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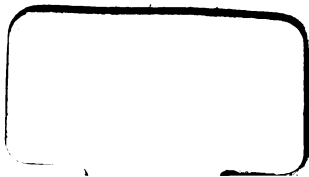
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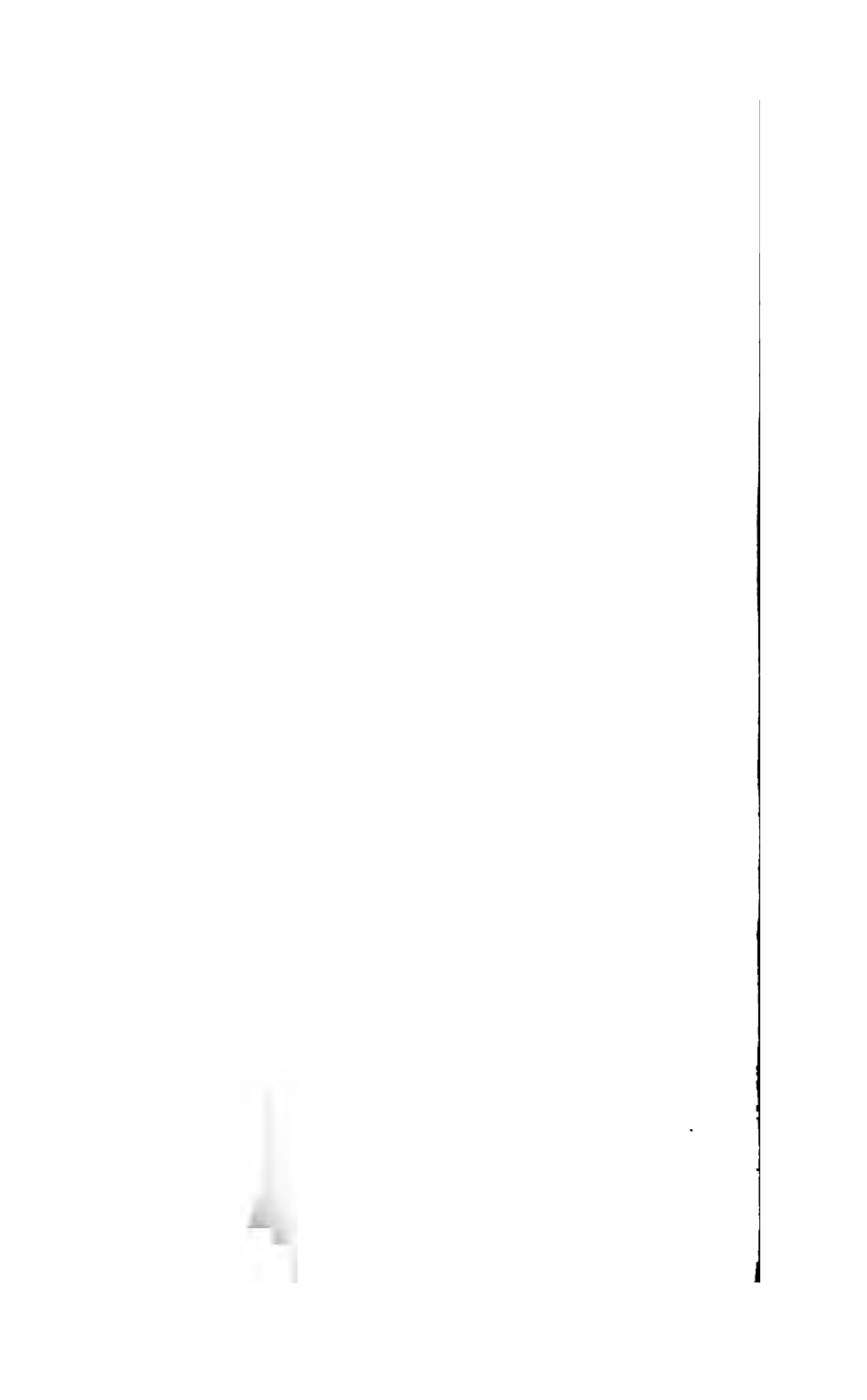


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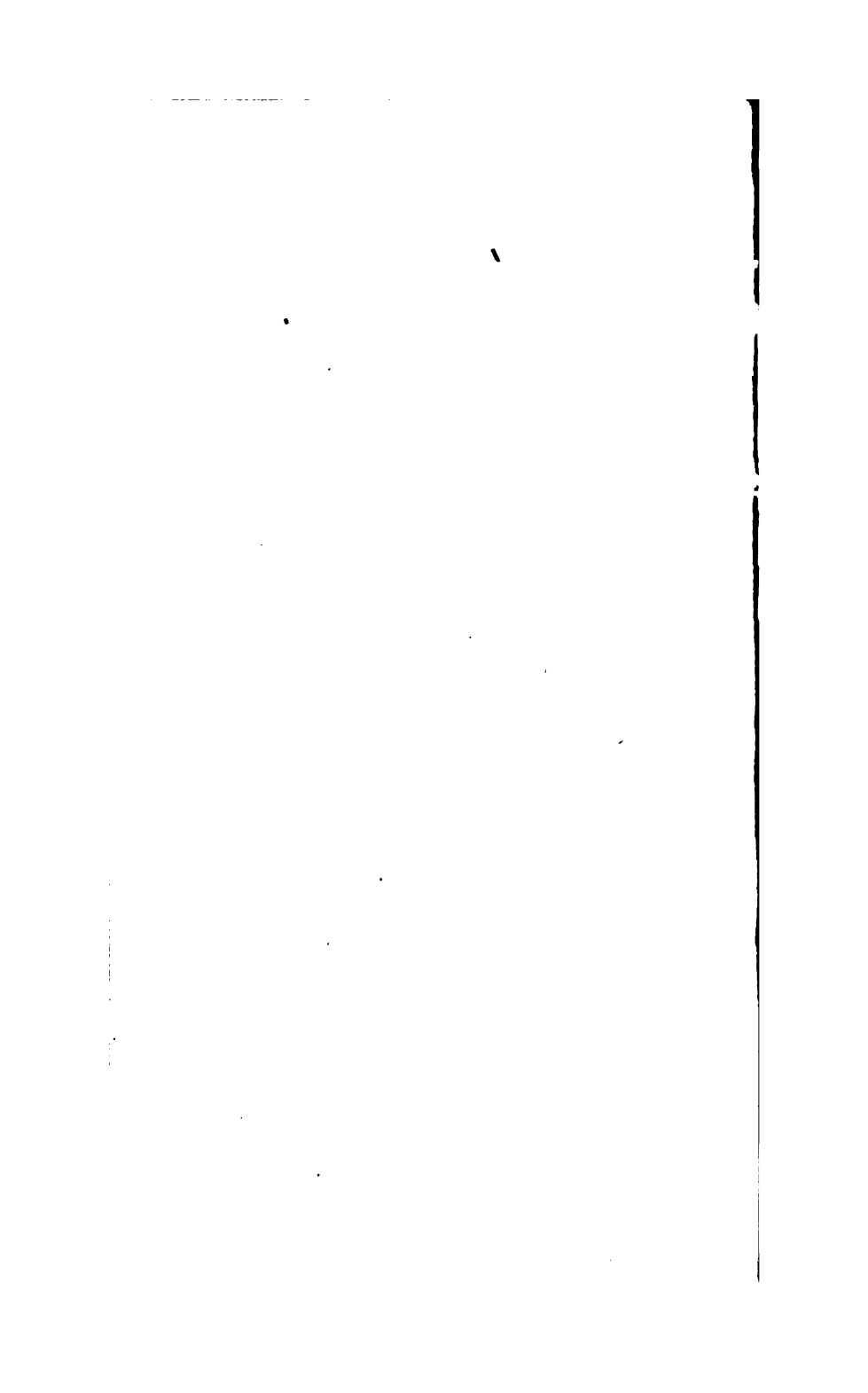


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Engr'd by John Fecii Glasgow

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM COLLINS GLASGOW

A
TREATISE
ON THE
FAITH AND INFLUENCE
OF THE
GOSPEL.

BY THE
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WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY
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GLASGOW:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM COLLINS;
OLIVER & BOYD, WM. WHYTE & CO. AND WM. OLIPHANT, EDINBURGH;
W. F. WAKEMAN, AND WM. CURRY, JUN. & CO. DUBLIN;
WHITTAKER, TREACHER, & ARNOT; HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
SIMPKIN & MARSHALL; BALDWIN & CRADOCK;
AND HURST, CHANCE, & CO. LONDON.

MDCCCXXXI.



ted by W. Collins & Co.
Glasgow.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

It is remarkable, that our Saviour, after foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and giving the assurance that he will speedily come to avenge his elect, makes this solemn and awakening inquiry: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" We cannot so far dive into the unrevealed secrets of prophecy, as to affirm how much, or how little, of analogy there is between the destruction of Jerusalem and the final dissolution of our world. It is impossible, in reading the woes and denunciations of our Saviour upon this subject, to rid ourselves of the impression, that there is a general resemblance between these two events. Both of them are described under the figure of the coming of the Son of man. At both of them there is a work of vengeance to be done, and a fell manifestation given of God's wrath against the finally and obstinately impenitent. In both an old economy is entirely swept away, and a new order of things emerges from the ruins of it. But there is one point of the comparison, at which, instead of a likeness, we believe it to be the general

apprehension of Christians, that there must be a strong dissimilarity. We are apt to look forward to a mighty spread and revival of the Gospel in the latter days. Ere the day of judgment shall arrive, we count on the restoration of Jews, and the flocking in of Heathens, and the consummation of a great moral triumph over the world's blindness and depravity; and, in short, a whole species visibly awakened from the lethargy of nature, and turned, intently turned, on the things of eternity. Now, we dispute not that in our book of prophecy there is a warrant for all these expectations. But the difficulty is, how to find an adjustment between these high millennial hopes on the one hand; and on the other, the sudden and overwhelming surprise wherewith the last day is to come on an unbelieving world. If it be as applicable to the breaking up of our globe as it was to the breaking up of Jerusalem, that its coming is to be as a thief in the night, and that it shall bear with it a sudden destruction, on men steeped in the delusion of all around them being peace and safety, and that, wholly given over to earthliness, they shall be caught at unawares, while "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,"—if it be really true, that it is in the midst of holiday enjoyments, and among the songs of mirth and revelry, that the sound of the last trumpet shall be heard, and the Judge is to descend with the authority of a sudden on all the pursuits and frivolities of a then living generation, may it not, after all, be true in this latter visitation, as it was of his former? when the Son of man cometh he shall not find upon the earth?

Now we shall leave the difficulty where we found it—and instead of devising explanations for other men and other ages, let us try to ascertain in how far the rebuke of the Saviour is applicable to ourselves.

But ere we proceed, let us, in explanation of the term *faith*, advert to the wide distinction which obtains between the popular imagination of what it is, and the Apostle's definition of what it is. The common conception about it is, that it consists in a correct apprehension of the truths of theology—or soundness of belief as opposed to error of belief. It appears to be a very prevalent impression, that faith lies in our judging rightly of the doctrines of the Bible—or that we have a proper understanding of them. And, in this way, the privileges annexed to faith in the New Testament, are very apt to be regarded as a sort of remuneration for the soundness of our orthodoxy. Heaven is viewed as a kind of reward, if not for the worth of our doings, at least for the worth and the justness of our dogmata. Under the old economy, eternal life was held out as a return to us for right practice. Under the new economy, is it conceived by many, that it is held out to us as a return for right thinking. Figure two theologians to be listed, the one against the other, in controversy. He who espouses error is estimated to be a heretic, and wanting in the faith. He who espouses truth, is estimated to be a sound believer, so that his faith resolves itself into the accuracy of his creed. It is not, Do this, and you shall live—but it is, Think thus, and you shall live,—and this seems to be the popular and prevailing

to be that which places eternity by the side of time, and so regards the one as a mere path or stepping-stone to the other; that the man whom it possesses actually moves through life in the spirit of a traveller, feels his home to be heaven, and all his dearest hopes and interests to be laid up there; walking, therefore, over the world with a more light and unencumbered footstep than other men, just because all its adversities to him are but the crosses of a rapid journey, and all its joys but the shifting scenery of the land through which he is travelling, and visions of passing loveliness. Keep by this definition of faith, and bear it round as a test among all the families of your acquaintance. Go with it to the haunts of every-day life, and see if it can guide you to so much as one individual, whose doings plainly declare that he is pressing onwards to an immortality, for the joys and exercises of which, he is all the while in busy preparation; and we fear, that even in this our professing age, faith is scarcely and rarely to be found; that nearly a universal species are carried through life in one tide of overbearing carnality; that the present world domineers over almost every creature that breathes in it; and were the Son of man now to descend in the midst of us, we know not how few they are who would meet and satisfy his inquiries after faith upon the earth.

For let there first pass under our review, that mighty host who live in palpable ungodliness, who, if you cannot say of them that they are against God, are at least without God in the world; who spend their days, not perhaps in positive hostility, but certainly in most torpid apathy and indifference towards

the Father of their spirits ; who, feelingly alive to all the concerns of time, are dead and insensible to all that is beyond it. These indisputably are children without faith. Eternity is a blank in their imagination. They are alike unmoved by its hopes and by its fears, and it offers as little of influence to move them, as does that dark and unpeopled nothingness which lies beyond the outskirts of creation. The thought of a distant planet that rolls afar in space, carries in it no practical operation on their business or their bosoms. And the thought of some distant misery or happiness that may cast up in eternity, has just as little of practical operation over the minds of the vast majority of this world. That which lies between, acts as an insuperable barrier between the things of faith and their principles, whether of feeling or of action ; and so it is that they can fetch, from the region which lies on the other side of the grave, no moving force which might practically tell on their hearts or on their history upon this side of it.

It were certainly premature and presumptuous to make these affirmations of all ; but we leave it to your own observation, whether it does not apply, and in its full extent, to many of your friends or familiars in society—to many, and very many, who daily throng our markets, and sit around our boards of festivity, and labour from morning to night among the cares of family management, and exchange the calls, and the salutations, and the inquiries of civil companionship ; and whether in the pursuits of science, or merchandise, or amusement, are severally busy, each with a world of his own, from which God is shut out, and in which eternity is forgotten.

Nothing can be more wide of apostolical faith than the spiritual frame and habit of these. They mind earthly things. They have no conversation in heaven. The world is their all, and it is within the compass of its visible horizon that their every wish and every interest lies. The terrors of another world do not agitate them. The hopes of another world do not enliven them. To both they are profoundly asleep, and that too at the very time when all within them is restless, and anxious, and astir about the matters of the short-lived day that is passing over them. This is the general description of all those who live without God and without hope. Does it apply to any of you? Then you may have honour, and decency, and kindness, and courtesy, and agreeable manners, and even exemplary morals, but you have no faith.

And it brings out this want of faith into more distinct exhibition, that they who exemplify it are so susceptible of a powerful impulse from futurity. It is not that we want the faculty of anticipation, for this, in fact, is the main-spring of all the activity that we see afloat in the world. Man lives on the prospect that is before him. It is in the pursuit of some distant advantage, or in the avoidance of some distant evil, that all his powers of thought and action are expended. Were the machinery of his moral system capable of no impulse from futurity, then it might alleviate the charge that we prefer against him, when we state his life to be an idiot's dream, on the brink of an eternity, that, ere a few little days, will absorb him, an unsheltered and unprovided creature, into a receptacle of despair. But it only marks

the more striking his blindness to the futurities of an eternal world, that he is so vigilant, and so busily alive to all the futurities of the present world—that he proves himself so eminently a creature of foresight in all that regards the pursuits or the interests of time, while this high characteristic of his nobler and loftier nature, seems to abandon him in all that regards the great concerns of immortality—that the very same man who can sit up late, and rise up early, for the purpose of building an earthly fortune in behalf of his children, and of his children's children, should never bestow the carefulness of half an hour on the fate and fortune of his own imperishable soul—that he who can regale his imagination with the perspective of thriving descendants, whom the wealth that he now accumulates is to grace and to ennoble, should never turn his eye to that grave in which his own body will then be mouldering, or to that land of condemnation in which his own desolate spirit will then wander in the nakedness of its unatoned guilt, and of its unchanged and unrenewed earthliness—that he who, in bequeathing to posterity, can stretch his mind forward to the time when his own name shall be forgotten, and the tomb-stone that covers him shall have gathered upon it the mould of its distant antiquity,—that he who can thus devise and make disposition of his earthly treasure for centuries to come, should be so shut and fastened in all his sensibilities to a treasure in heaven, and an inheritance that fadeth not away. It is this busy excitement of his about the futurities of earth which brings out, by contrast, to more striking and surprising manifestation, the utter lethargy of his soul about

those futurities of an everlasting condition that are so sure to overtake him. It is this which gives its most conclusive demonstration of Nature's apathy, and Nature's blindness, and prepares us for the announcement, that when the Son of man cometh he may not find faith upon the earth.

But let us pass onward to a class of somewhat different aspect from that of the palpably regardless ; who have been so far mindful of religion as to put on its decencies, and at least its public devotions ; who fill their Sabbath pew on every recurring occasion, with the members of a well-trained and well-mustered family, of whom we will grant that their presentation at church is just a thing as regular and sure as the tolling of the bell that summons them ; who are ever in their places at the periodic celebration of our great Christian festival ; and who, even in addition to their Sabbath and their sacramental observances, have such a style of worship and of exercise at home as is in perfect keeping with their more ostensible properties. One would imagine of such quiet, and orderly, and church-going men, that truly they are walking with a pilgrim step to another and a happier land ; that it was not the happiness of the present, but the hope of the future which concerned them ; that instead of being taken up with the fleeting interests of sense, they were indeed taken up with those distant and unseen things, by the power of which it is that we estimate their condition as believers ; that so many goodly symptoms, in the way of form, and ordinance, and manifold compliance with the established usages of Christianity, argued them to be indeed of the faith —and, at all events, that, in respect of moral and

spiritual characteristics, they are of a species altogether distinct from those infidels who disown the Gospel, or those ungodly who despise it.

And yet it is most true, that all this seeming sanctity may consist with an entire and unbroken habit of worldliness; that all this clock-work religion may stand as little connected with the aspirings of a mind that is heavenly, as do the routine evolutions of any piece of mechanism; that the keeping of all the Sabbath punctualities, may argue no more a heart set on the things that are above, than would the putting on of our Sabbath vestments; and the church, and the sacrament, and the family exercises, taking their respective places in the round of many a sober citizen, along with his busy shop, and his comfortable meals, and his parties of agreeable fellowship, may, one and all of them, be only so many varieties of earthliness. It is really so very possible to have gotten, whether by inheritance or by accident, into a habit of unvaried regularity, and to have a kind of conscience about it too, and to feel a violence done to our religious sensibilities, whenever it is broken in upon, and to have persevered so long in a certain style of observation, that a positive discomfort is suffered, should any inroad be made upon it—it is so possible, that all this may meet, and be at one, with the downward tendencies of a heart which is altogether of the earth, and earthly. It does not follow, that because a man of forms, he is therefore a man of faith. There may be much without him that bears upon it the aspect of religiousness, while there is nought within him of “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” He differs, it is true, from the

Sabbath breaker, and the profane absentee from all our ordinances; but the difference may be altogether complexional. To superinduce the ordinances of the Gospel on a man's history, is one thing; that they should spring from a spontaneous affection for the Gospel in a man's heart, is another. The example of parents may have superinduced them; or the force of natural habit may have done it; or a taste for the decencies of family regulation may have done it,—and thus it often holds practically true, that the punctuality of his Sabbath worship may no more argue him a disciple or an expectant of immortality, than does the punctuality of his morning walk. And, accordingly, we fear it to be true of many such, that, with all their external tribute at the altar of piety, there is nought of the living spirit of piety in their bosoms—that they stand as firmly rivetted to the dust of our perishable world, as do the most profane and profligate of their fellows—that their hearts are just as much with the interests of a passing scene, and in every way as naked of all influence from the things of eternity. So that were you to follow many a pains-taking and assiduous formalist, throughout the line of his week-day movements, you would say of him, too, that the world was his home, and heaven but the vision or the entertainment of his fancy—that nought, either of substance or of evidence, stood associated with his thoughts of futurity on the other side of death—that, wanting this, he wanted all that could really signalize him from earthly men, as a traveller towards Zion—that all which could be alleged of his observations or his prayers, only proved him to wear the livery of the faithful,

without their spirit or their character: for, look to him diligently, and you will find him to be just as intent on lucre, as keen in bargains, as busy and breathless in all the pursuits of merchandise, as agonized by the crosses of misadventure, as enraptured at the sight of profits and of suug accumulations; in a word, not only as laborious with his hand, but, more material still, as wholly given over, with his heart, to the pursuits and interests of a short-lived day, as are the great bulk, and common-place, of our ordinary men.

But, again, if faith, in the Apostle's sense of it, cannot be ascribed to the openly regardless, and cannot be ascribed to those seemingly religious, whose only homage to the cause is that of their personal attendance upon its decencies and its forms—ought it not, at least, to be ascribed to another and a higher class—even to those who are zealous for the faith? It might well be imagined, of him who thinks to purchase heaven by his works of devoteeship, that, all scrupulous as he is of Sabbath and sacramental proprieties, he may still be wanting in the faith. But, can this be alleged of him who has oft been heard to speak of faith and of works together—and who, after argumenting the utter worthlessness of the latter, has confined most rigidly to the former all of power and of efficacy that there is in the business of salvation? How is it, that the man who ever and anon pronounces on the vanity of his own righteousness, and professes the righteousness of Christ, as appropriated and laid hold of by faith, to be the alone plea on which a sinner can be justified—how is it that he can, at the same time, be destitute of faith? Surely,

if faith is to be found at all upon our earth, it must be among those men of a jealous and stickling orthodoxy, who are ever on the alert, and on the alarm, when human morality lifts its pretensions against the supremacy of faith, and offers presumptuously to usurp, or to derogate, from its honours. Where is faith to be met with, if not among its own professed and earnest advocates?—and how can the credit of faith be denied to those, who say, they hold by it alone as their passport to heaven, and that to it alone they look for being justified?

To know, and to think, that a man is justified by faith, is one thing: actually to have that faith, is another. One may know, that he who possesses a certain title-deed, has the property of certain lands—but this is wholly different from his being himself the possessor of it. Your religious knowledge may qualify you for enumerating all the powers and privileges which belong to faith—but it does not therefore follow, that this faith actually belongs to you. It is but a distant connexion to have with an earthly estate, that you know what sort of rights they are, by the holding of which it becomes the property of the owner. This you may know most thoroughly, and yet have no personal interest in the rights or in the property whatever. And distant, indeed, is your connexion with heaven, if you but know, how it is by faith that man acquires a part and an inheritance therein. The question recurs, Have you that faith? It is not of your knowledge, or your opinion, that we at present inquire. You may know that faith justifies a man, and yet have no faith whatever of your own. It may be a favourite dogma, this article

of justification; and you, having the dogma, yet wanting the faith, may have no justification. You may embrace, and with fond affection too, the sound doctrines upon this subject, and yet not, by any faith of your own, have actually embraced the righteousness of Christ: and so this doctrine of theology may be of as little avail toward the peace and joy of your eternity, as any doctrine of politics, or of philosophy, or of agriculture.

Neither is it enough, that you assert with vehemence, and abide with most opinionative tenacity by, the right doctrines of justification. Who has not witnessed the very same vehemence, and the very same tenacity, on other fields of speculation? All that ardour, and earnestness, and intolerance of what is pronounced to be damnable error, which are so often exhibited in theological controversy, may often be resolved into the pride of argument, the impatience of defeat, the jealousy of other powers and other understandings. These are the principles which uphold the zeal and strenuousness of so many combatants on the arena of a merely secular debate, and make each so resolute in the affirmation and defence of his own dogma. And on no other principles may you have taken your side on the agitated question of our acceptance with God; and may have urged it with most intense affection and energy, that this acceptance hangs upon faith, and upon it alone. This you may do, and yet be personally without the faith yourself—a fierce and eager partizan, and on the right side too, of this evangelical warfare—though, within the receptacles of your moral system, there be nought of “the substance of things hoped for,” and nought of “the evidence of things not seen.”

We think that, on the first blush and aspect of it, the thing is quite palpable to the eye of general observation. It is surely an oft-exemplified phenomenon, that a man should be quite sturdy in his adherence to the orthodox creed, and yet be all the while a man of earthly pursuits and earthly affections. He may lay claim to the dogmata thereof, as all his own,—and yet the living realities of which they treat, may never have impressed one touch of their practical and persuasive ascendancy over him. His mouth may be filled with the language, and his understanding be busied with the arguments, of orthodoxy, and yet the spiritual things, of which words are but the representatives and the symbols, may never once have come into living play, either with the purposes of his life, or with the affections of his still unregenerated bosom. He may stand up for all the articles, and yet be standing up for mere phraseology, and nothing more. It may be a mere germ of curiosity, or imagination, with the terms of theology; while the truths of it have never once stood before the eye of his conscience, clothed in all the urgent and impressive characters of their high bearing upon his everlasting welfare. They may have never, indeed, carried him forward to any one of those futurities, to which he will be so speedily conducted, by the flight of those successive years that roll over him. The coming death, and the coming judgment, and the coming eternity, may all be unheeded, and at the very moment, too, when he is agitating the terms on which death is plucked of its sting, and judgment is disarmed by mercy, and an avenue to the bliss of eternity is again opened for

those sinners who had cast it away from them. The urgencies of the present world may enslave him, even while the concerns of the future world are to him the topics, both of busy thought and busy conversation. The matters of God's kingdom may be quite familiar to him in word, which never are felt by him in their power. They have had interest enough to attract his gaze, but not energy enough to move his practice. They play, in speculation, around his fancy or his head, but they have never yet stimulated him to action; and while his talk is of the mysteries of heaven, his path in life is that of a devoted worldling.

There may be something in the apostolical definition of faith that is fitted to expose, and perhaps to remedy, this delusion. It is such a faith as, at least, carries hope in its train. It has for its object such things as are hoped for—that is, hoped for to the individual himself. One may believe of a thousand things in which he personally has no share and no interest—but hope implies a certain degree of appropriation. It may be easy to give a general consent to the truth—that, by Christ the Saviour, the gate of heaven has been opened for sinners—but, by the faith of our text, the sinner sees the gate of heaven to be open for himself; and so he rejoices in the bright anticipation, and betakes himself to all the required and preparatory movements for his entrance thereinto. One can imagine, that the report of a Saviour for the sinners of another country, would carry in it none of the personal excitement of hope, and none of the personal exertion correspondent thereunto, to the sinners of our own land. And

yet it is conceivable, that this message of a distant salvation for others, and in which we ourselves had no individual concern, might basily engage our speculations, and be the topic amongst us of a very intense controversy; and might arrange us into parties, according to the interpretation that we gave of the terms, on which God took into acceptance the strayed children of this remote branch of his family. And thus, one class of our home theologians might think truly, and have the sound opinion, on this matter; and so have their minds imbued with the accurate belief. Yet, from the nature of the thing, it is a belief which carries no hope along with it—and just, we apprehend, such a belief as is to be met with among many of the actual zealots of orthodoxy in our present day. They treat the matter, it is to be feared, as a thing that lies remote from themselves—as a mere theme for the understanding; which they look to as they would to any other abstract contemplation, but which they do not look to as that which bears, specifically and distinctly, upon their own interest. Whatever faith they have, is a faith without hope—but this is not the faith of our text. This is not the assured expectation of things hoped for. This is not the case of a man, who hath closed with the overtures of the Gospel for himself; and is looking onward to heaven, not merely as a place that has been opened, by a Redeemer's hand, for a certain number of travellers, but a place that has been opened for him, as one of these travellers. This would change the character of his faith. This would turn him from a controversialist into a pilgrim. In the former view of it, there was nought addressed but

his intellect. The latter view of it, offers that which is addressed to his affections and his hopes—which opens for himself a vista into heaven; and, revealing to him the holiness, both of the habitation, and of the highway that leads to it, instantly betakes him unto the way of holiness.

There are two questions which, could we answer in a way that might be readily apprehended, would go far to satisfy you, as to the process by which a real principle of faith in the mind, is followed by the life of faith in the history—so as to land every honest believer of the present day, in those very activities which signalized the patriarchs of the old dispensation, and separated them, by a holy and a heavenward walk, from the general habit of an unbelieving world.

The first of these questions is—By what stepping-stone is a believer conducted from his faith to his hope? What is there, in the Christian message, that warrants him to single out heaven as the distinct object of his own journeyings through the world, and his own preparations for it, as a place whither he might bend his footsteps, and to which he might look forward, as the home and the resting-place of his own special expectations? Had it been a message of salvation only to the people of another land, he might have put faith in it without drawing hope from it. And how is the message actually constructed, so as that the faith, which he places therein, should light up the animating sentiment of hope in his bosom?

Were the gospel but a message of salvation to some foreign land, there would be no link by which faith might pass into hope. And neither would this

transition follow, were it only a message to some of our own neighbourhood, exclusive of ourselves. But this is not the bearing of the message. It carries a tender of salvation to all. It points the eye of each, and of every man, to an open heaven, and invites him to enter thereinto. By such terms as, *all*, and *any*, and *every*, and *whosoever*, it brings its offers of reconciliation most specifically to bear on each unit of the human population. Insomuch that, if the word of salvation hath come to him, the offer of salvation hath been made to him. Just as much as if not another individual but himself had stood in need of Christ's propitiation, is the whole benefit of that propitiation pressed upon his acceptance. Just as much as if he had been the solitary and the sinful occupier of the only world where rebellion against heaven was known, and as if the Bible had been constructed for the one purpose of reclaiming him to the friendship of his offended God, has that Bible come to his door, armed with the full force of its importunities and its calls. It is as legitimately his right to take to himself the call of reconciliation that is sounded there, as if put into his hand by an angel from the sanctuary, with a special bidding, from heaven's Lord, that he should read, and should rejoice in it. It is true, that this is not the way in which the message is actually brought home; and that, instead of this, the everlasting Gospel is preached unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. But, while thus it goeth forth diffusively over all, it sendeth out a voice which speaketh distinctly unto each; and, in virtue of the terms that we

have now specified, does it happily combine, a wide expansion of itself over the face of the world, with a pointed application of itself to every heart, and to every habitation. That faith may become hope, nothing more is necessary, than to believe in the message, according to the sense of the message. It is to believe with understanding. It is to put the right interpretation on these simple words, *all*, and *any*, and *every*. It is to conceive of myself, that surely I am within the scope of a vocabulary, which is comprehensive of the whole species, and not exclusive of a single member belonging to it. I cannot believe in the announcement, that Christ "tasted death for every man," without rejoicing in this, that he hath tasted death for me. I cannot have faith in the invitation, "Let whosoever will, come and drink of the water of life freely," without feeling of myself, that I have been made the object of a marked and separate entreaty. It is thus that there is a hope of faith, as well as a hope of experience. There is a hope that hangs direct on the faithfulness of God. The man who argues on the side of orthodoxy, and feels not his personal interest therein, is blind to the important significancy of those very terms in which the doctrines of the Bible have been conveyed to him. He either knows them not, or attends to them not. All that we want for the lighting up of hope is faith, with understanding; and only grant it to be an intelligent faith, and then will it be the assured expectation of things hoped for.

But there is another question which must be answered, ere we can complete the analogy between the state of an expectant under the old, and of an

expectant under the new dispensation. We can perceive how a hope—a hope of his own individual preferment to blessedness and glory, may arise in the bosom of each, from the terms in which both the Jewish and the Christian message was conveyed to all who stood within reach of the hearing of them. But it might be imagined of this hope, that it should simply find an entrance into the heart, and there minister of its own sweet and placid sensations to the inner man. What is there in it that should put into motion the intercourse, or connect the faith of a believer with that new and busy career of activity on which he forthwith embarks himself? We can understand how a Christian, like Abraham of old, might see his day of triumph afar off and be glad. But what is there in the mere belief of the things which have been told unto him, and in his assured expectation of those things that should liken his history to that of Abraham, who, at the bidding of a voice from heaven, submitted himself to the toils and the trials of a new obedience? We can see how the faith of the Gospel might germinate that specific anticipation of heaven, which might give to the mind of a Christian all the spiritual elevation of Abraham? But by what distinct impulse is it that this faith originates a personal movement on the part of its disciple, so as that he shall walk in the footsteps of his father Abraham? We now understand the pathway between faith and hope. We now want to understand the pathway between faith and service—and how it is that the hope which gladdens alike the patriarch of the old, and the believer of the new economy, should further stimulate them alike to the same exertions and the same sacrifices.

Now, as it was by looking to the terms of the message, according to the meaning of these terms, that we attempted to trace the connexion between faith and hope; so it is in this, and in no other way, that we would trace the connexion between faith and obedience. The accompaniment of such a term as that of "whoever," with the invitation of the Gospel, gives me to understand of that invitation as directed specifically to myself, and my heart responds to it accordingly. And the accompaniment of such a sentence with the same invitation, as that "he who turneth to Christ must depart from his iniquities," gives me to understand, that while I look to heaven with the delightful sensation of hope in my bosom, I must also look to it with the diligence of an intent and busy traveller, who knows that in moving thitherward, he must move himself away from the habit and character and earthly desires of a world lying in wickedness. This is the way, and we know of no other, by which faith and obedience are so linked together, as that when the one enters the heart, the other forthwith comes out on the history. It is done by the power of a whole faith in a whole testimony. It is by keeping the ear of the mind open to the whole utterance of that voice which hath spoken to us from heaven. It is by treating God's communications as Abraham of old did. When he heard God say, "This is the land which I give unto thee," he rejoiced in hope; and when he heard him say, "Walk thou before me, and be thou perfect," he went forth in obedience. And so with the Christian, who can both look with glad anticipation to eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ

builds on this all his hopes of acceptance before God, he finds not only peace, but a purifying influence descend on his heart. It removes the spirit of bondage and of fear, which weighed down the soul to the inactivity of despair, and introduces the spirit of love and adoption, which makes him run with alacrity in the way of all God's commandments. So long as the question of his guilt remained unsettled, instead of loving, he could only dread, the Being whom he had offended; but when a sense of forgiveness enters his heart, he enters, with hopeful and assured footsteps, on a course of cheerful obedience. When love to God, which the consciousness of guilt kept away, is introduced into his soul by faith in the atoning blood of Christ, the inspiration of a new and invigorating principle takes possession of the believer, and he becomes animated with the life and the love of real godliness. Faith in the doctrine of the atonement is as much the turning point of a new character, as of a new hope. It is here Gospel obedience takes its commencement, because it is here that filial love and confidence in God take their rise. Christ came not only to redeem us from all iniquity, but to "purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The reception of Christ is always accompanied with the gift of the renewing Spirit, whose peculiar office it is to promote our growth in grace, and to perfect us in holiness; and the genuine believer will always experience the truth and the reality of the Apostle's declaration—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

T. C.

EDINBURGH, *March*, 1831.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of the following Treatise was a respectable Minister of the Secession, first at Torphichen, in Scotland, and afterwards in London; and is already known to the public by several judicious and esteemed Works: particularly, by two volumes on "Gospel Worship," an "Essay on Church Fellowship," a "View of the Constitution of the Gospel Church," and two Sermons, entitled, "Grace and Holiness,"—which were published during his life.

Though the present Volume makes its appearance for the first time, after the lapse of more than twenty-five years since the Author's death, its style and manner will, to those who are acquainted with his other writings, afford satisfactory evidence that it is the genuine production of his pen. The manuscript, from which it is printed, is in his own hand-writing, and evidently prepared for the press. It was deposited by him in the hands of his intimate friend, the Rev. Mr. Patison, probably with a view to its publication in Edinburgh; but the death of the Author, which happened soon after, and then of that venerable Minister of the Gospel, to whose care he had entrusted it, occasioned all thoughts of its publication to be laid aside. Through the politeness of Mr. Patison's family, in whose custody it has ever since remained, several of the Editor's brethren in the ministry were favoured with a perusal of it; and it now appears, in consequence of the opinion which they have been pleased to express, that it is in no respect inferior to the Author's other works; and that its publication might be of use for exhibiting clear and evangelical views, of points which have occasioned much disputation in the church of God.

The subject of this Treatise is confessedly of the greatest importance, and cannot fail to recommend itself to the attention of Christians of every denomination. The faith of the Gospel is of indispensable necessity. It enters as an essential ingredient into the Christian character, and, by its benign and powerful influence, adorns it. Without it a sinner can have no interest in Christ, nor communion with him; can perform no acceptable worship, possess no genuine holiness, nor enjoy any well-grounded hope: he can neither live happily, nor die safely. Men are saved through faith, and damned for want of it. It concerns every person, therefore, to know the doctrines which he must believe, and the nature of that faith with which he must believe them; the founda-

tion on which it rests, the means by which it is produced, and the characters by which it is distinguished from every counterfeit.

On these and other highly interesting topics, the reader will find much valuable information in the Volume with which he is now presented. An attentive perusal will satisfy him that it has been composed with great care, and is the fruit of much study and extensive reading on the subject of which it treats.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add, that the Editor is accountable for nothing but his fidelity. The Work appears precisely in the form in which the Author prepared it for the press; and no other liberty has been used than occasionally to supply a word, or part of a sentence, which had, by an incautious use of the manuscript, become illegible.

The Editor regrets that the Work is imperfect. The Author proposed to illustrate the second part of his subject as fully as he has done the first—and had actually completed it; but a fire, which broke out in an adjacent house, destroyed the manuscript, along with most of his books and furniture, and he had proceeded no further in the preparation of his work anew for the press than what is now published, when his labours were interrupted by disease, and soon after terminated by death. Had he lived to complete his plan, the work must have appeared in two volumes. Nine sections would have followed the three which are printed, in order to complete the chapter which treats of the influence of faith upon the character and conduct of the saints; showing its influence in our adoption—in promoting true holiness—comfort—hope—patience—and victory over the world,—and in enabling saints to resist the devil—depart in peace—and anticipate the glories of the world to come. The illustration of these would have been succeeded by two additional chapters; the one illustrating the office of faith in the life, walk, profession, and religious duties of believers; and the other pointing out the genuine marks of unfeigned faith.

The Editor commits the Work in the condition in which it now appears, to Him for whose service it was written; and hopes that, through his blessing, it may be useful for increasing the knowledge, confirming the faith, and promoting the holiness and comfort of the saints.

JAMES PEDDIE.

Edinburgh, August 25, 1803.

A
TREATISE
ON THE
FAITH AND INFLUENCE
OF THE
GOSPEL.

PART I.

INTRODUCTION.

“ I AM not ashamed,” says the Apostle, “ of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” “ He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” The enjoyment of all the blessings of the gospel is connected with believing; while the wrath of God abideth on every unbeliever. “ They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham;” but the “ children of disobedience” to the truths of God, are undoubtedly “ children of his wrath.”

This being the case, a regard to the glory of God, and compassion to immortal souls, demand the most earnest attention, both of the writer and of the reader of the following sheets, to the impartial and accurate examination of the subject which he professedly attempts to explain. We must not only believe the

truth of the gospel, but we must "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." This is the first object of a Christian's zeal. Every thing else has its season; but this must be inculcated, believed, and obeyed, "in season and out of season." We must "live by faith," "walk by faith," and "die in faith." "For without faith it is impossible to please God;" and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

To endeavour to rectify the misapprehensions of the multitude, and to direct the attention of the perplexed mind, concerning this interesting point, is, in a very eminent sense, a "labour of love" to immortal souls. Those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious through the belief of the truth, are under an obligation of gratitude to impart their views unto others, that they also may believe and rejoice. One who profited in humility and self-denial above many, describes the liberal, generous spirit of unfeigned believers of the truth in this manner: "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." The word of God, and the faith of a Christian, are not only altogether consistent, but inseparable. Believing, in every case, necessarily implies some testimony which the believer judges to be true; and the faith of the gospel respects a divine testimony, and judges the God who gives it to be faithful in his declarations and promises. Faith is not an abstract thing: it should never be thought of by the mind, without supposing some declaration that is to be believed; and to speak of it without such a connection, only darkens counsel by words without knowledge.

Error is various and changeable; a circumstance

of which the skilful adversaries of truth will not fail to take advantage. When their opinion is ready to be wrested from them, they will take entire possession of it again under another shape. The disputes that have been tossed with great warmth in the Christian church, furnish an illustration of this observation. The controversies concerning faith, in particular, are frequently managed without precision, and consequently without success. Perhaps this may be owing to the misapprehensions of the casuists about their subject. They suppose that there is ambiguity in the Scripture idea of believing. If it be once admitted, that the Holy Ghost employs this word in a variety of different senses, and does not afford to the reader of the Bible an easy and infallible line to ascertain the precise meaning of it, in every passage where it is introduced, it will necessarily follow, that the Scriptures are insufficient “to make the man of God perfect.”

The principal design of this performance is to show, that the Spirit of God, speaking in the Scriptures, invariably considers *believing* or *faith* in a simple and uniform sense;—to state and explain that sense with precision and exactness;—and to show the happy influence of this faith upon every important concern of the Christian life.

I proceed upon these four principles through the whole, namely, That the holy Scriptures are the word of God, and the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him;—that the faith of God’s elect does not rest upon the evidence of rational demonstration, but upon the authority and truth of the testimony of God in his word;—that the Holy Ghost must enlighten the eyes of their understanding, to

moved all the penmen, suggesting to them what they should write, and in what words they should express themselves upon every point. This consent is the more remarkable, when the exact agreement of prophecies and their accomplishment, of typical institutions and their substances, and of promises and threatenings, and their performance, is taken into the account. The scope of the whole Scripture revelation, which is to give all glory to God, is another proof that it is the word of God. Human contrivances are artfully adapted to flatter the pride of man, to please his fancy, or to gratify some corrupt selfish temper; but the holy Scriptures are "of God, and through him, and to him," in every point. They invariably represent the Lord of heaven and earth as the object of our faith, obedience, and worship; and hold him forth as working all things, by an all-powerful and wise concurrence of the dispensations of providence, according to the counsel of his own will, and to the praise of his own glory. The full discovery they make of the only way of man's salvation from a state of sin and misery, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, is an additional evidence that they are the word of the Lord. They have been authenticated with miracles wrought to confirm them, not only above the power, but even contrary to the course of nature. Providence has sufficiently established the credit of the prophetic passages in the oracles of God; it is still supporting their honour and veracity; and whatever is recorded by the Spirit of prophecy in the Old and New Testament, shall certainly come to pass. We are shut up either to deny the providence of God, or else to confess that the Scriptures are his word. To acknowledge that all the

administrations of providence come forth from the Lord of hosts, and yet to deny that the prediction of the most minute and accidental circumstances of these administrations proceeded from him, is a downright contradiction.

When we say that the Scriptures are the word of God, we mean that they are not the product of any man's own invention; but holy men of God, in writing them, were moved by the Holy Ghost, who infallibly directed and authorized them what to write, and secured them from error in their writings. Viewing them as the revealed will of God, his sacred oracles, and given by the inspiration of God, we have the highest degree of certainty concerning the whole; and this infallible certainty is equally applicable to every thing they contain, because it is delivered in the word of God that cannot lie. Our assurance rests upon the same foundation concerning every single article of Scripture truth.

2. The holy Scriptures are the only rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy him. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever. All the duty which we owe to God, is included in our glorifying him; and all the happiness of man is included in his fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; or, in other words, in his enjoying of God. This work, and this blessedness, shall be continued for ever. Other circumstances may differ; they shall be changed, and improved in their faculties; but the redeemed of the Lord shall glorify him for ever. Those that glorify him do also enjoy him; and those that enjoy him will also honour him. The duty and the true hap-

piness of man are like husband and wife in the marriage state, joined together by God, and cannot be divorced.

When the daring insolence of reason presumes to ascend unto the heights of the divine counsel, to sound the depths of infinite wisdom, to grasp the extent of the divine mercy, and to adjust every thing that pertains to the duty and happiness of mankind, it must not seem hard nor grievous in our sight to cast out this bond-woman and her seed. Her ambition aspires above her capacity, and affects an office infinitely superior to her weak abilities. These are not the pretensions of right reason, which waits to know, and rejoices to do, the will of God. Such affectation to exalt her throne above the stars of God, and to be like the Most High, sufficiently proves her to be, not only an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, but an enemy, a rebel against the God of heaven.

The church of Rome has taken away the key of knowledge from the unlearned in her communion, by denying them access to the word of God in a language which they understand. They pronounce every translation of the Scriptures erroneous, except their own; and they take care to keep that in the Latin tongue, which is every where a dead language. But, in compassion to the vulgar, they have opened a new source of knowledge and religion, in the doctrine they inculcate on the head of tradition, whereby they pretend the whole doctrines and duties of divine revelation, together with the true sense of all that the Scripture has delivered concerning them, are infallibly and universally conveyed from age to age.

A happy expedient, that infallibly supplies so much wisdom on such easy terms! Those who confide in this scheme must have a very respectable opinion of human nature. A treacherous memory, curiosity, pride, indolence, and disaffection to divine things, must have no part in her composition; for any one of these, and much more the united influence of the whole, would destroy all confidence in her evidence. Besides, she has been by thousands convicted of being both weak, treacherous, and pernicious; and therefore must re-establish her ruined reputation before we give her any credit.*

Therefore, renouncing these guides as both insufficient and dangerous, we are commanded to walk by the rule of God's word, as our only sufficient and undeceiving directory for faith and obedience.

That a rule of faith may answer its purpose, it must be sufficiently plain, that it may be understood; sufficiently certain, to give full satisfaction to the mind concerning it, that it may be safely depended on by all concerned; and if it be a perfect rule, it must want nothing that is necessary to direct the hope and conduct of those who are concerned to walk by it. The word of God is such a rule to the faith and practice of mankind, not only in preference to any other, but in opposition to all others. (1.) The Scriptures are a *plain* rule to direct us how we may glorify God, and enjoy him. We allow there are mysteries in that book, and so there are in all nature;

* Matth. xv. 3. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" Verse 6. "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

yea, the constitution of human nature is too wonderful for us to comprehend. But all the mysteries in the word of God are only obscure to us in their own nature, and not in the manner of revealing them. In this precious volume is milk for babes, as well as strong meat for grown men. (2.) The Scriptures are a *certain* and infallible rule. They are the word of God, and therefore they are more firm than the foundations of the earth, or the pillars of the vaulted heavens. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one word shall not fall to the ground of all that God hath spoken. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool;" he that trusteth in a friend, even a brother, or a guide, has only a precarious dependence; but he that believeth the word of the Lord shall never be ashamed of his confidence. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever." (3.) The Scriptures are a *perfect* rule. Hence the apostle says of them, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Whatever is profitable to give us a just view of religious truth, to convince our consciences of sin, and refute every erroneous opinion; to renew our heart, and reform our life; or to instruct us in the righteousness of Jehovah's nature and law, fulfilled and magnified by Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every ungodly sinner that believeth;—all that is profitable for these grand purposes, is contained in the precious, the inexhaustible treasures of the word of God. They are a perfect rule of faith and practice, and

comprise all that can be necessary, not only to make a complete Christian, but also a complete minister; being suited, in the nature of means, thoroughly to direct and furnish the one as well as the other, for a due understanding and performance of every good work that he is called to, relating to God, himself, and others. Therefore, "to the law and to the testimony" of the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture, is our great, our final appeal. This undeceiving source of truth and holiness is not like a glimmering taper, but like the mid-day sun, that diffuses light and heat concerning every article of faith and duty. (4.) The Scriptures are the *only* rule that can direct us how we may glorify God, and enjoy God. Amidst all the ignorance of philosophy, the bewildering errors of tradition, and the darkness and uncertainty which evidently run through the writings of the best of men, this is our unspeakable happiness, that "we have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed." "He that hath an ear" is obliged to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The saints and faithful in Christ Jesus "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." The sad experience of mankind has clearly proved, that they are vain in their imaginations, and brutish in their knowledge, concerning the glory of God, and their own happiness. Whenever they departed from the word of God, pretending to superior improvements in faith and morality, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Our folly will have the highest aggravations, if we pursue the same course. "They changed the truth

of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." With the utmost abhorrence, let us detest the thought of substituting any other rule in the room of the holy Scriptures, or of exalting reason, that auxiliary, above them, to enlarge their meaning, or increase their authority and obligation.*

It may be proper, before we proceed, to observe, that plain and necessary Scripture consequences are no less a part of the revelation which is made to us in the word of God, than the express words of Scripture; and such consequences ought to be received with the same faith as the most express words of Scripture. When we read that the Lord said to Moses at the bush, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," we ought to believe the resurrection of the dead, which is implied in that text, in the same manner, and upon the same principles, that we believe the Lord to be "the God of Abraham," &c. When we read that "God made man at the beginning male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and

* Should any reader imagine that this view of the sole sufficiency, perfection, and authority of the Scriptures, is subversive of the use of human creeds, confessions, and standards of doctrine and practice in the church; I shall only reply, that this construction is unreasonable, if these creeds, confessions, or standards, be founded upon the word of God. Such creeds and standards are no addition to the Scriptures; they are not alterations of the word of God, but only a compendious, faithful exhibition of the will and authority of the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Scriptures. Such systems, however much they may be ridiculed, are not only useful, but necessary in the Christian church; they ought to be received, not for the sake of the composition, nor in obedience to the authority of the church, but in obedience to the authority of God, whose truths and authority they set before the mind, and recommend to the conscience.

mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh," we ought to believe that only one man and one woman should be joined in the marriage-state; that all other connections are criminal; and that it is unlawful for either husband or wife to seek or give a bill of divorcement to the other. When the law saith, "Thou shalt not kill," it forbids all causeless anger, all reviling language, and all prejudice against our brother; and when the law forbids us to "take the name of the Lord our God in vain," it forbids us to swear by any creature whatsoever, either in heaven or in earth. Upon the whole it is manifest, that the genuine sense of the Scripture is to be always considered by us as the word of God, in opposition to those erroneous notions that restrict the whole to the precise letter of the inspired writings.

PROP. II. The faith of God's elect does not rest upon the evidence of rational demonstration, but upon the authority and truth of the testimony of God in his word.

For the illustration of this proposition, I shall make a few extracts from the celebrated and pious Mr. Halyburton, who expresses himself thus concerning the reason of a Christian's faith: "When it is inquired, Wherefore do ye believe, and by faith rest in the Scriptures as the word of God, and not of man? we do not answer, It is because God has given us an ability so to do; because the church says it is the word of God; because there are many strong moral arguments proving it so; because they who wrote it wrought miracles; because God has, by

some voice, whispered in our ears, or secretly suggested to us, that this is the word of God; or because there are particular scriptures that bear witness to all the rest that they are of God; nor, finally, because the matter therein revealed seems worthy of God, to our reason. But the formal ground or reason whereon I assent to, or receive, the whole Scriptures, and every particular truth in them, and am obliged in duty to do so, is the authority of God speaking in them, and speaking every truth they contain, evidencing itself to my faith, when duly exercised about them, and attending to them, by their own distinguishing light and power. Or, when it is inquired, Wherefore do ye believe, receive, assent to; and rest in the Scriptures, as indeed the word of God, and not of man? I answer, I do believe them; because they carry in them, to my faith, an evidence of God, or do evidence themselves, by their own light and power, to my faith, duly exercised about them, that they are the word of God, and not of man." And a little farther he says, "When to the question, Wherefore, or on what grounds, do I assent to the Scriptures as indeed the word of God, and not of man? it is answered, I do it, because it evidences itself to be God's word by its own light and power. There is no place for that captious question, How know you this light and power to be divine? for it is of the nature of all light, external and sensible, or internal and mental, that it not only clears to the mind other things discernible by it, but satisfies the mind about itself proportionably to the degree of its clearness. The light of the sun discovers sensible objects, and satisfies us so fully about itself, that we need to have re

course to no new argument to convince us that we have this light, and that it is real. In like manner, the evidence of any mathematical truth not only quiets us about the truth, but makes the mind rest assured about the evidence itself. And so the divine light and power of the word, not only satisfy our minds as to those truths they are designed of God to discover, but in proportion to the degree of light in them, or conveyed by them, satisfy the mind about this light or power, that it is truth, and is no lie. Nor is there need of any other argument, to convince a mind affected with this of it. It is true, if a blind man should say to me, How know you that the sun shines, and that you see it? I would answer, I know it by the evidence of his own light affecting mine eyes. If he should further say, But how prove you to me that you are not deluded, that really it is so? Then I would be obliged to produce other arguments whereof he is capable. But then it must be allowed, that the evidence of these arguments is not so great as the evidence I myself have of it, by its own light, though they may be more convincing to him; and, further, this is not to convince myself, but to satisfy him, and to free my mind from the disturbance of his objections. In like manner, if one that denies the Scriptures shall say, Wherefore do ye believe or rest in the Scriptures as the word of God? I answer, I do it, because they evidence themselves to my mind, by their own light and power, to be of God. If he shall say, I cannot discern this; I answer, It is because your mind is darkened; you want eyes, or have them shut. If he shall further urge, that my light is not real; I will prove it by

arguments which may stop his mouth, and be more convincing to him than my assertion, which is all that hitherto he has. But yet these arguments are not that whereon my mind rests satisfied as to the truth, though they may be of great use, not only to convince him, but to relieve my mind against such subtile sophisms as he shall make use of, which, though they could not persuade me out of the sight of my eyes, or the evidence shining to my mind, yet troubled me how to answer them, and at times when, through my inadvertency, or indisposition of my eyes, and through clouds overspreading or interposing betwixt this light and me, these objections might shake me a little."

The Scriptures are never believed to be the word of God, until the majesty and truth, the wisdom and grace, the authority and power of God, are perceived in the doctrines and duties they declare unto mankind. But whenever these glorious views of the character and will of God are discerned in his own testimony concerning himself, his words enter the conscience with irresistible light and sovereign power, and then the faith of the soul begins to "stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Hereby the mind obtains a clear and undeniable evidence of the truth and authority of the Scriptures, and comes under their influence as a rule of faith and obedience.

What has been said on this subject, suggests to us the following reflections. 1. Men may very accurately examine, explain, and defend the external evidences of the Christian religion, without any belief of its saving truths. A faith founded upon

such evidence, does not put the soul into the possession of any of the truths contained in the Scripture. Such convictions, in their highest degrees, leave the person without the knowledge and comfort of the great things contained in the word of God. There was never an age wherein the truth of Christianity was demonstrated with more ability, in opposition to infidelity, than the present; and, perhaps, infidelity never prevailed more than it does at present, in the face of all these demonstrations of its folly and absurdity. Christianity was at first established by a faithful manifestation of its own truths; and it must be supported by the same means. 2. The strongest and the weakest capacities of mankind are on the same footing, as to the perception of the grounds of believing the gospel. The strongest sight sees that the sun shines, by means of his own beams; and the weakest sees it in the same medium, and has the same assurance of the fact by the same kind of evidence. The one, indeed, perceives it in a greater degree than the other, because his eye-sight is stronger; but they both perceive the same sun shine, and they both perceive it by his own light. The same may be said of the philosopher and the peasant; they both know that the sun shines, and both know it by the same evidence. The greatest scholar, and the meanest Christian, supposing them to be both believers of the gospel, receive its precious doctrines upon the same evidence, namely, upon the testimony of God speaking in the word. And, 3. The power that renders the gospel effectual to the salvation of sinners, must be altogether divine and irresistible. It calleth things that are not as though they were;

and demonstrates things eternal and unseen, giving them a kind of present subsistence in the mind. But as this coincides with the next observation, I shall not pursue the subject any further.

PROP. III. The Holy Ghost must enlighten the eyes of our understanding, to perceive the authority and truth of the divine testimony, in the word which we believe.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” When the great things of the divine law, relating to the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ, are proposed, in the clearest light, to the understanding of a natural man, who acts only upon the principles of reason, they are as a sealed book unto him, or as a book which is put into the hands of one that cannot read. As long as the veil remains upon the heart, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God cannot shine in it. The Holy Spirit must enter into the mind with such irresistible light, as convinces the judgment, awakens the conscience, and engages the will to a compliance with every branch of revealed truth. This inward illumination removes the natural depravity and prejudices of our hearts, with their numerous indispositions to discern the true meaning, authority, and usefulness of scripture-declarations. They teach to profit. There is something efficacious and never-failing in the success of it; for “every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh

to the Son." But unless the Spirit of wisdom and revelation enlighten the eyes of our understanding, all external revelations will be ineffectual as to saving purposes. Hence is that pathetic expostulation of the prophet, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" It is the Spirit that irradiates our souls with the glories of the word; and hence true believers are said to "receive, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that they might know the things that are freely given them of God."

If we consider the success of our blessed Lord's own excellent ministry, and of the ministry of his apostles, we will perhaps be surprised at the amazing difference. He went about always doing good, and he spake as never man spake; yet his ministry was successful to very few during the course of several years. But upon the day of Pentecost, that immediately succeeded his ascension, light and grace shot their rays into the souls of multitudes by one sermon of one of his apostles, and three thousand were converted that very day. To imagine that this difference arose from the superiority of the servant to the Master, would be blasphemous; and to impute it to the better disposition of Peter's hearers, were contrary to fact. The plentiful effusion of the promised Comforter was the only reason of the extraordinary success that accompanied the preaching of Peter; whereas the Spirit was not yet so plentifully given while Christ was on earth. But after Jesus was glorified, the Spirit was poured out; and then "the gospel came not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;" it ran and

was glorified, and many believed, according as the hand of the Lord accompanied it, and as the Lord gave to every man.

The Scriptures reveal every thing that it is profitable for us to know concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; yet the Comforter must, by the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, open the eyes of our understanding, and set the great things of the law and gospel in a strong, clear, convincing, and impressive light before our mind. It is not his office to reveal unto us something which is not contained in the word;* but to convince us, with the evidence of demonstration, that every thing reported to us in that precious book is real; that the testimony it gives is the testimony of God; that the whole is every way adapted to our wants and comfort; that it is the only means of salvation to our souls; and that we have an immediate interest in all the truths which are delivered to mankind in these living oracles: I say, the chief office of the Spirit is to convince us, with the evidence of demonstration, concerning these things; and in performing this office, he opens the understanding to know, he opens the heart to believe, the Scriptures themselves. Mr. Harvey remarks, that "such is the darkness, such the depravity of our minds, that they will not, they cannot, be made wise unto salvation, even from the Scriptures themselves, without the powerful agency

* For persons to expect an additional new revelation from the Spirit, is great presumption; to depend upon such a fancied revelation, is gross delusion; and to make such a deluding pretence the rule of their conduct, is the highest reproach unto "the sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed, as to a light that hath shined in a dark place:" 2 Pet. i. 19.

of the blessed Spirit. Unless his influences enlighten our understandings, and apply the doctrines, when understood, to our hearts, we shall be, even with the word of light and life in our hands, somewhat like blind Bartimeus, sitting amidst the beams of day; or like the withered arm, with invaluable treasures before it. This, I think, experience must acknowledge; this, I am very certain, the texts referred to, in concert with many others, evince."

This work of the Spirit of truth, whereby such as are effectually called are taught all things that pertain to faith and holiness, will come under our consideration in the following treatise, where it will plainly appear, that this illumination, by which divine truth is perceived, assented to, and embraced, is entirely supernatural; that it powerfully encourages our diligence in the use of all the appointed means of believing, and of living by faith; and that it conveys no new revelation of the will of God. At present, I shall not enlarge on it any further than barely to suggest, that the assurance or conviction of a real believer concerning the authority and truth of the Scriptures, is infinitely superior, in its blessed effects, to that assent which is founded upon the testimony of men, or the evidence of demonstration; and it is altogether distinct from the delusions of a credulous warm imagination, commonly called *enthusiasm*. By this conviction, the soul is persuaded and determined to receive and rest only upon that word which it perceives to be the word of God; and this word becomes the only rule of its belief and obedience.

PROP. IV. A man is, in point of hope, holiness, and comfort, as he thinketh in his heart concerning the truths of God.

The universal experience of mankind shows, that the active powers of human nature are according to every man's present belief. What he believes best for him upon the present view of his circumstances, will infallibly obtain the preference, as the most eligible expedient, where he has an opportunity and a call to make a choice. This view of superior advantage will, while it possesses the thoughts, engage and direct his conduct. It will have the same effect upon all his affections, that the most express orders of an absolute and much-respected officer have upon the operations of his army. President Edwards, a great master of reason, speaking on this subject, says—

“In some sense, the will* always follows the last dictate of the understanding. But then the understanding must be taken in a large sense, as including the whole faculty of perception or apprehension, and not merely what is called reason or judgment. If by the dictate of the understanding, is meant what reason declares to be best or most fit for the person's happiness, taking in the whole of his duration, it is not true that the will always follows the last dictate

* What our author says of the *will* is equally true, and true upon the same principles, of the affections of the soul; such as fear, joy and grief, love and hatred, &c. Nay, what he says of the will, extends, upon the same principles, to a man's life; for experience assures us, that this is conformable to the governing views of the mind.

of the understanding. Such a dictate of reason is quite a different matter from things appearing now most agreeable; all things being put together which pertain to the mind's present perceptions, apprehensions, or ideas, in any respect. However, that dictate of reason, when it takes place, is one thing that is put into the scales, and is to be considered as a thing that has concern in the compound influence which moves and induces the will; and is one thing that is to be considered in estimating the degree of that appearance of good which the will always follows. Every act of the will is some way connected with the understanding, and is as the greatest apparent good is, in the manner that has been already explained, namely, that our soul always wills or chooses that which, in the present view of the mind, considered in the whole of that view, and all that belongs to it, appears most agreeable. Because nothing is more evident than that when men act voluntarily, and do what they please, then they do what appears most agreeable to them; and to say otherwise, would be as much as to affirm, that men do not choose what appears to suit them best, or what seems most pleasing to them; or that they do not choose what they prefer, which brings the matter to a contradiction."

Perhaps these remarks will seem trivial and curious to some readers, while others may reckon them only philosophical speculations; but if they contain the principles upon which we are led to an easy and just apprehension of the influence of divine faith upon the holiness and comfort of a Christian, they are certainly entitled to our most careful attention. Whenever Paul saw the great extent of the law of

God, and believed it to be holy and spiritual, just and good, immediately the proud Pharisee died under a strong impressing conviction of sin. When the grace of God, reigning through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, was preached to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, "they gladly received the word." Believers are "sanctified through the truth" of the word of God, "working by love," which is "the keeping of his commandments." Even devils believe and tremble; but the saints believe and rejoice, believe and fear, believe and love, believe and obey, believe and hope, believe and worship, believe and hate sin, believe and maintain good works: "As they think in their hearts, so are they;" and "according to their faith, so it is unto them." This is an unexceptionable rule in the Christian life and experience; but the illustration of it would be improper in this place. A considerable part of the subject of this performance is professedly employed in showing that it is indeed so, and in explaining the efficacious influence of the belief of divine truth upon hope, and sanctification, and the joys of the Holy Ghost. I shall only add, that all pretences to believe the truths of God, which do not promote obedience to the law of God, and joy in his sovereign grace, must be dead; because they are not justified by the necessary and inseparable fruits of faith unfeigned, which purifies the heart, and purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God, and diffuses through the soul joy unspeakable, and full of glory. An inspired writer tells the vain boaster, who glories in his professions and speculations, that "faith without works is dead;" and then affirms, that "by works" a Christian's "faith is

made perfect." The extensive holy tendency of faith arises, not from the nature of its act, but wholly from the truths of God which it receives, whereby the soul brings forth the fruits of righteousness, from the peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and love without dissimulation she enjoys by the knowledge of the genuine meaning of the word of God, and of her own interest in the important truths therein revealed for her use.

CHAPTER I.

**A SUMMARY VIEW OF THE DOCTRINES PROPOSED
IN THE SCRIPTURES AS MATTERS OF FAITH TO
THE CHILDREN OF MEN.**

WHEN we are entering upon an account of the belief of the Gospel, it is proper to begin with a brief representation of the scheme of divine truth, or of that "faith which was once delivered to the saints." The mind cannot form any abstract idea of believing, but is constrained as necessarily to think on some testimony which is believed, as it is to conceive of subjection, when it thinks on magistracy, or of service, while it considers the character of a master. In the most general sense, believing is ordinarily defined a persuasion of the mind concerning some truth; but as it is used in a religious sense, it invariably signifies a persuasion of the mind concerning the truths of God. Without understanding these truths, we can have no knowledge of a divine faith; and unless we understand the genuine meaning, authority, and design of the scripture-revelation, our notions about faith must be erroneous and unfruitful.

Wherefore, it must be of the greatest consequence, in the progress of our inquiries concerning the faith of God's elect, that we have just apprehensions at first about the doctrine of Christ; because our ideas of believing will be according to the views

we have of the testimony which God hath delivered unto us. I humbly think the testimony of God, proposed in the Scriptures to our faith, may, as far as is necessary for our present purpose, be considered under these three heads; namely, the law, the gospel, and the manner of proposing both of them unto mankind. What is most important on these articles, shall be suggested in distinct sections.

SECTION I.—*The Scripture-doctrine concerning the Law of Works.*

God created man after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. The capacities of man were originally adapted to the law of God; and his absolute dependence on his Maker, in whom he lived, moved, and had his being, obliged him to serve and obey his Creator. He both knew, and delighted to do, the will of God; for, being made upright, the ways of the Lord were in his heart. He was both a holy and a happy creature; he had favour with God, and dominion was given him over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. He was allowed to serve himself of these creatures, and order them like a governor, but not to riot upon them like an epicure, nor abuse them like a tyrant. All the duties required of him were, in his own view, reasonable, pleasant, and advantageous for promoting his own happiness. He could say from constant experience, "I delight to do thy will, O God; in keeping of his commandments there is

great reward; his ways are pleasantness, and his paths are peace; and the law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Adam was created the natural root of a very numerous posterity, who were, in successive generations, to "replenish the earth;" and it pleased God to constitute him a representative of all this posterity, who should descend from him by ordinary generation. To execute his own sovereign purpose concerning man, he entered into a covenant of life with the first Adam, not only in his own person, but in the name of all his posterity, who were to proceed out of his loins, in virtue of the law of his creation; wherein happiness was secured to himself and them, upon condition of his perfect personal obedience to the law of God, until the period of his state of probation was ended; and the wrath and curse of God were denounced against both him and all mankind whom he represented, if at any time he swerved in thought, word, or deed, from any thing prescribed unto him as his duty in the law of God. Perfect obedience was indeed to be continued ever afterwards; but then I conceive it would have been considered in Adam and the rest of mankind, rather as an indispensable obligation of the law of nature, than as the condition of the covenant of works.

"How long," says Dr. Guyse, "this probationary state would have lasted, we are not able to determine. Some suppose it would have been till Adam should have children capable of yielding obedience, or of sinning in their own persons; but, if I may be allowed to offer a conjecture in this case, perhaps it was to have been no longer than the fruit

of that season should hang upon the forbidden tree. However, be this as it will, we may reasonably suppose the goodness of God made the period of his probationary state as short as might well consist with the honour of his government, in passing an act of confirmation upon his fulfilling it without default." This conjecture seems to be the more probable, when it is considered, that the tree of knowledge was to be a constant trial of Adam's obedience to the will of God, and that it was not to bear fruit all the year, any more than the rest of the vegetable productions in the garden of Eden.

That God really made such a covenant with man, and that Adam acquiesced in the terms of it, may be clearly gathered from the Mosaic narrative: "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." In these words, the threatening of death is directly expressed, and a promise of life is strongly implied. Sin procures death, as this passage expressly affirms, and death could not enter into human nature, except by sin.

To vindicate the reasonableness, wisdom, equity, and goodness of this dispensation, is foreign to my present purpose. The reader that has an opportunity to examine the writings referred to in the footnote,* may expect all reasonable satisfaction on these heads, from a careful perusal of any or all of them.

* Strong on the Covenants, Witsius' Economy, Boston on the Covenant of Works.

That Adam was a representative of all his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation, is demonstrably evident from the consequences of his sin, upon which the apostle reasons thus: "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" as if he had said, 'By the first man Adam, who was the father of us all, and with whom the covenant was made in innocency, for himself and his posterity, sin, that worst of evils, even the first sin committed by him, broke in upon, and was propagated from him to all the inhabitants of this world, and became the source of all the iniquity that has ever since been found among mankind; and a sentence, together with the beginning of death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, inclusive of all the miseries of this life, and that which is to come, made its way into the world by his first sin; and so death, in all its hideous forms, passed to the whole human race, through him in whom they all sinned, as in their public head and representative, in whose loins they likewise were; in so much that they, on this account, are by legal estimation deemed sinners in him, his offence being imputed to, and punished in them.'

"Sin is not imputed where there is no law." To charge sin upon any person, so as to punish him for it, where there is not a law to convict him of having that sin, for which he is punished, actually lying upon him, would be a flagrant act of injustice and tyranny. But it is an undeniable fact in the experience of all nations, and of all ages, that "death reigns over them who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," by committing

actual sin, to subject them to this punishment. Therefore, to maintain the equity of the divine administrations, we must include even infants in these general characters of the human species. "There is none righteous, no, not one;" "all the world is become guilty before God;" and, "by the offence of one, judgment came (or sin entered) upon all men to condemnation."

This view of the covenant made with the first man, the root and representative of all mankind, leads us to a just way of thinking about our natural state, as it is affected by Adam's first sin, and the dreadful consequences of that ruining offence.

The divine law is stamped with strong and lively impressions of the glorious perfections and characters of Jehovah, the Lawgiver. He is infinite, and "his commandment is exceeding broad." He is "from everlasting to everlasting," and "the righteousness of his testimonies is everlasting." He "changeth not;" and "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." "He is a Spirit," and "the law is spiritual:" He is "absolutely perfect;" and his law is "a perfect way," and "the perfect will of God." His name is, "I AM THAT I AM," which expresses not only his unchangeableness and self-existence, but the most perfect simplicity of his nature and perfections; and his law is so simple, and so connected, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." He is "glorious in holiness," and "the commandment is holy." He is "a God without iniquity, just and right is he;" and "the statutes of the Lord are

assault upon the man himself; and every sin is a transgression of the law of God, an invasion upon his imperial authority, and rebellion against the Lord. Shall he not punish for such enormities? Shall not his soul be avenged on such criminals as these? Yes, the word is gone out of his mouth, it is proclaimed from heaven, and registered in every man's conscience, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." 5. Every sinner that lieth under the curse of God, is at the same time a "debtor to do the whole law," by yielding perfect, unsinning obedience to all its holy and righteous precepts. His being in a state of condemnation for having violated the law in former instances, does not dissolve the obligation that lies upon him, to "continue in all things written in the book of the law," concerning his present and future conduct, "to do them." 6. Every sin deserves an infinite punishment, being committed against the law of the most high God. "Every sin is usually and justly supposed to increase its demerit or desert of punishment, according to the dignity of the person whose law is broken. Sin against a father or a prince carries greater guilt in it, than that which is committed against a neighbour or a servant; and, in this way of argument, sin against God appears to have a sort of infinite evil in it, because it is committed against the infinite Majesty of heaven; and, on this account, every sin deserves a sort of infinite punishment." Accordingly, every sin receives such a punishment, either in the everlasting misery of the sinner, or in the sufferings of the Son of God, his substituted surety, imputed to him, and received by faith. 7. Every sinner is "without strength;"

he is neither possessed of any thing amiable, nor has the least ability to acquire it; he cannot please God by any of his performances, being dead in trespasses and sins, and has his conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; nay, he is chargeable with horrid guilt, and incapable of expiating a single offence. “The carnal mind,” or unregenerate soul, “is not subject to the law of God;” nay, is an enemy, or rather enmity itself,—against what?—against sin? that were a noble antipathy: against the world? that were a laudable disaffection:—No; but against God and his law. Amazing perverseness! to be enmity against God, who is boundless benignity, and consummate goodness; enmity against his law, which is the transcript of his amiable perfections, and the faultless model of all virtue. 8. The substitution of one person in the room of others, in order to establish a firm and valid title unto everlasting happiness for many, by the services of that one substitute, is perfectly consistent with the genius of the law of God. In the covenant of works, Adam was constituted the public representative of his posterity, who are now in a state of condemnation by his first transgression, and who would have been confirmed in a state of happiness upon the footing of his perfect obedience, if he had not fallen. Why then should it be reckoned unreasonable and unjust, for God to “make Christ, who knew no sin, become sin for us;” and to make us, who are ungodly and sinners, “the righteousness of God in Christ?” 9. Those who enjoy the favour of God are so far from being released from the indispensable and everlasting obli-

gation of his law, that their blessed state only enables them to see more clearly, and to perform more cheerfully, the reasonable service it prescribes. Had Adam and his posterity been confirmed in a state of holiness, he and they would have continued for ever to walk in the commandments of their God. And, 10. The law of God demands perfect obedience, and insists on a full atonement being made for past transgressions, from every child of Adam. The righteousness of the law, in its largest extent, must be fulfilled in all those that inherit eternal life. They must be covered with a robe of righteousness, and their beauty must appear perfect. They must stand, in the eye of the divine law, invested with a holy nature, righteousness of life, and a complete expiation of all their sins. “ Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? ”

If these doctrines were understood and believed by mankind, many would be ready to say with the disciples, “ Who then can be saved ? ” All would agree to set their seal unto these truths: “ By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God—every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is guilty before God.” Many would adopt that question, mentioned by the prophet, “ Wherewith shall I come before the Lord ? ” To point out the happy expedient for accomplishing this glorious purpose, is the design of the next section.

SECT. II.—*The Doctrine delivered in the Scriptures concerning the Gospel of the Grace of God.*

“ God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by Christ the Redeemer.”* God, having been in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses; and being well-pleased in his beloved Son for his righteousness’ sake; he condescends to show forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards mankind-sinners, through Christ Jesus, by the gospel. Therefore, in this benevolent scheme we are to expect a clear discovery of the righteousness of God, a solid establishment of his law, and an adequate relief to all the guilt and wretchedness of our sinful state.

“ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” When we consider our meanness as creatures, our aggravated offences, our utter unprofitableness to God, and the astonishing display of his unsearchable wisdom in redeeming us from self-destruction; we are constrained to confess, that the grace of God is infinitely rich and altogether free, sovereign, and in-

* Assembly’s Shorter Catechism.

dependent upon any works performed by the children of men. Contemplate the unspeakable gift of God, his own Son and all things with him, given freely to sinners of mankind in the declarations of the gospel, that whosoever will, may believe these declarations, and believing them, may have the Son of God; and eternal life through his name; and you will find the irresistible force of this joyful truth, obliging you to cry out with the beloved disciple, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" How amazingly great, how infinitely free, how marvellously adapted to our condition, and how inconceivably rich, is the love of God towards man, which opens its inexhaustible treasures in the gospel of Christ, and generously pours its precious stores upon the world that lieth in wickedness!

The gospel is the testimony he hath given us concerning his grace, favour, and good-will towards men, as it takes effect upon them through Jesus Christ, to save them with an everlasting salvation. This is what, I apprehend, the apostle means by "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Some of the great lines of this merciful establishment, wherein God hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, may be arranged under the following particulars:—

1. God, of his mere good pleasure, thought proper, in the prospect of the fall of mankind into an estate of sin and misery, to lay help for some of them upon his only-begotten Son; who is over all, God blessed for ever, being the eternal Word; who is, and always was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with the infinite, self-ex-

istent, immortal God. The help he provided for us in Christ, is every way suitable to our condition, every way sufficient for our relief, and on every account worthy of our acceptance.

2. God, of his mere good pleasure, chose the vessels of mercy in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he purposed to make them accepted in the Beloved.

3. God, of his boundless grace, was pleased to substitute his own Son in their law-room, and to consider him as a devoted sacrifice, responsible for all their iniquities, which were laid upon him; and as their Surety, made under the law, to magnify and make it honourable, by bringing in an everlasting righteousness. This was the appointment of his Father, who said, "Thou art my servant, O Israel! in whom I will be glorified." Accordingly, he who knew no sin, was made sin for us; he fulfilled all the righteousness of the law in our stead; he was put to grief, and his soul was made an offering for our sins; he was made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law; he became obedient unto death for us, that by the obedience of one many might be made righteous; he was born holy, harmless, and undefiled, that the righteousness of God might be declared, in making us, whose nature is entirely stripped of its primitive righteousness, accepted as righteous in the Beloved. This mysterious truth was inculcated upon the Jewish church,

by the substitution of harmless animals in the room of men who had sinned against heaven. These devoted victims bore the iniquities of the sinners in whose stead they were put to death, the beasts being incapable of committing any sin themselves, and without any natural blemish. These divine services were a shadow of Christ, our passover sacrificed for us; of Christ, who poured out his soul for transgressors; of Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; of Christ, who gave his life a ransom for many; of Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness, having brought in complete and everlasting righteousness to cover the naked sinner, to pardon the guilty criminal, and to justify the ungodly in the sight of God, the righteous Judge.

4. God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath made all the promises of grace and glory, and every good thing that constitute the everlasting life of lost sinners, unto Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant. This exhilarating view of the superabounding grace of God is frequently presented to us in the living oracles. It has been observed, that the promise of confirmation in happiness, in favours of himself and his posterity, was made only to Adam, as the public head of the covenant of works; and for the same reason, we must allow, that the promises of eternal life in the better covenant are made to Jesus the Surety of it. With what propriety could he be called the "heir of all things" that pertain to our salvation, unless all these things were immediately and primarily promised to him? Were not the promises made to Abraham and to his seed? While

the Holy Ghost doth not speak of seeds, as of many, but only of one seed, it is manifest, says the apostle, that he meant no other person but Christ. If it be once admitted, that Jesus Christ is the surety of "the covenants of promise,"* it will necessarily follow, that all the promises were made to him in that character, and are performed to believers only for his sake. Therefore, when we find the Scripture speaking of promises made to men, which relate to spiritual blessings, we must always view the heirs of these promises, as joint-heirs with Christ, who receive them only for the sake of Jesus, in whom the promises of God are all yea and amen. To the Mediator of the new covenant, all its great and precious promises were strictly conditional; but to sinners of mankind, all its promises are absolutely free. If we pray for any promised blessing, we must ask it in the name of Christ; and if we have received such a favour, we must give thanks in that same worthy name. That glorious name, the Mediator between God and man, would be of no use, either in our prayers or praises, if the promises we plead were not all made to Christ, if the mercies we ask were not all conveyed through Christ, and if the good things we receive were not all bestowed for the sake of Christ. Sinners are saved by the grace of God, revealed in the promises of his word; but that grace, which bringeth salvation to us, reigneth through

* Heb. vii. 22. Eph. ii. 12. The new covenant is but one glorious transaction, yet it is represented as various and manifold, because it consists of many exceeding great and precious promises that were delivered, with various enlargements in the publication of them at different times.

righteousness by Jesus Christ, in all these promises and merciful declarations.

Right apprehensions of this point, would have the most happy effects upon mankind. Hereby the labouring mind, that seeks to establish its right to the promises upon preparatory dispositions, evidences, and experiences, would be convinced of its fruitless toil; hereby the proud Pharisee, that imagines himself more worthy of the favour of God than others, would be confounded and ashamed of his deceitful hope; hereby the discouraged Christian would perceive the firm and lasting ground of his strong consolation and good hope through grace; hereby men of every character, and in every condition, would see their immediate warrant, their present right, to stand in the true grace of God, by believing the promises of complete and everlasting salvation in Christ; to drop their anchor on this sure bottom, and directly enter into rest.

5. We have the fullest demonstration of the infallible certainty of all these declarations, which testify the grace of God towards men, exhibited in the resurrection of Christ, and the glory that has followed unto him upon his resurrection from the dead: When the Son of God was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh, he fulfilled all righteousness, and made reconciliation for iniquity, he finished sin, he overcame the world, he triumphed over principalities and the powers of hell, he destroyed death and the grave, he magnified the law of works, and restored that which he took not away—he became the new and living way for sinners to enter with boldness and confidence by the faith of him into the holiest,—in

one word, he "finished the work which the Father gave him to do," for the glorifying of God, and saving of sinners. The unquestionable evidence we have of these grand purposes being fully accomplished to the entire satisfaction of God the Judge of all, centres in the resurrection and exaltation of the humbled, the crucified Saviour: for "by him we believe in God that raised up Christ from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God." The apostle observes, that "Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father;" which manifestly implies, that the glory of the Father's wisdom, holiness, love, and justice, shone conspicuously in the resurrection of the Lord of life. The glorifying of Christ demonstrates, that he glorified his Father upon earth by his obedience unto death; and proclaims unto the ends of the earth that Jehovah is "the God of peace,—well pleased in his beloved Son."

When certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees asked Christ, saying, "Master, we would see a sign from thee," to establish the truth of thy doctrine; "he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." "As Jonas came alive out of the great fish's belly, when he had been buried there three days and three nights in the depth of the sea, which was a proof of his being a prophet sent by God to the Ninevites; so I, the Son of man, shall rise again to life, when I shall have been put to death, and been buried three

days and three nights in the grave, to prove that I am the Messiah."—Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom, during his personal ministry on earth; and died a martyr for truth, after witnessing a good confession before Pontius Pilate. God the Father, in raising him up from the dead, declared, that he was glorified by the service Christ had performed, that he smelled a savour of rest in the sacrifice Christ had offered, and that Christ was a faithful and true witness in all he had said concerning the Father, the Spirit, and himself, unto mankind.

6. The grace of God, revealed in the gospel, is exactly adapted to all the wretchedness and misery of mankind, when viewed as sinners and ungodly, under the curse of the law of works. The righteousness of God our Saviour, revealed in the gospel from faith to faith, forasmuch as it was to be fulfilled in the room and stead of sinners, was, and must be, stated from the law or broken covenant of works, which they were lying under. He put himself into their very place, and took upon himself every obligation they were under, as to holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin. Hence every believer has "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him," by the imputation of the perfect righteousness of Christ.—For the same reason, the grace of God which bringeth salvation, is, and must be, immediately adapted to give effectual relief from all the bondage, guilt, pollution, and misery of sinners in their worst condition. Consequently, it must be calculated for the immediate relief of those who are "dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no

hope, and without God in the world;" of those who are so infatuated with ignorance and pride, that "they know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" of those that are "stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness;" of those that are "haters of God," being "alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works;" of those that are "under the wrath" and "curse of God;" of "enemies," of "sinners," of the "ungodly;" and to sum up all in one word, of those whose guilt is so horrid, whose sins are so many, and every one of them so heinous in their aggravating circumstances, that they may be called, with a shocking emphasis, "the chief of sinners."

If we consider the grace of God that appears in the gospel-revelation, as falling under any restrictive limitations in its saving discoveries to the children of men; we will be compelled to adopt these unavoidable consequences, arising from that restricted view of it, namely, That the grace of God in the gospel, is not an adequate relief to the condition of sinners, as such; that it does not correspond with the righteousness of Christ, who suffered for the unjust, who died for the ungodly, who poured out his soul for transgressors, and who reconciled enemies by his death; that sinners must furnish themselves with some good tempers, previous to their having any right to believe the gospel; with several other opinions, inseparable from that leading error. A sentiment, pregnant with so many dangerous consequences, injurious to the honour of God, and pernicious to the minds of men, deserves our detestation:

it subverts the faith once delivered to the saints, and destroys the proper notion of the grace of God.

When we review this account of the gospel, we must confess, that it is with the utmost propriety designed "the gospel of the grace of God"—"the true grace of God"—"the manifold grace of God"—"the word of his grace"—"the gospel of Christ"—"the gospel of peace"—"the gospel of our salvation," and "the truth as it is in Jesus." What has been laid before the reader in this section, proves, that "the law is not against the promise;" and that faith, instead of making void the law of God, establishes its authority and honour upon the firmest basis.* We maintain, that the law of God is the consummate standard of righteousness, the original condition of life, and a venerable system with which, as well as with its divine Author, there is no variableness or shadow of turning. The abundant and sovereign grace of God is fully consistent with the most awful glories of the Deity; and the perfect harmony of both, lays a solid foundation for the hope of sinners. Had justice, which is the essential glory of God's nature, or the law, which is the revealed glory of his will,—had either of these been violated by the evangelical scheme; benign and

* Rom. iii. 31. "We establish the law, not only as we receive it for a rule of life, but as we expect no salvation without a proper, without a perfect conformity to its injunctions. How can this be effected? By qualifying its sense, and softening it into an easier system. This were to vacate the law, to deprive it of its honours, and hinder it from attaining the due end either of obedience or condemnation. No; but we establish the law, by believing in that great Mediator, who has obeyed its every precept, sustained its whole penalty, and satisfied all its requirements in their utmost extent."—Mr. Heavey's Dialogues, Letter 5th, Aspasio to Theron.

desirable as it is, it must have been utterly rejected; it could never have taken place; the whole world must have perished, rather than such an injury be offered to any of the divine perfections. But, instead of being injured, they are most illustriously displayed by the obedience and death of Christ. By this means, Jehovah is inflexibly just, even in justifying the ungodly; and his law is highly exalted, even in absolving the transgressor that believeth in Jesus. We plead the cause of that marvellous, free, and preventing grace, which “reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Justification, holiness, and comfort, are the precious fruits of this triumphant grace, the capital ingredients of this eternal life.

SECT. III.—The manner of proposing the Doctrines concerning the Law of Works and the Gospel of the Grace of God, unto Mankind, in the Scriptures.

The Holy Scriptures are “the word of truth:” they faithfully declare the counsel of the Lord, and therefore they shall stand fast to all generations. They are not the word of men, nor even of angels speaking from heaven; but they are “in truth the word of God,” who cannot deceive us, and with whom it is impossible to lie. In them, the most high God addresses his call to men, and his voice unto the sons of Adam. The declarations of the God of truth are immediately directed to the characters of mankind, and their respective conditions.

No individual is now particularly named;* but every character, every condition of the sons of Adam, is interested in the truths delivered unto us in the living oracles; wherein God has published his good and acceptable will, has revealed his wrath from heaven, and has displayed the unsearchable riches of his grace, unto self-destroyed sinners. The Scriptures exhibit a system of faith and practice, calculated only for the use of mankind, while they live in this present evil world. The certainty of a future state, the everlasting happiness of such as believe the gospel now preached unto every creature, and the damnation of all that do not believe it, are doctrines clearly proposed to our faith in the word of God, and doctrines that have an advantageous influence upon the hope and holiness, joy and fear of believers. But the manner of God's dealing with the righteous and the wicked, as to the manifestations of his will, power, and sovereignty in a future state, shall be adapted to their respective conditions, and in many respects very different from the manner of his proposing the doctrines of the law and the gospel unto mankind in the Scriptures.

It must be observed in general, that the law of works, and the gospel of the grace of God, are proposed in the Scriptures unto the same persons,

* It must be acknowledged, that the greatest part of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, was written on special occasions, or with an immediate relation to some particular persons or societies; but this is a circumstance that neither derogates from their divine authority, nor supersedes their general and standing usefulness. The learned Dr. Guyse has entered, with his usual judgment and accuracy, into the discussion of this subject, in his very excellent Sermons on the Standing Use of the Scripture.

and to these persons viewed as standing before God in the same condition. The Holy Ghost presents the law and the gospel, as operating with united influence, like one undivided system, to discover the glory of God, and to promote the salvation of sinners. To establish and illustrate this position, I would offer the following remarks to the reader's most careful examination :—

1. The Scriptures set the precepts and threatenings of the law of works before mankind, in order to discover unto them, the majesty, holiness, and justice of God; and to convince them of their real state before God as perishing sinners, who can never attain to the law of righteousness by their utmost endeavours in following after it. The design of proposing the law to mankind in their guilty and strengthless condition, is to arraign and prove them guilty; to demonstrate, beyond all possibility of contradiction, that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God; to manifest the malignity of sin to their conscience; to declare the justice of God, in punishing them according to its dreadful demerit; to point out their enormous debt, though unable to pay one farthing; and to shut them up by all these alarming truths, demonstrated to their consciences, to despair, absolutely to despair, of obtaining righteousness by the law, and to embrace the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

It cannot be pretended, that the sinner who enjoys this knowledge of sin by the law, is more holy, more righteous, and more acceptable to God now, than he was before, while he was alive without the

law, and thought himself upright and holy in that condition. They certainly misapprehend both the law of God and the nature of man, who imagine, that the knowledge of sin by the law is a virtue or an effectual principle of holiness. So far is this notion removed from the truth of both scripture-testimony and the experience of the convinced, that the knowledge of sin which is by the law, never fails to produce, according to its measure, despair, enmity against God, blasphemy, and every sin, unless it be accompanied with a revelation of Jesus Christ in the soul. This was the experience of Paul, of Cain, of the carnal Jews, and of the damned in hell, who are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. I therefore conclude this remark with these observations, which sum up the whole, namely, all mankind are by nature under the law of works: this law is proposed in the word of God to convince mankind of their deplorable state, in regard to sin and misery, under that law: and those who are convinced of their deplorable state under that law, are not more holy and more virtuous on account of that conviction. It is absurd to suppose, that a person, possessed of a true sight of his own estate, and perceiving it to be altogether sinful and utterly lost, can be conscious to himself of any good dispositions in his mind, of any favourable extenuating circumstances in his guilt, or of any self-satisfaction arising from his being now thoroughly convinced of his sin and misery.

2. The Scriptures set the sovereign grace and free favour of God in Christ before mankind, as a necessary, sufficient, suitable, and immediate relief

from all their sin and misery; and as an effectual source of joy unspeakable, and life eternal. In the Old and New Testament, the grace of God which bringeth salvation, doth appear unto all men; it shines forth in all its light and glory, like the rising sun, upon all nations, upon every creature, and upon sinners of every character, such as the "foolish, disobedient, and deceived, who are serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The transcendent benignity and astonishing love of God towards men in these hideous circumstances, appeareth beaming forth its illustrious and reviving comforts upon mankind in the gospel of Christ. The kindness of God appeareth in this gracious revelation, without any difference, to Jews and Gentiles, to sinners of every rank, every character, and every age, to the servant and his master, to the vile prostitute and the modest virgin, to the abandoned profligate and the man of decent conversation. What the law saith in its rigorous demands and alarming threatenings, it saith to all that are under it; and what the gospel saith in its precious declarations, it saith unto all people that hear its joyful sound.

In the dispensation of the gospel, the writings of the prophets and apostles declare unto us an expedient that is every way adequate to the exigencies of our sinful and wretched condition, while they reveal unto us eternal life in the Son of God. They certify us of the truth of the declarations they contain, relative to this inestimable privilege of free and everlasting salvation, assuring us that they are truth, and are no lie, no cunningly-devised fable, no imposition

on our credulity. Moreover, they set the blessings which they declare, before the children of men, without any difference, as the free and unconditional gift of God unto a lost and perishing world ; that every sinner, who hears of eternal life in the Son of God, by the declarations of the gospel, may immediately receive Christ and his unsearchable riches, or assure himself of salvation by Christ alone, without waiting for any convictions of sin, any thirsting after righteousness, any inward motions, feelings, experiences, or desires, as any way requisite to such a reception or assurance.

This revelation of the grace of the gospel in Christ, under the form of a free gift to guilty and ruined sinners, is witnessed, not only by the doctrines of our Saviour and his apostles, but by the law and the prophets. When we speak of the gift of God unto men, we mean, his ordaining or appointing that which is given, to be a means of comfort or advantage to those for whom it is ordained or appointed ; but as the purposes of God are a profound secret until they be revealed, it is necessary they be made known or declared, in order that the persons concerned in that comfort or privilege may see the concern they have in it. Such declarations are properly called a gift, when the comfort or benefit they report is ordained or appointed to be enjoyed by the person who credits the declaration, without performing any work to obtain that benefit, but only taking possession of it, and using it for himself. Viewed in this light, we will find that all the declarations in Scripture concerning the blessings of the new covenant, are really, to all intents and purposes, a gift of these blessings

unto the persons to whom they are revealed, as the ordinance of heaven for saving perishing sinners of their character.

That this deeply-interesting view of the revelation of the kindness and love of God towards man, by freely giving his only-begotten Son unto the world, and freely giving us all things with him, may engage our thoughts with greater attention; the Holy Ghost has given us a short, but accurate abridgment of gospel-doctrine, together with the manner of proposing it unto mankind, in these words: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This eternal life is given, in the record of the gospel, to many who make God a liar, "because they believe not the record that God gave of his Son." The whole language of Scripture agrees to this view of the dispensation of the gospel. Christ calls himself "the gift of God." The apostle speaks of "the gift of righteousness;" and tells us, that whereas the wages of sin is death, "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The privileges of the gospel are said to be "things that are freely given to us of God." When Jesus was instructing Nicodemus concerning the new birth, he used the following similitude: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In this passage, the lifting up of the Son of man is manifestly of the same import with God's giving his only-be-

gotten Son; and both the expressions refer to the manner of proposing him in the gospel, that the world may believe on him, and believing may have life and salvation through his name. He is proposed in the same way to a perishing and guilty world, that the brazen serpent was to Israel in the wilderness. Every one that was stung with the fiery serpents throughout the whole camp, was expressly directed to turn his eyes towards that brazen serpent elevated on a pole. The brazen serpent was lifted up by Moses, and given as the ordinance of God unto Israel, that every one who was stung might behold it, and beholding it might be instantly healed of his dangerous wound. Christ is revealed, in like manner, by the gospel unto mankind-sinners; that every one may perceive and use his right to Christ, and eternal life in him, upon the alone sufficient warrant of his being freely given by God unto all. Christ is given to mankind-sinners, as the manna was given to the Israelites, to all the Israelites both good and bad without any distinction. When the manna made its first appearance, when the people of God neither knew what it was, nor for whom intended, both these particulars were explained by Moses: "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." No mention is made of any individual person; yet the whole congregation looked upon this as an undoubted permission, both for themselves and their children, to gather, to fetch home, and to use the miraculous food. Our Lord, alluding to this very miracle, says, to a promiscuous carnal multitude, that sought him only because they did eat of the loaves which he miraculously multi-

plied, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." He giveth you his beloved Son, his divinely excellent righteousness and eternal life, though not in actual enjoyment, yet in a full right to possess. This he giveth you in the free indefinite grant of his word; without which grant, any attempt to possess, even in the most upright of men, would be illegal and presumptuous: by virtue of which grant, even the most abandoned sinner has an unquestionable warrant to receive and possess all the riches of Christ.

Upon the whole it seems evident, that the grace of God is proposed to mankind-sinners by the gospel, not as a matter of bargain, requiring them to keep the commandments if they would enter into life; nor as the subject of sale, commanding them to buy salvation with money or with a price; but as an absolutely free gift, conveyed in the most unlimited and ample form, to the most unworthy and the most miserable of sinners.

3. The Scriptures set the law and the gospel before mankind, as one undivided system, operating with united influence to manifest the glory of God; and to promote the salvation of sinners. The law and the gospel are always distinguished, and even opposed to one another: "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." If election unto eternal life be of "grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no

more grace : but if it be of works," as some would have it to be, "then it is no more grace ; otherwise work is no more work." The essential and everlasting difference between the law and the gospel, between the grace of God and the works of men, must never be forgot : these widely differing systems must never be confounded. "The law is not of faith." "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." There is an obvious and immutable line that divides them, so that works cannot pass over to the gospel, as a conditional recommendation to the grace therein revealed ; nor can the grace of God pass over to the law, as a reward to the works of men therein prescribed. Each system is entirely complete in itself, considered as a rule of manifesting the favour of God to the sons of Adam, and as a foundation of hope unto mankind. To blend them, is to destroy the proper nature of each of them : the composition would constitute another law and another gospel than the Scriptures have revealed, which yet would be neither the law of God, nor the gospel of his Son.

But although we must not confound the law and the gospel, they must never be separated in the dispensation of the grace of God to mankind. They harmoniously agree in their testimony concerning the holiness and the justice of God as a Lawgiver : they conclude all under sin ; they shut up sinners unto the faith revealed in the gospel ; they concur in declaring the righteousness of God in freely justifying and saving sinners that believe on Christ ; they mutually support and establish one another ;

they have a united influence upon true holiness in believers; they will both be gloriously vindicated in the day of the Lord Jesus, when he shall judge the world in righteousness: and on all these accounts, they must be skilfully explained and urged, each in its proper place, and according to the nature of it, as distinct branches of one undivided system, which "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" serving as a mean of divine appointment, to lead some to the faith, and to render others inexcusable. A short illustration of the foregoing particulars, will both explain and establish what I intend.

(1.) The law of works and the gospel of Christ harmoniously agree in their testimony concerning the holiness and the justice of God as a Lawgiver. The law delineates the transcendent beauties of his holy nature and will, it displays the essential glory of his character and righteous government: the gospel recognizeth this aimable, this faithful image of the just and holy God, by revealing Christ as the end of that law, who magnified its precepts by his perfect obedience, who endured all its penalties by becoming obedient unto death. Hence both the law and the gospel concur in promoting a thorough conviction of sin: in the law, we see the nature of sin and its awful demerit; in the declarations of the gospel, we see the inflexible resentments of God against that abominable thing which he could not pardon without the shedding of blood.

(2.) The law of works and the gospel of Christ conclude all under sin. The law concludes all mankind to be sinners: that "there is none right-

eous, no, not one;" that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" that "as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse;" and that both "Jews and Gentiles are all under sin," being condemned for it, universally defiled by it, and servants to iniquity. The gospel supposes all mankind to be in that condition, and of these deplorable characters: it opens its precious stores for their complete relief; and assures them that its heavenly treasures are not sent, are not suited, to the righteous, but to sinners only. A constitution perfectly sound, and in the full vigour of health, has no need of medicinal prescriptions; he that is every whit clean needeth no washing; he that is innocent, and was never accused of any crime against the laws of his country, has no need of the prince's pardon: and he that has never sinned against God, cannot have any part in Christ as a Saviour, nor in the great blessings of the everlasting gospel.

(3.) The law of works and the gospel of Christ shut up sinners unto the faith revealed in the gospel. The law expressly states the terms of escaping the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, and of inheriting eternal life: sin must be finished, and reconciliation made for iniquity; the righteousness of the law must be fulfilled; and it pronounces every other scheme for happiness impracticable, and every other ground of hope to be saved a gross delusion. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God our Saviour to a guilty world: it assures us, that he was made under the law, and fulfilled all the righteousness of it; it reports that the Lawgiver is glorified to the fullest extent of his whole charac-

ter, as a holy and just God, by his services and sufferings, and therefore he has raised him from the dead, and given him power and glory; and it publishes the will of God unto the prisoners, shut up under guilt and condemnation, inviting them to turn to this strong-hold, provided by infinite mercy, approved by the holy commandment, and open for the most obnoxious criminals. The just God and his righteous law echo to these gracious declarations, and “persuade men” to flee from the wrath to come. The harmony of the law and gospel in compelling sinners to believe on the Son of God, is more than implied in his name—“a just God and a Saviour.” It is immediately subjoined—“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” These are the words of God, who is just in all that pertains to the honour of his precepts and threatenings; who is a Saviour to the chief of sinners; and who unites the characters of a just God and a Saviour in his person and office, being “the end of the law,” and at the same time “full of grace and truth.”

(4.) The law of works and the gospel concur in declaring the righteousness of God, in freely justifying and saving sinners that believe in Christ. “The righteousness of the law is fulfilled” in every one whom God doth justify freely by his grace; not a righteousness performed by themselves, “for by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God; but the righteousness of God, which is received by faith of Jesus Christ, is imputed unto all, and put upon all them that believe, even as righteousness was imputed to Abraham without

works. A just God doth act in all the grand and awful glories of his righteous character, when he justifieth the sinner that believeth in Jesus. In passing that act of sovereign grace, he puts on righteousness as a breast-plate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; he puts on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and is clad with zeal as a cloak: he views the sinner as made the righteousness of God in Christ, his substituted Surety; and, upon this principle, declares his own righteousness as a just Judge, in dealing with the sinner as a member of Christ. The law pronounces this sentence just, because the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the person who is justified: and the gospel declares it is a just thing with God to forgive us our sins, because the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

(5.) The law and the gospel mutually support and establish each other. The law of God is only obeyed by the seraphim, who glow with a holy ardour in their heavenly services, and yet they are but unprofitable servants, because they only do what is their duty; but it was illustriously honoured by Christ, who, being in the form of God, was made of a woman, made under the law; who magnified the law, and made it honourable; and in whose service Jehovah declares he is glorified. It is an ancient cavil against the doctrines of free grace, that they invalidate and set aside the moral law; or, in the modern phrase, they are Antinomian tenets; but as this objection was made against the apostolic doctrine, we are happy to be attacked in so good company, by the same sort of adversaries, and with the same weapons.

Their reply is our impenetrable shield, "God forbid" the imputation should be just; yea, the very reverse is true, for "we establish the law." Again, the gospel is established by the law. Hence the Psalmist observes, that "justice and judgment are the habitation of Jehovah's throne;" or rather, are the establishment of his throne. "By justice, I understand God's justice proceeding on a righteousness; by judgment, the execution of justice against sin; which done, justice gives what is due. These are the bases, supporters, or stays, or foundations, the throne of grace stands on; and they relate to Christ the Mediator, who became justice's prey, and on whom judgment was executed for the satisfaction of justice. The throne of grace could not be set up but on these bases; and were it possible they could fail, that moment they failed the throne would tumble down."

(6.) The law of works and the gospel of Christ have a united influence upon the true holiness of believers. I do not mean that they perfect holiness in the fear of God, upon mercenary, slavish principles of legal hopes and fears; as if the favour of God was either to be acquired, or kept, by their obedience; or as if they were to avoid sinning, lest they fall into condemnation. Whoever are governed by these principles in their endeavours to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well, are neither under the influence of the gospel, nor even of the law as it is proposed to mankind in the Holy Scriptures, operating, with a powerful energy, in connection with the grace of God, unto holiness of heart and conversation. True holiness is the blessed effect of the word

of Christ dwelling in the soul, by an unfeigned belief of the truth, as it is in Jesus. Hence Christ prayed to his Father concerning his sheep, in these words: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth:" and Peter says to the believing strangers, "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Believers are not without law to God, but under law to Christ: they are under the direction and authority of the same moral law that Christ magnified, while he obeyed it unto death, in order to establish their complete and never-failing title to everlasting life, to redeem them from the curse, and to deliver them from the wrath to come. When they see that this was the purpose for which he obeyed and suffered, and that this purpose is fully obtained for them by his obedience unto death, they will not impiously attempt to dishonour their Surety, by resting any part of their hopes of divine favour and everlasting life upon their own performances. No; but while they discern their title to eternal life unquestionably secured, and their safety from condemnation infallibly provided for in Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to them; and while they perceive the obligation that lies upon them to be holy as he is holy, and to do righteousness as he is righteous; they will be constrained thus to judge, thus to act: How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? How shall we that are become dead to the hopes and fears of the law of works, by the everlasting righteousness of the Surety of the better covenant, live any longer under false hopes, and tormenting, killing fears? How shall we dishonour our high and

holy calling, by walking in the vanity of our minds? What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, seeing we are clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness, whereby the righteousness of the law of works is fulfilled in us? While the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth the saints to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God; a view of what the law of works demands and threatens, teaches them to prize their inestimable privilege of full and free redemption through the blood of Jesus, and shuts them up to live in a daily improvement of the grace of God, and the gift of righteousness.

(7.) Both the law of works and the gospel of Christ will be gloriously vindicated in the day of the Lord Jesus, when he shall judge the world in righteousness. The quick and the dead shall be all gathered unto the judgment-seat of Christ, where every individual shall stand in his lot; the righteous on the Judge's right hand, and the wicked on his left. On that awful occasion, joy and terror will be in their extremes. Mercy, on the right hand, will display the olive branch of grace, and hold forth the crown of righteousness: Justice, on his left, will poize the impartial scale, and unsheathe the sword of vengeance. The sheep will stand the confessed objects of everlasting, sovereign grace; and as clothed with the garments of salvation, as covered with the robe of righteousness, will be adjudged to inherit with Christ the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world. Their belief and obedience of the truth will be mentioned, not as the

means of its saving influence upon those who know and believe it. The doctrines of the law and of the gospel, with the manner of proposing them to mankind, that have been briefly hinted in the preceding sections, are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. This will be evident, if we attend to a few examples of their great advantage and extensive utility.

1. The account that has been given of the law of works, is a manifest proof, that the law, in whatever light it be considered, is the "ministration of condemnation" unto all mankind. "As many as are of the works of the law," expecting to become righteous before God by their own works of any kind, are so far from obtaining their purpose, that they "are under the curse" of that very law by which they strive to be justified. So far is the law from establishing our interest in the favour of God, and so far are our works from giving true peace to the conscience, that the apostle of the Gentiles has affirmed, "the law worketh wrath." It uniformly "revealeth the wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" and it is "a killing letter," while it shows men their duty, and gives them no strength to perform it, and yet condemns them for every defect, destroys all hope of salvation, and binds them over to destruction for every single offence. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law:" and "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The endeavours of the Gentiles to establish their own righteousness, will prove equally unsuc-

cessful, and are equally criminal, as the endeavours of "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, and yet attained not to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, as it were, by the works of the law."

The apostle indeed speaks of "the law of faith," by which he meant the gospel of the grace of God. This must be the sense of the phrase, because it stands opposed to the law of works, and because it excludes all boasting. Whoever is justified by the law of faith, is "justified without the deeds of the law;" consequently, the law of faith is nothing else than the gospel of Christ, wherein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. But this expression gives no countenance to the notions some have adopted concerning a new remedial law, requiring faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, as the conditions of our justification. They see the impropriety of pretending to a perfect righteousness in fallen creatures, and therefore they say that God hath given this new law, which prescribes to our condition, demanding only what is sincere, though not perfect, from mankind, and promising upon these mild terms to receive them into favour.

It might be expected that these bold innovators would show their warrant from the word of God, for modelling his perfect law, and reducing it to this diminutive standard. Our Lord Jesus hath most expressly told us what is the genuine language of the law of God, in every age and to every person, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment: and the

second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Is this the language of the law of the God of heaven? Surely then it must be extremely dangerous for men, who ought to be doers of the law, and not judges of it, to degrade its authority, to debase its great and extensive meaning, by insinuating that it only requires of us sincere love to God and men, while it directly commands us to "love God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength; and to love our neighbours as ourselves." This invention will appear to be the more criminal and dangerous, if it be remembered that the law has, in the most pointed terms, pronounced every one that has not continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them, an accursed criminal.

It will perhaps be pretended, that these gentlemen do not mean the moral law, which requires nothing less than perfect obedience; but the gospel law; which prescribes, accepts, and rewards sincere endeavours to please God. I shall only observe upon this scheme, (1.) That it puts mankind upon the same train for obtaining happiness which had been proposed to the first Adam. (2.) It suspends our happiness upon our own conduct as much, or even more, than the happiness of mankind depended on the works of Adam in the first covenant: for sincere endeavours to please God are not so much beneath the perfection of holiness required in the law, as the powers of fallen man are beneath the abilities of man when God made him upright. (3.) It is a capital mistake in this opinion, that the gospel is blended

with the law; and upon the ruins of both the law and the gospel, a new mode of divine administration is contrived, under the name of gospel laws. The law and the gospel are entirely distinct from one another, and ought never to be confounded together. A gospel law is a contradiction in terms; for the works of the law and the grace of the gospel stand opposed to one another in the great concerns of our justification before God. To compound the sincere endeavours of men with the grace of God, is to destroy the perfection of the law, and to subvert the sovereignty of saving grace, at one bold stroke. If such a scheme be once admitted, the divine law will no longer exhibit the perfection of beauty that is essential to the eternal God; and the glorious gospel will no longer reveal the riches of his sovereign grace, whereby he has mercy on whom he will have mercy. This dangerous innovation sets aside the necessity of knowing and believing the truths of God, by resting the whole of a man's salvation upon the sincerity of his intentions to please his Maker, whatever his principles may be; and it opens the door to licentiousness of practice, by representing the Law-giver as demanding only that which is upright, not that which is perfect.* Upon the whole, this doctrine concerning a new law is a gross perversion of Christianity; and therefore we return to our first assertion, that the law, in whatever light it be con-

* The error of this pernicious scheme is set in a very just and easy light by Mr. Harvey, in his *Theron and Aspasio*, Dialogues 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th; by Mr. Richard Taylor, in his *Establishment of the Law by the Gospel*, Chap. 6th; and by Mr. Maurice, in his *Social Religion Exemplified*, Dialogue 9th.

sidered, is the ministration of death and condemnation to all mankind.

2. It is a just inference, from what has been observed concerning the law of works and the gospel of Christ, that no man can be saved without being perfectly righteous. The law is the ministration of death to all mankind, because all have sinned; the gospel is the ministration of life to sinners, because it is the "ministration of righteousness," wherein they are washed, and sanctified, and justified, and saved. No sinful creature is perfectly righteous in his temper and conduct, for then he should not be a sinner; yet none can be saved without a perfect righteousness. Hence the apostle says, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God" accomplished by "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh" of Christ: "that the righteousness of the law might be" completely "fulfilled in us." Here it is declared that the law cannot save, it cannot justify sinners, because they are extremely vile, and the law is perfectly holy: therefore the law is said to "be weak through the flesh," that is, through the inability of our degenerate nature, which is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be. If sinners be saved, the law must neither be deprived of its due honour, nor the transgressor screened from his deserved punishment. To obtain all these glorious purposes, "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," to live among sinners, to come under their obligations, to perform the obedience demanded from them, to be a sacrifice for their sin, to bear the load of their guilt, and to undergo its punishment in

their stead. Hereby sin was condemned, and punished with the utmost severity, in the flesh of Christ; even in that very nature which was guilty, disabled, and ruined. This lays the surest foundation, or makes the most complete provision, for our being saved with an everlasting salvation; because this merciful contrivance was set on foot, and carried into execution, that "the righteousness of the law," both its righteous sentence and its righteous precepts, whatever either of suffering or of obedience it required from transgressors, being fulfilled in Christ, the substituted Surety, might be fulfilled in us, as it was all done in our name; and as he and we are one—one in civil estimation, for he is our Representative; one in legal estimation, for he is our Surety; and one in social estimation, for he is our Bridegroom. On this account, his righteous acts are ours, his legal death is ours, and we are "the righteousness of God in him."

It is a glorious and a most important truth, that God is gracious to the unworthy, is merciful to the ungodly, and saveth sinners; but it is equally certain, that the grace of God which bringeth salvation doth reign, in all its manifestations, to mankind—sinners, through a perfect righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ, imputed to the worthless and ungodly sinner, unto his eternal life. Hence God is represented as declaring his righteousness, while he deals with sinners according to the law of faith published in the declarations of the gospel. This scheme demonstrates, not only his clemency, but his justice; even that vindictive justice, whose essential character and principal office is to punish sin. On this prin-

ciple, the salvation of sinners neither clashes with the truth, nor interferes with the righteousness of the supreme Legislator: on the contrary, it becomes a faithful and just procedure of the most high God, to justify him that believeth on Jesus, and to forgive us all our sins.

3. What has been said of the law and the gospel, shows the reasonableness of God imputing sin, in certain cases, to those who never committed any sin; and of imputing righteousness to some who are altogether ungodly. Sometimes that is said in Scripture to be imputed to a person, which he himself has done, and for which he is either rewarded or punished. In this sense Shimei used the word, when he pleaded with David for the pardon of his treasonable conduct, saying, "Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me;" that is, let me not be punished for my sin. In the same sense the word is used of Phinehas, who executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi for their uncleanness, and that was counted or imputed to him for righteousness. The meaning of the expression is, that God highly approved his zeal in taking such exemplary vengeance, and thereupon established the covenant of priesthood in his family. But the Scripture frequently uses the word in another sense, to signify that what is done or suffered by one, is so reckoned and counted to another, as if it were the action or suffering of this other person. "Let us suppose the parties were Paul and Onesimus. Onesimus was Philemon's slave. The slave disobeyed his master, ran away from him and his service; not only deserted his service, but stole his goods—turned fugitive and thief at once. For

the first of these crimes he deserves stripes and a rod; for the last, death and the gallows. Paul, meeting with Onesimus, learns the state of his condition; and, having been the means of his conversion to Christianity by his preaching, and of his reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ, he offers to become his mediator with his offended master. In order to execute this office more effectually, he puts himself in the criminal's stead, becomes answerable for his villany, and takes upon him to make full reparation for the injuries he had done to his master. 'If he hath wronged thee ought,' says the beneficent apostle, 'or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account,' or impute it to me; 'I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.' By this means the renegade slave is discharged, and Paul, the innocent apostle, becomes debtor. But how? Not actually, but imputatively; for neither has Onesimus repaid, nor Paul stolen ought: but, by virtue of the undertaken suretyship, Onesimus's debt lies upon Paul, and Paul's freedom turns to the acquittance of Onesimus."

This kind of imputation is founded upon the union between the principal and the surety, who must be viewed in law as one party. Unless the law of God had considered Adam and his posterity as one party, it could neither have promised them life upon his obedience, nor threatened that they should die for his sin. Had not the animal victims, offered before God for the sins of his people, by divine appointment, been considered as, in a law sense, one party with his people who sinned, their death had never been a security to his people against the

rant that sinners have to receive it. But, if sinners have the same warrant to receive all the comforts of the gospel that believers have to enjoy them; and if unbelievers are, in fact, despisers of all the comforts which believers have in Christ; it is evident these comforts are proposed in the same light to sinners who despise them, and to believers who receive them.

This way of stating the consolations of the gospel is liable to objections of several kinds:—As,

(1.) “It seems to reject the comforts of the saints; which are founded on the work of the Spirit in their hearts, and wrought by Christian experience and evidences.” *Answ.* The Holy Ghost comforts the saints as “the Spirit of truth,” by giving testimony to the word of the grace of God upon the mind, whereby the soul is made to know, believe, and obey the truth as it is in Jesus, or the declarations of the Scripture that refer to him. Christian experience certainly consists in the word of Christ dwelling in the heart, and moulding the whole man, by its divine energy, into a glorious conformity to its precious doctrines. And solid evidences of a gracious state are never improved to a good purpose, except when they are employed to determine whether we be in the faith; that is, whether we be living in the belief and comfort of gospel truths, and walking under their benign and savoury influence. Upon the whole, just apprehensions of the work of the Spirit, of religious experience, and of the proper use of those marks and evidences which describe the character of real Christians, are so far from confuting, or any way disagreeing with, my position, that they imply all I have affirmed, and contribute not a little light on the subject.

(2.) "This way of stating the comforts of the gospel, seems to consider them as proper to be preached and received without previous self-examination, in order to discover whether they belong to us or not." *Ans.* It is unquestionably our duty to examine ourselves, to prove our own selves, and to know ourselves; but this is not necessary, this is not proper, in order to know whether the consolations of the gospel belong to us as they stand in the revelation of divine grace. The gospel is subverted, and self-examination is made a work of the law, when a person attempts to discover his right to gospel comforts by examining his own heart. There is a wide difference between a right to enjoy, and the actual possession. Our right to enjoy Christ, and all his comforts, stands singly upon the footing of that record which God hath given us, in revealing them to mankind-sinners, as such: neither evidences nor experiences can strengthen this right, nor can the want of them in the least diminish its strength. The actual possession of those comforts that are in Christ, is only the privilege of believers: and even they can never have any satisfying evidence that they enjoy these comforts, unless they are living in the exercise of that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" or, in other words, which sees the promises of God, which is persuaded of them, and embraces them. Since, therefore, the consolations of the gospel are actually possessed only by believing; since the undeceiving evidence of a person being actually a partaker of these consolations, is only to be enjoyed in the exercise of faith; and since faith is a receiving the

witness or testimony of God, in the free and general record of the gospel; it must follow, that the whole relief and comfort of believers arise from gospel declarations, which testify unto them, as mankind-sinners, the true and sovereign grace of God. Upon this principle, their comforts are properly the "joy of faith;" and do not spring from self-examination, but depend wholly upon the word of God, giving unto them eternal life in Christ Jesus.

(3.) It may be objected, "That many of the comforts proposed to believers, are not competent to be proposed unto sinners; and, therefore, those consolations that are peculiar to them as believers, ought not to be confounded with the general comforts of the gospel, which are proposed unto all that hear the gospel." *Answ.* There is undoubtedly a great difference between sinners in the flesh, who are "afar off," and believers in Christ Jesus, who "are made nigh by the blood of Christ:" but this difference does not consist, either in the comforts revealed to them—as if one kind of comfort was revealed to sinners in the record of the gospel, and another sort of comfort to believers—nor in the manner of proposing these comforts to both, as if they were given in one form to sinners, and in another to believers.* The gos-

* This truth is very happily illustrated by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, in his sermon on Luke ii. 28. in one of his inferences, where he expresses himself thus:—"See from this doctrine the true way of joy and comfort. Perhaps there may be some poor soul going mourning without the sun, saying, Oh! that I were as in months past. Once in a day I thought I could say, The candle of the Lord shined upon my head; but, alas! now the scene is altered, the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: how shall I recover my wonted joy in the Lord? Well, here is the way to it: go forth out of yourselves by a direct act of faith;

pel of salvation, with all its comforts, is fully proposed unto sinners; but unbelievers do not embrace it: the same gospel is proposed to such as receive it, setting their seal to the truths of God; and when they receive it, they only take the possession of those very comforts that are proposed to sinners. Moreover, they possess them upon the same right that sinners have to claim and to use them as their own mercies. Every one in the host of Israel, had the same right to gather and fetch home the manna for his own use; every man-slayer had the same right to flee for safety to one of the cities of refuge God had appointed; every one that was stung with the fiery serpents, had the same right to look unto the brazen serpent for a perfect cure; and every sinner that hears the joyful sound, has the very same right to eat the flesh, and

take Christ anew in the embraces of your souls, upon the free call and offer of the gospel; and, with Simeon, ye shall be made to bless God. It is the wreck of the comfort of the generality of God's people in our day, that they continue poring within themselves, upon their graces, their frames, their experiences, their attainments, without going forth by faith unto the fulness of a Redeemer for relief. And while we do so, we are just like mariners at sea: while they sail among shallow waters, near the shore, they are always afraid of striking upon rocks, or running upon sands, because they want deepness of water; but when they launch forth into the main ocean, they are delivered of these fears, being carried far above rocks and sands. So, while the believer continues among the shallow waters of his graces, duties, experiences, and attainments, he cannot miss to be harassed with continual fears, because the waters of divine grace are but ebb while we stay there; but when by faith we launch out into that full ocean of grace that is in Christ, then fears, doubts, and perplexities vanish; the soul is carried up above all these, being strong, not in created grace that is in itself, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead. So then, I say, if ye would surmount your fears, and recover your joy and comfort in the Lord, study to live by faith upon the Son of God; for we are filled with joy and peace in believing."

to drink the blood, of the Son of man; to fly for refuge to the hope set before him; and to believe on the Son of man, lifted up in the revelation of the gospel.

Perhaps it will be said, "The Israelite was much more comforted when he had gathered and eaten his allowance of manna, than when he barely perceived his right to gather and eat it; the man-slayer was much more comforted when he knew that he was actually in the city of refuge, than when he barely knew that he might flee thither; the stung Israelite was much more comforted when he was completely healed, than when he barely understood that he might look unto the brazen serpent: and for the same reason, a believer is much more comforted when he is conscious to himself that he is a partaker of Christ, than when he only knows his right to believe on Christ." To all this I answer, that the manna given from heaven was the only relief to the hungry Israelite; the city of refuge was the only comfort to the man-slayer; the brazen serpent was the only remedy to the patient, who was in anguish of spirit by the mortal wound of the fiery serpent: even so is Christ, received by faith in the declarations of that gospel which is preached to every creature, the alone relief and comfort of those that believe.

Perhaps it may be further urged, "The consciousness of being filled with the manna, of being safe in the city of refuge, and of being healed by looking towards the brazen serpent, produced great relief and comfort to the persons who respectively enjoyed these benefits; and so consciousness of our being in Christ becomes a source of joy to those that

know they have believed on him." I reply, that they must have been relieved, before they knew that they were relieved; they must have been comforted, before they were conscious to themselves that they were in a comfortable condition; and when they came to know that they were relieved and comforted, they came to know—what?—that they were altogether indebted to the manna, to the city of refuge, and to the brazen serpent, these ordinances of God, for their whole relief, and for all their comfort. The case is precisely the same with the soul which knows that Jesus Christ is revealed in it: Christ was revealed there before the person knew that he was so revealed; and when the soul becomes conscious of this fact, it becomes conscious that Christ and his complete salvation, revealed in the declarations of the gospel, are its whole relief, all its joy, and its only hope.

Will it be alleged, "that this scheme renders faith useless, and represents it as a matter of little consequence for a Christian to know his interest in Christ?" Surely such language can only be taken up in the mouths of people who "err, not knowing the Scriptures." Faith is of such importance in the Christian religion, that it is the grand means of possessing all the blessings of the gospel, and of walking in holy obedience to the law of God. The best means to know our interest in Christ, is to view him as he is revealed in the gospel to us as lost sinners: "for this is the will of the Father, that every one which seeth the Son," exhibited in the testimony of the word, and "believeth on him" as therein revealed, "may have everlasting life."

(4.) But still it may be objected, "That many of the privileges of the gospel cannot belong to any but saints; such as exemption from the dominion of sin, from the sting of death, and from the wrath to come: and therefore the comfort of all such privileges must arise from the knowledge of our having believed on Christ, and not simply from the gospel declarations, which testify unto mankind-sinners the grace of God." *Answ.* All the privileges of the gospel are inseparable, and must either be all enjoyed, or all despised. They are all united in that eternal life, which God hath given to mankind. The saints have received the first-fruits of this salvation, by faith in these given declarations of the gospel; and they depend on these same declarations for all the good things secured to them in reversion. Hence their whole comfort, even concerning these good things, depends upon the free promises of the gospel of God. I shall only mention another objection that may be made against the founding all our comfort and relief upon gospel declarations, as they are proposed to sinners of mankind in general, namely,

(5.) "The Scriptures seem, on many occasions, to rest the comfort of the saints upon their holy walking in the fear of God." *Answ.* When those that fear God are invidiously misrepresented by men, as if their intentions were wicked, and their works were evil, it gives them great satisfaction, under the heaviest load of calumny, to be able to say, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." When men accuse

them of crimes they have never committed, without suffering them to vindicate their own innocence, it is exceedingly comfortable to them, to be able to appeal their cause to God, saying, "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in mine integrity." Again; if the question be, Whether the truths of the gospel, which reveal Christ and eternal life as the provision God has made for saving mankind-sinners, are an ingrafted word in the heart? the saints ought to show by their works, that they are unfeigned believers of the gospel; and by this evidence to decide the dispute. But when the real ground of Christian joy in the sight of God is examined, it will be found that all the saints speak the language of Scripture, and are of the same mind with Paul, when he expressed himself with a becoming warmth in this important cause, saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and with David, when he said, "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice;" and they are all stamped with the character of "the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The sum of the observation that has been now explained and defended, may be shortly expressed in the following proposition, namely, all the relief God has provided for the distressed consciences of his people, and all the comforts he administers to them, are proposed and enjoyed in those declarations of the gospel which testify and report his free grace through Jesus Christ unto mankind-sinners. Hence they are said to "walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost," while they "have hope through the com-

fort of the Scriptures," and while "believing, they rejoice."

5. From the general account that has been given of the law and the gospel, it is manifest, that the gospel is not a bare revelation of so many facts, that are capable of being improved for the relief and comfort of mankind-sinners; but a revelation of all these facts in their nature and uses, in their connections and consequences, as a word of salvation sent to the sinful and ruined children of Adam; that every one who hears this message may trust and depend on the grace of God therein revealed, for his own everlasting benefit, without waiting for any inward motions or excellencies in himself, and without attempting to perform any kind of works, to recommend him to the favour of God.

It is allowed on all hands, that the gospel is a revelation of the grace of God; but still the great point remains undetermined, after this general concession, namely, In what precise form is the grace of God revealed unto mankind by the gospel? This question has received very different answers, according to the different views people have of it. Some imagine that the grace of God is proposed to mankind by the gospel in a conditional form: and here, again, some insist on more, and some on fewer conditions. The most moderate patrons of this opinion strenuously maintain, that believing is the condition of our being saved by grace; but others reckon repentance, sincere obedience, and perseverance in the whole, no less necessary as conditions of eternal life. On this head, I beg leave to observe, in the words of an eminent writer, that "in the order of the

covenant of grace; forasmuch as the having of the Spirit must go before faith, faith before justification, justification before sanctification, holiness before heaven's happiness; these may be called conditions in the covenant of grace, to wit, conditions of certain connection: and this belongs to the established order of the promises of the covenant, which are contradistinguished to the condition of the covenant. Howbeit such conditions can in no proper sense be called the condition or conditions of the covenant of grace, more than the buyer's receiving of the commodity can be called the condition of the covenant or bargain of sale. But the condition of the covenant of grace, properly so called, is, Christ in the form of a bond-servant, as last Adam, Representative, Kinsman-Redeemer, Surety, and Priest, his fulfilling all righteousness owing in virtue of the broken covenant of works, unto God, by his spiritual seed." The same author adds, "Faith and obedience are benefits promised in the covenant, upon the condition of it; and in virtue of the promises of the covenant, they are produced in the elect: therefore they cannot be the condition of the covenant." And in order to prevent every pretence to find fault, he further says, "God forbid that we should go about to juggle faith and obedience out of the covenant of grace! Those who do so in principle or practice, will thereby juggle themselves out of the kingdom of heaven. Faith is necessary, savingly to interest us in Jesus Christ the head of the covenant; and none can attain to eternal happiness without actual believing, who are subjects capable of it. Obedience is necessary, as the chief subordinate end of the

covenant, being that whereby God hath his glory he designed therein ; and without obedience begun here, none who are subjects capable of it can see heaven. But withal it is necessary, that they be kept in the place and station assigned them in the covenant, by the Father and the Son, from eternity. By faith we personally embrace the covenant, consent to, and rest in, the condition of the covenant, fulfilled by Christ ; and so are justified, and brought into a state of salvation. By evangelical repentance and gospel obedience, we testify our thankfulness to God, and evidence the truth of our faith, and our being within the covenant." *

Others consider the gospel as a revelation of the grace of God to a lost world, barely by making a report of the sufficiency and suitableness of the work finished by Jesus Christ in his death, and proved by his resurrection, to justify the ungodly. The design of this scheme is to represent the declarations of the gospel, merely as a report of certain facts, relating to the sovereignty of divine grace, the supreme Godhead of the Redeemer, his finished work upon the cross, and his resurrection from the dead, with such other doctrines as are connected with these leading articles of revealed truth. It is moreover said, that the whole benefit of the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ, is conveyed to men only by the apostolic report, declaring the truth and sufficiency of this grace and righteousness. We cheerfully agree to many things in this scheme, respecting the sovereignty of the grace of God, the work of

* Mr. Boston's View of the Covenant of Grace, &c. Head III. Part I. near the beginning.

Christ finished in his death, and his resurrection, which we always consider as the grand evidence of the sufficiency of his obedience unto death, to answer all the purposes of our reconciliation to God. But we deny that the report made unto mankind concerning these facts, considered barely as so many indisputable truths, is sufficient to answer the purpose of preaching the gospel. The design of the gospel revelation is, to give the conscious possession or enjoyment of the blessings it reveals, unto those who have the benefit of that revelation. When the sinner is convinced by the law, he perceives the nature and demerit of his sin, whereby he is possessed with a sense of shame and fear; because he becomes conscious to himself, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to him. Now, the remedy for removing this consciousness of sin and fear of wrath, must be the finished work of Jesus Christ, revealed to him in such a point of view, as encourages him to depend on that work, under a persuasion that it is sufficient to relieve him, and that it is the ordinance of God for his pardon, acceptance, and salvation. While he considers it in this light, he understands the comfort and benefit of Christ's righteousness to consist in this, that it is a sufficient righteousness in his behalf: and viewing it in this relieving sense of the divine declarations concerning it, his fears vanish, and he has the conscious enjoyment of reconciliation to God by that revealed righteousness alone; he has reconciliation, only by the righteousness which is revealed, and the conscious enjoyment of reconciliation, only by the revelation of that righteousness. The general form of exhibiting gospel grace, is in-

effectual to reach this purpose;* and therefore it does not answer the scripture design of preaching the gospel. But this will appear to be more evidently injurious to the word of God, if the genuine form of proposing the grace of God unto mankind, in the Scriptures, be considered.

The whole word of God is a declaration of his character and will unto mankind. It is suitable to all their different conditions and characters in this world; and every individual that enjoys the benefit of this merciful revelation, has a general interest in the truths, privileges, duties, and threatenings contained in it. The whole scripture revelation is profitable to bring sinners to the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins, and to make the man of God perfect. It does not come to mankind by name, but exhibits the will of God concerning all the characters of the children of Adam. The Most High God says to every person of any particular character, whatever he saith concerning that character in his word. Hence the apostle tells the Romans, "We know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them," that is, to all them, "who are under the law." Upon the same principle, we find that the everlasting gospel is preached to the sons of men; and every creature, to whom these good tidings of great joy are brought, is deeply interested in the joyful message. "He that believeth" it "shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned." By the general declarations of

Mr. Sandeman, a bold and sensible writer, in defence of the
 e now under review, acknowledges it cannot answer the
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the law, revealing the essential holiness of the nature and will of God, as a prescribed rule of holiness in heart and life to all mankind, individual persons receive the knowledge of their sin, and are convinced as transgressors: and, in like manner, by the general declarations of the gospel, revealing the sovereign love of God in his only-begotten Son unto the world, individual persons receive the knowledge of their salvation by the remission of their sins.

Gospel declarations are made in a form that warrants every sinner, merely in the character of a guilty undone sinner, to depend upon Christ alone for complete salvation, and to rest assured, that a gracious faithful God will be to him, and will do to him, all that is imported in these general declarations, which testify the grace of God unto mankind-sinners, of whom he is one. It must also be remembered, that these declarations do not only constitute a sinner's warrant to possess and enjoy the favour of God, and eternal life in Christ; but oblige him to judge them faithful sayings, and to depend upon them as the sufficient, the alone ground of his sure and undecieving hope. Hence we are told, that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." To answer these purposes, of furnishing every sinner with a sufficient right to believe, of giving a real conscious possession of revealed grace to every believer, and of leaving unbelievers quite inexcusable in their contempt and disobedience of the gospel; eternal life is given, in the declarations of the gospel, unto mankind in their

lost and sinful state; the Son of God is given unto the world; the gospel is preached unto all nations; the dispensation of the grace of God is towards the sons of men, in opposition to devils, and in distinction from the Jews, to whom in ages past were committed the oracles of God; and the Son of man is lifted up in the given declarations of divine grace, as the ordinance of God for saving sinners, through faith in his name. These things have been touched already, and will be further illustrated and defended in the progress of this work.

6. What has been said concerning the law and the gospel, manifestly shows, that it is both the allowed privilege, and the bounden duty, of all gospel-hearers, to embrace the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. To receive Christ, as the unspeakable gift of God to a guilty world, is the allowed privilege of all the hearers of the gospel. To them is the word of salvation sent; to them, without any distinction of characters, without any exception of persons, "the Father giveth the true bread from heaven;" and this gift constitutes a right, a warrant, and privilege, for every one to receive and enjoy Christ, and all things in him. Therefore, says our Lord, speaking of himself, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven," in the revelation of him to perishing sinners, "that a man may eat thereof, and not die." Where it is evidently implied, that Christ answers the same purposes for the happiness of the immortal soul, that manna did for sustaining the natural life; that Christ is as much the revealed ordinance of God for our salvation, as manna was for the food of Israel; and that any sinner is as much

warranted and allowed to believe on Christ for eternal life, as any Israelite was to gather and eat the manna.

But it is not only the allowed privilege of sinners, as such, to believe the gospel; it is also their bounden duty to embrace the promises and given declarations of divine grace. The beloved disciple says, "This is the command of God, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." It cannot be doubted that the commandment of God is a sufficient authority to prescribe the duty of men; nor can it be pretended, that this command only points out the duty of believers, because unbelief is the sin, and will prove to be the condemnation, of all that hear the word of Christ, and yet do not believe on him. "When the Comforter," the Spirit of truth, "is come," says Christ, "he shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me:" where it may be observed, that our Saviour affirms that the world is guilty and chargeable with sin, which is a transgression of the law of God; that the capital sin of such as hear of Christ, but obey not the gospel, consists in their not believing on him; and that the Spirit of truth is employed to demonstrate this sin to the world, that the world may be convinced of the crime, and reproved for it as transgressors of the law of God. "And this is the condemnation" of the unbelieving world, that "they believe not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God;" but condemnation is only the effect of disobedience to a lawful authority. Upon the whole, if it is the command of God, that the world should believe on Christ; if it is the sin of the world, that they do not

believe on him ; and if it shall be their condemnation, that many who hear of Christ given to them in the declarations of the gospel, will not come unto him that they may have life ; then it is manifestly the bounden duty of all gospel-hearers, to depend on Christ for salvation, and to receive the grace of God revealed in the word, for their own benefit.

These scripture views of the privilege and duty of every creature to whom the gospel is preached, entirely coincide with the nature and design of the gospel report ; wherein the sovereign grace of God is made known to the sons of men, without any other character to distinguish one from another, in order that Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, males and females, may all perceive the sufficiency and suitableness of the merciful expedient, to give them, merely as sinners, everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. And when this revelation of peace on earth and of good-will towards men, is considered as a divine declaration, it must be revered as implying an indispensable obligation and authority, which render it the duty of all to be persuaded of what is revealed, and to embrace what is given, in this declaration of the will of God.

Upon this account, it is also very obvious, that ministers of the gospel ought, in fulfilling the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to pray sinners "in Christ's stead," saying, "be ye reconciled unto God." Their office, as stewards of the mysteries of God, as ministers of Christ, who have a dispensation of the grace of God given unto them, and as ambassadors for Christ, who have the ministry of reconciliation committed to them ; their

office, I say, authorizes them to exhibit unto sinners the warrants God hath given the ungodly to embrace the word of reconciliation, and by a clear manifestation of the authority of God, to urge upon sinners the duty of believing it.

When the servants of Christ execute their office upon this plan of gospel administration, they do not suppose moral abilities in sinners to receive the gospel in faith and love; but according to the commandment of the everlasting and almighty God, they preach quickening truths, which are "the ministration of the Spirit." Nor does this scheme lead men to establish a preliminary righteousness by their own labours, as some way expedient or necessary to their enjoying the comforts and benefits of divine favour; because it carries all their attention directly to the grace of God which bringeth salvation to them, appearing in such declarations as both warrant and oblige them to live by divine grace reigning through righteousness unto their eternal life, by Jesus Christ, who is the alone subject of all the declarations of the everlasting gospel.

7. The doctrine concerning the law and the gospel, that has been explained, furnishes this remark, that the whole word of God is profitable, both to sinners and believers. It is profitable unto sinners, being the word of salvation God hath sent unto them; wherein he declares the exceeding sinfulness of their sin, the dreadful punishment of every offence they are chargeable with, and the inflexible justice of the sovereign Lawgiver and Judge of all. All things written in the book of the law, in its holy precepts, and awful threatenings, conspire to give them an

undeceiving view of their real character, and to destroy every ground of hope that ignorance and pride would establish in their own works of righteousness. To them the grace of God opens its boundless stores, revealing to them a sufficient and suitable remedy in Jesus Christ, and assuring them that the sinner who "cometh to him shall never hunger;" that the wretched soul which "believeth on him shall never thirst." Hereby sinners receive the knowledge of sin, as a transgression of the divine law; and hereby they receive the knowledge of salvation, mercifully provided in Christ, and revealed in the gospel, for the immediate benefit of the guilty and the self-destroyed. The whole word of God is also profitable to believers, that they may stand perfect and complete in the faith and obedience of all the revealed will of God. When the apostle exhorts Timothy to continue in the things which he had learned, and had been assured of, he congratulates him upon his early acquaintance with the word of God, reminding him, "that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." He then gives a precise account of the original and usefulness of the holy Oracles, affirming, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be" a complete Christian, or an accomplished minister, and in either of these characters may be "perfect, thoroughly furnished" by all the inspired writings, "unto all good works."

There is not one Bible for sinners, and another

for believers ; nor is one part of the Bible appropriated to the use of sinners, and another part to the use of believers ; neither is the scripture revelation set before sinners in one sense, and before believers in another : but the whole word of God is revealed as profitable, in the simple and genuine sense of it, both to sinners and believers. Believers hear Christ, and are taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus ; sinners also hear, but understand not ; they see indeed, but perceive not ; their heart is fat, their ears are heavy, and their eyes are shut : therefore they do not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their heart, those very truths that are seen, and heard, and understood by believers. All the comforts of the gospel are included in the truth of the gospel, which is preached to sinners that are under the law ; and all the honours of the law are established by the gospel of the grace of God, which is the dependence and joy of believers. This is the reason why the same revelation becomes “ the savour of death unto death ” to them that hear and despise it, and “ the savour of life unto life ” to them that believe and obey it.

8. The preceding account of the law and the gospel, illustrates the meaning of all those expressions which represent believers as “ dead to the law,” and as “ not under the law, but under grace.” It has been already observed, that the law of God is the express image of his holy will, and therefore its obligation, as a rule to direct the conduct of reasonable creatures, is immutable and everlasting ; that mankind are become insolvent debtors in every point of duty prescribed in that law, and moreover are under

its curse; that God declares his righteousness, when he justifies the ungodly through faith; and that Christ put himself in our room, and became responsible for all the sins of his people, as well as a debtor to fulfil all righteousness for them, in order to redeem them from the curse of the law, and to establish their title to eternal life. Upon these principles it is evident, that the sinner who believeth in Christ, is redeemed from the curse, and has a complete righteousness in his glorious Surety. The awful threatenings of the law have been executed on his Substitute, the highest demands of the law have been fully satisfied by his Representative; and therefore the law demands no personal obedience, in order to confirm his title to divine favour; and it expressly assures him, that there is no condemnation to him in Christ Jesus. : Thus the believer becomes dead to the law in its covenant-form: he expects no reward for his obedience; and when he understands his privileges, he joys in God through Jesus Christ, by whom he is delivered from the wrath to come. The bright hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promiseth in Christ, is still a noble and a powerful source of joy, obedience, and long-suffering unto believers; but to hope for heaven as the reward of their services, or to fear the wrath of God in hell as the punishment of sin, is to act upon the same motives as if Jesus Christ had not become obedient unto death. This is to be "alive to the law," and to be "under the law." Believers are not under the law in this sense, because their hope of heaven and their security from hell stand only in Christ: and therefore they are said to be "under

grace," that is, in a state of favour with God, being pardoned and accepted in the everlasting righteousness of the Surety of the better covenant.

Those who represent believers as acting under the influence of mercenary hopes of eternal life, and slavish fears of everlasting destruction; of hopes, founded upon their persevering obedience, and of fears, suggested by their offences,—do always consider mankind as now placed in a state of probation or trial. Their scheme is self-consistent upon that supposition; because such hopes and fears can only be admitted where men are to make good their claim to heaven by their own conduct. But this supposition is entirely subversive of the Scriptures, where it is a positive maxim, that all the heirs of salvation are "saved by grace through faith." All that adopt this unscriptural notion, dishonour both the law of heaven and the gospel of Christ; and all that make this the highest principle of their religious services, are ignorant of the glorious liberties of the sons of God. Their hopes are from the law, and not from the promises of a gracious God; their fears are from the law, without any regard to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and neither their hopes nor their fears can subsist in the soul that is living by the faith of a suffering and risen Saviour.

Perhaps some may be disposed to ask, Whether hope and fear have any place in the gospel scheme? and if they belong to it, upon what principles should they act, so as to avoid the extremes of legalism and licentiousness? To the first branch of this question I reply, that the Scriptures frequently represent hope and fear as principles of holy walking with God.

Says the apostle John, "He that hath this hope" of being like God, and of seeing him as he is, "purifieth himself:" and says Paul, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Admitting, therefore, that hope and fear belong to the gospel scheme, I shall endeavour to point out their respective principles upon which they operate, so as neither to run into the law of works, nor weaken the sacred obligations of the law of Christ.

(1.) Concerning the hope of eternal life, there is no occasion to say much: for that hope is grounded on the free promises of God, and therefore is called "the hope of the gospel," and the saints are made to hope in his word. The hope which is built entirely upon a gracious revelation of divine favour, manifested to the guilty through the cross of Christ, who is raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, can never encourage the pride of the legal spirit in our corrupt nature; and yet this hope must animate the Christian with joy in tribulation, and produce diligence in the duties of religion. When it builds upon this humbling and sure foundation, it is neither legal nor licentious: it exalts Christ, and promotes holiness; it looks for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, as a provision freely made and completely secured. He that lives by this hope, doth worship God in the spirit, doth rejoice in Christ Jesus, and hath no confidence in the flesh; he is saved by hope, and is careful to maintain good works, not that he may acquire hope from his works, but because he has good hope through

(2.) The fear of the wrath of God has an important influence upon the Christian life, according to the Scriptures. We are commanded to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" not to be "high-minded, but fear;" and to "have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire." From what has been observed on this subject, the reader will see that I do not suppose the Christian to be liable to condemnation on account of his transgressions: on the contrary, he is a partaker of Christ, and an heir of salvation; he shall never perish, neither shall any pluck him out of the hands of the good Shepherd, who hath given to him eternal life. Therefore, it is a contradiction to the principles of a believer's happy state, to imagine that the fear of hell should be the motive of his obedience of love to the law of God. Nay, this fear of forfeiting divine favour, so far as it prevails, destroys love to God, subverts the nature of his law, and rejects his grace manifested in the new covenant. But the fear of the wrath of God, which is entirely different from the fear of hell as a place of misery, is many ways useful in the practice of religion. The wrath of God revealed from heaven in the death of Christ his beloved Son, affords the most venerable display of the holiness of God, and the most awful view of his justice. While this is not kept up in the mind, it is impossible the declarations of the gospel can be received with joy, and improved with delight; but when this discovery of the divine character is imprinted on the mind, Christ becomes precious, as the Mediator that interposed between God and man, and

that savoury name, the Lord our God, appears to be glorious and fearful. When the Lord made his goodness pass before Moses, he proclaimed his name —“ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.” Supposing the last clause to be properly translated, it manifestly implies, that right views of the holiness and justice of God, detesting and punishing sin, are absolutely necessary to furnish the mind with the knowledge, belief, and esteem of his grace, mercy, and goodness. In this sense, even the threatenings of the word are a caveat to the saints against sin, and a motive to live by faith, “ that, reading them, we may tremble at the awful word, and acknowledge ourselves justly liable to those terrible judgments; but, at the same time, believe, that ‘ Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.’”

The sum of the whole may be collected into this proposition :—Believers stand in the favour of God, pardoned and accepted by him in the imputed righteousness of Christ their Surety, who fulfilled the whole righteousness of the law for them; and therefore they ought neither to perform obedience in order to obtain eternal life, nor to reckon themselves liable to condemnation, since Jesus died for their sins: but still they ought to improve both the goodness and the severity of God, whose glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ, as effectual and proper motives to engage their souls to cleanse themselves from
 “ filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holi-

ness in the fear of God. In this sense they are dead to the law, and yet live unto God.

9. What has been said concerning the law and the gospel, explains and establishes the distinction that is commonly made in the character of Jehovah, as an absolute God, or a God out of Christ, and a covenant God, or a God in Christ. He is one Lord, whose character is viewed in these different lights. When he is considered merely as a sovereign Lawgiver, prescribing perfect obedience as the condition of entering into eternal life, and denouncing his wrath and curse as the wages of every sin, he is then viewed without respect to the mediation of Christ; and this view of his character represents him as an absolute God, or God out of Christ. But when he is considered as offended by sin, yet purposing to save sinners by the obedience and death of his beloved Son, he is viewed as a covenant God, or a God in Christ. The character of an absolute God is a source of joy to angels who have never sinned, and would have secured the happiness of mankind, if man had persevered in his integrity; but this character is big with terror to devils and unbelievers. The character of a covenant God, or of God in Christ, is proposed in the gospel to a guilty world, to engage their belief in him, and their reconciliation to him; and as many as receive this merciful declaration, enjoy God as their exceeding great reward. He is an absolute God in his law, and a covenant God in all the declarations of the gospel.

10. What has been said of the law and the gospel, clearly demonstrates, that all gospel truths are

really "doctrines which are according to godliness." Nobody can reasonably doubt, whether the law of God is a holy doctrine, because it is the rule, the standard, and reason, of all true holiness. If the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God be impartially considered, their powerful influence will manifestly appear to be wholly on the side of true holiness in heart and life. Their influence this way is so great, and so certain, that every unfeigned believer of these doctrines is "sanctified through the truth;" and every unholy professor has only a dead faith concerning them, whatever be his profession or his knowledge. "The libertine, who only speculates or disputes, may indeed abuse the doctrine of grace; but the believer, who feels the power of grace, will improve it to better purposes. Where the former only fluctuates in the understanding, detestable consequences may ensue; where the latter operates on the heart, it will always produce very different effects. Such a person, from such a faith, will be no more inclined to inactivity or licentiousness, than our busy humming companions the bees, are inclined, by this bright sunshine, and all those expanded blossoms, to sleep away their hours in the hive; and you may as soon expect to see these colonies in the spring swarming in December, clinging to an icicle, or dispersing themselves to gather honey on the snow, as to see a truly gracious man, who is dead to sin, 'live any longer therein.' Whoever, therefore, so shamefully perverts so sweet and glorious a doctrine, is a witness against himself, that he has neither lot nor portion in the inestimable privilege. If any animal suck poison from the most

wholesome herbs, we are sure, from that infallible indication, it is the vile spider, or some envenomed insect, not the valuable and industrious bee. The believer must, out of duty, he will, out of gratitude, and, from the new disposition of his nature, he cannot but add to his faith works of righteousness. How runs the heavenly edict, in this case made and provided? 'I will that they who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works.' The word translated *to maintain*, implies, that a believer should not only be exercised in, but eminent for, all good works; should show others the way, and outstrip them in the honourable race; be both a pattern and a patron of universal godliness. How beats the pulse of a believing soul? You may feel it in that truly generous demand made by the Psalmist: 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?' A grateful heart wants not the goad, but is a spur to itself. How leans the bias of his nature? He is new-born, 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works,'—'his delight is in the law of the Lord;' and what is our supreme delight, we are sure to prosecute, and prosecute with ardour. 'We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard,' was the profession of the apostles; and, if applied to practical godliness, is the experience of the Christian. As the compassionate bowels cannot but yearn at spectacles of misery; as the benevolent heart cannot but dilate with pleasure at the sight of a brother's happiness; so the new creature in Christ cannot but desire to glorify, and delight to obey, the ever-blessed God." *

* Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio. Dial. 5th.

The merciful declarations and blessings of the gospel are all adapted to promote our sanctification, and even to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." "Have we redemption through our Saviour's blood, even the forgiveness of our sins? We are redeemed, not that we may sink in supineness, or launch into licentiousness, but that we may be 'a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' Are we made the children of God? Then let our light so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in heaven. This is the genuine consequence of such a doctrine, and the proper effect of such a benefit. Are we vested with sacred privileges? These admonish us, these urge us, to 'walk worthy of him who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.' Shall the citizens of heaven be animated with no higher views than the slaves of appetite, and drudges of the world? Are we constituted heirs of the promises? The grace which they ascertain is intended to make us 'partakers of a divine nature;' and the encouragement which they administer incites us to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;' incites us to 'perfect holiness in the fear of God.' Such high immunities are a most endearing persuasive, not to disgrace, but magnify, not to provoke, but please, their unspeakably beneficent Author. Holiness is one of the most distinguished blessings in our system; nay, is the very central blessing, to which all the others verge, in which they all terminate. Were we chosen from eternity? It was for this purpose, 'that we may be holy and unblameable in love.' Are we called in time? It is to this intent, that we may

‘ show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.’ Are we created again in Christ Jesus? It is to capacitate us for acceptable service, and to ‘ furnish us unto every good work.’ Far, very far from discarding sincere obedience, we would only introduce it, under its due character, as the fruit, not the cause, of our interest in Christ’s righteousness, and in its due order, as following, not preceding, the gift of righteousness.”

As I apprehend the ten articles that have been now explained and confirmed, are of the utmost importance in considering the faith and influence of the gospel, I have given particular attention to them. They have been represented as so many fair conclusions from the doctrines delivered in the Scriptures concerning the law of works, concerning the gospel of Christ, and the manner of proposing both the law and the gospel to mankind. To me the conclusion seems to have a firm foundation in the preceding sections; but, in order to set the evidence and meaning of them in the clearest light, they are illustrated and fortified with collateral proofs. As the following account of the nature and influence of the faith of the gospel, is entirely built on these principles; the reader who would wish to profit by it, should endeavour to make himself master of the scheme and sentiments contained in this chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE AND FOUNDATION OF THE FAITH OF
THE GOSPEL.

I PROPOSE to explain the *nature* and the *foundation* of the faith of the gospel together; because, however distinct they may appear to be at first view, the nature of faith is really inseparable, even in our conceptions, from the testimony on which it is founded. Attempts to explain the nature of faith, as an act of the mind, have always produced unprofitable speculations, and left the readers or hearers in as great ignorance of the subject as before. Abstracted descriptions of this sort are at best improper, and frequently pernicious. They either substitute the exercises which are the effects of faith, in the room of faith itself; or else they lead us to imagine, that believing is a very refined and exalted virtue; and, in either of these cases, our minds are entirely corrupted, and misled from the idea of believing, that is suggested by common sense in all ordinary cases, and adopted in its natural and plainest meaning by the Holy Ghost. I am far from denying at present, and afterwards I will endeavour to prove, that the soul is active in believing; but still I deny, that this act of the soul, considered in itself, and viewed merely as an act, is capable of being described, any more than the act of the eye in perceiving colours, or of the ear in perceiving sounds. All our ideas of seeing and hear-

ing are formed, not upon our inward perceptions of colours and sounds, but upon the objects which produce these perceptions. In like manner, all our ideas of faith are formed entirely upon the things revealed to us, and believed by us. Every man is conscious, that belief has no existence without its object in any thing that concerns this life; and it is only a false deceitful oversight, that has led people to imagine it is otherwise with the faith of the gospel. When a mistaken notion is once established, it passes without examination; but that only shows, in a stronger light, the necessity of searching the Scriptures daily, that our faith may stand in the power of God.

What I shall further add on this branch of the subject, may be arranged under these three heads:—

(1.) I shall examine the scripture sense of faith, or believing. (2.) I shall consider the word of God as the only foundation of divine faith. And, (3.) I shall more particularly explain the nature of this faith, which “is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.”

SECT. I.—*The Scripture sense of Faith, or Believing.*

The general meaning of faith, or believing, is very simple, and intelligible to the weakest capacity. If something either absent or past, is mentioned or reported as a fact, by a person or persons whom we reckon honest men and competent judges, we believe their word, and are satisfied that their account of the matter is true. If the facts they relate to us appear to affect our interest, they awaken in our

minds a general sense of hope or fear, of joy or pain, according to the nature of the facts and the interest we have in them. If we are given to understand, that a person, possessed both of power and resolution, has threatened to punish us; we do not question his severe intention, and our minds and measures are affected accordingly. If a person of ability and benevolence, whom we judge to be a person of honour, and one that pays a strict attention to his word, promises to relieve us from some distressing embarrassment, or to bestow upon us some favour, we depend upon his engagement, and reckon him faithful. In all these cases, the common sense of mankind never required a definition of their faith. The fact reported, the calamity threatened, or the benefit promised, together with the credibility of the report, threatening, or promise, command and engage their assent. The report becomes their belief concerning the fact; the threatening becomes their belief concerning the calamity; and the promise becomes their belief concerning the benefit. If they are misinformed by the report, threatening, or promise, or if they misapprehend them, yet their minds act in the same manner as if their information was good, and their own apprehensions exactly conformable to truth. Only suppose an information to be true, which is really not true; and experience shows that mankind would not be otherwise affected by the truth, than they are by the lie which they judge to be truth. I do not mean, that it is indifferent to a man what he believes. To believe a lie is always unprofitable, and frequently pernicious. But if a man believes a lie, he judges that lie to be true, or else he could

not believe it ; and his mind acts in the same way while he believes it, as if the thing he believes was, in every respect, precisely what he apprehends it to be. Perhaps the most simple account of believing will be found, upon examination, to be the most accurate and useful, namely, that it is the persuasion we have about things by information or report.

Having said this much concerning faith in general, as it is understood and exercised in common affairs among men ; I shall now proceed to inquire, Whether it is taken in the same sense in the Holy Scriptures, as when it is used in all ordinary cases.

To any one who is contented to understand the inspired writings in their plain and natural meaning, this inquiry cannot be long or difficult. The most general and exact account they give us of believing, is expressed in these words : " Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." " The description given of faith in this verse, and exemplified in the various following instances, I take, with the learned Dr. Owen and others, to be a description of faith, inclusive indeed of that which is justifying, but not under the strict notion of it, merely as justifying." In the Scripture we find divine things proposed, sometimes merely to our understanding, and sometimes also to our enjoyment. Considered as things proposed to our understanding, they are represented as truths of the most unquestionable certainty, and of great importance to the happiness of mankind : viewed as things proposed to our enjoyment, they are, moreover, set before us as a suitable and sufficient remedy appointed by God for our salvation. As faith respects the things of God, pro-

posed to the understanding of men by the Scriptures, it is said to be "the evidence," or conviction, "of things not seen:" as it relates to the things of God, proposed to their enjoyment in his word, it is "the substance of things hoped for." All the doctrines and duties, histories and promises, contained in the Holy Scriptures, are "written for our learning," and proposed to our understanding as "faithful sayings," and "words of truth." But the gospel, strictly so called, is not only proposed to the understanding of mankind as a word of truth and a faithful saying; it is also made known to the sons of men as a "joyful sound," revealing the righteousness of Christ to the guilty in the form of a free gift; manifesting the sovereign "kindness and love of God towards men;" and "giving them eternal life." In this view, the gospel of salvation, with all its precious blessings, is proposed to the enjoyment of mankind-sinners, as a word, promise, and gift of the grace of God.

When a person is persuaded of the truth of scripture doctrines, because God has revealed them, his faith is "the evidence of things not seen;" that is, he is as fully convinced that the doctrines and truths of the word are just what God has said they are, as if he saw them with his eyes. The things themselves are not seen with his bodily eyes indeed; but they are as evidently true to his mind, and he is as much convinced of them, merely on the credit of God's word, as he can be of the reality and truth of any visible object, when exhibited most plainly to his view. The apostle gives several examples of faith considered as the evidence, or demonstration, or conviction, of things not seen. The Scripture

tells us, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now, says the apostle, "by faith," resting upon this information given us by the Holy Spirit, "we understand," or perceive, with as much evidence and certainty in our minds, as we can have about any thing we see with our eyes, when it is placed in the properest medium for seeing it with advantage, "that the worlds were" really "framed by the word of God," as the Scriptures inform us, "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Again, the Scriptures teach us that there is a God: "Now," says the apostle, "he that cometh to God, must believe," upon the credit of this declaration, "that he is," or that there is one eternal, necessary, and unchangeable Being; this truth he must believe with as much assurance as he has about any thing he sees with his eyes. Another example we have in the case of Noah: the Lord told him that he would bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy it, and every living creature upon the face of the whole earth; and commanded Noah to prepare an ark for saving himself and his wife, his sons and his sons' wives, together with some of all kinds of cattle, creeping things, and fowls, in the ark. Noah was as fully persuaded of the dreadful calamity, as if he had seen it spreading universal desolation. God had warned him of its certain approach, and by this warning he was sure it would come; therefore, says the apostle, "by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Thus also Joseph was fully assured of things not seen, "when he died,"

having "by faith made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones:" and Moses, when "through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them:" and the children of Israel, when "by faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land;" and when "by faith they compassed about the devoted walls of Jericho seven days."

This evidence or conviction of "things not seen," upon the authority of the scripture report, is essential to a belief of the Scriptures. There can be no belief of them without such a conviction; and where there is such a conviction, they are believed as faithful declarations that relate to "things not seen." In this view, the terrors of the Lord are believed by many, who endure them, and are even distracted, while his fierce wrath goeth over them, and his terrors cut them off. In the same sense, life and immortality, brought to light in the gospel revelation, produce a belief of happiness in a future world. Thus do the holy angels believe the discoveries of "the manifold wisdom of God" made known to them by the church; and so do the devils likewise, who believe every thing contained in the Scriptures, and have a full persuasion, and a thorough conviction of the truths they reveal. This conviction has a respect to its objects, merely as "things not seen," which are made known by the testimony of God; and being made known by that infallible authority, the information concerning them must be certain in the highest degree.

But now the question recurs, Whether, are the

objects of divine faith to be always considered precisely as things that are certain and unseen, declared in the word of God; or should they be considered, not only as things infallibly true, but also as "things hoped for?"

To this question, the apostle's definition of faith furnishes an express and decisive answer: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Every believer of any truth has conviction of the thing which that truth relates to. He does not indeed see the thing, for he believes upon report; but he is persuaded it is a true report that he hears concerning it, and thereby he believes it. Suppose the thing reported to him is a piece of news relating to some fact he is no way concerned with, still his faith is the "evidence," or conviction "of a thing not seen." But if the thing reported to him concern his benefit, and if it be reported to him that he may possess and enjoy* it by believing what he hears reported to him; his faith is not only a conviction of the thing he does not see, but also the substance of the thing he now hopes for, upon the footing of this report: that is, the thing not seen appears to his mind as clearly to be his own for all the purposes mentioned in the report, as if he had the actual present possession of it. He really is not possessed of what he hopes for, because his hope must cease immediately upon his being in the possession of the good thing he expected; yet, in the absence of the thing he hopes for, it appears by that

* The sense in which a believer of the gospel possesses and enjoys the benefits of it, will be explained in the third section of this chapter.

authentic report to be really his own ; and in believing the report, he judges the absent good thing which he hopes for to be his own. The apostle mentions many examples from the Old Testament, of faith, in the whole extent of his own description. I might quote to this purpose what he says of the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of Moses, Rahab, and others ; but the example of Sarah shall suffice from that glorious catalogue, as a specimen of the whole. Concerning her the apostle writes, "Through faith also, Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." Her belief of the promise of God, that she should have a son, was a conviction of her having a son according to the promise ; and this belief was to her mind the substance of that blessing she hoped for. It gave her a kind of present enjoyment, and the most infallible reversion of it. If you ask, how she became possessed of this faith : the apostle tells us, it was not from any reasons of hope founded in herself, or in nature ; for "she received strength to conceive seed," and "she was past age : " but she became possessed of the belief that she should have a son, "because she judged him faithful who had promised" her a son.

Perhaps it will be said, that the foregoing distinction between the objects of faith, merely as they are proposed to our understanding, and as they are also presented to our enjoyment, is frivolous and fanciful. I must on the contrary affirm, that it is both natural and obvious. Every thing that is presented to our enjoyment in the word of God, is also pro-

posed to our understanding; and the whole word of God is profitable for our salvation, either more directly or more indirectly. Every thing that is "hoped for," according to the Scriptures, is a thing "not seen;" and whenever faith is the substance of a thing hoped for, it is also the conviction of that unseen thing which the believer expects. But it is evident, that many things not seen, of which the reasonable mind may have the fullest conviction, are not the objects of its hope; because hope is a pleasing expectation of something desirable. Therefore, the foresaid distinction is neither more nor less than the apostle's distinction between things merely as not seen, and things not seen which are hoped for; between the evidence or clear demonstration of the former, and the substance or realizing assurance of the latter. All that is required in believing a thing not seen, is evidence; but, in order to constitute the belief of a thing hoped for by the believer, there must be both evidence and substance.

The gospel being a revelation of things not seen, which are proposed as the objects of the hope of sinners, their faith concerning it must be the evidence of these "things not seen," the "substance of some things hoped for," according to the revelation of them in the word of God. By judging him faithful who hath promised, the mind is as fully certified "of things not seen," as the bodily eyes are of their proper objects, when these objects are present, and seen in a due medium; and these things God hath proposed to appear to the believer's mind as his own bequeathed property, with as much certainty as he can have of his right to any thing he actually possesses upon an unquestionable title.

From what has been said, it appears that the scripture sense of faith is most simple, and accommodated to our ideas of believing in all the cases incident to common life.* Several witnesses, who do not appear to have had the least concert together, who are people of understanding, and are reputed candid and honest men, do all agree in narrating the same circumstances of a fact, upon a judicial trial; and the jury, or the court, find a verdict without hesitation, according to the evidence, upon a fact they knew nothing about, but by the concurring testimony of these witnesses. They believe their verdict is true and just. Is not this belief the evidence or conviction of a thing not seen? But, says the apostle, "if we receive the witness," or testimony "of men, the witness" or testimony "of God is greater;" though the receiving of a witness is common both to the witness of God and the witness of men. Again, if a gentleman contemplates his deeds of conveyance, and finds them regular and authentic in his favour, he considers them as the

* "My notion of faith," says Aspasio, "gives us a clear intelligible sense, suited to the most common acceptation of the word; such as would naturally arise in the mind of a stranger, who, without any bias on his judgment, should inquire into the purport of our religion, or consider the language of our Bible. When you sent a message to your tenant, who in his last sickness expressed so much uneasiness on account of his numerous family, and embarrassed circumstances, assuring him that you had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt; when you told the poor woman, whose husband fell from the loaded wagon, and broke both his legs, that you would order a surgeon to attend him, and would continue his weekly pay; how did they regard, how receive your promised kindness? So let us credit the gracious declarations of our God, so accept his faithful promise, and then we shall answer the import of the word, then we truly believe." Theron and Aspasio, Dial. 16.

substance of his estate, though perhaps he never saw it, or at least does not see it while he is reviewing his deeds : even so the soul that judges God faithful who hath promised, considers the things he hath promised as an inheritance, and the promise of God that cannot lie, as its deed of conveyance; whereby the inheritance becomes his own.

Some may reply, "Then it seems there is no difference between saving faith and any other kind of faith." I answer, What has been said, I humbly apprehend, demonstrates that the act of believing is the same, whether Christ, or the creation of the world, or the birth of Isaac, or the departure of Israel out of Egypt, or the falling down of the walls of Jericho, &c. be the thing believed. Faith, in all these cases, is either simply "the evidence of things not seen," or it is both "the evidence of things not seen," and "the substance of things hoped for." But there are essential differences between saving faith and other kinds of faith, which arise from considerations of quite another nature: for, (1.) The objects of saving faith are entirely peculiar to itself; such as the revealed grace of a reconciling God, and the Son of God given to be our complete Redeemer and Saviour. (2.) The immediate ground of saving faith is peculiar to itself; which is the free and generous revelation that a gracious God hath made of Christ, as his salvation to the ends of the earth. From these peculiar views of its objects and foundation, we must expect it will have many blessed effects, which belong only to the faith of the gospel, and to no other belief whatsoever.

SECT. II.—*The Word of God is the only Foundation of Divine Faith.*

Believing, in the sense wherein we use it through this performance, is the persuasion of the mind concerning a testimony; and divine faith is the persuasion of the mind concerning the testimony of God. His testimony, which we are to receive, is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. To seek it any where else, is the height of presumption and folly. Says an evangelist, "These things are written,"—for what purpose?—"that ye might believe;" and, says an apostle, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." When the Lord of glory was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said unto them in his life-time, speaking of the temple of his body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" "and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." The Thessalonians "received the word of God," which they heard of the ministers of Christ; and it is particularly observed concerning their faith, that they received the message, "not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God."

It is proper to observe, that the testimony of God, which is the immediate ground of our faith, is nothing else but the revelation of his will. Whatever he hath revealed or made known to mankind as his will concerning them, is the testimony of God unto them. When he made himself known to the prophets by dreams and visions, he gave them an immediate revelation of his will; and when the message he

gave them was faithfully delivered, the persons who were concerned in receiving it were bound to believe it as a message from heaven, though reported to them only by men. God does not speak to us now immediately from heaven: he hath written to us the great things of his law, and has made it our duty to take good heed to this sure word of prophecy; to regard it as if we heard God speaking every word to us from heaven with an audible voice; and to consider ourselves as much concerned to understand, believe, and obey what is contained in the Holy Scriptures, each for himself, as if no other person in the world had any interest in it.

Every thing that is important to our faith and practice, is clearly delivered in the sacred oracles; and the question of infinite moment to be resolved, is, What sufficient warrant have we to justify our firm persuasion of the truths they testify unto us, and our entire dependence on them for eternal life? or, What assuring evidence have we, that the things not seen are really such as the word of God describes them to be; and that the things present to our enjoyment and hope are indeed our own?

The answer to this momentous question is short and plain:—God, who cannot lie, who will not deceive, hath spoken all the words of that divine book; the only wise and almighty God, who changeth not, hath promised all the good things we are called to expect. Is he a God of truth, that hath revealed to us these things that are not seen? Then we have undoubtedly a sufficient warrant in his testimony, to be fully persuaded of them. Is he the faithful God, that has promised to us future and invisible

blessings? Then we have an unquestionable warrant to judge him faithful, and to "believe God that it shall be even as is told us" in his gracious promises. Divine faith builds, with the greatest confidence and safety, all its persuasion and all its dependence upon the word of the Lord, witnessed in the writings of the prophets and apostles, these "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and another foundation can no man lay for it, either besides the word of the Lord, or in partnership with it. It is of the utmost importance in building, that the foundation be sufficient to support the fabric: if the foundation be not good, the builder loses his labour, and the falling of the superstructure will cover him with disgrace for his folly.

It will therefore be proper, (1.) To consider the absolute sufficiency of the word of God, as the only foundation of divine faith; and, (2.) To demonstrate the folly of many hearers of the gospel, who endeavour to build their faith upon the sand, instead of building it upon that sure foundation.

First, I shall endeavour to show the absolute sufficiency of the word of God, as the only foundation of divine faith.—Upon this head, the following observations are peculiarly worthy of serious attention:—

1. Some testimony must be the foundation of our faith. A fond opinion concerning something we have had no experience of, is not faith, but fancy, unless our opinion be formed upon credible report.

2. The things to be believed for our salvation, are of such a nature, that we could never have known

or conceived them by any other means than a revelation from God concerning them. The apostle describes them as "the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew." Even the holy angels obtain, by the revelation made to the church, new information concerning "the manifold wisdom of God." A revelation of such mysteries can only be made by him who is wonderful in counsel.

3. The testimony of God in his word is most suitably adapted to answer all the purposes of our faith and practice. It must be so, because infinite wisdom planned it upon the most perfect view of our sinful and miserable condition, that it might "make us wise unto salvation," and "thoroughly furnish us unto every good work, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

4. The word of God is a full and complete revelation of his will. One who had much acquaintance with it, has recorded his opinion, founded on experience and observation, in these words—"The law of the Lord is perfect;" that is, the whole word of God is so complete, and so well contrived in every part, that it is neither defective nor superfluous. It contains the fullest information upon every article of faith and duty. Nothing must be added to it, and nothing must be taken from it.

5. The word of God is a clear and plain manifestation of the truth, which we are concerned to believe and obey. David compares it to a lamp that directs our feet, while we choose every step in a dark place by its assistance; and to a light that shines upon our

be founded in a testimony; seeing the saving truths of the gospel are of such a nature that none but God could reveal and attest them; and seeing his word is a testimony that is suitable to our condition, complete in itself, sufficiently plain, infallibly true, enforced by divine authority, and a present ground of our immediate dependence and hope: therefore, we should improve this word as the only foundation of divine faith.

Secondly, I shall now proceed to demonstrate the folly of those hearers of the gospel, who endeavour to build their faith upon the sand, instead of building it on this rock of ages, the word of God. All such pretenders to the faith of the gospel make lies their refuge, and deceive their own souls. A few examples may be of use to the reader, in order to detect the delusion, and prevent the consequences of this capital error.

1. Some build their faith upon the belief of their fathers, and reckon it quite sufficient for them that they are of the same religion they were brought up in. Surely these inconsiderate fools are building on the sand; for upon the same principle they would have been Mahometans in Turkey, disciples of Confucius in China, or worshippers of the devil among the Indians, if it had been their unhappy lot to be born in these countries. A Mahometan, a Chinese, or an Indian, can assign the same ground for his faith, that these nominal Christians do for theirs. If their principles be good, it is only by chance.

2. Some choose to follow the multitude, and to believe what is commonly received in their country on the article of religion, imagining that system to be the best, which is patronized by law, and approved

by the greatest number. Concerning them, I beg leave to observe, that it is indeed no sufficient proof that their sentiments about the doctrines and duties of religion are wrong, because they coincide with the system that is established and professed in the country they happen to live in; but the faith that is built upon such an establishment and profession, cannot be a divine faith: for upon this principle the Jews resisted the doctrines of Christ, the Heathens persevered in their idolatry, and the church of Rome retains her influence in Popish countries. Common opinion is generally on the side of error, superstition, and licentiousness.

3. Many refine a little farther on the subject, and found their belief in religious matters upon the sentiments of great, wise, and good men. On this head it must be remembered, that if these men were really great, and wise, and good, they never wished to have their sentiments considered as the foundation of any man's faith; nay, the very thought must be detestable, that the glory, due only to God, should be given to them. Besides, our faith must not stand, either in "the wisdom of men," or in the authority of men, who "have no dominion over our faith."

4. Some imagine their faith may safely rest upon tradition, which transmits divine truths from father to son, in a long succession of ages. This gross delusion is altogether inexcusable, if we consider the imperfection and errors of tradition, with respect to the history of ages past, or if we recollect the treachery of our own memories, and our negligence in communicating what we know; but especially, if we remember that our Lord severely blamed the

Jews for corrupting the sense of the divine law, and making it of none effect, by adhering to their traditions. Nor has tradition ever promoted any better purpose in latter ages, when it has been employed in the cause of religion.

5. Others have resolved their faith into rational arguments in favour of Christianity, declaring that they believe its doctrines, because they are supported and recommended by strong rational evidence and argument. Upon this head, it may be observed, that rational arguments are useful and even necessary to convince gainsayers, who deny the Scriptures to be the word of God; but they are not the foundation of saving faith. The belief of the gospel implies a submission to divine authority, and a dependence immediately upon the declarations of God. Such a submission, and such a dependence are most reasonable; but they can only be exercised upon the word of God, as their entire foundation. The apostles never used rational arguments to recommend the truths of God to their hearers, and yet they required their hearers to believe these truths. And it is too frequently seen, that, while those masters of argument against infidelity defend the outworks of the Christian cause, they betray the greatest ignorance of its leading principles, and show an enmity against its peculiar doctrines, no way inferior to the malice of the most determined infidels. On the other hand, we shall find persons of very weak capacity, possessed with such an assuring belief of the Scriptures, that they are ready, with the martyr, to "burn for Christ, though they cannot argue for him." From the whole, it is evident, that divine faith has another

foundation than rational arguments; because it is grounded on testimony, and therefore cannot be built upon reasoning.

6. Others go still beyond this, and suppose that divine faith is founded upon some private whisper or suggestion of the Spirit of God, distinct from the written word, whereby they must be brought to believe the Scriptures. Concerning this dangerous notion, I shall only say, that it is a principle that will patronize the grossest delusions; and after all, the question returns upon its votaries, How do you know your impressions to be the whispers or suggestions of the Spirit of God? Can this question be determined any other way than by the written word? If it cannot be decided except by the written word, then we are left in possession of the word of God still, as the grand and ultimate foundation of our faith. Pretences to these whispers and suggestions are exceedingly suspicious.

7. Many religious people are inclined to think, that experiences of divine favour, and evidences of a gracious state, are the foundation of believing the gospel. Mr. Hervey shall suggest our remarks on this point: "As to those who insist upon what they call the reflex act of faith; sure they mistake the nature of the thing. This, if I understand them aright, is their way of arguing: 'I am a new creature; I love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; I have the fruits of the Spirit: from whence it is plain, that Christ and his salvation are mine.' Now, in all this procedure, I cannot discern the least footstep of faith; no, not the least trace of receiving a testimony or relying upon a Saviour. Here is nothing more than

a logical deduction of one proposition from another ; a conclusion drawn from given premises. Grant the latter, and any person, without any aid from the Spirit, will infer the former. It may, therefore, more properly be reckoned an act of reasoning, than of believing ; it is founded upon what we ourselves feel, not upon the record of a faithful God ; and it is styled by judicious writers, the assurance of sense, rather than of faith. When we are advised to prove our title to [evangelical] comfort, by genuine marks of conversion ; and taught on this column to fix the capital of assurance ; I would rather propose a question, than advance objections : Is not this somewhat like placing the dome of a cathedral upon the stalk of a tulip ?”

8. Many are ready to found their confidence towards God, upon their consciousness of having endeavoured to walk steadily in the ways of religion. But I presume it will scarcely be pretended, that such confidence is by the faith of Christ ; since they who go upon the principle I impugn, suppose it rests upon another foundation in themselves. The faith of the gospel “ works by love ;” but this supposition would invert the course of nature, by making the branches to bear the root, and the effect to produce the cause. The assurance of faith in its largest measures, and in its highest and most vigorous shoots, grows only upon the word of a gracious and faithful God. To substitute the consciousness of our sincere endeavours to please God, in the room of his precious and promising word, is to renounce the gospel, and to build upon self and the old covenant.*

* See Mr. Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, Direct. 6th.

9. Some would build their faith upon the favourable appearances of divine providence, supposing that these furnish them, at least, greater boldness in the faith. The folly of thus judging is manifest from the most superficial view of the Scriptures. Faith is so far from deriving strength from the smiles of providence, that its most glorious triumphs have been usually exhibited in a great fight of affliction, and outward discouragements. It is no doubt for this purpose, that "the Author and Finisher of faith" commonly leads his people through many tribulations, while they are walking by faith; that they may "run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus." God has sometimes condescended to confirm the faith of mankind by signs and providential tokens; but these signs and tokens are not the foundation of faith, but a proof of our senses, that God is worthy of credit in the declarations which are attested in this sensible manner.*

I shall not enlarge on other deceiving grounds upon which men usually attempt to build their faith; because, I apprehend, they will be found to coincide with those that have been mentioned. Only, from the instances that have been named, it is natural to observe two things: (1.) That the way of believing is strait and narrow; and few there be that find it. (2.) That the promised Comforter is absolutely necessary, to show us the path of life, and to lead us in the way of truth; so as we may walk by faith, live by faith, and die in the faith.

* The rainbow is such a sign to the world: being set in watery clouds, which once poured a universal deluge upon the earth, it is a token to all succeeding generations, that God will not any more destroy the earth by water. Gen. ix.

SECT. III.—*The Nature of Saving Faith more particularly explained.*

Having ascertained the sense of the word Faith, as it is used in the Holy Scriptures, and proved, that the testimony of God, recorded in these sacred books, is the only foundation of all divine faith; it remains, that we endeavour to improve these general but important principles, for illustrating the nature of that saving faith, which “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” and puts the soul into a kind of present possession of everlasting life in Christ.

To obtain just views of this point, we must give the most earnest heed to the things God hath spoken in his word, and the manner of proposing them to us. His testimony exhibits divine things, which are the object of our belief, in all those lights wherein our faith is concerned with them: particularly, it describes them as substantial, though unseen realities, that are worthy of all acceptance, and presented to us for our immediate enjoyment. In believing the report of the gospel, the soul is not conscious to itself of any succession and gradual advances in its views of these characters of the truth, which it receives with joy and much assurance; but the divine testimony is perceived in the most simple form, as an undoubted conveyance of eternal life in the Son of God unto the sinner that embraces it. As the size, colour, and shape of any object, are perceived the moment we see it with our eyes; so the reality, excellency, and free conveyance of eternal life, are per-

ceived by the believing soul, in one simple view. We can, however, think and speak of those properties of any object we have seen distinctly, each by itself; and the Scripture warrants us, in like manner, to conceive and discourse on the distinct character of those blessings, which are the objects of our belief: yet still it must be remembered, that each character is a description of the object itself in a particular point of view; and that all the characters of it, when joined together, are no more than a simple view of the thing to be believed, because the same object is described by every single character, and by all the characters complexly. Having premised this necessary caution, I come now to inquire, In what different lights do the oracles of God present those truths, which are the objects of our faith to the mind? Upon this subject, it shall suffice at present to observe, that the things proposed to our belief in the Scriptures, are characterized as things we do not see, —as things real and substantial,—as things that are “worthy of all acceptation,”—and as things which God hath revealed for our benefit.

1. The objects of our belief are things we do not see. Hence the apostle says, “We walk by faith, not by sight:” and again, “We look not at things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” To walk by sight, is here opposed to walking by faith; and looking at things which are seen, to looking at things which are not seen. For the same reason, faith is described to be “the evidence of things not seen.” Many things which a Christian be-

lieves, are in themselves of a spiritual nature, and so not capable of being objects of sense. "No man hath seen God at any time" with his bodily eyes; and yet Moses is said to have endured, as "seeing him who is invisible," by faith. The providence of God is out of sight, and the blessings of the gospel come not within the verge of sense; yet both of them are proper objects of faith. Several things proposed to our belief, are far above our comprehension; not only too glorious to be perceived by the bodily senses, but so transcendent, that the closest application of the mind cannot trace them out. The perfections of God, the distinction and union of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, are of this sort. Some of the objects of faith are things past and gone; as the doctrines relating to the eternal purpose of God, his unbeginning love, and the creation of the world. Other things are at too great a distance for us to have any immediate enjoyment of them as they are in themselves: of this kind is the present state of the invisible worlds. Others of them, again, are future; as the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the misery or glory that shall follow it. But it is an essential character of all the objects of our belief, that they are not seen while we believe them: for when we look at things which are seen, we do not live by faith; but if we look at things which are not seen, then we walk by faith, and not by sight.

2. The objects proposed to our faith in the word of God, are real and substantial. Though they are things not seen, they are not imaginary; but have

the most certain and real existence. Carnal minds, devoted to time and sense, reckon there is nothing excellent and substantial, but the riches, pleasures, and honours of this world. Gross and dangerous infatuation! Hear, ye deaf, and consider, ye careless ones, the judgment of God which is according to truth. Thus saith the Lord, "Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" "The fashion," or the specious appearance, "of this world passeth away," like a dissipated cloud, or a vanishing shadow." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." He has drawn the following character of worldly men, who have their portion in this present life, as a strong remonstrance against their folly and delusion: "Ye rejoice in a thing of nought," even when ye are most successful according to your wishes. But the things presented to our belief in the word of God, are summarily comprehended, and truly described, in that concise account of them—"a better and an enduring substance." They do not derive their worth and reality from the misapprehensions of a deceived mind, nor from the depraved attachments of a corrupt heart; but from the appointment, purpose, and covenant of the Most High. The Scripture does not amuse us with "cunningly-devised fables," when it brings life and immortality to light; it informs us of things that are real, certain, and eternal. Surely the faith which is built upon the record of God is no fancy; the hope of eternal life, founded upon his word, is no delusion, and shall never make the saints ashamed of their confident expectation.

3. The objects of faith are proposed to mankind,

as things that are "worthy of all acceptance." They are supremely good, and altogether suitable to the undone condition of guilty sinners. Is the advice of a physician worthy of acceptance from a distressed patient? Is the benevolent offer of meat and drink worthy of a man's acceptance, that is ready to die for hunger and thirst? Is the prince's pardon worthy of a convicted criminal's acceptance? Are clothes worthy of a person's acceptance, who is starving through nakedness and the pinching severity of the weather? Then surely the salvation of God is worthy of all acceptance; because it comprehends all that is expedient for the pardon of our sin, and the peace of our conscience; all that is necessary to renew our nature, and sanctify us throughout; all that is useful to establish and secure our comfort; and all that is requisite to make us completely happy, both here and hereafter. As the contrivance of salvation is stated in the gospel, it is adapted in all points to our case. Our sinful and miserable situation is accommodated with a sufficient and suitable remedy in the revelation of divine grace. Since, therefore, the things proposed to our faith are so excellent in their own nature, and so suitable to our condition; since they are entirely sufficient for all our wants, and the alone expedient for our relief; since they declare the glory of God, and accomplish the salvation of sinners through the belief of them;—these objects of our faith have an unquestionable title to be esteemed blessings that are worthy of all acceptance from the sons of men.

4. The objects of our belief are directly proposed by God in his word unto mankind-sinners, for their

personal benefit: or, in other words, the blessings of the gospel are revealed in the Scriptures, as the free gift of God to a lost world, that every sinner may have a sufficient warrant, and a valid right, to believe that they are really given to him in the gracious promises of God. But having explained my sentiments on this subject in the former chapter, as far as is necessary in order to be sufficiently understood, I shall not enlarge any farther at present in the illustration of it.

Thus we see in what light God is pleased to set divine things before our view in the declarations of the gospel: and now it is proper to inquire, How the mind is employed about these objects of its faith, while it believes them? The general answer is, that the mind, in believing, is persuaded that these objects are just what God has said they are; and accordingly depends upon the revelation he has made of them, for complete salvation and eternal life. A more particular answer may be gathered from the apostle's account of the faith of the patriarchs, of whom he says, "They all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." This account of their faith throws light upon the general description of believing, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" and it comprehends the whole exercise of the mind about divine truth, as it is proposed to be the object of our belief.

The objects of faith are "things not seen;" and the apostle says, these venerable patriarchs "had not received the promises" which they believed; that is, they did not see them accomplished, they did not re-

ceive the blessings therein promised. Whenever a promised blessing is actually received and seen, it ceases to be any longer the object of faith; because the promise concerning it is performed, and the favour that had been promised cannot be any more an object of hope and expectation, after it is actually in our possession.

Again, the objects of faith are things real and substantial; and the apostle says, the believing patriarchs "saw the promises afar off;" that is, they perceived that the blessings therein promised were real, desirable, and satisfactory; they understood the meaning of them, and discerned something of the nature of these precious benefits God had promised to confer, though at a great distance of time to come. When the meaning of a divine promise is opened to the understanding, and when the authority and faithfulness of God are perceived in his word, the soul sees the greatest reality in the promises of God, and possesses the fullest conviction of things not seen, because it judgeth him faithful who hath promised.

Moreover, it has been observed, that the objects of our belief are presented to us in the word of God, as "things that are worthy of all acceptation;" and the apostle strongly intimates, that the believing patriarchs considered them in this light, while "they saw the promises, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Could their conduct be consistent with itself, or reconcilable to reason; could it be approved by their own minds, or accounted for to the world, without supposing that they esteemed the promises of God, "worthy of all accep-

taſſon ?” It is manifeſt, they reckoned theſe promiſes “all their ſalvation, and all their deſire.”

Finally, it has been obſerved, that eternal life is preſented to mankind—ſinners in the declarations of the goſpel, as the free gift of God, which warrants every one to be perſuaded that the inſtimable gift is preſented to him, and to embrace it for his own benefit; and the apoſtle ſays, the ancient fathers in the church of God “ſaw the promiſes, and were perſuaded of them, and embraced them.” They underſtood the meaning and deſign of the promiſes of God; they were fully convinced and ſatisfied in their own minds, that the promiſes were the true ſayings of God, and had not the leaſt diſtruſt with regard to the certainty of their performance; and they embraced the promiſes as their own, they hugged them, as it were, to their very ſouls, and wholly depended on the God of truth to be and to do unto them all that he hath ſaid in the promiſes of his word.

This, I apprehend, is the genuine faith of the goſpel, that brings relief to the guilty, and gives a loſt ſinner the conſcious enjoyment of Chriſt’s ever-laſting righteousneſs and complete ſalvation; while he ſees theſe glorious and neceſſary bleſſings preſented in promiſes of the word, to be enjoyed by him; and is perſuaded that God in very deed preſents theſe things for his immediate benefit; and accordingly embraces the promiſes wherein they are preſented to him, and depends only upon the free gift of God, as his entire title to theſe and all other promiſed benefits. In ſo doing, he receiveth the divine teſtimony, according to its true meaning and purport, and “ſets to his ſeal that God is true.”

He believes God, that it shall be in his own behalf, even as it is told him in the scripture declarations, wherein the gospel is preached to every creature.

This account of faith will be still more plain, if we illustrate it in some instances, whereby it will appear, that the idea now suggested runs through the whole life of faith. The labours of a judicious writer shall furnish a pertinent extract on this subject. He considers the report of the gospel, and the trusting to it, conjunctly; which is the only way to direct us in using the report, and to speak intelligibly concerning the trust:

“(1.) The gospel is a report from heaven, of salvation for poor sinners, from sin, and from the wrath of God, however dear bought, yet freely made over to you in the word of promise; so as that ye may freely take possession of it. This report being brought to the sinner, faith trusts it as a true report; believing that God has said it; and trusts to it as good, laying our own salvation upon it. So the soul greedily embraceth the Saviour, and the salvation brought to it in that report; as ever a drowning man would take hold of a rope let down to bring him out of the waters.

“(2.) The gospel is the report of a crucified Christ made over to sinners, as the device of Heaven, for their salvation. It is proclaimed by the authority of Heaven, that Christ has died, and by his death purchased life and salvation for lost children of Adam; and that they, and every one of them, may have full and free access to him. Faith trusting the report as true and good, the soul concludes, The way is made; and leans to him for all the pur-

chase of his death, for life and salvation to itself in particular.

“(3.) The gospel is the report of a righteousness wherein guilty ones may stand before a holy God: ‘For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.’ And by faith one believes there is such a righteousness, that it is sufficient to cover him, and that it is held out to him to be trusted on for righteousness; and so the believer trusts it as his righteousness in the sight of God, disclaiming all other, and bating himself to it alone.

“(4.) The gospel is the report of pardon under the great seal of heaven, in Christ, to all who will take it in him: ‘Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things.’ This pardon is proclaimed openly by the authority of Heaven, full and free, without exception of any of lost Adam’s race, to whom the report comes. The soul by faith believes this to be true, and applies it to itself, saying, This pardon is for me; it is good and suitable to my case: I will therefore lean to this word of grace for my pardon, and come in, for this is the word of God that cannot lie.

“(5.) The gospel is the report of a physician that cures all the diseases of the soul infallibly and freely, and rejects no patients. The soul believes it, and applies it to its own case; and says, Then I will trust him for removing the stony heart out of my flesh, for curing me of the falling-evil of backsliding, the fever of raging corruption, the running issue of the predominant lust, and the universal leprosy of the corruption of my nature.

“(6.) The gospel is the report of a feast for hungry souls, to which all are hid welcome, Christ himself being the maker and matter of it too. The soul, weary of the husks of created things, and believing this report, accordingly falls a-feeding on Christ, his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed; believing and applying to itself all that Christ was, did, and suffered, as that whereof the soul shall reap the benefit—which is the feeding by faith on a slain Saviour.

“(7.) The gospel is the report of a treasure. In it are the precious promises, within them precious Christ with his merit, like the gold mentioned, Rev. iii. 10. ‘I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.’ The field it is hid in may be yours [in possession]; the gospel offers you the covenant as that field. Faith believes this report; and the soul lays hold on the covenant, and trusts entirely to the treasure hid there for the payment of all its debt, for its through-bearing during life, and through death, and for procuring it eternal happiness.

“(8.) The gospel is the report of a victory won by Jesus Christ over sin, Satan, death, and the world; and that in favour of all that will join the glorious Conqueror. Faith believes this report; and the soul trusts to it for its victory over all these, as already-foiled enemies. To name no more,

“(9.) The gospel is the report of a peace, purchased by the blood of Christ for poor sinners, and offered to them. Faith believes it; and trusting to it, the soul comes before God as a reconciled Father in Christ, brings in its supplications for supply before

the throne, deliv'ring the reins unto him to be opened betwixt his two knees, which, during the war, was blocked up." TO THOMAS BAKER, &c.

The soul, in believing, is not conscious to itself of any succession in its exercise about the divine truths it sees, and is persuaded of, and embraces. It acquiesces in them as "faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance," which convey eternal life to its immediate enjoyment, with as much simplicity, as if it only credited a historical narrative. The whole attention of the mind is engaged unto the revealed objects of its belief, which are perceived in the most simple view. When a malefactor receives the king's pardon, or an insolvent debtor gets a receipt in full discharge of all his debts from his creditor, the pardon and the receipt engage and direct all their thoughts; but their belief is as simple an act of the mind, as if they only credited a report concerning an indifferent thing. Indeed the pardon and the receipt must have quite other effects upon the minds and conduct of the malefactor and the debtor, than any thing arising from the credit they give to a piece of intelligence whereof they are not interest'd; but these different effects do not proceed from the difference of their act in believing the one and the other, but from the difference of the things which they believe, and the different interest they have in each. When God promised that Sarah should have a son, she saw the promise, and was persuaded of it, and embraced it; in the simplest form that can be conceived; for she judged him faithful that had promised. In judging God faithful, she saw his promise, she was persuaded of his promise, and she

embraced it, in one act: When God gives to sinners eternal life in his Son, the believing soul sees this gift, and is persuaded of it, and embraces it, in one simple act. The report of the gospel does not present so many successive views of divine truth to sinners, that they may first become persuaded of one thing and then of another, that they may first gain one view, and then advance to another; as we mount a ladder step by step; but it presents the freely-given salvation of God in Christ, as his testimony to be received for their complete and everlasting benefit. This testimony must either be received whole and entire, just as God hath delivered it, or else it is not received at all. The simplicity in believing is exactly proportioned to the noble and God-like simplicity of the divine record; for it cannot go beyond the word of the Lord. The foregoing extract from Mr. Boston, is sufficient both to illustrate and confirm this position.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The account that has been given of believing, both justifies and establishes the essential difference that the Scripture has expressly stated between faith and works. Indeed, they that believe in God must be careful to maintain good works: for "faith without works is dead; and whatsoever works are not of faith, are sin, and cannot please God." Faith and works ought never to be separated from one another. But as they must never be divorced, so they should never be confounded. In their nature they are not only distinct from each other, but set in opposition

to one; another: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward, not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness: Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

The difference between the nature of believing and the nature of works, is as great as the difference between grace and a debt, or between the law and the promise. The meanest capacity can perceive a wide difference between the service performed by a domestic, and the credit he gives to his master's word, while the master generously promises to confer upon him some favour. Nobody ever imagined a domestic was performing any service to his master, when he believed a promise which his master made to him. The person who believes a promise made in his own favour, does honour to the generosity, truth, and candour of the person that made the promise; but he cannot be said to serve him by doing any work, while he only believes his word. By believing, we hear and receive the word of God, declaring his will to us, and giving unto us in that word eternal life: by working, we keep the law, and do the will of God. In believing, we consider God as revealing what is true, and giving us what is good: in working, we view him as a lawgiver, prescribing our duty, and demanding our services. In believing, we receive from him: in working, we set for him. In believing, we judge him faithful that hath promised: in working, we give obedience to his

commandments. By believing, we receive the conviction and the comfort of truth; by working, we act under the power of that conviction and comfort. When faith is called a work, and when it is enjoined unto mankind by the command of God; we are to remember, that the work they are called to do, is to live by the sovereign grace of God; and the everlasting righteousness of his "beloved Son in whom he is well pleased;" which are freely given to them in the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation. The gracious words that testify the free grace of God, are proposed to be the alone; and the whole dependence, life, and comfort of lost sinners, that they may hear and live, that they may believe and rejoice, and that their souls in believing them may enter into rest. These glorious blessings are not given in order to be enjoyed by men who perform some virtuous deed, but to be received and enjoyed by unworthy and guilty criminals. And as this receiving terminates directly in its objects, the favour of God, and the righteousness of Jesus, it can no more exist without them, than a beggar's receiving his alms can exist without the alms he receives, or eating without food, or beholding an object without the object beheld. Faith always receives the truth it believes; and the faith of God's elect receives, and depends upon, the gift of complete righteousness and salvation in Christ, by the free grace of God. In so doing, it only takes possession of Christ and eternal life, as a divine and undeserved gift. But in regard this is the gift of God, the revelation of it is attended with an express command, obliging all that hear it to receive and live by the given Saviour,

as roads of God unto them: wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. To conclude, a conviction of the truth of the sovereignty of divine grace, and of the sufficiency of Christ, and of this grace being revealed in Christ to the guilty and lost, is the only activity that answers to the doctrines of the gospel, or the command to believe on the name of Jesus Christ. But how widely different is this from all our activity in the service of God, as our Lord, our King, and our Lawgiver!

2. The preceding account of the foundation and nature of the faith of the gospel, is a manifest proof, that unfeigned faith is grounded in knowledge. How can we believe the word of God, without knowing it to be his word, and without understanding what it reveals to be believed by us? An implicit assent, not founded in knowledge and understanding, is necessary to be adopted in the church of Rome; but faith, founded in a blind attachment to an unknown doctrine, is not "the fruit of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation." He that heareth the word of Christ, must also understand it, in order that he may enjoy it through faith. Every one that "believeth on the Son," and hath everlasting life, must see him previous to his believing. Every man that cometh to Christ in a way of believing, must first "think and learn of the Father." Believers have "enlightened eyes of the understanding" given them, to know the things which are freely given to them of God. Their eyes are opened, and they are turned from darkness to light. Divine things are commended to their conscience, by a manifestation and discovery both of the meaning and authority of divine truth.

The necessity of knowledge in believing, is evident from the nature of faith: for "faith is the evidence," or demonstration, "of things not seen;" which it could not be, unless it perceived the meaning and authority of the truths it believes. "Faith is" also "the substance of things hoped for;" which necessarily implies some knowledge of the things hoped for, and a view of the word of God as the ground of its confident expectation.

Besides, it deserves particular attention, that "Faith is opposed to such things as imply a defect and want of knowledge, as to ignorance, darkness, and folly; and therefore there is a knowledge in faith. Paul maketh his ignorance and unbelief the joint causes of his rebellion against God. 'But,' says he, 'I did it ignorantly in unbelief.' It must needs be so, if in unbelief. So unbelief is made to be a state of darkness: 'The people which sat in darkness, saw great light.' Till men come to believe the gospel, they are under darkness. So the apostle saith, 'Blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.' Now, the great sin of the Jews is unbelief, and rejecting the light of the gospel. So the state opposite to faith, or to the learning of Christ, is expressed by 'the vanity of the mind, the darkness of the understanding, and blindness of heart,'—which three expressions denote vain principles, corrupt inferences, and want of spiritual wisdom to oversway the affections, and all the inclinations of the heart, into a subjection to the will of God." If we would be strong in the faith of the gospel, the rule is plain and express: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is an infallible directory how to "build up ourselves in our most holy faith."

8. From the account of believing that has been given, it appears, that assurance is of the essence of faith. There is, indeed, an assurance which is so far from being essential to faith, that it has nothing of faith in it, even in its highest degree. Suppose a Christian is assured of his union to Christ, of his reconciliation to God, and of his being an heir of salvation, by certain scriptural marks, and experimental evidences; this certainty is not founded upon the promise of God, but upon his own enjoyment, and is therefore called the assurance of sense. It is the same thing in effect that is frequently called by practical writers the reflex act of faith, concerning which I gave my opinion already. An anxious concern for the comfort of the people of God, has become a snare to some eminent ministers, who, endeavouring to administer consolation to dejected saints, whose experience does not clearly prove them to be in a state of grace, have excluded assurance from the nature of faith, when it is viewed as acting directly upon the word of God. The fallacy of their opinion proceeds entirely upon these two principles, that the assurance of a believer is his assurance concerning his gracious state, and that a believer can only know his gracious state by reflecting on his own experience. If these principles be false, or, which is the same thing, if they be understood in a wrong sense, the opinion that is built upon them must fall to the ground. I will have occasion afterwards to examine the last of them, and shall now

endeavour to show that the assurance of a believer, in the exercise of faith, is not an assurance concerning his gracious state, but a firm persuasion that God giveth to him eternal life in the declarations of the gospel, and that this life is in his Son. Hereby the soul becomes assured of the truth of God's word, and confidently depends upon it, as a sufficient ground of its hope of eternal life, judging him faithful that hath promised.

“The common sense of mankind,” says Ralph Erskine, “usually takes faith, or believing, for a persuasion. I believe such a thing; that is, I am persuaded or assured of it, I do not doubt it. I believe such a man; that is, I am persuaded it is truth that he says: if the honest man gives his word, his oath, his bond; this fortifies the persuasion, and certifies the person that hath ado with him. So here, to believe is to be persuaded, assured, and certified, upon the word, the oath, the bond, the promise, the covenant, yea, the blood and righteousness of a God; and he that believeth upon such a ground, as all true believers do, must believe with persuasion, according to the measure of his faith: if it be a weak faith, it is a weak persuasion; if a strong faith, a strong persuasion. Many do not understand themselves when they say they want assurance: for what better assurance would you have than the word of God? If you have his word, and take his word, you need no better assurance. If a man of credit, whom you can depend upon, give you his word for such a thing, then you depend upon it, and say you are assured of it, for you have his word. There is assurance of sense; that is, the assurance of the

work, when you have got the thing that is promised : this is not properly assurance, it is enjoyment ; but the assurance of faith, is the assurance of a word. If you take God's promise, you have the best assurance in the world. But if you say you want faith, you cannot take his word, or trust his word ; then this is plain dealing ; then you want assurance indeed, because you want faith, and cannot take his word, nor give him so much credit." The same worthy author, in another sermon, says, " If any ask, whether assurance be in the nature of faith ? I would ask, how the particular faith of a promise can be without assurance in the nature of it ? To believe, is to take the promise to yourself ; and to take the promise to yourself, is to believe, or be sure of it with respect to yourself. If one promise some good thing to you, what do you, when you take his word, or take his promise ? If you be not assured or persuaded of it with respect to yourself, then you do not take it ; but if you take it, then, upon the fidelity of the promiser, you are assured and persuaded of it with respect to yourself. Even so it is here : faith is a taking of God's word, a resting on God's promise, and trusting to the fidelity of the promiser. It is the nature of unbelief to stagger at the promise : and indeed the believer may have many doubtings and staggerings, because he hath much unbelief ; and the most part of believers, in our day, are unbelieving believers, staggering believers : but it is not faith that staggers, it is unbelief. The question is, What the believer does when he believes. Why, it is the nature of faith, to be persuaded of the promise, and to take God at his word ; and it

is by the virtue and power of the promise, to believe the truth and accomplishment of the promise, saying, 'Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.'

These judicious observations are sufficient, to explain and establish the assurance of faith, against all the cavils of the adversaries to this important truth. Do they tell us, "that many believers have not assurance?" We reply, that every believer, in the exercise of faith, hath a persuasion of the thing which he believes; he is sure it is what he believes it to be: and so far as he is not sure of it, he does not believe it. Do they further tell us, "that believers have many doubts and fears?" We allow it is so; and affirm that their unbelief is as manifold and strong as their doubts and fears. And, finally, do they urge this consequence against our opinion, "that believers can never have assurance, upon our principle, except they be living in the exercise of faith?" We own the consequence is just; and we maintain it, as a capital truth, clearly founded in the word of God, and abundantly confirmed in the experience of all that believe.

4. The view we have taken of faith, accounts in a satisfactory manner for the appropriation that is essential to the unfeigned belief of the gospel. "To appropriate, in the theological sense, is to take home the grace of God, which lies in the common indefinite grant of the gospel. Is Christ the treasure hid in the field? To appropriate this treasure, is to receive and use it as our own portion. Is Christ the balsam of Gilead, full of saving health? To appropriate this balsam, is to take and supply it

for the recovery of our own souls. And criticism such an appropriation, how can we either be enriched by the former, or healed by the latter? Let me farther explain my meaning, and exemplify the position, by considering Christ in his several offices. Christ, as a Priest, is made unto guilty creatures righteousness: when we appropriate the grace of our great High Priest, this is the language of our hearts; 'In the Lord have I righteousness.' Christ, as a Prophet, is made unto ignorant creatures wisdom: when we appropriate the benefits of our answering Prophet, this is the persuasion of our souls, 'Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me.' Christ, as a King, is made unto depraved creatures sanctification: when we appropriate the munificence of our Almighty King, this is our comfortable trust; 'The Lord will deliver me from every evil work.' This is what I mean by appropriation. That something of this kind is included in the essence of faith; is the sentiment I would maintain."

This idea of believing the gospel, agrees with the description of faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" it explains all that is meant by the metaphors used in the Scriptures; to express the nature of faith in Christ; and it is authorized by the experience of the saints.

First, The idea of believing the gospel, by appropriating Christ and eternal life in him to ourselves, agrees with the description of faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." When the mind is fully convinced of the blessings of the everlasting gospel, and possesses

them to be really what God says they are; and when they are perceived to be not only sufficient, amiable, and necessary, but freely promised and given to our enjoyment in the same testimony that informs us of their being provided; the person, under these views, judges God both gracious and faithful. In receiving the record, he is persuaded, that "God hath," indeed, "given to him eternal life in his Son;" and therefore in believing, he hath the Son, and having the Son, he hath life. "He that believeth" any truth, witnessed to him by any testimony whatever, "hath the witness," or the testimony which bears witness of the truth he believes, "in himself." He possesses that report in his mind, and it has the same influence upon his hopes or fears, his joy or grief, as if he really saw and possessed what he does not see, but believes upon the report made of it. If the report refers only to a fact, he believes it as a fact; that is, his persuasion of it is the evidence of what is not seen. If the report be a promise on which he depends, he believes it as such a promise; that is, his persuasion of it is not only the evidence of something not seen, but the substance of that same thing which he hopes for.—When this general idea of believing is applied to the given declarations or promises of the gospel, it includes every thing we mean by the appropriation of divine faith.

Secondly, This idea of appropriation in faith, explains, without any force, all that is meant by the metaphors used in the Scriptures, to express the nature and exercise of believing in Christ. There is great variety, and a peculiar beauty, in the figura-

tive descriptions of faith, which occur in holy writ. I shall mention a few of them, as so many examples of the whole.—Faith is styled a “looking unto Jesus.” But if we do not look unto Jesus for pardon, righteousness, and salvation to ourselves, as the stung Israelites looked to the brazen serpent for their own cure, and as the lame man gave heed unto Peter and John at the gate of the temple; what comfort or what benefit can we derive from the sight?—Faith is a “receiving of Christ.” But can we have any pretence to receive him, or take possession of his unsearchable riches, unless they appear to be given to us, as the manna was to Israel? This is what neither the dictates of conscience will allow, nor the laws of reason authorize.—Faith is also a “resting on Christ.” But how can we rest on a surety, without viewing him as having interposed in our behalf? or how can we confide in a payment, unless we consider it as made for our debts?—When Christ is represented by the similitude of “bread that cometh down from heaven” for the hungry soul; faith is described as an “eating him;” which cannot be done without a particular appropriation of him to our own souls.—When Christ is held forth under the image of “living waters,” ever running, and always free for the thirsty appetite; faith is said to be a drinking them. But unless waters are actually drank, the thirst will not be quenched, nor the spirits refreshed, however copiously the waters run, and however freely they be presented.—When Christ is described as “a garment,” to accommodate destitute creatures, and to beautify deformed sinners; faith is expressed by putting on this glorious robe:

which is an expression that strongly denotes an actual appropriation.—When the mighty Redeemer is viewed as “a strong tower;” faith is designed a running to him for safety, and a “fleeing to him for refuge” in the most imminent dangers, as the man-slayer fled from the avenger of blood, to the city of refuge God had appointed for his secure habitation.—Believing on Christ is a “laying hold on his strength,” and “taking hold of God’s covenant.” But this cannot be done without embracing and appropriating what we lay hold upon, for our own personal benefit.

I shall only add, that believing in Christ is frequently called a “trusting in him.” When a man trusts in any person or thing, he depends upon it as sufficient for the purpose of his confidence, assuring himself that it will effectually answer his wishes and expectations. If he finds himself deceived, he is ashamed of his confidence; but this implies, that he believed it to be sufficient for his benefit, before he made the experiment, which convinced him of his error, in placing his dependence where he should not have placed it. Trusting in the Lord must imply an entire dependence on his word, whereby the soul renounces every other confidence, and rests perfectly satisfied with that provision which the undecieving promise of God has revealed, and infallibly secured.

It is scarcely necessary to hint unto the intelligent reader, that these metaphorical expressions do not describe so many different acts of faith; nor would it be fair to understand some of them as pointing at lower degrees of faith, and others of them at such

as are more eminent. But the true reason of the variety and difference of these beautiful images, is founded in the variety and difference of the character of Christ, and of the condition of the believer. There is as much activity of the soul in looking to Christ, as in running to him. Faith acts in the same manner, and upon the same principle, when it looks to Jesus, when it receives him, when it rests upon him, when it eats his flesh, and drinks his blood, when it puts him on, when it runs and flees to him for refuge, when it lays hold on him, and when it trusts in him. People may amuse themselves with distinctions founded on the sound of words as they please, but the act of divine faith, which is described by these elegant figures, is too simple to admit their metaphysical refinements.*

Thirdly, The idea of appropriation in the faith of the gospel, is authorized by the experiences of the saints. On this head we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, who all agree in one: and this agreement is the happy result of their having obtained like precious faith, and of their being endowed with the same Spirit of faith. Hence they all speak one language, and with one heart and one mouth they concur in attesting, that an appropriating persuasion of salvation by Christ alone, is that confidence which properly answers to the divine report,

* "Christ, the ever-blessed object of faith, is presented to us in the gospel, under a great many different views and aspects, in correspondence unto which faith receives its denomination.—According to the aspect in which Christ is presented, faith receives its name; as the sea receives its names, according to the different countries or shores it washes."—*Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's Sermons, printed at Edinburgh, 1761, Vol. I. p. 298.*

and grant of a Saviour to be believed on for everlasting life. They who lived before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, "were persuaded of the promises," and had not the least distrust with regard to their performance; nay, they embraced them as their own, and hugged them, as it were, to their very souls.—They who lived under the Jewish law, could say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."—They who live under that dispensation of the grace of God which is established in the New Testament, express themselves in the same language: "We believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they."—The confession God has drawn for all true believers runs in these precise and expressive terms: "They shall say, The Lord is my God." I might, on this head, mention the faith of Abraham and Sarah, of David and Job, of Habakkuk and Micah, of Paul and Peter, with many others; but it shall suffice to observe, that the faith of God's elect is every where represented as a "believing in Christ." This belief in or on Christ, must imply their confident dependence on him for that purpose which they expect to obtain at his hands. Salvation to their souls is the end of their faith; but they could never be said, either with propriety or truth, to believe in Christ for this salvation, unless their whole dependence be set upon him for this inestimable blessing to themselves, and for their own benefit. Such a dependence on Christ is the very thing we mean by a believing appropriation of him, or believing in him as presented to us in the word of God for all the pur-

poster of our salvation. "The soul which thus dependeth on Christ, believeth in Christ; the soul which does not thus depend on him, doth not believe in his name.

To obviate all objections against this appropriation; I shall briefly state the following propositions concerning the point, and leave them with the reader:

—(1.) The appropriation we contend for is entirely founded upon the record of God, giving us, as lost sinners, eternal life in Christ: it is just the echo of the soul to the divine testimony. (2.) The mind, in appropriating Christ and eternal life in his name, has no other activity than in receiving any promise whatever. There is, indeed, a very great difference between the promise of eternal life and complete salvation, which the God of truth hath given us, and every other promise made by men; but the activity of the mind in receiving both is the same: for, "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," though the act of receiving both is the same.* (3.) The appropriation of faith does not arise from any supposition that God has chosen us to salvation, or that Christ died with a design to redeem us; nor is it grounded on any marks and evidences of a gracious work within us; nor does it imply a persuasion that we are in the actual possession of those things we reckon to be our own: but it is a persuasion that God really giveth us a sufficient and a desirable salvation to be enjoyed in Christ; and, viewing it in this light, we believe God

* This observation has been explained and confirmed in the first section of this chapter, and in the preceding reflection, which relates to the assurance of faith.

consideration to inquire, How is Christ enjoyed or possessed? Surely "he dwells in the hearts of his people by faith;" that is, he is enjoyed in his word, when it is received and embraced by the soul.* Now, the question recurs, By what means does a believer know, that Christ, whom he receives and rests upon for salvation, is his own Saviour? While many deride all pretensions to certainty concerning this point, others suggest, that the works, evidences, or experiences of a believer, must be the criterion of his interest to his own mind; and deny that he can be sure that Christ is his Saviour by any other ordinary means. But, in opposition to both these erroneous notions, it is evident, both from experience and from the Scripture, that believing in Christ, according to the degree and measure of faith, gives the soul a conscious enjoyment of Christ; or, in other words, the soul, in believing the divine testimony concerning Christ, knows him to be its own salvation, and depends upon him as such. Without knowing a benefit promised by a trusty friend to be his own, no man could be justified in trusting his friend for that benefit. When the apostle had stated the evidence, and explained the import, of the gospel record, he accounts for this part of his epistle, by telling his correspondents, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Wherein three things are particularly worthy

* That Christ is enjoyed in the word of God, by believing on him as therein revealed, is expressly asserted, and clearly explained, in that beautiful passage, Rom. x. 6—17.

of our regard, and useful to clear up the point under consideration. (1.) The apostle writes to them "that believe on the name of the Son of God;" whom he had described a few verses before, as persons that receive "the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son." The apostle does not mention any other character of the saints, but confines himself precisely to this one view of them—that they judge God faithful in the record of the gospel, and accordingly believe in, or depend upon, the name of his Son. He does not write to them under the notion of their perceiving some marks, evidences, or experiences, in their own character, which distinguished them from others; but he addresses all that place their whole dependence for their salvation upon the name of Jesus Christ. (2.) The apostle's design in writing to believers concerning the record of God, is, that they "may know that they have eternal life," while they perceive that it is bequeathed and made over to them in the gospel of their salvation. But how could his writing to them on that subject enable them to know that they have eternal life, unless the gospel report gave them sufficient evidence that eternal life is actually given to them? and that every believer of that report, according to the proportion of his faith, sees and is persuaded that it is his own in that free gift, and therefore embraces it, and depends upon it as his portion? In the apostle's view, believers are to know that they have eternal life, not from what they feel in their hearts, nor from what they recollect in their conduct; but they are to know this comfortable truth by receiving and resting upon the written testimony of God: for,

says the beloved disciple, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (3.) The best way to have our knowledge and evidence of an interest in Christ confirmed and increased, is to live by the faith of the Son of God. When the apostle had asserted, that he wrote to believers, in order that they might know that they had eternal life, he subjoins, "And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." From this account it is evident, that the same things are written to give us the knowledge of eternal life as our inheritance, and to be the foundation of our faith in Christ. The same truths that warrant our dependence on the name of the Son of God, do also convey to every believer the knowledge of his having everlasting life: and if these things are so, it follows, with all the evidence both of reason, and experience, and scripture, that the word of faith is the ground of a believer's enjoying Christ by faith; and that believing on the name of Christ is accompanied with, or rather it includes, the knowledge of an interest in him.

I do not know that this position has ever been controverted, except by such as deny that assurance and appropriation, in the sense before explained, are essential to the faith of the gospel. It is with very great pleasure that I refer the reader for a full explication and defence of this point, to Mr. Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, Direction 10th, where the author professedly treats of it, and shows that it is both important and deeply interesting; he proves it to be a scripture doctrine, and vintates it upon the principle of Christian experience.

7. What has been said in explaining the nature and the foundation of divine faith, furnishes a satisfying answer to that question, Whether does the faith of the gospel import our believing something that was true before we believed it? or does it imply our believing something that only becomes true when we believe it? Every good and perfect gift is conveyed in the declarations of the gospel, to be received and enjoyed by the knowledge and belief of these declarations. There is no enjoyment of Christ, or any of the blessings of salvation, except in a way of believing. We cannot believe upon any other ground than the word of God, which presents to us these blessings to be received, and the sufficient warrant we have, as sinners, to take possession of them for our own benefit. Therefore, what we believe is true in itself, before we believe it, in this sense, that the blessings we receive are real, independent of our believing them to be such; and these blessings are freely given and exhibited to us, independent of our receiving them. When we realize and appropriate these given blessings, we only believe that they are real and substantial things, according to the testimony of God concerning them in his word; and we depend upon them as given to us for our own benefit. This faith does not, in the least, go beyond the word of the Lord; because it only receives what is given, and depends upon what is spoken, by the God of truth.

If it be said, that the confidence of believers exceeds the revelation God has made unto them in his word, while they express themselves in such language as this, "We believe that through the

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved," I answer, This confidence corresponds most harmoniously with the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, wherein Christ says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." It expresses their perception of the word of God, their persuasion concerning it, and their embracing it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, for their own personal benefit. Such a declaration of their confidence can never be true, such a confidence can never exist, before they believe.* Christ and his great salvation, in all its several branches, are exhibited in the Scriptures, and they are enjoyed in the belief of the word that exhibits them; but it is impossible they can be enjoyed without that belief. The descriptions of faith that express its boldest and most assuring confidence, are not to be considered as a bare account of the thing that is believed; but they manifestly relate to the appropriating trust of the soul, built upon the divine testimony concerning that which is enjoyed by believing. The faith that answers to the declarations of the gospel, is not a firm assent to some general propositions, but a persuasion of, and a

* "When the word *faith* belongeth to persons, it comprehendeth and includeth both their believing, and what they believe, or believe in. What is to be believed, or to be believed in, doth not become any man's faith before he believeth it, or believeth in it. My faith, belief, or creed, meaneth what I believe; or what is believed, or believed in by me. What I believe, may be true before I believe it; but it is not my faith before I believe it. The gospel is the truth of God, whether it is believed or not; for it is the same truth before and after believing of it. But the gospel doth not become any person's faith, till he believeth it. If I believe not the gospel, yet, nevertheless, it is the precious truth of God: but if I believe the gospel, it becometh my faith." Ing-ham on the Faith and Hope of the Gospel, p. 11, 12.

dependence upon, such declarations as convey to us eternal life in the form of a free gift. Therefore, when the apostle says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" he is not to be understood as if he believed any thing that was not true, even before he believed it; and yet this declaration he makes concerning his faith could not be true before he believed; because it is a contradiction to suppose, that an unbeliever can live by the faith of the Son of God.

What I mean on this head may be summed up in these four propositions: (1.) Divine faith has its alone and whole foundation in the word of God. (2.) Every thing revealed in the word of God, as an article of faith, is unquestionably true in itself, whether it be believed or not; and therefore they that believe not are represented as making God a liar, which implies that his witness is true beyond all dispute. (3.) We cannot enjoy the good things reported to us in the divine record, without the belief of that record. And, (4.) All the appropriating confidence of believers concerning the record of God, implies their belief of that record, and their dependence upon it. In other words, their confidence is the suitable exercise of their minds about divine truths which they believe; and therefore, as it cannot be exercised about any thing but what was true before their minds were exercised about it, so it cannot exist until the soul actually believeth.

8. The account that has been given of divine faith in the preceding sections, shows the propriety of living by faith on all occasions, and in all circumstances and conditions. Things not seen are presented to

our faith in the word of God, that we may look at them as our own, and take the enjoyment of them for ourselves, without waiting for any ground of hope in the appearances of providence, and without attempting to seek any recommendation to render us worthy of such inestimable mercies. When the mountains depart, and the hills are removed, the Lord's covenant of peace remains immovable; when man is turned into destruction, the word of our God, which is preached to us by the gospel, endureth for ever. Therefore, "let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." What time we are afraid, let us trust in him. When providence frowns, and Satan tempts us,—when the world hateth us, and our consciences condemn us,—when all refuge faileth us, and none careth for our souls,—then let our dependence be firmly rooted and grounded on the wisdom, power, faithfulness, and mercy of a promising God. The prophet sets us an example, and invites us to copy it, while he sings in the following words: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will," even on such an occasion, "rejoice in the Lord; I will," in such distressing circumstances, "joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."

CHAPTER III.

THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING THE GOSPEL.

WHEN God created man in his own likeness, and after his own image, he endued him with all that knowledge of his will, and with all those powers and inclinations for his service, which thoroughly furnished him unto every good work. But man, being in honour, did not continue; he became like unto the beasts that perish. By his fall he became a wretched sinner, and a child of wrath. Being altogether dead in trespasses and sins, and exposed to the wrath and curse of his offended Judge, he is not in a condition to contribute, in the smallest degree, to his own recovery. In these deplorable circumstances of sin and ruin, it pleased God to reveal a help meet for our forlorn and hopeless state, namely, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, the head of that better covenant by which life and immortality are brought to light, and conveyed to our enjoyment. Upon the revelation of this rich and abounding grace, it is become our indispensable duty to believe the gospel; and to neglect the great salvation therein revealed, will be the condemnation of every unbeliever. So absolutely necessary is faith in the system of our holy religion, that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and "without faith it is impossible to please God."

To illustrate the necessity of believing the gospel, I shall only propose four things to the reader's con-

sideration : (1.) Jesus Christ, with all his unsearchable riches, is proposed in the gospel as a sufficient Saviour, and suitable portion, to a guilty perishing world. (2.) There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved; neither is there salvation in any other, besides the name of Christ alone. (3.) Whosoever believeth in the name of the Son of God, shall have everlasting life. And, (4.) He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. If these four propositions can be supported with sufficient evidence, the necessity of believing the gospel will be abundantly manifest. To demonstrate the truth of them severally, shall be the subject of so many sections: though the proof rests upon the whole of them taken together.

SECT. I.—*Jesus Christ, with all his unsearchable riches, is proposed in the Gospel as a sufficient Saviour, and suitable portion, to a guilty perishing world.*

“ This is the constant report of the gospel concerning him, ‘ That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.’ ‘ He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.’ In the word of the gospel, Christ is held forth as an able Saviour; able to save poor sinners from their sins, and from the wrath of God. His merit is a sufficient defence against the tempest of fiery wrath, which incensed justice is ready to cause to fly forth against transgressors: ‘ A man shall be a covert from the tempest.’ His Spirit is sufficient

to sanctify the most unholy: ‘ And such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.’ The righteousness he fulfilled as the condition of the covenant, is so valuable in itself, and in the eyes of his Father, that it is sufficient to procure justification, sanctification, and all other saving benefits to sinners, who in themselves deserve death and damnation : so that they are happy who are in him ; they shall never perish, but have everlasting life, being eternally secure under the covert of his righteousness.” The apostle gives a concise and full account of the character in which the Son of God is presented to lost sinners, when he tells the Corinthian believers, that “ they were in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption : that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” In this beautiful passage, many things, pertinent to the present purpose, demand our serious attention ; particularly the inventory that is drawn of the unsearchable riches of Christ, under three heads :—The ordinance of God concerning the fulness of Christ, appointing it for the benefit of sinners ;—the complete happiness of believers, in the enjoyment of Christ as their salvation ; and, the design of bringing sinners into a state of salvation by this means, and not by any other.

1. The apostle draws up an inventory of the unsearchable riches of Christ, which he arranges under four heads ; to wit, “ wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” These capital blessings are adapted to the sinfulness and wretched-

obedience, he justifies them, in the imputed obedience of their glorious Surety. "For," says the apostle, "he hath made him to be sin for us," by imputing our offences to him, "who knew no sin" in his nature or life; "that we," who were children of disobedience and wrath, "might be made the righteousness of God in him." The design of this astonishing and gracious exchange is, that sinners might be covered with that very righteousness, which the God of all perfection, uniting himself to our nature, wrought, finished, and infinitely ennobled. Believers in Christ are hereby furnished with a plea, as prevalent for their justification and admission into the divine favour, as if they had retained their innocence untainted, and in every respect conformed themselves to the righteousness which the law of God requires. Thus the salvation of sinners neither clashes with the truth, nor interferes with the justice, of the Supreme Legislator. Thus the incarnate Jehovah, by a gracious imputation of his services performed, and sufferings endured, in our nature, and in our name, is our righteousness; ours to all the intents of justification and salvation, yea, as much ours, for these blessed purposes, as if we had wrought it out, each in his own person.* Therefore, it is a faithful and just procedure in the most high God, to justify an ungodly sinner that believeth on Jesus.

Moreover, "Christ is of God made unto us *sanctification*," to subdue our iniquities, to purify our

* The Arminian doctrine concerning the universal extent of Christ's death, appears to be false upon every principle. What is here said of his righteousness, is to be understood of the same persons, and in the same extent, with that prophetic passage, *er. xxiii. 6.*

hearts, and to renew our depraved natures ; that “ as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam,” from whom we inherit universal pollution, “ we might also bear the image of the heavenly,” in point of true and prevailing holiness. Christ is our true principle of sanctification. “ True morality,” says Mr. Hervey, “ is the image of the blessed God : it is most charmingly delineated throughout the whole Bible ; it is the beginning of heaven in the human soul ; and its proper origin is from the cross of our divine Master. Through the merits of his death, sinners are made partakers of the Holy Spirit ; who writes upon their hearts, and makes legible in their conversation, what was anciently written upon the mitre of the high priest, ‘ HOLINESS TO THE LORD.’ And, oh ! what a motive is the cross of Christ to the exercise of every virtue ! He died—my Lord, my Judge, my King died, ‘ to redeem me from all iniquity, and make me zealous of good works.’ How powerfully, far beyond any naked instructions or abstract reasonings, do such considerations invite us, urge us, constrain us, to renounce all ungodliness, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour !”—“ Observe some beautiful and copious river ; how it exhilarates the country, and fructifies the soil through which it passes ; bestows a thousand conveniences, and gives birth to a thousand delights, wherever it takes its winding course. So the Comforter, dwelling in the heart, gives such charming views of Christ and his unsearchable riches, as gladden the conscience, and make us truly happy. Hence, as from an inexhaustible source, true holiness flows, and every good thing. This disposes us to love our neigh-

bour : this teaches us to be meek in spirit : and this will raise our desires far above earthly, sensual, transitory things ; even as David's thoughts were raised far above the shepherd's scrip, when he sat on the throne of Israel. Under the influence of this divine Spirit, you will say, Christ has taken away the execrable filth of my sins ; and shall I wallow in the mire of iniquity again ? Christ has delivered me from the pit of everlasting destruction ; and shall I leap into those unquenchable flames, from which, as a brand, I have been snatched ? In my adorable Redeemer I have a perfect righteousness, and am completely justified ; and shall I not endeavour to walk worthy of such favours, to show my gratitude for such beneficence, by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in all my conversation ?”

Finally, Christ is of God made unto us *redemption*, to rescue us from all evil, and render us, both in body and soul, completely and eternally happy. By the law of Israel, the right of redemption lay in the next kinsman, who was to marry the widow, to purchase her land, to ransom his poor relation from bondage, and to avenge the blood of his kinsman on the murderer. That Christ might become our Redeemer, he became our kinsman, and “took hold of the seed of Abraham ;” by which means he has a complete qualification for the effectual discharge of this office. The price of our redemption is not corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but his own precious blood, which was shed for remission of sins unto many. This is the ransom for our souls, and the atonement for our sins ; this hath satisfied the justice of God, and obtained eternal redemption for

us. But as we are naturally in a state of bondage under the tyranny of Satan, and under the dominion of sin, governed by the influence of a present evil world, and obnoxious to death; our Redeemer must not only ransom us to God with his blood, but must destroy the devil, subdue our iniquities, deliver us from a present evil world, unsting our death, and ransom us from the power of the grave. Christ is actually made unto us redemption, to accomplish all these grand and blessed purposes. He who redeems us from the curse of the law, doth also deliver us out of the hand of all our enemies, and redeem us from all adversities.

I shall only add, that Christ is not made unto us of God any one of these blessings singly, but all of them together. God hath inseparably united them in the person of his Son, in the revelation of his grace, and in the happy experience of his people. They must either be all received, or they must all be despised and rejected.

2. The apostle declares, that the fulness of Christ is appointed, by the ordinance of heaven, for the benefit of mankind-sinners: and therefore he says, "Christ Jesus is made of God unto us wisdom," &c. The brazen serpent had no efficacy in itself to heal the wound that was made by a poisonous serpent; and yet every Israelite who was stung by these venomous animals, was commanded to look unto the brazen serpent for his cure. Even so hath God ordained Christ to be his salvation to perishing sinners, and hath accordingly revealed him in his word unto mankind-sinners, assuring them, that "whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting-

ing life. Only whereas the brazen serpent has no virtue in itself to cure the wounded, it is the character of our Lord Jesus, that he is "full of grace and truth." He is "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He is all this in himself; and our right to enjoy these precious blessings, which are his fulness, lies in the revelation of this all-sufficient Saviour unto the sons of men, whereby God makes, ordains, and exhibits him unto every one that hears the gospel. This revelation as much warrants every sinner to receive and trust in Christ, as the gift of the manna warranted the congregation of Israel to gather it, and use it for their food; or an invitation warrants every one that is invited, to partake of an entertainment. When the apostle says, "Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom," &c. his meaning is not, that Jesus was appointed in the secret purpose of God to save the elect; nor does he only intimate by that expression, that Christ is actually enjoyed by believers as their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." That Jesus Christ was designed by the secret purpose of God to save the elect, and that he is actually enjoyed by believers, are undoubtedly scripture truths; but the apostle had something else in his eye, when he says, "Christ is of God made unto us wisdom," &c.; namely, that he is revealed, given, and exhibited, as the ordinance of heaven for these grand purposes unto sinners by the gospel. This sense of the passage is evident from the text and context, where the different effects of the same gospel, preached to the Jews and Greeks, to the learned and unlearned, to high and low, without any

distinction or difference, are particularly mentioned; and its happy effects towards those that believe it, are described in this address unto them. Owing to the sovereign mercy of God, "ye" that believe "are in Christ Jesus" by a vital and indissoluble union, "who of God is made unto us," in that gospel which we hear and believe, and which many hear and reject; in that common report, he is "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," in order "that no flesh may glory in his presence; but as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," who hath mercifully provided such a Saviour, and hath freely revealed him as his salvation to the ends of the earth. By this revelation of him we are called, and under this revelation unbelievers are left without excuse; because Christ Jesus of God is made a common salvation to all in the faithful record of the gospel.

3. The complete happiness of believers, who enjoy Christ as their salvation, is strongly implied in the apostolic congratulation: "Ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." As if he should say, ye are complete in him; he is all your salvation; and his unsearchable riches are your inexhaustible, endless, satisfying treasure. The wisdom of Christ enlightens the mind; his righteousness justifies the conscience; his sanctification renews the whole man; and his redemption delivers the saints out of the hand of all their enemies. "Blessed are all they that trust in the Lord, who is a sun and shield, who will give grace and glory, and will not withhold any good thing."

4. The design of making sinners completely happy by believing in Christ, and by the enjoying of his salvation proposed in the record of God unto all that hear it, is, that “no flesh may glory in his presence,” even though he is a partaker of Christ, but may glory only in the Lord. Did salvation come to our enjoyment by any other means than faith, we should have some ground of boasting, as if we had contributed somewhat to it by our own endeavours; but as it is revealed to us in the gracious declarations of the Scripture, that we may receive and rest upon the testimony of God concerning it, all boasting is entirely excluded.

Upon the whole, we conclude, that Jesus Christ, with all his unsearchable riches, is proposed to a guilty perishing world, in the gospel, as a sufficient Saviour and a suitable portion; that “whosoever will, may come and take of the water of life freely.” Blessed be God for this word of salvation, which is brought so near unto us, and which endureth for ever! May the divine Comforter enlighten our understandings to discern it, and open our hearts to embrace it as our whole dependence!

SECT. II.—*There is no salvation for Sinners in any other than Jesus Christ, revealed in the Gospel; and there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but his name alone.*

In our lost state there was no eye to pity us, and no friendly hand to be stretched out for our help. We had destroyed ourselves; holy angels neither

could nor would hold any intercourse with rebels against their God; and devils rejoiced to see mankind in the same state of disobedience and condemnation with themselves. Without any source of happiness in ourselves, and destitute of every created aid, the Lord looked, and there was none to help us; and he wondered that there was none to uphold us: therefore his own arm brought salvation, and he revealed our help in his only-begotten Son. He is the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof; “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Where it is strongly intimated, that salvation may be found in the name of Jesus Christ; which I attempted to illustrate in the preceding section: and it is expressly denied, that it can be obtained any other way; which is the point to be established at present. In doing this, it will be proper, (1.) To show that there is no salvation in any other; and then, (2.) To explain the reason urged by Peter to prove, that there is no salvation in any other but him.

First, I proposed to show, That there is no salvation in any other but Christ. This detested truth is expressly and uniformly witnessed by the law and the prophets. All the people of God have eternal life in the name of the Lord Jesus; but all that are far from him shall perish. Every blessing that constitutes or accompanies salvation, belongs to one or other of the articles, in that comprehensive catalogue, —“wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;” and it has been observed, that all these are inseparable from Christ. The several

names and titles given to Christ in the Scriptures, are a further proof, that there is no salvation but in him alone, as will sufficiently appear from these few examples :—

(1.) He is the door by which sinners enter into a state of life and salvation ; and we are assured there are no more doors but one. If a house has but one door, no man can enter that house but by that one door : and no more can any lost sinner enter into a state of salvation but by Christ. It is impossible to climb up some other way, or to break through the wall by force. We must either enter and enjoy salvation by Christ, the only door of access, or be forever shut out from the favour of God and the glories of heaven. It is only by faith that we have living union to Christ, and fellowship with his Father.

(2.) He is the only way to the Father. When a traveller walks in a way, he leaves one place where he was, and goes towards another where he was not ; and the way he walks in, is the communication between these places. Christ is the new and living way from a state of sin and death to a state of grace and glory. The gulf is altogether impassable by any other means : and if we sit still in a state of sin and misery, we must remain under the curse, under the law, and under the wrath of God. Our Lord has expressly decided the dispute on this point, when he said, “ No man cometh to the Father but by me.”

(3.) He is the vine, and his members are the branches : to teach us, that as the branches of the vine-tree cannot live a vegetative life, but wither and perish, and are fit for nothing but to be burnt, when they are separated and cut off from the vine ;

so we can neither live in the favour of God here, nor with God hereafter, if we have no union to Christ. When a branch is severed from the tree, it must die; because its life and vigour lay in its constant supplies from the fulness and life of the root: even so those branches that are not in Christ, must wither, and die, and perish.

(4.) He is "the head of the church, which is his body;" and the saints are "members in particular." The animal spirits formed in the head, are formed for the benefit of the whole body, and designed for the use of all the members. The body and all its members live by the continued supplies of those animal spirits constantly administered from the head. In like manner, the life of the soul lies in Christ, out of whose fulness all the saints "receive, and grace for grace." By holding fast the head, from whom the whole body and all its particular members, "by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and being thus knit together, believers increase with the increase of God."

(5.) He is "our peace," who hath finished our transgression, and made reconciliation for our iniquity, by giving himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour. All that believe on him, are reconciled to God by his death; and every unbeliever is a child of wrath, as well as an enemy unto God in his mind by wicked works. To every such sinner God saith, "There is no peace to the wicked." Seeing therefore we can only be reconciled to God, and forgiven our iniquities, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, it is

a certain consequence that there is no salvation for us in any other but him.

(6.) He is "our hope." Hence the apostle sums up the riches of the glory of the gospel in these few comprehensive words,—“Christ in believers the hope of glory.” He is justly called “the hope of glory” in the saints: for he hath removed all that could obstruct their hope of glory; he hath done all that is necessary to encourage it; and he gives his people some earnest of all this in their own happy experience. But O how different from all this is the case of sinners, who are “without Christ!” they have no “hope,” that is, they are either in despair, or else they trust in lies.

(7.) Christ is the alone foundation God layeth for us in Zion, that we may believe on him for salvation. Whosoever believeth on Christ, shall not be ashamed of his confidence. He may be compared to a prudent man, that built his house upon a rock; and therefore it resists the fury of winds, and rain, and tempests. But whosoever believeth not on the name of Jesus, shall assuredly be confounded. He may be compared to a foolish man, that built his house upon the sand; and therefore his labour is laid in ruins by the first attacks of the wind, the rain, and the tempest. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Shame, confusion, and anguish will eternally prey upon the infatuated sinner, that neglects the great, the alone salvation, which is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and makes lies his refuge.

I might likewise prove, that there is no salvation in any other than Christ, by showing that none can

be saved by the general mercy of God, without a respect to Jesus Christ; nor by the best external privileges; nor by the highest improvements of their reason and free-will; nor by their good works. But as these topics have been hinted already in the former part of this work, I shall leave the inspired determination, that "there is no salvation in any other" besides Christ alone, to be received and acquiesced in, without gainsaying, as an indisputable principle of the Christian faith; and proceed to the next branch of this section, which was,

Secondly, To explain the reason urged by Peter, to prove that there is no salvation in any other besides Christ. The reason is expressed thus:—"For there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The force of the reason is shortly this, that Jesus Christ is the only person whom God hath appointed, sent, and given, to be the Saviour of the world. It implies four capital principles, to wit,—that the Saviour of sinners must bear a commission and appointment from God;—that the scheme of salvation he executes, must be honourable to all the perfections and declarations of God;—that this Saviour must be revealed, in order that sinners may believe on him; and, finally,—that there is no such Saviour revealed among men under the whole heavens, besides Jesus Christ alone.

1. The Saviour of sinners must bear a commission and appointment from God, authorizing him to be their Redeemer. "No man taketh unto himself the honour" of a divine office, "but he that is thereunto called of God, as was Aaron." Without the

appointment of God, it would be dangerous presumption for any person to pretend to the character of a Saviour; and without perceiving the evidences of such a commission, it would be the grossest infatuation for any sinner to depend upon a Saviour. There is no part of the character of Jesus more frequently mentioned in the Scriptures, than that which represents him as chosen, called, and sent by God. "Christ glorified not himself, to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee," the same supreme authority glorified him: and therefore he is said to be "called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec." His commission is also properly authenticated to the world: "For him hath God the Father sealed," having given mankind the most undeniable evidences, that Jesus Christ is his only-begotten Son, and that he is appointed to be our Saviour. His commission was opened in the prophecies that went before concerning him, for the space of four thousand years; it was ratified by the typical ceremonies that prefigured his mediation; it was witnessed by angels, and other concurring circumstances at his birth; it was attested at his baptism; it was demonstrated by his doctrine and miracles during his life; it was evidenced by the extraordinary signs, both in heaven and earth, that accompanied his death; it was confirmed by his resurrection; it was further manifested by his ascension, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost; and the power that makes the gospel effectual in every succeeding age, exhibits an evident standing proof, "that the Father" actually "sent the Son to be the Saviour

of the world." These witnesses agree in one, and are so many seals appended to the commission of our Lord Jesus, which manifestly demonstrate him to be the sent of God, and his ordinance for our salvation.

2. The scheme of salvation which Christ executes, must be honourable to all the perfections and declarations of God; for so much is imported in the expression,—“Whereby we must be saved;” or rather, “Whereby we ought to be saved.”* The meaning of the apostle is, that there is no name under heaven, whereby it could consist with the honour of God to save sinners, except the name of Jesus. If the sovereign Jehovah be pleased to have mercy on any, he must not suffer their sin to pass unpunished; he must declare his righteousness as a Judge, while he extends favour to the children of disobedience. Sinners ought not to be saved upon any other terms than the law of works has immutably fixed, as an honourable and adequate standard of the divine government; namely, perfect obedience, and an infinitely precious sacrifice. Nor should sinners

* “We ought to be saved.”—This is the true meaning of the original phrase used in the text, *διουθενου σωτηριας*. The expression does not signify any absolute necessity of our being saved; but it certainly means, that, if God is pleased to save any of mankind, they ought to be saved in such a way as is most consistent with the glory of his own perfection, and the honour of his declarations. The word *δου*, which is translated *must*, and which I translate *ought*, is frequently used in the New Testament, and frequently rendered *ought*, as in Matth. xxiv. 27. Eph. vi. 20. Heb. ii. 1. The same word is used in Luke xxiv. 46. and translated, with very great propriety, *behooved*; and this translation may be adopted in the text now under our consideration, which will then run thus: “There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we *behooved* to be saved,” with honour to God, and with certain benefit to ourselves. Unless the scheme of our salvation were honourable to God, it is altogether impossible it could have been successful.

trust in any other expedient for their pardon, and acceptance, and salvation, but that which God has assured them is acceptable and pleasing in his sight. Now, there is a consistent discovery of the glory of God, as a holy and righteous Lawgiver, and as a merciful and gracious Father, made in the face of Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled all righteousness in our room, and obtained eternal redemption for us. God will by no means give his glory to any other, nor even suffer it to be injured by his acts of kindness towards men. It is meet and fit upon every account, that the Lord God, merciful and gracious, support the authority of his law, and maintain all its holy and righteous honours, while he showeth mercy. Blessed be God for that everlasting covenant, which is ordered in all things that concern his own glory and our salvation, without diminishing the one or preventing the other, because Jesus is the Mediator of it.

3. The Saviour whom God hath appointed to redeem sinners, in a way that is honourable to all his perfections and declarations, must be revealed, in order that he may be believed on. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." That sinners may believe on Christ, his name must be given among men; and the word that reveals him, must be nigh them. The whole Scriptures testify of Christ, and are written for this very purpose, "that we," who are favoured with them, "may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we may have life through his name."

4. God hath not revealed any other Saviour among men, under the face of the whole heavens,

besides his Son Jesus Christ. All the redeemed of the Lord, in every period of the world, and in every nation, have been saved by the Son of God alone: He was revealed to Adam and Eve, as the "seed of the woman that should bruise the head of the serpent;" to Abraham, he was promised as "his seed, in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed;" to Jacob, as the Shiloh that should come out of the tribe of Judah, unto whom the gathering of the people shall be; to Moses, as the Prophet whom the Lord would raise up unto Israel of their brethren; and he is the subject of all the revelations God hath given, at sundry times, and in divers manners, unto a lost world, concerning their salvation. In all the writings both of the prophets and of the apostles, Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone.

Thus it appears, that there is no salvation in any other besides Christ; because none but God's own Son is appointed and sent to be the Saviour of the world; because the salvation that is in the name of Jesus, is the only scheme that is consistent with the honour of God; because God hath revealed and given unto mankind-sinners eternal life in the name of his Son; and because he never did, and never will, give salvation to them that are lost, upon any other terms. Examine the historical records of ages past, and survey all nations that live on the face of the whole earth; and you will find, that "there is no other name under heaven given" by God "among men, whereby we ought to be saved." It is, therefore, a point of true wisdom, it is absolutely necessary, that we believe in the name of Christ, since we must either be saved in him, or perish for ever.

SECT. III.—*Whosoever believeth on the name of Christ shall have everlasting life.*

THIS proposition is supported by many express determinations of Scripture. The words of the Lord Jesus are most explicit on this head: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Before Christ ascended, he appeared unto the eleven apostles, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." The beloved disciple echoes the same truth in the following words: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Indeed, we say nothing else than Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, have uniformly affirmed with one voice, when we assert, that "whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved in him with an everlasting salvation." ur things may be observed upon this point.

1. Life is the portion of every believer. What is more sweet and desirable than life? Even the father of lies spake the truth, when he said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." The favour of God, and a good conscience, are indeed better than life; but every worldly enjoyment is very far inferior, even to natural life, and much more to that life which consists in true happiness and felicity. Believers have a life of justification, which lies in the favour of God; a life of sanctification, which denominates them new creatures, having put on the new man, which after God is created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; and a life of consolation, whereby they do, or ought to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they receive the atonement, which justifies their consciences, and gives them boldness and access to God with confidence.

2. The life of believers is everlasting. God hath not only promised them life, but life eternal, life for evermore, which shall never be extinguished. O what a big and pregnant word is everlasting life! There is more in it than in the world, or in all the kingdoms of the whole earth, and their glory put together: there is all in it that the eternal decree of love doth grasp: there is all in it that the precious blood of Christ did purchase: there is all in it that the covenant of grace and everlasting gospel can hold: there is more in it than tongue can express, or heart can imagine, or angels comprehend. All things are included in it, and the whole is the heritage of believers in Christ.

3. Believers have eternal life even in this world.

Christ doth not say, he that believeth on the Son may have eternal life, as though it were possible or merely probable. He doth not say, such a person shall have it, as if it were only to be enjoyed hereafter: but he says, such a one "hath everlasting life." It is the present privilege of believers to have the Son of God himself, and consequently to have life through his name. Whatever they embrace in the promise of God is their own. As believers of his promise, they enjoy all that it conveys: for faith is the substance of every thing promised and expected, as well as the evidence of things not seen. What God freely gives, faith receives; and what is received by faith, is the believer's own property. Upon this ground, the apostle addresses believers in these bold and comfortable words: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

4. Believers have a sure reversion of heaven and all its glory, after they depart this life. Then shall they receive the end of their faith, even the complete and everlasting salvation of their souls. Christ's glory shall not be beheld thenceforth darkly as through a glass, by the eye of faith; but they shall for ever walk by sight, beholding what is now reported to them, and enjoying what is at present secured for them in the promises. Until this day of glory break, and the shadows that now surround us flee away, may we live in a joyful and confident dependence on the promise of God, who will not leave his people till he has done that which he has spoken

to them of! May we thus go up from the wilderness, trusting in the name of the Lord, and walking by faith!

SECT. IV.—*He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

As this proposition is expressed in the very words of Scripture, so it agrees with many other passages, that all concur in representing unto us the same thing, and almost in the same terms: Says the faithful witness, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God: and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "I said unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "He said unto his disciples, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth not, shall be damned." Before our Lord Jesus ascended, he told his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove," or convince, "the world of sin, because they believe not on me." Jesus said unto the multitude that attended on his ministry, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." On another occasion, he said, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." His apos-

ties frequently express themselves to the same effect. One of them plainly says, "He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." And, in another place, he affirms, that "the unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." Another apostle proposes this truth, and argues upon it to this effect: "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip: for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?"

To quote any more proofs is altogether needless; though these that have been mentioned are but a small specimen of what the Holy Ghost has recorded in the Scriptures, to show that unbelievers are in a state of wrath and condemnation; being "without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." It is not my purpose at present to anticipate what will fall in more properly afterwards, when I come to treat of unbelief in a separate chapter: only I beg leave to suggest, in this place, that an unbeliever cannot see life, because he rejects the life-giving truths of the everlasting gospel; and, in rejecting them, he rejects all the precious blessings they convey unto a lost world. He will not come to the Saviour revealed in the word of God, to be his wisdom, his righteousness, his sanctification, and his redemp-

tion: and while he remains thus disaffected to the gospel of salvation, he cannot enjoy any of its enriching privileges.

The argument that has been prosecuted in these four sections, to prove the necessity of the faith of the gospel, may be briefly summed up thus:—Seeing Jesus Christ, with all his unsearchable riches, is proposed to a guilty perishing world in the gospel, as a sufficient Saviour, and a suitable portion: seeing there is no salvation for sinners in any other, besides Christ revealed in the gospel, and there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby they ought to be saved: seeing all that receive and rest upon Christ revealed in the gospel, shall assuredly be saved, and have everlasting life: and seeing all that do not believe on the Son of God, remain in a state of sin, and shall not see life:—seeing all these things are so, it is a manifest consequence, that believing on Christ is absolutely necessary as a means of salvation. Only “he that believeth, shall be saved: he that believeth not, shall be damned.”

REFLECTIONS.

1. The necessity of believing on the Son of God, that has been illustrated, both directs and engages the zeal of gospel ministers, in fulfilling the ministry they have received of the Lord Jesus. The tendency and scope of all their ministrations should be to explain and promote the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus. A judicious writer observes, that “a man may be a strong reasoner, an eloquent orator, a fine gentleman, and a polite talker, and yet no gospel

minister, If Christ is not preached, pertinent epithets, embellished words, and fine periods, with all the froth of criticism, and curious turns of thought, are but like the garnishings of an empty dish, and afford no nourishment. To preach Christ, and salvation by faith in him, is to preach the gospel, and preach as the apostles did. This is the proper and honourable work of the ministers of Christ; it is to lay a right and sure foundation; and without this, all our preaching is but a vain attempt to build without a foundation, or to lay a foundation upon the sand: for 'other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' To preach any thing but faith in Christ for salvation, is to give a stone instead of bread: and for persons to take up with such preaching, is little better than feeding upon ashes, and snuffing up the east wind."*

It is the business, and it should be the constant care, of the servants of Christ in the work of the gospel, to show unto men the way of salvation by faith in Jesus. Barely to explain the doctrines of the Scriptures, is not to preach the gospel. The door of faith must be opened by the ambassadors for Christ; and the grounds, warrants, and obligations of believing, must be illustrated and inculcated at the same time that the doctrines of the gospel are declared. The precise form wherein divine truths are delivered, and the purpose for which they are revealed in the holy oracles, will be a sufficient directory on this head, both to preachers and hearers.

2. The more we consider the necessity of believ-

* Sladen's Sermons on Faith and Good Works, p. 134, 135.

ing, the more reason we will see to prize the word of God as an inestimable treasure of superlative worth. The Scripture revelation is a light which shines with meridian brightness upon our world, that was covered with darkness and the shadow of death. It furnishes a most satisfactory answer to that pungent question, "What shall we do to be saved?" It presents a sufficient ground of hope to the chief of sinners. It is a lamp to guide our feet into the paths of peace and holiness. It is able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly to furnish him unto all good works. It is not only a sufficient, clear, and perfect rule to direct us how we may glorify God and enjoy him; but it is the alone rule to direct us in these supremely interesting concerns. It is the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ.—O! how should we esteem the Scriptures, which give us such blessed discoveries of God and his perfections, of his law and gospel, of his wrath and mercy; discoveries that infinitely exceed all the midnight gloom of nature, and all her powers of reasoning! The blessed Bible, the word of faith, should undoubtedly lie next our heart, and be the companion of our bosoms. This precious book lays a sure foundation for a heart-purifying belief of our merciful recovery from all our guilt, and wretchedness, and ruin.

3. What has been advanced on the necessity of believing the gospel, is a sufficient vindication of that tremendous act of divine severity against the unbelieving Jews, whom he cut off for their unbelief. They rejected the counsel of God against themselves. They made light of the invitation given

them to receive salvation in the name of Christ. An evil heart of unbelief seduced them from the ways of truth and peace, into error and perdition. By natural descent, they came of Abraham, that eminent believer; but their unbelief, their enmity against the Messiah, and their wicked works, proved them to be of their father the devil: "Because of unbelief they were broken off." Behold the righteous severity of God towards them! He has made them a terror to themselves, and a scorn to the world. Jehovah and his throne are altogether guiltless in this awful procedure. By rejecting Christ, they sinned against their own mercies, and chose death, in their unbelief, in preference to that life which was revealed to them in the Lord Jesus. To this day the wrath of God abideth on them, because they continue in their unbelief. Take heed, ye professors of Christianity! take heed to yourselves, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. You can only stand by faith. Your case will be inexpressibly wretched if God swear concerning you in his wrath, "Ye shall not enter into my rest." You see what he has done in the Jewish vineyard, where he has cut off the natural branches. Take heed, lest he also spare not you. The established rule of his distributions of goodness and severity is so plain, that he that runs may read it: "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

4. Since believing is so absolutely necessary, we in the British isles have the utmost reason to adore and improve that kind providence, which has enlight-

ened us with the gospel. Upon a comparison with other nations, we may truly say, "Our lines have fallen to us in pleasant places." Every inhabitant has reason to say within himself, "Why was not I born a barbarous African, or a savage Indian, ignorant of God and his word, and without any person near me to give me the least intelligence about the way to happiness? Why was not I left merely to the dumb and silent lectures of the heavens, the earth, and the sea, or the instruction of the trees, and plants, and beasts of the earth, to teach me the knowledge of him that made me? Who am I, that I should be brought into being in the midst of sunbeams, and not in a region of thick darkness, under the shadow of death? Everlasting glory be given to free and distinguishing grace, for every happy circumstance in my merciful situation."

5. What has been said to show the necessity of believing, is sufficient to evince the deplorable condition of the heathens, who want the light of the gospel. They are "Gentiles in the flesh, having no hope, and without God in the world." What are all the blessings of nature, temperate climates, the dew of heaven, the fatness of the earth, and plenty of gold and silver, with all the advantages of civilized manners, and every legal security to rational liberty, without the gospel, by the hearing of which faith cometh? The possessors of such liberal profusions of their Creator's goodness, must remain aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. Their minds are not enlightened with divine knowledge, their wills are enslaved to vanity and vice, and their affections are

attached to sensual and earthly things. They serve divers lusts and pleasures; yea, they know not the only living and true God, but “do service to them which by nature are no gods.”—May the prophecies speedily be accomplished which assure us, that all nations, people, and languages, shall ascribe their salvation to the grace of Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the blood of the Lamb! Let Christians pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

Some indeed have taken upon them to say, that even heathens, who never heard of Christ, or salvation by his cross, shall be saved without faith, provided they order their conversation aright, according to the measure of light they have concerning their duty. In support of this opinion, they urge the declaration of Peter after he came to Cornelius: “Of a truth,” said the apostle, “I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” A candid and benevolent writer shall suggest our animadversion on this perverted application of the apostle’s words:—“Rightly to understand this text,” says Mr. Hervey, “we should inquire into the circumstances of the history. The apostle had been strongly and most unreasonably prejudiced in favour of the Jews; imagining, that the salvation of Christ, like the dispensation of Moses, must be confined to his countrymen. But now, having considered the purport of his late heavenly vision—having compared it with the angelic message delivered to Cornelius—and being made acquainted with the character of that valuable man, he breaks out into this truly catholic declaration: ‘My prejudices are

vanished. My sentiments are enlarged. From the instance before me, it is demonstrably certain, that God does not appropriate the blessings of his covenant to any particular person, family, or people. But, in every nation, he that feareth him, and, from a principle of religion in the heart, worketh righteousness in the life, is accepted; so accepted, as to be an object of the divine favour, and an inheritor of eternal happiness.' This, I think, is the exact meaning of the place. And let it be recollected, that no one truly fears, or can possibly please God, without faith. For which reason, it is necessary to suppose, that Cornelius, though a heathen by birth, had believed through grace. Nay, it is evident from the context, that he had heard of Jesus Christ; had some acquaintance with the design of his coming, and the execution of his office; enough to be the ground of a real, though perhaps an infantile faith. The business of the apostle was, to lead this convert into the clear light and full privileges of the gospel; to ratify and confirm his title to them by the sacred seal of baptism; and introduce him, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, into the Christian church. So that nothing can be concluded from this passage, but that the glad tidings of Christianity are for Jews, for Gentiles, for all people; that faith, even when weak, is productive of good works; and when sincerely improved, will certainly be increased, and will go from strength to strength."

6. The absolute necessity of believing the gospel, that has been evinced in the preceding sections, points out a most important object of self-examination to every hearer of the gospel; to wit, Whether

he be in the faith or not? The first and leading question Christ puts to his people, concerning the truths of his word, is, "Do ye now believe?" And the principal point we should examine ourselves about, is expressly inculcated in the apostolic admonition, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." This is the capital object of all our concern in matters of religion; and it has an undoubted right to a preference above all other concerns, in proportion as it is more important than any other.—Careless sinners! awake from your criminal and dangerous security; turn your eyes to the word of God; attend to his faithful voice; hearken diligently to those truths, by which you shall be judged at the last day. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Do you make a profession of religion, that you may conform yourselves to the multitude, that you may comply with the principles of your education, or that you may secure the favour of God by the profession you make of the Christian faith? Know assuredly, that the profession you make is deceitful, unprofitable, and even detested by God, who is a Spirit, and who will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. No profession can be acceptable to him, unless it arise from an unfeigned belief and obedience of divine truth.—Consider, ye self-righteous professors, who go about to establish a righteousness of your own! consider, receive instruction, and be wise. It is neither the multitude nor the sincere performance of your religious duties, that can justify you in the sight of a holy and righteous God. But he hath showed you what is both suitable and sufficient for this grand

purpose : for he hath set forth his own Son to be a propitiation for your sins, through faith in his blood. —Run with patience the race which a wise and sovereign God hath set before you, O tossed and afflicted Christians! and as you run, constantly look to Jesus, the author and the finisher of faith. As “Christ is all and in all” for your salvation, so faith in the word that reveals him, is all and in all for receiving out of his fulness.

To conclude the whole. Since it is impossible to please God without faith, and since we can have no enjoyment of Christ and salvation in this world except by believing—it is plain, that our life in the flesh ought to be a life of faith on the Son of God; and our constant inquiry should hinge on these questions, Are we in the faith? Do we live by faith? Do we walk by faith? Do we receive Christ truly, and do we walk in him answerably? The Antinomian pretends to receive Christ, but he does not reckon himself obliged to walk in Christ; and the legalist considers himself as under an indispensable obligation to walk in obedience to the law of Christ, while he despises the doctrine of faith in his person and mediation. But a true believer both receives Christ Jesus the Lord by believing, and walks in him by practical holiness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VARIOUS KINDS INTO WHICH FAITH IS COMMONLY DISTINGUISHED.

WHEN we read the Holy Scriptures, we find every thing represented in the most simple and artless form. There is no affected show of wisdom, and no idle parade of words, in these precious volumes; yet the wisdom, majesty, and design of their glorious Author, shine conspicuously through the whole. They every where speak to the meanest capacities, and "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err" in apprehending the sense and design of what is revealed therein. Mistaken notions about the Scripture, and the truths delivered in it, have always originated and begun with the wise and prudent, who trust to their own understanding, and despise the simplicity that is in Christ; while, on the contrary, the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed to babes, and received by them with faith and love. The pride of the heart acts upon the same principle of fleshly wisdom, when it models the system of revealed truth upon principles of reason; when it rejects the Scriptures, as an imposition upon mankind, and when it presumes to deny that there is a God. The degrees of its advances are different, but the principle is the same. It is certain that the atheism which denies the existence of God, and refuses, upon principle, to render him homage and

obedience, is unknown to the most barbarous tribes of illiterate savages; it only disgraces an age of improved light and speculation, wherein pride affects to be wise in an avowed contradiction to the common sense and general belief of mankind. Atheists glory in the singularity of their sentiments, and reckon it a reproach to be considered as men of ordinary discernment. They pretend to a refinement in reasoning far superior to the rest of mankind; and by this pretence they betray their cause, and fairly own, that it is much easier to conceive that there is a God, than to be persuaded of the contrary opinion. If we turn next to the Deists, who allow that there is a God; but deny that the Scriptures are given by his inspiration, we are presented with another specimen of the pride of human reason, boasting of its superior force and application—whereby these gentlemen imagine themselves to be in so advantageous a situation, that they look down with sovereign contempt upon the multitude, who are supposed to be incapable of receiving the same free and manly sentiments. Hereby they, in common with the besotted Atheists, confess, that the deistical scheme is not adapted to the capacities of human nature. When we descend to the class of Christians, that affect the name of rational inquirers after truth, the pride of corrupt nature presents itself in another form. Here it is allowed, not only that there is a God, but that the Scriptures are the word of the only living and true God; but still his word is not glorified as the word of God: for the doctrines and duties of religion are reduced by these gentlemen to a rational system, and then received, not as they are the word of God,

but as articles of that system, which is pronounced rational, and supposed to be built upon the Scriptures. Until their system be understood, and they suppose this is only the attainment of the wise and prudent, they do not expect men will be rational believers of their system: and in course they allow, that their scheme is too much the effect of genius, art, and reasoning, to be useful to babes and people of ordinary capacity.

But rejoice and be exceeding glad, ye children of men! that the mysteries of the gospel are as plain and legible to the faith of the meanest, as of the most learned believers. This is not only the case as to the doctrines of the Scripture, but as to the nature and kind of that faith whereby the truths of God are believed. It is very common to distinguish faith into four kinds, which are usually called historical faith, the faith of miracles, temporary faith, and saving faith. These epithets are never joined to faith or believing in the word of God; and yet the precise idea, connected with the term faith or believing, is so exactly ascertained in every passage where that term is used, that he that runs may read the meaning of the Holy Ghost in every such text. What I further propose on this subject is, (1.) To describe these kinds of faith; (2.) To inquire wherein they differ from each other; and, (3.) To prove that the difference of saving faith from all the rest, does not lie in any act of the mind.

SECT. I.—*A description of Historical Faith, the Faith of Miracles, a Temporary Faith, and a Saving Faith.*

1. HISTORICAL faith is commonly described as “a bare assent of the mind to the truth of what is revealed in the word of God; while the person who thus believeth, does not apply these truths to his own soul, nor live in the comfort of the blessings they report and present unto mankind-sinners.” It is a very possible case, and in many instances it is realized in life, that people may have clear notions of the capital doctrines revealed in the word of God, and may be able to show a reason for them severally from the Scriptures; that the account they give of the different branches of the Christian system may be unexceptionable, and that they may not be conscious to themselves of any doubt concerning any one of its articles; and yet all this knowledge leaves the mind without any impression of the reality, importance, and design of the scripture revelation. Hence it comes to pass, that the word of God is considered by such persons in the same light as any system of science; and their study of it is merely an exercise of reason. They assent to it as generally true; but they do not consider it as a system of truth by which they must be comforted, sanctified, and saved. This, I apprehend, is the character of historical or speculative believers; and this is the nature of their faith.

2. The faith of miracles is “a peculiar gift, whereby a person is persuaded, by means of a divine impression on his mind, that the power of God will

work something that is far above the power of all natural causes, either by him, or upon him. This kind of faith is extraordinary, and God has bestowed it only upon some special occasions, either to confirm some extraordinary mission, or to attest some important article of revealed religion: and for these purposes, the miracles of Moses were wrought under the Old Testament, and of the apostles under the New. As the occasions and designs of these preternatural interpositions of divine power were not ordinary, so the foundation of their belief concerning them, was an immediate suggestion from God: and of this suggestion they had as perfect evidence and assurance in their own minds, as they could have of any thing they saw with their bodily eyes. Without such a suggestion, no miracle was performed on any occasion, not even by Christ, of whom it is expressly said, that "he could do no mighty work in his own country, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them: and he marvelled because of their unbelief." This expression does not imply any want of power in Christ; but it manifestly intimates, that his miracle-working power was always put forth, according to the persuasion he had in his own soul, of its efficacy and seasonableness on particular persons and occasions. It would seem, that a miracle was never wrought upon a particular person, or for his benefit, except the person was himself persuaded that God could perform it.

3. The idea of temporary faith is taken from the stony-ground hearers in the parable of the sower. They are said to "hear the word," and "immediately with joy to receive it;" yet they "have no root

in themselves," and they "endure only for a while." Hence their faith is called temporary; because it doth not continue to the end. This attachment to the word of God includes, not only an assent to the truth of the Scriptures, but some sudden, though transient, flashes of joy in the affections; and some hasty resolutions for God and religion, while they are hearing the word. Their character and apostacy are thus described by Luke, "These have no root, which for a while believe; and in time of temptation fall away." Such believers either receive the word upon the evidence of those arguments that satisfy the understanding about the truth of it; or else their faith rests upon the prejudice of education, or upon the testimony of him that preaches the word: and their joy usually arises from an apprehension of their own happiness being promoted by what they hear. Upon this principle they hear the word gladly, even while they neither understand the spiritual meaning of the law of God; nor depend upon the report of divine favour through Jesus Christ.

4. Saving faith, or faith in Jesus Christ, is "a saving grace, whereby sinners receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to them in the gospel." Hereby sinners, viewing their own guilt and misery, cordially embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, given to them in the record of the everlasting gospel; as their wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; they heartily approve the plan of salvation by his obedience unto death: and they joyfully receive and depend upon his everlasting righteousness for their justification, and upon his unsearchable riches for their eternal life. "Though

a mere assent to a testimony, were sufficient faith for the knowledge of things which the philosophers aimed at; yet we are to consider, that the design of saving faith is, not only to know the truth of Christ and his salvation, testified and promised in the gospel, but also to apprehend and receive Christ and his salvation, as given by and with the promise.²⁰ Hence it is commonly represented as a believing on Christ, a trusting in him, and by such other expressions as necessarily imply an enjoying of him, a confidence in him, and an entire dependence upon him.

SECT. II.—*The difference between these kinds of Faith ascertained.*

It is of little importance to us to examine the precise differences between historical and temporary faith, as it is evident that neither of them is the faith of God's elect. Only it may be observed in general, that historical faith seems more immediately to refer to that persuasion the mind has of the truth of the word of God; whereas temporary faith, as it is compared to the seed which fell upon the stony ground, and forthwith sprung up, because it had no deepness of earth, seems more directly to respect that comfort which the mind receives in the goodness of the joyful sound. Persons may have no doubt of the truth of the Scripture, while yet they never relish any comfort or joy in the declarations of it: or, in other words, they may be historical believers, while they are not stony-ground hearers. It is, moreover, re-

²⁰ Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, Direct: 4

terrible enough to allow, that the temporary joy may vanish, when the historical belief remains; though it is certain, that there can be no such joy as the temporary believer has in the word, without some historical belief of those things that occasion his gladness being the truths of God.

The faith of miracles, being occasional and extraordinary, is the most easily distinguished from every other kind of faith. As miracles were only wrought, either to confirm an extraordinary mission, or to attest a revealed doctrine; the persons who wrought the miracle were carried beyond all suspicion and doubt, that such a miracle would be performed. This persuasion was produced by a suggestion from God, revealing to their minds what should happen: and without such a revelation, it would have been great presumption in them to expect it. However, it must be observed here, that although this positive belief of the event was always necessary in the person who wrought a miracle, it seems, in many cases, to have been sufficient in the persons for whose benefit a miracle was performed, that they believed the power of God to do such a miracle by the instrument of it, without having any certain persuasion about the event; as in the instances of the centurion, and Martha, and others. This faith of working miracles was not peculiar to real Christians in those ages, when it pleased God to employ them as means of confirming mankind about the character of his servants, and the truth of his word: for “many will say to Christ, Lord, Lord, have we not in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will he profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from

me, ye that work iniquity." The person possessed of this faith, could not even explain to the apprehension of another the demonstrative evidence and assurance he had of the event, though he undoubtedly had a full assurance concerning it. To others it was enough, that the event justified his pretensions, and proved him to be in no delusion.

Saving faith, or faith in Jesus Christ, is sufficiently differenced from the classes I have mentioned, by several things which are peculiar to itself. Perhaps the principal characteristics of real believers may be comprehended in the following particulars:

1. They understand the meaning of the testimony of God, recorded in his word, through the gracious and powerful illumination of the Holy Ghost, whereby they know the things that are freely given to them of God. To them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, while others do not know them. Paul had his education at the feet of Gamaliel, an eminent doctor of the Jewish law, who was had in reputation among all the people; and he profited in his studies above the greater part of his countrymen. He exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men; and as touching the righteousness of the Jewish law, he was blameless, both in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others who beheld his conversation. He was ready to ask with the young man, "What lack I yet?" But when it pleased God to send the commandment of his holy and spiritual law into the mind of this proud ignorant Pharisee, "sin revived, and he died." Sin did not acquire any new life by the commandment of God; but now the nature, de-

merit, and spreading leprosy of sin, appeared to his mind, and conscience, in that very light and sense wherein they were described by the law of God; and by this discovery he perceived himself to be a defiled, guilty, ruined sinner. Let us again suppose, that a person has been instructed in the knowledge of the principles of the Christian faith, that he has profited much in that system, and that he can give a judicious and consistent account of the different branches of it; and let it be supposed, that afterwards the Spirit of truth shines in his heart to give him the knowledge of salvation. Hereby the person perceives, that the word of God is not only a revelation of such things as are infallibly true, but an exhibition of all that it reveals, as a suitable, necessary, and satisfying portion to himself: and therefore he does not view the system of revealed truth as a science, that gratifies his curiosity, and awakens his hope or fear; but he considers it as the gospel of his salvation, that presents to him the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life to be enjoyed by the knowledge of Christ, and to be improved by walking humbly with God. Now he sees the congruity of scripture truths to the character of God; as his glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ; and he perceives their suitability to sanctify, and comfort, and save his own soul. Thus to understand the meaning of the divine testimony, is peculiar to those who are taught of God.

2. Unfeigned believers in Christ perceive the divine authority of his truths upon their conscience. In believing the word of God, the soul is taught to acquiesce in, and submit to his sovereign determine-

tion. I have frequently read, with very great pleasure, the following paragraph in the Memoirs of Mr. Halyburton's life; where, after he had related his experience as to several particulars, he says, "As all those discoveries and influences were conveyed by the word, so the Lord now, in the conveyance, affected my conscience with his authority, and evidenced that his name was in it, by that light and power peculiar to God that went along with it. It spake not in all these things as the Scribes and Pharisees, the wisest, the greatest, or the best of men, but with another sort of authority and weight: it 'spake as never man spake.' Whatever is said, either with respect to God, or my case, or others, my conscience was made to stand to it. When he challenged by his word for things which I know not to be faults, and men notice not, conscience obeyed, and took the hint, and, armed with his authority, accused, arraigned, condemned, and, as it were, executed the sentence too: nor would it stand to, or regard defences or pleas from any other sixth. When God spake wrath, he kindled a flame in my soul by the breath of his word, that many waters could not quench; he raised a storm in it that I could neither quiet nor row against, so as to get to land. The heart that before was as unconcerned as a stone, at reading the word or hearing it, now trembled and quaked. In like manner, when he spake peace, he created it. He made the dead to hear, and the hearer to live. 'He sent his word and healed me.' He said to the troubled sea, 'Be still, peace; and immediately there was a calm.' The winds and seas obeyed him; at his rebuke they fled; temptations

and it will not again. When I was self-destroyed, self-condemned, and by its power beat from all pleas, so that I durst neither deny, excuse, nor extenuate, nor quarrel the hardest sentence which I dreaded most; and was thrown into the greatest agony of trouble: when I was ready to say with Job, "If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice:" when, with him, I refused to be comforted, and scarce did think comfort possible: yet whenever he said his word, it healed me, and my soul was commanded to be at peace, a glorious calm ensued. Whereas, on the other hand, when I or others endeavoured to speak to myself, mine enemies boldly repelled all, and flew on me, as the devil did on the exorcists." To have such a sense, conviction, and reverence of divine authority, is a distinguishing fruit of the Spirit of God, and altogether peculiar to a real Christian.

3. It is the peculiar character of true believers, that they receive the word of God in its genuine sense, because God has revealed it. They are taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; and they receive it, not as the word of man, but as it is the word of God. They do not only assent to the truth of the divine record, but they depend upon it; they live by it, and they judge it faithful, and worthy of all acceptance. "God's giving; or making over Jesus Christ, in the record of grace, is the warrant and rule of receiving him; hence the record is believed, because divine authority is interposed; and Jesus Christ, with his whole salvation, are accepted of, because they are offered by the Father in the quality

of a free and unconditional gift. To whatever, therefore, God hath spoken in his holiness, they, as their aman; in whatever terms the record of grace runs, their souls agree to them, and, by believing obedience, comply with them; and in setting to their seal that God is true, they appropriate all the spiritual riches, righteousness, and redemption, for the giving whereof to perishing sinners, his faithfulness is pledged in the record. God is true, says faith, when he gives Jesus Christ to sinners in a word of record; and therefore, as a sinner, to whom that record is presented, Jesus Christ is mine for all the purposes of my salvation."* No man can thus receive the ingrafted word, without the immediate and powerful influence of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, enlightening his understanding, and opening his heart.

I might also show, that those who understand the meaning of the word, who perceive the authority and faithfulness of God speaking in it, and who receive the word at his mouth in faith and love, will keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. But as these things refer to the fruits of faith and its practical influence, it would be improper to enlarge upon them in this place, especially as they will come to be considered afterwards.

* Mr. Hui's Parable of the Sower, p. 281.

SECT. III.—The difference of Saving Faith from the other kinds of Faith; does not lie in any act of the mind.

WHEN persons are awakened to consideration about the salvation of their souls, it is very common for them to have a great anxiety about their faith in particular. They hear that devils believe the truths of the Scripture; and that many of the children of men, "who have no root in themselves, receive the word gladly, and for a while believe;" whereupon they become solicitous to know, whether their faith is of the right kind, and whether they believe in a right manner. This solicitude is highly necessary; it ought to be encouraged and directed; so as they may be enabled to obtain satisfaction in a proper channel, concerning this important inquiry. Here a most interesting question must be attended to, namely, Whether there is any thing in the act of a person's mind, who believeth to the saving of his soul, that is really different from the acts of the mind in a historical and temporary believer?

If there be something in the very act of the true believer's mind, that is really different from the acts of the mind in historical or temporary faith; then it is proper to direct persons to judge of these distinguishing differences in the very act of believing on Christ. An attention to these differences would enable them, upon this supposition, to determine the important question, Whether they are unfeigned believers in Christ, or not? But if the difference between saving faith and every other kind of believ-

ing, lies in the things which are respectively believed, and in the authority upon which they are believed; then we ought only to examine what we believe, and upon what authority we believe, in order to know whether our faith be the faith of God's elect.

To see this point in the best light I am able, I shall, 1. Ascertain the nature of the mind's activity in believing any proposition; 2. Prove that the mind of a believer in Christ has such an activity in believing on him; and, 3. Show that there is no difference in the very act of avowing faith, considered merely as the act of the mind, whereby we can distinguish it from the acts of historical and temporary faith, considered merely as acts of the mind.

1. I proposed to ascertain the nature of the activity of the mind, in believing any proposition. I know it is strenuously denied by some, that the mind is at all active in believing.* They consider the mind of a believer as entirely passive, in receiving conviction of the truth he believes; just as the eye is passive in receiving impressions of the objects presented to it, or the ear in receiving impressions of sounds that strike upon it. It is readily granted on our part, that believing is exceedingly simple; and that the bare supposition of its being compounded of many acts and operations of the mind, is contrary to experience in every case where we believe any thing, be what it will. But still we maintain, that believing includes some activity of the

* This is the opinion of Mr. Sandeman, Letters for Tipton and Aspasio, third edition, vol. ii. p. 7—9. *et passim*, of Mr. Barnard, a preacher of that party in London, Simple Truth Vindicated, p. 40—42. and of all the rest of their connections.

without the truth or proposition that is believed, and about the evidence upon which it is believed. This activity of the mind is indeed exceedingly simple; so very simple, that we cannot distinguish it into any corresponding parts; it may be properly enough compared to the simple acts of seeing and hearing. We can distinguish the several objects we see, or the different sounds we hear; we can easily judge whether these objects of our sight and hearing are pleasant or offensive; but we cannot make the same distinctions concerning our seeing and hearing, that we can do concerning the things we see and hear, because these distinctions are entirely founded in the objects of our sight and hearing, and not in the faculties that see and hear, nor in the exercise of these faculties. The act of seeing is the same, whether we look up to the heavens, or cast our eyes down to the earth; whether we see a mountain, or a mole-hill. The things we behold are very different and various, but our seeing them is the most simple act. I call our seeing an act, because in seeing the object we behold, we are really active in receiving the impression of it; though the impression is made only by the object we behold, and the medium wherein that object is presented to our view. Such is the activity of the mind in believing a testimony. A believer of any proposition made to him by a report, credits that proposition according to the sense wherein he understands the report, and according to the degree of certainty he thinks there is in the testimony whereby it is reported to him. He is convinced of the truth of the report, and has a persuasion that the thing reported to him is really what it is said to be;

or else he could not believe it. But is it consistent
 with common sense to say, that the mind of man is
 altogether passive in admitting conviction, or in its
 persuasion, concerning a truth? Must not the thing
 reported be understood, and the evidence of this re-
 port perceived, in order to a person being denomi-
 nated a believer of that report? Can the mind un-
 derstand the nature, and perceive the evidence of a
 report, without being active? And does not all the
 activity of the mind, in understanding the report, and
 perceiving the evidence of it, terminate only and di-
 rectly in the report itself, which it receives and per-
 ceives by the belief of it? The things reported to
 men, and believed by them, may be various and
 many; but our belief of the various and many reports
 concerning them, is one simple act of the mind, where-
 by we are convinced and persuaded that they are just
 such as we have been told they are. Different things
 are reported to us, each according to its nature; we
 apprehend each of them according to the report made
 of it; we believe, that is, we are convinced and per-
 suaded that each of these reports is true; and this
 belief, conviction, or persuasion, is as much one simple
 act of the mind, as our beholding different visible ob-
 jects with our eyes is one simple act of seeing.

2. I shall now endeavour to prove, that the mind
 of a believer in Christ is active in believing on him,
 in that sense, I have just now explained. This
 seems to be very evident from the general tenor of
 the Scriptures; where we find the Spirit of God
 calling men to believe on Christ, in a manner of ad-
 dress which manifestly implies, that believers have
 such a conviction of the sufficiency of Christ, and of

having freely given to the guilty and lost, as to live by this sufficient righteousness and salvation so given to them in that character. "This," says an apostle, "this is the commandment of God; that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." The voice which came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," was attended with an express commandment to hear him, or to believe in his name. Jesus Christ invites and commands "all the ends of the earth to look unto him, and be saved;" he declares, that "except a man eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, they have no life in them;" and in the last day, that great day of the feast of tabernacles, "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The constant language of the apostles to a guilty world, was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved." This being the address of the Father, and the Word, and the Holy Ghost, witnessed to us by the prophets and apostles, it may reasonably be asked, 1. Whether it does not imply that the mind is active in believing on Christ, as he is revealed in the gospel? 2. Whether it implies any other activity, than barely to understand, to receive, and to live by the fulness of Christ so revealed? And, 3. Whether this activity of the mind about the gospel of our salvation, can be justly reckoned a work of the law? We deny that it can, on any consideration, be esteemed a work of the law, or any part of the righteousness of a sinner; because it is wholly employed about the free

grace of God, which reigns through a perfect and everlasting righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. This kind of activity forms the most perfect contrast to that pride and legal bias in the human breast towards the old covenant, which prompts mankind to go about to establish their own righteousness, and to refuse to submit themselves to the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith in the gospel. Hereby the soul flies for refuge from the law, unto Christ the end of the law.

3. It only remains now to be proved, that there is no difference in the act of saving faith, considered merely as an act of the mind, whereby we can distinguish it from the acts of historical and temporary faith, considered merely as acts of the mind. The proof of this assertion depends partly upon what was formerly offered to ascertain the sense of the word *faith* or believing, as it is used in the records of inspiration;* where I endeavoured to show, that it is used in Scripture without any distinction being made about the act of the mind in believing. I shall at present prosecute the argument a little further, upon the same principle.—Whenever the Spirit of God has occasion to speak of faith, he never uses expressions that imply any difference in the act of believing, but always employs the same form of speech to denote faith of every kind. The several expressions concerning it used in the Bible, might all be collected to show the truth of this position, but as it is too manifest to admit of any reasonable objection, I shall decline the trouble of proving them. Only

it must be observed, that there is a real specific difference between saving faith and every other kind of believing; and that the Scripture always suggests this difference, whenever it gives us any account of faith, on any occasion. But, as the difference is never put upon the act of a believer's mind, we must consider wherein the difference is stated by the Holy Ghost; and, upon a general inspection of the word of God, we find it lies in these three things that were explained in the last section.

(1.) Saving faith implies an understanding of the true meaning of the divine testimony. Accordingly, our glorious Intercessor expresses himself in these words to his Father: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; for I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." In like manner, the apostle says to unfeigned believers, whose character he sets in opposition to such professors of Christianity as continued only for a time in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. I have not written unto you," says he, "because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." One important branch of the Comforter's office is, to "guide us into all truth, and to show unto us the things of Christ." "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, yet he himself is judged of no man; for who hath known the mind of the Lord? But we that have received not the spirit of the world, but

the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God; we have the mind of Christ;" that is, we are led into the true knowledge of divine truths by the Holy Ghost, who has enabled us, in some measure, to see the great things that relate to the glory of God, and our eternal salvation through his crucified Son, in the same sense and view of them that is intended by Christ in his word. I conceive this is more than can be said of an historical believer, who, acting only upon principles of natural reason, in forming his judgment about the things of God, cannot know the doctrines of divine revelation aright in their amiable glories, as they exhibit a grand and consistent character of God, as they display the everlasting righteousness and unsearchable riches of Christ, and as they set before us an adequate and honourable expedient for the hope and salvation of sinners. This is the case also with temporary believers, who are said to hear the word, and to "receive it with joy;" but are not said to understand it. Temporary believers must have very partial and erroneous apprehensions concerning the gospel of salvation, or else they could never rejoice in hearing it, except they perceived that it really spake peace to them; but if they perceived it in this light, it would become an ingrafted word, an abiding principle, and an incorruptible seed. Since this is not the case with them, it is evident, that their apprehensions concerning the genuine sense of it are erroneous; that they rejoice in a lie, which is not consistent with the truth of the gospel; and that they have not the mind of Christ.

(2.) Saving faith is founded upon the authority of

God, revealing his will in the Scripture. It receives the Scripture; "not as the word of men, but as the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe." This is sufficiently confirmed, 1. By the constant practice of the apostles. The way they took to persuade the unbelieving world to receive the gospel, was not by proposing arguments to prove the truth of their doctrine, nor working miracles, nor insisting upon miracles wrought by them, for the confirmation of their doctrine; but by a bare proposal of the truth, and a sincere manifestation of it to the consciences of their hearers, in the name of God they proceeded, and demanded acceptance of it, as the word of God, and not the word of men; and, by this means, they converted the world. This is further confirmed, 2. By the experience of those that believe in Christ to the saving of their souls. However they may be relieved against the objections of adversaries, and enabled to deal with them by other arguments and means; yet that, whereupon believers of all sorts, learned and unlearned, do themselves rest their whole dependence, hope, and joy, is the word of God, evidencing itself unto their faith, by its own light and power. The unlearned are for the most part capable of no other evidence; and yet, upon this alone, in all ages, in life and death, in doing and suffering, they have evidenced another sort of stability and firmness in cleaving to it, and suffering cheerfully for it, on this account only, than the most learned, who were best furnished with arguments of another nature, but wanted this. Besides, if this be not allowed as the ground and foundation of faith, there can be no divine faith leaning

upon an infallible bottom; and the vulgar, who are not capable of any other evidence, must either rove in the greatest uncertainty, or pin their faith upon the sleeves of their teachers. But, blessed be God, here is a ground sufficient to rest upon, that will neither fail nor deceive. The Lord speaks, and his sheep, notwithstanding that simplicity which makes them contemptible in the eyes of the world, know his voice, hear it, and follow him, and will not hear the voice of a stranger."* This is more than can be said of historical or temporary believers, whose faith stands only in the wisdom of men, or in the demonstrations of reason, or in the evidence of miracles, or in the authority of the church, or in their education-principles, or in their blind attachment to a party, or in a general view of the gospel, as a means of saving them from misery; but their faith cannot rise so high as to "stand in the power of God," demonstrating the evidence and authority of his word to their consciences.

(3.) Saving faith receives the word of God, depends upon divine faithfulness engaged in the promises, and lives by the Lord Jesus Christ and his complete salvation therein revealed, renouncing every other confidence, and rejoicing only in Christ Jesus. But this is not, cannot be, the character and exercise of historical or temporary believers, who, amidst all their convictions and joys, remain utter strangers to those demonstrations of the Spirit, which discover the true nature and heinous guilt of their unbelief, and which should constrain them to confess their

* Mr. Halyburton's Essay concerning the Reason of Faith, page 132.

shown necessity and sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ, revealed to them in the gospel.

Do conclude the whole? If a person would be satisfied, whether he is a believer of the gospel, who unfeignedly believeth on the Son of God, it is evidently improper to perplex his mind with the idle and deceiving inquiry, Doth my heart believe in a right manner? or, What circumstances distinguish my act of faith, to prove it either right or wrong? The only proper questions that can tend to a safe and certain resolution of this most important case, are these: 1. What do I believe? 2. Upon what ground, and for what reason do I believe? 3. Do I really judge him faithful, who hath revealed in his word those truths that I believe? And, 4. Do those truths which I believe, teach and constrain me to "cleanse myself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God?"

REFLECTIONS.

1. What has been said concerning the several kinds of faith, shows the necessity of reading the Scriptures with judgment and attention. The Spirit of God uses the same word to denote the faith of devils, and of all the different classes of men that profess any regard to the character and work of Christ, without putting any difference between the acts of faith performed by one and another; and yet the same Spirit has so clearly distinguished every kind of faith, whenever he speaks of believing, that the particular kind he speaks of is very evident to an impartial and attentive reader. A few examples

will sufficiently illustrate this observation. "Devils believe and tremble," says the apostle; whereby it is manifest, that they do not believe the word of truth, as the gospel of their salvation; for, if they considered it as the gospel of the grace of God to them, they would, in believing it, "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;" whereas, they "believe and tremble." The devils said, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God." But it is plain, they did not believe him to be their Saviour; on the contrary, they were persuaded that they had no part in his salvation; they believed he would destroy them. "King Agrippa believed the prophets;" but while he was persuaded that these holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, he did not believe that Christ suffered, and that he rose again from the dead, and that he showed light unto the people, and to the Gentiles; he did not rejoice in Christ Jesus, the chief corner-stone, laid in the writings of the prophets. This appears from his own words to Paul: "Almost," said he, "thou persuadest me to be a Christian;" which the apostle understood as implying that he was not altogether a Christian, or that he did not believe on the Son of God as his righteousness and his salvation. We are informed, that when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." But as their faith was only the effect of their seeing the miracles he wrought, so it is plain from the next verse, that they did not believe in his name for sal-

vation from sin, and for reconciliation to God by his death. "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men;" and he perfectly knew that they only considered him as a temporal Messiah and Prince. The great multitude whom Jesus miraculously fed with five barley-loaves and two small fishes, said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world." Here was their belief; but they did not believe that he was to redeem them unto God by his blood; for they intended to take him by force, and make him a temporal king. When Jesus opened the design of his coming into the world, which was, to "give his flesh for the life of the world," many of his disciples, who believed on him as a Prophet and King, "murmured at him, went back" from him, "and walked no more with him." The stony-ground hearers of the word "receive it with joy, and for a while believe; but when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended;" whereby they plainly discover, that their minds are not impressed with the majesty and authority of God, speaking in his word; and also that they do not believe the reality and excellency of eternal life, which God hath given them in that record, for the sake of which affliction and persecution ariseth. "Simon Magus believed, and was baptized;" yet he so entirely misunderstood the design of the gospel, and the sovereignty of divine grace, that "he thought the gift of God might be purchased with money." Now, in all these instances, and in all other examples of believing mentioned in the Scriptures, we find there was an essential error and defect in every kind of

faith, except that which receiveth and resteth on Christ alone for salvation, as he is freely-given upon in the gospel. This defect and error does not lie in the act of the mind, nor in the manner of its acting, but in the mind believing a lie instead of the truth, or in believing the truth upon some other ground than the authority of God, or, finally, in not considering scripture truths as a word of salvation sent to us.

On the other hand, the faith of God's elect is always expressed with so much simplicity and precision in the oracles of God, merely by telling us what it believes, and for what reason it believes such truths, that any attentive reader is immediately enabled to perceive, that saving faith is meant in every place where it is spoken of. I shall not at present mention examples, though many might be adduced;* nor shall I now anticipate the consideration of such characteristics of an unfeigned belief of the gospel, as pertain to the practical influence of faith, which will be explained afterwards. Only, from the whole it appears, that attention and judgment are absolutely necessary in reading the Scriptures with profit; that, in reading them, we may rightly divide the word of truth, both in our understanding and in our practice.

2. What has been said in the preceding sections, sufficiently accounts for the several denominations of faith, according to its different kinds. These denominations are all taken, either from the things

* The reader may, if he pleases, consult the following texts: John iii. 15, 16, 18, 33, 36. John vi. 35, 40, 47. John xi. 25, 26, 40.

which are believed, or from the authority upon which they are believed. . . . If we believe upon the testimony of men, our faith is called human : if we believe upon the testimony of God, our faith is said to be divine : if we believe upon the evidence of reason and argument, our faith is denominated historical or rational : if this historical or rational assent be accompanied with a transient glow of affection, it is designed temporary faith : if we understand the word of God, and receive it as his word for our own benefit, this is the faith of God's elect : if we thus apprehend the righteousness of Christ, revealed from faith to faith, this is ordinarily called justifying faith : and if we thus receive salvation in the name of Jesus, our faith is said to be saving.

Perhaps this remark may be reckoned too trivial and vulgar to merit much attention. I am of a very different opinion. It seems to be of great importance, both to correct a common, though a dangerous mistake, and to direct the minds of Christians in a most serious inquiry. I beg leave to explain what I mean, with as much perspicuity, and in as few words as I am able.

First, When it is considered, that all the denominations of faith are either taken from the things which are believed, or from the authority upon which these things are believed, it must be very improper, and even dangerous, for teachers to lead their hearers into a labyrinth of perplexity, by setting before them distinguishing marks and characters of the act, or acts of saving faith. Such discourses are open to objections of various sorts, and all of them weighty. Does not this way of representing the acts of saving

life in himself, and that he given to the Son to have life in himself? His answer is, he has the express determination of the only-begotten Son of God upon the case, and his decision is conclusive and final.

But our ignorance of divine things is an impediment in the way of believing, which nothing is the power of God can remove. The most repeated and hateful character of mankind is painted in these lively colours by the pencil of inspiration: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Without the knowledge of divine things, there can be no belief of them. While "the god of this world blindeth the minds of men," it is impossible they can believe the gospel of Christ. There that believe on the Son, must see his glory; they who put their trust in him, must know his name: "For this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." "Since the world began, it was never heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind; and it was never imagined, that any person who was born blind could recover sight by his own efforts. It is equally impossible, that a natural man can know the things of the Spirit of God." Therefore all right and saving apprehensions of revealed truth, must be the gift and the work of God, who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, in the first creation, shining in our hearts by the demonstration of his Spirit, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." "The preaching of the cross," by which faith cometh, "is to them that perish fool-

richness, but into things which have actually it is the power of God; for it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. *Where is the wise, the man of fame for wisdom and science; among both Jews and Gentiles? "Where is the scribe," who, upon the principles of reason and religious education, makes the highest pretences to the knowledge of the revealed will of God? "Where is the disputer of this world," who delights in speculation and controversy, and takes a great deal of pride in disputing, even upon questions that relate to the faith and practice of a Christian? "Hath not God made foolish all the wisdom of this world;—that no flesh should glory in his presence?"*

4. The dissatisfaction that naturally reigns in the hearts of the children of men against the truths of the gospel, is a sufficient demonstration that a divine agency must bring them to a saving belief of the gospel. It may be easily conceived, that those who are "in the flesh," and who "cannot please God," because they are without Christ, may heartily approve many of the doctrines of revealed truth, and may eagerly contend for them, and may even suffer much for adhering to them: but it cannot be allowed, that such persons are satisfied with the stripes account of salvation; for their inward sentiments concerning the scheme of redemption are quite adverse of the gospel plans, and while they profess to know and believe it, in heart and practice they deny and renounce it. That this is so, is fully evinced by the impatience and resentment that is evident from the plainest descriptions of this character and conduct:—"The carnal mind is

SECT. II.—*The Holy Ghost worketh Faith in the soul, by means of the word which is preached.*

This position is conformable to every idea we have of believing; and it is the express language of Scripture. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth: for he spake, and every thing in occasion was done; he commanded, and all things stood fast. Such is the work of God also in the new creation, which is both begun and advanced by his powerful word, in such grown persons as are capable of experiencing its saving influence." In all ordinary cases, mankind are induced to credit human testimony upon the account of the credibility they apprehend to be in the testimony itself. Whatever reasons may contribute to engage their belief, it is certain that all these circumstances only operate to render the testimony more credible in their view; and being so confirmed, the testimony itself, of which they might have doubted without such circumstantial confirmations, is believed. But if we receive the testimony of men upon this principle, and if our receiving it is owing to our perceiving the credibility of their testimony, surely the testimony of God is greater; and our receiving his testimony must arise from a perception of his authority and veracity, which

* As the word of God was not written for the use of idiots and infants, and does not gratify an idle curiosity about the nature or means of the work of the Spirit in such of them as belong to the election of grace; it is both impertinent and dangerous to examine the manner of their effectual calling.

render every word he hath spoken infallibly certain. Such a clear manifestation of the truth, and such a powerful demonstration of the authority of God, unto the consciences of men, is the effect of the blessed Spirit, who receiveth the things of Christ, and shews them unto us. Hence the Comforter is promised to reprove, or convince us, so as to determine our judgments, and sway our affections, of "sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He performs this work, by enabling us to perceive the meaning, and submit unto the authority of the Scriptures; which testify unto a lost world, the nature and demerit of sin, the righteousness of the law, and that righteousness fulfilled by Christ, and the judgment that shall be executed on the prince of this world. To explain and support the proposition that stands at the beginning of this section, I shall endeavour to illustrate it under these two capital branches: 1. The Holy Ghost worketh the faith of the divine law by means of the law; and, 2. He worketh the faith of the gospel by means of the gospel.—All convictions of sin and misery are comprehended in the faith of the law; and all relieving, comforting, quickening, and saving knowledge and belief of scripture truths, are included in the faith of the gospel.

It is observed, that the Holy Ghost worketh the faith of the divine law by means of the law.

Having, in a foregoing chapter, endeavoured to explain the nature, demands, sanctions, and obligations of the divine law,* I shall not resume that subject at present; but only observe, that the knowledge

* Chap. I. Sect. I.

and belief of these things is wrought in a sinner by the law of God. Hereby he is convinced that the law is spiritual, and that himself is carnal; that the law demands perfect and persevering obedience, and that he is altogether unrighteous, and a child of disobedience; that the law reveals the wrath of God born heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and that he is the obnoxious criminal, and a child of wrath; that the obligation of the divine law is universal and perpetual, and that he lies under it as a binding rule of holiness both in heart and life. The Spirit of God presents the law to the sinner's conscience, and opens the eyes of his understanding to perceive the true meaning of its holy commandments, as well as to feel its authority demanding obedience and forbidding sin, under the highest penalties. By these impressed views of the divine law, the sinner learns to know what the law saith to himself; he sees the perfect contrast between the holiness of God and his own depravity; he discerns the majesty of the supreme Lawgiver stamped on every precept and on every prohibition; he perceives the veracity and justice of the Lord engaged to execute deserved punishment upon him as a transgressor of the law; and, to sum up all in one assertion, he that believeth the law of God, hath the witness or testimony which is contained in the law, put into his mind, written in his heart, and recorded in his conscience.

Perhaps this doctrine may become clearer, if we illustrate it by an example. The experience of Paul seems to be extended on purpose for our learning, that we may be led thereby into right views of the

work of the Lord the Spirit in the conviction of sinners. Paul had great intellectual abilities as a man; he had great advantages for improving them, as a scholar, being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most famous tutor of the age; he was educated in the study of the law of the God of Israel; he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and lived according to the most rigorous rules of that class of the Jews; his acquisitions in their religion were so eminent, that he professed in it beyond many of his equals in his own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers; as teaching the external branches of righteousness required in the law, he was blameless; and he lived in all good conscience from his youth up, exercising himself therein to keep his conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man. With all these advantages, it is no wonder if he thought himself perfect: for he imagined, that he thoroughly understood the full extent, and all the branches, of the duty it prescribed; and as touching the righteousness he apprehended the law required of him, he was blameless, secure, and self-satisfied. "I was alive," says he, "without the law sense." I regarded the law of God as the rule by which I was to justify my conduct, and recommend myself to divine favour, and I thought I was paying such an obedience to it as God would undoubtedly reckon sufficient for these purposes. "But when the commandment came," that is, when the meaning, design, and authority of it were understood by me, and demonstrated to my conscience, "sin revived," it appeared in all its hideous deformity, it became strong and irresistible in its accusa-

tions against me, "and I died;" all my pride and self-confidence vanished; I saw and confessed myself to be a ruined lost sinner, and equally condemned criminal, before the holy law of God. He adds, "The commandment, which was ordained to life" that is, the eternal law which was originally designed to be a covenant of life to the first Adam, who had power to keep it, "I found to be unto death;" it was so far from justifying or equipping me that it condemned and bound me over to the wrath of God and the misery of hell; it utterly disannulled every remedy I could contrive for my own relief. Again, it deserves our consideration, that the apostle has particularly informed us by what means he obtained these views of his sinful and wretched character. He says, "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence: for without the law, sin was dead; but when the commandment came, sin revived." In this passage two things are very evident. 1. That the apostle knew and believed himself to be a sinful and miserable creature, as soon as he knew the meaning, and believed the obligation, of the law of God. 2. That the Holy Ghost led him to the knowledge and belief of the law, and of his own sinful and wretched character, by opening the genuine sense of the law to his understanding, and demonstrating its divine authority to his conscience. The law said, "Thou shalt not covet;" and thereby he was made to know that "lust" including all the secret workings and irregular desires, and the very first motions of in-

sinners' affections, was really sinful, and displeasing to God, as the law saith, **16** The wages of sin is death; and thereby he was made to believe, that he was really under the wrath and curse of God. **17** This was the experience of Paul, and this is also the experience of every Christian; for by the law they receive the knowledge of sin.

The law teacheth every sinner three humbling truths, and the Spirit of God opens the eyes of all those whom he calleth effectually to see them clearly written in the book of the law, and the same Spirit lodgeth a divine evidence of all these truths in their consciences; **(1.)** The law pronounces the whole world "guilty before God." The Spirit of bondage demonstrates this to be the voice of the eternal God, and the voice of that God to the sinner whom he convinces in particular. He discovers to the sinner, by this awakening truth, that his life and conversation are displeasing to God, and exceedingly corrupt; that his heart is full of mischief and iniquity, being "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and that his whole nature is altogether unclean and defiled, being "dead in trespasses and sins;" so that his depravity is natural, universal, and deadly. **In** all these respects, the sinner is made to see, to believe, and confess himself to be guilty and vile in the sight of God. By the convincing power of the Holy Ghost, he is assured, upon the evidence of the divine law, that his nature, heart, and life, are ungodly, criminal, and loathsome. **(2.)** The law expressly determines the punishment of sin, and assigns the wrath and curse of God unto every child of disobedience, as the deserved wages of iniquity;

saying, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The Spirit of bondage applies this alarming sentence to the conscience of the criminal, as if he said, "Thou art the man;" he lodges the evidence of his miserable condition, in virtue of this condemnation, within the sinner's breast; by causing him to hear the sentence of the law, as it afflicts himself in particular. Hereupon the wretched convict is persuaded of his deplorable situation; confesses that the Lord is justified when he speaketh, and is clear when he judgeth; and, like one under sentence of death pronounced against him, he groans out his belief of the wrath and curse of God lying upon him, saying, I perish, mine iniquity is greater than I can bear. And, (S.) The law declares every man to be impotent, and "without strength," to recover himself from the guilt and ruin of his natural state. No man is able to perform such obediences as the law can honourably expect; and no man is able to make satisfaction for his manifold offences. The Spirit of God records this declaration in the sinner's conscience; and thereby convinces him, that it is impious, as well as foolish, to go about to establish his own righteousness. By this conviction, he perceives himself to be spiritually dead, legally dead, and morally dead, in the sight of God; he sees the insufficiency of his own righteousness, in its best forms; and he is fully persuaded of the gross folly and error of all self-dependence. These convictions which the Holy Ghost produces by the law, are so necessary, that an unconvinced sinner will never receive nor submit to the righteousness of God our Saviour without them;

and yet they are no recommendation to the favour of God. A recommendation to his favour! No, by no means. Unless such convictions by the law be accompanied with a view of the relieving truths of the gospel, they will produce such effects as are every way injurious to the honour of God, and fatal to our own souls. An excellent evangelical writer has observed on this subject, that "an evil guilty conscience, whereby we judge that God is our enemy, and that his justice is against us to our everlasting condemnation; by reason of our sins, doth strongly maintain and increase the dominion of sin and Satan in us, and worketh most mischievous effects in the soul against godliness, even to bring the soul to hate God, and to wish there were no God, no heaven, no hell, that so we might escape the punishment due to us. It so disaffecteth people toward God, that they cannot endure to think, or speak, or hear of him and his law; but strive rather to put him out of their minds, by fleshly pleasures and worldly employments. And thus they are alienated from all true religion; only, blinding their guilty conscience, and stopping the mouth of it, it produceth zeal in many outside performances; and also false religion, idolatry, and the most infernal superstitions in the world. I have often considered, by what manner of working any sin could effectually destroy the whole image of God in the first Adam; and I conclude, it was by working first an evil conscience in him; whereby he judged that the just God was against him, and cursed him for that one sin. This was enough to work a shameful nakedness by disorderly looks, altering away his love wholly from God to the creature, and a desire

to be hidden from the presence of God, which was a total destruction of the image of God's holiness. And we have cause to judge, that from the same cause proceedeth the continual malice, rancour, rage, and blasphemy of the devil, and many notorious wicked men, against God and godliness."*

A belief of what God says in the law, will never melt our heart into godly sorrow for sin, nor bring down the pride of our minds to stoop and yield our souls to be possessed and governed by his word and Spirit. A conviction of having sinned against God as a righteous and inexorable Judge, is so far from furnishing us with any amiable disposition, that it produces every sinful and ungodly temper: and yet this conviction is necessary to shut us up to receive and rest upon Christ as the end of the law for our justification, by cutting off every other dependence, and showing us the absolute need of a perfect righteousness, to reinstate us into the favour of God. It is not a qualification, required in order to make us meet for Christ, but a motive that strongly urges us to renounce all our vain hopes of attaining to the law of righteousness by our own endeavours, and to flee for refuge to the hope set before us in the gospel. Having said so much concerning the faith of the law, I shall now attempt to explain the next branch of this section, namely,

2. The Holy Ghost worketh the faith of the gospel by means of the gospel itself.

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The declarations of the gospel are

* Mr. Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, Direct. 2.

the conveyance wherein God sendeth Christ to bless us with the knowledge and enjoyment of salvation; they are the "ministration of the Spirit," and "of righteousness," unto a condemned guilty world; they are the "incorruptible seed," whereby the children of God are begotten in Christ Jesus; and they are the means of "forming Christ in believers, as the hope of glory." The great mysteries of the gospel could never have been discovered by the most intelligent creatures; and even when they are brought to light, they cannot be received by the "natural man." The Spirit of truth, who revealed them in the Scriptures, must open our understandings to know and embrace the things that are freely given to us of God. In performing this work, the Holy Ghost makes use of the gospel, as the great instrument, of persuading and enabling a sinner to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to him in the word of God, and to set his seal to the truths of the gospel.

Concerning this office of the Comforter, I shall suggest the three following observations, which appear to have a sufficient foundation in the word of God, and may be profitable to direct our apprehensions about the nature and manner of the work of the Holy Spirit, in producing the faith of the gospel, by means of the gospel itself: namely, Every thing a believer can know concerning the person, righteousness, and grace of Christ as a Saviour, is revealed in the gospel:—The Spirit of truth opens the eyes of the understanding to perceive what is revealed concerning Christ and salvation, in the declarations of the gospel:—and, He thereby persuades and enables the soul to receive and rest upon Christ alone for

salvation, as he is revealed in these declarations. Several hints have been suggested upon these propositions in the foregoing part of this work; but as they are here introduced to show how the Spirit of God works the faith of the gospel, it is necessary to be more particular in illustrating them for that purpose.

1. Every thing a believer can know in this world concerning the person, righteousness, and grace of Christ as a Saviour, is clearly and sufficiently revealed in the gospel. The fulness and perfection of the Scriptures for promoting the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is abundantly evident from the general contents of the Old and New Testament, which set before us a bright and undecaying view of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ; and their sufficiency to answer this purpose is expressly affirmed by the apostle: "All scripture," says he, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Particularly, the gospel presents to perishing sinners a remedy in the person and mediation of Christ, that is universally available to their sinful and miserable condition "for he is of God made unto us," as ignorant sinners, "wisdom," to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of salvation; unto us, as guilty sinners, "righteousness," to justify our consciences; unto us, as defiled sinners, "sanctification," to renew our natures, and to stamp true holiness on our tempers and conversation; and unto us, as enslaved sinners, under the curse

of the law, under the bondage of corruption, under the dominion of Satan, and under the governing influence of a present evil world, he is made of God complete "redemption," to redeem us from all evil, and to bring us into the liberty of the sons of God. The gospel presents this remedy to sinners, as every way sufficient to support their dependence, and secure their salvation. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Who can pretend to set limits to the merit of that sacrifice with which God is well pleased? or to the agency of that power which extends to all things in heaven and in earth? His blood is sufficient to cleanse us from all sin; his righteousness is sufficient to make us reign in life; his Spirit is sufficient to make an effectual application of the redemption purchased by his obedience unto death; his wisdom is sufficient to guide us unto glory; his vigilance is sufficient to provide for our safety amidst all our enemies; his fulness is sufficient to supply all our need; his gracious presence is sufficient to make us easy, and even joyful; his intercession is sufficient to obtain for us all spiritual blessings; his right hand is sufficient to uphold us under all our tribulations; his covenant is sufficient to sustain all our hopes; and he himself is sufficient to be all in all to us, both in time and eternity, in the world that now is, and in that which is to come. The gospel presents this suitable and sufficient remedy unto mankind in the form of an absolutely free gift, without requiring any condition or qualification whatsoever in the person to whom this precious gift is made, in order to establish their right to receive it, or

to warrant them to use it for their own personal benefit: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The gospel assures us, that every sinner to whom this suitable and sufficient remedy is presented, has an immediate and sufficient right to receive Christ and all the blessings of the new covenant; and that this right is entirely founded upon the free gift of God, declared and witnessed in his word. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," and "gave him for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." This gift is a good warrant to authorize and embolden every sinner to embrace what is "given him from heaven." Finally, the gospel gives us the most positive assurances, that "whosoever believeth on Christ shall never be ashamed;" and that such shall undoubtedly be "saved." These are the faithful and undeceiving reports of the gospel, that contain the general heads of Christian consolation, and may be considered as a summary abridgment of the truths most immediately connected with saving faith. I have endeavoured to explain and establish them before, and have only mentioned them at present, in order to prepare the way for the illustration of the two next propositions.

2. The Spirit of God opens the eyes of a sinner to perceive what is revealed concerning Christ and salvation, in the declarations of the gospel. He does not make some new revelation of Jesus and his saving work, which was not in the word itself before the sinner was made to perceive it; but he opens the understanding to know what was declared in the

gospel, while the sinner had no apprehension that it contained such important and interesting declarations. A savoury and practical writer speaks of this subject, with much evidence, in the following words: "We can have no saving knowledge of God, but in and by his word. We must look through that glass upon him; and that appearance of God we meet with there, is the beginning of all religion. The word never comes with power to our consciences, till God appear in it. God lets himself down into our hearts, through the apprehensions of our faith, which frames in our hearts a right image of God, answerable to that character he gives of himself in his word. He shines through the word in all his glory. When he spake of old to the patriarchs by an articulate voice, the unwritten word then was accompanied with such convincing signs of his presence, that they could not but believe it: and so is the written word now as capable of representing God to us, when he has a mind to be seen by us, as that was then. The letter of the word is but a creature; but the truths contained in it are eternal, and do all centre in God himself, who is the essential word. Thus God rises out of the word, and looks a man in the face, tells him, 'Thus saith the Lord, I am the Lord God Almighty, who now speak unto you;' he leaves no objection unanswered, and shows what sure grounds of faith we have in him. Shall God say, and not do? It is impossible for God to lie; it must be so as God says; it cannot be otherwise. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one tittle of the word be broken. Thus "in God we praise his word." Consider the word out

of God: it will puzzle men and angels to make out the meaning of it, to think the things spoken of possible, or likely to come to pass; but all things are possible with God, and to those who believe in God. They stick at nothing; they are sure Omnipotency knows no difficulties; the counsel of the Lord must stand; his thoughts shall come to pass. A soul thus struck with a sense of God's presence, yields immediately, 'I believe, Lord, with all my heart, and am ready to do whatsoever thou requirest of me.' The knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, is one thing, and the knowledge of the truth as it is in ink and paper, is another. They are the same truths; but as they are in the Scriptures, they lie in the dead letter; as they are in Christ, they are seen in their living root and principle from whence they spring. Mere scriptural knowledge is but historical: we look upon things we read and hear, rather as notions than realities. Till God fill up all expressions of Scripture concerning himself, with a divine presence answerable thereunto, we believe nothing that is said of him; but such a presence of God in his word, captivates our hearts to the belief of it. We must believe him to be such a God as the word declares him to be, before we shall count all his sayings true. So that, till God appear and show himself to the soul, all that is said to us out of the Scriptures, in the name of an "unknown God," affects us not, because it wants that which is the ground of its credibility: for "no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" he cannot say so and think so, he cannot say so and believe what he says, till the Father

reveal his Son in him. God has invisible ways of access to our hearts: he conveys himself through his truth to our souls; his divinity leads the way. Without some appearance of this, the contents of the word would have no place in our hearts; but coming with so great a presence, in so great a name, and with so strong an impression, God himself writing them upon the heart, we cannot but receive his testimony. The word comes into our hearts suddenly before we are aware, and seizes them for God; and hence we cannot but think, speak, act, and judge as God does; the sense of the word is the sense of our souls, so far as the word is written in our hearts; we read it without the least variation; the copy answers the original.* To open the eyes of the mind to take in the knowledge of gospel declarations, is the office of the Lord the Spirit; and therefore he is promised for this purpose: "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for," says Christ, "he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." And the Holy Ghost performs this office by means of the gospel; and therefore the gospel is called "the ministration of the Spirit," and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The apostle uses a fine expression on this subject, when he writes to the saints at Ephesus, explaining their glorious privileges, and enforcing a thankful regard to the sovereign grace of God, and the agency of the blessed Spirit, in every thing that pertained to their new and happy state. He reminds them of the essential and necessary relation of all their pre-

* See a Discourse of Faith, by Mr. Thomas Cole, pages 12—18.

sent enjoyments and future hopes unto Jesus Christ, and then addresses them thus: "In whom also believing, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."* The apostle does not mean that some time after they believed in Christ, the Holy Ghost gave them the assurance of their interest in him; but that every believer among them was sealed with the demonstration of the Spirit of God, accompanying divine truths with such evidence and power on his heart, that in believing them he received the same faithful impressions of these truths on his soul, as the melted wax receives from the engraved seal strongly applied to it.

3. By these discoveries of the meaning and authority of the declarations of the gospel, as they refer to Christ and salvation, the Spirit of God persuades and enables the soul to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is revealed and exhibited in these declarations. Hereby he dispels the mists of ignorance and error that hung upon the mind, and veiled the glories of divine truth, while they led the sinner into the fatal mistake of trusting in falsehood, and making lies his refuge: hereby the soul is brought under subjection to the authority of God speaking in his word, and proud reasonings against the will of God are demolished, so that the sinner becomes like a little child in submitting to the authority and will of God: hereby the sinner, under a view of the exceeding sinfulness of his sin, and un-

* Eph. i. 13. *Et quod nos in nomine domini baptizati sumus, &c.* I have given a literal translation of these words; and I apprehend this small alteration contributes much light to the meaning of the passage. See Theron and Aspasio, near the close of the nineteenth Dialogue.

der a view of the suitable and sufficient remedy proposed to him in the gospel, doth gladly embrace and depend upon this safe and honourable expedient for his complete salvation: hereby faith becomes the echo of the soul to the voice of God in his word, concerning Christ, and eternal life in his name. This might be illustrated in many instances, to prove the immediate and direct regard a believer has to the word of God, while he, through the Spirit, believeth on Christ unto the salvation of his soul. He considers in what light the Saviour's character is proposed, and he receives him accordingly. Is Christ exhibited to a lost world as the free gift of God? The soul is persuaded and enabled by the Holy Spirit to receive him accordingly: for it "buys without money and without price;" it "takes the water of life freely." Is Christ exhibited in his whole undivided character? The believer is persuaded and enabled to receive him accordingly, as "the way, and the truth, and the life;" as his prophet, priest, and king. Is Christ presented to all the hearers of the gospel, so as to warrant every one of them to embrace him for his own benefit? The believing soul accordingly receives him with the most particular appropriation, saying, "My Lord, and my God." Is Christ proposed in the gospel declarations as the only Saviour of perishing sinners? He is received accordingly by every unfeigned believer, whose language is, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Having taken this view of the effectual operation of the Spirit, in producing an unfeigned belief of divine truth, by means of those very truths which

he enables a person to believe and realize, whether he works a faith of the law, or a joyful belief of the gospel; I shall now dismiss this branch of my subject with one single observation, concerning the manner wherein the Holy Ghost accomplishes this important office: namely, That his agency is so powerful and efficacious in working faith, that it produces "a new creature;" and yet so secret and hidden, that it operates like the blowing of the wind. There is a universal, constant divine agency in the natural world, and yet the manner of divine operations, influencing second causes and their respective effects, is secret, wonderful, and inexplicable: why, then, should it be thought incredible or strange, that the effectual operation of the Spirit of truth upon the soul of man is secret, and neither capable of admitting a clear explication, nor even a distinct apprehension, of his almighty and gracious agency? "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

SECT. III.—*Objections against the necessity of the Divine Energy to produce an unfeigned belief of the Scriptures, and against the Spirit working this Faith by means of the word of God, answered.*

1. It is objected against the necessity of divine energy, that "human nature is certainly possessed of sufficient powers in itself to believe the word of God, both because all that hear it are commanded to

believe it, and because such as hear it, and do not believe it, will be condemned for their unbelief."

Answ. It is evident, from the whole scope of the Scriptures, that God commandeth all mankind that enjoy the benefit of divine revelation, to credit his word, and receive his testimony: and it is most certain, that all who reject the counsel of God by unbelief, will be held criminal, and condemned for their disobedience; but it does not follow from these indisputable facts, that human nature, in its present state, is possessed of sufficient powers in itself to believe the word of God. Man was originally endowed with a capacity to understand, to believe, and do the will of his Creator; but all the bias of our corrupt nature since the fall, is so entirely averse to the will of God, that we can neither know, nor approve, nor do, what is pleasing in his sight. This depravity that has debased our whole nature, and vitiated all its powers, depriving it of original righteousness, has rendered us altogether impotent to every thing that is good, and has brought us wholly under the dominion of sin; but it would be most unreasonable to suppose that it has impaired the obligation of the divine law, which prescribes nothing but what is holy, and just, and good—nothing but what is our reasonable service—nothing but what man was once able to perform—nothing but what the Spirit of grace enables the saints to approve and delight in—nothing that can be offensive and displeasing, except to a carnal mind that indulges its enmity against God—and nothing but what is a wisely-chosen mean of promoting our salvation.

The commands to believe on the Son of God are

not adapted to the abilities of men as sinners; but they are calculated to serve many valuable purposes notwithstanding. For, (1.) They direct our views to Jesus Christ, as the salvation of God for eternal life, and shut us up to seek and expect it only through faith in his name. Divine authority is therein interposed to hedge up our way, that we may neither turn to the right hand nor to the left. (2.) They are quickening truths to "the heirs of promise," through the powerful demonstration of the Holy Ghost bringing them home upon the conscience. When Paul and Silas said to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," the Spirit of God accompanied his word with light and life, so that "he believed in God, with all his house." (3.) Unbelievers are justly condemned for rejecting the counsel of God, because they despise, they hate, they detest the will of God concerning their salvation by Jesus Christ; and therefore they are without excuse. They "make God a liar," even while he is giving them the highest proofs of his veracity; and they despise the riches of his goodness, even while he is showing the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards them through Christ Jesus. Surely such commands are proper to be published unto sinners, who cannot believe them, because they direct them to Christ for salvation, and because they are made spirit and life unto as many as are ordained to eternal life. Surely unbelievers, who hate Christ without a cause, and yet cannot believe on him, are deservedly punished with the greatest destruction from the presence of the Lord, because they hate both the Father and the Son, and

because they willingly gratify their enmity against both the authority of the divine law, and the sovereignty of divine grace.

2. It is objected against the necessity of divine energy in working faith, that "the supposition of such an agency as has been explained, being absolutely necessary to produce an unfeigned belief of the gospel, is inconsistent with the use of any means of believing." *Ans.* If this reasoning should be admitted, it is impossible to fix any limits to the consequences that arise out of it. Who will choose to dissent from the poet's maxim, "In God we live, and move, and have our being," except an avowed atheist? But who could ever imagine, that this position will operate to make men careless and indolent about the business of life, except a bedlamite? Yet this reasoning is founded on the same principle with that in the objection; and one answer will serve both. The great God may certainly establish what order he pleases, in bestowing undeserved favours upon mankind. Had it seemed good in his sight to do so, he could have conferred them by a continued miracle, without the use of any means; but the order he has settled is of a different kind. He will do all things freely, and yet he will be inquired of to perform his promises. On this head I may adopt the words of the famous Dr. Owen,* with a little variation: "The command of God is the measure and rule of our industry and diligence in a way of duty; and why any one should be discouraged from the exercise of that industry which God requires of

* Preface to the Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit.

him, by the consideration of the aid and assistance which he hath promised to him, I cannot understand. Believing on Christ is difficult, and of the highest importance; so that if any one can be negligent therein because it is the operation and gift of God, it is because he hates it, he likes it not. Let others do what they please, I shall endeavour to comply with the apostle's advice upon the enforcement which he gives unto it: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.'"—To use the means of grace, that is, the word and ordinances of God, whereby he is pleased to communicate the benefits of redemption unto sinners, is our unquestionable duty; but to suppose that our using these means will ever produce faith in Jesus Christ, without the energy of the Holy Spirit to render them effectual for that purpose, is contrary both to scripture, and observation, and experience. The Spirit is received "by the hearing of faith;" he giveth "testimony unto the word of his grace;" and, what is altogether decisive on this point, the apostle says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The manner of the Spirit's work is so far from discouraging men in using the means of faith and holiness, that it is a most powerful motive to excite them to abound therein more and more.

3. It is objected against this agency of the Holy Ghost in producing an unfeigned belief of the gospel, that "such an energy could not be resisted; whereas many reject the counsel of God against themselves, and will not be gathered by the gospel." *Answ.* It is most certain, that many hearers of the word do

reject the counsel of God against themselves, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life: it is also certain, that very many who are invited by the gospel, refuse to come to Christ that they may have life; and when he would gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, they will not be gathered. But this is no proof that the energy of the Spirit of God can be resisted, when it is his pleasure to convince the mind of divine truths. Whenever a man comes to understand the meaning of the words in some propositions, he is obliged to believe them; such as, a part of any thing is less than the whole, one and one make two, and many others. Now, it must be remembered, that the office of the Spirit of promise is to convince; that is, to manifest the truth or falsehood of opinions by an undeniable demonstration, so as to bring the conscience to a full and fixed persuasion. When the Lord the Spirit is pleased to convince in this manner, his convictions cannot be resisted. A person can no more doubt of the truths of God, when they are thus demonstrated to his conscience, than of any thing that he sees or hears. But if a person shall hear the gospel, and have it urged upon his conscience, without having this divine evidence lodged in his heart by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, it is no wonder if he resist and grieve the Holy Ghost, and perversely rebel against the declarations of God, and against many convictions of conscience. This is the case with very many who reject the word of the Lord; and yet we maintain, that the rod of God's strength causes a willing people to come to Christ in the day of his power. The Spirit's agency in convincing of

sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, is efficacious, prevalent, and irresistible. The counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.

4. It is objected against the effectual energy of the Spirit in working faith, that "it cannot be reconciled with the freedom of our will, which is at liberty either to choose or reject what is proposed to it; whereas such an energy would preclude its determination." *Ans.* The liberty that is essential to the will of man, does not consist, as the objection supposes, in a power of choosing or refusing whatever is proposed to it; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:" yet the carnal mind is perfectly free from any violence, compelling it to disobey God, and rebel against his law; in like manner, the saints "delight in the law of God after the inward man;" and they are constrained to do so by "the love of Christ." But the true idea of that freedom which is the essential property of the will, consists in a person's choosing what, upon the whole, appears to him most fit to be chosen, and refusing what, upon the whole, appears to him most disagreeable and unfit to be chosen. Whether a person approves or disapproves upon this principle, he does it with choice, and without experiencing any force or violence compelling him to determine against his inclination.

If this be the case, there is no foundation for the vehement declamations of Arminians against the Calvinistic scheme, as if it were subversive of all moral agency, and compelled the will of man to choose what it did not apprehend to be good, and to refuse what it did not apprehend to be evil. On the con-

trary, we affirm, that the blessed Comforter aways the will in effectual calling, by enlightening the eyes of the understanding, and demonstrating to the conscience, that divine declarations are supremely good, and worthy of all acceptation. Whenever they are apprehended in this light by the mind, they necessarily become the faith and joy of the soul, and accordingly they are received with faith and love. The efficacious operation of the Spirit of God is so far from doing the least violence to the freedom of the will, that it has a most friendly influence upon its best and most important interests, while it gives men a capacity to discern, and an inclination to choose, the things that are freely given to them of God. This is the highest reason, and the most perfect liberty. "I will run the way of thy commandments," says David, "when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

5. Against the effectual agency of the Holy Ghost in producing an unfeigned belief of divine truth, it is objected, that "mankind are not conscious of such an almighty energy, which makes it evident that there is no such thing." *Answ.* If this principle be admitted, that there is no divine agency upon the human mind, unless the mind be conscious of it by its own feelings, (which must be the meaning of the objection,) atheism and scepticism must also be adopted, in preference to Scripture, reason, and common sense. Are we conscious, by any feelings and sensations in our own minds, of an effectual divine agency in the daily operations of providence? Would such experimental perceptions of an immediate energy, in all cases, consist with the grand purposes of the divine government? Does not the

same obligation, however, lie on us to acknowledge and reverence the hand of God in every providence, and in every moment of our lives, upon the present plan of his administration, as could possibly take place, if we had a constant experimental perception of his immediate agency?

The wisdom, power, holiness, and goodness of God, shine conspicuous in the whole scheme of providence. A considering mind is struck with an awful sense of the Deity, in the design and execution of the complete system, and of all its various parts. In like manner, when the humbling and awakening truths of the law are brought home with power and evidence upon the conscience, and when the voice of joy and gladness in the gospel is heard and received; not as the word of men, but as the word of God; the soul is made to see God in his word, to feel his power, to confess his presence, and to yield itself unto the authority and will of the Lord. Nothing is more certain in Christian experience, than the happy consciousness of this powerful influence of the word of life upon every believer of the truth. Here the power of God is really felt; but the experience a believer has of it, is by means of the word. He is not indeed conscious of any work of the Holy Ghost, separate from the Scriptures; but he is made to obey them from the heart, as a faithful record that displays the glory of the Lord, and makes a just representation of his excellent majesty.

6. It is, moreover, objected against this divine energy towards them that believe, that "it savours of enthusiasm; and strikes the imagination with delusive apprehensions about an extraordinary work

upon the soul, that cannot be brought to any proper test. *Answ.* The proper notion of enthusiasm, when taken in a bad sense, is a persuasion that a person hath of some immediate intercourse with God, and of receiving the illumination of his Spirit, without the use of the word. Such imaginary correspondences with the Deity, are not pretended to be founded on the Scriptures; they cannot be justified by that unerring standard of true religion; they are expressly condemned at that decisive tribunal; and on all these accounts, they are exceedingly dangerous and detestable. But what inference can be drawn from the ignorance and pride of a deluded enthusiast, that imagines he really hath immediate illuminations of the Spirit of God, without having these illuminations by and through the word of truth,—what inference, I say, can be drawn from these foolish and dangerous pretensions, that will in the least affect the real and certain experience of believers? All the operations of the Spirit of faith are experienced and received by the hearing of faith; they are all founded upon the Scripture; and they all tend to one great purpose, namely, to promote a correspondence with God entirely upon the foundation of his revealed will, and upon no other plan whatever. Light and darkness, Christ and Belial, the temple of God and the temple of idols, are not more distinct from each other, are not more opposite to one another, than the divine energy of the Spirit of truth and the strong delusions of enthusiasm. There is a clear line of distinction between the work of the Holy Ghost upon the soul, and the warmest imaginations of a deceived heart. The influence of the Holy

Ghost is always, without the least exception, exactly correspondent to the written word, and preserved and increased in the use of the means of grace. It makes no new revelations, but gives access and efficacy to what is already revealed. The vain boastings of self-elevating enthusiasts are expressed in a very different manner. They avow the most insolent contempt of the oracles of God, that sure word of prophecy which the Lord hath magnified above all his name; and as they believe not the truth of God, but follow their own imaginations, God is righteous in giving them up to wander in the counsels of their own hearts, to believe lies, and even to have pleasure in unrighteousness. Divine energy and the efficacy of delusion are as opposite to one another as truth and error, light and darkness, the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world.

7. Some object against the Scripture being the means by which the Holy Ghost worketh mightily in producing faith, that "faith is as much an immediate, supernatural work of almighty power, without the use of any instrument or means of effecting it, as the work of creation, or of raising the dead, wherein the eternal power and Godhead of the great Creator, and restorer of life, accomplish the whole, without the intervention of any means whatever." *Ans.* It is very true, that all mankind are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins;" and that believers are "quickened together with Christ," and become "the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." It is also true, that creating all things of nothing, and raising the dead to life, are the works of God alone; and that he performs them

immediately by his almighty power, and not by any created means. But it is equally certain, that "faith," which is the gift of God, and the fruit of his Spirit, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith of any kind cometh by a report, and saving faith cometh by the word of God. A report is not believed until the mind be acquainted with the meaning of it, and persuaded of the truth of that report: nor is the word of God believed until the understanding be enlightened to know it, and the soul becomes persuaded of the truth and certainty of it. Believing the word of God is the immediate effect of the word being presented to the mind in its genuine meaning and divine authority; whereupon the conscience assents to the truth of it, and imbibes the image and will of God speaking in it. The sense of the Scripture is then understood to lie in the Scripture itself, and its divine authority is perceived to be inherent in the word of God itself. Hereby divine truths become an ingrafted word, and an incorruptible seed, changing the whole powers and faculties of the soul, and furnishing it with new principles of living by faith, and walking with God. It is the work of the Spirit to demonstrate divine things in this manner to the conscience; and therefore our prayer should be, "Open thou our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law:" but as this illumination of the Spirit is received by the hearing of the doctrines of faith, it is our duty, even as sinners, to search the Scriptures, to hear and obey the voice of God in them, and to watch daily at wisdom's gates, waiting at the posts of her doors. In creating the world, and raising the dead, no means

can be employed, because the nature of these works is such as cannot admit of any instrument; but the word of God must be employed as the means of believing that word, because the nature of faith is such that it cannot be wrought without that means. Will some foolish caviller reply, 'Why not? May not God work faith by giving an immediate revelation of divine things to any that he is pleased to call?' I allow that this is possible with God; but even this supposition admits that such believers must have the things of God revealed to them, or else they could not believe them. This revelation would be the same thing to them that the Scripture is to others. Such immediate revelations, however, are no where promised; and it is both criminal and dangerous presumption in men to expect them.

8. I shall only take notice of another objection against the divine energy of the Holy Ghost, in producing an unfeigned belief of the word of God; namely, that "all those scriptures, which speak of such energy, denote nothing else but the power of working miracles, whereby the gospel was confirmed, and they to whom it was preached were induced to believe it." *Answ.* When the gospel was first preached and propagated in the world, it was attested by many signs and wonders, whereby it evidently appeared to be a divine system; but many saw these miracles, and heard the doctrines confirmed by them, and yet continued in a state of unbelief and disobedience. Miracles were a proof of gospel doctrines, but they did not produce a confident dependence upon the doctrines proved by them. The Spirit of the Lord who is the author of the gospel, what miracles can he do for the heirs of salvation, what miracles can-

not do, and what they were never intended to accomplish. He must "convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He must "show unto them things to come;" he must give enlightened eyes of the understanding;" he must "open the heart;" he must accompany the declarations of the gospel with demonstration, with convincing light and persuasive evidence in their minds and consciences, and with power to influence their hearts, and bring them into an obediential subjection to the word of Christ; he must set up and support the kingdom of God in the soul, even that kingdom which "is not in word, but in power," by turning sinners "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" he must bring home the gospel upon the conscience, "not in word only," as it reaches the ear in the external publication of it, "but also in power, and in much assurance," whereby the soul is filled with an unshaken satisfaction, as to the truth and importance of the gospel report. These and other such offices must be performed by the Spirit of truth, towards them that believe; and it is too evident to require any proof, that they are all very different from the miracles by which the gospel is attested to be a divine revelation. Even when the working of miracles is ceased, the office and work of the Holy Ghost still do, and always shall, continue to the end of the world.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Since divine energy is so necessary to work in the mind an unfeigned belief of the word of God, we

may justly infer, that faith is no such easy trivial matter as many people count it to be. Nothing is supposed to be more easy than believing; and it is commonly supposed that persons may believe when they please. While the truths of God are not understood, and his authority in these truths is not perceived, the mind is not sensible of any objection it has against believing them, and therefore supposes itself capable of loving and obeying them at pleasure. But when the commandment comes to the conscience in its true meaning, divine authority, and dreadful penalties; sin revives, and the sinner stands accused, convicted, and condemned before the Judge of all. When the gospel opens her mouth, and proclaims peace on earth, and the good-will of God towards men, the guilty criminal shuns this consolation, stops his ears, and refuses obedience to the humbling joyful sound. This would for ever be the case, unless the Spirit of God both persuade and enable the soul to embrace Jesus Christ and his great salvation, freely offered in the gospel. Surely "faith is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God," "a fruit of the Spirit," and effected by "the operation of God." Believers have no reason to arrogate the praise of having believed unto themselves; for they have believed "through grace;" and the hearers of the gospel have no reason to imagine themselves possessed of any ability to receive the truths of God with faith and love; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Ignorance of God and his word, operating with pride and self-conceit, produces that presumptuous indif-

ference about the doctrines and life of faith, which is so exceedingly dishonouring to God, and so generally ruining unto mankind.

2. Since "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," it is manifest that unconverted sinners ought to hear the word, and improve the means of grace. The obligation that lies upon them to do so, arises from the command of God, who hath prescribed their duty, and made it their reasonable service. Sinners are not required to hear the word, and improve the means of grace, in order to work out a preliminary righteousness, to make them worthy of any favour at the hand of God, or even to qualify them for the enjoyment of it; but the duties prescribed to them are the means of receiving the Spirit of God, who enlightens the mind, renews the will, and gives the knowledge of salvation, by the ordinances of his own appointment. Gospel ordinances prescribe services that become the majesty and honour of the Lord's glorious and fearful name, and point out the way of life unto self-destroyed sinners. If they were to be observed, in order that divine mercy might be extended to the observers of them, as a recompense for these duties; such services would be altogether inconsistent with the promises of God, and subversive of the design of the gospel. But they are life-giving institutions, that are mighty through God to make the dead to hear the voice of the Son of God, and hearing it to live. Divine power works by and through these means, as they are the appointments of heaven; but the grace of God is no where promised to reward and crown the work of men, in attending and observing these insti-

tutions, with any other kind of blessings than he has been pleased to convey by the institutions themselves.

Perhaps an example or two may contribute some light to my meaning.—When Moses and the children of Israel kept the first passover by faith, they sprinkled the blood of the paschal lamb upon the lintels and door-posts throughout all their dwellings, lest the angel that destroyed the first-born of man and beast that night in all the land of Egypt, should touch them. Israel must have sprinkled the blood, or else they could not escape in the general calamity; yet the protection promised them was not a reward of their labour in sprinkling the blood, but it was afforded them through the means of the blood they sprinkled, which was the ordinance of God for their safety. Again, when an impotent person stepped into the pool at Bethesda, first after the angel had troubled the water, he was made whole of whatever disease he had. A great multitude of such people lay in the porches adjoining to this pool, waiting for the troubling of the waters, each of them hoping for the first benefit from that event, by getting first into the troubled water; yet the cure such persons received did not in the least depend upon their own work of stepping into the water, as being any sort of reward for their labour; but they were cured by means of the troubled water into which they first stepped, which was the ordinance of God to heal them. In like manner, the great God has made it the duty even of unconverted sinners, to read, and hear, and believe his word, and to observe his ordinances, not with a design to give them spiritual blessings as a reward of their services of this kind, but

because he is pleased, through means of his word and ordinances, to confer the knowledge and enjoyment of salvation.

3. Since the Spirit of truth produceth faith by means of the word, working the faith of the law only by means of the law, and working the faith of the gospel only by means of the gospel; it is very manifest, that the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul of man, can neither be justly expressed nor conceived in an abstracted form. A systematical account of his gracious influence, is better adapted to gratify the curiosity of a philosopher, than to improve the mind or enlarge the experience of a Christian. His general office is to convince and to bear witness of revealed truths, and by making them plain to the understanding, and rendering their influence efficacious upon the heart and life. This office he performs by means of the word; and the only advantageous way of describing his agency upon the heart, is to describe the meaning, authority, and influence of his testimony of its different articles, as it is declared in the Scriptures, and as it is transfused into the hearts and lives of believers.

4. Since faith is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, through means of the word of God, we conclude, that the only proper principle or habit of saving faith is the word of truth, put into the mind, and written on the heart, by the demonstration and power of the heavenly Comforter.* By consulting more

* It is only upon this principle that the general obligations which lie upon mankind-sinners to believe the gospel, and improve the means of grace, can be consistently maintained. To pretend that sinners are called to use means of having a new

with reason than with the Scriptures, an opinion has been adopted that seems to subvert this proposition; namely, that the Spirit of God creates a new nature in the soul by his immediate agency; and that this new nature is the proper principle and habit of all the actings of the mind, in faith, love, and new obedience. This new nature is supposed to be antecedent to all acts of believing, even as the eye is antecedent to seeing, and the ear to hearing; it is said to be something distinct from the object of faith, the word of faith, and the acting of faith; it is considered as something immediately produced by the Spirit, that lives and exists independent of the word of God, though it cannot act but under the influence of that word. This new nature is not thought to be formed by believing, because faith is the act or effect of it; and it is said to be something inherent in a man, really distinct from the enjoyment of Christ revealed in the gospel. But, according to the Scriptures, "the old man" is "put off," and "the new man" is "put on," by learning Christ, by hearing him, and being taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; and to "be born again," is precisely of the same import with "believing on Christ." Therefore, the principles or habits of faith are nothing else than the word of Christ dwelling in the soul. But this subject will be further illustrated, when I come to consider the influence of faith, on the head of Regeneration.

nature, which does not consist in the enjoyment of Christ by believing, is to put them on doing some services in order to their receiving a new nature, as the reward of their labour; it limits the declarations of the gospel, and destroys every encouragement to the hearing of faith, except what is founded upon a legal principle.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL.

THERE are two rules whereby we ought to be directed in making an estimate of the worth and excellency of any object : either its worth is inherent in itself, independent of any opinion mankind may have about it ; or its excellency consists in its fitness as a means of accomplishing some important purpose. When we compare the different species of creatures with one another, we see different degrees of excellency and dignity in their several kinds ; but if we speak properly, God only is good, and glorious, and excellent. If we consider the order, harmony, and dependencies of the words, and works, and purposes of the only-wise God, we see abundance of reason to adore the depth of the riches both of his wisdom and knowledge, in the grand arrangement of the whole system, and in the happy connections established among its particular branches. Here we may perceive a wonderful beauty and excellency in some of the works of God above others. Some of them are placed in the most conspicuous stations, and ordained to diffuse very extensive happiness ; as the sun that rules the day, and the moon that walketh in brightness amidst the gloom of night : others are important and useful in their kind, but their use is so limited, that they are, on a comparison, of small value, and of little or no consequence. The faith of the gospel

is exceedingly precious, not for any intrinsic worth or inherent excellency, but because it has the most conspicuous station, and promotes the best purposes in the method of God's gracious dealings with men. This will be sufficiently evident from four considerations, which I shall briefly illustrate: (1.) Sinners are saved by grace, through faith. (2.) Salvation is of faith, that it might be by grace. (3.) Because salvation is of faith by grace, it is sure to all the seed. And, (4.) The tendency of faith is to answer man's chief end, which is to glorify God; and enjoy him for ever. Whatever is a means of serving these noble purposes, ought to be esteemed precious and excellent.

SECT. I.—*Sinners are saved by Grace, through Faith.*

The free grace of God, in opposition to every idea of man's inherent goodness, is the alone spring or fountain from whence all our salvation proceeds. Sinners have no title to life; enemies have no claim upon divine favour; rebels have no right to pardon; lawless captives deserve no redemption; ungodly and disobedient criminals ought to receive the wages of their unrighteousness; and those who have destroyed themselves, should die unpitied and unlamented. In these guilty and miserable circumstances, nothing but boundless sovereign grace could bring salvation to the sons of men. The apostle had good reason, therefore, to say, when he writes to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus, "By grace are ye saved, and not of works, lest any man should boast."

But if it be asked; By what means do sinners enjoy and possess the salvation of God, provided by his free grace, for their own immediate benefit? the apostle informs us, they are saved by grace, "through faith." As they do not merit their salvation, so they do not acquire the enjoyment or possession of it by doing the will of God, but by believing his word. Divine grace is revealed in the gospel of our salvation, where it is published to the world in such a form as warrants every sinner to receive it for himself, and to depend on it for his own benefit. The business of faith in the concerns of our salvation, may be comprehended in two things:—

1. By faith we perceive our interest in that common salvation, which the gospel sets at large before perishing sinners. . . Gospel declarations are proposed in the most general terms, that they may answer the design of God in setting before mankind an open door of free access to the enjoyment of the common salvation; and that believers of the gospel may see no cause to magnify themselves, on account of any personal goodness that distinguishes them from the rest of mankind. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The right of believers to all the blessings that constitute the great salvation, is not founded in their having good dispositions, or doing good actions, before they believed; for if that were the case, they would be saved by works, and not by the grace of God. It would be ridiculous to say, their right to salvation is grounded upon the experiences and evidences that accompany or flow from their effectual calling, whereby they are brought into a state of sal-

vation; because their right to that salvation must go before the enjoyment of it, and consequently also before their experiences or evidences relating to it. The Spirit of God hath established this right upon the surest basis, by representing it arising entirely from the word of salvation sent unto a guilty world, without supposing the basis of promise to be of any better character than sinners and sinners, or in any better condition than lost sheep and children of wrath. A revelation that conveys to such persons a sufficient right to embrace and enjoy this great salvation, must be expressed in general terms, or else it could never answer the purpose of giving them the conscious possession of its precious and everlasting treasures.

Now, it is only by faith that we can perceive the interest we have in this salvation. While we look into the word of God, and discern the remedy therein presented to us, it appears to be every way suitable to our character, and altogether sufficient for our happiness. Viewing it in these lights, as exhibited in the given declarations of the gospel, the believing soul is filled with joy and peace in contemplating this great salvation as really its own; because it is provided for perishing sinners, and revealed for their acceptance in the most general, free, and unconditional terms. Eternal life in the Son of God is then apprehended to be a satisfying inheritance, and the declarations of the Scriptures concerning this life are then approved as sufficient title to the inheritance; even as a testamentary disposition constitutes a right and warrant for the legatee to claim his legacy, and to judge that he has a real interest in the estate bequeathed in his favour, antecedent to the enjoy-

ment of them. Such is the interest that a believer perceives he hath in the salvation of God; an interest founded in the revelation of divine grace, and established on the confirmed testament of Jesus Christ, who was dead and is now alive. No man can approve of this right as a sufficient title to eternal life, until the Spirit of wisdom and revelation give him a spiritual understanding, that he may perceive the things which are freely given him of God; but as soon as the eyes of his understanding are enlightened, he sees, with heart-felt satisfaction, that the mercies he forsook are his own; and that he sinned against his own soul, as well as against God, while he was rejecting them by unbelief.

2. By faith we apply Christ and his salvation to our own souls, upon the sure warrant that has been just now explained. Sometimes people have an interest and property, where they do not choose to possess or enjoy. Hiram, the king of Tyre, having furnished Solomon with cedar-trees, and fir-trees, and with gold, according to all his desire, Solomon, to requite his friendly offices, gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. Whereupon "Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul," or the displeasing, dirty land. He despised them so much, that he would not take possession of them, but restored them to Solomon. Many who bear the word of God, are guilty of treating it with the most profane contempt: instead of receiving it gladly, they "put it from them, and judge themselves unworthy

of eternal life." As Israel loathed the heavenly manna, and despised the promised land, so many that are favoured with the gospel "neglect the great salvation," and even "tread under foot the Son of God." Shocking infatuation! horrid impiety! But those that believe, are enabled to know, to receive, and apply the truths of God, as the gospel of their own salvation. They see the excellency of salvation, and therefore they cannot neglect it; they perceive their interest in it, and therefore they cannot reject it; and they discern the necessity, the sufficiency, and the suitableness of it, and how desirable it is to make them perfectly happy; and under all these views, they apply to themselves what is revealed and given, in general terms, to persons of their criminal character, and in their wretched condition.

Believing a report in our favour, never fails (if the matter that the report relates to be esteemed important and desirable) to lead us to this conclusion; that we are so much more happy by the accession of that additional comfort. A merchant is informed, that a ship he employed in foreign trade is returned home, richly laden with precious commodities; that her voyage has been prosperous; and that the value of her cargo is still greater than he expected. Does he not now reckon himself richer in proportion to the reported worth of her successful adventure? A convict is told, that his free pardon is signed and granted by the king: Does he not, by believing this intelligence, judge himself a happy man, delivered from a disgraceful death; and released from a loathsome prison? A beggar is credibly informed, that a large estate is assigned him in the last will of

a person now departed this life, and that the testament is in all points legal and valid: Does he not immediately feel an agreeable alteration in the opinion he forms concerning his circumstances, comparing the past with the future, or rather with the present? For in believing the information, he anticipates what is to come, and every thing becomes present to his mind. Surely the sinner, who is taught by the Spirit, to know that eternal life is freely given him, as a guilty condemned criminal, receives and applies the precious gift with much joy. On the day of Pentecost, that immediately succeeded the ascension of Christ, the Holy Ghost was poured out with extraordinary power, and converted three thousand in one day. These converts, upon hearing the humbling and awakening descriptions of their sin in "crucifying the Lord of glory, were pricked in their hearts," but upon hearing further, that divine grace was revealed to them in a free promise, and that this promise, which contained every thing that constitutes the salvation of a perishing sinner, was actually sent to them, then, "they gladly received the word," and rejoiced in it as their treasure, believing God that his promise was verily made to them, and that their happiness was effectually secured in it. The language of a believer is well expressed in the dying words of the sweet singer of Israel; "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire," or in the apostle's phrase, "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" that he made for us, while we were ungodly and without strength, sinners and enemies.

By perceiving our interest in the salvation of God, revealed to us by the gospel, and obtaining it with application to our own souls, we become possessed of salvation itself. Christ the Saviour, with all his unsearchable riches, "dwelleth in our hearts by faith." While the saints live in the favour of God, and live to the praise of his glory, "Christ liveth in them, and their life in the flesh is" maintained and nourished "by the faith of the Son of God," who liveth in them. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Son, and hath everlasting life in him." The faithful Witness hath given us the strongest assurance on this head: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hearth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." From these texts, two things are most evident: (1.) That believers have the actual enjoyment of Christ and salvation only by faith; and, (2.) That the efficiency or operation of faith, in order to the enjoyment of Christ and his fulness, cannot be the procuring of a right or title to this enjoyment. The office of faith appears to be altogether inconsistent with this proud and dangerous notion, which dishonours the sovereignty of divine grace, and rejects the surety-righteousness of Emmanuel. These passages expressly inform us, that faith assumes no merit to itself, it establishes no title for the believer; it claims no reward; but enters into the enjoyment of a complete salvation freely offered in the gospel, and takes possession of it upon the sufficient warrant of God's free gift: for "we which have believed, do enter into rest;" and

“through Christ we have access, or entrance,
 “by faith into the grace of God wherein we stand.”
 The consequence of what has been said is briefly this—
 that sinners, who have destroyed themselves, are
 brought into a state of salvation by the grace of God,
 through faith discerning and appropriating salvation,
 as the merciful provision and free gift of God. By
 this means, and in the other way, do they become
 partakers of Christ, and heirs of the promises.

*SECT. II.—Salvation is of Faith, that it might be
 by Grace.*

The express design of that establishment God
 hath been pleased to make for man's salvation in the
 new covenant, is, “that he may show the exceeding
 riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us,
 through Christ Jesus;” and that his “grace may
 reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by
 Jesus Christ our Lord.” This being his great de-
 sign, it is necessary that the means of carrying it
 into execution be of such a nature as to answer the
 purpose; by excluding all boasting on our part, and
 magnifying the riches and sovereignty of divine
 grace. For this reason our salvation is “of faith”
 as the means of enjoying it, “that it might be by
 the grace of God” conferring it. Believing does not
 invade the honour of divine sovereignty, while it
 takes possession of all the promises, and of all their
 precious contents; and therefore the saints give
 glory to God, by believing the gospel of his grace.
 To understand this matter more perfectly, the fol-

lowing observations are recommended to the reader's serious consideration:—

1. The salvation of sinners is the result of the mere good pleasure of God, who is "gracious to whom he will be gracious," and "showeth mercy on whom he will show mercy;" and his end in saving them with an everlasting salvation, is expressly declared to be the magnifying of his merciful kindness, that his redeemed may "glory in the Lord," and that they "may be to the praise of the glory of his grace." The Lord's redeemed, whom he hath called and saved, not according to their works, but according to his purpose and grace, ought always to confess their great and everlasting obligations to his mercy "which endureth for ever;" they speak not aright, unless they constantly say, "By the grace of God we are what we are."

2. Salvation is published and given to sinners in the promises of the gospel, and not in the law. Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees by the God of glory, who appeared to him while he was serving strange gods; a covenant was made with him, wherein he received "the promise that he should be the heir of the world, that he might be the father of all them that believe." But how did Abraham receive this promise? Did it depend on his obedience to the law, or the sovereign grace of God, reigning through that righteousness which the gospel reveals in Christ to the guilty, that they through faith may become the righteousness of God in him? Not upon his obedience to the law, because this would have made the promises of none effect; but the peculiar honour and happiness he

received, were both conveyed and embraced in the promise of God. The law is so far from countenancing the vain pretensions of a legal spirit, which goes about to make out a title to eternal life by its own righteousness; that it worketh wrath, both by revealing the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and by distressing the conscience with apprehensions of that wrath, and by irritating the enmity of the heart against the holiness and justice of God and his law. Salvation is only provided for sinners in the covenant of grace; it is only revealed in the gospel; it is only given in the precious and faithful promises of God. To seek it any other way is egregious folly, and will certainly end in a fatal disappointment; but all that take hold of God's covenant, shall rejoice in their portion.

3. Salvation, originating from the free grace of God, and published in the promises of the gospel, must be received and embraced by believing that it is the undeserved gift of God, which he hath freely promised in Christ Jesus to a lost and ruined world. It cannot be received in any other way. What is promised cannot be enjoyed by us, while the promise is not performed, except in a way of believing that promise: and we cannot become possessed of a gift any other way but by receiving it. When the Lord promised Abraham a son by Sarah, in their old age, the venerable patriarch did not consult with flesh and blood; he did not consider the impossibility of that event, upon the principles of nature and experience; but being fully assured that God had promised, he was strong in the faith, giving glory to God, and was fully persuaded that what God had

promised, he was able also to perform: When the gospel of the grace of God is preached unto the sons of men, it is either believed, or it is not believed: when it is believed, it immediately becomes the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; when it is not believed, the unbelievers remain in a state of sin and misery, they are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them. Believers are saved by grace, through faith; but how shall unbelievers, who neglect the great salvation, escape the wrath and curse of God?

4. This way of enjoying salvation, by believing the promises of the gospel, is altogether adapted to secure and advance the honour of the grace of God. The righteousness of the law, and salvation by faith, are placed in a direct opposition: "For," says the apostle, "by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Let any attentive reader, though but of common understanding, consider this passage, and he cannot but observe, that faith and works, in point of salvation, cannot stand together; but where one is the means of salvation, the other is not. Where a person does any work for his salvation, he does not believe for it; and where he does really believe for salvation, he does not work for it. Believing and working are so very different in their natures, that whensoever any favour is enjoyed or received by mere believing, it cannot in any proper sense be said to be obtained by working; because it is received by faith, as a blessing which is freely given, and not as a reward of any services we perform. "This is the record,

that God hath given to us" sinners in the gospel of our salvation, namely, "eternal life; and this life is in his Son;" A comfortable and gracious declaration indeed! When God, by his Spirit, brings this testimony home to the conscience, makes an application of it to the soul, writes it in the heart, and thereby produces an unfeigned belief of this joyful truth; every one must see that whatsoever is of such a faith must be of free grace. Whatsoever blessings are conveyed into the soul, or conferred upon it, in this way, must be gifts of sovereign, rich, and effectual grace, and must be received in that light only.

If faith, as it denotes the exercise or activity of the mind about the grace of God that bringeth salvation, were the foundation of our claim to Christ and his salvation, as many gross corrupters of the gospel would persuade the world,—then it could not be said, that whatsoever is of faith, is of absolute, unconditional grace. But this proud unscriptural notion is as much inconsistent with the nature of faith, as it is injurious to the design of the gospel. Faith is not that which gives us a claim to Christ and eternal life; but that by which we really claim and receive him with all his unsearchable riches, upon the footing of a free and faithful promise. Faith is not that which gives us either our liberty, ground, or warrant, to trust in Christ as our Saviour; but it is that by which we trust upon him, having all our liberty and warrant to do so from the free exhibition of Christ, and the free invitations of the gospel.

The case is very clear, and it might be proved by many considerations, that faith and free grace are entirely consistent; and that believing is the only

these circumstances, there remaineth nothing for mankind, but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation," to devour them as "the adversaries" of God. If the rebels were suffered to escape, how should the Judge of all the earth be just? If the offenders were thoroughly pardoned, how should he be "faithful and true"? This is an intricacy which the most exalted of finite intelligences are unable to clear up. But, behold! the mysterious secret is set in the clearest light by the gospel, which brings life and immortality to the enjoyment of guilty and destroyed sinners; and brings it to them as a free gift, conveyed in the sure promise of God that cannot lie. This gift is to be received by believing the promise wherein it is conveyed, in opposition to all the efforts of human pride, that would establish a title to it by our own works of righteousness. Salvation is the free gift of God; his promise concerning it is our alone and sufficient warrant to receive and possess it; salvation is received and possessed by believing the promise of God concerning it, and this way of conferring and receiving salvation, makes the promises of salvation sure to all the world. This will be very evident from the following observations.

1. All the promises relating to our salvation, were made to the Lord Jesus Christ in the everlasting covenant; They are indeed presented unto us in the word of truth, that we may believe them; and that is believing them; we may enter into the possession of the good things promised in them; but they are presented unto us as promises of that covenant which is "confirmed to Christ," and as promises made to Abraham's seed, that is, to Christ.

who came of the fathers as concerning the flesh. As all the promises relating to the happiness of mankind, were made to the first Adam in the covenant of works; so all the promises, relating to the salvation of the heirs of the promise, are made to the second Adam in the covenant of grace. Upon this account the apostle affirms, that "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God." It was only in consideration of his fulfilling all righteousness, and making his soul an offering for sin, that the pardon of sin, the sanctifying Spirit, and everlasting glory, were ever proposed unto mankind-sinners.

2. All the promises relating to our salvation, are a free conveyance of those blessings they respectively propose to the enjoyment of sinful and wretched creatures, unto whom the good-will of God is thereby declared. These promises are a gift of Christ the Saviour, and of all things freely with him. We are called to come to Jesus, and to "buy of him wine and milk, without money and without price;" which implies, that his salvation is a free gift, and as such must be freely received. This is what the apostle expressly asserts, while he says, "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." From which passage it appears, that salvation is the free gift of God, and the rich portion of the saints; also, that they must either receive this inheritance by the law or by the promise: for it cannot be partly of the law and partly of the promise; but be wholly of the one, or wholly of the other. But it is clear that God gave it to Abraham only by promise, and not

through the works of the law; and the inheritance must come in the same way to all that are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; for they are Abraham's seed, and heirs with him according to the promise, and not according to the deeds of the law. All our salvation is completely purchased by Jesus Christ, and is freely bequeathed unto us.

3. Since the promises relating to our salvation are all primarily and originally made to Christ, and since they freely convey eternal life to our enjoyment, they are unquestionably sure to all that believe. Whatever easy work some have in maintaining their presumptuous hopes of the mercy of God, while they do not see the heinous nature of sin, nor the holiness and perfection of his spiritual law, and therefore build their hopes upon something in themselves, rather than upon the free and faithful promise of the covenant in Christ Jesus; yet such as are truly exercised unto godliness, find many discouragements in the way of believing. When they consider the greatness and preciousness of the promises, and their own guilt, wretchedness, and unworthiness, they are ready to say, How can such declarations ever be made to us? how can we be heirs of these promises? And they can never conquer these slavish and unbelieving suspicions, till they are enabled to see these great and precious promises, as promises made to Christ for the benefit of ungodly sinners, who are children of disobedience, and children of wrath. But whenever they are made to view them in this just and comfortable light, they gladly receive and embrace them as faithful sayings, that are worthy of all acceptation. Now they perceive that the promises are an undoubted

revelation of the will of God, whose grace abounds, through the righteousness of his beloved Son, towards the chief of sinners: and now they rejoice that these promises are a word of salvation sent to them in the gospel, that they may immediately enter into rest by the belief of them for their own benefit.

There are only two things that can be supposed to render any promise precarious and uncertain. Either the person that makes the promise is not worthy of confidence, or his promise is suspended upon some uncertain and doubtful condition. But neither of these things can invalidate the security of that promise by which believers are saved. God, who hath promised, is worthy of the highest confidence: for he is a God of truth, and without iniquity; he is able to perform his word, and it is impossible that he can lie. It is equally certain, that the promise of eternal life he hath given us, is not suspended upon any condition to be performed by us: for it is altogether free and sovereign; it supposes us to be dead in trespasses and sins; and it presents all the riches of Christ for the complete and everlasting salvation of our souls. "Though the use of means is required both of sinners and saints, and though we be under a command and obligation to faith, repentance, and all other duties and graces; yet the covenant of grace is such a free, absolute, and unconditional promise, that no act or deed of ours is the condition thereof. The covenant of promise cannot be properly conditional to us; otherwise, woe would be to us, whose condition is nothing but sin and misery by nature. This covenant stands upon absolute foundations. Conditions on our part, pro-

perly so called, would destroy the nature of the gospel, which is a free promise. Where is the freedom of grace, if conditional? It would turn the gospel to a law, and the free covenant of grace to the conditional covenant of works.”*

If salvation were only promised conditionally, it could never be certain who should be saved; and the hope of the saints could have no encouragement to enter within the veil, upon the warrant of Jehovah's promise. If we suppose that the promises are conditional, all our hope of inheriting them must arise from our performances, as the stipulated condition of salvation. But upon this supposition perplexity and distress are altogether unavoidable: for “the law worketh wrath,” while the conscience accuses and condemns the sinner for the imperfections of those duties, whereby he supposes he is to acquire a right to the promises. Perhaps he does not comprehend the full extent of his conditional services; or perhaps he does not invariably persevere in them; or perhaps he does not come up to the measures of zeal and holiness required as the condition of a firm title to the promises. In all these cases, or in any one of them, the promise is made void, it can administer no comfort, it can afford no help; and the law, which is supposed to prescribe the condition of receiving the promise, instead of making good our claim, “worketh wrath.” But where our claim is not to be established by working a preliminary righteousness, to entitle us to the promises, but by receiving what the God of truth promised to Christ, and pre-

* Mr. Ralph Erskine's Practical Works, Vol. I. p. 373.

sents in the freest terms unto us, there is no law to work wrath, nothing imperfect in our title, nothing to forbid our hope, nothing to flatter our pride, and nothing to perplex our minds. "The promise is sure to all the seed."

There is only one objection against this view of the security and stability of the promises through faith, that merits particular consideration. "Since the promise of eternal life is presented unto all in the dispensation of grace, and since it is only made effectual to some of them to whom it is presented; how shall we account for its being sure and stable, without supposing that it is conditional, and that it becomes sure to such as perform the condition of it."

Ans. Without entering into all the difficulties that attend the discussion of this question, I shall suggest the following observations upon it: (1.) The mercy that is built up in the promises of God, is both free and sure. It is free and undeserved: for he "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." None of the family of Adam has any claim to his compassion, more than the fallen angels. It is also sure; and therefore he saith, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." These mercies are sure, because the purpose of God is unchangeable, and his covenant is everlasting. The promises wherein God hath built up his mercy, are likewise free, being suspended on none of our performances, as a condition of our access unto them; and they are of such certainty, that they can neither be removed nor forgotten. According to his mercy, so is his promise:

his mercy is free, and his promise is free; his mercy is sure, and his promise is sure. (2.) The mercy of God which is built up for ever in his promises, is not to be separated from the promises themselves. God hath joined them together, and no man must presume to put them asunder. The promises are a revelation of divine mercy, and the mercies of the Lord can only be embraced in his promises. The attempts of mankind to separate the mercy, and salvation of God from his promises, have contributed, perhaps more than any one cause, to enthusiasm, implicit faith, and presumption: for whereby shall it appear, that our souls are really comforted by the mercy of God, or that our hope is established on his mercy, except by this, that our souls are comforted with his word, and our hope built upon his promise? (3.) It is therefore evident, that the mercy of God is to be received and enjoyed, by receiving and enjoying the promises wherein it is conveyed. Now, to receive and enjoy a promise, is the same thing with believing it. Hence those that remain in unbelief, under the clear revelation of divine grace, remain in a state of sin and death. While they do not believe, they continue under all the guilt and misery of their natural state. While they despise the word of salvation sent among them, they despise the riches of divine mercy, and have neither part nor lot in the actual enjoyment of "the sure mercies of David." But, on the other hand, as many as believe the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, do immediately enter into the begun possession of eternal life. The promises of God are only effectual to the salvation and comfort of them that believe. Yet,

(4.) Believing is not the condition of salvation, nor of the promises wherein it is presented to us. If faith were the condition of our receiving the promises, it must exist before we receive them: but it has been observed, that receiving a promise is nothing else but believing it; and therefore, to say that faith is the condition of receiving the promises, is to say that faith is the condition of believing them, or that faith is the condition of itself, or that a person must believe before he doth believe—which is the grossest absurdity. Two things seem to have produced misapprehensions on this point with many excellent divines. The first cause of their misapprehensions, seems to be their conceiving faith to be a virtue, that has an abstracted existence in the mind, and may be considered as a habit or power of action. Metaphysical speculation has done much to cherish this mistake, contrary to all the remonstrances of experience and common sense. “The Popish school-divines do dream that faith is a quality cleaving in the heart, without Christ,” said Luther. “This is a devilish error. Faith is a certain steadfast beholding, which looketh upon nothing else but Christ the conqueror of sin and death, and the giver of righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. This was nobly and lively represented by the brazen serpent, which is a figure of Christ. Moses commanded the Jews which were stung of serpents in the desert, to do nothing else but steadfastly behold the brazen serpent, and not to turn away their eyes. They that did so were healed only by that steadfast and constant beholding of the serpent. But, contrariwise, they died who obeyed not the commandment of

Moses, but looked upon their wounds, and not upon the serpent. So if I would find comfort when my conscience is afflicted, or when I am at the point of death, I must do nothing but apprehend Christ by faith, and say, I believe in Christ Jesus the Son of God, who suffered, was crucified, and died for me; in whose wounds, and in whose death, I see my sin; and in his resurrection, victory over sin, death, and the devil, also righteousness and eternal life: besides him, I see nothing, I hear nothing. This is true faith concerning Christ, and in Christ. Christ and our faith must be thoroughly joined together.* The other cause of misconceiving this matter, is the want of attention to the wide difference there is between the condition upon which a benefit is given, and the means by which a benefit is received. Salvation is not given upon any condition to be performed by us: for "the gift of God is eternal life." Faith is not the condition upon which a gracious God confers salvation; but it is the means by which the soul receives into its possession the salvation God holds forth in the promises of the gospel. (5.) The contents of the promises show manifestly to what sort of persons they are made. The promise of pardon can only benefit the guilty; the promise of sanctification can only relieve the sinful; the promise of salvation is only suitable to the lost; and the promise of redemption can only comfort the wretched sinner. These glorious blessings are only desirable and necessary unto persons of such execrable characters, and in such deplorable circumstances; and therefore,

* Luther's Commentary on Gal. iii. 28.

to them are such blessings freely presented in the promises of God. (6.) When God promises pardon of sin, he promises it to the guilty, as such; when he promises sanctification, he promises it to the polluted and sinful, as such; and when he promises salvation, he promises it to the lost and perishing, as such. He sets no limitations upon his revealed grace; but makes it the duty of all that hear his promise to believe it. And, (7.) Those blessings which God hath promised, are actually received and possessed by the hearing of faith. He that believeth the promise, immediately takes possession of what he believes; and he that believeth not, makes God a liar, and forsakes his own mercy.

SECT. IV.—The tendency of Believing is, to dispose and enable the soul to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever. This was the great end of man's creation, and this is the principal end of our redemption by the blood of Jesus. "They that are in the flesh, cannot please God;" and they cannot enjoy him, while they are "without Christ and without God." All mankind may be divided into two classes: they are either unbelievers, or believers of the truth of the gospel. If they are unbelievers, they are "in the flesh," in a state of condemnation, and dead in trespasses and sins: they are neither capable of glorifying God, nor of enjoying him, while they continue in that estate. But as many as God hath effectually called by his grace, are made

partakers of a new state by their union to Christ: "They put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The new man signifies that state of salvation into which sinners are brought by their effectual calling. The new man "is created;" to intimate, that it is altogether new, and that it is throughout the workmanship of God, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. This happy state consists in righteousness and true holiness: in righteousness, to cover our heinous and manifold sins, and to render us accepted in the sight of God; and in true holiness, to enstamp the image of God upon our hearts, and to produce holy obedience in our lives. The obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ, imputed to the guilty sinner, is the righteousness that justifies him; and the sanctification of the Spirit, is the true holiness that makes him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. A believer's new state consists in this righteousness and true holiness joined together, as the grand constituent branches of God's salvation. This new man, or this state of salvation, must be put on by believing on Christ, as made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. This new man is said to be "after God," in opposition to the old man, which is said to be "concerning the former conversation." The state of salvation a believer has in Christ, is "after God;" both as it inclines and strengthens the soul to live to the glory of God, and as it makes the soul happy in communion with God.

1. The state of salvation a believer has in Christ,

inclines and strengthens him to live to the glory of God. Hereby the soul is furnished with such endowments for the service of God, as render the ways of religion both practicable and pleasant. To a believer the law of God appears amiable, and the gospel is altogether precious. His delight is to do the will of God, and his greatest ambition is to have a conversation as it becometh the gospel of Christ. His "faith worketh by love." Having received Christ as his complete salvation, he "walks in him." Being joined to the Lord, he becomes one spirit, and has the same mind in him that was also in Christ Jesus.

2. The state of salvation a believer has in Christ, makes him happy in communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. By believing the testimony of God, as it relates to his good-will and free favour towards men, the soul enters into the joy of the Lord. Hence Christ said to Martha, "If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God." By faith the "saints have access into the grace wherein they stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but they glory in tribulations also." "Believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." They "believe to the saving of the soul."

The tendency of faith to answer the chief end of man, is an important branch of the present treatise; and shall be considered in several instances, when the practical influence of believing comes to be explained. I have only mentioned it at present, in order to show the excellency of the faith of the gospel; which is the means whereby sinners receive and enjoy the

salvation of God ; which secures the honour due to divine grace ; which renders the promise sure to all the seed ; and which promotes the chief end of man, by teaching him to glorify God, and by putting him in the conscious possession of God as his exceeding joy, and of eternal life in the name of his only-begotten Son.

REFLECTIONS.

1. Since sinners are saved by grace through faith, it is evident, that believing on Christ for eternal life must be the first step of all practical godliness and vital religion. Until the tree be made good, it is impossible the fruit can be good. A sinner passes from death unto life, and begins to enjoy salvation, when he first believeth on the name of Christ, as revealed in the gospel. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Real religion is a walking in Christ Jesus the Lord ; and this walking in Christ necessarily supposes that he is received. "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." An unbeliever may be an amiable and useful member of society, he may do many things that are good for the matter of them, and he may be very zealous and circumspect in all the externals of religion ; but, being an unbeliever, all his works are an abomination in the sight of God. He has no root, while the word of Christ does not dwell in his heart by faith. If he be not openly wicked, yet he is not truly holy : if he appear outwardly fair, yet he is not endowed with truth in the inward parts. The apostle has drawn the character of such persons in its proper colours, when he says,

“To them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” Reason tells us, that the branches must be in the vine; and must abide in it, that they may bear fruit: and Jesus assures us, that the fruits of righteousness, which are to the glory of God, must spring from himself as the true vine, received and improved by believing. Our souls can only be purified in obeying the truth of the gospel through the Spirit of holiness. It is a very dangerous mistake, to imagine that holiness is something entirely different from salvation. Upon this principle people suppose they must first endeavour to be holy, and then they shall receive salvation. But all true holiness, and vital godliness, ought to be considered as ingredients of that complete and everlasting salvation which is enjoyed by believing on the name of Jesus. Believers are sanctified in Christ, and the saints live godly in Christ Jesus.

2. Since there is such a close and important connection between the free grace of God and our faith, it follows, that wrong apprehensions concerning the nature of faith are exceedingly dishonouring to God. Errors concerning this point, are not merely speculative, or such as may be received or rejected with equal safety. The promise of God, conveying salvation to lost sinners without money and without price, “is of faith, that it might be by grace.” Wrong conceptions of the nature of believing on Christ, are always accompanied with erroneous notions of the promises and grace of God. Believers of the gospel are directed and enabled to receive the blessings of salvation in the very light in which he

want of attention to the freedom of his grace, and the stability of his promise.

4. Since the promises become sure to the soul by means of faith, it is plain, that "staggering at the promise of God" arises from an evil heart of unbelief. Such as stagger at the promises, will always pretend some reason for wavering in their minds; but it is impossible their reasons can be good; because the grace of God is free, because his promise concerning it is faithful, because he that hath promised is able to perform, because his covenant of promise is ordered in all things for all possible cases, and because it is to be received only by believing, in opposition to every entitling work of the law. When persons doubt concerning the divine promises, they either suppose they must see the means of accomplishing them, and then they "walk by sight;" or they imagine they must be conscious of something in themselves to prove their right to them, and then they "desire to be under the law." In both these cases, they are fallen from a dependence on the grace of God in his free promise, by a living faith: an evil heart of unbelief has seduced them from their quiet rest, and filled their minds with perplexity and sorrow.

5. Since the belief of the promises operates so effectually in promoting man's chief end, it greatly concerns every one to receive the truth of the gospel, that he may be in a condition, both to glorify God, and to enjoy him. Vain are all the efforts of men, upon any other principle, to be truly holy, and to be truly happy. It is long since the experiment was made, and the experiment then proved unsuccessful. Whenever it is attempted, it must be followed with

the same success in any future period: for as "Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law;" so it is an established rule in the dispensation of grace, that "without faith, it is impossible to please God."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL ADMITS OF VARIOUS DEGREES.

THE apostle John writes to *fathers, to young men, and little children*. These characters denote the different degrees of spiritual growth among the heirs of promise. Some are strong and confirmed in faith, while others are weak and wavering. It is not by making profession of faith for many years, that persons become strong in the faith; though it must be allowed, that faith grows by exercising it: but the strength of faith is owing, more than any thing, to the powerful demonstration of the truth unto the soul by the work of the Holy Spirit. We will frequently find the same person both weak and strong in the faith, at different times, and on different occasions. To illustrate this point, I shall endeavour, (1.) To account for the different degrees of faith in the people of God; (2.) To explain the nature and foundation of the full assurance of their faith; (3.) To consider the reasons, and why they are frequently so weak in the faith; and, (4.) To prove that the unfeigned belief of the gospel is always successful, even in its weakest and lowest degrees.

SECT. I.—*The difference of the degrees of Faith in the people of God accounted for.*

If we consider the great variety in the measure and stature of the faith of believers, we must per-

ceive there is not only a difference between one believer and another, but also between the strength of the same person's faith, at different times and in different situations. The word of God is an incorruptible seed in every believer, and therefore his faith cannot fail; but those that have believed, may be so far under the influence of an evil heart of unbelief, as to stagger at the promise of God. The Scripture records some of the noblest acts, and also some great weaknesses, of the same believers. Abraham in hope "believed against hope," that he should have a son by Sarah, in the hundredth year of his own age, and in the ninety-ninth year of hers; and that his covenant-seed should be called in Isaac, even though this child of the promise should be offered up for a burnt-offering: yet this eminent believer, at other times, staggered through unbelief, and doubting of his safety among the Egyptians and Philistines, on account of the beauty of his wife, retreated to a dark ambiguous expression, in saying she was his sister. The same may be seen in the history of Rahab the harlot, whose faith was justified by her works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way; and yet she lied to them of Jericho concerning the spies. The short memoirs of almost all the saints mentioned in the Scriptures are a sufficient proof of the general position, that there is a great variety in the measure and stability of the faith of different believers, and even of the same believer, at different times, and in different situations.

This variety is not to be accounted for, merely on the principle of the length or shortness of time that

has intervened between their effectual calling, and those occasions wherein they appear to be strong or weak in the faith. Some young believers are strong in the faith, and some old disciples betray great weakness. A prosperous state is sometimes turned into great perplexity with eminent believers: and sometimes their first works of faith, as well as their first labours of love, are more noble and vigorous than their last. If they became stronger and stronger in faith, in a continued progression, from the time they are effectually called, it could never be said of them, that "the things which remain are ready to die," and that "they have left their first love."

Nor is the strength or weakness of a believer's faith to be accounted for, merely from the clearness or darkness of the revelation which he believes. The superiority of the New Testament revelation above the Old, in point of evidence and perspicuity, is as great as the light of the sun above that of the moon; yet the faith of the saints, under that dispensation, was strong and fixed. Their assurance of faith was full, and their confidence firm and stable. The apostle does not insinuate any difference in the measure of their faith from that of the New Testament believers. A child does not know as much as a grown person; but it may be as fully assured of what it does know, as a grown person can possibly be of what he knows.

Again, The strength or weakness of believing is not to be ascribed merely to the measures of experience people have had in the ways of religion. Sometimes the inexperienced soul, whose trials are severe to flesh and blood, is enabled to cleave to the Lord

with firmness and perseverance while others that have tasted much of the goodness and mercy of "the Father of lights," have shrunk back in the day of adversity. . . Even the same person has frequently proved unsteadfast and yielding under small temptations, who had approved himself courageous and cheerful in many former dangers. This variety in the exercise and behaviour of the people of God is so evident in their own experience, and so manifest from observation, that I presume none will venture to dispute it. After many establishing manifestations of divine favour, David felt the power, and assumed the language of unbelief, "saying in his haste, that all men were liars."

Finally, The strength of a believer's confidence doth not arise from rational probability of the thing it is exercised about. Flesh and blood will teach us, in a way of rational reasoning, to expect such effects from their ordinary causes, and such events from the arrangements of Providence, as have been usually observed to follow upon them in like cases: but this conclusion is not founded upon the word of God; and consequently, the expectation built upon it, however strong or weak, is not an act of believing. "Faith cometh by hearing," is what the faithful, omnipotent, and only-wise God hath said in his word, and not by the fair appearances of reason or providence. To judge of the probability of events by the face they bear in the eyes of reason, is to act only upon the principles of reason: and hopes or fears, following upon this judgment, are not to be ascribed to a faith of the operation of God. No doubt, in many cases, the same thing may appear very probable in

power of his might :” and others to fathers, venerable for their age, experience, and prudence ; “ they have received Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as they have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”* These degrees of spiritual stature imply different measures of faith, according to the various communications they receive out of the fulness of Christ. If the people of God are misled by lust and temptation, if they forsake the way of duty, and become formal, carnal, or careless in their conversation, their mind becomes in proportion dead to a sense of the authority and evidence of divine truth : they see, but perceive it not ; they hear, but do not understand ; their heart is made fat, their ears become heavy, and their eyes are shut. When this is the case, their minds, like an instrument out of tune, are indisposed for obeying from the heart the form of doctrine delivered in the oracles of God.

2. The saints are strong or weak in the faith, according to the various objects they regard and converse with. When they “ look at things which are seen,” with anxious desires after them, or with much

* “ In some fruitful family, you may see one child in leading-strings ; another able to walk by itself ; a third come home, improved and cultivated, from the school of literature. Observe their speech : one utters out a few broken sentences ; another talks intelligibly, but very incorrectly ; the last has learned to express himself with tolerable propriety. Yet each speaks the same language, not, without the various degrees of fluency in their utterance, or purity in their diction. So faith always speaks one and the same uniform language. Whether she utters of stammer, whether she utters in faint accents, or whether her voice be more manly tone, this is still the import of her speech. ‘ God, even our God, will give us his blessing.’ — Hervey’s *Theron and Aspasio*, Book 16, c. 10, § 10, p. 139.”

solicitude about them, or with great expectations from the enjoyments of time and sense, which are subject to the greatest uncertainty, and to continual disappointments—it is reasonable to think, that their minds will be frequently harassed with perplexity, elevated with false hopes, or overwhelmed with imaginary fears. They take a method that exposes them to every distressing and mortifying reflection, while every experiment gives an additional evidence to the humbling truth, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” But, on the other hand, when they “look at things not seen,” which are real and excellent, unchangeable and eternal, they do not expect any sensible evidence of them; and, therefore, content with the revelation God has made of them, they view them only as matters of faith and hope, according to the Scriptures. The soul that believes the providence of God, and views its inheritance and treasure as lying in heaven, is prepared for distress, danger, or disappointment. Divine revelation is the solid rock where faith rests with composed joy and expectation; but if the dependence of a believer be in part placed upon the fluctuating unstable scene of transient possessions or expectations, he must be of a doubtful mind, and unstable in all his ways.

3. The measure of a believer’s faith is greatly affected by his apprehensions about the scheme of the gospel. Just conceptions of the sovereignty of divine grace, and of the perfect righteousness of Christ, are of great importance to the confirmation and fortitude of a believer. When he misconceives these fundamental articles of the gospel, he is necessarily stag-

gered and shaken. The person that understands the nature of the gospel, and stands fast in the liberties of it, can look on himself as a transgressor of the law, a child of disobedience, a rebel against God, a guilty criminal, and an heir of hell, while, at the same time, he contemplates with pleasure and veneration the majesty of the Lord, the beauties of divine holiness, the terrors of his justice, and the dreadful solemnities of the judgment to come, together with its awful and certain consequences: and in the midst of all these humbling, alarming views of God and himself, he can "joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom he doth now receive the atonement;" he sees a sufficient reason of cheerful dependence on Christ for the pardon of all his sins, for the supply of all his need, and for the complete salvation of his soul. In every condition he sees reason to "rejoice in the Lord always."

But how does the case stand with a person that misapprehends the nature, the liberties, and design of the gospel? He seeks to be under the law. He supposes some good endowment, if not some good deed, must complete his title to the comforts revealed to him in divine declarations. He is afraid to remember the holiness of God, the brightness of his glory, the sanctions of his law, and the solemnity of a future judgment. He dares not think on his sins, their nature, number, and aggravations. No view of God is tolerable to him, but that which presents him altogether merciful; and no sight of himself, but that which furnishes him with something good in his character. Hence his confidence is marred every way, because he is not established in the faith of

Christ, as the end of the law for his justification in the sight of God, and as the author of eternal salvation to him, a lost sinner. He does not consider the Son of God as a Saviour to him, the chief of sinners, and he does not attend to the faithful record published from the excellent glory—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." No consciousness of any pre-eminence in holiness above the level of ungodly sinners and enemies, is required to establish any ground or warrant for our personal dependence on him whom God hath sent and sealed. Christ the Saviour is given to sinners as such, that, merely as sinners, they may receive him, and in him may have eternal life.

4. The degrees of a believer's confidence are greater or weaker, according to the measure of his attention to the character of a promising God. "When Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to him, and said, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee also a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and kings of people shall be of her." How did Abraham entertain this promise? Did he begin to confer with flesh and blood about it, saying, It is impossible, at least it is every way improbable, that a child shall be born to him that is an hundred years old, or that Sarah, who is ninety years old, shall bear? No: he "against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hun-

hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

But how different was the case with Sarah, when, in the tent-door, she heard the Lord say to Abraham, "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo! Sarah thy wife shall have a son?" She "laughed within herself, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?" It is evident from the reproof which the Lord gave her, that she judged it impossible that the word of the Lord could stand: and therefore he says, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" As if he had said, 'Why should Sarah doubt, or even hesitate, concerning this matter? It is indeed impossible, according to the ordinary course of nature, that she should have a son by Abraham, in their old age; but the same Lord that blessed man, whom he created male and female, saying to them in the day he made them,—“Be fruitful and multiply,”—the same God, hath said that Sarah shall have a son. Is any thing, however much above the powers originally given to second causes,—is any thing too hard for the Lord, who prescribed laws to all creation, and maintains these laws by the unremitted energy of his almighty providence? Weigh every discouraging appearance in an even balance, laying the power and faithfulness of a promising God in the opposite scale against every possible obstruction; and then judge, whether you ought to waver, to doubt, to disbelieve. “Is any thing too hard for the Lord, whose counsel shall stand,

and who will do all his pleasure? Hath he said, and will he not do? Hath he spoken, and will he not make it good? He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.”

This touching remonstrance removed every difficulty, confirmed her wavering mind, and established her in the faith of Jehovah's promise: for “through faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.”

In the example of these eminent persons, we may clearly see, how faith is strengthened or weakened by the attention or inattention believers give to the character of a promising God. When they have just apprehensions of his power, wisdom, grace, and faithfulness in his declarations, they are like mount Zion which cannot be removed; but when they consider any thing else, they “become weak, and like any other man.”

5. The degrees of a believer's confidence are frequently affected by the temptations of Satan, who, “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” When Peter thought the attachment of his soul to Christ was so firm and ardent, that he was ready to go with him both into prison and to death, “the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” This disciple did not suspect any danger from all the legions of hell; and therefore experience must inform him more fully, that Christ is the glory of his strength and steadfastness in believing. When wheat is winnowed, the chaff is retained, and appears apparent

wretched and miserable; yet, perceiving the glorious sufficiency and the universal suitableness of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth and given in the declarations of his word to mankind-sinners, he is fully assured, and firmly persuaded, that this Saviour is really his, and that all the unsearchable riches of Christ are his own portion; and therefore he depends wholly upon the Lord Jesus for eternal life, because he believes, and is sure that God hath given and revealed Christ for this express purpose. In this exercise, we have an example of the full assurance of the faith of the gospel. Fears, dangers, and difficulties, must vanish in such a strong, clear, and appropriating view of the grace of God, and the inexhaustible fulness of Christ. Now the person can survey the deformity of his nature, heart, and life; now he can contemplate the exceeding sinfulness of sin, in the light of the holy and spiritual commandment; now he can view his own concern in the most humbling truths, and in the most alarming declarations; now he can read all the lamentations, and mourning, and woe, written in the book of the law; now he can come boldly to the throne of grace, though viewing himself as the chief of sinners; now he can look forward to the solemn and decisive determinations of the last day; yea, what is impossible to him who thus believeth on the name of Christ? He considers Christ as all in all. In Christ he sees salvation from all his sins, security from all condemnation, a supply of all his need, safety in life, victory over death, a glorious resurrection, and the everlasting enjoyment of God: and he is fully assured, that the record concerning these and all other

privileges, which constitute eternal life, is given to him in the gospel, by God who cannot lie.

Such was the assurance of the patriarchs, "who saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Of the same kind was the assurance of David, when he said, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Of this sort was the assurance of the Old Testament church, expressed in these words: "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." And the confidence of New Testament believers is expressed in the same language of triumph and assurance: "We believe," says an apostle, "that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they."

From the whole it appears, that the full assurance of faith lies in such a firm fixed persuasion, confidence, or trust in the faithfulness of God in Christ, pledged in his covenant or promise, as overcomes and tramples upon all difficulties and improbabilities, all doubts and fears, as to the actual performance of what is promised, in God's time and way; and all this with particular application to the person's self.

It is a most serious and interesting question, What foundation or warrant has any sinner for such a strong and full assurance of faith? To answer it is one branch of my present business. As much has been said on this subject in a former chapter, I shall not enlarge upon this head, but refer the reader to what

has been there offered to his consideration: only I must observe, that the stable and firm foundation or support of his conscience lies in the word of God, which the sinner believes with much assurance. When we speak of this matter, it would seem to be very complex; but the foundation of this full assurance stands in the most simple point of view before the mind of a believer. The word *πληροφορεια*, translated *full assurance*, in Col. ii. 2. Heb. vi. 11. and Heb. x. 22. is allowed by all our critics to be a metaphor taken from *sailing*; and it is applicable to a vessel that rides with all her sails expanded before a prosperous gale. So the soul that is fully assured of the mercy and truth, the wisdom and power of a promising God, rides triumphant amidst the billows of adversity and danger; while it sees the promises of God, administering every relief to its condition, and pouring their richest comforts with a liberal hand.

1. A clear and appropriating view of the grace, love, and mercy of a promising God, fills the mind with peace and joy in believing. When we are convinced that a man is our friend, that he has the tenderest sympathy and compassion on us under all our distresses, that he is inviolably attached to our interests, and that he only wants an opportunity to do us the greatest service he is able; would we not, in that case, employ his aid, and depend upon his friendship, without hesitation? In like manner, the sinner who perceives the love of God commended to him in the declarations of the gospel, who discerns the exceeding riches of the grace of God that bringeth salvation to him, and who sees the sufficiency and suitableness of the abundant mercies of the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,—that sinner will cheerfully depend upon his merciful kindness. Hence we find David expressing himself in this manner: “How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.” Here we are taught, that whenever the children of men apprehend the excellency of God’s loving-kindness, they cheerfully put their trust under the shadow of his wings, as chickens gather under the wings of a hen for safety and protection; and that the excellency of his loving kindness is the foundation of their confidence. The loadstone that draws the iron to itself, attaches it when drawn.

Every character of God, displaying the glorious perfections of his nature, and the richness of his mercy on a throne of grace, invites the confidence of sinners. Here he appears as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” as “the God of all grace,” as “the God of peace,” as “the God of salvation,” as “God with us,” as a “God in Christ reconciling the world to himself,” as “the hearer of prayer,” as “a promising God,” and as “the Lord our God.” Even the terrors of his vindictive justice, and of his righteous judgments, smile propitious from the throne of grace: for “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne,” or rather the establishment of it, according to the marginal reading. The grace they confide in “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord,” who is “the

end of the law for righteousness," having paid all their debt, and made reconciliation for all their sins.

2. The full assurance of believing souls is built upon the infinite power of a promising God. That power belongeth unto God, is one of the first lessons we learn from both his word and his works. The power that created the world, that upholds, directs, and controls all the regions of the universe, working all things after the counsel of Jehovah's sovereign and immutable will,—the same power, animated with infinite love, is effectual to perform all his promises: "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." He hath promised many things that are marvellous, and in appearance improbable; but to that power which spake the worlds into being, which sustains them by his mighty word, and which calleth things that are not as if they were,—to that power nothing is impossible, nothing can be difficult. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" He gave Sarah strength to conceive seed; he could have raised Isaac from the dead; he preserved and multiplied Israel in the land of Egypt; he brought them out with a strong hand; he fed them miraculously forty years in the wilderness; he divided the Red Sea, and parted the overflowing streams of Jordan, before his favoured people; he drove out the heathen, and planted his heritage in the land of Canaan; he brought the Jews back from their captivity in Babylon; by his power a virgin conceived and brought forth a Son, whose name is Emmanuel, God with us; by the exceeding greatness of his power, Jesus was raised from the dead; the gospel is the power of God to salvation; and the church has been raised up

and preserved, defended and supported, by the arm of the Lord revealed. Whenever we contemplate the wonderful works of nature, or the marvellous performances of love and mercy, let us cheerfully ascribe the glory of all to the Almighty Lord, saying, "These things hath God wrought:" and when we look into the promises he hath given us, let us view them as the promises of "the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength."

A firm persuasion of the power and dominion of the Lord God omnipotent, who hath spoken in his holiness, will establish the soul even while it is called "in hope to believe against hope." Is the blessing promised improbable? is it difficult? Nay, is it to all human appearance impossible? So much the fitter for the exertion, and so much the more proper for the display of almighty power. Be our miseries ever so galling, cannot this God relieve us? Be our wants ever so numerous, cannot this God supply them? Be our corruptions within ever so inveterate, or our temptations from without ever so importunate, cannot this mighty, mighty God, subdue all our iniquities, and fortify us against all our temptations? Should trials, with an incessant vehemence, sift us as wheat; should tribulation, with a weight of woes, almost grind us to powder; should pleasure, with her bewitching smiles, solicit us to delicious ruin; we may confidently run into the name of the Lord, which is a strong tower, and be perfectly safe. We cannot be involved in such calamitous circumstances, but God is able to support us under them; nor exposed to such imminent dangers, but he is able to deliver us from them: and not only to support and

deliver, but to exalt us from the deepest distress, to the most triumphant joy; and even to extract comfort from all our afflictions, advantage from all our calamities, and to make all things work together for our good.* “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is.” Such a person will possess his soul in patience, and quietly wait to see the salvation of God, who ruleth by his power for ever. “What is it that weakens our faith, and keeps it from arriving at a full assurance as to the performance of the promise, but one of these two? Either we look upon the performance of the promise as difficult, or uncertain. Now, faith, eyeing the power of a promising God in Christ, can easily surmount both, and conclude that the performance of the promise is both easy and certain. 1. It is certain, for it depends upon the will of an unchangeable God, the promise being a declaration of God’s purpose or will of grace. He was willing to promise, for he has actually done it, ‘the word has gone out of his mouth;’ and he is willing to perform, for he is ‘a God of truth,’ always ‘yea and amen.’ 2. Faith, viewing the power of God, sees the performance to be easy. What more easy than a word speaking? And yet one word from the mouth of God can give being and accomplishment to all his promises, without any pain, cost, trouble, or hazard. And were not our faith pinioned with ignorance and unbelief, it could not miss to be-

* Mr. Hervey’s Contemplations on the Starry Heavens.

lieve without staggering, upon this ground, as did the faith of Abraham.”*

3. The full assurance of faith is supported by clear views of the knowledge, wisdom, and prudence of a promising God. Ignorance and folly are inseparable from human nature in its fallen state. Hence “the Gentiles” are said to “walk in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” These odious principles of human conduct are fatal sources of perplexity, presumption, or despair. Always prone to be “as gods, knowing good and evil,” we impiously presume to direct the counsels of God, to comprehend his truths, to know all his designs, and to decide upon his works. Leaning to our own understanding, we despise his law, and censure the ways of his providence. Acting on the principles of the wisdom of the world, we deceive ourselves with false hopes, and torment ourselves with imaginary fears. No appearance of things is either stable or lasting; for “the fashion of this world passeth away.” Expectations are raised and destroyed, buoyed up and sunk, in a quick succession of unforeseen incidents. Looking on the face of providence, even the saints must waver, and become like a wave of the sea, that is driven of the wind and tossed, until they raise their views to “the depth of the riches both of the knowledge and wisdom of God,” whose truth shall endure for ever, whose kingdom ruleth over all.

* Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's Assurance of Faith opened and applied.

That the God of knowledge doth condescend to teach us in the volumes of inspiration, is enough to silence every cavil against the doctrines they contain, and to prompt an eager attention to his unerring, salutary instructions. That the only wise God hath given us exceeding great and precious promises, is a sufficient reason why we should stay ourselves upon his word, even in the greatest extremities. He will surely devise means, or he can act without them, to maintain the honour of his faithful promises. Every difficulty and impediment that stands in the way of their accomplishment, was known to God from the beginning. To speak unadvisedly with their lips, is a species of folly to be found sometimes in the wisest of men; but this weakness can never impeach the sayings of wisdom. His wisdom and discretion are equal to his power and mercy. Did we remember that "God performeth all things for us" in providence, we would cheerfully trust him with all our concerns, and rest assured of a happy issue of them. Upon this ground, we are called to commit our works unto the Lord; and, fixing our entire dependence on this immovable basis, "our thoughts shall be established," in a composing, peaceful persuasion, that he will give what is good, and do all things well. Establishing, satisfying truth! Here, my soul, drop thy anchor, and ride serene amidst all the swelling floods of confusion and danger in a present evil world. Though clouds and thick darkness, impenetrable by any human scrutiny, are sometimes round about his throne, who is the supreme conductor of things in heaven, and of things on earth, and of things under the earth; yet "righteousness" always exact, "and

judgment" infallibly wise, "are the" constant "habitation of his throne," the invariable standard of all his administrations, which "come forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Here is firm footing, here is a sure foundation for the most perfect confidence in the most trying circumstances that can befall the people of God. "His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him:" and therefore the soul is authorized to believe with full assurance, that the Lord will "lead it in the right way, and guide it with his counsel."

4. The inviolable faithfulness and veracity of God who hath promised, is another firm ground of the full assurance of faith. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" God that cannot lie, hath promised eternal life. Heaven and earth may drop into nothing, sooner than one promise, or indeed one jot or tittle of his promise, should fall to the ground. He has not only passed his word in many and various promises, but he has given us, if we may so speak, a note under his own hand. He has recorded his promises in the Bible, and written them with an everlasting pen; so that they will stand conspicuous and indelible, like a bill drawn upon heaven, and a basis laid for faith so long as the sun and moon endure. Nay, he has confirmed all by the most solemn sanction imaginable—by an oath; by his own oath; by the oath of God. Though his word is sure, and his promise immutable, he adds

—astomishing condescension! admirable benignity!
 —he adds his oath to all. He not only speaks, but swears—swears by himself—swears by his own eternal existence, that his faithful and true promises belong—to whom? Mark this particular with the most exact attention. To whom do these promises belong, which are ratified in this unequalled and inviolable manner?—To the holy, the upright, the accomplished? No: but to those, says the scripture, “who fly for refuge to the hope set before them;” the hope set before them in the propitiation, the righteousness, the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Suppose any neighbour of substance and credit, should bind himself by a deliberate promise to do you some particular piece of service,—if he should add to his promise a note under his own hand,—if he should corroborate both by some authentic pledge,—if he should establish all by a most awful and solemn oath,—could you suspect the sincerity of his engagement, or harbour any doubt with regard to its execution? This would be most unreasonable in any man; to a person of a generous temper it would be impossible. Let us remember that God has given us all this cause for a full assurance of faith, and even more than this. Nay, I will defy the most timorous and suspicious temper to demand, from the most treacherous person on earth, a greater, stronger, fuller security, than the God of infinite fidelity has granted to the sons of Adam. After all this, one would think, diffidence itself could no longer hesitate, nor the most jealous incredulity demur. Shall we, can we, withhold that credit from the unchangeable Creator, which we could not but repose in a fallible creature? Ma-

that let us "set to our seal that God is true;" and, "judging him faithful that hath promised," let us rest "fully persuaded, that what he hath promised he is" both "able," willing, and ready "to perform." "He keepeth truth for ever." "Great is his faithfulness."*

5. An apprehension of the glory, sufficiency, and suitableness of Christ and his salvation, establishes the mind in the full assurance of faith. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and desirable for the purpose it is adapted to answer. Plenty of gold and silver can neither feed the hungry soul, nor remove a fever, though they are of manifold use in human life. Put a pardon in the hand of a poor man that walketh in his integrity, not suspected of any crime, and under the protection of moderate, equal laws; or, present a sufficient title to a fair estate unto a criminal who knows the precise day of his execution:—these offers, which would be supremely desirable in other circumstances, are equally despised, because neither of them can promote the happiness of the persons to whom they are respectively made. Suitableness and sufficiency are absolutely necessary, in order to find satisfaction in any object of enjoyment. "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that be of heavy hearts."

The sinner that perceives the worth of his soul, and the great importance of salvation, dare not presume to hope for the favour of God and eternal life, upon the slight grounds that gave him a deceitful peace, while he was careless and secure. His awakened conscience feels the necessity of a divine Savi-

* Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, Dial. 16.

our, an everlasting righteousness, and a free salvation. Nothing less can give him satisfaction, or beget him to a lively hope. But a clear and satisfying view of the Lord Jesus Christ, "whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world," dispels his fears, and produces "peace and joy in believing." "Behold," says the everlasting King, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Though pressed with adversities, loaded with guilt, or surrounded with danger; yet, resting upon the consummate ability of the Saviour, and assured of his universal suitableness, the believer shall possess his soul in patience, free from tumultuous and perplexing thoughts, preserved from rash and precipitate steps; knowing the sufficiency of that work, and the fidelity of that grace, on which he reposeth his confidence, he shall quietly and without perturbation wait for an expected end. And not only amidst the perilous or disastrous changes of life, but even in the day of everlasting judgment, such persons shall stand with boldness. They shall look up to the grand Arbitrator—look around on all the solemnity of his appearance—look forward to the unalterable sentence, and neither feel anxiety nor fear damnation. "Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

6. The general address of divine declarations is a

most satisfactory warrant for the full assurance of faith concerning them: "Wisdom cries, and understanding puts forth her voice. She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths; she crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors." To whom doth she speak? and who are concerned to give her attention? Let all flesh be silent, while the faithful and true Witness publishes, with divine authority, the interesting information: "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart."

It cannot be denied, that the threatenings, recorded in the word of God, are denounced against the guilty; nor will it be doubted, that the moral law is of universal obligation: but when we ask, To whom is the word of salvation sent, revealing the grace of God in Christ, as the ground of hope and confidence? we find great variety in the opinions of mankind. To remove every suspicion where the honour of God and our own comfort are so nearly concerned, let us carefully take heed unto the sure word of prophecy. Hear what our Lord himself says—"Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He may partake of all spiritual and everlasting blessings, as freely as he makes use of the most common refreshment, as freely as he drinks of the running stream. This is his royal proclamation, wherein he gives express permission to every sinner to receive and enjoy Christ, as the infinitely rich gift of divine grace, vouchsafed even to the lost, the guilty, the undone, without any good

works, any good qualities, or any preparatory requisites whatever. Hear his kind invitation—"Look unto me, and be ye saved;" saved from your disquieting fears, by justification; saved from your domineering corruptions, by sanctification; and saved from every evil, by complete and eternal redemption. To whom is this most affectionate call directed? Not to a few distinguished favourites only, but to all "the ends of the earth." People of every nation under heaven, of every station in life, of every condition and character, not excepting the chief of sinners:—none are excepted, none are excluded. Nay, further—hear our Lord's earnest entreaty, hear his tender and repeated importunity,—“As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” O! the rich, the infinite love of our exalted King! He humbles himself to behold the sinless services performed by ministering angels in heaven: but he does more for rebels of Adam's family. He bows from his celestial throne. He almost kneels to his guilty creatures. He begs, he even begs of obnoxious sinners, not to reject his mercies. To all this let me add—the plain, express, and peremptory command of the Almighty, which must supersede all objections: “This is his command, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.” To believe in the name of the Son of God, is to live under a persuasion, that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that, by his obedience unto death, he has obtained everlasting redemption for us; and that his grace shall be sufficient for us in every exigence. Pray, examine the language: it

is not said, he only allows, or barely advises, but he commands us to believe on the name of his Son. We are not only permitted, invited, and entreated, but strictly required to believe. It is not only our privilege, but God's positive injunction. How gracious! most amazingly gracious is this command! And give me leave to hint, it is the greatest and most important command that ever issued from the throne of glory. If this be neglected, no other can be kept; if this be observed, all others will be easy.*

Upon this ground, every hearer of the gospel is sufficiently authorized to believe and be sure, that the God of all grace actually giveth him eternal life, and that this life is in his Son; and he is warranted, on the same principle, to believe, that "he shall be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." The foundation of this assured confidence is every way as firm and good, as the right of Israel to gather and eat the manna, to look at the brazen serpent, to fly to the cities of refuge, or to go in and possess the land of Canaan.†

SECT. III.—*Reasons why the people of God are frequently so weak in the faith.*

The Christian life is a struggle between sense and faith. The temptations to sin, are the pleasures

* Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, Dial. 16.

† It is with particular pleasure that the author embraces this opportunity of acknowledging his vast obligations to Mr. Ebenezer Erskine's sermons on "the Assurance of Faith," and to Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, Dial. 16. He wishes the reader would carefully peruse these excellent performances, in order to direct and enlarge his views of the grounds or warrants of the assurance, the full assurance of faith.

of this life; the incitements to godliness, are the pleasures of the next. The last are only seen by faith; the former are the objects of every sense. On the side of godliness, all the motives, all the objects of faith engage; on the side of vice, stand the formidable powers of sense, passion, and affection. Where the heart is established in the full assurance of faith, the heavenly host prevails, and religion triumphs over all the works of darkness; but where sense governs, sin enters, and is served by every evil passion of the heart. I apprehend, that the influence of sense, "looking at things which are seen," will account for all the instances of "weak" or "little faith," of "wavering, doubting," or "staggering at the promise of God," that are recorded in the Scriptures, or found in the experience of believers.

When the Lord promised Abraham a very numerous posterity by Sarah, "Abraham, being not weak in faith, considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:" he "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;" but was "strong in faith," giving glory to God, being "fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." In this account of Abraham's faith, it is strongly implied, that if he had been guided by sense, or considered the deadness of his own body, and the deadness of Sarah's womb, he would have become "weak in faith," and must have "staggered at the promise of God," as Sarah did at the first hearing of it, saying, "Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old?"

When the Lord was pleased afterwards to try

Abraham, by commanding him to take his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and get him into the land of Mória, and offer him there for a burnt-offering; "by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Had the patriarch, on this trying occasion, conferred with sense, he must have become "weak in faith," and reluctant in his obedience; but he trusted in the power and faithfulness of God, and therefore his heart was fixed and serene.

On other occasions, that same patriarch, judging after the flesh, had not courage to trust in the power of God, as sufficient to guard him from the Egyptians and men of Gerar; but lest he should be exposed to danger by the beauty of his wife, made use of an ambiguous dark expression, saying, "she is my sister." It is manifest, that this wavering and disingenuity arose from his looking at the things which are seen.

To the same cause we must attribute the indifference of the children of Israel, to that gracious message Moses carried to them in Egypt,—their tempting the Lord at Massah and Meribah,—the carnal reasonings of Moses,—the fearfulness of the man after God's own heart,—the perplexing apprehensions of the psalmist's mind,—and all the disquieting thoughts that unhinge the peace and joy of believers. Conferring with flesh and blood in matters that relate to our duty, will infallibly seduce us from the paths of righteousness; and an attachment to

rection of Christ. "And while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them: but their eyes were holden, that they knew him not." Having heard the subject of their conversation, and their jealousies about himself, he said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" This weighty reproof strongly implies, that these disciples were more attentive to the appearances of things, than to the various testimonies of God by the prophets, concerning these very things.

Thomas, who was not with the rest of the disciples when Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, on the evening of that day he rose from the dead, refused to credit their word, when they afterwards told him, "they had seen the Lord. He said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." In this case we may see, that leaning to the evidence of sense, is a fatal obstruction to believing.

The centurion, who applied to Christ to heal his servant, sick of the palsy, and grievously tormented, said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say unto this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, I have not found so great

faith, no, not in Israel." The singular eminence of his faith consisted in this, that he was persuaded Christ had sovereign power over all distempers, and could, at his pleasure, command them off from his servant, wherever he was, and whenever he would.

The woman of Canaan was another eminent believer. She came to Christ to have her daughter cured, who was grievously vexed with a devil. "She cried unto him; but he answered her not a word. His disciples besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us: but he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she, and worshipped him," notwithstanding these discouragements, "saying, Lord; help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. She replied, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith!" Her faith rested wholly upon the power and grace of Christ, and therefore she clave unto him with the most fixed resolution, under every discouragement, regardless of appearances.

From these examples of the weakness and strength of faith, two things are exceedingly manifest. (1.) That faith is great or strong, only while it steadfastly views its objects as God hath presented them in the testimony of his word; and therefore remains unshaken in its confidence and expectation, because God, who hath spoken and promised, is "faithful and true, the only wise God, and the Lord God omnipotent, who calleth things which be not, as though they were." (2.) That faith is "weak," or

“little,” when a person, judging according to the principles of sense, questions the declarations and promises of God, or hesitates about them, or disputes in his own mind against them, raising objections, and improving every improbability as an argument against his belief of God’s word, and dependence upon God’s promises. All the instances of strong and weak faith that have been mentioned, confirm the truth of these observations.

On the whole it appears, that there is one, and but one, fatal principle of all that doubtfulness, wavering, and discouragement, which are to be found in weak believers; and that is, their “looking at those things which are seen,” whether by the natural senses or by reason, or by reflections upon the feelings of their own souls. Hopes or fears, proceeding upon such views, are dishonouring to God, and highly injurious to a life of faith. But these are many things that co-operate to weaken the faith of believers, by diverting their attention from the bare testimony of God, and fixing their minds on objects of sense. I shall mention a few particulars on this head, that have a most peculiar influence this way.

1. We are naturally creatures of sense. Comforts we enjoy are present to us; agreeable prospects, that seem to fall within our reach, stimulate our ambition, and gladden our hearts; and we feel affliction grievous and hard to be borne. In this situation, it is too common for the people of God to adopt the language of the carnal world, “Who will show us any good?” or, in their prosperity, to say with Job, “We shall die in our nest, and we shall multiply our days as the sand:” or, in the day of their dis-

ness, to conclude with Jacob, that all things are against them. The presence of sensible things gives them a very great advantage upon the carnal mind, over the objects of faith, which are not seen, and only hoped for.

2. The wisdom of the flesh is against our belief of the divine record. We suppose we cannot be mistaken, when we form our expectations concerning events, according to the usual operation and energy of natural causes. Guided by this maxim, the saints have judged it prudent to dispute the truth, and deny the possibility of the promises of God himself. Sarah could not at first believe that "she would have a son, because she was old." Moses thought it incredible, that all the congregation of Israel should have flesh for a whole month, that they might eat of it in the greatest abundance, because all the flocks and herds, yea, all the fishes of the sea, seemed too little to suffice such a multitude. The church concluded, that "her way was hid from the Lord, and her judgment passed over from her God," because she was brought very low. These reasonings, that exalt human wisdom against the knowledge of God, by opposing the order of nature to the credibility of Jehovah's word, must be cast down.

3. The pride of corrupt nature resists the design of revealed grace. The humbling truths of the gospel teach us to deny self, to account all our own righteousness but as filthy rags, and to reckon ourselves in every view but unprofitable servants. They direct us, as lost and needy sinners, to the unsearchable riches of Christ, for the abundant supply of all our wants. But the proud heart remonstrates against

this self-debasing scheme of sovereign grace, sometimes in the language of the Laodiceans, "We are rich and increased with goods;" sometimes in the words of the Pharisee, "God be thanked, I am not as other men;" and too often in sentiments that imply all the sense of the young man's question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" When the prophet commanded Naaman to go and wash in Jordan seven times, assuring him that thereby he should be cured of his leprosy, Naaman was wroth, and went away in a rage, concluding, that he was treated with disrespect by Elisha, and that Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were better than all the waters of Israel. Such are the sentiments of proud reason concerning Christ, presented to us in the gracious declarations of the gospel, which forbid all glorying, save in the Lord. Naaman's servants, indeed, persuaded him to take the prophet's advice; but nothing less than the power of God can prevail on a sinner, "to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, counting all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ."

4. A pretended humility and false modesty, is another auxiliary of unbelief. Its true name is pride; and it is nearly related to the temper that was described in the last article. Such as are deceived by this vain show of humility, thrust away the revealed grace of God in Christ, under a pretence that they are not worthy of it. Their reasoning is, We are such guilty and hell-deserving sinners, our sins are so many and so great, that we dare not presume to believe on the Son of God; He was never in-

tended for the like of us. Upon this principle, Peter, falling down at Jesus' feet, said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It is very true we are sinners, and unworthy; but the gospel is a revelation of the mercy and grace of God. His mercy could not be mercy to us, if we were not wretched and miserable; his grace could not be grace to us, if we were worthy and deserving. To refuse Christ and his salvation, tendered in the word of grace, because we are sinners, and unworthy, is as unreasonable, as if a traitor should refuse his prince's pardon because he has been in arms against him; or if one should refuse to accept of a full and free discharge, because he is a bankrupt drowned in debt. This criminal modesty arises from an opinion of the necessity and possibility of attaining to some recommending righteousness, as it were by the works of the law; though the person is conscious to himself, that he is not possessed of such righteousness, and therefore thinks he dares not believe on Jesus for salvation by grace.

5. Ignorance of the nature, excellency, and duration of divine and eternal things, is another reason why the objects of sense have so powerful effects upon the minds of the people of God. Alas! how limited and superficial are their views of the great mystery of godliness! Hence, like Israel, "they despise the pleasant land, they believe not his word," with a full assurance of faith and expectation. When the reality and importance of divine truths are not perceived and attended to, the soul cannot continue in the faith grounded and settled, but is

moved away from the hope of the gospel by every temptation.

6. The world is a great enemy to the strength and stability of a believer's faith. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world." The cares of the world, its comforts and sorrows, are all dangerous, in different respects, to "the heirs of the promise," whom God hath chosen and called out of the world. Believers cannot fly from these dangers: for if they go forward, or backward, if they turn to the right hand, or to the left, they find themselves encompassed on every side. Their only alternative is, to conquer, or be conquered.

7. The regards we have for the favourable opinion of men, is often a fatal occasion of stumbling to the children of God: "The fear of man bringeth a snare." What our Lord said to the unbelieving Jews, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?" may be applied, with a little variation, to all the disciples of Christ: How can ye be strong and steadfast in the faith of the gospel who ambitiously affect the praise of men? It is a small thing to be judged of man.

8. The dark appearances of providence frequently divert the attention of the saints from the word of God, and occasion much perplexity to their minds. When the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon, he said unto him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which he told us

of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? And he said, Oh my Lord! wherewith shall I save Israel? And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me." Here, and in the following part of this history, we see how hard it was for this believer to be persuaded of the word of the Lord, while the appearances of providence were so very discouraging. This humbling truth is expressed by Job in the strongest light, when he says, "If I had called" upon God by prayer, "and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause: he will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness." Dark dispensations in the conduct of providence are exceedingly disquieting.

9. The devil, who is the god of this world, labours to blind the minds of mankind, by many artifices, which have a malignant influence to increase and confirm the blindness and stupidity of them who remain in unbelief, and even to shake the faith and confidence of God's own people. He draws a veil over the precious truths of the gospel, and magnifies the importance of the things of this world. He presents the word of God in a false light to their up-

prehensions, and persuades them to believe a lie. He is a liar and a murderer :—a liar, because he sets himself against the truth of divine revelation, and against the proper use mankind-sinners should make of that revelation for their own salvation ;—a murderer, because he wishes to ruin immortal souls, by substituting the transient, sordid pleasures of sin and sense, in the room of the eternal God, and persuading them to set their affections on things on earth, not on things above. Sometimes he would make them believe, that there is nothing better for them than to eat and drink, and indulge themselves in all sensual pleasures. Sometimes he attempts to shake the foundations of all religion, by suggesting to them, that the principles of it, relating to the being, perfections, and providence of God, the truth and authority of his word, and the important consequences of death in a future world, are only the artful contrivances of men. On some occasions, he possesses the mind with the most alarming views of the wrath of God, persuading the sinner there is no hope ; and therefore his wisest course is either to put an end to a miserable life, or else to divert his sorrow, by gratifying his lusts as long as he can : on others, he “ transforms himself into an angel of light,” persuading them that they must be humbled and mortified, sanctified and self-denied, before they presume to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ; and that the consciousness of these good characters, is necessary to give them boldness in coming to the Son of God for eternal life. By these and many other artifices, the god of this world worketh in the children of disobedience, and seeketh to winnow real disciples, by

fixing their views on those things that are seen, and removing their dependence from the word of the living God.

These are some of the most fatal causes of weakness and wavering in the faith of believers, which operate on an evil heart of unbelief, to seduce their minds from establishing views of the divine declarations, by turning their thoughts to the appearances of things, to the power of second causes, or to the conscious feelings of their own souls, as the rule by which they should judge concerning the truth and certain performance of the promises of God.*

SECT. IV.—*The faith of the Gospel is always successful, even in its weakest and lowest degrees.*

The Scripture is very particular and full in declaring the inexpressible happiness of true believers. Jesus, discoursing with Nicodemus, informed him, that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned.” He further assures us, that “this is the will of the Father that sent him, that every one

* The reader is desired to recollect what was said on the first section of this chapter, as it may serve to throw considerable light on the reasons why believers are weak in faith.

which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." The disciple whom Jesus loved, when copying out those things which he had seen and heard, expressly says, "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." If you ask, For what purpose doth he write so particularly, and with so great earnestness, on a point that is frequently and clearly inculcated in the sacred page? he says, "These have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." He writes these things, not with a view of leading them either to a knowledge of their having believed, or to a consciousness of their title to eternal life by any marks of their gracious state, but of confirming them in the belief and comfort of the gospel. He intimates, that the privilege and the consolation should go together. If we believe, that Christ is our Surety, we should be persuaded, that he has paid our debt, and satisfied justice to the very uttermost farthing. If we believe that Christ is our Bridegroom, we should rest assured, that his righteousness, his inheritance, and his kingdom are ours.*

Jesus said unto the centurion, "Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." The centurion had been requesting him only to speak a word concerning his servant, who lay at home sick of the palsy, and grievously tormented. He believed that by a single word his servant should be healed; and the sacred historian records, that "his servant

* Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, Dialogue xvi.

was healed in the self-same hour." Whenever he speaks, it was done; when he commanded it stood fast. He sent his word and healed him.

The woman of Canaan, who came to Christ for her daughter, who was grievously vexed with a devil, was at last comforted with this gracious answer: "O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." The consequence was, that "her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

The woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, "when she heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment; for she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." Having touched him, "straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body, that she was healed of that plague." When she came before Jesus, "she fell down, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

When blind Bartimeus was asked by Jesus, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? the blind man said unto him, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he recovered his sight; and followed Jesus in the way."

From these instances, and others of the same sort, it appears, that faith unfeigned is really "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Resting upon the word of God, it puts the soul into a kind of present possession of the blessings he hath promised. "All things are possible to him that believeth." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, Because I am not the eye I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" If a child should say, Because I have not the strength or stature of a grown person, I am not of the human race; is it therefore not of the human race? In like manner, if a weak believer should say, Because I am not strong in faith, I have no part in Christ; is he therefore without any part in Christ?—This sort of reasoning is false in every particular; because there are many members of the body, and yet but one body; there are different degrees of strength and stature in different stages of human life, and there are both strong and weak believers in the body of Christ. It is true, the foot is not the hand, the ear is not the eye, a child has neither the stature nor strength of a grown person, and a Christian of little faith is not strong in faith; but as the foot and the hand, the ear and the eye, belong to one body, as childhood and manhood are several stages of the same life and nature of man, so the strength and weakness of faith are characters of the same faith of the operation of God. Therefore it must be unreasonable to allow, that there are different degrees in the faith of believers, and yet to suppose that there is no real faith where it is not great. Our Lord speaks of having faith "as a grain of mustard seed," which implies that it may be little, where it is real and unfeigned.

2. The variety there is in the degrees of the faith of God's elect, admonishes the strong to "bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves." It is a case far too common among the people of God, to despise the weaknesses, and insult the mis-

apprehensions of their brethren. This glorying is not good; for "who maketh them to differ from their weaker brethren? or what have they that they did not receive? Now, if they did receive it, why do they glory" over others, "as if they" themselves, "had not received it?" Believers are brethren, and have all "obtained the like precious faith, through the knowledge of God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ;" and therefore they ought to "be kindly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another." No man ever yet hated his own flesh so far as to neglect any member of his body, when he perceived it was exposed to danger, or to lay the heaviest load on that member which is least able to bear it, or to be cruel to any member that might happen to be diseased. No, surely; every man "nourisheth his own flesh, and cherisheth it." If, then, believers, "being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," they should, in that relation, love, and comfort, and help one another. The proud and haughty professor is concerned to lay to heart that alarming reproof to his insolent triumph, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." We should often remember, that if we despise, insult,

and "sin against the brethren," for whom Christ died, "and wound their weak consciences, we sin against Christ," whose members they are, however weak and despised. Let us, therefore, study to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." To be severe and unkind to the infirmities of a weak believer, may naturally arise from "knowledge that puffeth up," it cannot consist with "Christian charity that edifieth" the church.

3. What has been said of the several degrees of faith may suffice to convince us, that it is of the utmost importance to have a clear and exact apprehension of the word of God, and to have our minds entirely fixed upon it. The apostle's prayer for the Colossians was, "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and *unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding*, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." What vigour of expression, what exuberance of ideas, and, above all, what distinguished privileges are here! *understanding* of the excellent scheme of the gospel—*assurance* of understanding—*full assurance*—*riches* of the full assurance—*yea, all riches* of the full assurance of understanding! With such a treasure, the people of God must prove "steadfast and immovable," being "rooted and built up in Christ Jesus the Lord, and established in the faith, as they have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Imperfect apprehensions of divine truth, and, much more, wrong notions of it, expose the people of God to the utmost danger of being shaken, and moved away from the hope of a gospel; but when their minds are possessed with

just views of the meaning, importance, and interesting nature of the word of God, they become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Hereby the feeble believer becomes as David, and the house of David, whose faith is great and fixed, becomes "as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." The apostle's advice is grounded on this consideration: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away" from your attention to the word of God "with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

4. What has been offered concerning the degrees of faith, may enable us to judge what it is that precisely constitutes the character of a true believer in Christ. It is neither the abundance of his comforts, nor the multitude of his duties, the clearness of his evidences, nor the elevation of his affections. Happy are the people of God, when these things are in them, and abound; they are neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ! But none of these things constitute them believers, because they follow upon their believing, and are never real, but when they proceed from faith unfeigned. The precise and constituent character of a believer in Christ is shortly this: He trusts in Christ alone, as freely given by God to sinners, for complete salvation and eternal life. The weakness or strength of his faith, its evidences and comforts, are only circumstances, though important circumstances, of his believing in Christ. This may be illustrated from the case of such stung Israelites as looked to the brazen serpent which Moses

made, and set on a pole, in the midst of the camp, that every one who was bitten by fiery serpents might look to it and be cured. Their relief came by looking at the brazen serpent, though they might be at a distance from it, or their sight might be naturally weak, or their eyes might be almost closed up with the venom of the sting; yet, if they did but *look*, under all these disadvantages, they were completely healed in a moment. An excellent emblem of the soul that believeth in Christ!

5. The weakness and waverings of the faith of real believers, are an undeniable evidence of their being imperfect creatures. As long as they know but in part and sometimes stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, it is impossible they can be perfect in love to God, or in the observation of his law; because their "faith worketh by love," and therefore, where faith is imperfect, love must be imperfect also. No effect can be either more perfect or more noble than its cause.

6. Since there are such differences in the degree and measure of believing, let none presume to satisfy himself with any small degree of faith. It looks very selfish, when people are pleased with such a measure of faith as will save them from damnation, without endeavouring to be strong and confirmed in the belief and comfort of the Scriptures. Such as are weak in faith, though they be real Christians, dishonour the God of truth, disgrace their profession, and suffer much damage in their own souls. Surely such a temper is not to be rested in, it ought not to be indulged; especially when we know, that God hath provided sufficiently for the establishment of our faith

in the fullest assurance, by laying all the firm foundations for it that have been mentioned. How delightful must it be to overcome the legality of the heart, by possessing a clear and appropriating knowledge of the grace of God! To build our confidence, as to things of the greater importance and nearest concern, upon a naked word coming from the mouth of Christ, even though sense and reason, yea, the ordinary course of providence, be all against it! To hang with fixed resolution on the Lord, till we succeed in our request, refusing to let him go, except he bless us! To maintain our peace and confidence, upon the sure ground of God's promise and covenant, even when he hides his face, and seems to cover it with a cloud in his anger! And, finally, to abound in all the fruits of the Spirit, which are in all goodness, living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit! How desirable must it be to live upon the principles of the gospel, in such high and comfortable paths of "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ!" This is the life, these are the dignifying privileges, of strong believers.

7. Because faith in Christ, even in its lowest and weakest measures, is always successful; therefore believers are properly called "rich in faith." Whatever God hath promised becomes their inheritance. They know not the extent of the durable, the unsearchable riches of Christ, in whom they are complete. Sooner may they count the number of the sandy particles on the sea-shore, and measure the waters of the ocean, and comprehend the whole system of nature, than they can know all the fulness of God, who is the portion of their souls, and all the

glories of that eternal life they have in his only-begotten Son.

8. Since unfeigned faith is always successful, therefore true believers can never perish, but must persevere unto the end. God hath promised eternal life in Christ. They see this promise; and are persuaded of it, and embrace it. Their faith is not a fancy. They know whom they have believed. A promising God will be a performing God. That the comfort of believers may be full, the good Shepherd says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." The apostacy, or falling away of real believers, can only be maintained upon some of the following principles: either that the life God hath promised is not everlasting life, or that everlasting life is only promised to them, as it was to Adam, upon condition of their persevering obedience; or, that they believe a lie, when they embrace eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ; or, finally, that it is *not* to them according to their faith. Whom dost thou reproach and blaspheme, thou enemy of grace and truth? and against whom dost thou lift up thy voice, in such detestable suppositions? Even against the Holy One of Israel, against the God of truth, who peremptorily says, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end."

PART II.



INTRODUCTION.

IN the former part of this Treatise, we have considered, in a more general view, the doctrine of faith; its nature and foundation, its necessity, the distinctions and kinds of it, the author and means of producing it, its precious excellency and various degrees. In this part, we propose to describe its tendency and operation, as it affects the heart and conversation of such as believe on the name of the Son of God. Here a large field presents itself; and the principal difficulty is, to select and illustrate what is most important on this copious subject, without incurring the imputation of being either too tedious or too obscure. I apprehend the objects of greatest consequence will naturally fall in our way, while we attend to the influence of unfeigned faith upon the character, temper, and general conduct, of the saints; and then examine, more particularly, its office in the life, the walk, the profession, and religious duties, of believers. Having explained these things, the marks or proofs of the faith which is unfeigned, will properly become an object of inquiry, deeply interesting to every professor of religion.




If any reader shall too hastily conclude, that the idea of believing, which has been given and established in the First Part, is *speculative* and *Antinomian*, because it is rather more simple than some descriptions of it he has used to consider with veneration, it is to be expected he will find himself entirely relieved on this head, by attending, without prejudice, to what is further offered in this Second Part. Should the Author be happy enough to accomplish his purpose, it will be made very evident, that the faith of the gospel is "most holy," that it "purifies the heart," and engages the soul to abound in "good works." "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

CHAPTER I.

THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH UPON THE CHARACTER
AND GENERAL CONDUCT OF THE SAINTS.

THE children of God, whom he hath called and chosen out of the world, are "a peculiar treasure unto him above all people." If we consider their high calling, their great dignity, their excellent privileges, the services wherein they are employed, and the securities they have for the enjoyment of eternal life, we may justly congratulate them in the words of Moses: "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thine excellency!" When they take a view of themselves, they will cheerfully acknowledge, in the language of Paul, that it is only "by the grace of God they are what they are." They neither dare nor choose to make themselves of the number, or compare themselves with some that commend themselves. They cannot glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom they are complete. "By grace are they saved in the Lord, through faith; and that not of themselves it is the gift of God." When we consider the character and general conduct of the saints, as resulting from the superabounding riches of divine grace, we must also attend to faith in Christ, as the means whereby the Spirit of truth forms their character, and influences their general



conduct. This will be more plain from some examples, than from any other method of illustration; and therefore we shall select a few instances to show, that the belief of the truth is the effectual means of putting the soul in possession of all spiritual blessings, and of furnishing it with every principle of Christian duty. It is the means, (1.) of enjoying Christ, by a vital union to his person; (2.) of regeneration; (3.) of justification in the sight of God; (4.) of adoption; (5.) of true holiness; (6.) of comfort; (7.) of hope; (8.) of patience; (9.) of victory over the world; (10.) of successfully resisting the devil; (11.) of departing in peace by death; and, (12.) of anticipating the glories, the rest, and the endless felicities of the world to come.—All that is necessary, for our present purpose, on each of these articles, is, in a few words, to explain the nature of them; and then to show, that they are severally enjoyed by the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus. And this we shall endeavour to do in separate sections, if the Lord will.

SECT. I.—Faith is the means of enjoying Christ, by a vital union to his Person.

In the writings of the prophets and apostles, we are often told of union with Christ, as the dignifying privilege of the people of God. Says the church, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” This is the common name of Christ and believers, “**THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**” They are “saved in the Lord,” and “justified in the Lord.” The saints and faithful are said to be “in Christ,” and to be

“one with Christ.” What is higher still, and implies a greater degree of nearness, they are “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;” and, which denotes the most intimate connection imaginable, “They that are joined to the Lord Jesus, are one spirit with him.”—“This union with Christ was not only prefigured by types, but is displayed by a variety of similitudes, taken from the most familiar occurrences of life: by which it appears to be our divine Master’s will, that we should live under the habitual belief of this momentous truth, and in the constant enjoyment of this distinguished privilege. You cannot visit a friend, or view your children; you cannot enter your garden, discourse with your spouse, or contemplate your own body; without a representation and a remembrancer of this precious blessing.”*

The covenant of works being made with the first Adam, not only for himself, but for all his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, both as their parent and as their surety, and fell with him in his first transgression. Hence they are born in a state of sin and misery, in virtue of their fatal connection with their first father, as a covenant-head and representative; yet they are not really sinful and miserable, before they actually exist, as the children of Adam. Upon the same principle, we maintain, that the covenant of promise being made with the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, as a Surety and Representative-head of all that the Father chose in him, and gave

* Mr. Hervey’s *Theron and Aspasio*, Let. 12.



unto him from among the human race; all the redeemed of the Lord obeyed in him, and died in him, are saved in him, and made alive in Christ, as their Substitute and new-covenant Head. Hence they are born again in a state of salvation, which commences in their regeneration, in virtue of their blessed connection with the second Adam, as the Mediator of that covenant which is all their salvation; yet they are not really in the possession of that state of salvation, before they are actually created in Christ Jesus. In both cases, there is a real and most interesting connection between these covenant-heads, and the parties they respectively represented; but this sort of connection is not that union between Christ and his people, which the Scripture describes, under so many striking resemblances; comparing it to the union between the Father and the Son, to the union of the vine with the branches, to the union of our meat and drink with our bodies, to the union of the body to the head, to the conjugal union of husband and wife, and, not to be tedious where the subject is so copious, comparing it to the union of a building, whereof Christ is considered as the foundation and chief corner-stone. The connection between Christ and his people, held forth by these instructive metaphors, is what the Holy Ghost means by Christ's "being in believers, and living in them, and dwelling in them." In explaining this union, I shall, (1.) offer a few remarks for illustrating the nature and excellency of it; (2.) show that it is accomplished and maintained by means of faith; and, (3.) demonstrate the weakness and folly of the principal objections urged against this comfortable doctrine.

1. I proposed to illustrate the nature and excellency of the union that subsists between Christ and believers, in a few remarks. This is an article of revealed religion, and a matter of Christian experience, that is frequently insisted upon in the sacred volumes; and yet it is so great a privilege, so important, and so far above all the principles of natural sense and reason, that it remains, after all that can be said for the illustration of it, "a great mystery" still. The following observations may be useful, in some degree, to correct our misapprehensions about it at least, if not profitable also to throw some light on the subject. (1.) While sinners are "dead in trespasses and sins," they are "without Christ;" that is, they do not enjoy Christ and salvation, but remain in a state of sin and misery, separated from all part in that new state believers have in the Lord Jesus. They are universally depraved, and children of disobedience; they are in a state of condemnation, and children of wrath; their carnal mind is implacable enmity against God; and they are in the most wretched subjection to the power of the devil, the god of this world. (2.) When it pleaseth God, who is rich in mercy, to call sinners by his grace, they embrace and rest upon the Lord Jesus Christ, for all the purposes of their salvation. They do not expect those benefits that constitute their happiness, as any sort of recompense for services they perform, nor merely as so many instances of divine goodness; but they consider Christ himself, as their wisdom, their righteousness; their Husband, their Saviour, their guide, their life, and their Redeemer; yea, as all and in all to them. Viewing Christ as theirs in

every saving and suitable character, they do not so much expect eternal life from him, as in him. What I mean is, they do not only consider the things that accompany their salvation, as blessings which Christ confers upon them in a way of sovereign favour, in consequence of his having procured them by his obedience unto death, but as blessings of that covenant God made in Christ, in whom, as its Head, it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; and hence they receive Christ himself for all the glorious purposes of that everlasting covenant, which is all their salvation. (3.) Such as receive Christ for all the purposes of their salvation, do really enjoy Christ, by a vital union to his person, as the Head of that new and better covenant. As the branches are embodied with the substance of the vine; as all the debts of the bride devolve upon her husband, as soon as they are married, and all his dignity is derived to her; as the superstructure rests entirely upon the foundation; and as all the members live and move in their union to the head, where the animal spirits are formed for the use of the whole body; so all that believe in Christ do really enjoy him, for all the purposes of their salvation. Because the word of God is unquestionably true, and that word reveals Christ as an all-sufficient and complete Saviour, the belief of that word must be accompanied with a real enjoyment of the Lord Jesus, as he is revealed and described in that faithful record. (4.) This real enjoyment believers have of Christ by a vital union to his person, is everlasting, and can never be lost. They alter in their frames, in their behaviour, in their apprehensions both of this privilege, and of

their interest in it; but "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," declares the duration of this union and enjoyment, and peremptorily says it shall never be dissolved: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." To this agrees the apostle's confident persuasion, that neither death, as terrible as it is, nor life, as desirable as it is, nor devils, those evil angels, nor the devil's persecuting agents, though they be principalities or powers on earth, nor evil things present, already lying on us, nor evil things to come on us, nor the height of worldly felicity, nor depth of worldly misery, nor any other creature, good or ill, acting either singly or in combination, shall be able, with their utmost efforts, "to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (5.) This real and everlasting enjoyment of Christ by faith, establishes a common and mutual interest between the Lord of life and the believing soul. The sap, imbibed by the vine at the root, circulates into the branches, and gives them vegetable life, fills them with buds, and loads them with fruit. The foundation supports the building, while the building rests upon the foundation. The animal spirits formed in the head, diffuse life and vigour through the whole body, while the several members have all their life and vigour in the head. In the married state, husbands and wives have one common and mutual interest, as was observed already.—All these examples and metaphors, used to illustrate the union

between Christ and believers, strongly imply, that Christ and believers have a common and mutual interest, whereby his fulness becomes a supply to all their need, and his unsearchable riches become their durable and satisfying treasure. Upon this principle, his wisdom is theirs, to enlighten them; his blood is theirs, to cleanse them from all sin; his righteousness is theirs, to justify them; his grace is sufficient for them, and his strength is made perfect in their weakness; his Spirit is theirs, to sanctify them; his redemption is theirs, to make them completely and eternally happy; yea, Christ himself is theirs, and they are his. I shall only add, (6.) The enjoyment of Christ by his people is emphatically called a vital union to his person. A vital union, to express its reality, its tendency, and its energy. There are branches in the vine that bear no fruit, because they are withered and dead, though the vine is alive and fruitful; so there are many professors of the Christian faith, that have a name to live, but are really dead. But believers in Christ have a living union to him as their Redeemer. They are quickened together with Christ, who liveth in them. Because he lives, they live also, in the enjoyment of him. And this vital union is affirmed to be a union to the person of Christ, to show that the believer enjoys not only spiritual blessings, but spiritual blessings in Christ. Hence the apostle writes to "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord," telling them, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death,

er things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's." They are joined to the Lord in the precise character of a new-covenant Head; or, as "the last Adam, who is a quickening Spirit, the Lord from heaven."

2. I shall now endeavour to show, that this enjoyment of Christ by a vital union to his person, is accomplished and maintained by means of faith, or believing on Christ revealed in the declarations of the gospel. In order to set this matter in a proper light, the following observations must be carefully attended to. (1.) God doth make known the exceeding riches of his grace, and the glorious fulness of Jesus Christ, by the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation; and doth invite and command perishing sinners to believe on Christ for his salvation; and encourages them to do so, by a free promise of that salvation to as many of that character as believe on his name. This is God's own instrument of conveyance, wherein he sendeth Christ to us, to bless us with his salvation, "in turning away every one of us from his iniquity." Hence it is called, "the ministration of the Spirit which giveth life, and the ministration of righteousness." (2.) By believing that word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, sinners do actually receive Christ himself, and all the benefits of his salvation, into their hearts, to dwell in them by that faith of the operation of God. The principles of sense and reason are no way fit, nor sufficient, to bring Christ into the enjoyment of the soul; but, when the Redeemer is perceived in the word of God, as the remedy which God hath provided and set forth for the benefit of mankind-sinners,

the soul lays hold upon that word which reveals him, and therein receives Christ from the hand of the Father, as his gift. It is impossible to believe the word which reveals Christ to us, or, as one expresses it, "to have and to hold the promise, without having and holding Christ himself. A promise of Christ is Christ to a believer. Faith takes hold of Christ in and by the promise. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the testimony of God concerning this precious Saviour in himself; and, having this infallible testimony in himself, he hath the Son, in as much as he enjoys Christ by a real, vital, and inseparable union to his person." (3.) This union is brought about by the Spirit of truth, discovering in the soul the matchless excellency, the inexhaustible sufficiency, and the universal suitableness of that Saviour, whom God hath given to be "a covenant of the people." "By one Spirit," says the apostle, "we are all baptized into one body," as the living members of Christ; "and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." And in another place he prays, "That God would grant the saints, and the faithful in Christ Jesus, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith." If we do but consider the dignity and excellence of that state of salvation which believers enjoy in Christ Jesus, and how much they are exalted thereby above their natural condition by Christ living in them, we cannot rationally conceive, that it should be within the power of nature to do any thing that advanceth us so high. "None can come to Christ, except the Father draw him. It is

written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Jesus.”

(4.) The belief of the gospel, as it has been described, hath a peculiar fitness to receive and enjoy Christ and his salvation, and to unite our souls unto him in believing. God hath fitted natural instruments for their respective purposes, as the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the feet to walk, &c. so that we may know by their nature, and natural manner of operation, for what use they are designed; and, in like manner, we may know, that faith is the means of uniting sinners to Christ, so as he may live and dwell in them, and they in him, because it is so well adapted to answer this purpose. By trusting or believing on Christ for complete salvation, the soul rejecteth and putteth away from itself every thing that kept it at a distance from Christ; as, all confidence in its own strength, endeavours, works, and privileges; or in any worldly pleasures, profits, and honours; or in any human helps and succours, for its happiness and salvation; because such confidences are inconsistent with its entire confidence in Christ for all salvation. Christ and his fulness cannot be seen, or handled, or attained to, by any bodily motion; they cannot be earned by works, nor by any kind of conditional faith;* nor can they become an object of our love and delight, till they be enjoyed

* Mr. Marshall justly censures with great severity, “some refiners of the Protestant religion, who have thought fit to make saving faith to be only a condition to procure a right and title to our justification by the righteousness of Christ.” *Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification*, on the fourth direction. This is the author’s idea, when he speaks of a *conditional faith*.

by believing. Christ is, and lives, and acts in believers by the Spirit of truth, who shows them the things of Christ, and leads them into the knowledge and belief of all revealed truth, and bears witness to their consciences that this revelation is made to them; and they are in Christ, and live, and dwell, and act in him, by the belief of that truth which reveals the glory and grace of Christ unto them as ungodly sinners. This, I apprehend, is the apostle's meaning; when he says, "In Christ ye also obtained an inheritance, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom ye also, believing, were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." In this passage, we see that the inheritance of the saints is conveyed to them in the word of truth;—that this word of revealed truth, which conveys to them their inheritance, is the gospel of their salvation, and reveals it as a merciful provision which God hath made for them as sinners;—that this inheritance is given and enjoyed in Christ;—that believing is the means by which the people of God receive their inheritance in Christ, conveyed to them in the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation;—that the Holy Spirit of promise makes the word of truth become spirit and life to believers;—and, finally, that believers, in receiving this word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, become actually possessed of that inheritance in Christ, and their minds, in believing, are sealed and stamped with the impressing power of the word of truth by the energy of the Holy Spirit of promise, just as the melted wax is impressed with the image and lineaments of the seal which is strongly applied to it. "Believing in Christ, ye were sealed," as

partakers of Christ, with the Holy Spirit of that promise, which ye embrace as the gospel of your salvation.

3. I shall now endeavour to demonstrate the weakness and folly of the principal objections that are usually urged against this comfortable doctrine. They are not of so much consequence as to merit great attention; nor would they have been honoured with a particular review on the present occasion, if it were not still further to illustrate the subject itself, which they are employed to confute or deride.

Object. 1. It is thought incredible by some, that believers on earth should be so intimately joined to Christ, who is exalted far above all heavens.

Ans. Distance of place is no impediment to a union which is constituted by believing. Christ, who obeyed and died, who rose again from the dead, and ascended up into heaven, is truly present in the word of God, where he is revealed to sinners, and enjoyed by the hearing of faith in that word which testifies of him. The feet are as really united to the head, as the heart and the shoulders are in the animal body; and, in like manner, believers on earth are as really joined to the Lord Jesus, as the spirits of just men made perfect, who are absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

Object. 2. It is objected against this mysterious and intimate union, that it makes a believer one person with Christ, even as the members constitute one body with the head. *Ans.* Christ and his people do constitute one spiritual body, whereof he is the Head; yet it does not follow, that they are one person, because they enjoy Christ in the character of

the last Adam ; whereby it is supposed, that he is really a distinct person from them, even as the first Adam was a distinct person from his posterity. Moreover, Christ dwells in believers by faith ; which implies, that he is really a distinct person, even as a dependent beggar is a different person from his generous benefactor.

Object. 3. If we suppose such a union between Christ and believers, then it must also be allowed, that believers become perfect in holiness immediately upon their being made partakers of Christ, by union to his person. *Answer.* This consequence is altogether false ; because Christ is known but in part, and therefore enjoyed but in part, as long as believers are present in the body, and absent from the Lord. Christ knoweth how to dwell in his members, in certain measures and degrees, according to his infinite wisdom ; and he makes them partakers of his holiness, only so far as he dwelleth in them. They are all “ members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones ;” but as “ God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,” so they have severally spiritual gifts of knowledge and holiness, “ differing according to the grace that is given to them.” A weak branch lives in all the fatness of the tree, though it does not possess so much thereof as another branch of the same tree that is in a flourishing state.

Object. 4. If Christ is enjoyed by faith, in a vital union to his person, must there not be degrees of this union, according to the measures of faith ? And, for the same reason, must not this union be dissolved whenever the exercise of faith is interrupted ? *Answer.* Though there are various measures of that

faith which is the means of enjoying Christ by a vital union to his person, yet there cannot be different degrees of this union, because Christ, who is enjoyed thereby, is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and because every believer is a partaker of Christ and his glorious fulness in the most intimate relation. The head-stone of a building is as really united to the foundation, and supported by it, as the stones that were immediately laid upon the foundation itself. Every living branch is as really in the vine, during the severity of the winter-cold, as in the summer and harvest, when it is adorned with leaves, and loaded with grapes. The husband and wife are as really and intimately related by the marriage-covenant, when they are many miles distant from each other, as when they are dwelling together in the most familiar and intimate society. Nor can the union between Christ and his members by believing, be dissolved or cease, whenever the exercise of their faith is interrupted; because the gospel of their salvation, wherein Christ is received and enjoyed, is an "ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls," and an "incorruptible seed, which endureth for ever." By this ingrafted word, the Holy Ghost dwells in them, and Christ in that word is truly possessed by them; though they neither do nor can improve and make use of him for the purposes of their sanctification and comfort, except "they abide in him, and his words abide in them." Besides it ought to be considered, that, though their faith may be shaken, and the exercise of it interrupted, it is impossible their faith can fail, because "Jesus is the author and finisher of faith." "The Lord will per-

fect that which concerneth them: his mercy endureth for ever. He will not forsake the work of his own hands."

Object. 5. If faith be the means of enjoying Christ, by a vital union to his person, then infants, idiots, and others who are incapable of actual believing, through want of the exercise of their reason, may be thought to be without any enjoyment of Christ, since they cannot enjoy him by believing. *Answ.* This consequence is not good; because the Scriptures are written, not to gratify our curiosity, by informing us how the vessels of mercy, who can neither hear, nor read, nor understand them, are prepared unto glory, but to inform such as are capable of hearing and learning from the Scriptures, in what way, and by what means, they must become partakers of Christ, his fulness and salvation. No doubt, such elect vessels as fall within the description mentioned in the objection, are saved by grace, and united to Christ; but the manner of making them partakers of Christ has no connection with our present purpose. It ought to suffice us, that such as are of ripe years and understanding, must either have the Son of God by means of faith, or they must die in their sins.

REFLECTIONS.

1. A vital union to Christ by faith, is the commencement of all the holiness and comfort that belong to the Christian life. Christ, enjoyed by believing, is the only true principle of sanctification and eternal life in his people. "Their life is hid with Christ in God;" and it is less proper to say

that they live, than that "Christ liveth in them." Christ is "the Alpha and Omega" of all a Christian's privileges and duties. 2. The true members of Christ can never perish, because they enjoy Christ by a vital union to his person. Wherefore he saith, "Because I live, ye shall live also." This is more than if he should say, 'As sure as I live, ye shall live also;' or, 'While I live, ye shall live also.' The expression Christ has used implies, that the life of believers is bound up in the life of Jesus, their covenant-head; and that they live in the favour of God, and in a state of salvation, by the enjoyment of him, who is "alive for evermore." 3. The fellowship believers have with Christ in grace and glory, rests upon a firm and adequate foundation. They are united to him as the last Adam; and therefore in him they have everlasting righteousness and complete salvation. Here is a source of hope and joy, of patience and new obedience, that reaches as wide as all their exigencies can ever require, that is more stable than the pillars of heaven. 4. It is of the utmost importance to a Christian to live by faith, if he wishes to rejoice in the comfort, and to abound in the fruits, of his union to Jesus. Hence he says to his disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." 5. Union with Christ is an article of the form of sound words, which is to be preached unto all nations, and to sinners of every character, for the obedience of their faith. Christ both takes possession of the sinner, and, having taken possession, he dwells in his heart, by manifesting himself to the

soul in the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. Every sinner is peremptorily commanded to hear that word of truth, and sufficiently warranted to appropriate Christ in that gospel of his salvation. Whosoever heareth and believeth, "hath set to his seal that God is true," because he receiveth the testimony of heaven concerning Christ; but "he that believeth not, hath made God a liar," because he believeth not the record that God gave to him, a sinner, concerning his Son.

SECT. II.—*Of Regeneration, or the New Birth, by the belief of the Word of Truth.*

When a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, "Rabbi, thou art a teacher come from God," Jesus waived the authority of the supreme judge, and, speaking with the condescension of a teacher in Israel, answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus, conceiving it to be altogether impossible that a man should be born again, even by a miraculous exertion of the power of God, replied, "How can a man be born again, when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He further informs Nicodemus, that he neither did nor could mean a natural birth, but a spiritual birth only; for "that which is born of the flesh," by a

natural birth, if it could be born again in this sense, "is flesh" still, and nothing but flesh; whereas, "that which is born of the Spirit" of God, by a supernatural birth, "is spirit." He then cautions him against being offended at the doctrine of the new birth, because he could not comprehend it, by calling his attention to a very familiar case: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This is not a description of regeneration, as many excellent writers have supposed, but a defence of it against the imputation of absurdity and contradiction to all the principles of common sense. We know that the wind which blows on the earth comes from somewhere, though we cannot tell whence it cometh; and we are sure it goeth somewhere, though we cannot tell whither it goeth; we only hear the sound, we only see and feel the effects of it. Here is a confessed mystery in nature, and that too in a most familiar instance.

Nicodemus, still unsatisfied about the doctrine of Christ, asks again, "How can these things be?" To whom Jesus answers, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" As if he had said, 'This doctrine is so clearly delivered in the oracles of God, which were committed to the Jews, that it argues great ignorance of their obvious meaning and design, not to know it.' But, to remove all kind of doubt about it from the mind of this ignorant master in Israel, he calls him to receive it entirely upon the credit of the testimony of Jesus, and neither to expect any other evidence for it, nor

to question the truth and sufficiency of his word, as a ground of faith concerning that matter, and every thing else. " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our testimony. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things ? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Therefore, no information can be more authentic than the testimony of Christ, and no evidence can deserve so much credit. He is the only fountain of all unerring, undeceiving intelligence, about heavenly things.

Having asserted the necessity of being born again, having shown the folly of judging about this high and glorious privilege by natural principles, and having proved the competency of his own testimony concerning the necessity and the nature of it, he then goes on to instruct Nicodemus further concerning it, by giving him an account of the nature, means, necessity, and effects of this supernatural birth. He illustrates it by a very striking comparison, taken from an ordinance God was pleased to establish for Israel in the wilderness : " As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already," &c. From this passage, I beg leave to collect the following observations. (1.) Our Lord is continuing his conversation with Nicodemus concerning the new birth in these verses. It is very amazing, that so plain a truth should have been attended to by very few commentators and writers on the subject. Nothing has been more frequent than to consider the third, and fifth, and eighth verses, as an account of the nature of regeneration; whereas they only declare the necessity of it, and the agency of the Holy Ghost in producing it. But the nature, means, and effects of this gracious change, are explained only in the fourteenth and following verses, down to the twenty-second. (2.) The state of one that believeth not, or that is not born again, is compared to the case of a man incurably wounded with the mortal bite or sting of the fiery serpents, which God sent to punish his people in the wilderness: "He that believeth not is condemned already;" he that is not born again, cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and he that did not look at the brazen serpent after he was bit, died of the poisonous bite. And, on the other hand, he that believeth in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting life; he that is born again, shall enter into the kingdom of God: and if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (3.) Christ, revealed in the declarations of the gospel; is compared to the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness. (4.) Believing on Christ is compared to the beholding of that serpent. And, (5.) The happy change from a

perishing state to the enjoyment of everlasting life, and from an unregenerate to a regenerate state, is beautifully illustrated by the marvellous and immediate alteration that happened to the Israelites, whenever he beheld the serpent of brass. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, sinners are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord:" and as soon as the brazen serpent was beheld, instantly the mortal wound was healed, how weak soever their sight, and how great soever their wound might be."

In further explaining this subject, I shall consider these four things. (1.) The state of a sinner who is not born again, or who believeth not. 2. The state of one who is born again. (3.) Show that the people of God pass from the one state into the other, by believing on Christ. And, (4.) I shall attend to some objections against this view of the means of regeneration.

1. That we may understand the doctrine of the new birth, it is necessary to consider the state of a sinner who is not born again, or who believeth not in Christ. The Scripture tells us, there is a natural man, and there is a spiritual man; an old man, and a new man; some are in the flesh, and some are in the Spirit; some are "dead in trespasses and sins," being "children of disobedience, and children of wrath;" and some are quickened together with Christ, being "the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" some are "dead in the first Adam," and some are "made alive in Christ." I apprehend these expressions are used for much the same purpose. They serve to throw light upon the natural state of sinners, and the spiritual state of believers;

upon the real character of the unregenerate, and of such as are born of God.

An unregenerate sinner is in a state directly opposite, in respect of knowledge, righteousness, true holiness, and real happiness, to the upright state wherein man was originally created. He is "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." His mind, being carnal, "is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be:" he is "in the flesh," and therefore, "cannot please God:" he is "dead in trespasses and sins;" not only condemned on account of them, but actually dead in them: he is a child of disobedience, and walketh contrary to God, with the whole bent of his heart, and in the whole course of his conversation: he is a child of wrath, and stands exposed to all the miseries sin deserves at the hand of a holy, jealous, and righteous God: his conscience is defiled, and either denounceth the wrath of God against him for sin, and inclineth him to hate and abhor God as an enemy, or, if it be blinded and seared, hardeneth him more and more in his disobedience: and he is a child of the devil, in the most disgraceful and fatal subjection to the power of Satan, who is the god of this world, and blindeth the minds of all that believe not. These things, and whatever else can be attached to the character of a sinner, who is "without Christ, and without God in the world," constitute the description of "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, that must be put off."

In this deplorable state of sin and ruin, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; there is no

soundness in any faculty of the soul, nor in any member of the body, nor in any character of the sinner. All is covered with infamy, loaded with guilt, defiled with sin, and universally miserable. This natural condition of mankind is called "the old man:"—called *man*, by a happy and expressive metaphor, to signify its extent, and the universal influence of it upon the whole nature, character, and conduct of man; hence it is represented as the very self of a sinful creature: called *old*, because it is the state wherein we are conceived and born as the children of the first Adam, under the curse of the first covenant.

2. I shall now consider the state of those who are born again, or who believe in Christ. The apostle says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Such as are "renewed in the spirit of their mind, put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;" they "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." These expressions clearly show, that the design and purpose of the change that takes place in regeneration, is to repair the loss which man sustained by the fall. An excellent author has well observed, that "regeneration is of a larger extent and signification than justification and sanctification. It is initially all that belongs to a state of grace. It is fully described, Tit. iii. 5. by washing and renewing. Regeneration is our passing over into Christ, into his life, nature, and spirit. They who are thus joined to the Lord, are one spirit. Christ is their life. Being united to life itself, they must needs be quick-

ened by it. It is present death to be separated from life itself. In regeneration, life doth not so much enter into us, as we into it; and being once born of God, we gradually enter farther and farther into his life, till all mortality be swallowed up of it. When "we are in him that is true, even in Jesus Christ, this is eternal life." Therefore, to be "in Christ," and to be a "new creature," are all one. All creatures that have breath live, and move, and have their being in God; yet they are not so in God, as the new creature is in Christ. God, as a Creator, bestows a creature-life upon man, distinct from his own eternal, uncreated life; and man, having this natural root of his own from the God of nature, grows up by himself with all the specific properties belonging to his kind, whereby he is distinguished from his fellow-creatures. He stood forth at some distance from God, yet under the general influence of his providence, without which no creature can subsist. But in regeneration, he doth not only breathe the breath of life into us, making us living souls, but breathes his own quickening Spirit into us, that we may live the very life of God in our measure. It is one thing for God to give forth something virtually from himself, as he does in our first creation, and another thing to give himself really unto us, as in the second creation. God, as a Redeemer, raises up a new creature in himself, partaker of his own image, life, and Spirit. This "life is hid with Christ in God," and cannot, in the root and principle of it, be distinguished from God himself. Christ is our life, which, according to our finite capacity as creatures, did partake of it. The new creature is

but a creature for all this, though quite of another make, constitution, and original, from all the first creation; and therefore called a new creature, standing in a nearer union and conjunction unto God; so born of him as no other creature is. All creatures are made by him, none born of him but the new creature.*

This is the happy and honourable state of all that are born of the Spirit. They are the workmanship of God, who hath "created them in Christ Jesus unto good works." They receive all things in Christ that constitute their amiable character, and furnish them for the obedience of faith. "Christ is all and in all, and they are complete in him. God hath "made them accepted in the Beloved;" and they are made "light in the Lord." They "hate sin with a perfect hatred," and "delight in the law of God after the inward man." The image of God is recovered upon their soul, so as to love him supremely, and serve him ultimately, as their highest end; and to delight in him superlatively, as their chiefest good. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." Whosoever beheld the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness, was perfectly relieved from the poisonous bites of the fiery serpents that God sent to plague the people: and whosoever beholdeth the glorious fulness of Christ, revealed in the gospel for the benefit of lost sinners, is changed into the image of Christ, and puts on the privileges, principles, and spirit of a new creature, by the actual enjoyment and possession of the Lord Jesus, "in

* Mr. Thomas Cole's Discourses of Regeneration, pp. 9, 27—29.

whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell." "Of his fulness do all" that are born again "receive," by union and fellowship with him, "and grace for grace." How great, how real, how happy is the change produced in their state, temper, and conduct, by believing in the only-begotten Son of God! The change that passed upon the Israelite, ready to die of the venomous poison pervading the whole system of his natural frame, was not more real, nor more evidently the doing of the Lord, than the wonderful change made in the state and disposition of the person who "passes from death unto life," by being "born of God," and "created in Christ Jesus."

3. It now remains to be proved, that the people of God "pass from death unto life," or from a state of nature into a state of salvation, by believing in Christ; even as the person who was bitten by the poisonous serpent, became a sound and living man, whenever he beheld the serpent of brass, which Moses made and set upon a pole. It has been observed, that sinners, in their unregenerate state, are under the curse of the first covenant, separated from all gracious enjoyment of God, children of his wrath, entirely destitute of his image, and enemies against him in every propensity, bias, and disposition of their minds: and it has also been proved, that the new-born soul is a new creature, and enjoys life, righteousness, and salvation in Christ, the last Adam. Mr. Boston has largely established and explained the proposition I now affirm, on the sixth head of his "View of the Covenant of Grace;" where he maintains, that sinners are instated in the covenant of grace by faith or believing. It

is with very great pleasure I embrace this opportunity of recommending that excellent performance to the attention of the reader, and particularly on the head mentioned.

If we consider the Scriptures carefully, when they speak on the subject, three things will be evident. (1.) God is the author of this saving change; (2.) The word is the instrument of it; and, (3.) Faith is the means of producing it.

1. God is the author of regeneration, or of that happy change whereby sinners pass from death unto life. Believers are, on this account, said to be "born of God," and "begotten of God." All that is called, and allowed to be God, is concerned in the work of regeneration. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten them." They are "created in Christ Jesus," and they are "born again of the Spirit." All the persons of the Godhead have a joint agency in the new birth, even as they had in the work of creation. Hence God is the Father of his people, and they are "his sons, even his first-born; which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the great love and almighty power of God."

2. The word of God is the instrument, or the outward means, whereby sinners pass from death unto life in their regeneration. One apostle says, believers are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever:" another affirms, that "of his own will God begat us with the word of truth:" and a third declares, that "in Christ Jesus he hath begotten the believing Corinthians through the gospel."

“The word of God is a proper medium for the invisible God to work by. God never acts more like a God, and like a Creator, than when he works by his word. He speaks, and it is done. He said, “Let there be light; and there was light:”—“Lazarus, come forth;” and immediately a resurrection followed. He can as easily do as speak: his word is operative. God chooses to work by his word, that he may appear to do all by himself: as a Creator he has nothing else to work by. He that is the everlasting *I am*, calleth that which is not, to exist. The written word is the most suitable means for God to make use of in all his dealings with man, his reasonable creature. As men communicate their thoughts to one another by words, so doth God communicate his mind and will to us by his word. As a natural man cannot discern the things of God in the word without the Spirit, so neither can a spiritual man, in this world, know them without the word.

“The word is the pattern of the image of God, which is drawn upon the face of the new creature, plainly representing it to us in all its spiritual features. The word is the mould into which we are cast. The glory of the Lord, reflected upon us, through the glass of the gospel, leaves its own image upon the soul. What is grace but truth put into the inward parts?—the law written in the heart, the word abiding in us, and turned into grace in our hearts? which is nothing else but a living principle of faith and holiness, inclining us to keep the word, which is an authentic copy and transcript of the will of God to man. Where there is an inward man, delighting in the law of God, we may be sure the

word has been effectual in that soul, because that inward man is nothing else but the new creature, born of the incorruptible seed of the word." .

The word presents Christ and all his fulness to mankind-sinners, that they may behold and appropriate him in that faithful revelation; even as the pole on which the brazen serpent was set, elevated that merciful remedy to the view and use of the congregation of Israel. He that was bitten with the venomous serpents, did not look to the pole for healing, but to the serpent of brass which was elevated on that pole, and no where else; because the only use of that pole was to exhibit the remedy which God had provided for a case otherwise mortal. In like manner, Christ given for a covenant of the people, is exhibited, to be seen and enjoyed only in the word of God; not that we may confine our views to the word merely as a means of instruction, but that we may trust in the Lord from heaven, who is testified of in the word of God unto us, as perishing sinners. The pole only exhibited the brazen serpent upon it; but the word of God exhibits Christ in it; and therefore he says, "I am the truth." This view of the word of God is so far from setting aside the office of the Holy Ghost, that it necessarily implies both the necessity and the agency of the Lord the Spirit, in the strongest sense; while it affirms, that the work of God becomes spirit and life only as the instrument through which the Spirit of truth accomplisheth the whole of his work in the hoire of salvation. . . .

8. Faith, or believing in Christ, revealed in the gospel, is the means of producing that happy change whereby sinners pass from death unto life. . . . As

Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear, shall live." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life."

"Naturally, when the understanding acts upon any object, it draws the image of that object into itself: hence they say, 'The understanding is every thing it understands;' that is, it takes in the idea, shape, and image of that thing which it knows, under all its distinguishing properties. So faith brings in Christ, as he is made known in the gospel, into the soul, under a peculiar character, as the fairest of ten thousand. It proposes him as the greatest truth to the understanding, and as the greatest good to the will, and frames conceptions of him accordingly: thus is 'Christ formed in us.' Faith doth not take in Christ notionally only, to lie by, as other notions do in which we are little concerned; but it takes him in, in reference to ourselves, as a new mould into which the soul is to be cast, as a spirit and principle of new life. It is impossible to receive Christ by the saving knowledge of faith, and not to have his image impressed upon the soul by that faith which first brought it in. The very conceptions of

faith concerning Christ, are the very thoughts of a man's own heart; so he is, so he thinks, so he acts, even as he believes. Gospel truths cannot enter into our rational nature at any other door than that of faith; and when they are understood and believed as the truths of God, there needs nothing else to turn that soul unto God. Every man is as his faith is. Faith contains the true inward sense of the soul about Jesus Christ: and God is the author and finisher of this faith, and understood to be so by all true believers. Faith is the main thing in conversion. Christ is the same in himself, both before and after conversion, and so are all gospel truths the same in themselves; only, before conversion they are not believed and felt, and after conversion they are both believed and felt. It is faith makes all the difference; and the principal thing in faith, is the power of God in working it."*

A man cannot enjoy colours without sight, nor music without hearing, nor a savoury scent without smelling, nor food without eating, nor any other external object, without the use of such bodily senses as are suitable to the nature of it; and no more is Christ revealed in the soul without faith, which embraces him in the record of God; even as the serpent in the wilderness was beheld upon the pole where Moses fixed it.

Fourthly, I shall now attend to a few objections against this view of regeneration, by means of faith or believing in Christ; whereby the sinner passes from a state of death, to a state of life and salvation in the last Adam.

* Mr. Thomas Cole's Discourse of Christian Religion, p. 14—17.

Obj. 1. According to this view of the matter, there seems to be little or no difference between union to Christ, and the new birth. *Answ.* I do not apprehend it is either safe or useful to a Christian, to pretend to much precision in distinguishing where there is not much difference. In the present case, there is very great affinity; so great, that it is as hard to tell wherein they differ, as to describe the difference between the in-being of a branch in a vine, and the life it has in the vine. Vital union to Christ seems particularly to relate to the enjoyment believers have of him, as he is revealed in the declarations of the gospel, for all the purposes of their salvation. Regeneration seems to refer more directly to the glorious change that is made by this enjoyment of Christ, whereby they are translated from their natural state into a state of salvation, as members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones. By union they become partakers of Christ; and by regeneration they become conformed to his image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.

Obj. 2. If sinners are born again by means of faith, then faith is before regeneration; or the soul acts spiritually, before it is changed, and possessed of spiritual principles. *Answ.* This objection is unanswerable upon their scheme, who consider a certain implanted principle of grace, distinct from Christ himself dwelling in the heart by faith, as the thing that is meant by the new man, or the new creature;*

* The reader will find a solid and convincing demonstration of the error and danger of this speculative notion; in Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification; particularly, on the 3d, 4th, and 5th Directions.

and who regard faith as the act or exercise of this implanted habit, or inherent principle. Every virtuous act proceeds from a virtuous principle; and it is a contradiction to pretend, that an act of obedience can be performed without a principle of obedience. The tree must be first good; and then the fruit will be good also. A sinner must be renewed, and must put on the new man, before he can please God in a holy walk and conversation, that becometh the gospel of Christ. But if regeneration is a change of a sinner's state by the enjoyment of Christ, producing a change of his mind and affections from the principles of that new state; it is evident, this change can only exist where Christ is enjoyed, and is only so enjoyed by the belief of the divine record, wherein God giveth eternal life to sinners, and this life in his Son. The scope of the seventh direction in Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, is to prove, that "we are not to imagine that our hearts and lives must be changed from sin to holiness in any measure, before we may safely venture to trust on Christ for the sure enjoyment of himself and his salvation." In illustrating that direction, he says, "Regeneration is necessary to salvation, and therefore many would find it wrought in themselves before they trust on Christ for their salvation. But consider what regeneration is. It is a new creating or creating us in Christ, in whom we are made partakers of a divine nature, far different from that nature which we received from the first Adam." Now, faith is the uniting grace whereby Christ dwelleth in us, and we in him, as hath been showed; and therefore it is the first grace wrought in our regeneration,

and the means of all the rest. When you truly believe, you are regenerated, and not till then. Those that receive Christ by believing, and those only, are the sons of God, "which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." After all, we do maintain, as the objection states it, that faith is before regeneration; but that the sinner in believing on Christ, is changed into his image, and "sealed with his Spirit," even as an Israelite lived, when he beheld the brazen serpent, and as a person becomes wise or skilful in any branch of useful science, not after he has understood it, but in understanding it.

Ob. 3. If sinners are born again by means of faith, or believing on Christ, will it not follow, that the soul is active in its new birth, or in regeneration?
Ans. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth;" its faithful declarations, and precious promises, are "spirit and life." The Spirit of truth sets the great things of the law and gospel of God in a strong, clear, and convincing light before the mind; whereby the sinner is made to perceive their certainty, their importance, and interesting nature. Upon this view of them, the soul acquiesces in the revealed will of God, and appropriates Christ, his unspeakable gift, in that revelation; but the power of God in that word is the alone agent in accomplishing the whole of this gracious change; and, for this reason, the gospel is called "the arm of the Lord," "the power of God," and "the rod of his strength." An Israelite lived, when he beheld the serpent; Moses lifted up in the wilderness. He could not live without beholding it,

after he had been bitten by the fiery serpents; but whenever he beheld the brazen serpent, in beholding it he became a sound and living man. In like manner, the sinner that believeth in Christ, in beholding his glory, as revealed in the gospel, is changed into his image; but by what influence or power?—by his own act, or by any virtue or efficacy of his own faith? Not at all; but by the Spirit of the Lord in that gospel, wherein he beholds the glory of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

1. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." They are under the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law; are subject to the power of Satan, and influenced by evil propensities. Their praying and hearing, their alms, and even their ploughing, are sin. All they can do in their natural state, proceeds from a corrupt principle, and is directed to a bad end. Sometimes they may do "that which is right in the sight of the Lord," for the matter of it; but, being in the flesh, they can never do it with a "perfect heart." It is altogether impossible they can either be holy or happy, while they are "dead in trespasses," and "children of wrath."

2. There is a most real and important change made in the state, nature, and life of every sinner that is born of God. He that had been dead, is quickened together with Christ; he that was a child of disobedience, is made accepted in the Beloved; he that was a child of wrath, is loved, and finds mercy in Jesus Christ; he that was a child of the

devil, receives the spirit of adoption; he that was in the flesh, is born of the Spirit; he that was sometimes far off, is now made nigh by the blood of Christ; he that was lost, is found; he that bore the image of the degenerate earthy Adam, now bears the image of the heavenly Adam. The soul "has heard Christ, and has been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:" and thereby has "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and is renewed in the spirit of his mind; and has put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." How glorious and excellent is the new creature, created in Christ Jesus, and living in him, as the fountain of all its salvation and felicity!

3. Since sinners pass from death unto life in their regeneration, by believing in Christ as the revealed ordinance of God for their salvation; it appears, that there is a great propriety in calling every sinner to the enjoyment of this blessing, by directing them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. When regeneration is supposed to consist in the implantation of a principle of divine life in the soul, by an immediate operation of the Spirit of God, without the word as the outward instrument of it, and without faith as the means of enjoying Christ in the word; it seems to be unreasonable, to call sinners to the enjoyment of such a principle, because it is considered merely as an effect of the power and favour of God, independent of the word of his grace: at most, those who have such a notion of the new creature, can only believe that God will create it. All who have such

apprehensions of regeneration, and accordingly reckon that implanted principle the spring of holy living, must either deny that Christ is to be preached to sinners as such, or else be very inconsistent with themselves. But the Scriptures, as has been proved, present unto us quite other views of the principle of divine life, and new obedience. Christ himself, revealed in the soul by the power of the Spirit, and appropriated by the faith of that word wherein the Spirit testifies of him, is the alone principle of life, and comfort, and holiness, to all the children of God. When Christ is considered as the life of God in the soul of man, there appears to be as much propriety in calling sinners to put on the new man, by believing in Christ, as in calling a hungry man to satisfy his appetite by eating, or an Israelite to be healed by beholding the serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness.

4. All that are born of God, must bear his image, and do his will, according to the measure wherein they enjoy Christ, by believing in him. Hence we find glorious and distinguishing characters appropriated to them in many places of Scripture; for instance, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.—Every one that doth righteousness, is born of God.—Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.—Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world.—Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him:" and "as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." These precious characters both describe the children of God, and distinguish them from the rest of man-

kind. By these fruits, every man is concerned to try his pretensions, to the honourable relation of being a "child of God," and an "heir of promise." He that looketh these things, is yet in his sins, and a stranger to real religion.

SACT. III. *Sinners are justified in the sight of God by believing in Christ.*

Justification is a law term, borrowed from courts of justice; and signifies, that a person who had been accused of a crime, is judicially discharged. This is the proper sense of the word, and the sense in which the Scripture uses it, opposing justification to condemnation. Moses lays down this directory for Israel, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just," saith Solomon, "even they both are an abomination to the Lord." If an accused person is innocent of the crime laid to his charge, nothing more is necessary to his justification, than, upon legal evidence, to pronounce or declare him to be innocent. But if he is guilty, and under a sentence of condemnation, a legal declaration of a pardon, and of a restored right to forfeited privileges, must be his justification; though even this can hardly be called justification, unless it proceed upon terms of equity and righteousness. This is the case of those whom God "justifieth freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a

propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

What I further propose to do on this subject, shall be arranged under four heads: (1.) A description of the character of those whom God doth justify, before they are justified; (2.) A view of the nature, principles, and properties of their justification; (3.) To show that they are so justified, by believing in Christ; and, (4.) To answer some objections.

First, To describe the character of mankind, before they are justified. The pencil of the Holy Ghost has faithfully drawn it in these expressions: "They are under the law"—"they are all under sin"—"they are debtors to do the whole law"—and, "they are in a state of condemnation." Such is the dreadful state of every sinner whom God hath not justified freely by his grace.

1. They are "under the law." It has been much disputed what law the apostle speaks of; but if we consider what he says of the law they are under, the controversy will appear altogether unnecessary. He declares it to be that law which "proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin;" that law by which "all the world is become guilty before God;" that law, the offence against which produced death, even before the days of Moses; and that law, by obedience to which, wherever it could be found, life would be certainly attained. These are characters which can agree to none but the moral law. To be under this law, which is holy, and just, and good, is to be con-

earned in every thing the law saith, in a way of precept, conviction, or condemnation; so as to stand or fall by its righteous sentence. Every sinner that believeth not in the Lord Jesus Christ, is, in the sight of God, just in the same condition that he is at the bar of his holy law.

2. Mankind, before justification, "are all under sin." They are "dead in sins; sin has dominion over them;" they "live after the flesh;" they "walk in trespasses and sins;" and they are universally under a just charge of the most criminal disobedience and rebellion against the authority of the eternal God. By the law is the knowledge of this deplorable state of fallen man, under the power, guilt, and bondage of sin; yes, "the strength of sin is the law," by the deeds whereof there shall no flesh be justified in the sight, or at the awful tribunal of the all-seeing, heart-searching, just, and holy Lawgiver.

3. Unbelieving sinners are "debtors to do the whole law." The law of God demands obedience in every view and instance, absolutely perfect and complete; doing God's will on earth, as it is done in heaven; and continuing in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Imperfection in the principle, extent, or manner of obedience, is a transgression of the law of God, who requires an entire service, and cannot accept that which is lame. One defect as effectually destroys all title to life by the law, as a thousand transgressions. The longest course of obedience, once interrupted, ceases directly to be a legal righteousness. How exceedingly destitute and miserable must the case of unbelievers be! They are debtors to do the whole law,

under the pain of God's wrath and curse; and yet they do not only fail in their duty; but they walk contrary to it.

4. "He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Our transgressions of the divine law, are numberless, great, and aggravated. The law hath found us guilty; and justice hath annexed to "every transgression and disobedience" an adequate "recompense of reward." "The wages of sin," in every person and of every kind, "is death." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The power of God is all-sufficient to inflict these righteous penalties; his holiness requireth it; and his truth obliges him to take this course against sin, wherever he finds it. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse," because they are not righteous before God. They "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and they are not covered with the robe of Christ's imputed righteousness, to cancel their guilt, and render them accepted in the sight of God, the Judge of all.

This is a faithful delineation of the state and character of fallen man, before he is justified by the grace of God. He is "under the law," and "under sin," a "debtor to do the whole law," and "in a state of condemnation."—I shall now proceed;

Secondly, To take a view of the nature, principles, and properties of that gracious act, whereby God justifies the ungodly, through faith in the righteousness of Jesus, the glorious Surety of the new and everlasting covenant.

1. The nature of that act of sovereign grace, which God passes in favour of the ungodly that believe in Jesus Christ, includes the forgiveness of all their iniquities, and their acceptance with God to eternal life, in a way of righteousness. Forgiveness of all their iniquities is included in the justification of life. The sentences of the law of God, which condemned them to be punished with everlasting destruction from his presence; is taken off; and they are released from the legal obligation they had been under, to endure the wrath of God and the execution of his curse, on account of their sins. "David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Besides the forgiveness of sin, justification in the sight of God doth also include the acceptance of their persons unto eternal life, by an act of sovereign and unchangeable grace. A criminal may be pardoned by his prince, though he be not made a favourite; but if he should become a favourite with his prince, he may forfeit all his favour, and fall again into a state of condemnation by another crime. This is an event that can never happen to any that are justified freely by the grace of God. Their justification does not barely take off the guilt of sin, and reverse the sentence of condemnation by a pardon; it also gives them an actual and abiding title to eternal life: "Being justified by his grace, they are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life: this is a faithful saying." It was also said, that believers are both pardoned and accepted with God, in a way

of righteousness: and therefore he is said to be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." But this will be better understood, when I have considered,

2. The principles upon which a sinner is justified in the sight of God. To enter upon these principles at any length, would be quite improper in this place, where the extent and professed design of my plan prescribe narrow limits to every particular branch of the subject. Only I must recommend the following positions to the reader's careful attention:—(1.) The moral law is the rule of God's dealing with reasonable creatures. Had Adam kept that law, he and his posterity would have been happy; having transgressed it, he and they are rendered miserable. (2.) Whenever the law was broken, it became utterly impossible for any creature to repair its honour, by yielding obedience to its precepts, and suffering the punishment it denounces; so as to open an honourable prospect of reconciliation, between God as a righteous Lawgiver, and man, his rebellious creature. (3.) God, in his manifold wisdom, and of his abundant mercy, provided an adequate expedient for the gracious purpose of justifying the ungodly, by substituting his own Son in our stead, and requiring at his hand the complete payment of our enormous debt, and full satisfaction for all our aggravated transgressions. In executing this design, "the Son of God was sent forth, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "He that had no sin, was made sin for us," who were laden with iniquity. The supreme Legislator became "the end of the law for righteousness."

“ He who was rich, for our sakes became poor.” He “ who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (4.) By the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, God is glorified, his law is magnified, his justice is satisfied, sin is finished, and reconciliation is made for iniquity. (5.) As Christ, in performing this righteousness, stood in our room and stead, being the legal representative of his people; so his obedience unto death is reckoned in law to be the righteousness of every sinner that believeth in Christ. Hence every believer is said to be “ the righteousness of God in Christ;” because he has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and put upon him. (6.) The sinner who is covered with this robe of perfect and everlasting righteousness, is regarded by God, and dealt with in law, precisely according to the righteousness wherein he is found, and not at all according to either the demerit of his offences, or his own good works. By the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in every believer; and therefore he is both pardoned and accepted, in a way of righteousness, and at the same time in a way of sovereign mercy. This leads me,

3. To mention some of the distinguishing properties of that gracious act, whereby God doth justify the ungodly. (1.) It is an act of God as a righteous judge, wherein he pardoneth sin, and accepteth

the sinner as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to him: (2.) The justification of the ungodly is an act of free grace, without any regard either to the demerit or the worthiness of the sinner. The guilty criminal is "justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." A gracious God provided the Surety, who fulfilled all the righteousness of the law; his grace reveals and gives the righteousness to the guilty; and he graciously accepts the ungodly that receive the gift of righteousness revealed in the gospel. (3.) The justification of sinners before God is but one single act, and is always performed upon one great principle. All that believe in Christ are justified by faith without the works of the law; and they are justified at once, without a succession of various acts, to complete their pardon and acceptance with God. There are degrees, and there is a succession, in the perceptions believers have of their justification; but whenever they perceive it, they always view it as one gracious act. (4.) The act of God in justifying sinners is a perfect act. All their iniquities are pardoned, and they are made perfect in beauty, through the condescension of Christ put upon them. Believers are all equally justified, and their justification is perfect once; because they are at once "made the righteousness of God in Christ." (5.) This work is perpetual and unalterable. Nothing shall ever be able to separate those whom God hath justified from his love which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. They are justified in an everlasting righteousness imputed to them; and the faith by which they receive is abiding.

never fail. "When God hath justified, then he will also" must necessarily "glorify." "His gifts and callings are without repentance," and altogether irrevocable.

Thirdly. The third head on this section, calls our attention to the means of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. Having already affirmed that the ungodly are justified by believing in Christ, I shall now endeavour to explain and establish this proposition. That the guilty are justified by faith, is so uniformly the language of Scripture, that it is unquestionably safe to maintain the position. "I apprehend," says one, "that justification properly terminates in the conscience, and that that abstracted way which some have of considering it, as it exists in the mind of God, without being extended to or perfected in our consciences, is but, though ever so true in itself, a mere speculation to us; "for secret things belong to God alone, but these things which are revealed belong to us." Many, instead of seeking by faith in the blood of Jesus to be justified in the court of conscience, wherein they are condemned, content themselves with speculations of God's justifying his people from eternity, or at the resurrection of Christ; endeavouring to pacify their own consciences, and find themselves of the number of the justified, by unskilful and evidences drawn from what they find inherent in themselves, instead of the alone perfect righteousness of our Saviour through faith." I beg leave to make three observations on this subject.

1. When the sinner views himself and his actions, as in the presence of a holy and righteous

with chains, and looking forward with terror to the fatal day of execution, receive and enjoy a pardon from the king, but by believing that it is really the king's pardon for him? In the same way do sinners receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, even by believing in Jesus Christ, "by whom" alone "they reign in life." The apostle's expression is remarkably precise and express on this point: "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Fourthly, Before I dismiss this subject, it will be necessary to consider some of the objections that may be made against the doctrine of the sinner's justification in the sight of God by believing in Christ.

Obj. 1. Doth not an apostle tell us, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?"
Ans. That expression is not to be applied to the justification of a sinner in the sight of God. The point which the apostle undertakes to illustrate in the context is,—to distinguish a genuine from an insincere faith. "If a man say he hath faith," this is mentioned as the boast of some hypocritical professor. So that the apostle is evidently dealing with a pretender to this precious gift; and therefore replies, "Show me thy faith; prove the reality of thy claim; prove it to me and to the church, to thy fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians. If unproductive of righteous and godly works, we must pro-

stance it spurious, worthless, dead. Having detected the counterfeit, he proceeds to describe the sterling. The grand characteristic of which is, a frame of mind and a course of action corresponding with the doctrine believed.* An unfeigned profession of faith is evidenced by its fruits of righteousness and true holiness.

A familiar example may throw some light on the apostle's meaning. In a court of judicature, the only way of knowing whether a person be innocent or guilty, is by examining the evidences; though these evidences do not contribute either to his guilt or innocence, but are the vouchers of the one or the other, by which a verdict must be given, and sentence passed. So is it in the present case. Man is the prisoner arraigned; and though his works have no more hand in his justification before God, than witnesses at a trial have in constituting the person tried either guilty or not guilty, yet are they the best external evidences and vouchers to prove that he is in a justified state.

Obj. 2. "The scripture saith, Abraham believed God, and faith was reckoned to him for righteousness;" which seems to imply, that sinners are not justified by means of faith apprehending and embracing Christ as the Lord their righteousness, but by their own faith imputed to them. *Ans.* Faith is counted for righteousness; just as windows are reckoned the lights of a house; not because they illuminate a house, but because they afford a passage to the illuminating rays of light, that first and best of

* Hervey's *Theron and Aspasio*, Dial. 6.

elements, into all the several apartments. Faith is very particularly distinguished from the righteousness which justifies. We read of "the righteousness which is of faith," and of "the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith." These forms of expression put an apparent difference between the faith of the gospel, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ; because, whatsoever is by another and of another cannot, without the greatest violence to reason and language, be reckoned that other. Besides, the objection goes upon a gross and dangerous mistake concerning the nature of faith in Christ. It supposes, contrary to any thing which the Scripture teaches, that faith is a work of the law, which recommends the person who performs it to the favour of the supreme Lawgiver.

Obj. 8. "God justifieth the ungodly;" and therefore it would seem, that the objects of divine favour must be justified, in order of nature, before they believe in Christ; because believers are new creatures, and cannot be denominated ungodly sinners. *Answ.* The folly of this way of reasoning is manifest enough from the text itself, which runs in these terms, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Whatever else is implied in this passage, it evidently proves, that the objects of this gracious act are in themselves ungodly and guilty criminals; and further, that the act of justification only terminates on them as believers in the righteousness of Christ, in whom God declares himself well pleased. Whatever difficulty there may be in reconciling the

ideas of an ungodly character to those of a real believer in Christ, yet the text itself obliges us to think that they are perfectly consistent. But the difficulty is not so great as some imagine. Even in natural things we may find many examples that help to illustrate this supposed contradiction. Does not an indigent person receive the seasonable alms contributed for his relief merely in the character of an indigent man? Does not a condemned malefactor receive his pardon merely in that criminal character? And why should not a sinner receive the free gift which comes upon him, as an ungodly creature, unto justification of life? A person that believeth in Christ for righteousness, cannot be considered in any other character than as an unrighteous, sinful, guilty criminal in himself. It is only upon this view of himself that he can say, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness." A believer, in the exercise of faith, always acts in that character, and in that view of his character, which corresponds to the saving and life-giving declarations of the gospel of the grace of God; consequently, he can only act in the character of an ungodly sinner, while he "believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly."

Obj. 4. If sinners are justified by believing on Christ, will it not follow, that their justification may vary according to the degrees and measure of their faith? *Answ.* If their acts of faith were their justifying righteousness, this consequence would be necessary and inevitable; but as the perfect, immutable, and everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer, is their justifying righteousness in the sight of God, which they believe in for pardon and acceptance unto eternal

life, the consequence stated in the objection is altogether false, and foreign to the doctrine we maintain.

Obj. 5. If sinners are justified in the court of their conscience, whenever they are justified in the sight of God, and if the Scripture always means our justification in the court of our conscience, whenever it speaks of being justified in the sight of God by believing in Christ—will it not follow, that believers fall under condemnation, and cease to be in a justified state, when their consciences condemn them?

Answ. The sentence of justification, so far as a Christian can improve it for the purpose of his comfort, and holiness, and salvation, is pronounced in the gracious and powerful word of the God of truth; it is only received and heard by “the hearing of faith;” and the justifying sentence which is pronounced in the word, and received in that word by the hearing of faith, is recorded in the conscience of the believer by the demonstration of the Holy Ghost. In that happy moment the sinner is justified, pardoned, and accepted; he ceases to be under the law of works, and enjoys a new and firm standing in the grace of God, as a real member of Christ; and he is complete, as to all the righteousness of the law, in his glorious Surety and new-covenant Head. If the hearts of believers afterwards condemn them, and lose all comfortable views of their peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, this is no proof that they are fallen from a justified state, but only that “they have forgotten their resting-place,” and are not acting upon the principles of their new and unchangeable state in the favour of God, unto whom they are reconciled by the death of his Son.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The knowledge of the law of God is necessary and important to every sinner. Hereby we perceive the holiness of the divine character, the malignity of sin, and the invariable standard of moral righteousness. By attending to the law of God, unbelievers may discern the folly of going about to establish a righteousness of their own, and the fatal error of resting their hopes of eternal life upon the general goodness of a holy and righteous God. Hereby, also, believers may see upon what honourable and advantageous terms they stand in the favour of God the judge of all, being "made the righteousness of God in Christ," and having "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in them," by their union to Jesus, "the end of the law."

2. Since sinners are justified in the sight of God by believing in Christ as the Lord their righteousness, it is plain, that the Arminian doctrine concerning the effect of the death of Christ must be false and dangerous, namely, that God is hereby become reconcilable to all mankind; that a new law is thereby procured for the benefit of sinners, requiring only faith, and repentance, and sincere endeavours, to constitute an evangelical righteousness; that mankind are now in a state of probation, according to this new law; that God becomes actually reconciled to as many of them as perform the terms of justification prescribed in this law; and that he pardons and justifies them by reputed their conformity to this new law, their gospel righteousness. Thus have

they most presumptuously changed the truth of God into a lie, and taught men to seek justification by works of a law.

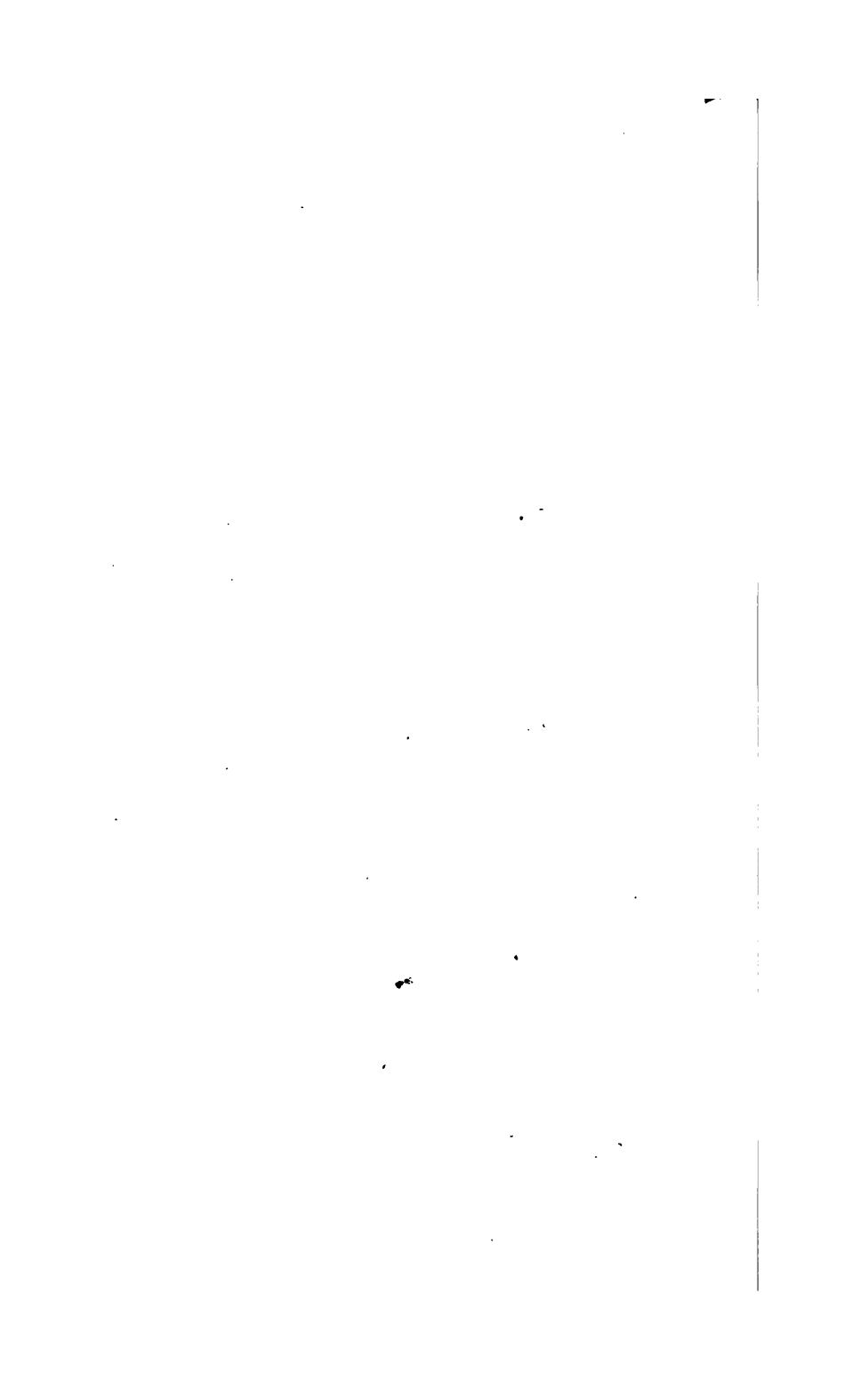
3. Behold, in the method of justifying sinners by faith in Christ, an awful display of the severity of God, and a most comfortable discovery of his goodness, upon the most harmonious principles. He declared his righteousness as a Lawgiver and a Judge, by subjecting his own Son to the law which man had violated, that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace by justifying the original transgressors.

4. Faith has a more important office in the justification of a sinner, than merely to be an evidence of a justified state. The blessing of perfect and everlasting justification is heard from the mercy-seat of God speaking in his word, and enjoyed in hearing it, by means of faith. It is a strong presumption against all the schemes of speculative minds concerning eternal justification, evidenced to the souls of the heirs of promise by believing, that the Scripture so expressly says, "A man is justified by faith, without the works of the law." If faith bear no other office in justification, than to evidence that a man is justified, why does the apostle say, that he is justified "without works?" Should he not rather have said, with respect to evidences, "A man is" thus "justified by works, and not by faith only." But from all the accounts of justification recorded in the sacred writings, it appears, that a sinner is never justified before God, until the divine sentence is received into his conscience by the hearing of faith.

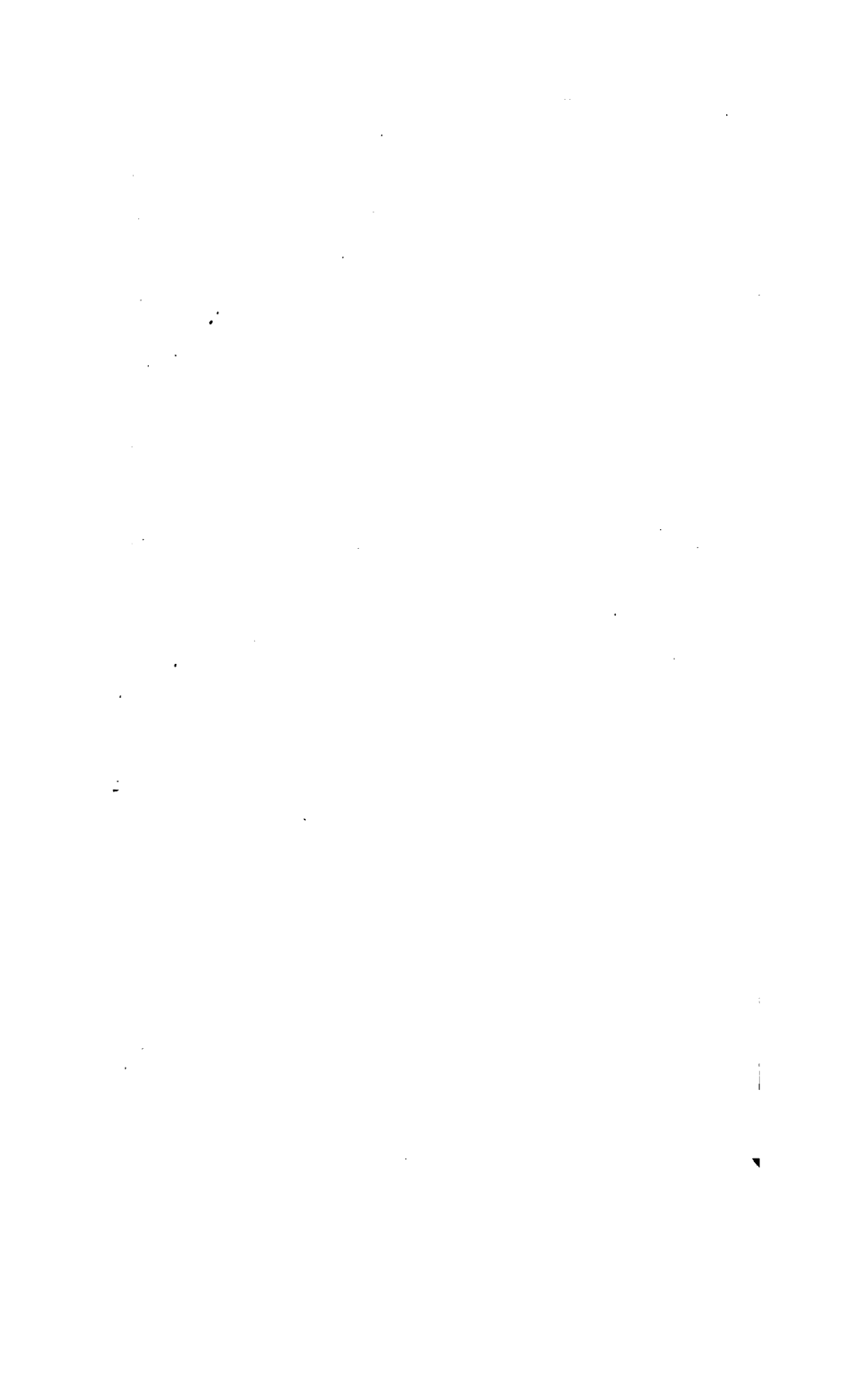
5. The distinction which some make between a first and second justification is unscriptural and dan-

gerous. They mean that believers are received into divine favour at first, without any works to recommend them; but these same persons must stand in the favour of God afterwards, and be pronounced righteous at the last day, upon the righteousness of their walk and conversation. This detestable error is confuted by the account the apostle gives of the capital article of the gospel, wherein "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;" namely, that "the just shall live by faith." He is made alive by the means of faith, and being made alive, he continues to live, not by works, but by faith alone.

FINIS.









FEB 28 1939

