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A

R E P L Y

TO

MR. FULLER'S APPENDIX

TO HIS BOOK ON

THE GOSPEL WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.

PARTICULARLY TO HIS DOCTRINE OF

ANTECEDENT HOLINESS, AND THE NATURE AND OBJECT
OF JUSTIFYING FAITH.

BY ARCHIBALD M'LEAN.

NEW-YORK:

SCATCHERD AND ADAMS, PRINTERS.

1839.

P R E F A C E.

No apology is deemed necessary for the detached form in which the following essays are presented to the public. Though the controversy in the course of which they were written is now almost forgotten, and the writers themselves have long since passed to their account, the questions here discussed, it will at once be seen, possess an interest of no local or passing character; they concern the alone ground of a sinner's hope in the presence of God, and in this view can never be destitute of interest while men continue to be burdened with a sense of guilt, and to put the anxious question—how shall a man be just with God? Another reason for the republication of these essays, is to be found in the circumstance, that a subsequent publication of Mr. Fuller, entitled "Strictures on Sandemanianism," in which the same corrupt doctrine and specious reasoning, here so ably refuted, is again urged with pertinacity and an air of triumph, has been widely circulated in this country; and is now confidently appealed to as an unanswerable piece of argument, and as forever settling the points at issue, by many who have never read the writings he attacks, and who have certainly never studied their Bibles to any good purpose. The Strictures referred to, appeared some eight or nine years after the following essays were written, and very near the close of Mr. M'Lean's life, which sufficiently accounts for their not having received from him a distinct answer: whether the friends of truth have any reason to regret this circumstance, the readers of this little work are called upon to decide.

With regard to the importance of the questions here discussed, a few words may be said: the writer is fully persuaded that they involve the whole difference between the truth, as it is in Jesus, and another gospel; that from the answer which any man is prepared to give to them, may be fairly inferred what is the ground of his hope in the presence of God. Nothing seems to

him clearer than that a misapprehension in regard to the nature of *faith* must carry with it an entire misconception of that gospel which assures salvation to him, and to him only, that believeth. If faith be looked upon as something more than a recognition of the gospel as true—of the testimony on which it rests as trust-worthy—if it be regarded as something tangible, and possessed of an existence and of qualities apart from its object; how evident is it that the mind must, of necessity, be turned away from the soul-satisfying, *saving truth*, and turned in upon itself, to find comfort in its supposed possession of a *saving faith*. The great facts of the gospel, with their blessed meaning, which are designed and fitted to afford instant relief to the sinner under his most poignant sense of guilt, the moment he understands and counts them to be true, must, of necessity, be disregarded; while the anxious questions, *Have I faith? Have I believed aright?* plainly evince the inquirer's solicitude to find a Saviour within himself, and his disbelief of the sufficiency of Him who came into the world to save sinners. That man, it has been truly said, must be ignorant of the grace of the gospel, who does not see, in the blood of Christ, sufficient to give him hope, though he view himself as the greatest infidel on earth. The consideration of his being a believer forms no part of that truth which comforts the self-condemned, even as his faith forms no part of that righteousness on the ground of which he hopes for acceptance with God. Those whom God comforts, "are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead:" "they are filled with all peace and joy in believing" this: the sole ground of their hope, is, that "whereof they have heard in the word of the truth of the gospel:" to this they point with confidence as a solid and sufficient reason of the hope that is in them; and the idea that by any possibility their hope may prove delusive, so long as this stands true in their consciences, they are taught to repel with abhorrence, as the suggestion of him who was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the truth. But if faith be "not the belief of any sentence that can be thought upon, or that can be expressed in words"—if "many things about truth in the understanding being presupposed, faith be mainly and principally an exercise of the heart

and will,"* it demands for itself a distinctive consideration; an anxious eye must be had to it, and until the sinner find himself this believing, willing, loving creature, the gospel has no word of peace or hope for him; it can only work wrath, and give the knowledge of sin. And when the sinner comes to think himself possessed of this holy disposition, when he *hopes he has attained an interest in Christ*, is it the gospel, think you, the faithful word of Him who was called the friend of publicans and sinners, which is the spring of his comfort, and daily the rejoicing of his heart? or does his peace spring rather from a survey of himself—is it rather the confidence of him who trusts in himself that he is righteous, and despises others?

To suit this altered sense of the word *faith*, the gospel is denied to be a divine testimony, making its appeal to the faith of men, and assuring salvation to him that believeth: though the word of the God of truth, declares him a believer, who sets to his seal that God is true, and him only an unbeliever who makes God a liar, by disbelieving the record which God hath given of his Son. Instead of a divine proclamation of forgiveness, assured to every one that believeth, "of faith, that it might be by grace," "unto all and upon all them that believe, because there is no difference," on the score of moral fitness, among men, the gospel is represented as an offer, holding forth the promise of forgiveness to him whose will has been renewed by some antecedent grace, and who is thus better disposed than other men: and it is this offer which faith accepts. Men are instructed to enter on a course of pious labor for the attainment of this *grace*, though it is fair to say, some question the propriety of this, while fully persuaded that this grace is necessary; yet the word of truth declares that it is "not of him that *willeth*, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" and "if it be of works, then is it no more of grace," thus excluding all acts of will, whether renewed or unrenewed, even any the least co-operation of his own, in the business of making a sinner's peace with God. Yet how often is the salvation of the sinner made to depend on some motion of his will, and faith itself repre-

* Guthrie's Christian's Great Interest.

sented as dependant upon choice? And how often are texts of Scripture perverted to sustain this system of self-dependance; to show that it is not a disbelief of what God has spoken, but an indisposition to make a right improvement of their knowledge, which excludes the sinner from the blessings of Christ's purchase? Thus it is said, "Ye *will* not come to me that ye might have life," John v. 40. That this text is designed to teach that it is not unbelief, but a want of will, which renders men indifferent to the salvation of Christ, seems to be pretty generally admitted, the only difference of sentiment being as to whether or not men possess any *ability* of will to come to Christ. But if we turn to the Scripture from which this text is taken, we find that the Saviour is charging upon the Jews the guilt of their *unbelief*, "that whom the Father had sent, him they believed not." After having pointed to the testimony of John—to the works which he himself wrought in attestation of his mission, to the Father's voice from heaven (according to Dr. Campbell's translation,) he adduces yet another source of evidence, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of *me*, and ye will not come to *me* that ye might have life." Thus the words which were designed to make known the Saviour's unutterable kindness to the sons of men—to point to him as the Giver of life; believing in whom, the chief of sinners is justified without a motion of his will, in order to peace with God: are made to suggest only the uneasy question, am I willing? Have I closed with Christ? the proud thought; I am thus willing, I have performed the appropriating act; or to stir the angry strife of contending parties. Not as an incidental result, then, but as the necessary and direct effect of this system, men's eyes are turned away from that work of surpassing grace which Jesus finished in his death, to gather comfort from supposed evidences of a work of grace within themselves; while those who can discover no such favorable signs; who are forced to regard themselves only as meet objects of divine wrath, as sinners and enemies, ungodly and without strength; though it is to *such* that He commends his love, are beaten off from any part, or hope, in the revealed mercy of God. If the amazing facts and truths of the gospel—the love of God to sinners, as

such, "the grace of Him, who, when he was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich"—the glad tidings of great joy, that "He has made peace by the blood of His cross," that sinners might be blessed in Him, are brought forward: it is only to animate the efforts and stimulate the religious pride of the devout inquirer, or as subservient to that mysterious moral change which is to be inwrought in conversion, and to which men's attention is principally directed.

In the words of one who has ably exposed the corruptions of the system referred to, "It would seem, from the generality of pulpit harangues, that all who have a disposition to attend preaching, believe the gospel, and so need very little instruction on that head. The grand end is, to awaken warm fits of affection, under the pretence of cultivating the religion of the heart. The presence of these fancies is called communion with God; their absence, desertion: a conceit that they possess them, faith; and a fear about them, unbelief; which they are taught to pray against: and thus, thus it is, that trifles, rather delusions, are set up and caressed; while infinite worth is slighted and despised."

In conclusion, while the writer is fully persuaded that no force of argument will avail to open the eyes of any to the simplicity of the truth here vindicated: "that this is part of that knowledge which no man can communicate to his neighbor;" yet, believing that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," he would earnestly entreat the reader to examine the doctrine defended in the following pages, by that infallible standard; believing it to be of the last importance to every man to come to a Scriptural conclusion as to the points at issue. Those who are religious teachers especially, he would earnestly exhort to consider well whether they be obnoxious to that heaviest woe which the word of God pronounces against any human being: that woe which was denounced against the religious teachers, and leaders in devotion, of the most devout nation the world has ever known—"Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge, ye enter not in yourselves, neither do ye suffer others to enter in;" whether they be engaged in holding forth that *truth* which stands on the testimony of God, to be *believed* or *disbelieved*;

or whether, denying that the salvation of men stands in the persuasion of what God has spoken, they are found fighting against God, and laboring to extinguish the best—the only hope of mankind.

H. W.

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A R E P L Y

TO

MR. FULLER'S APPENDIX

TO HIS BOOK ON

THE GOSPEL WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.

INTRODUCTION.

MR. ANDREW FULLER, in an Appendix to a new-modelled edition of his book, entitled, "The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation," has attempted to refute what I have advanced on Faith in my Treatise on the Commission of Christ, and in a pamphlet, entitled, "The Belief of the Gospel, saving Faith." One reason he assigns for offering his sentiments on this subject is, that "Mr. M'Lean, in a second edition of the Commission of Christ, has published several pages of animadversions on what I have advanced on the subject, and has charged me with very serious consequences."* Yet these several pages happen to be only two notes at the bottom of the pages, wherein Mr. Fuller's name is not once mentioned. Nor is there the

* Page 159.

least reference in them to any thing which Mr. Fuller had published, that might lead the reader to think I had him in view.

He seems to think that it was not very proper in me to animadvert publicly on what he had written only in two private letters. Had I exposed any of his private opinions, communicated to me in confidence, and mentioned his name, I confess it would have been very indelicate; but as neither of these is the case, and as it is Mr. Fuller himself who has informed the public that these notes refer to his sentiments, I see not the least cause of complaint. He observes, that "if such conduct were proper, some people may be tempted to think that it is rather dangerous to correspond with authors."* What danger he may apprehend from corresponding with me I know not, as I am altogether unconscious of having ever attempted to expose or misrepresent him either publicly or privately. Whether Mr. Fuller has been equally cautious on this head with regard to me and my connections, he knows best.

He complains that his "sentiments are very partially stated, and things introduced so much out of their connection, that it is impossible for the reader to form any judgment concerning them.†" I am certain, however, that this complaint is groundless. Every material idea in his letters relating to the subject is, in these two notes, expressed in his own words, and distinguished by inverted commas; and nothing is so introduced out of its connection as in the least degree to obscure or alter the sense. The publication of his letters would clearly evince this; but there is no occasion, for if any will take the trouble of comparing his words, quoted in these two notes, with his Appendix, he will find the sentiment to be the same in both.

At my advanced period of life, I could wish to have been

* Page 160.

† Ibid.

excused from entering the field of controversy, and especially with Mr. Fuller, who is much my superior in polemical talents, which he has exercised of late years to good purpose both against Socinians and Deists. But it sometimes happens that men of distinguished abilities do not always know where to stop in their polemical career. Success in some things has urged them on to attempt others, wherein they have done little service to the cause of truth; and such, in my humble opinion, is Mr. Fuller's present attempt.

As he seems to consider the simple belief of the gospel to be nothing more than mere speculation, which has no necessary connection with, nor influence upon true holiness of heart, I can easily see how a concern for the interests of vital religion may have led him to make faith the *effect* of a previous holy disposition, and to include in its nature the exercise of the will and affections; but I cannot so easily account for his misrepresentations of my sentiments, and the strange conclusions he draws from them. Those who know nothing of my writings but through the medium of his Appendix, must consider them as striking at the root of all true religion, or at best as a mere jumble of inconsistencies. This lays me under the necessity of making some reply, not only to wipe off these misrepresentations, but also, if possible, to throw some further light on the point in debate.

The first thing that presents itself is the question which Mr. Fuller prefixes to his Appendix, and which I shall here make.

QUESTION I.

WHETHER THE EXISTENCE OF A HOLY DISPOSITION OF
HEART BE NECESSARY TO BELIEVING?

THIS holy disposition he terms a divine principle—the moral state or disposition of the soul—a change of heart—a change of the bias of the heart towards God.* He maintains that this principle must exist prior to, or before believing, and in order to it; and he frequently represents faith as arising out of it, influenced by it, and partaking of it.† I never considered this previous principle to be any part of the difference betwixt Mr. Fuller and me; nor did I observe that he held any such sentiment, my attention being entirely confined to what he says on the nature of faith itself. I might therefore justly excuse myself from entering upon the question which he prefixes to his Appendix, because, although the affirmative were admitted, it will not prove that faith is any thing else than simple belief; and because the question betwixt us does not respect what is previous to faith, but simply what faith itself is. But as Mr. Fuller has brought forward this previous holy disposition of heart, and laid it as the fundamental principle of his

* Page 127, 129, 170.

† Page 171—176.

scheme, it will be proper to examine it a little. After a deal of reasoning, he comes at last to state the question thus :—

“That there is a divine influence upon the soul which is necessary to spiritual perception and belief, as being the cause of them, those with whom I am now reasoning will admit. The only question is, In what order these things are caused? Whether the Holy Spirit causes the mind, while carnal, to discern and believe spiritual things, and thereby render it spiritual; or whether he imparts a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth, in consequence of which we discern its glory and embrace it? The latter appears to me to be the truth.”*

But this is a very unfair state of the question, so far as it relates to the opinion of his opponents; for he represents them as maintaining, that the Holy Spirit causes the mind, while carnal, or before it is spiritually illuminated, to discern and believe spiritual things; and then he sets himself to argue against this contradiction of his own framing, as a thing impossible even with God himself, because impossible in its own nature, and that the Holy Spirit declares it to be so, 2. Cor. ii. 14.† Were I to state Mr. Fuller’s sentiments thus, “The Holy Spirit imparts to the mind, while carnal, a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth,” would he not justly complain that I had misrepresented his view, and that he did not mean that the mind could possess any holy susceptibility or relish for the truth while it was in a carnal state; but only, that the Holy Spirit, by the very act of imparting this holy susceptibility and relish for the truth, removed the carnality of the mind? But then this explanation applies equally to the other side of the question; and surely it appears at least as consistent with the nature of things, and as easy to conceive, that the Holy Spirit should

* Page 204, 205.

† Page 205, 206.

in the first instance, communicate the light of truth to a dark carnal mind, and thereby render it spiritual, as that he should, prior to that, impart to it a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth. It would, indeed, be highly presumptuous in me to affirm of this last what Mr. Fuller does of the former, viz: that it is impossible with God: but I must be allowed to say, that to me it is altogether inconceivable how the human mind can have a holy relish for the truth before it has any perception of it. A conviction of sin, and a fear of its awful consequences, may indeed dispose a person to listen to, and relish any thing which may give him hope; but till his mind is in some measure enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, this cannot be termed a holy susceptibility, much less a holy relish for the truth, or a change of heart. In such circumstances, it is only the effect of that natural self-love or desire of happiness which is common to all mankind, and which, though it may subserve his relish for the truth as soon as he perceives it, must, till then, lead him to seek relief or ease to his mind from some other quarter.

The principle upon which Mr. Fuller establishes this holy disposition previous to faith seems to be this:—That the understanding, or perceptive faculty in man is directed and governed by his will and inclinations. The most of his arguments are evidently founded on this hypothesis. But must it not be owned, that, so far as this is the case, it is an irregular exercise of his faculties, arising from the moral disorder of his lapsed nature, whereby his judgment, reason, and conscience, are weakened, perverted and blinded, so as to be subjected to his will and corrupt inclinations?*

* Dr. Owen ascribes this to the disorder introduced into the soul by the fall; his words are, “The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all its faculties by sin. God created them all in a perfect harmony and union. The mind and reason were in perfect subjection and subordination to God and his will. The will answered in its

And shall we suppose that, in regeneration, the Holy Spirit acts according to this order, by first performing some physical operation upon the blind will to give it a new bias or inclination, and thus make way for the introduction of light into the understanding?

This is evidently Mr. Fuller's opinion; for he says, "God does not cause the natural man to receive spiritual things;" that he considers as impossible, "but he removes the obstructing film, by imparting a spiritual relish for those things." This obstructing film he explains to be "the obstinacy and aversion of the heart," and thinks that the first operation of the Spirit is his "imparting a spiritual relish for those things" which the mind does not as yet perceive. "Thus," he says, "it is that spiritual things are spiritually discerned."* Whether I take these words by themselves, or in connection with the whole paragraph, I can make no other sense of them but this, that spiritual things are spiritually discerned by a spiritual relish for we know not what; for he does not admit that there is any previous communication of spiritual light to the understanding; on the contrary, he denies this to be possible, even with God himself.

He observes, that "though holiness is frequently ascribed in the Scriptures to a spiritual perception of the truth, yet

choice of good, the discovery made of it by the mind; the affections constantly and evenly followed the understanding and will. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul, and all the wheels of it. That being disturbed by sin, the rest of the faculties move cross and contrary one to another. The will chooseth not the good which the mind discovers: the affections delight not in that which the will chooseth; but all jar and interfere, cross and rebel against each other. This we have got by our falling from God. Hence, sometimes the will leads, the judgment follows; yea, commonly the affections, which should attend upon all, get the sovereignty, and draw the whole soul after them."—On the Nature and Power of Indwelling Sin. Chap. iii.

* Page 205, 206.

that spiritual perception itself, in the first instance, is ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the HEART." And for this he cites Acts xvi. 4. 2 Cor. iv. 6. 1 John ii. 20, 27.*

Spiritual perception is without doubt the effect of the Holy Spirit's influence upon the heart; but the reader must observe, that Mr. Fuller here uses the word heart to signify the will and affections, as distinguished from the understanding or perceiving faculty; so that his meaning is, that the Holy Spirit does not, in the first instance, impart a spiritual perception of the truth, and so make persons to relish or love it; but that he makes them first to relish or love it, and then to perceive or understand it. But, on this subject, the word of God never mentions the word heart, in Mr. Fuller's partial sense of it, but always as including the understanding, as well as the will and affections,† and the former as the avenue to the latter. It has, indeed, become common with us to confine the metaphorical use of the word heart to the affections and dispositions; but in Scripture the heart is said to know, to understand, to study, to discern, to devise, to meditate, to ponder, to consider, to reason, to indite, to doubt, to believe, to be wise, &c. In short, every exercise which we consider as belonging to

* Page 206.

† "The word heart in the Scripture is variously used. Sometimes for the mind and understanding; sometimes for the will; sometimes for the affections; sometimes for the conscience; sometimes for the whole soul. Generally it denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil. The mind, as it inquireth, discerneth, and judgeth what is to be done, what refused: The will, as it chooseth or refuseth, and avoids: The affections, as they like or dislike, cleave to, or have an aversion from that which is proposed to them: The conscience, as it warns and determines. All these together are called the heart."—Owen on the Nature and Power of Indwelling Sin. Chap. iii.

the intellectual faculty, is in Scripture ascribed to the heart. See Deut. iv. 39, Psal. xlv. 1. and xlix. 3. Prov. x. 8. chap. xv. 23. chap. xvi. 9. chap. xix. 21. Eccl. viii. 5. Jer. xxiv. 7. Matt. xiii. 15. Mark ii. 6, 8. chap. xi. 23. Luke ii. 19, 35.

The Scripture passages which Mr. Fuller refers to, prove this, and are decidedly against him. The Lord's opening the heart of Lydia, was his opening her mind, in the first instance, to perceive in some measure the sense and excellency of what was spoken, so as to make her attend to it with judgment and relish. It is equivalent to what the Lord did to his disciples, "Then opened he their UNDERSTANDING (*υβυ* mind), that they might understand the Scriptures," Luke xxiv. 45. And if we can believe the disciples themselves, it was by his opening the Scriptures to their understanding (which is the same thing), that their affections were moved: "Did not our hearts BURN WITHIN US while he talked with us by the way, and while he OPENED TO US THE SCRIPTURES," ver. 32. To open the understanding or mind, is a clear and common expression, but to open the will or affections, seems not intelligible, and is never used. Again, when the apostle says, "God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6, he certainly does not mean that God had first shined in their will and affections; for these are not the perceptive powers of the heart, which are adapted to receive light in the first instance, but the understanding or judgment. Accordingly, this shining of the divine glory in the hearts of these eminent ministers of Christ, is represented as giving them the light (*της γνωσεως*) OF THE KNOWLEDGE of it; and he also shows that it was in beholding this glory of the Lord, that they were changed into the same image, chap. iii. 18. The spiritual light communicated by the Spirit to their understanding, worked effectually upon their will and af-

fections, and changed their souls into the divine image. With respect to the anointing mentioned 1 John ii. 20, 27, I cannot perceive how it favours Mr. Fuller's hypothesis. It is represented as a preservative from the false doctrine of seducers, and cannot be those blind and enthusiastical impressions and emotions which some honour with the name of a divine unction; for, as it taught and made them know all things, it must have been by enlightening their judgment, and seems to have been a portion or degree of that which Christ promised to his disciples, and by which they were to be guided into all truth, John xiv. 26. and xvi. 13, 14.

To show that the will acts prior to the understanding, and independently of it, he says, "Whatever may be said of particular volitions being caused by ideas received into the mind, original biasses are not so;" and, in a note below, affirms that "President Edwards speaks with great caution on the will being determined by the understanding."* Yet the citation shows that President Edwards uses no other caution on this point than to explain what he means by the understanding, viz. not only reason or judgment, but also perception or apprehension.† And this explanation was necessary, because the will is not always determined by what right reason or judgment would dictate, but is often governed by erroneous perceptions and apprehensions. But be the acts of the understanding right or wrong, still they are its acts, and must ever precede and influence the acts of the will, unless we can suppose that the will acts without any previous inducement, motive, cause, or ground of its choice, which President Edwards absolutely denies.‡

* Page 207.

† Enquiry on the Will, Part I. Sect. 2.

‡ In the same Section he says, "By motive, I mean the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjunctly. Whatever is a mo-

But it is said that original biasses are not caused by ideas received into the mind. It may be so for any thing I know. Adam was possessed of an original holy bias, yet this, in order of nature, might arise from the discovery he had of God. Had his will been wholly governed by this bias, without any direction or influence from ideas in his mind, I know not wherein it would have differed from a blind instinct or propensity, being devoid of any rational motive, end, or aim, as to him. Again, if this holy bias had no dependence on any light in his judgment, how came he to lose it, and receive a contrary bias, through the influence of those false ideas which Satan instilled into his mind, and which is the origin of that evil bias which is to be found in all his posterity?

But whether original biasses are caused by ideas received into the mind or not, it has no concern with the question under consideration, unless it could be shown that regeneration is an original bias, and that it exists before any spiritual light is communicated to the mind.

Mr. Fuller asserts that "every thing which proves spiritual perception and faith to be holy exercises, proves that a change of heart must of necessity precede them, as no holy exercise can have place while the heart is under the dominion of carnality."* That spiritual perception and belief are holy, is freely admitted; and I have no objection to their being termed exercises, if nothing more is meant than

tive in this sense, must be something that is extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding, or perceiving faculty. Nothing can induce or invite the mind to will or act any thing any farther than it is perceived, or in some way or other in the mind's view; for what is wholly unperceived, and perfectly out of the mind's view, cannot affect the mind at all. It is most evident that nothing is in the mind, or reaches it, or takes any hold of it, any otherwise than as it is perceived or thought of"--Enquiry on the Will, Part 1. Sect. 2. See also

II Sect 8, 9, 10.

* Page 207.

simply perceiving and believing. But how does this “prove that a change of heart must necessarily precede them?” Why, Mr. Fuller informs us, that “no holy exercise,” consequently no spiritual perception or belief, “can have place while the heart is under the dominion of carnality.” True; contraries cannot have dominion in the same heart, and at the same instant; but for the same reason, no change of heart can actually have place while it is under the dominion of carnality. Here both sides of the question stand upon equal ground. But, as it will be allowed that God can change the heart, the question is, Whether does this change begin with a removal of the darkness and unbelief of the mind, or whether is the heart actually changed previous to this, and while it is yet in a state of spiritual darkness and unbelief? The former is my sentiment, the latter Mr. Fuller’s. “It is thus (he says) I apprehend that God reveals the truth to us by his Spirit, in order to our discerning and believing it.”* That is, he reveals the truth to us, by changing our hearts before we perceive and believe it. In this method he thinks it was revealed unto Peter, Matt. xvi. 17.—unto babes, Matt. xi. 25.—unto the apostles, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 12, 13, 14.† But all these passages are greatly misapplied, when brought to prove, either that the heart is actually changed while yet in a state of ignorance and unbelief, or that God cannot remove this ignorance and unbelief from the natural man, in the first instance, and so make him spiritually to discern spiritual things.

The Scriptures expressly declare, that the word of truth, or the incorruptible seed of the word, is the means or instrument of regeneration. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,” James i. 18. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever,” 1 Pet. i. 23. One

* Page 208.

† Page 209.

would think that these plain texts should fully determine the point in dispute; for if it is with the word of truth, that God of his own will begets or regenerates men; if the word of God is the very seed of regeneration; and if to be born of God, born of the Spirit (John i. 13. chap. iii. 5.), and to be born of the incorruptible seed of the word, are expressions of the same import, then this birth must be effected by the Spirit's causing men to understand and believe the word in the first instance; for it is certain that the word can have no saving influence upon the heart previous to this. Mr. Fuller admits that "we are as properly said to be born again by the word of God, as we are said to be born into the world by means of our parents."* If so, then we can have no existence as new creatures previous to the instrumentality of the word, any more than we can have an existence as human creatures previous to the instrumentality of our parents.

Yet he does not abide by this, but by means of an imaginary distinction, endeavors to elude the force of the above texts, and introduce regeneration previous to, and altogether abstract from any influence of the word of God. He affirms, "That the term regeneration in the sacred writings is not always used in that strict sense in which we use it in theological discussion. Like every other term, it is sometimes used in a more strict, and sometimes in a more general sense."† Granting this were the case (as it really is not), how does it determine in which of these senses it is to be taken when ascribed to the word of God?

"Regeneration (he says) is sometimes expressive of that operation in which the soul is passive; and in this sense stands distinguished from conversion, or actual turning to God by Jesus Christ."‡ This must be his strict sense of that term. But where does he ever find the term regenera-

* Page 210.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

tion used in this sense? Perhaps in theological, or rather metaphysical discussion; but I am confident it bears no such meaning in all the sacred writings.* Regeneration, strictly speaking, is not the operation or agency of the Holy Spirit, but the effect of it. It is not his working, but his workmanship. It is a spiritual change produced on man, as to the sentiments and dispositions of his soul, whereby he is made, in some measure, to perceive divine things as they are, and to be affected towards them as he ought; and therefore cannot, in the nature of things, actually take place while the soul is purely passive, or only physically acted upon, like insensible or unconscious matter. True, indeed, the operation or agency of the Spirit must, in order of nature, precede regeneration, as a cause precedes its immediate effect; but so must also the influence of the word of God, to which it is likewise ascribed; because the Spirit operates upon the mind in and by the word, which is the instrumental cause of regeneration; so that in this matter the influence of the Spirit of truth, and of the word of truth, coalesce in one, and must not be separated. To regenerate men, is to beget them to the faith; and this faith, which is the gift of God, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 17, which is the incorruptible seed whereby they are born again, 1 Pet. i. 23. Whatever in-

* The term (*παλιγγενεσία*) regeneration, occurs only twice in all the New Testament. We find it in Matt. xix. 28. where it signifies the resurrection: "Ye who have followed me," viz. in this world, "in the REGENERATION," i. e. at the resurrection, "when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones," &c. The only other place where the word occurs, is Tit. iii. 5. where it signifies that spiritual purification, of which baptism is a figure. But as Mr. Fuller understands it here in what he calls a large or general sense, and as including faith, (page 211,) he has not left himself a single instance in Scripture, where it can be understood in his strict sense, as above stated; and indeed it is nowhere to be found in such a sense but in metaphysical theology.

fluence of the Spirit, or exercise of mind, may be supposed previous to this, it is nowhere in Scripture called regeneration, nor by any equivalent term. In other words, the Scriptures nowhere declare that any unbeliever, while such, is actually regenerated; and therefore Mr. Fuller's strict sense of the term regeneration, has no foundation in the word of God, nor indeed in the nature of things.

But he produces two texts for this strict sense of it, and observes, that "when the term (regeneration) is introduced as a cause of faith, or as that of which believing in Jesus is a proof (as it is in John i. 12, 13, and 1 John v. 4.) we may be certain it stands distinguished from it."* Yet these texts hold forth no such distinction, far less the whole sentiment, viz. that regeneration is without the word, and previous to the perception or belief of it. In John i. 12, 13. we are told that those of the Jewish nation who believed on the name of Jesus, "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" i. e. of the will of God, as opposed to the will of man, and is the same with what James declares, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James i. 18. The word of truth was first published to them, and God, by the sovereign influence of his Spirit concurring with that word, begat them to the faith of it, and so gave them power to become his sons: "For we are all the children of God, by faith "in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 26. This is also the sense of John v. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;" not previous to this belief, but in producing it, as our Lord said to Peter when he confessed this faith: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not REVEALED it unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven," Matt. xvi. 17. The first thing therefore in regeneration, is the introduction of light into the judgment, where-

* Page 200.

by the soul is made to perceive and believe the truth and excellency of divine things, and consequently to be suitably affected towards them.

The Scriptures frequently speak of the mental powers under the metaphors of bodily members, organs, and senses, such as eyes, ears, heart, bowels, reins, &c. even as it ascribes bodily parts to God himself. Hence many, instead of explaining these metaphors in a suitableness to the spirit of man, affix such gross notions to them, as are applicable only to the material part of him; and as when the bodily organ (the eye, for instance,) is wanting or distempered, it must first be supplied or rectified by some physical operation before it can perform its office, so they imagine that some similar operation must be performed on the soul previous to the introduction of spiritual light into the understanding. Thus Mr. Fuller speaks of God's first removing the obstructing film from the mental eye, by imparting a spiritual relish for divine things.* But we know that a bodily taste or relish will not remove a film from the natural eye, and it is not easy to conceive how a spiritual relish for we know not what (were it possible that such a relish could exist,) will remove the film from the mental eye. He represents this spiritual relish, whereby the heart is changed and turned towards God previous to the knowledge of him, as some new sense or faculty created in the soul, in which the intellect has little or no concern. He compares it to a delicate sense of propriety, in which the mind judges, as it were, instinctively from a feeling of what is proper, and says, "It is by this unction from the Holy One, that we perceive the glory of the divine character, the evil of sin, and the lovely fitness of the Saviour; neither of which can be properly known by mere intellect, any more than the sweetness of honey, or the bitterness of wormwood, can be ascertain-

* Page 206.

ed by the sight of the eye.”* But if this spiritual relish precedes the exercise of intellect, or the mind’s perception of an object (which is the case supposed), then it is certain it can have no object, consequently cannot be a spiritual relish. We may, indeed, feel and relish objects of sense without seeing them with our eyes, such as the hardness of a stone by the touch, and the sweetness of honey by the taste ; but spiritual objects cannot be felt or relished by the soul, while the judgment has no spiritual perception or knowledge of them. Therefore, to affirm that an unction from the Holy One makes us “ PERCEIVE the glory of the divine character, the evil of sin, and the lovely fitness of the Saviour,” without enlightening the judgment, in the first instance, appears to me altogether unintelligible, and contrary to the plain declarations of the Scriptures, viz : that God of his own will begets men to the faith, with the word of truth, and that they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word. So much for Mr. Fuller’s strict sense of regeneration.

With regard to his large sense of the term, viz : as including faith, he says, “ Regeneration, taken in this large sense of the term, is undoubtedly by the word of God. It is by means of this that a sinner is first convinced of sin, and by this, as exhibiting mercy through Jesus Christ, is kept from despair. It is by this only that he can become acquainted with the character of the Being he has offended, the nature and demerit of sin, and the way in which he must be saved from it. These important truths, viewed with the eye of an enlightened conscience, frequently produce great effects upon the soul, even previous to its yielding itself up to Christ. And the impartation of spiritual life, or a susceptibility of heart to receive the truth, may generally, if not always, accompany the representation of

truth to the mind. It was while Paul was speaking, that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. It is also allowed, that when the word is received into the soul, and finds place there, it worketh effectually, and becomes a principle of holy action, a well of water, springing up to everlasting life."*

If by an enlightened conscience, and a susceptibility of heart, to receive the truth, he does not mean any thing previous to a representation of truth to the mind, I can most heartily subscribe to this view of regeneration, as being agreeable to the word of God. But then I can by no means reconcile it with his strict sense of regeneration, unless I could suppose that a person is regenerated before his first conviction of sin, and previous to his being acquainted with the character of the Being he has offended, the nature and demerit of sin, and the way in which he must be saved from it; all which, he admits, come by means of the word.

He gives the sum of what he pleads for in these words: "All I contend for is, that it is not by means of a spiritual perception, or belief of the gospel, that the heart is, for the first time, effectually influenced towards God; for spiritual perception and belief are represented as the effects, and not the causes of such influence."† If he means that the influence of the Spirit of God is the cause of spiritual perception and belief, we are agreed; but if he means, as I suppose he does, that the heart is effectually influenced towards God previous to any true knowledge of him, or to any spiritual perception and belief of the truth, or to any influencing motive whatever being presented to the view of the mind, such a sentiment appears to me not only unscriptural, but altogether irrational and absurd.

He says, "A spiritual perception of the glory of divine things, is not the first operation of God upon the mind."‡

* Page 211. † Page 211, 212. ‡ Page 212.

To avoid ambiguity, it must be noticed that the word operation is sometimes used to express the effect, at other times the cause. If he means that spiritual perception is not the first effect produced on the mind, then the effect prior to this must be entirely of a mechanical or physical nature; for it cannot be a moral effect, where no ideas are communicated, nor any object brought to the view of the mind. But if by operation he intends that divine energy or influence, which is the cause of regeneration, it is freely granted that this must, in order of nature (though not of time), precede that spiritual perception which is the immediate effect of it; but so must also the word of God, which is the means of that effect. As to the operation of the Spirit, whereby the truth is introduced into the mind, so as to produce its proper effects, we can no more explain the manner of it, than we can explain that creating operation whereby God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, or that by which he quickens the dead, to both of which it is compared, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Eph. ii. 1. But we may safely affirm, that there is not any holy susceptibility or relish for the truth subsisting in the human heart previous to the influence of the word. Indeed, there appears to be no occasion for this; for the word of God, through the effectual operation of the Spirit, is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, Heb. iv. 12. It finds its way into the most unsusceptible and untoward mind, and breaks the stoutest and most obdurate heart. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. xxiii. 29. It storms the heart in its strongest holds, whereby it seeks to fortify itself against the truth. "For the weapons of our warfare (says the apostle) are not carnal, but MIGHTY THROUGH GOD, to the pulling down of strong holds: casting down imaginations, and

every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Such passages do not admit the supposition, that the heart is possessed of any principle of grace previous to the influence of the word by the Spirit.

If a holy disposition of heart be previous to faith, it must be without it, and so cannot be pleasing to God; for, without faith, it is impossible to please him, Heb. xi. 6. It must be prior to actual union with Christ, and while the mind is without divine illumination, conviction, or any spiritual motive, consequently is no part of that regeneration which is by the incorruptible seed of the word, 1 Pet. i. 23. nor of that sanctification through the truth which Christ prays for, John xvii. 17. This previous holy principle he describes as an "effectual change of the bias of the heart towards God," as if the bias of a person's will and affections could be turned towards an object in whom he does not believe, and of whose true character, as revealed in the gospel, he is supposed as yet to have no just conception. This also makes the doctrine of reconciliation needless, in order to reconcile the heart to God.

Further, if men are regenerated, and possessed of holy dispositions before they believe, then they must be godly unbelievers,—a character unknown in the word of God; and should they die in that state, they must be saved without faith, for no regenerated holy person shall perish. Mr. Fuller is aware of this plain consequence, and endeavors to elude it. His words are: "If there be a priority (i. e. if regeneration be before faith) in order of time, owing to the want of opportunity of knowing the truth, yet, where a person embraces Christ, so far as he has the means of knowing him, he is in effect a believer."* This answer

appears to me exceedingly confused and incoherent. The point he strenuously contends for is, That regeneration is before faith ; but here he speaks of it hypothetically, as if he were not sure of it, "If there be a priority in order of time ;" and he makes this supposed priority to be only in case of the "want of opportunity of knowing the truth," which imports, that none having that opportunity, are regenerated before they believe. Again, such as "want an opportunity of knowing the truth," are yet supposed to embrace Christ so far as they have the means of knowing him ;" as if they could both want an opportunity, and yet have the means of knowing him ; or as if they might know and embrace Christ, without knowing the truth which reveals him. Such, he says "are in effect believers ;" an expression which in this connection I do not understand. "The Bereans (he observes) searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so ; therefore it is said, many of them believed. And had they died while in this noble pursuit, they would not have been treated as unbelievers."* Yet it is not said that all of them who searched the Scriptures believed, but many of them ; and there is not the least foundation to suppose that any of them who searched the Scriptures would have been saved without believing ; and to affirm that men will be saved short of believing, appears to me contrary to the uniform declarations of Scripture, and a very unsafe doctrine, however necessary it may be to support Mr. Fuller's hypothesis.

It is alleged that the honest and good heart, mentioned in the parable of the sower, Luke viii. 15, † represents persons as regenerated previous to their hearing the word. But such an interpretation is a striking instance, among many, of the abuse of Scripture metaphors, whereby doctrines are grounded on similitudes and parables altogether

foreign to their design. Because it is a well-known truth in husbandry, that if the soil is not good, either by nature or culture, before the seed is sown into it, it will not be productive ; therefore it is imagined that it must also be a truth in theology, that the heart of man must be honest and good previous to his hearing the word, otherwise it can have no proper effect upon him. But this is far from being the design of that parable, which is, to set forth the different reception and effects of the word among those who actually hear it. Some consider this parable as respecting the first publication of the gospel to Jews and proselytes, by our Lord and his apostles, when it found many previously possessed of honest and good hearts, who looked for redemption, and waited for the consolation of Israel ; such as Nathanael, Joseph of Arimathea, Cornelius, and many others, but this honest and good heart was not begotten in them without the word, but by means of the Old Testament revelation, which they believed, and by the ministry of John the Baptist, whose office it was “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,” Luke i. 16, 17.

But, though this affords a good answer, there is no occasion to confine the parable to the first publication of the gospel ; for we may easily trace the order of things, by comparing the three Evangelists, and harmonizing them into one compound text. The first thing in order is, the sowing of the seed, or publishing the word of the kingdom : A sower went forth to sow ; for how should men hear without a preacher ? Those to whom the word was published heard it. This was common to all the classes ; they were all hearers. But then the good effects of hearing the word was confined to one class of them ; and these effects are threefold, and in the following order—1. Having heard the word, they understood it, Matt. xiii. 23. and received it, Mark iv. 20. The word of God, accompanied by the influence of the Holy Spirit, enlightened their minds, removed

their prejudices, and made them perceive the import, evidence, and excellency of what was declared ; so that they understood and received it as the word of God, 1 Thess. ii. 13. as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, 1 Tim. i. 15. Thus they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, 1 Pet. i. 23. and thus God, of his own sovereign will, begets them to the faith with the word of truth, Jam. i. 18. for faith cometh by hearing the word of God, Rom. x. 17. and now, and not till now, are they possessed of a principle of grace in their hearts.—2. Having heard, understood, and received the word, they, in an honest and good heart, keep it, Luke viii. 15. i. e. they retain and hold it fast, in opposition to their letting it slip, like the other classes of hearers : The seed of God remaineth in them, 1 John iii. 9. even that which they have heard, chap. ii. 24. They continue in Christ's word, and his words abide in them, John viii. 31. ch. xv. 7. which is to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which they have heard, Col. i. 23. But that honest and good heart in which they keep (*κατεχουσι*) or retain the word, did not exist prior to their hearing and understanding it, but was evidently produced by that means, as was shown on the first particular. Paul traces the origin of love, a pure heart, and a good conscience (which constitute the honest and good heart) only back to faith unfeigned, which respects the word, 1 Tim. i. 5. for it is by faith that God purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9.—3. The last thing in order is, they bring forth fruit with patience, and in various degrees, Luke viii. 15. Matt. xiii. 23. The word of God which they have heard, understood, and received, effectually worketh in them, 1 Thess. ii. 13, and bringeth forth fruit in them, since the day they heard and knew the grace of God in truth, Col. i. 6. This, therefore, is the order of things set forth in the explanation of the parable. It is by means of the word that the heart is made honest and good,

though the nature of the similitude, which is taken from agriculture, does not permit it to illustrate that particular.

Mr. Fuller says, "A spiritual perception of the "glory of divine things appears to be the first sensation of which the mind is conscious; but it is not the first operation of God upon it."* If not, then this first operation of God makes no impression upon the rational mind of man. It communicates no light to the judgment, no spiritual perception of divine things, nor any sensation respecting them of which a thinking mind is conscious. In his opinion the understanding cannot be spiritually enlightened, but in consequence of some holy disposition previously implanted in the heart by this first operation; and then he admits that spiritual perception will follow as the first sensation of which the mind, already regenerated, is conscious. So that what he says of Mr. Brine's previous principle, I think will with equal justice apply to his own; it is "something different from what God requires of every intelligent creature;"† for it is plain that the human intellect has no concern in it, and it is certain that God does not require blind dispositions of his intelligent creatures. He affirms, that the introduction of light into the mind in the first instance, is a thing altogether impossible even with God himself, until, by some other operation, he has regenerated the soul, altered its moral state and disposition, given it a spiritual relish for divine things, and produced a change of heart, whereby it is effectually influenced towards him; and all this previous to, and without any illumination of the mind, or instrumentality of the word of God.‡

* Page 212.

† Page 127.

‡ Mr. Fuller's sentiments on this subject seem to be formed upon the scheme of Messrs. Bellamy and Hopkins, two American divines, who, though they have written many good things, have overstrained others beyond the sober Scripture medium, in their opposition to Arminian and Antinomian speculations. Mr. Hopkins, in a sermon on John i.

Though man is a fallen depraved creature, yet he is still possessed of intellectual and moral powers, however much impaired, otherwise he would not be a rational moral agent, susceptible of instruction, the subject of law, or the object

13. after having asserted, That regeneration consists wholly in a change of the will or heart, and not in the intellect or faculty of understanding ; and that in this operation the Spirit of God is the only agent ; he proceeds to show, "That this change is wrought by the Spirit of God immediately. That is, it is not effected by any medium or means whatever. I would (says he) particularly observe here, that light and truth, or the word of God, is not in any degree a mean by which this change is effected. It is not wrought by light—Men are first regenerated in order to introduce light into the mind : therefore they are not regenerated by light, or the "truths of God's word." He affirms, That natural men may see every thing in matters of religion but the moral beauty and excellence of divine things : That this moral beauty is not discerned by the understanding, nor can it possibly be made the object of it by any operation on the mind, or any supposed illumination whatever, any more than it is possible by any operation on a stone to bring it to the understanding and discerning of a man without giving it the faculty of understanding and reason. That, therefore, men are not regenerated by the word ; but the heart (i. e. the will) must first be renewed by the immediate operation of the Spirit of God, giving it a good taste, in order to prepare it to understand and receive the word. See Hopkins's Sermon on John i. 13. with the Appendix. See also Bellamy's True Religion Delineated, and his Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel of Christ.

To show that men are born of God, there is certainly no occasion to reason against, or rather flatly to contradict express Scripture, by denying that God begets them with the word of truth, or that they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, for both are perfectly consistent. And though it is true that the natural man may speculate on the truths of the gospel without discerning either their true evidence, or their moral beauty and excellence, so as to have a taste or relish for them ; yet this will never prove it impossible that a good taste should be formed by a proper view of divine things in a spiritually enlightened judgment. To affirm that no enlightening influence of the Spirit of God upon the understanding can have any more effect in forming a spiritual taste, than if it were exerted upon a stone, is the language of unhallowed reasoning, which serves to exclude the under-

of praise or blame. In regeneration the Spirit of God does not create new powers or faculties, but rectifies those already in existence ; gives the lead to the legitimate directing powers, which were blinded and enslaved by corrupt dispositions, affections, and passions ; and restores the soul to order and harmony. The leading faculties of the human mind by which, when it acts regularly, all the rest are directed and governed, are the understanding or judgment, reason and conscience. These constitute his mental capacity to receive instruction, to perceive and distinguish truth from its opposite, to discern the fitness or unfitness of things, and the moral qualities of actions and objects. But, notwithstanding these natural powers, such is the blindness and depravity of the human heart, that the natural or animal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God revealed in the gospel ; for, judging of them by the preconceived principles, wisdom and reasoning of a carnal mind, they appear foolishness to him ; neither can he know them till he is spiritually enlightened, because they are spiritually discerned. Therefore I conceive that the first operation of the Spirit of God in regeneration is the introduction of spiritual light into the understanding or judgment, which is the same with his opening the understanding to discern the things of the Spirit as revealed in the gospel in their true light ; for there is no medium between the introduction of spiritual light into the mind and the mind's spiritual perception of it. This spiritual perception of divine things is attended with a persuasion of their truth and reality, and an impression of their supreme excellence and importance, which gains them immediate access to the will and affec-

standing from being the subject of regeneration, as well as the word of God from being the means of it. In my opinion Mr. Fuller would have been more profitably employed in consulting the Scriptures upon this subject, than in adopting the sentiments and reasonings of these authors.

tions, exciting desire, relish, choice, and esteem. Thus the soul is regenerated agreeably to the regular order of its faculties ; but to maintain that the will and affections are changed previous to any discernment of spiritual things in the judgment, is to reverse that order, and is the same as to affirm that the soul relishes, chooses, and loves without an object ; that is, its relish, choice, and affection have no relation to any thing, consequently these exercises (could we suppose them to exist) can have nothing of the nature of virtue in them : for it is an undoubted truth, that no motion or exercise of the will and affections can be of a virtuous and holy nature, but as influenced by proper objects or motives.

Let it further be observed, that the word of God is addressed to men's understanding, judgment, reason, and conscience, as the only channel through which its truths can have any influence upon their will and affections ; and all its doctrines, precepts, arguments, evidences, and motives proceed upon that principle, as might be shown at large ; but I must draw to a conclusion of this part of the subject.

I had said, that the truth is no sooner perceived and believed, than it takes possession of the will and affections ;* upon which Mr. Fuller observes, " This, I should think, is allowing that perception is distinct from believing, and necessarily precedes it."† In order of nature, indeed, we

* The whole paragraph runs thus : " As to the effects of faith upon the heart, such is the important, interesting, and salutary nature of the saving truth testified in the gospel, with its suitableness and freeness for the chief of sinners, that it is no sooner perceived and believed than it takes possession of the will and affections, and becomes in the soul the ground of its hope, trust, and reliance ; the object of desire, acceptance, esteem, and joy ; and the principle of every holy, active, and gracious disposition of heart." See Commission, page 82.

† Page 203.

must have a perception of something, real or imaginary, before we can believe, for belief must respect some object in the mind's view ; but then we cannot perceive that object to be real or true without believing it, because that very perception is believing it. It belongs, therefore, to Mr. Fuller to show, how a spiritual perception of the glory of divine truth is distinct from believing it ; or, in other words, how such a perception of divine truth can exist without including in it a perception of its truth and reality. I am certain he cannot show this without reducing what he terms " a spiritual perception of the glory of divine truth," to a mere empty speculation, in which nothing exists as a reality in the mind's view.

Yet he proceeds upon this distinction, and says, " But if a spiritual perception of the glory of divine truth precede believing, this may be the same in effect as regeneration preceding it."* But if he really admits that a spiritual perception of the truth is the same with regeneration, then he, in effect, gives up his argument. He has all along maintained, that regeneration is previous to a spiritual perception of divine things, and that the introduction of light into the mind in the first instance is impossible ; that it consists in a spiritual relish for divine things, and a change of heart whereby it is effectually influenced towards God, previous to any illumination of the mind, and without the instrumentality of the word. Therefore, to admit that a spiritual perception of the truth is in effect the same with regeneration, is to yield the point, and grant all that I think worth contending for on this head ; for I am certain there can be no spiritual perception of the truth without believing it.

But he thinks his argument is entire, notwithstanding this concession, if he can only maintain the priority of regene-

* Page 204.

ration to faith ; and this he attempts by separating a spiritual perception of the truth from the belief of it, so far as to make room for a change of heart between them. His words are, "Allowing that the word requires to be perceived ere the will and affections can be changed, it does not follow that it must also be believed for this purpose ; for the very perception itself may change us into the same image ; and, in virtue of it, we may instantly with our whole heart set to our seal that God is true."* This appears to me a very strange statement. There is not a more self-evident axiom than this, That the human will and affections cannot be rationally affected, much less changed by any truth, till it is in some measure believed or realized in the mind ; yet Mr. Fuller, instead of fairly yielding the point, or admitting that a belief of the truth is necessary to a change of the will and affections, will rather maintain an absolute absurdity, viz : That a mere perception of the truth without believing it, will produce this change. And by the words in *Italic*, he seems to ground this on 2 Cor. iii. 18. as if the apostle had said, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," without believing it, "are changed into the same image." This requires no answer, and the matter having come to this issue, I may be excused from pursuing the argument on this head any further, and shall only observe, that Mr. Fuller can take either side of this question as he finds occasion. In answering those who deny the belief of the gospel to be saving faith, and make it to consist in coming to Christ, receiving him, and relying upon him for acceptance, he says, "All this, in the order of things, follows upon believing the truth concerning him ; no less so than coming to God follows a believing that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently

* Page 204.

seek him. We may, therefore," mark the expression, "be REGENERATED BY A PERCEPTION AND BELIEF OF THE TRUTH, and, as the immediate effect of it, come to Jesus, and rely upon him for salvation."* Here he agrees with my sentiments, both as to the nature of faith and its influence on regeneration, which is perfectly inconsistent with all the arguments he uses against me on these particulars. What a pity it is that such distinguished talents as Mr. Fuller possesses, should be employed in this manner!

I have now considered his chief arguments for a previous principle of grace in the heart, or regeneration before believing, which he thinks necessary to the holy nature of faith; and have shown, that whether he places this supposed principle before or after a perception of the truth, it is equally without foundation while he holds it to be previous to a belief of the truth. What I maintain, in opposition to this sentiment, is shortly this, That in regeneration, the Holy Spirit, in the first instance, by his inexplicable energy, gives the mind a believing or realizing perception of the truth as revealed in the word, and thereby operates on the will and affections, not only in the beginning of the change, but in all the subsequent progress of sanctification; for men are not only born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, but are also sanctified through the truth, which is the word of God, John xvii. 17.

We shall now take notice of his concluding reflections on the consequences of the principles he opposes with respect to addressing the unconverted. He observes,

"First, in the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness be given up, we shall not be in the practice of urging it on the unconverted."† I cannot conceive what ground Mr. Fuller has to suppose, that those whom he opposes have given up the necessity of repentance in order to for-

* Page 202, 203.

† Page 214.

giveness. However negligent I may be in urging sinners to repentance, it has always been my firm belief, that not only the unconverted, but even the converted themselves, need often to be called to repentance, and that in order to forgiveness. He has seen as much of my writings as fully refutes this misrepresentation, and therefore it cannot pass for a mere mistake. I am afraid there will be occasion for some more remarks of this kind before we have done.

He assigns the reasons why we must thus give up repentance in order to forgiveness, "We shall imagine it will be leading souls astray to press it before, and in order to believing; and afterwards it will be thought unnecessary, as all that is wanted will come of itself."* So that, according to him, we cannot, consistently with our principles, press repentance either on the converted or unconverted. Yet I find it perfectly consistent with my principles to press repentance on all to whom the gospel is preached; for, though I know that none will truly repent but those who believe, yet the gospel doctrine of salvation, with men's need of it, being first declared, a reasonable foundation is laid for calling all who hear it to repentance, and to urge this by every argument and motive which the word of God affords.

But I own that, upon Mr. Fuller's plan, I should be very much embarrassed in pressing true repentance on the unconverted. He had said before, that "It does not come up to the Scripture representation to say, repentance is a fruit of faith;"† and here he says, repentance must be pressed upon the unconverted before, and in order to believing. Now, my difficulty lies here, According to this order of things, I am debarred, in urging repentance, from using any arguments or motives drawn from the gospel; for it is certain that such motives cannot possibly have any influence without faith, or till they are first believed, and, according to

* Page 214, 215.

† Page 173.

him, they cannot be believed till men first truly repent ; for they must repent before, and in order to believing. So that his scheme renders the principles and motives of the gospel altogether useless as to their influence on repentance, and therefore can with no propriety be used for that purpose. From all this it plainly follows, that the gospel itself should not be preached to men till they repent.

But is it not necessary that some principles should be believed previous to repentance, and as the means of producing it? Yes ; he admits “ that a conviction of the being and attributes of God must, in the order of nature, precede repentance ; because we cannot repent for offending a being of whose existence we doubt, or of whose character we have no just conception : but the faith of the gospel—is represented in the New Testament as implying repentance.”* There is no dispute about whether the faith or belief of the gospel implies repentance, as its inseparable concomitant or immediate effect : nay, I can admit that when faith first takes place in the mind, it imports repentance, or a change of mind, as the word *μετανοια* signifies. It is a change from darkness to light ; from blindness, prejudice, and unbelief, to a spiritual perception and conviction of the truth ; and it is by convincing men of the truth concerning Jesus, that the Spirit convinceth them of sin, because they believe not in him. See John xvi. 9. compared with Acts ii. 36, 37. But the point he wishes to establish is this, that true repentance is previous to the belief of the gospel, and is produced by a conviction of the being of God, and a just conception of his character ; which last he supposes may be obtained without the gospel.

I freely admit that men have some natural notices of God and of his law in their conscience, sufficient to constitute them accountable creatures, to render their guilt inexcusa-

* Page 173.

ble, and to make them susceptible of conviction; and if they have access to the revealed law of God, their knowledge of his character, of their duty, of their guilt, and consequently of their danger, must be greatly enlarged. This may awaken in some strong convictions of sin, and a fear of divine punishment, which, if it does not drive them into utter despair, may produce some outward reformation of life, and even some struggles against heart sins, in hopes of obtaining the favor of God by these things. Yet all this may be without any true love to God and holiness, or any real hatred of sin itself, but only of its punishment. This is by some called legal repentance, because produced only by the law; and if this is that repentance which Mr. Fuller pleads for, I have no objection to his placing it before the belief of the gospel. All I contend for, is, that it is not true repentance, or what the Scripture calls repentance unto life, which, together with a humbling conviction of sin and its desert, necessarily implies an apprehension and belief of the mercy of God, through Christ, as revealed in the gospel.

I may justly question if ministers of the gospel are warranted to urge repentance on their hearers, as a pre-requisite to faith. There is no example of any such thing in the New Testament. All the calls to repentance stand connected with preaching the gospel, which contains the most powerful persuasives to it; and there is no instance of any complying with these calls, but such as believed it. While, therefore, ministers call on sinners to repent, if they wish that this may have effect, they must also at the same time, after the example of the first preachers, call on them to believe the gospel, without which their minds are not principled for true repentance, whatever conviction of guilt and terror may be produced.

Though repentance ought to be urged upon all who hear the gospel, and though none believe it who do not repent:

yet I strongly suspect that it would be leading souls astray, to press repentance upon them before, and in order to their believing the gospel. Should a preacher keep strictly to this order of things, and speak out plainly, the tenor and spirit of his address must be something to the following effect:—"As for you, the unconverted part of my hearers, I have no authority to preach the gospel to you in your present state. To you the word of this salvation is not as yet sent. You are not prepared or qualified for it; for you are nothing but mere sinners, and no sort of encouragement or hope is held out in all the book of God to any sinner as such considered. It is only to the penitent that the gospel is to be preached; for to such only does it hold out its golden sceptre.* You have therefore nothing to do with the gospel in the first instance: nor is it your immediate duty to believe it, nor even to take encouragement from it to repent, which supposes your believing it. Let me therefore, in the first place, call your attention to a previous duty; a duty which you must perform before, and in order to believing; and that is, that you sincerely and heartily repent of all your sins; and when you have performed this aright, from a principle of disinterested love to God, and a thorough hatred of sin, as such, you may then venture to believe the gospel-testimony concerning Christ, and the way of salvation through him, and rely upon him accordingly." This appears to me to destroy the freedom of the gospel; for it brings the word of faith nigh to those only who view themselves as converted, and sets it at a distance not only from the stout-hearted, but also from the self-condemned, who can find nothing good in themselves, as a ground of encouragement; and so it lays an insuperable bar in the way of faith, consequently prevents genuine repentance.

A conviction of guilt and danger by the law, though it ought

* First edit. Pref. p. 8.

to be urged, will not by itself produce true repentance. It is by exhibiting the free grace and pardoning mercy of God, and the promise of the everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David, that the wicked and unrighteous are called and encouraged to forsake their evil ways and thoughts, and to turn unto the Lord, Isa. lv. 1—8. It was by the gospel which John the Baptist preached, that any of his hearers were brought to real repentance. See Luke i. 76, 77. John i. 7 15, 16, 17, 18, 29, 34. chap. iii. 35, 36. Acts. xix. 4. It was by the gospel which Peter preached on the day of Pentecost that three thousand souls were both convicted and converted, Acts ii. It was by “the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not [imputing their trespasses unto them,” that Paul and his fellow-labourers besought and prayed men, in Christ’s stead. to be reconciled unto God, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20. The truth is, these first messengers of Christ did not distrust the efficacy of the gospel, but considered it as mighty through God, to pull down strong holds, and as powerful both to wound and to heal. They viewed it as furnished both with the terrors of the Lord, to persuade men, ver. 11. and with the allurements of his love and grace, to gain upon their hearts and reconcile them unto God. But Mr. Fuller proceeds to another consequence :

“Secondly, For the same reason that we give up the necessity of repentance, in order to forgiveness, we may give up all exhortations to things spiritually good, as means of salvation.”* Though I do not agree with Mr. Fuller, that repentance before believing, and in order to it, is connected with forgiveness, for I know of no promise of forgiveness to an unbelieving penitent ; yet I have already shown, that I hold the necessity of true repentance, in order to forgive-

* Page 215.

ness, and have also hinted that Mr. Fuller must know this. Let us now attend to his other consequence; he says, "For the same reason, we may give up all exhortations to things spiritually good, as means of salvation." This, indeed, is not a direct assertion that we do so; but mark what follows: "Indeed, Mr. M'Lean seems prepared for this consequence. If I understand him, he does not approve of unconverted sinners being exhorted to any thing spiritually good, any otherwise than as holding up to them the language of the law, for convincing them of sin. It is thus he answers the question, Are unbelievers to be exhorted to obedience to God's commandments? referring us to the answer of our Lord to the young ruler, which directed him to keep the commandments, if he would enter into life."* Here he affirms that I disapprove of unconverted sinners being exhorted to any thing spiritually good; and, to prove this charge, he refers his readers, at the bottom of the page, to a pamphlet, entitled *Simple Truth Vindicated*, page 21, second edit. written about thirty-six years ago by Mr. John Barnard of London. But did any inform Mr. Fuller that I was the author of that pamphlet? or can he show, from any part of my writings, that I hold the sentiment which he here, without the least evidence, imputes to me? No; on the contrary, he was possessed of full evidence that I hold no such sentiment. To my certain knowledge he has seen and read my *Thoughts on the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel*, published first in the *Missionary Magazine*, Nos. II. III. IV. V. and afterwards more fully in a separate pamphlet. He knew this to be my performance, in which I combat the very sentiment he here attributes to me, and maintain, that the word of God calls upon unconverted sinners to repent, believe, be converted, to forsake their evil ways and thoughts, and to return unto the Lord,

* Page 215.

and call upon him ; and have endeavored to answer at some length the chief objections brought against this. I have also briefly touched on this subject in my Treatise on the Commission, p. 86—89, and in *The Belief of the Gospel saving Faith*, p. 35—41, 56, first edit. which he has also seen. I am therefore utterly at a loss how to account for this mistake, and especially for his declining afterwards to rectify it publicly, though desired by his friend. But he proceeds upon false ground, and says :

“It is easy to perceive that Mr. M’s scheme requires this construction of the exhortations of the Bible ; for if he allow that sinners are called to the exercise of any thing spiritually good, in order to their partaking of spiritual blessings, he must give up his favorite notion of God’s justifying men while in a state of enmity against him.”* I have nothing to do with the former part of this quotation, but only with what he calls my favourite notion, viz. “That God justifies men while in a state of enmity against him.” But this is so far from being my favorite notion, that it never once entered into my heart. I indeed affirm, upon the authority of the inspired apostle, that justification is “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY,” Rom. iv. 5. Yet I never supposed that any, from the moment of their thus believing, are in a state of enmity against God, or that God justifies them while in that state. So that this is altogether a misrepresentation ; but more of this afterwards.

“Mr. M:Lean (he says) tell us in the same page,” (i. e. page 21, of Barnard’s *Simple Truth*,) “that there is no promise of life to the doing of any good thing, except all the commandments be kept.”† Though I have no concern in this, yet I must observe, that if Mr. Barnard, by doing, means working, in order to obtain justification by the

* Page 215, 216.

† Page 216.

works of the law, he is certainly right in saying that no doing will answer this purpose, except all the commandments be kept ; for “the law is not of faith,” but its condition of life, as contrasted with that of the gospel, is, “That the man who doeth those things, shall live by them ;” while it “curseth every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 10, 12. But I must observe, that Mr. Fuller gives the very same view of our Lord’s answer to the young ruler that Mr. Barnard does ; his words are, “That to which the young ruler was directed, was the producing of a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law, which was naturally impossible ; and our Lord’s design was to show its impossibility, and thereby to convince him of the need of gospel-mercy.”* What our Lord directs the young ruler to do, was, to keep the commandments, to sell what he had, and give to the poor, and to take up his cross, and follow him. Now, if his doing these things was naturally impossible (as Mr. Fuller affirms,) then, according to his own reasoning, † the young ruler was under no obligation to do them, it was not his duty, and he was perfectly innocent in neglecting them.

Having mentioned some Scripture calls to faith and repentance, he observes, “That if Mr. M‘Lean was called to visit a dying sinner, he would be careful not to use any such language as this ; or, if he did, it must be ironically, teaching him what he must do on his own self-justifying principles, to gain eternal life. If he be serious, he has only to state to him what Christ has done upon the cross, and assure him, that if he believes it, he is happy.”‡ I should reckon it a piece of wanton cruelty to speak ironically to a dying sinner on the concerns of his soul ; but I would tell him seriously, that he could not be justified by the

* Page 158.

† Page 115—124.

‡ Page 217.

works of the law, because that required perfect sinless obedience ; and having shown him his guilty and lost condition, I would at the same time set before him the gospel-remedy, as the sole, the free, and immediate ground of hope for perishing sinners ; nor would I hesitate, from any notion of his being unqualified or unprepared for Christ, or destitute of a previous holy principle, “to state to him what he has done upon the cross, and assure him, that if he believes it, he is happy.”

Mr. Fuller here seems sensible that he has gone rather too far, and therefore instantly checks himself ; “Far be it from me,” he says, “that I should disapprove of an exhibition of the Saviour as the only foundation of hope to a dying sinner, or plead for such directions as fall short of believing in him. In both these particulars I am persuaded Mr. M^rLean is in the right ; and that all those counsels to sinners, which are adapted only to turn their attention to the workings of their own hearts, to their prayers, or their tears, and not to the blood of the cross, are delusive and dangerous.”* But if these are Mr. Fuller’s real and fixed sentiments, for what end did he write his Appendix ? Is not the most of it adapted to turn the attention of sinners to the workings of their own hearts instead of the blood of the cross ? Hereby they are taught that they must be regenerated, and have their hearts turned effectually towards God without the word, and before they are illuminated or have a perception of the truth, and, at any rate, previous to their believing it. That they must truly repent before they believe in Christ, and in order to it. That justifying faith itself is a persuasion influenced by a previous moral state of the heart and partaking of it ; a holy exercise of the soul, depending upon choice, implying repentance, and including love and other holy affections. That God does not justify

the ungodly, though, however godly they are, he does not impute it to them for righteousness, &c. Now, as all these things respect the holy state, dispositions, affections, and exercises of the heart: and as they are all stated as previous qualifications in the sinner, and placed in a conditional point of view between him and the Saviour; so all the counsels and directions given to sinners concerning them in that view must have an infallible tendency to turn their attention, in the first instance, to the workings of their own hearts, and not to the work finished by Christ on the cross, consequently as Mr. Fuller admits, must be “delusive and dangerous.”

But then he asks, “Does it follow that they are to be exhorted to nothing spiritually good, unless it be for their conviction?”* As I have given no occasion for such a question, so it lies not on me to answer it. I may, however, observe, that when the gospel is declared to sinners, a foundation is laid for exhorting them not only to faith and repentance, but to every thing that is spiritually good in its own place and order. Yet I see no ground for exhorting them to any thing short of believing immediately, or which does not suppose it; far less for directing them to seek after certain previous qualifications to fit them for Christ, or to warrant their believing on him.

He imagines that “Mr. M^cLean, to be consistent, must not seriously exhort a sinner to come off from those refuges of lies, to renounce all dependence on his prayers and tears, and to rely upon Christ alone, as necessary to justification, lest he make him a pharisee.”† From what has been already said, the reader will perceive that this requires no answer from me. Such exhortations are included in the exhortation to faith itself. But if he means them as exhortations to some holy exercises previous to faith, then he

* Page 217.

† Ibid.

must suppose that a sinner will come off from his false refuges before he knows the true refuge; and that he will renounce all dependence on his prayers and tears before he perceives any better foundation to depend on. If Christ is held forth as a free and immediate Saviour to the guilty, such exhortations are very proper, and likely to be understood; but a preacher may so dwell upon the active exercises of the mind in coming off, renouncing, humbling one's self, &c. as to counteract the very design of such exhortations. How free and gracious is our Lord's invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Yet some preachers have discovered such a variety of arduous exercises imported in the word come, as to lay very great obstacles in the sinner's way to Christ, and so to increase the burden of those who are heavy laden, instead of directing them immediately to the Saviour for rest to their souls. This is the tendency of all those exhortations and labored directions how to perform what is called the great work of believing in order to be justified: and this is the natural effect of the doctrine which teaches sinners that they must be true penitents, and possessed of holy dispositions of heart previous to their believing; and that their belief cannot be genuine, unless it arise from this moral state of the heart, and partake of it.

Calls and exhortations to believe are both proper and necessary when men are told what to believe, and upon what grounds, without which all the preacher's vociferations are but empty and unmeaning noise: but the gospel is much perverted when faith is represented under the idea of acting or working, and in this view urged upon sinners in order to their justification; for this is the reverse of calling them to believe in the sufficiency of Christ's work to justify them, and so must necessarily draw their attention off from that to seek after justification by some exertions or exercises of

their own, of a very different nature from believing the gospel.

Having considered Mr. Fuller's doctrine respecting a principle of grace in the heart previous to faith, together with his concluding reflections, I proceed now to

QUESTION II.

WHETHER JUSTIFYING FAITH INCLUDES IN ITS NATURE
ANY THING MORE THAN A BELIEF OF THE GOSPEL ?

IN my Treatise on the Commission, p. 74—83, and in a pamphlet entitled, “The Belief of the Gospel saving Faith,” I think I have sufficiently shown and proved from Scripture, that justifying faith is neither more nor less than a belief of the gospel, or of God’s testimony concerning his Son ; and have also taken notice of the principal objections to this view of it. Therefore, instead of transcribing what I have already advanced, I must refer the reader to these publications, where he will find my sentiments on this subject in their own proper order and connection. In the mean time, as Mr. Fuller has given a very just and scriptural account of faith in the first edition of his book on “The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation,” (which I have perused of late with more attention than formerly), I cannot give a better view of my own sentiments on this subject than by transcribing his.

“Faith (says he) appears always to carry in it the idea of a crediting some testimony where intuitive evidence cannot be obtained.” This he confirms by what is said of the Thessalonians, Our testimony among you was believed, 2

Thess. i. 10. "And thinks that no better definition can be given of true faith than that which is given by the Holy Ghost himself in 2 Thess. ii. 13, **THE BELIEF OF THE TRUTH,**" p. 10. In answering objections to this definition, he grants that true faith is the belief of Scripture propositions, because, to believe a proposition is to believe the thing or truth conveyed by it, p. 21. He admits that "believing, simply considered, is a mere natural act; but that believing such things as the gospel reveals, must be a spiritual act." He also allows that it is "a rational act, excited by rational evidence," and thinks it is "no reproach to true faith to be so represented." That "if it be supported by evidence at all, it must be a rational act;" and that "nothing deserves the name of faith but what "is so supported," p. 25, 26. Further, he distinguishes true faith from "the actual outgoing of the soul towards Christ for salvation in a way of fleeing to him, receiving him, resting on him," &c. These things, he says, are "distinct from the belief of the truth as an inseparable effect is distinct from its cause." And even trusting in Christ he considers as "an immediate effect of believing what God says concerning him."—That "it does not appear, strictly speaking, to be faith, but its immediate effect—an inseparable attendant on it; but seems to be distinct from it," p. 22, 23.—[Here, it must be owned, there is a sufficient niceness of distinction.] Lastly, he argues for this simple view of faith from the plainness of the Scriptures, and from the impossibility of understanding them, had the sacred writers used this term in an uncommon sense. "This view of faith (he says) seems to be plain and easy to be understood, and does not embarrass our minds with a number of words without ideas. Great and glorious as the matter contained in Scripture is, Protestants commonly maintain that it is set forth in language plain and intelligible—that the inspired writers made use of terms in common use in the affairs of life adapted even to the understandings

of the common people—and that they did not use these terms in any contrary sense, but in the same sense as they were used in the common affairs of life. If they had used them in a sense peculiar to themselves, then had they been unintelligible to their hearers. Then had the Jews been furnished with a sufficient answer to our Lord's reprehensive question, Why do ye not understand my speech? Yea, then must it have been a miracle for him or his apostles ever to be understood, or their writings, in any future ages. To apply this observation to the point in hand: It is well known that faith, in common speech, signifies the same as credence; a credit of some report, declaration or testimony, where intuitive evidence is not to be obtained. Now, if true faith, as mentioned so frequently in the Scriptures, be to be understood according to this easy, obvious sense of the word, then the inspired writers acted in character; but if they included a meaning in the terms faith, believe, believer, &c. peculiar to themselves, then whence does it appear that they spake and wrote intelligibly?" p. 28, 29.

I could not possibly express my own view of faith with greater accuracy or simplicity than Mr. Fuller has done in the above extract; and had he kept consistently to his own definition of it, and the arguments by which he supports it, there would have been no difference between us on this subject. But, notwithstanding his distinguishing faith from the outgoings of the soul towards Christ, in fleeing to him, receiving him, resting on, and trusting in him, &c. notwithstanding all he says of the term belief being so plain, obvious, intelligible, and easy to be understood, and his repeated acknowledgment that Christ and his apostles did not use it in any peculiar sense, but in the same sense in which it was used in the common affairs of life; yet he says, "However, to avoid obscurity, I shall attempt more fully to explain the terms," p. 10. It seems, then, that the plain definition given by the Holy Ghost himself, viz. *τῆς*

BELIEF OF THE TRUTH, (than which, he owns, there cannot be a better) is, after all, so obscure, that it needs to be explained before we can understand the terms of it.

With regard to the term BELIEF, he explains it to be a cordial reception of the truth; and if by this he means nothing more than belief, it is far from being so plain an expression, or so suited to convey that idea, as the Scripture term itself which directly expresses it. Belief is a term which does not admit of a logical definition, because the act of the mind signified by it is perfectly simple, and of its own kind; nor does it need to be defined, or even explained, because it is a common word, and well understood. But it is evident that by a cordial reception he intends something more than belief, some exercise of the will and affections respecting the truth; and it can admit of no dispute, that all who really believe the gospel as a faithful or true saying, must also perceive it to be a good saying, worthy of all acceptance, and so receive it cordially: But the question is, Whether is this cordiality of reception what the Scripture means by the term belief, or the immediate effect of it? for it is certain that it is neither the proper nor common meaning of that term, and it is as certain that the will and affections cannot be moved by any truth till it is first perceived and believed. For this cordial reception he produces Philip's words to the eunuch, Acts viii. 37. "If thou believest WITH ALL THINE HEART, thou mayest," taking it for granted that the word heart there means the will and affections. But it has already been shown, that in Scripture the word heart is sometimes put for the intellectual, sometimes for the moral powers of the soul, and at other times for both; and therefore the sense can only be determined by the nature of the exercises ascribed to it; so that, when the heart is said to choose, incline, love, desire, &c. we are certain that it is put for the will and affections; but when it is said to perceive, know, understand,

reason, consider, &c. then it must signify the intellect ; and this must also be meant by the term when doubting or believing is ascribed to it, these being exercises of the understanding or judgment, in relation to the truth or falsehood of things. When Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you," Josh. xxiii. 14, he was not affirming any thing respecting their will and affections, but that they had a clear experimental proof and full conviction of God's faithfulness to his promise. So Philip, by believing with all the heart, means just a sincere and hearty conviction of mind as to the truth of what he had declared concerning Jesus. And that the eunuch so understood him, is plain from his reply, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God ;" where we see he expresses the truth which he believed by a proposition,* which would have been improper had he meant to express the exercise of his will and affections respecting it ; for it would not be language to say, I consent, choose, or love that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The same thing may be observed of the expression believing in, or with the heart, Rom. x. 9, 10, where it relates to the proposition, "That God hath raised him from the dead," and is distinguished from confessing with the mouth, and so must import a real inward conviction of the mind, as opposed to a mere verbal or insincere profession of belief. It must always be kept in view that there is no dispute about the immediate effects of faith on the will and affections, but simply about the nature of faith itself.

The other term in the Scripture definition is, THE

* Belief is always expressed in language by a proposition wherein something is affirmed or denied, and without belief there could be neither affirmation or denial, nor any form of words to express either. Dr. Reid on the Intellectual Powers of Man. Essay ii. p. 270.

TRUTH. This Mr. Fuller admits to be the Gospel, p. 10 ; but when he comes afterwards to explain that truth, he obscures it to such a degree that I can scarcely recognize the apostolic gospel in it. He first specifies some gospel truths, and states them as so many abstract disconnected particulars, keeping out of view their coherence, import, or design, such as, “that there was such a person as Jesus Christ—that he was born at Bethlehem—lived, and wrought miracles in Judea—was crucified, buried, and raised again from the dead—that he ascended to glory, and will judge the world at the last day—that he is God and man, and bears the titles of king, priest, and prophet of his church—that there is an eternal election, a particular redemption, an effectual vocation, a final perseverance,” &c. &c. &c. Having run over these particulars, and left us to guess the rest from his three et ceteras, he admits “that these, no doubt, are truths, “and great truths ;” but terms them general and external truths, and thinks “they may be believed where no saving faith is,” p. 13.

Now, though I must own that Mr. Fuller’s list of detached articles is far from giving a proper view of what the Scriptures emphatically call the truth ; yet I cannot help observing, that his stating them in such a light not only tends to depreciate the particulars mentioned, but also that great truth with which they stand connected, and which is the subject and scope of the gospel testimony ; and thus lead his readers to conceive that the belief of the gospel will be of little service to them, and to imagine that there is some other truth of greater importance, which demands a preferable regard. The grand foundation truth which the gospel testifies is, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, John i. 34. chap. xx. 31. Acts ix. 20, 22. chap. xviii. 5. All its supernatural evidence unites in attesting this great truth, and all its doctrines are founded on, and derive their meaning, glory, and importance from it. This truth includes in it his

character and also his work, as the Saviour of lost sinners, as that he died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day for our justification, Rom. vi. 25. 1 Corin. xv. 3, 4. And whatever Mr. Fuller may say about what he calls general and external truths, which may be believed where no saving faith is, yet the word of God expressly assures us, that those who believe this truth are blessed, Mat. xvi. 17, have life through Christ's name, John xx. 31, have righteousness imputed to them, Rom. iv. 24, are born of God, and overcome the world, 1 John v. 1, 5, and shall be saved, Rom. x. 9, 1 Cor. xv. 2 ; so that the belief of this truth is saving faith. This is that truth which Paul terms "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, viz. that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and of such the chief, 1 Tim. i. 15. This is the apostolic testimony which the Thessalonians believed, 2 Thess. i. 10, and whose faith is therefore described to be a belief of the truth, chap. ii. 13.

But it is evident that Mr. Fuller does not consider this as the main thing intended by the term, for he explains it thus : "By truth I mean (and I think the apostle means the same) to include with the fore-mentioned doctrines their qualities or properties, which make a great, and even an essential part of their truth," p. 13. It will admit of no doubt, that to believe the gospel is to believe (so far as we are enlightened) whatever it testifies, both relating to doctrines and their qualities. The doctrines themselves exhibit the qualities of what they reveal, and it appears to me a contradiction to suppose that a person may really understand and believe the doctrines of the gospel without some perception of their importance and excellence, though the greatest saint upon earth, even when possessed of the full assurance of faith, perceives the excellence of the truth only in part. But I am of opinion that the gospel doctrines are termed the truth, not on account of their qualities as good

or bad, nor only as exhibiting the substance of the legal shadows ; but chiefly because they are true as opposed to all falsehood or deceit, 2 Pet. i. 16. 1 John, ii. 21, 22, 27. The agreement of the gospel testimony with the reality of what it testifies, is its truth or veracity ; and as it reveals the most important of all truths, and upon the highest authority, it being the testimony of God, who cannot lie, so it is by way of eminence termed The Truth. Now, though a belief of this testimony includes a belief of the qualities or properties of what is testified, yet it is as truths or realities that they are the objects of faith ; and till they thus exist as truths in the mind, they can have no influence on the will and affections.

But let us see what those truths or qualities are which Mr. Fuller thinks are more especially the objects of saving faith. He specifies the following, viz. "The infinite excellency of God, the reasonableness and goodness of his law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin in itself considered, men's vile, dangerous, and lost condition, the equity of God in sending them to hell, the infinite loveliness of Christ, and excellency of his way of salvation, the beauty of holiness, &c. &c. ; these are truths concerning which every wicked man is an infidel," p. 14, 15. These are, indeed, very important truths, and without some suitable conviction of them the gospel will not appear in its proper light, nor be duly esteemed ; yet, excepting two general expressions, viz. the loveliness of Christ and excellence of his way of salvation, I find nothing of what is properly called the gospel in them. These particulars may be learned in a good measure from the law, without any knowledge of the way of salvation ; for they are truths altogether independent of the gospel, and would have remained the same immutable truths though Jesus Christ had never come in the flesh. True, indeed, the gospel supposes these truths, the whole scheme of salvation infers them, and is calculated to give

the clearest views and deepest impressions of them, and also to reconcile the mind to them; yet I do not find that our Lord and his apostles, in preaching the gospel, ever dwell on these particulars as the direct and main subject of their testimony, or as that truth which they called upon men to believe unto their salvation. Peter declared the truth on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. and also to Cornelius and his house, chap. x. and so did Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, chap. xiii. These discourses are plain and simple, and in perfect unison with each other; they were also countenanced of God, and attended with remarkable effects: yet in none of them is there any direct or explicit mention of what Mr. Fuller chiefly considers as The Truth. They seem wholly to consist of what he terms general and external truths, and which he says may be believed where no saving faith is. The apostles declared the testimony of God concerning his Son, and constantly connected salvation with the belief of it; but Mr. Fuller, though he does not exclude the main subject of their testimony, yet he gives it such epithets as tend to depreciate it, while he transfers salvation from it to the belief of some other truths or qualities which he considers as more peculiarly the objects of saving faith.

Hitherto my remarks have been confined to the first edition of his book. He has left out of the second edition the greater part of that description of faith which I have extracted from the first; yet it is with pleasure I observe, that in this last edition his account of faith is exceedingly plain, simple, and scriptural. He says, "That the belief of the truth which God hath recorded in the Scriptures concerning Christ, is saving faith, is evident from the following passages;" for which he cites Mark xvi. 16. John xx. 31. Luke viii. 12. Matt. xvi. 17. Rom. x. 9. 1 John v. 1, 5. John iii. 33. chap. v. 33, 34. 2 Thess. i. 10. chap. ii. 13. From these passages he observes, that a belief of the gospel—of the word—of the gospel-testimony—a belief that

Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, &c. must be saving faith, because salvation is connected with that belief; and he is so certain of this, that he further says, "If the foregoing passages do not prove the point, we may despair of learning any thing from the Scriptures."* And I may add, that if Mr. Fuller does not perfectly agree with me on this head, I despair of learning any thing from his words, for no words can more clearly express my view of the subject.

In his Appendix he enters upon this point, by professing his agreement with me: "I have the pleasure (says he) to agree with Mr. M. in considering the belief of the gospel to be saving faith."† If this were really the case, then the controversy would be at an end. But do we not differ as to the meaning of the word belief? No: we agree, "that the inspired writers used this term in the same sense as it is used in the common affairs of life, and that it signifies the same as credence; a credit of some report, declaration, or testimony, where intuitive evidence is not to be obtained." And do we agree also as to what is meant by the Gospel? Yes; we agree in general, "that it is the truth which God hath recorded in the Scriptures concerning Christ;" and certainly we will not differ about the excellent qualities of that truth, or the hearty reception it must meet with from all who really believe it. We cannot therefore differ on this subject, while both of us abide consistently by what we have expressly agreed to.

Yet Mr. Fuller will not abide by this, but strikes out a difference in these words: "Our disagreement on this subject is confined to the question, What the belief of the Gospel includes?"‡ But how is it possible that we can disagree on this, if we are agreed as to what belief itself is? We both admit that it is credence: a credit of some report,

* Page 16, 17, 18.

† Page 160.

‡ Ibid.

declaration, or testimony; and that the Scripture does not use that term in any uncommon sense. We not only agree in the sound of the term belief, but in the most pointed explanation (though it needs none) of its meaning, both by synonymous words, and by distinguishing it from every other exercise of the mind, however nearly allied to it, or inseparable from it. How, then, can we possibly disagree about what it includes? It must be kept in view that the question under consideration does not respect the antecedents, concomitants, or effects of faith; nor can Mr. Fuller include these in it, without departing from his own pointed definition of it, and falling into the most glaring inconsistency. If, therefore, he is consistent with himself, the question must respect simply what the nature of faith itself includes. Now, with respect to this he says,* “I consider faith as credence, and nothing else.” And if it is credence or belief, and nothing else, then it is certain that it can include nothing else in its nature. And with respect to its concomitants and effects, which are out of the present question, I do not know that we differ at all.

But, notwithstanding Mr. Fuller’s simple and scriptural definition of faith or belief; his express declaration, that he understands the term belief according to its ordinary use in the common affairs of life; his nicely distinguishing it from all those exercises of the soul which are either its concomitants or immediate effects; his professing to consider it as credence, and nothing else; and his train of arguments in support of this simple view of it—I say, notwithstanding all this, it is evident he means no such thing; but, on the contrary, labors in his Appendix to prove that belief is something else than credence! He professes to have the pleasure of agreeing with me, that the belief of the gospel is saving faith. What pleasure he can

* In his letter to me, dated Nov. 25, 1794:

have in this, I am not able to conceive, since he endeavors to show that it is only an agreement in the sound, but not in the sense of that proposition ; for he affirms that we disagree on the question, What the belief of the gospel includes ? and that “ there is an important difference in the ideas which we attach to believing.”* For my own part, I honestly declare that I attach no unusual or double meaning to that word. I think it bears but one simple sense, which needs no explanation, because every body understands it ; nay, I attach no other idea to the word believing, than what Mr. Fuller himself must necessarily attach to it if he really means what he says, viz. that he understands it according to its ordinary use in the common affairs of life, to be a crediting some report, declaration, or testimony, or to be credence and nothing else. If, therefore, there is an important difference between this and the idea which Mr. Fuller attaches to believing, it must be a difference in his real meaning from the plain sense of his words, which belongs to him to reconcile.

When I take into view what he advances on this subject, I think Mr. Scot's definition of faith would have suited his purpose better than his own. The belief of the truth, he says, is “ a cordial consent to the testimony of God in his holy word ;” and faith in Christ in particular he defines “ a cordial consent to the testimony of God concerning his Son.”† Had Mr. Fuller fairly retracted his own definition, and adopted something like this, it would have been more consistent with his real sentiments ; but to state true faith as only belief or credence, and then endeavor to explain it into something else, appears to me a deviation both from simplicity and consistency.

It is now time for me to take notice of his animadver-

* Pref. p. viii. Note.

† The warrant and nature of faith in Christ, p. 8.

sions on what I have advanced on this subject in my Treatise on Christ's Commission, and in the pamphlet entitled, "The Belief of the Gospel saving Faith." All I have said, or meant to say, in these publications on the nature of faith, centres in this single point, viz. That justifying faith is simply a belief of the gospel; and therefore, if Mr. Fuller's animadversions are in point, they must go to a denial of that position. But, instead of attacking this directly, he proceeds, first, to misrepresent my sentiments, and then to combat his own misrepresentations.

He charges me with denying that there is any thing holy in the nature of faith, or that it is a virtue or moral excellence.* But if the reader will turn to the note he refers to, Commission, p. 75, 76, he will find that the very reverse is the truth. Mr. Fuller in his letter had said, that "if faith was a mere exercise of the understanding, it would contain no virtue." To this I replied, "that he must mean a believing exercise of the understanding; and to affirm that this contains no virtue, when it has God or his word for its object, is rather too bold, considering how highly the Scripture speaks of it, representing it as the root or principle of all Christian virtues, Gal. v. 6. 1. Tim. i. 5, as that which gives glory to God, Rom. iv. 20, and without which it is impossible to please him, Heb. xi. 6. Surely it is right to believe all that God says." The reader may now judge which of us deny the simple belief of the gospel to be a virtue. But, notwithstanding my express declaration, with the Scripture grounds of it, he still persists in his accusation. And why? Merely because I denied that the principle upon which he argued will hold good in all cases. Having affirmed that "if faith was a mere exercise of the understanding, it would contain no virtue," he adds, "and if faith contained no virtue, unbelief could contain no sin."

* Page 164, 165.

My answer to this was, "That though we should grant the unfounded assertion (viz. of Mr. Fuller) that mere belief contains no virtue, it would not follow that 'unbelief contains no sin;' for such an argument proceeds upon this principle, that if there is no virtue in a thing, there can be no sin in its opposite; but this does not hold true in innumerable instances." I instanced an abstaining from many crimes which might be mentioned; taking food when hungry; believing the testimony of a friend, and I may add, the exercise of mere natural affection, in none of which is there any real moral virtue; yet the opposite of them would be very sinful and vicious. And, to bring the matter to the point in hand, and show the inconclusiveness of Mr. Fuller's reasoning, I made the "supposition that there was no more virtue contained in believing the witness of God than in believing the witness of men," yet even in that case "it does not follow that there would be no sin in unbelief, which is to make God a liar," 1 John v. 10. Now, it is this supposition which Mr. Fuller says "must be allowed to prove that Mr. M., notwithstanding what he has said to the contrary, does not consider faith as containing any virtue.* But, passing this impeachment of my honesty, let us state the matter shortly: Mr. Fuller asserts, "That if faith were a mere exercise of the understanding, it would contain no virtue; and if faith contained no virtue, unbelief could contain no sin." I, on the other hand, maintain, That a believing exercise of the understanding (which alone can be properly termed faith), when it has God or his word for its object, does contain virtue; but that, even supposing Mr. Fuller's assertion were true that it did not contain virtue, yet his conclusion would not follow, viz. that unbelief could contain no sin; because there are many things (some of which I specified) which have no real po-

* Page 165.

sitive virtue or holiness in them, and yet their opposites would be very sinful. Now, as Mr. Fuller denies that there is any virtue in believing God with the understanding (the only faculty with which we can believe any thing,) he must, according to the principle of his argument, also deny that there is any sin in disbelieving God with the understanding, or in holding him in our judgment as a liar. He cannot possibly avoid this shocking conclusion without giving up the general principle upon which his argument hinges, viz. That if there is no virtue in a thing, there can be no sin in its opposite.

He attempts, however, to support this principle by running to the opposite extreme, and affirms that the instances I mention as containing no virtue, such as taking food when hungry, believing the testimony of a friend when we have every reason to do so, the exercise of natural affection, &c. are all virtuous and holy exercises.* But if they are, and if, as he affirms, "even our believing the testimony of a friend when we have every reason to do so, be a virtuous and holy exercise," how comes it that the exercise of our understanding in believing the testimony of God contains no virtue? Is this the only exercise which admits of no holiness in it, nor of sin in its opposite? I hope Mr. Fuller will rather give up his argument than stand to this plain consequence of it.

But wherein consists that holiness which he ascribes to common eating, believing the testimony of a friend, the exercise of natural affection, &c.? Not, surely, in these natural exercises themselves; for then wicked men, and, in some of them, even brute animals would exercise holiness. It must therefore lie in something else, and he very properly places it in the aim of the moral agent, or his doing these things with an eye to the glory of God; while he owns

* Page 167, 168.

“That there may, indeed, be no holiness in these things as performed by apostate creatures.”* Now, as holiness lies not in these exercises themselves, but in the pious aim of the agent; and as they are not universally, nor for the most part, performed with a holy aim; so they sufficiently show that the general principle of Mr. Fuller’s argument does not hold good in innumerable instances, and that I was fully warranted to adduce some of these instances as containing no moral virtue, though their opposites are very sinful. But Mr. Fuller is very tenacious of his argument, and therefore bluntly replies, “This, I am persuaded, is not true.” And how does he prove it to be false? Why, by this argument, “If they were performed as God requires them to be (and as they should be in order to their being the proper opposites to the sins referred to), they would be holy exercises.”† That is, If they were what, in fact, they generally are not, then they would be holy exercises! Mr. Fuller should recollect that the question here does not respect a matter of right, or what things ought to be, but a matter of fact, or what they actually are, and what he himself allows them to be as they are performed by apostate creatures.

But to return to the point; Mr. Fuller, as was observed, affirms, “That if faith were a mere exercise of the understanding, it would contain no virtue.” The expression, “a mere exercise of the understanding,” does not convey to me any distinct idea of faith. The understanding may be exercised in a variety of ways without belief. We may have a clear and speculative conception of many things which we do not consider as real or true. There is a wide difference between understanding the sense of a proposition, and believing the truth of it. Belief is a particular kind of exercise of the understanding, whereby it perceives and

* Page 167.

† Ibid.

realizes the truth of things testified or promised upon proper evidence.

Though the act of the mind which is termed belief must necessarily be of the same general nature in all cases, and though true faith is nothing more than belief; yet belief in all cases, and indeed in most cases, does not contain virtue. The following distinctions may serve to explain this a little.—1. When belief is the effect of mere natural causes, there is no positive holiness in it; but when produced by the illumination of the Holy Spirit and word of God, it must be holy, for the nature of the effect must correspond with its cause; and Mr. Fuller admits, “that the special influences of the Holy Spirit are not required for that which has no holiness in it;”^{*} and “that whatever the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier produces, must resemble his own nature.”[†]—2. When belief is not grounded upon proper evidence, but is chiefly influenced by the will, inclination, or disposition to believe, it is not so properly termed belief as credulity, and does not contain virtue; for the will has no more right to supersede or supply the place of evidence, than it has to reject the clearest proofs; and Mr. Fuller acknowledges that “nothing deserves the name of faith but what is supported by evidence.” First edit. p. 26. That belief also which is grounded merely on the evidence of sense, experience, or human testimony, is not divine faith, or peculiar to real Christians, but is merely natural and common to mankind. But when belief is grounded on proper evidence that God is the author of revelation, and credits that revelation because it is the word of him who cannot lie, but will make good all he hath said, however far transcending the ordinary course of things; such a belief must be holy, for it is grounded on just views of the character of God, and gives him the glory of his power and faithfulness, Rom. iv. 20.—3.

* Page 128.

† Page 171.

When the objects of belief are only natural things, or the common affairs of this world, it has nothing spiritual in it; but when it respects God, and the supernatural truths of his word, it must be a spiritual belief. Mr. Fuller also admits, that, "though believing, simply considered, is a mere natural act, yet believing such things as the gospel reveals must be a spiritual act." First edit. p. 25, 26.—4. With regard to its influence and effects, as belief in general is the main spring in the life of man, without which he could have no rational motive or end in his volitions, affections, or actions; so the belief of divine revelation, and particularly of the gospel, on the authority of God, is represented in Scripture as the main spring in the life of a Christian, or as the root or principle of all Christian virtues, Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6. Tim. i. 5. Heb. xi. 1. John v. 4, 5. Hence it is that the same moral influence and effects upon the will, affections, and life which are ascribed to the word and Spirit of God, are also ascribed to faith. Now, Mr. Fuller admits, that "if faith is the root of holiness, it must be holy itself; for the nature of the fruit corresponds with that of the root."* Thus it appears that the quality of belief depends much on the nature of its productive cause, grounds, objects, and effects. When these are not holy and spiritual, neither is belief; but when they are, belief must be also holy and spiritual; and with this Mr. Fuller seems to agree in every particular. I shall only add,—5. That as without faith, it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6.—as faith is highly commended in Scripture, Mat. xv. 28. Rom. iv. 18—23. Heb. xi.—and as it has the promise of spiritual blessings (Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 15, 36. Acts x. 43. ch. xiii. 39. ch. xvi. 31. Rom. x. 9.) it must be spiritual and holy, or rather the radical principle of all spirituality and holiness. And here I adopt Mr. Fuller's

* Page 166.

criterion of spirituality, viz : that “ whatever has the promise of spiritual blessings, that is considered as a spiritual exercise.”*

The reader will now perceive with what justice Mr. Fuller represents me as denying that faith contains any virtue, and as laboring to establish that principle. It was certainly very unfair in him to catch at a mere supposition, which I made for argument’s sake, and to state it as my real sentiment, though he saw that I expressly opposed that sentiment. Nor was it fair in him to alter my introductory words, viz. “ But though we should grant the unfounded assertion, that mere belief contains no virtue,” &c. and to substitute the following, “ If mere belief contains no virtue,” &c.† as if I had really admitted that it did not. But, whatever holiness may be ascribed to faith, still I maintain that it is credence or belief, and nothing else ; and, with respect to the efficacy ascribed to it in justification, that must be laid to the account of its object ; its own intrinsic power, virtue, or holiness, being out of the question.

It has already been shown that Mr. Fuller, very inconsistently, both admits and denies “ that faith is credence, and nothing else ;” and that not merely in some inadvertent and occasional expressions, but in a train of reasoning on both sides of the question. But the whole scope of his Appendix goes to deny that faith (be its cause, grounds, objects, or effects what they may) can be a holy principle, unless it arise from a previous moral state of the heart, and be produced by an act of the will. But though the gospel is of such a salutary and interesting nature, that no man can be believing it if his will continues either averse or indifferent to it, yet belief is not an act of the will ; for, could we suppose a man ever so much inclined to work himself up into a persuasion of its truth, yet he cannot give real credit

* Page 74.

† Page 164.

to it till he perceive it to be the testimony of God. If he could, what is the use of all that accumulated divine evidence which attended and confirmed it at its first publication? Was it not written and recorded for this express purpose, "that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through his name?" John xx. 31. It is this evidence which makes the command to believe reasonable, and which leaves those who believe not altogether without excuse, John xv. 22, 24. But I shall attend a little to the manner of his reasoning on this subject.

His main arguments seem to be grounded on the following principle, viz: "I scarcely can conceive of a truth more self-evident than this, That God's commands extend ONLY to that which comes under the influence of the will."*

But the principle here laid down, is so far from being self-evident, that to me it does not appear evident at all. That the commands of God extend both to the will, and to that which comes under its influence, I freely admit; but that they extend ONLY to these, I deny; for it is evident, particularly in the present case, that they extend ALSO to the belief of the revealed truths and motives by which the will itself is influenced. None of his commands whatever extend to blind volitions, enjoining consent to, or acquiescence in any thing which is supposed to be neither perceived nor believed in the judgment; nor could any actings of the will in such a case, supposing them to exist, be of a holy nature, or acceptable to God. The first and great commandment of the law is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, which certainly respects the exercise of the will and affections, and that obedience which comes under their influence; but it is equally evident that this presupposes a belief "that God is;" that he is holy, just, and good; "and

that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Without this belief, or previous to it, there cannot, in the nature of things, be any holy exercise of the will and affections towards God, nor any acceptable obedience to him, Heb. xi. 6. Every command of God, therefore, extends not only to the will, and what falls under its influence, but also to the belief of the motives he sets before us, to influence the will itself. And I cannot conceive of a truth more self-evident than this, that every holy motion of the will and affections towards God, always presupposes the mind's perception and belief of some manifestation which God hath made of himself.

The gospel exhibits the most glorious manifestation of the character of God, and of his good-will to guilty men ; but as that can have no influence on the will and affections till it is perceived and believed, so belief is the first and great commandment which accompanies the declaration of the gospel. Now, a command to believe, supposes something spoken or revealed by God, and proposed as the matter or object of belief. Without this, belief would be an absolute impossibility, and so not a duty. A command to believe also supposes sufficient evidence afforded, that what is declared or testified is a revelation from God, and therefore true. Without this, belief would be credulity, a weakness of mind which exposes to all manner of imposition and deception, and cannot be commanded of God. But as God has sufficiently manifested himself to be the Author of revelation, so the command to believe that, is a command to believe his own word, with whom it is impossible to lie. In this case unbelief is not merely the effect of ignorance, but of aversion of heart to the truth ; and so unbelievers are represented not only as blind, but as hating the light, and closing their eyes lest they should see it, John iii. 19, 20. Acts xxviii. 27. It is a treating of God himself as a liar, and so a sin of the first magnitude. But it

does not follow from this that faith must be influenced by a previous moral state of the heart, or produced by the active exercise of the will, any more than it follows that its merit must be equal to the demerit of unbelief. Though, in believing, the will does not resist light and evidence, but gives place to it ; and though when the truth is believed, it heartily acquiesces in it, yet belief itself is not produced by the will, but by the word and Spirit of God enlightening the mind, to perceive the truth and its evidence. It is of his own will, not ours, that God begets us to the faith with the word of truth, James i. 18. Every thing that is holy in the state of the heart, or exercise of the will and affections, is the effect of the truth believed ; for faith purifies the heart, and worketh by love, but is itself the gift of God.

In support of the above principle, he says, " Knowledge can be no further a duty, nor ignorance a sin, than as each is influenced by the moral state of the heart ; and the same is true of faith and unbelief."*

But if faith " be no further a duty, but as influenced by the moral state of the heart," then it can be no man's duty to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, till he is previously possessed of that moral state. Till then, neither the revelation of God's testimony with its evidence, his faithfulness in that testimony, nor his command to believe it, can, according to this, constitute faith a duty, nor unbelief a sin ! So that the obligation which makes it a duty to believe God, must be founded entirely on some previous good disposition wrought within us, and not in any objective revelation, or command of God in his word. Again, if faith is not a duty, unless it arises from a previous moral state of the heart, then no man who adopts this opinion will find himself warranted to believe, till he knows that the state of his heart is changed. This must be its unavoid-

* Page 163.

able effect, so far as it operates; and, in my opinion, a very pernicious one. To say that he “cannot possibly be conscious of this change till he has believed,”* is no answer at all to this. It is only saying, that in his first believing, he cannot possibly avoid presumption. Further, to assert that faith cannot be genuine, and so a duty, unless it arise from a previous moral state of the heart, is to take for granted the very point at issue, though the regular exercise of our faculties, the Scripture instances of conversion, the nature of the means to which that change is ascribed, &c. all militate against that assertion. It is contrary to the regular exercise of our faculties that the state of the heart should be changed previous to any illumination of the mind, or while the soul is in a state of total ignorance and unbelief. It does not agree with the Scripture instances of conversion; for in none of them do we read of any real change in the state of the heart previous to their hearing the word and its influence, though some might be less prejudiced and more candid than others. Nor does it comport with the nature of the means with which the Spirit concurs in producing that change, and to which it is always ascribed, viz. the word of God; for it is obvious, that if the word is the means, it can have no influence in changing the state of the heart any farther than it is understood and believed.

He thinks, “We might as well make a passive admission of light into the eye, or of sound into the ear, duties, as a passive admission of truth into the mind.”†

But I see no reason why believing should be considered as a mere passive admission of truth into the mind. The truths of revelation are not like surrounding material objects which obtrude and act upon our bodily senses. They respect things spiritual and invisible, and are brought to the view of our minds merely by means of testimony, and

* Page 163.

† Ibid.

therefore our belief of that testimony requires the mind's attention to, and consideration of its import and evidence. The gospel report, indeed, comes to us unsolicited, and faith comes by hearing that report, and by the divine influence which accompanies it; yet believing itself is the proper exercise of our own minds, and we are no otherwise passive in believing the testimony of God than we are in believing the testimony of men to which it is compared. But, with regard to that previous moral state of the heart which, in Mr. Fuller's opinion, makes faith a duty, it is a thing wherein the mind is perfectly passive; for, according to him, it is produced immediately by the Spirit operating upon the will without the word, or any truth communicated to the judgment, and in which the soul is not only passive, but of which it is altogether unconscious:* yet from this passive and unconscious moral state of the heart, he supposes the duty and activity of faith to arise; and this faith he describes to be a receiving the truth into the heart, or a voluntary acquiescence in it. But it is obvious to the common sense of mankind, that no truth can be acquiesced in by the will, or received into the affections, till it is first perceived and believed. And this self-evident truth interferes with all Mr. Fuller's arguments on this head.

In the foregoing part of his book he asserts, "That if faith were wholly an intellectual and not a moral exercise, nothing more than rationality, or a capacity of understanding the nature of evidence, would be necessary to it. In this case it would not be a duty, nor would unbelief be a sin, but a mere mistake of the judgment. Nor could there be any need of divine influence; for the special influences of the Holy Spirit are not required for the production of that which has no holiness in it."†

Here he plainly denies that it is a duty to believe the di-

* Page 135.

† Page 123.

vine testimony merely with the intellect, or that power of the mind termed the understanding, though it is by that alone we can perceive its import and evidence, and assent to its truth. Had he only denied that there can be any real belief of the gospel when it does not influence the will and affections, I should most heartily subscribe to it ; but to deny that a belief of the gospel with the understanding is itself a duty, is to deny that we are under any obligation to believe God ; nay, it is in effect to deny that it is our duty to acquiesce in, or love the truth ; for that depends entirely on a previous perception and belief of it, and can have no existence without this.

He not only denies that believing God with the understanding is a duty, but adds, “nor in this case would unbelief be a sin, but a mere mistake of the judgment.” But this can only be true upon one or both of the following suppositions, Either that God has not given a clear revelation of the truth, and supported it with sufficient evidence ; or, if he has, That there is no moral turpitude in mental error. But both these suppositions are absolutely false ; and therefore unbelief in those who have access to hear the gospel, is not a mere mistake of the judgment, but a most heinous sin, and in this case altogether without excuse, as our Lord expressly declares, *John xv. 22, 25* ; so that, though faith is not the exercise of the will, but of a spiritually enlightened judgment whereby the will is moved ; yet unbelief arises not merely from ignorance, but also from the aversion of the will whereby the judgment is blinded, and most unreasonably prejudiced against the truth.

He affirms, that “aversion of heart is the only obstruction to faith ; that the removal of that aversion is the kind of influence necessary to produce it—that the mere force of evidence, however clear, will not change the disposition of the heart,” and that “in this case therefore, and this only, it

requires the exceeding greatness of divine power to enable a sinner to believe.”* Now, as he restricts the influences of the Holy Spirit entirely to the will, and speaks so diminutively of the understanding, denying that its exercise in believing the gospel is a duty, or of a holy nature, so as to require the influence of the Holy Spirit to produce it; I think it plainly appears from all this, that he does not consider the understanding as the subject of any part of regeneration, or as capable of it; or if he does, he must consider it as changed into something else than the understanding, something more than rationality, or a capacity of understanding the nature of evidence,” and its exercise into something else than a perception and belief of the truth,

But the word of God speaks very differently on this head. It represents the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of the mind, with regard to spiritual things, as the source of men’s alienation from the life of God, and of their rebellion against him, Eph. iv. 18, 19, as that by which Satan reigns in and maintains his power over the minds of men, Acts xxvi. 18, Eph. vi. 12, Col. i. 13, and under which he endeavors still to keep them, notwithstanding the publication of the gospel, by blinding their minds lest the light of it should shine into them, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. On the other hand, the regeneration and conversion of sinners is represented as effected by means of light communicated to the understanding. It is described as the opening of their eyes by means of the gospel, turning them from darkness to light, and so from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18, as a delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, Col. i. 13. The new man is said to be renewed in knowledge, chap. iii. 10, and the spiritual man to discern the things of the Spirit as revealed in the gospel, 1 Cor. ii. 15, and hence it is term-

ed spiritual understanding, Col. i. 9. Paul prays in behalf of the Ephesian believers for a further illumination of their understanding by the Spirit, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know," &c. Eph. i. 17, 18. With regard to faith, it is plain that it has its seat in an enlightened understanding. Those on whom the word has its proper effect, are they who hear and UNDERSTAND it, Matt. xiii. 23, and the highest degree of faith is termed "the full assurance of UNDERSTANDING," Col. ii. 2. Many other passages might be produced to the same purpose; but these are sufficient to show that the understanding is the subject of regeneration as well as the will; that the Holy Spirit exerts his special influence upon it, and that faith has its seat there. Further, as the word is the means of regeneration and sanctification, it is plain that it must be understood and believed in the judgment previous to its influence upon the will.

He observes, that the mere force of evidence, however clear, will not change "the disposition of the heart." I admit that it will not, unless it be the evidence of something which is exceedingly important, engaging, and interesting, appearing to the mind through the enlightening influence of the Spirit. But does he mean to deny that the glorious gospel is mighty through God to pull down strong holds, cast down reasonings, &c. and so to change the disposition of the heart? If so, then he must deny that men are regenerated and sanctified through the truth, or by the incorruptible seed of the word, John xvii. 17. 1 Pet. i. 23.

Christ says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who has sent me draw him," John vi. 44. On this he observes, "That the only bar to which our Lord refers, lies in that reluctance or aversion which the drawing of the

Father implies and removes.”* That God removes the aversion of the will is freely granted ; but how, or in what order ? By an immediate influence upon it, previous to any communication of spiritual light to the judgment ? No ; for Christ, in the following verse, explains this drawing to be by divine teaching : “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore who hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me,” ver. 45. It is evident, therefore, that there is a bar of ignorance to be removed as well as of aversion, and that the former must be removed in order to a removal of the latter. Peter, addressing the Jews, says, “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers,” Acts iii. 17 ; but Mr. Fuller, upon his principle, would have told them that it was only through aversion they did it, and that though they knew, yet they crucified the Lord of glory. Paul says, “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief,” 1 Tim. i. 13 ; but Mr. Fuller would have told him, that had he been duly convinced of his sin, he would have been sensible that he did it knowingly, and that his unbelief was nothing but aversion.

I shall now take notice of his arguments from Scripture to prove that faith is more than belief, as arising from, and partaking of a moral state of the heart. He observes,

“First, That faith is a grace of the Holy Spirit,” and from this infers that it must be of a spiritual and holy nature resembling its divine origin. †

By a grace I suppose he means a fruit of the Spirit, and in this I fully agree with him ; for faith is the gift of God, and is given on the behalf of Christ, Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29 ; and I have also inferred from this, that it must be spiritual and holy (see before, p. 38.) But yet we differ as to what faith itself is. I view it as the belief of a spiritually

* Page 65.

† Page 171.

enlightened understanding ; but he considers it as consisting chiefly of the consent or acquiescence of the will, and denies it to be holy in any other view. But he proceeds,

“ Secondly, Faith is that in the exercise of which we give glory to God, Rom. iv. 20.—If faith be what Mr. M‘Lean acknowledges it to be, a duty, and an exercise of obedience, its possessing such a tendency is easily conceived ; but if it be a passive reception of the truth, on which the moral state of the heart has no influence, how can such a property be ascribed to it ?”*

I do consider it as an indispensable duty to believe all that God says, and look upon it as obedience, because he hath commanded it. As to the nature of faith itself, I have no other idea of it than that which the apostle gives of Abraham’s faith in the passage referred to. Nothing can be plainer than that it was his believing God’s promise respecting his seed, (Gen. xv. 4—7.) And, notwithstanding he knew that its accomplishment was altogether above the power of nature, or any fitness in himself, yet being the promise of a faithful and almighty God, 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 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,” &c. v. 18—22. Thus, in believing God’s promise, he gave him the glory of his power and faithfulness. This account of Abraham’s faith is too plain to need any comment ; and what a contrast does it form to the numerous and jarring descriptions of faith with which the world has since

been pestered and puzzled ! The apostle intends it not only as a description, but commendation of Abraham's faith, as an example of ours, ver. 23, 24, 25. Yet he says nothing of the previous moral state of Abraham's heart, whatever that was, nor of the actings of his will and affections, which now make the capital figure in modern definitions of faith. Nothing is mentioned but simply his believing God according to that which was spoken, and the strength of his belief. And indeed nothing could be more foreign, or even opposite to the apostle's purpose, than to dwell upon Abraham's virtuous and holy dispositions when setting him forth as an example of God's justifying the ungodly by faith without works. Another argument he uses is,

“Thirdly, Faith is represented as depending upon choice, or the state of the heart towards God;” for which he cites John xi. 40. ch. v. 44. Mark ix. 23..*

As to John xi. 40, it contains our Lord's words to Martha respecting the resurrection of her brother, when she appeared to be staggered at the circumstance of his having been so long dead, and are intended to strengthen her faith; “Said I not unto thee, If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ?” i. e. his miraculous power displayed. Mr. Fuller here lays the stress upon the English auxiliary verb wouldest, to show that her belief depended upon her choice. Yet he knows that Martha was a believer in Christ already, ver. 27 ;* that she believed her brother would be raised at the last day, ver. 24 ; and not only so, but that Jesus could have prevented his death, or even now raise him up if he pleased, ver. 21, 22. What, then, was the belief which now depended on her will ? Was it a belief that Christ could or would then raise her brother ? And does Mr. Fuller think that she did not choose to believe this, or that her doubt arose from aversion to it ? I should like

* Page 172.

to know how he accounts for that slowness of heart which appeared in the disciples to believe the resurrection of their Lord, Mark xvi. 11, 14. Luke xxiv. 11, 25. Will he attribute it entirely to their disinclination, or aversion of heart to that joyful event? The truth is, believers may have occasional doubts which do not arise from aversion of heart to the truth, but from remaining ignorance, or the absence of evidence from the mind; but these doubts are not removed by an act of their will, but by a renewed perception of light and evidence in the judgment. Men frequently have doubts respecting things while they earnestly wish them to be true.

With respect to John v. 44. "How CAN ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" they are Christ's words to the unbelieving Jews, and point out one great cause of their unbelief, viz. their love of human applause or honor, with their mutual exchange of it among themselves, whereby their consciences were fortified against conviction of sin, and their spiritual pride and self-righteousness supported; so that while this was the case, they could not believe on the Saviour of lost sinners. But Christ does not here insinuate that their believing depended on their choice, or that any will really seek the honor which cometh from God only, before they believe the way of acceptance with him.

Another text is Mark ix. 23. "Jesus saith unto him, If thou CANST believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." On this he asks, "If believing had no dependence upon choice, or the state of the heart, how is it that our Saviour should suspend the healing of the child, upon the parents being able to exercise it? Did he suspend his mercy upon the performance of a natural impossibility; or upon something on which the state of the heart had no influence?"* To this I answer, that belief is a na-

* Page 172.

tural impossibility in all cases where there is no information or evidence given ; for “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard,” Rom. x. 14, and though this had been the case with the parent of the child, yet Christ might justly suspend the cure till that natural impossibility was removed. But it is plain that he must have heard something of Christ’s fame as to miraculous cures, and given some credit to it, otherwise he would not have applied. The disappointment he met with in his application to the disciples, might raise or increase his doubts if even the power of their master extended to that case ; and this seems to have been the state of his mind in addressing him thus, “If thou CANST do any thing, have compassion on us.” But it does not appear that this doubt arose from his want of will, or his not choosing to believe that Christ was able to cure his child ; for nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to be fully persuaded of this. Nor was his doubt removed by an act of his own will, (though not against it,) but by Christ’s reply to him, assuring him of the sufficiency of his power, if he only gave credit to it, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

“Fourthly, Faith is frequently represented as implying repentance for sin, which is acknowledged on all hands to be a holy exercise,” Mark i. 15. Matt. xxi. 32. 2 Tim. ii. 25.*

There is no dispute about whether faith implies repentance for sin. It implies many things which it does not include in its nature. For instance, it implies both its necessary causes and inseparable effects ; but these are not faith itself. He observes, that “it does not come up to the Scripture representation to say, repentance is a fruit of faith ;” yet he owns, “that a conviction of the being and

attributes of God, must, in the order of nature, precede repentance," i. e. even legal repentance ; and he also admits, that "whenever the Scriptures speak of repentance as followed by the remission of sins, it will be allowed that faith is supposed ; for repentance without faith could not please God, nor have any connection with the promise of forgiveness." This, I think, is to admit that repentance unto life is a fruit of faith in Christ. But then he says, "faith without repentance would not be genuine." I grant it ; but neither would faith without works be genuine ; yet as faith and works are not the same, neither is faith and repentance, though they are more immediately connected.

"Fifthly, Faith is often expressed by terms which indicate the exercise of affection. It is called receiving Christ, John i. 12,—receiving the love of the truth, that we may be saved, 2 Thess. ii. 10.—In true believers Christ's words have place, which is more than a mere assent of the understanding, John viii. 37,—they, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, Luke viii. 15."*

As to receiving Christ, Mr. Fuller himself admits that it is "distinct from the belief of the truth as an inseparable effect is distinct from its cause," (see before, p. 44,) and that "receiving him, in the order of things, follows upon believing the truth concerning him."† Yet I own that receiving the testimony of God concerning him, is the same as believing in him.—All who truly believe the truth receive the love of it, because they perceive and believe the loveliness of what it reveals ; but this does not prove that faith and love are the same.—Christ's words have place in believers ; but how does this show that faith is more than an assent of the understanding?—Those who have heard and believed the word, keep, (or retain) it in an honest and good heart, as I have already shown (see before, p. 22, 23 ;) but what is this

* Page 174.

† Page 203.

to Mr. Fuller's purpose? None of these passages prove that faith is the exercise of affection, or that belief and love are the same, though in this case they are inseparable.

“Sixthly, Belief is expressly said to be with the heart, Rom. x. 9, 10; with all the heart, Acts viii. 37.”*

I have answered this already (see p. 47, 48,) and shall only here take notice of his explanation of these expressions; he says, “Doing any thing with the heart, or with all the heart, are modes of speaking never used in Scripture, I believe, for the mere purpose of expressing what is internal or mental, and which may pertain only to the understanding: they rather denote the quality of unfeignedness, a quality repeatedly ascribed to faith, 1 Tim. i. 5, 2 Tim. i. 5, and which marks an honesty of heart which is essential to it.” I have not the least objection to the positive part of this explanation; for if a man does not believe unfeignedly, he does not, properly speaking, believe at all, but only professes it with his mouth hypocritically. But I am perfectly at a loss to conceive what more there is in an unfeigned (or *ἀνυπόκριτος*, unhypocritical) belief, than a real internal or mental belief with the understanding. I suspect it will require something beyond metaphysics itself to explain this, though I own I am no adept in that science.

“Seventhly, The want of faith is ascribed to MORAL CAUSES, OR TO THE WANT OF A RIGHT DISPOSITION OF HEART.” John v. 38—44, chap. viii. 45—47.†

This is granted; for when the outward light and evidence of the gospel is set before men, something more than simple ignorance must be the cause of their rejecting it, and so it is ascribed also to aversion; but it does not follow from this, that any thing more than that same light and evidence of the gospel, properly perceived and understood, through

* Page 175.

† Page 175, 176.

the enlightening influence of the Spirit, is necessary to produce faith, and so to remove that aversion.

“Lastly, Unbelief is not a mere error of the understanding, but a positive and practical rejection of the gospel. John viii. 45, 46, 47.”*

This argument is much the same with the last, and requires only the same answer; but I may add, that though unbelief is not a mere error of the understanding, yet there is some very essential error of the understanding included in it, as the Scriptures abundantly testify; and therefore to affirm (as Mr. Fuller constantly does) that unbelief “is owing only to the aversion of men’s hearts, and nothing else,”† is to contradict a great number of the plainest passages in the word of God, and to deny that any direct illumination of the understanding is necessary to produce faith. It is to affirm, that an unbeliever may have the same ideas and conviction of the evil and demerit of sin, and the same discernment and belief of the truth and excellency of the gospel that a believer has, and that the only difference lies in the will or disposition of the heart.

Indeed, if Mr. Fuller’s sentiments and reasoning on this subject be just, there must be a great deal of improprieties in Scripture language, which cannot fail to mislead us. Peter and James inform us, that men are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, 1 Pet. i. 23, James i. 18. But Mr. Fuller tells us, that, strictly speaking, this is not the case, for that they are born again of the Spirit without the word.‡ The Scripture frequently attributes unbelief to ignorance, or not understanding the truth, as one cause of it in those who hear the gospel, Matt. xiii. 19, Acts iii. 17, Rom. x. 3, 1 Tim. i. 13. But Mr. Fuller argues against this, as if it were a natural inability, like what arises from want of information or natural capacity, and so inconsistent

* Page 176.

† Page 177.

‡ Page 210.

with a moral one ;* and therefore ascribes unbelief entirely to aversion. Paul affirms, that faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. But Mr. Fuller affirms, that it “ cannot with any propriety be termed the gift of God ; but he gives us that from which it immediately follows.”† Now, if there are so many improprieties in the language of Scripture on this subject, “ whence does it appear that the inspired writers wrote or spoke intelligibly ?”

In my Treatise on the Commission of Christ, after having shown that true faith must be distinguished by its genuine effects on the heart and life, and having pointed out some of its immediate effects on the heart, I add : “ But these effects of faith, or, which is the same, of the truth believed, ought not to be confounded with faith itself, as is commonly done. Though faith is the confidence of things hoped for, and also worketh by love ; yet it is neither hope nor love, for the apostle distinguisheth it from both ; And now abideth faith, hope, love, these THREE, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. The same may be said of all its other effects upon the heart ; for whatever is more than belief is more than faith, and ought to go by another name,” p. 82, 83. And in a note below I take notice of what Mr. Fuller had said on this passage in his letter, viz. that “ faith, hope, and love are THREE, considered only in respect of their objects.” But he denies that he “ ever thought of affirming that they are three only in that view.”‡ If not, why did he give this view as expressive of the sense of the passage ? Does the apostle affirm that they are three in different senses ? He says, “ My argument only required me to point out a sense in which they were distinct, provided they were not so in respect of their holy nature.”§ This, I am obliged to say, is a mere evasion. He knew I never disputed the holiness of their nature ; and he was also sensible that his argument

* Page 120. † Page 209. ‡ Page 199. § Ibid.

required him to deny that they are distinct in themselves ; for to admit this, would be to give up his argument, and therefore he places the distinction of faith, hope, and love in their objects : “the object of faith being revealed truth—of hope, future good—and of love, the holy amiableness of God, and of whatever bears his image.”

In answer to this I observed, “That the apostle is not speaking of the objects of faith, hope, and love, but of themselves ; and if they are not three as distinguished from each other, their objects can never make them three. The apostle says, the GREATEST of these is love ; but love is not greater than faith and hope in respect of its object, but in its own nature ; which shows that faith, hope, and love, are different from each other, and properly termed three.” Now, what reply does Mr. Fuller make to this ? only the following : “I see no solidity in Mr. M^cLean’s objection to an objective distinction.”* This is a very easy reply ; but I can excuse him for once, being confident that if a better had occurred to him, it should not be wanting. The whole drift of his reasoning on the nature of faith is to confound it with love, hope, and other fruits of the Spirit ; and though the apostle distinguishes them numerically as three, and expressly says, that love is the greatest of these three ; yet he professes to see nothing solid in my objection to a mere objective distinction, i. e. he sees no reason why it may not be admitted that love has a greater object than either faith or hope have ! But, though this absurdity were admitted, it would not favor his cause ; for love could not have a greater object than faith has, unless it were distinct from it.

Mr. Fuller was sensible that he could not answer my objection to his view of this passage, and therefore has recourse to misrepresentation. “Mr. M^cLean,” he says,

* page 199.

“thinks that faith, love, and hope are distinct as to their nature.”—True; but then he adds—“and that the excellency ascribed to love, consists in its being holy; whereas faith is not so.”* Had he given this as an inference of his own from my view of faith, it might pass as a piece of reasoning, however unfair; but to state it directly as my sentiment, or as what I think, is, I am sorry to say, a violation of truth, and altogether unworthy of Mr. Fuller. He also affirms, that “It has been farther objected,” viz: to the holiness of faith, “that the reception of God’s testimony is compared to a reception of a human testimony; and as a disposition of heart, whether holy or unholy, is not necessary to the one, so neither is it to the other.”† But this objection is entirely of Mr. Fuller’s own framing; and he well knows that the note he alludes to (Commission, p. 75,) contains no objection to the holiness of faith, as I have already abundantly shown. See before, page 55, 56. Further, he amuses his readers with part of a private conversation which passed between us at Kettering: “Mr. M‘Lean, when asked whether hope did not imply desire, and desire love? answered, Yes, hope is a modification of love. It was replied, Then you have given up your argument.”‡ It may, perhaps, have been inaccurate to term hope a modification of

* Page 199.

† Ibid.

‡ Page 199. Mr. Fuller has written this to several of his correspondents both in England and Scotland; some of his letters I had seen before I took notice of it in the note, Commission, p. 82. My visit to Mr. Fuller was not with a view to litigate points, but to cultivate intimacy and friendship. I therefore declined following out any dispute upon differences which occurred in conversation; but promised to write him my thoughts upon these things when I got home, which I accordingly did. If he thinks it dangerous to correspond with authors even when names are concealed, it must be much more so to converse with those of them who wish to take advantage, and publish names. His proclamation of victory, however, is rather premature.

love, as it seems to throw down the apostolic distinction between them. All I meant was, that hope implies love; and I might have added, that despair, its very opposite, also implies love, without in the least giving up my argument. But let us bring the matter to the principles of common sense. An agreeable and interesting object, believed or realized in the mind as such, excites love or desire. A probable prospect of obtaining it, is 1 of ϵ . The want of this is despair. But the actual enjoyment of the object, while it perfects love, admits of neither hope nor despair. Here the following two things are obvious, 1. That the distinction in the above cases is not objective; for faith, love, desire, hope, and despair, relate only to one object. 2. That though both hope and despair imply love to that object, yet they are not the same as love, for love exists most perfectly without them. I cannot therefore give up my argument, that faith, love, and hope are three, considered in themselves, and that love is the greatest of these three, till I find a more solid reason for doing so than anything which Mr. Fuller has yet advanced. Nay, I am confident that Mr. Fuller must give up his argument, before he can give any explanation of this passage that will bear examination.

Though faith, hope, and love are all holy fruits of the Spirit, and inseparably connected in the hearts of true Christians while in this pilgrimage state; yet love is the greatest of them both in respect of its nature and duration.—1. It is the greatest of them in respect of its nature, as being more like God, or bearing more of his moral image than either faith or hope. We are expressly and repeatedly told that “God is love,” 1 John iv. 7, 8, 16; but it does not appear that either faith or hope can with any propriety be ascribed to the Divine Being; for as his wisdom, knowledge and understanding are infinite, and extend immediately to every thing, he has no occasion to receive any thing upon testimony; and as he is possessed of perfect happi-

ness in and of himself, and has every thing that pleases him immediately in his power, so there is no room to hope or wish for any thing beyond this. It is evident that faith and hope, however excellent, are peculiar to dependent and imperfect creatures, and are adapted to our present state, while as yet we have not the immediate sight and possession of their objects. 2. Love is the greatest in respect of its duration. The state of things to which faith and hope are adapted will come to an end. Their objects are things not seen, and made known to us at present only by the divine testimony and promise; but when they become objects of sight and enjoyment, there will be no more occasion for faith and hope; "for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?" Rom. viii. 24. They will then give place to the immediate vision and fruition of their objects. But love never faileth. That which supersedes faith and hope perfects love, which shall endure for ever in the glorified state.

A time shall come, when constant faith
 And patient hope shall die;
 One lost in certainty of sight,
 And one dissolv'd in joy.

But love shall last when these no more
 Shall warm the pilgrim's breast,
 Or open on his dying eyes
 His long-expected rest:

Love's unextinguish'd ray shall burn
 Through death, unchang'd its frame:
 Its lamp shall triumph o'er the grave
 With uncorrupted flame.

Thus it appears that faith, hope, and love, are in the strictest propriety of speech termed three, and that the greatest of these is love. And therefore every attempt to con-

found faith and love, particularly on the point of a sinner's acceptance with God, is to pervert the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith only.

QUESTION III.

WHETHER JUSTIFYING FAITH RESPECTS GOD AS THE
JUSTIFIER OF THE UNGODLY?

ON this important question I shall, 1. Recite what I have already advanced in my Treatise on the Commission of Christ ; and then—2. Examine Mr. Fuller's sentiments on this subject.

What I have advanced on this subject in the Commission is contained in the following words :

“It will perhaps be asked, Why so nice in distinguishing here ? What harm can arise from including in the nature of faith such holy dispositions, affections, and exercises of heart, as are confessedly inseparable from it ? In answer to this, let it be considered,

“1. That unless we carefully distinguish faith from its effects, particularly on the point of a sinner's acceptance with God, the important doctrine of free justification by faith alone will be materially affected. The Scriptures pointedly declare, That God justifies sinners “FREELY BY HIS GRACE, through the REDEMPTION that is in Jesus Christ,” Rom. iii. 24, and that this justification is received “through FAITH in Christ's blood,” ver. 25. Faith in this case is always distinguished from, and opposed to the works

of the law, Rom. iii. 26, 27, 28. chap. ix. 32, Gal. ii. 16, chap. iii. 9—15, not merely of the ceremonial law which was peculiar to the Jews ; but of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, Rom. iii. 20, which says, “Thou shalt not covet,” chap. vii. 7, and which requires not only outward good actions, but love and every good disposition of heart, both towards God and our neighbor, Matt. xxii. 37—41 ; so that the works of this law respect the heart as well as life. The distinction therefore between faith and works, on this subject, is not that which is between inward and outward conformity to the law ; for if faith is not in this case distinguished from, and opposed to our conformity to the law both outwardly and inwardly, it cannot be said that we are “justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” Rom. iii. 28, or that God “justifieth the UNGODLY,” chap. iv. 5. Faith, indeed, as a principle of action, “worketh by love ;” but it is not as thus working that it is imputed for righteousness ; for it is expressly declared that righteousness is imputed “to him that WORKETH NOT, but BELIEVETH ON him that justifieth the ungodly.”—“It is of FAITH that it might be by GRACE,” chap. iv. 16, and grace and works are in this case represented as incompatible with each other, chap. xi. 6 ; for “to him that WORKETH is the reward not reckoned of GRACE but of DEBT,” chap. iv. 4. Now, when men include in the very nature of justifying faith such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary (no matter under what consideration) to a sinner’s acceptance with God, it perverts the apostle’s doctrine upon this important subject, and makes justification to be, at least, “as it were by the works of the law.”

“2. The effect of such doctrine upon the mind of an awakened sinner is obvious. He who conceives that, in order to his pardon and acceptance with God, he must first be possessed of such good dispositions and holy affections

as are commonly included in the nature of faith, will find no immediate relief from the gospel, nor any thing in it which fully reaches his case while he views himself merely as a guilty sinner. Instead of believing on him that justifieth the ungodly, he believes, on the contrary, that he cannot be justified till he sustains an opposite character. Though Christ died for sinners—for the ungodly, yet he does not believe that Christ's death will be of any benefit to him as a mere sinner, but as possessed of holy dispositions; nor does he expect relief to his conscience purely and directly from the atonement, but through the medium of a better opinion of his own heart or character. This sentiment, if he is really concerned about the salvation of his soul, must set him upon attempts to reform his heart, and to do something under the notion of acting faith, that he may be justified; and all his endeavors, prayers, and religious exercises will be directed to that end." Commission of Christ, page 83, 84, 85.

The reader has here before him the whole of that passage which Mr. Fuller so strenuously opposes, and loads with the most odious consequences. He will perceive that I am not here speaking of faith as it works by love, or as a principle of sanctification, or holiness of heart and life (which I had mentioned a little before,) but merely as it relates to justification, or respects the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God; so that, whatever Mr. Fuller opposes to it, must be restricted to that point, otherwise it is nothing to the purpose. The reader will also observe, that I am not here denying that faith itself is a holy principle; but I am opposing those who "include in the very nature of faith as justifying, such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary to a sinner's acceptance with God." This I consider as perverting the doctrine of justification by faith alone. I had no particular view to Mr. Fuller in this, it being a

thing too common with many ; but as he finds himself concerned to defend it, he ought to do it in plain and express terms, and deny that sinners are justified by faith only, that there is any thing peculiar to faith in justification, or that it is any more calculated to exclude boasting, and to correspond with grace in this matter, than if we were justified by love, or the exercise of any other virtue. But, instead of this, he involves the subject in a train of reasoning, wherein he sometimes appears to me both to admit and deny the same things alternately.

What I have said of the effects of this doctrine on the minds of awakened sinners, is, I am confident, fully verified in the experience of all who have seriously come under its proper influence. An awakened sinner asks, "What must I do to be saved?" and an apostle answers, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," showing him at the same time what he is to believe, and thus he is relieved and made happy, Acts xvi. 30—35. But a preacher of the doctrine I am opposing would have taught him another lesson. He might, indeed, in compliance with scripture language, use the word believe ; but he would tell him that, in this case, it did not bear its usual sense, that it was not the assent of his understanding in giving credit to the testimony of the gospel, but a grace arising from a previous spiritual principle, and including in it a number of holy affections and dispositions of heart, all which he must exercise and set a working in order to his being justified ; and many directions will be given him how he is to perform this. But this is to destroy the freedom of the gospel, and to make the hope of a sinner turn upon his finding some virtuous exercises and dispositions in his own heart, instead of placing it directly in the work finished by the Son of God upon the cross. In opposition to this I maintain, that whatever virtue or holiness may be supposed in the nature of faith itself, as it is not the ground of a sinner's justification

in the sight of God, so neither does it enter into the consideration of the person who is really believing unto righteousness. He views himself not as exercising virtue, but only as a mere sinner, while he believes on him that justifieth the UNCOD-
LY through the atonement. This view of the divine character, at which others startle so much, is to him most precious, as being the only view which suits his case, and which alone can give him hope. And though he must be conscious that he now perceives and believes the gospel ground of hope, and experiences relief from it; yet he can ascribe no holiness to himself on that account. His thoughts centre entirely in the object of his belief as all his salvation and all his desire. And if before this he has been seriously engaged in religious exercises to pacify his conscience and make his peace with God, he will now be so far from looking upon these as having prepared him for Christ, or contributed to his present relief, that he will consider them as having had a contrary tendency.

Mr. Fuller sometimes seems to agree with the above statement, at least in part. He admits, that "though faith, as a principle of action, worketh by love; yet it is not as thus working, that it is imputed for righteousness.—That justification by faith is opposed to justification by the works of the law, even those works which are internal as well as those which are external.—That faith is not supposed to justify us as a work, or holy exercise, or as being any part of that which is accounted unto us for righteousness; but merely as that which unites to Christ, for the sake of whose righteousness alone we are accepted."* And with regard to the view which a sinner has of his own character when he believes in Jesus, he says, "He that believeth in Jesus Christ, must believe in him as he is revealed in the gospel: and that is as the Saviour of sinners. It is only

* Page 178, 182.

as a sinner, exposed to the righteous displeasure of God, that he must approach him. If he think of coming to him as a favorite of heaven, or as possessed of any good qualities which may recommend him before other sinners, he deceives his soul: such notions are the bar to believing.”*—He worketh not with respect to justification.—All his hopes of mercy are those of a sinner, an ungodly sinner.”†

Here Mr. Fuller admits that faith does not justify either as an internal or external work, or holy exercise, or as being any part of that which is imputed unto us for righteousness; and did not other parts of his writings appear to clash with this, I should rest satisfied. But I own that I am not without a suspicion that Mr. Fuller here only means, That faith does not justify as the procuring cause or meritorious ground of a sinner’s justification and acceptance with God; and that while we hold this point, we may include as much virtue and holy exercise of the will and affections in the nature of justifying faith as we please, without affecting the point of justification, as that stands entirely upon another ground, viz. the righteousness of Christ.

But it must be carefully observed, that the difference between us does not respect the meritorious procuring cause of justification; but the way in which we receive it. The Scriptures abundantly testify that we are justified by faith, which shows that faith has some concern in this matter; and Mr. Fuller admits that justification is ascribed to faith “merely as that which unites to Christ, for the sake of whose righteousness alone we are accepted.” Therefore the only question between us is this, Does faith unite us to Christ, and so receive justification through his righteousness merely in crediting the divine testimony respecting the sufficiency of that righteousness alone to justify us? Or, Does it unite us to Christ, and obtain justification

* Page 111.

† Page 185, 186.

through his righteousness by virtue of its being a moral excellency, and as including the holy exercise of the will and affections? The former is my view of this matter; the latter, if I am not greatly mistaken, is Mr. Fuller's. I hold that sinners are justified through Christ's righteousness by faith alone, or purely in believing that the righteousness of Christ which he finished on the cross, and which was declared to be accepted by his resurrection from the dead, is alone sufficient for their pardon and acceptance with God, however guilty and unworthy they are. But, in opposition to this, the whole strain of Mr. Fuller's reasoning tends to show that sinners are not justified by faith alone, but by faith working by love, or including in it the holy exercise of the will and affections; and this addition to faith he makes to be that qualification in it on which the fitness or congruity of an interest in Christ's righteousness depends.* Without this addition, he considers faith itself, whatever be its grounds or object, to be a mere empty unholy speculation, which requires no influence of the Spirit to produce it.† So that, if what is properly termed faith has, in his opinion, any place at all in justification, it must be merely on account of the holy exercises and affections which attend it.

In the note (Commission, p. 76), I put the question, "Of what use is it to contend for the moral excellence of faith, in point of justification?" To this he answers, 1. That it is of importance that faith be considered as a duty. 2. It is of importance that it be genuine, or such as will carry us to heaven, and not dead or unproductive; and, 3. That unbelief be allowed to be a sin."‡ All this I admit is of very great importance, and might be a proper answer to a question relating to the marks of true faith; to which might be added, that it is of importance that faith produce good works, without which it is dead, being alone. But, as

* Page 183, 184.

† Page 128.

‡ Page 166.

it is intended as a direct answer to my question on the use of the moral excellency of faith, in point of justification, it must import that faith justifies as a duty, and as it is a moral excellency, and productive or fruitful.

In his letter he says, "Though faith be a moral excellency, yet it is not on account of that excellency that justification is ascribed to it; for if we were justified by faith as a virtue, we might as well be justified by love, &c., either would be justification by our own righteousness." He cannot, consistently with himself, mean any thing by this, but that faith, as a virtue, is not the meritorious ground of our justification; not that it does not, as a virtue, obtain justification through Christ's righteousness: for, as he includes the exercise of the will and affections in the very nature of justifying faith, and confounds it so with love, as to annihilate its distinctive character, we cannot in that case be justified by faith as distinguished from love; and every attempt to distinguish them here, is at once to give up all the arguments whereby he has endeavored to confound them.

That he considers faith to justify as a virtue, is further evident from what he says in the same letter: "May not faith include the acquiescence of the heart, and so be a moral excellency; and may there not be a fitness in God's justifying those persons who thus acquiesce, without any foundation being laid for boasting?" Here we see that he makes the moral excellency of faith to consist in the acquiescence of the heart, or the exercise of the will and affections, and places the fitness of God's justifying upon that ground. My answer to this was, "That the distinction between this and being justified by faith as a virtue, is too fine; for if this fitness in God's justifying, arises from the moral excellency of faith, we must undoubtedly be justified by faith as a virtue, in some sense or other." And in the note, (Commission, p. 76,) I further observed, "That as

this fitness in God's justifying, is placed upon faith's being a moral excellency, it must be such a fitness as is between virtue and its reward; and so this is only a roundabout way of saying that we are justified by faith as a virtue, which is above acknowledged to be justification by our own righteousness."

I am aware that there are different kinds of fitness. A person may have a natural fitness for a certain state, not because he is possessed of virtue, but merely because his qualifications and that state are naturally adapted or suited to each other. Again, a person may have a moral fitness for a state, when his virtue commends him to it, or when he is put into a good state, as a fit or suitable testimony of regard to the moral excellency of his qualifications or acts. The last, I think, must be what Mr. Fuller means by a fitness in God's justifying, because he grounds it upon the moral excellency of faith, or rather of its immediate effects. Yet he wishes to avoid the term moral fitness, and in another letter says, "A fitness of wisdom is the whole for which I contend." This, however, is no explanation of his meaning; for a fitness of wisdom applies both to a natural and moral fitness. But as he labors to prove that the virtuous exercises of the will and affections are included in the nature of justifying faith, in order to show that there is a fitness in God's justifying such as are thus virtuously exercised, what other kind of fitness can he possibly mean in such a connection, or according to the scope of his reasoning, but the fitness of justifying a virtuous character?

After all, I freely admit that there is a fitness in faith corresponding to the gospel method of salvation, but it is of a very different nature from what has been stated above. The salvation by Christ is communicated to men by means of the revelation concerning it; and faith alone is adapted to perceive the import, and realize the truth of that revelation, and so has a fitness to receive benefits conveyed by testi-

mony which no other fruit of the Spirit has. This office is equally peculiar to it as seeing is to the eye, or hearing to the ear, to both which it is compared, Isa. xlv. 22, ch. lxxv. 1, ch. lv. 3. Again, the great doctrines of the gospel are supernatural truths, which cannot be known by intuition, experience, or the deductions of reason from any known principles, but purely by revelation, 2 Cor. ii. 9, 10; and the only evidence of their truth is the manifestation which God hath made of himself as the Author of that revelation. Now, faith is adapted to receive such truths upon the authority of God without any other evidence, and even when all we know of nature seems to contradict them. A striking instance of this we have in the faith of Abraham, which is set before us as an example of ours. He believed God's promise, that he should become the father of many nations: and though both he and Sarah were past age, yet he took not that into consideration as any objection. God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were, had promised it, and that was enough to him; so that "against hope, he believed in hope that he might become the father of many nations; according to what which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.—And being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform, and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Rom. iv. 17—23. In like manner righteousness shall be imputed to us "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," ver. 24, 25. And if our faith is of the same kind with that of Abraham, it will surmount every discouragement arising from the consideration of our natural unfitness to be justified; it being the faith of the operation of God, that raised up Christ from the dead, for our justification, chap. x. 9, 10. Col. ii. 12.

But the main thing to be considered on this head, is the

peculiar and exclusive suitableness of faith to receive justification, and every other spiritual blessing purely of grace ; i. e. of mere free favor to the utterly worthless and undeserving. The declared design of God in the salvation of sinners, is the manifestation of his own glory, and especially the glory of his sovereign free grace. It is “that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory,” Rom. ix. 23,—“That we should be to the praise of the glory of his grace,” Eph. i. 6, 12, and “that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus,” chap. ii. 7. The sovereignty and freedom of divine grace is not only displayed and magnified in election and redemption in which men could not possibly have any hand ; but also in the application of this redemption, and particularly in justification. It is chiefly on this head that the apostle insists so much on the freedom of divine grace, because it is in opposition to this that the self-righteous bias of the human heart operates most powerfully, leading men to seek for some virtuous qualifications in themselves, that may account for their being justified. But as God justifies sinners freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24, so faith alone is adapted to receive justification purely of grace ; and this the apostle clearly intimates, when he says, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace,” Rom. iv. 16. Here we see that faith and grace are in perfect unison, and suited to each other. Faith magnifies grace, and ascribes all to it ; and grace admits nothing but faith, for both are opposed to works. Grace and faith will not mix or compound with works in this matter. Men must either be justified wholly of works, or wholly of grace through faith ; for thus the apostle states the opposition, “If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace ; otherwise

work is no more work," Rom. xi. 6. From this it appears, that so far as one takes place, the other is annihilated; so that if works of any kind, or upon any consideration whatever, have place in justification, grace and faith, according to Paul's idea of them, can have none. Justification, in that case, would be reckoned of works, not of faith; of debt, not of grace, chap. iv. 4. And that this is the sense, is plain from what he opposes to it, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," ver. 5. This is, indeed, a supernatural method of justification, very opposite to our natural notions and self-righteous bias; and therefore we need not wonder that it hath met with so much opposition from the beginning, under the most pious and specious pretexts. Nothing but a supernatural faith, like that of Abraham, can answer to it, or receive it; and that is the gift of God.

I had said, that "when men include in the very nature of justifying faith, such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart, as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary (no matter under what consideration) to a sinner's acceptance with God, it perverts the apostle's doctrine on this important subject, and makes justification to be at least, as it were, by the works of the law." Commission, p. 84.

To this he answers, "That we may judge whether this assertion be well founded, it is necessary to examine the evidence on which it rests; and this, if I mistake not, is confined to the phraseology of a single passage of Scripture. If this passage (namely, Rom. iv. 4, 5,) do not prove the point for which it is alleged, I know of no other that does; and, what is more, the whole tenor of Scripture teaches a doctrine directly opposite."*

Why Mr. Fuller mentions the phraseology of Rom. iv. 4, 5, I know not, unless it be to insinuate that it is incautiously or improperly expressed, and so not to be understood according to the most obvious and natural sense of the words; though the apostle is there arguing upon the subject in the most close and pointed manner. And it is certain that it must undergo a very great change, both in phraseology and sense, before it can please him, or be accommodated to his scheme. Yet, as Dr. Owen says, "we must not forego this testimony of the Holy Ghost, let men be as angry as they please." But it seems the evidence on which I rest my assertion "is confined to this single passage of Scripture." Supposing this were the case, as it is not, would not a single passage, if it is plain, express, and agreeable to the scope, be sufficient evidence? The truth is, in my assertion I had no particular view to this passage more than to many others, several of which I refer to at bottom of p. 83, 84; and I may now add, that all the passages which prove—that there is none righteous, no not one, but that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God—that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law either internal or external—that justification is of free grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, and received by faith alone—that grace and faith in this matter are in direct opposition to works, debt, or any comparative ground of boasting—and, in short, every argument which the apostle uses on this head in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, all unite in proving that sinners are justified by faith only, and not by the works of the law. Consequently this doctrine is perverted when sinners are told that they cannot be justified till they are previously possessed of such holy affections and virtuous dispositions of heart as the moral law (which is not of faith) requires. This is what I assert, and, in opposition to it. Mr. Fuller asserts, "that the whole tenor of Scripture teaches a doctrine directly opposite to

this :” That is, it teaches that sinners are justified not only by faith, but also by holy affections and virtuous dispositions of heart ; or, in other words, by their holiness and conformity to the law. It is evident, therefore, that the difference betwixt us is very wide, and, considering the nature of the subject, of vast importance. But he proceeds,

“If by him that worketh not, and the ungodly whom God justifieth, be meant persons who at the time had never done any good thing in the sight of God, and who were actually under the dominion of enmity against him, Mr. M.’s assertion will be granted him.”*——

It is my opinion, that him that worketh not, means persons who have never done any good works in the sight of God, or acceptable to him, previous to their believing and being justified ; otherwise it would not be true that God justifieth the ungodly ; nor would their believing on him as the justifier of such be true faith, but the belief of a falsehood. I have no notion that the apostle means any thing different, far less contrary, to what he plainly says, as if he meant that God justifies the godly, though he does it as if they were ungodly. Such a sense is not only an addition to the apostle’s words, but flatly contradicts them. On the other hand, it never entered into my heart to imagine that him that worketh not, but believeth, is descriptive of those who, from the first moment of their believing, “are actually under the dominion of enmity against God.” On the contrary, it is my firm belief that the persons here described are immediately reconciled to God by that which they now believe, and as soon as they believe. Therefore my assertion respecting the perversion of the doctrine of justification has nothing to do with the execrable sentiment upon which Mr. Fuller wishes to found it ; but it is founded upon the following principles which are intimately connected

* Page 185.

on this subject. 1st. That belief, in its nature, is different from the works of the law, whether these consist of holy affections and virtuous dispositions of heart, or outward actions; for the law is not of faith. 2nd. That believing on him that justifieth the ungodly, is justifying faith; for this faith is counted for righteousness. 3rd. That such a belief is inconsistent with working in order to be justified; and, 4th. That every convicted sinner, till he thus believes, must necessarily work with a view to justification, for he can have no idea of obtaining it in any other way. If, therefore, Mr. Fuller would disprove my assertion, he must either refute these principles, or show that the doctrine I oppose is consistent with them.

But it will be proper to set before the reader at once Mr. Fuller's view of Rom. iv. 4, 5, which amounts shortly to this,

That "by him that worketh not, and the ungodly whom God justifieth, is not meant persons who," previous to their justification, and "at the time, had never done any good thing in the sight of God, but were actually under the dominion of enmity against him; for the apostle is speaking of believers. He that worketh not is at the same time said to believe; but whenever this can be said of a man, it cannot with truth be affirmed of him that he has done nothing good in the sight of God, or that he is under the dominion of enmity against him, and has actually wrought nothing for God. Holiness may precede justification as to time, and it may be necessary, on some account, that it should precede it, and yet have no causal influence upon it. If antecedent holiness destroy the freeness of grace, I know of no solid reason why consequent holiness should not operate in the same way; and then, in order to be justified by grace, it will be necessary to continue the enemies of God through life." But, whatever degree of holiness, previous to his justification, it may be necessary for him to possess, however much he may have wrought for God,

and whatever good he may have done in his sight; yet "he worketh not with respect to justification, but in all his dealings with God for acceptance, comes not as righteous, but as ungodly. So that the character described by the apostle is not merely applicable to a Christian at the first moment of his believing, but through the whole of life. We have to deal with Christ for pardon and justification more than once; and must always go to him as working not, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly." And this sense of the passage, he thinks, is decisively proved by "the examples which the apostle refers to for the illustration of his doctrine, namely, Abraham and David," who were both holy men many years before they are said to be justified.*

On this view of the passage I shall make a few remarks, and then give the sense in which I understand it.

First, There are several things here stated which are not disputed by me, but agree well with my view of the passage,

* Page 180, 185, 186, 187, 188. This is exactly Mr. Hopkins's doctrine of justification, and of the antecedent holiness necessary to it. According to him, a person must not only be convinced of his guilt, and the just condemnation due to it; but he must have the true knowledge of God, and a new heart, a humble, penitent, and contrite heart to hate sin as such, and to love God and delight in his law; and all this not only previous to his justification, and in order to it, but even previous to his knowledge of the Mediator and faith in him. And he scruples not to affirm, that those "who have never been reconciled to God and his holy law in any other way, but by first seeing and believing in the grace of God through Christ, are yet ignorant of the true grace of God, and enemies to it." *Two Discourses*, page 24, 25, note. Mr. Booth, in his *Glad Tidings*, has made some very just animadversions on this author's sentiments. Mr. T. Scott has also made a few but very pertinent remarks on the distinguishing tenets of the American divines, and particularly alludes to Hopkins, when he says, "they have certainly advanced positions which obscure the glory of the gospel, and embarrass the minds of inquirers with many unscriptural distinctions."—*The Warrant and Nature of Faith in Christ*, page 3, 4.

as—1. It is not denied that the apostle is here speaking of believers. I have no notion that any are justified till they believe, though I consider their believing and justification to be coeval.—2. Nor is it denied that believing is a good thing. It is an effect of the regenerating influence of the Spirit and word of God, and the principle of all holy affections and good dispositions, though in justification it is distinguished from them; and therefore, when I deny that holy dispositions or good works are required as necessary to justification, I surely do not mean to deny that faith itself is necessary to it.—3. Far less do I affirm (as Mr. Fuller would have me,) that a person who believes is still “actually under the dominion of enmity against God;” on the contrary, I maintain, that what he believes instantly removes the enmity of his heart and reconciles him to God, exciting love to him and hatred of sin.—4. It is admitted that he that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, worketh not with respect to justification, either at the first moment of his believing, or (if he continues in the faith) through his whole life after; for that would be inconsistent with such a belief.—5. It is also admitted that a believer needs pardon, not only for the sins of his past life when he first believes, but a continued exercise of pardoning mercy for the sins he commits afterwards during the whole course of his pilgrimage in this world. Hence believers are exhorted to repent of their sins, to confess them, and to come to the throne of grace that they may obtain mercy, which is promised to them through the atonement and intercession of Christ, Heb. iv. 16, 1 John i. 7, chap. ii. 1, 2. But I observe,

Secondly, That Mr. Fuller explains the term (*ασεβης*) **UNGOGLY**, in this passage, to mean only the **GODLY**, and none else; for he represents them as persons who have labored and wrought for God, and done good in his sight previous to their justification; and affirms, that “holiness

may precede justification as to time, and that it may be necessary on some accounts that it should precede it." In short, he would have us to believe that the apostle uses this term in a sense quite opposite to its usual meaning, and such as will fitly apply to the most godly saint on earth; for he maintains that "the character described by the apostle is not merely applicable to a Christian at the first moment of his believing, but through the whole of life." I suppose he will admit there are some godly characters in the world, and that he would not reckon them properly characterized by any author who should term them the ungodly; nay, though he should add the opposite character to it, and call them ungodly godly persons, which comes nearer the character he has in view: Why, then, does he attribute such a glaring impropriety of speech to the inspired apostle, who is arguing closely upon the most important subject? The word ungodly occurs in the New Testament, I believe, seven or eight times, and the word ungodliness, about six; but neither of them are ever used to characterize persons actually converted, but the very reverse; and therefore it would be strange beyond all example, if the apostle had used it here in a sense altogether opposite to its usual acceptance.

Mr. Fuller, however, ventures to produce another passage where the word ungodly signifies the godly, viz. Rom. v. 6, "Christ is said to have died for the ungodly. Did he then lay down his life only for those who at the time were actually his enemies? If so, he did not die for any of the Old Testament saints; nor for any of the godly who were then alive; not even for his own apostles."* According to this, Christ could not have died only for the ungodly or his enemies, unless he has died before there were any saints upon earth! But it is plain, beyond all dispute, that the word ungodly in this passage has not the least reference to

* Page 188.

any as godly ; and though it may include all the saints both before and at the time of Christ's death ; yet it respects none of them as saints, but is expressive of their former ir-regenerate state, wherein they are classed with all the rest of the ungodly for whom Christ died, and so are strictly and properly termed such, as having been really ungodly, enemies, and children of wrath, even as others. The apostle is writing to Christians, among whom he includes himself ; and, to set forth the exceeding greatness of the love of God towards them, he brings to view their former state and character as being without strength, ungodly, sinners, enemies ; and so he expresses himself not in the present, but past tense, thus, "When WE WERE YET without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly.—While WE WERE YET sinners Christ died for us.—If when WE WERE enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," &c. ver. 6, 8, 10. This passage, therefore, makes nothing for Mr. Fuller's purpose, but proves, on the contrary, that Christ died for such as in the strictest sense were ungodly, even as ch. iv. 5, proves that God is the justifier of such, and that justifying faith is a believing on him under that character.

Thirdly, Mr. Fuller thinks it makes no difference as to the freeness of grace in justification, whether holiness be required in order of time before it, or after it ; for he says, "If antecedent holiness destroy the freeness of grace, I know of no solid reason why consequent holiness should not operate in the same way.—It is not the priority of time that makes any difference, but that of causation." So that, according to him, it makes no difference whether holiness be required before justification or after it ; if holiness is not the cause of justification, grace is equally free in both cases. But Paul was of a very different mind, who, in setting forth the freeness of grace in election, redemption, and justification, lays a great deal of stress upon its priority in order of

time to any holiness in us, and by this he demonstrates that no holiness or works of ours can possibly be the cause. He represents election as prior not only to our existence, but to the creation of the world, to show that it is entirely of grace, and not of our works or holiness; and illustrates the freedom and sovereignty of grace in it by the distinction made between Esau and Jacob, while as yet they were not born, or had done any good or evil previous to the revelation of the divine purpose respecting them, Eph. i. 4. Rom. xi. 5, 6, chap. ix. 11—14. With the same view he represents the death of Christ as prior to any holiness, at least either in himself or those he writes to; and that it was when they were yet without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies that he died for them, Rom. v. 6—11. With regard to justification, he takes pains to show that Abraham was justified by faith in God's promise before he was possessed of that holiness, or had done any of those works which the Judaizers made necessary to it, and while he was only an uncircumcised Gentile, Rom. iv. 9—13. He also finds an argument upon the priority of the promise, (which includes the Gentiles,) to the giving of the law of Moses, to show that the blessing freely promised is not obtained by men's holiness or works, but purely by faith that it might be by grace, and so sure to all Abraham's spiritual seed both of Jews and Gentiles, Rom. iv. 13—17. Gal. iii. 8, 9, 17, 18. Further, he takes notice of the Lord's words in Isaiah, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me," Rom. x. 20, which exclude men's holiness not only as the cause, but as antecedent to the blessing here promised. And this corresponds with the Scripture instances of God's being found of, and made manifest to guilty sinners; for what holiness had Mary Magdelene, Zaccheus, the thief on the cross, the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, Saul the persecutor, the Philippian jailor, or, in short, any

of all the idolatrous Gentiles, previous to their believing the gospel?

But I must further observe, that when holiness (under whatever consideration) is required of a sinner previous, or in order to his being justified, justification cannot appear to him to be of free grace through faith as opposed to works. He indeed may admit that any holiness in him cannot merit justification, and that in this respect he can only be justified through the righteousness of Christ; but still he must look upon this antecedent holiness as coming betwixt him and Christ, and as absolutely necessary to his obtaining an interest in Christ's righteousness and justification by it. He must necessarily view justification as suspended upon his possessing this antecedent holiness, and so consider it as the condition on which he is to be justified, which must have the same effect upon his mind as if he were to be justified by the works of the law. And if he is really concerned about the salvation of his soul, this antecedent holiness will engage his attention first of all, and lead him to strive and pray that he may possess it in order to his obtaining justification. So that, while he has this view of the matter, he must necessarily be following after righteousness, or seeking to obtain justification as it were by the works of the law, or by a kind of antecedent holiness, which, though it may go under another name, yet, when made necessary to his justification, differs nothing in its nature and tendency, for words cannot alter the nature of things. In short, while he considers this antecedent holiness as necessary to his justification, he can have no idea that God justifieth the ungodly, nor can he believe on him under that character.

Fourthly, Though Mr. Fuller pleads for the necessity of holiness antecedent to justification, (when the sinner must be supposed without any actual union with Christ, and so in a state of condemnation, as all are till they are justified); yet he also maintains that whatever previous holiness may

be required of a sinner, and sought after by him as necessary to his being justified, "he worketh not with respect to justification, but in all his dealings with God for acceptance, comes not as righteous, but as ungodly." But it is most evident, that if an awakened sinner believes that he cannot be justified without antecedent holiness, he must of necessity work to obtain that holiness in order to his being justified, and so have a respect to justification in his working. He may, indeed, apply to God while he views himself as an ungodly sinner; but it is to obtain this previous holiness that he may be justified, and his aim in all his religious exercises and dealings with God must have this for its object; because the very nature of such a principle precludes the idea that he can be justified as a mere sinner, or while he views himself as such, and so is inconsistent with his believing on him that justifieth the ungodly.

Fifthly, Mr. Fuller imagines, that if men admit what he calls the grand principle on which the apostle rests the doctrine of justification by grace, viz. It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in ALL THINGS written in the book of the law to do them, Gal. iii. 10; and if they also admit that the righteousness of Christ, and not their own personal holiness, is the procuring cause of justification,* this will sufficiently guard the freeness of grace in justification, whatever antecedent holiness may be required of men, or sought after by them in order to obtain it. But I apprehend this is a very great mistake. True, indeed, such as are thoroughly convinced that they have actually incurred and justly deserve the curse of the divine law—that they cannot possibly deliver themselves from that curse by any supposed doing, exercise, or holiness of theirs, performed in their own strength or by any assistance whatever—that the only work by which redemption from this curse is

* Page 179, 180.

which they include every virtuous and holy disposition of heart as necessary to justification. The former paid no regard to Paul's authority as an inspired apostle, but avowedly contradicted him: but the latter admit the inspiration of the apostle, and contradict him only in their method of explaining his words. Both, however, agree in this, that God does not justify the ungodly.

Sixthly, Mr. Fuller affirms "that the character described by the apostle," namely, the ungodly, "is not merely applicable to a Christian at the moment of his believing, but through the whole of life. We have to deal with Christ for pardon and justification more than once, and must always go to him as working not, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly." But the apostle does not say that the person who worketh not, but believeth, is ungodly, far less that such a character is applicable to a Christian through the whole of life. This is a glaring misconstruction of the apostle's meaning, and contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. The apostle does not use the word ungodly to describe the existing character of an actual believer;* but

* It may well excite surprise and regret that Mr. M'Lean should have been betrayed into such an inconsistency as is involved in the denial that God justifies those who are in a state of enmity against Him—a sentiment equally inconsistent with the Scriptures and with the whole scope of his own performance. The same sentiment is advanced in two other passages, and in each of them the reason assigned is such as almost to justify the idea that the writer meant to deny something very different from what his words express. On page 37 it is said "I indeed affirm, &c. Yet I never supposed that any, from the moment of their thus believing, are in a state of enmity against God, or that God justifies them while in that state." And on page — it is said, "Far less do I affirm, as Mr. Fuller would have me, that a person who believes is still actually under the dominion of enmity against God: on the contrary, I maintain that what he believes, instantly removes the enmity of his heart, and reconciles him to God, exciting love to Him and hatred of sin." Here we have the instant and sure effect of the truth in reconciling the heart to God, adduced as

brings it in under a description of his faith in God: He is one who "believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly." Should we search the Scriptures from the beginning to the end, we shall nowhere find the word ungodly used to describe the existing character of real believers in God, though it is twice used to describe their former state and character. It is therefore very strange that Mr. Fuller should put such an unnatural sense upon the word in this passage, as it bears nowhere else in all the word of God; and it is no less so, that he should fix the character of ungodly upon real believers through the whole of life after their justification, in order to prove that they were holy or godly prior to it!

In support of these contradictory notions, he finds it necessary to advance another strange sentiment, namely, "That we have to deal with Christ for justification more than once." I have reason to think that Mr. Fuller's view of justification is pretty singular, and that he does not con-

proof that God does not justify his enemies. But are we to regard Mr. M'Lean as here affirming that faith and its effects are coeval, or that God justifies men not as believers, but as bringing forth the fruits of faith? If he affirms neither of these, how can he deny that God justifies men in a state of enmity to him? If what he believes slay the enmity of the sinner's heart, and he is justified as a believer, surely he is justified while stout-hearted against God, and in arms against him. If, as is here said, the term ungodly do not describe the existing character of an actual believer, how does it appear that God justifies the ungodly? for it is the believer whom he justifies—and not rather one who was once ungodly, but who at the moment of his justification has lost that character. But Mr. M'Lean has himself proved at length that the term ungodly is never applied in the Scriptures to those who love God, and are reconciled to him: As this error is one which forms no part of that truth for which Mr. M'Lean contends, but is, on the contrary, clearly inconsistent with, and subversive of it, it is hoped that the reader will thus regard it, and so discriminate between the errors and inconsistencies of the writer and the consistent and immutable truth which he labors to defend. Ed.

sider it as any specific act of God at all, but only the uniform declarations of the word of God, (the statute-book of heaven,) as to what characters are exempted from the curse of the law, and entitled to everlasting life. Nor does he consider it as a blessing conferred at once: "Justification," he says, "is not of so transient a nature as to be begun and ended in an instant—It is described in language which is expressive of its continuity—It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life—Hence also believers in every stage of life deal with Christ for justification, desiring nothing more than that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."* Now, if it is a truth that justification is carried on through every stage of a believer's life, it will indeed follow that he must bear the character of ungodly unto the end, as he is not completely freed from condemnation, nor perfectly justified by the righteousness of Christ, any more than he is perfectly sanctified while in this world. But is this Paul's doctrine of justification? Far from it. The passages he refers to are nothing to his purpose. I need not show this as to Rom. viii. 33, and John iii. 36, the reader will perceive it at once; and as to Phil. iii. 8—15, Paul does not there represent himself as dealing with Christ for justification, as if he had not yet obtained mercy, or an acquittal from the sentence of condemnation, or as laboring to obtain that justification which is to him that worketh not, but believeth: but he is guarding the Philippians against the influence of the Jews or Judaizing teachers, by opposing his example to theirs, in his setting at nought all his own legal righteousness in which he formerly boasted, and count-

* See Gaius's paper in the Protestant Dissenter's Magazine for April, 1799, p. 145.

ing it but as loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and of his being found in him, having the righteousness which is of God by faith, as opposed to works. With this view he also sets his example before the Galatians, (chap. ii. 18, 19, 20, 21. chap. vi. 13, 14,) not as laboring for justification, but living by it. In like manner he also sets before the Philip-pians how earnestly he pressed after conformity to Christ, and pursued the Christian race, that he might at last obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, or the crown of righteousness and glory which fadeth not away. See 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. 1 Pet. v. 4. Thus, being already justified by faith, he labored that he might be accepted, approved and rewarded at last as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. A proper view of this would remove any apparent difficulty in reconciling Paul and James on this subject; compare Rom. iii. 28, with James ii. 24. But I must not enter upon this at present.

Had Mr. Fuller only affirmed that believers have the remains of a corrupt nature in them, and are daily sinning while in this world; that they have constant cause to be humbled on that account before God, to confess their sins, and pray to their Heavenly Father that they may obtain mercy through the atonement and intercession of Christ, (Matt. vi. 12; 1 John i. 7, 8, 9; Heb. iv. 16,) or had he affirmed that pardon does not respect them as godly, but as guilty, and that, as such, they must always apply for it, I should have most heartily agreed to all this: but to affirm that believers are characterized in Scripture as ungodly through the whole of life, and that they are not completely justified at once when they believe in Christ, appears to me a very unscriptural view of this important subject. Our Lord says, "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come

into condemnation ; but is PASSED from death unto life," John v. 24. Paul declares, that "by him all that believe ARE JUSTIFIED from all things," Acts xiii. 39, and that "there is NOW NO condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Justification is a change of the sinner's state ; for hereby he passes from a state of guilt, condemnation, and death, into a state of pardon, acceptance, life and peace with God ; and this change of state is always represented as taking place at once when men believe the gospel. A person must either be in a state of justification or condemnation, for there is no middle state ; and as the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe, so they must be perfectly justified from all things, and accepted in the Beloved, though the privileges and blessings pertaining to this justified state continue to be dispensed according to the believer's need. But I need not insist on this, as Mr. Fuller, notwithstanding what he says above, admits "that we are introduced into this blessed state at the moment of our believing. From that instant we are no more under the law, but under grace. The curses of the former stand no longer against us, and the blessings of the latter become our portion."

Lastly, He produces the examples to which the apostle refers for the illustration of his doctrine, viz. Abraham and David, which he thinks are decisive of the question. On the former he observes, that "if Abraham at the time he is said to have believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, had never done any good thing, and was actually the enemy of God, Mr. M's position is established ; but if the contrary is true, it is overturned ;" and then he adduces Gen. xii. 1, Heb. xi. 8, to prove that he was a believer several years before he is said to be justified in Gen. xv. 6.

If Abraham was a believer several years before he was

justified, it will indeed serve to illustrate Mr. Fuller's doctrine respecting the necessity of antecedent holiness; but then it must be observed that the apostle does not produce this part of Abraham's example, or make the least mention of it for the illustration of his doctrine, nor does it appear that it would have suited his purpose in arguing with Judaizers. Hence there is ground to suspect that the apostle's doctrine is not exactly the same with Mr. Fuller's on this head. Indeed, if it can be shown that the faith whereby Abraham was justified included a previous course of holiness for several years, I am apprehensive that it will not only overturn my position, which is a small matter, but also the whole scope of the apostle's reasoning on this subject.

As Mr. Fuller has misquoted my words, and also represented me as maintaining that Abraham was justified while he was actually the enemy of God, the reader will observe that the position which he combats is this, viz. "When men include in the very nature of justifying faith such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary to a sinner's acceptance with God, they pervert the apostle's doctrine upon this important subject." Commission, p. 84. In this position I suppose that sinners are justified by faith only, as opposed to works—that holy dispositions, affections, and exercises are internal works of the law, and effects of faith—that to include these in the nature of faith as it justifies, is to give the same place to them in justification as to faith itself, and so to pervert the apostle's doctrine, who, from the whole of his premises on the subject, draws this conclusion, "That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. iii. 28.

Now, in opposition to this, Mr. Fuller affirms That the property of working by love is not only an immediate and inseparable effect of faith, but belongs to its nature as justifying, and that, as thus working, it is necessary to justi-

fication.* That those who are described as working not, and as the ungodly, whom God justifieth, are really persons of an opposite character to what the words plainly express ; but that they are represented as ungodly, and as not working, because, however godly they are, and however much they have wrought for God during a series of years previous to their being justified, yet they work not with respect to justification, but in all their dealings with God for acceptance, come not as righteous, but as ungodly. And this sense of the words, he thinks, is supported by that part of Abraham and David's example which the apostle has thought proper to omit.† Thus he overturns my position, by reversing the plain sense of the apostle's words, making the ungodly to be the godly, who have a humble opinion of their own character, and their working for God during a series of years previous to their justification, to be notwithstanding their not working with respect to it ! By the same rule of interpretation he might have told us, that those who trust in their own righteousness for justification are godly, because they imagine themselves to be so, and in all their dealings with God for acceptance, come not as sinners, but as godly ; and though they are real workers of iniquity, it may, however, be truly affirmed of them, that they work it not, because they do not work it with a view of being either justified or condemned for it.

But it is time to return to the example of Abraham and David. Let it then be observed, that the great apostle of the Gentiles is establishing the doctrine of free justification by faith without works ; and though his argument excludes all works of every kind in obedience to any law whatever, whether moral or positive, yet he has a particular view to the state of the controversy as carried on between him and the Jews or Judaizing teachers of his time. They maintained

* Page 183, 184.

† Page 185, 187.

that except men were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved, Acts xv. 1, 5. Gal. vi. 12, 13. In opposition to this he shows that some of the best and most respected characters among their ancestors, and who had been remarkably distinguished as the favorites of Heaven, were not justified by circumcision or any works of theirs whatever, but purely by faith; and for this he produceth the example of Abraham, their venerable patriarch, and the testimony of David who was a prophet, and one of the most eminent of their kings.

With regard to Abraham, though he was no doubt justified, or received into a state of favor with God when he called him at first, and made himself known to him, Gen. xii. 1, yet that passage of his history was not sufficiently explicit for the apostle's purpose; for though it supposes, it does not expressly mention Abraham's faith or justification, but only his obedience to the divine call. Nor was it to his purpose to refer the Judaizers to that remarkable instance of his faith, in offering up his son Isaac, which was so highly approved of God, Gen. xxii. 10—19, for they could have replied, that that was a work, and performed after he was circumcised and in covenant with God, and so did not support his position, but was rather a proof of their own doctrine. Therefore, to refute the Jewish argument, he must bring an express proof that Abraham was justified merely by faith, and that before God had formally made a covenant with him, and while he was yet an uncircumcised Gentile.* And to prove this, he produceth Gen. xv. 6, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This passage was directly in point, and fully to his purpose in all respects. The use he makes of it is

* It appears to have been an opinion among the Jews, that Abraham was not pure, or accepted with God, till after his circumcision, (See Whitby on Rom. iv. 1,) and therefore it was necessary to produce an express Scripture testimony to the contrary.

chiefly to show—That Abraham was justified by faith alone, or believing God; and that not only in distinction from, but in opposition to all works of any kind, done in any view, or required under any consideration whatever, ver. 4, 5, 6, 16.—That he was justified while an uncircumcised Gentile; and that his circumcision afterwards was a seal of his being previously justified by faith, that in this he might be a pattern of the justification of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, ver. 9—13; and to this purpose he applies at last all that he had said on the subject, ver. 23, 24, 25. Thus he entirely overturned the argument of the Jews, who could not plead that Abraham was justified by any holiness or good works of his previous to his being circumcised, without giving up their plea for the necessity of circumcision to justification.

But it will perhaps be said, That though the apostle's argument is a sufficient refutation of the Jewish antecedent holiness, it does not exclude that antecedent holiness which Mr. Fuller pleads for, because that was prior not only to Abraham's circumcision, but also to the time referred to Gen. xv. 6, when he is said to have righteousness imputed to him, and so is beyond the limits of the apostle's argument with the Jews. Now, to this I answer,

1. That it is evident from the whole of the apostle's doctrine on this important subject, that he not only excludes circumcision and the holiness which the Jews supposed connected with it, from being antecedently necessary to justification; but he also excludes all holiness or good works whatever, either ceremonial or moral, which can in any sense be denominated the works of the law, performed either by Jew or Gentile, with respect to justification, or in any other view, from being antecedently necessary to it. He lays the foundation of all that he says upon it, by proving that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and in a state of guilt and condemnation, Rom. iii. 9, 19, 23,

and that they are without strength, enemies to God, and ungodly, chap. v. 6, 10. This cuts out every idea that men can possess any holiness, or perform any acceptable works previous to their deliverance from that state ; and to suppose they can, is a flat contradiction to the Scripture account of man's natural state. Further, he shows that sinners are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24. Now, as justification supposes guilt, and respects the ungodly, so its being of free grace and through the redemption that is in Christ, sets aside every idea of antecedent holiness in the subjects of it, either as meriting it or qualifying them for it ; and thus only can it exclude all boasting, ver. 27. Again, with regard to the way in which men actually receive this blessing, he restricts that to faith alone, which he everywhere opposes to works on this subject, and declares that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5 ; and he represents this faith as corresponding with the freeness of that grace by which the blessing is conferred, ver. 16. Now, as it is by faith alone that men are justified, and pass from death unto life ; as faith itself is the very beginning of spiritual life, and the principle of all holiness either in heart or conduct ; so there can be no true holiness antecedent to it for a moment of time, far less for a series of years. And if it was otherwise with Abraham and David, as Mr. Fuller affirms, their case must have been very singular indeed, and their example altogether unfit to illustrate the apostle's doctrine respecting the justification of the ungodly.

2. Though the apostle cites Gen. xv. 6, as sufficient to prove to the Jews that Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised ; yet he does not by that passage intend to show that Abraham was not justified till then. It is plain, beyond all dispute, that Abraham was a believer

in God several years before this, even from the time that the God of glory first appeared to him, Acts vii. 2, 3, and called him to leave his country, his kindred, and father's house, Gen. xii. 1. The promises were then originally made to him, which were afterwards renewed at different times, respecting the land of Canaan, the multiplication of his seed, and that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him, ver. 2, 3. To these original promises the Apostle refers, when he says the gospel was preached before to Abraham, and terms them the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ, four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law, Gal. iii. 8, 17; and he explains the spiritual sense of these promises to be the heavenly inheritance, the promise of the Messiah, and of blessing the Gentile nations in him, Heb. xi. 10, 16, Gal. iii. 8, 16. That Abraham believed God in these promises when first made to him, there can be no doubt; for the apostle, referring to this date, says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing, whither he went." Heb. xi. 8. His obedience to the divine call demonstrates his faith in God, and in the promises he had made to him, and made him yield himself up implicitly to his direction. Now, the Scriptures constantly declare, that all that believe are justified—that they have everlasting life—and shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life, Acts xiii. 39. John iii. 36, chap. v. 24. Therefore Abraham must undoubtedly have been justified when he first believed, and was converted from the idolatry of his father's house, to serve the living and true God, Josh. xxiv. 2. Mr. Fuller himself admits, as was formerly noticed, "that we are introduced into that blessed state," viz: of justification, "at the moment of our believing. From that instant we are no more under the law, but under grace. The curses of the former stand no longer against us, and

the blessings of the latter become our portion ;”* and therefore he cannot consistently deny that Abraham was justified from the first moment of his believing in God. And now, what has become of Abraham’s antecedent holiness, which Mr. Fuller thinks decisive of the question ? Can he produce any of it previous to this period, when he first believed God, and was certainly justified ? This I am confident he cannot do ; for it appears that Abraham till then was an idolater ; so that God, in justifying him, in the strictest sense justified the ungodly.

But though Abraham believed God, and was justified when he first received the promises, yet his faith and patience were afterwards to be tried, and his justification to be further manifested. The accomplishment of the promises, which included his notable seed Christ, was to begin in his having an heir of his own body ; but this was delayed till he and Sarah were past age, and every natural ground of hope was cut off. In these circumstances the promise was renewed, Gen. xv. 1—5, when his faith in God who quickeneth the dead, triumphed over every difficulty ; so that, though he was justified before, on this occasion God manifested his acceptance of him as righteous purely by faith, without works, ver. 6, which is recorded not for his sake only, but for us also, Rom. iv. 23, 24. After he had received the promised heir, his faith was put to a further trial, by the command to offer him up for a burnt-offering, Gen. xxii. 2. This he obeyed in intention, and the faith which now wrought with his works was his “accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead,” Heb. xi. 19. On this occasion he received the most signal testimony of the divine approbation, and another renewel of the promises ratified by an oath, ver. 16, 17, 18. Thus it appears that Abraham, who was justified when he first believed, being freely forgiven all his past sins, and accepted into a state

* The Protestant Dissenter’s Magazine for April, 1799, p. 145.

of favor with God, was afterwards manifested to be in a justified state, and approved of God upon the trial of his faith and obedience.

With regard to the testimony of David, the apostle quotes the two first verses of Psal. xxxii. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," Rom. iv. 7, 8. Now, though these words may include that continued forgiveness of sin which is the privilege of the people of God who are already in a justified state, (see 1 John i. 8, 9. chap. ii. 1, 2, 12,) and though David, in a subsequent part of that Psalm, speaks of his acknowledging his sin, and obtaining forgiveness, and likewise shows that this is the exercise and attainment of all the saints; "For this shall every one that is GODLY pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found," ver. 5, 6. Yet it is evident that the apostle does not cite the beginning of this Psalm as descriptive of the blessedness of the man who has been the friend and servant of God for a series of years,* and in whom the Lord finds previous righteousness and good works, and so is justified by works and not by faith only, of which James speaks, chap. ii. 24; but he produceth it as a description of the blessedness of the man unto whom God IMPUTETH RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS, consisting in having his sins freely forgiven, covered and not imputed to him unto his condemnation, ver. 6, 7, 8; which imports the imputation of righteousness to him. This is the only sense which agrees with the whole scope of the apostle's reasoning on the subject of justification; for he is not treating of the blessedness of the godly who have been for a series of years in a justified state, but of the blessedness which comes upon the ungodly when they are introduced into that state upon their first believing.

* Page 167.

And now I leave it with the reader to judge whether Mr. Fuller has proved by the examples of Abraham and David, that antecedent holiness is necessary to the justification of the ungodly; and if he has, whether these examples (as he applies them) do not equally prove that men must be the friends and servants of God for a series of years before they are justified; for no singularity can be pleaded in the case of Abraham and David, nor any reason given why their justification should be delayed longer than other men's. As to what he says of the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness; a principle which he thinks requires to be disowned before the position maintained by me can be admitted, I have answered that already.

Let us now consider the sense of Rom. iv. 4, 5. "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." The apostle is here showing how guilty sinners receive or obtain the blessing of justification, or of pardon and acceptance into a state of favor with God. Two ways are mentioned, viz. works and faith. As to the way of works, he had before proved that it is entirely shut up, and that it is impossible for any to be justified in that way, because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, chap. iii. 19, 20, 23; and that therefore men must be justified purely by grace through faith in Christ's blood, ver. 24, 25, 26. In the passage under consideration he shows, that if justification were of works, it could not be of grace, or of free favor to the guilty, but must be counted as a debt due to him for his work; "Now, to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of GRACE, but of DEBT." Every body knows that the reward of a man's work cannot be reckoned as a free gift, or matter of mere favor, but as

a matter of debt due to him from his employer; "for the workman is worthy of his hire." The reward may, indeed, far exceed the value of the work, or any benefit the employer receives from it; and this must always be the case in all the works which the most perfect and innocent creature can perform in obedience to his Maker, for they cannot in the least profit him. "Is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect—If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" Job xxii. 3. chap. xxxv. 7. "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" Rom. xi. 35. In this view there never could have been any such thing as justification by works as a debt; even though Adam and the whole of his posterity had stood in innocency, the reward must still have been of grace. Had this been the apostle's notion of grace, he could not have opposed it to works in justification; for whether it were of works or of faith, it would be still of grace or free favor. It is evident, however, that this is not the grace which the apostle has in view, for no Jew or Judaizer could deny that; but the grace he speaks of is such as would be annihilated, if works of any kind, or under any consideration whatever, were to have place in, or influence upon, the justification of a sinner. In that case, he says, "the reward is NOT RECKONED OF GRACE, but of DEBT." So that grace and works cannot mix here. They must both change their nature before they can unite either in the election or justification of sinners. Rom. xi. 6.

In the next verse he opposes believing to working, and the free justification of the ungodly through faith, to a reward of debt. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for ("unto) righteousness." On these words I observe,

1. That him "that worketh not" is opposed to "him that worketh" in the foregoing verse. No hint is here given

that he worketh for God in any respect more than with respect to justification ; nor is there the least intimation of his being possessed of holiness for a series of years before this. The apostle expressly says, he worketh not ; so that all arguments grounded on the contrary supposition are vain and nugatory, as being without the least shadow of support. Instead of working, he is said to believe ; "he worketh not, but believeth." On this I observe,

2. That working and believing are here directly opposed to each other, and the former is altogether excluded in justification : it is "to him that worketh not, but believeth." But if believing were a work, as Mr. Fuller affirms,* the distinction and opposition would be lost ; and it would not be true that he worketh not, or that he is justified by faith without works ; but only that he is not justified by one kind of works, though he is by another. To say, that "though faith be a work, yet it does not justify as a work,"

* In the *Biblical Magazine* for Jan. 1802, p. 34, Mr. Fuller cites John vi. 29, to show that faith is expressly called a work. But it is plain that our Lord does not term believing in him the work of God with a view to represent faith as a work, but merely to suit his answer to the words of the question put to him, from which this expression is taken. The Jews ask, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God ?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Though Christ adopts their expression, yet he shows immediately that he did not mean working by it, but believing on him. And they appear to have understood him in that sense ; for their next question is, "What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and BELIEVE THEE ?" ver. 30. Many instances can be produced of such accommodated use of terms, which are not to be taken in a strict or proper sense, far less as the ground of an argument. In this very chapter our Lord takes occasion from their mentioning the manna, to speak of himself as the true bread that came down from heaven, answerable to which he represents faith as eating his flesh and drinking his blood ; but would it be right to understand this of proper eating and drinking ?

is a distinction only necessary for those who, having converted faith into a work, wish to avoid saying that we are justified by a work. The apostle did not use any such unintelligible distinction, because he did not consider faith as a work, and therefore had no occasion for it. While he sets before us the work of Christ as the only procuring cause of justification, he does not scruple to say "that faith was reckoned to Abraham for (or unto) righteousness," ver. 9, and to show at large that this faith was his believing God, ver. 18, 23, and that it is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," chap. x. 10. In all this he uses no caution or distinction, as if he were apprehensive that he might be misunderstood as pleading for justification by works. But if faith is really and properly a work, it unavoidably follows that we are justified by a work, so far as faith is concerned in our justification.

3. Here we have a description of that faith whereby the sinner believes unto righteousness, or receives justification: "He worketh not, but BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY." Enough has already been said on the nature of faith. His believing on him that justifieth the ungodly imports,

(1.) The view he has of his own character and state, namely, that he is an ungodly sinner, an enemy of God, and a transgressor of his holy, just and good law, both in the state of his mind and course of his life; that he has incurred and justly deserves the infliction of its dreadful penalty; that his case is altogether hopeless as to any thing he can do for his own relief; and that, but for the sovereign free mercy of God through Christ to the chief of sinners, he must perish for ever. Without some suitable convictions of this kind he cannot believe on him that justifieth the ungodly; because without this he is not cut off from all hope in himself, or his own endeavors; he does not see himself to be absolutely ungodly, or as needing to be justified under

that humiliating character. Believing on him that justifieth the ungodly imports,

(2.) The view he has of the character of God. This is what is chiefly intended. He believes on God as possessing the glorious character and prerogative of being the justifier of the ungodly. When Abraham believed God's promise, he saw no natural fitness in himself or in Sarah to have a son; but he believed in the supernatural power of God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were, ver. 17. Even so, when a sinner believes unto righteousness, he sees no fitness in himself to be justified in the natural way of works, but in all respects the reverse; yet he believes in the supernatural grace of God, whose prerogative it is to justify the ungodly, such as he, through the obedience of another. This is his faith, which is more fully described afterwards to be a "believing on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," ver. 24, 25. Here we see that his faith is a believing on God as having substituted his own Son in the room of the guilty, delivered him up to death as an atonement for their sins, and raised him again from the dead for their justification, thereby demonstrating that he is fully satisfied and well pleased in the sacrifice of his beloved Son, and requires no more offering for sin. By the obedience of Christ unto death he perceives the law magnified and honored, sin expiated, justice fully satisfied, and pardon and eternal life procured for lost sinners; so that he now sees how it is just in a holy and righteous God to justify the ungodly such as he is, purely through the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain. This, and this alone, gives peace to his guilty conscience and rest to his soul.

This faith in its very nature is opposite to his working in order to be justified; for it is a belief that all his works in that view are in vain and unavailable, Rom. iii. 20. It is

a belief that all his works to that end are needless, because he sees that the work which justifies the ungodly is already completely finished and accepted without his concurrence, and that nothing can be added to it as the ground of acceptance, either in point of merit or moral fitness. Nay, it is a belief that all works performed in this view are exceedingly sinful, as frustrating the grace of God, and implying that Christ hath died in vain, Gal. ii. 21. Whoever, therefore, are working and laboring in order to be justified, have not yet believed on God as the justifier of the ungodly. Such a belief would have furnished them with other principles of action, and have made all their works and exercises turn upon a very different hinge. But we must remember that this faith is a supernatural principle, opposite to our natural bias and reasonings, and therefore requires the mighty power of God both to produce and sustain it. I observe,

(4.) That believing on him that justifieth the ungodly, is here declared to be justifying faith. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, HIS FAITH IS COUNTED FOR (OR UNTO) RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Counting, reckoning, or imputing faith for righteousness, is not the apostle’s usual style on this subject. He uses it only throughout this 4th chapter, where he is commenting upon Gen. xv. 6, which leads him to adopt the phraseology of his text: but at the beginning of the next chapter he drops this phraseology, and expresseth the same thing in his usual manner by “being justified by faith;” so that, to have faith counted for righteousness, is to be justified by faith. But as the words have been variously explained, I shall here give the sense in which I understand them.

Faith here does not mean the object of faith, as some explain it, but a man’s believing. Abraham’s faith, which was imputed to him unto righteousness, was his believing God, ver. 3,—his believing in hope, ver. 18,—his being strong in faith, ver. 20, and fully persuaded, ver. 21. It

is opposed to unbelief, staggering, or being weak in faith, ver. 19, 20; and in this 5th verse it is described to be a person's believing on him that justifieth the ungodly. This sense is fixed down by the apostle when he says, "If thou shalt—BELIEVE IN THINE HEART—FOR WITH THE HEART MAN BELIEVETH unto righteousness," Rom. x. 9, 10.

By righteousness here, many understand the righteousness of Christ. This is, indeed, the only meritorious or procuring cause of justification. It is by the righteousness of one, or one righteousness, that the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life, chap. v. 18. It is by the obedience of one that many shall be made righteous, v. 19. God hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. Hence he is said to be made of God unto us righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30, and we are said to be justified by his blood, Rom. v. 9. Yet I am of opinion that righteousness in the passage under consideration signifies the blessing of justification itself, which is received by faith in Christ's righteousness. This, I apprehend, is the sense of the word through the whole of this chapter and many other places, such as Rom. ix, 30. ch. x. 4, 10. 2 Cor. iii. 9. chap. v. 21. Gal. ii. 21. chap. iii. 21. For to be justified through Christ's obedience is to be made or constituted righteous, Rom. v. 19, or to be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21.

But it will be asked, In what sense is a man's faith counted to him for, or unto, righteousness or justification? I cannot better illustrate this than by referring to what is said of the miraculous cures which Christ performed on the bodies of men. He asks some of those who applied, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Mat. ix. 28; and to another he says, "Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth," Mark v. 36. It was certainly Christ's divine power alone that healed them; yet not with-

out their believing that he was able to do it; and when they believed that, his power was exerted in healing them according to their faith in it; "As thou hast believed, so be it unto thee," Matt. viii. 13. "According to your faith be it unto you," chap. ix. 29. And so he places their cure to the account of their faith, or counts their faith to them unto healing: "Thy faith hath saved thee," Luke xviii. 42. "Thy faith hath made thee whole," Mat. ix. 22. Christ's power was always the same, whether they believed it or not; but it was when it became the object of their belief that it effected their cure. Nothing could be more gratuitous and beyond the compass of human power than those merciful cures; so that the manner in which they were conferred clearly illustrates the point in hand. Healing the diseased, answers to the justifying the ungodly. Christ's power effected the former; his righteousness the latter; yet it was by believing that his power and righteousness are alone sufficient for these purposes, that the benefit was obtained, and so it is ascribed to faith. We may therefore run the parallel thus, To him that worked not for his cure, but believed on him that healed the diseased, his faith was counted for, or unto, healing; so, in like manner, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for, or unto, righteousness," i. e. justification: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," or to the obtaining of justification, Rom. x. 10.

From the whole it appears to me, that God may as properly be said to justify the ungodly, as to pardon the guilty, reconcile enemies, heal the diseased, or quicken the dead; for certainly the character of ungodly applies to that state wherein men are really such; and if justification be a taking them out of that state, how could it be better expressed than by justifying the ungodly? Indeed, none but the ungodly are capable of being justified in the apostle's

sense of that word. For, though faith is necessary to justification; yet as it is not the ground of it, but receives it as a free gift, and as this reception cannot be shown to be prior to it in order of time; so it does not constitute a godly character or state, previous to justification; for there is no unjustified godly person, nor is any person in a godly state till he is justified: therefore justification must respect the ungodly, and the apostle's expression is the most correct that could be devised. It also appears that justifying faith implies the person's conviction that he himself is ungodly, and has incurred the curse; for he believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, which he would not submit to but for such a conviction. Further, it is evident, that by this faith he is justified, or receives pardon and acceptance with God; for it is said, his faith is counted for righteousness. Now, and not till now, his state is changed, and he is no longer ungodly, nor denominated such. That faith by which he is justified is accompanied by true repentance, purifies his heart, works by love, and is productive of obedience; and though sin, to his grief, still remains in him, of which he becomes more and more sensible as he grows in spirituality and the knowledge of himself; yet it shall not have dominion over him, for he is not under the law, but under grace. He lives by the of the Son of God, and Christ lives in him.

None can believe in Christ for righteousness without a conviction of sin and its consequences, for they can see no need they have of him, nor any suitableness in him without this. But many may have strong convictions of sin awakened in them both by the word and providences of God; their minds may be filled with fear and distress, and an earnest desire of deliverance at least from the punishment of sin, and perhaps from sin itself as the means of obtaining that. They may also be very busily engaged in establishing their own righteousness in a variety of ways, and, among the

rest, in fitting and qualifying themselves to be justified by Christ's righteousness. Nay, they may be taught in theory to renounce all this labor, as if they were doing nothing, and to depend upon the merits of Christ alone for acceptance; and so be engaged in doing and undoing, alternately working, and, as it were, humbly renouncing all their works; while in all this exercise they have not the least notion that they can obtain justification believing in the work and worthiness of the Son of God as alone sufficient to justify the ungodly.

In the Commission, p. 84, 85, I mention the effect which the doctrine I oppose must have upon the mind of an awakened sinner. "He who conceives that, in order to his pardon and acceptance with God, he must first be possessed of such good dispositions and holy affections as are commonly included in the nature of faith, will find no immediate relief from the gospel, nor any thing in it which fully reaches his case, while he views himself merely as a guilty sinner—He does not believe that Christ's death will be of any benefit to him as a mere sinner," i. e. while he views himself only as such; "nor does he expect relief to his conscience purely and directly from the atonement, but through the medium of a better opinion of his own heart and character. This sentiment, if he is really concerned about the salvation of his soul, must set him upon attempts to reform his heart, and to do something under the notion of acting faith," (but in reality to qualify himself for Christ) "that he may be justified; and all his endeavors, prayers, and religious exercises will be directed to that end." Thus, he is working with respect to justification, instead of believing on him that justifieth the ungodly purely through the work already finished by his beloved Son.

Mr. Fuller's method of answering this is by entirely changing the case here supposed, and then combating the creature of his own imagination.

He first infers from it that I deny the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness.* Yet the case supposed is that of an awakened sinner, convinced of guilt, distressed in his mind on account of it, really concerned about the salvation of his soul, and not only earnestly desiring relief, but diligently laboring to obtain it, according to the direction given him, by the exercise of holy affections and dispositions. All this I admit may be previous to faith in Christ and forgiveness through him. And will Mr. Fuller deny that this is the repentance he pleads for in order to forgiveness, and as previous to faith in Christ, and which he thinks "a conviction of the being and attributes of God" is sufficient to produce?† Wherein, then, do we differ? Not as to the existence of the thing, but in our judgment of its quality. He supposes that this previous repentance is of a holy nature, including love to God. I do not; for, however much convictions of sin and a sense of need may be necessary to make sinners prize the remedy; yet I have no idea that unbelievers, while such, have any holy affection or true love to God.

Upon this he proceeds to deny that the case which I have supposed, is consistent with itself. "It may be questioned," he says, "whether this account of things be consistent with itself; or whether any mere sinner ever views himself merely as a guilty sinner: for such views include a just sense of the evil of sin, and of his own utter unworthiness of the divine favor, which no mere sinner ever possessed."‡ This is that part of the scheme whereby persons, previous to their believing in Christ, are taught to extract comfort from their convictions; and some are so extravagant as to imagine that, while in this situation, they have arrived at such a pitch of holy affection as to love God disinterestedly, or without any view to his mercy; so that, according to this, the reve-

* Page 189.

† Page 173.

‡ Page 190.

lation of his grace in the gospel must tend to contaminate their pure affection, and mix it with selfishness! This conceit I consider to be the very pinnacle of self-righteous pride. I am far from thinking that Mr. Fuller would carry matters to this extravagant height: no; I hope he is better acquainted with his own heart; but yet I apprehend that his doctrine of antecedent holiness, and of holy affection to God being included in convictions of sin previous to faith, (consequently without any true ground of hope in his mercy) can stand upon no other principle but disinterested love. I am, however, of a very different opinion. I believe that a person may be so awakened and convicted in his conscience as to view himself merely as a guilty sinner, i. e. having no righteousness to recommend him to the favor of God; and that under such conviction his sense of the evil of sin will not be confined to its punishment; but his conscience, or moral sense will tell him that he deserves punishment at the hands of a righteous God. Yet, notwithstanding this conviction, if he knows not the ground of hope in the mercy of God, or the way of relief, he will neither truly fear nor love him; but will either sink into despair, or, if any hope remains, it must be founded on his repentance and resolutions of amendment. And this last is the case which I have supposed, in which the awakened person is laboring to acquire holy affections and good dispositions that he may be justified.

Now, because I do not admit that an awakened sinner, however strong his convictions of sin and its desert, and however earnestly he may desire relief, is possessed of true holiness previous to faith; therefore Mr. Fuller infers that the case which I have stated must be that of a "hard-hearted enemy to true religion;" who has not a grain of regard to God's name, nor concern for having offended him; nor the least degree of attachment to the atonement of Christ on account of its securing his honor, and who wishes not

to be saved from his sins, but to be saved in them. He also affirms, that I suppose this hard-hearted sinner is to be relieved by the assurance of pardon and acceptance with God, and that this is to be derived directly from the atonement; by which, he says, I mean that the mere sinner is pardoned without repentance or any holy affection to Christ—that no mere sinner, in my sense of the term, ever derived relief as a mere sinner directly from the atonement; but believing sinners only. That by my way of reasoning it should seem as though impenitent and unhumbled sinners not only derived their comfort in this way; but as if they were the only persons that did so.”* By this, and a good deal more in the same spirit and strain, he shows his zeal for the holiness of unbelievers, and at the same time beats off the self-condemned, who can find no holiness in themselves, from looking directly to the atonement for relief.

I have not the least idea that a hard-hearted enemy of God, while such, can either receive or enjoy forgiveness; but I distinguish between such a state of mind, and that of an awakened self-condemned sinner, and also between the latter and a real convert who believes the Gospel, has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is possessed of holy affections.† For strong convictions of sin have often taken

* See page 190---197.

† What is here said of a supposed difference between a hard-hearted enemy of God and a self-condemned sinner, of convictions previous to faith and preparatory to it, is without the shadow of a foundation in the word of God; and Mr. M'Lean is here certainly obnoxious to the charge of “building again the things which he destroyed.” No further comment upon it is necessary than that which he himself has furnished in his description of the tenor and spirit of his address, who, holding just such sentiments, should speak out plainly. “As for you, the hard-hearted part of my hearers, I have no authority to preach the gospel to you in your present state. To you the word of this

place, and been attended with various affections, emotions, and resolutions, which yet have not issued in repentance unto life, or a real change, and so cannot be properly termed holy affections. Whether such convictions as issue in conversion differ in kind from the former, I will not take upon me to determine ; but I am certain of this, that it would be very unsafe to build up any in an opinion of their possessing holiness merely upon the ground of their convictions, while they come short of a real change, and do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That conviction of sin and its desert, which is subservient to faith in Christ, will never lead a person to think that it is any part of his holiness ; for such a thought would be as opposite to the nature of his conviction, as his feeling a disease would be to his thinking himself whole.

Mr. Fuller ought not to have treated the case of the awakened sinner which I have stated above, and which deserves compassion, with such unfeeling contempt and uncharitable invective ; for, whether I consider him as possess-

salvation is not as yet sent. You are not prepared or qualified for it : you are nothing but mere sinners, and no sort of encouragement or hope is held out in all the book of God to any sinner as such considered. It is only to the penitent that the gospel is to be preached ; for to such only does it hold out its golden sceptre. Let me therefore, in the first instance, call your attention to a previous duty ; a duty which you must perform before, and in order to believing," &c. How much more consistent would Mr. M'Lean have been with himself, to say nothing of the word of God, had he here made the truth " the one thing needful ;" had he centred all salvation, all desire in this ; had he been persuaded that it contained all that is necessary to affect suitably the hearts of those who hold it true, instead of dreaming of softening the hearts of the stout-hearted against God, by some previous process preparatory to believing it ;—had he not supposed that any in ignorance of the truth could be less hard-hearted enemies of God than others, and sought for no other fitness for the grace of the gospel than man's guilt as a sinner, and his misery as an outcast from the favor of God. Ed.

ed of real holiness or not, he certainly deserves no such treatment from any, much less from Mr. Fuller, who ought to have recognized his case as the genuine effect of his own doctrine, and so have vindicated his holiness; but, instead of this, he gets rid of the case altogether, by changing it into that of a hard-hearted enemy to true religion; and in this form he presents it to his readers, and combats it, as if I had either stated or approved of such a case!

But if he thinks the case which I have supposed not applicable, we shall take a real one, namely, that of the Philippian jailer, Acts xvi. in whom we may perceive a hard-hearted enemy to God and true religion—an awakened sinner—and a true convert; and all this in the space of a few hours. Mr. Fuller will certainly admit that he was a hard-hearted enemy to true religion when he attempted to kill himself, ver. 27. I suppose he will also admit that he was a true convert when he rejoiced, believing in God, ver. 34. It remains then to consider his intermediate case as an awakened sinner, when he “came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ver. 29, 30. Their answer to this was plain, direct, and pertinent, without any double meaning or reserve,—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” ver. 31. But as they knew he could not believe till they told him what he was to believe, “they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house,” ver. 32. The effect was, he believed what they declared as the word of God, and was immediately relieved, and made happy by it; for he found the gospel-remedy perfectly suited to his case, and reaching him guilty as he stood; so that he “rejoiced,” or exulted “believing in God.”

Let us now suppose that an answer had been given to this self-condemned jailer upon the principles which Mr. Fuller has advanced. It must be something to the follow-

ing effect:—"You ask what you must do to be saved; to this I answer in general, that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved. But I must inform you that there are many things requisite to your believing in a right manner:—You must first be regenerated without the word, and have your heart effectually changed, and its bias turned towards God, before you know any thing of Christ. You must also truly repent of all your sins, before you believe on him, and in order to it. And, with respect to this repentance, you must observe, that it is not a mere conviction of sin, and a dread of its just punishment, such as you seem at present to possess; but a holy affection towards God, being chiefly concerned for the dishonor you have done to his name, and reconciled to his justice, though he should send you to hell. Then with respect to your believing in Christ, you must not understand this in the common acceptation of that word, as if it meant simply your giving credit to the gospel testimony concerning him; for that would be an unholy speculation, which would never carry you to heaven. There is an important difference between this and the ideas which you must attach to believing. It is a grace of the Spirit, influenced by the moral state of the heart, and partaking of it, and including in its nature the exercise of holy affections and good dispositions. For God does not justify the ungodly till they are possessed of such antecedent holiness as I have described, nor perhaps till they have been his friends and servants for a series of years." Such an answer as this must either have driven the poor trembling jailer into despair, or have set him upon that kind of perplexing labor which I have described in the former case; but could never relieve his mind, or reconcile his heart to God, as the apostle's doctrine did.

Mr. Fuller thinks that his doctrine of antecedent holiness, and of working for God, previous to justification, can have no bad effect, because, "whatever necessity there may

be for a writer, in vindication of the truth, to enumerate these things, they are such as the subject of them thinks nothing of at the time, especially as the ground of his acceptance with God."* But if the subject of these things thinks nothing of them at the time, it is not Mr. Fuller's fault. He has done what he can to make him both think and act upon them, and that too with a view to be justified. And does he imagine that, after all his pains, the thoughtlessness or inattention of his readers will be a proper antidote against the genuine influence of such doctrine? Or does he indeed wish that this may be the case?

To conclude:—As the clear and decisive reasoning of the apostle Paul has not put an end to this controversy, which has been agitated ever since, I am of opinion that it is of such a nature that it can only be satisfyingly decided in the conscience and experience of such individuals as are taught of God, and that it is part of that knowledge which no man can effectually teach his neighbor.

* Page 185.

THE END.

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