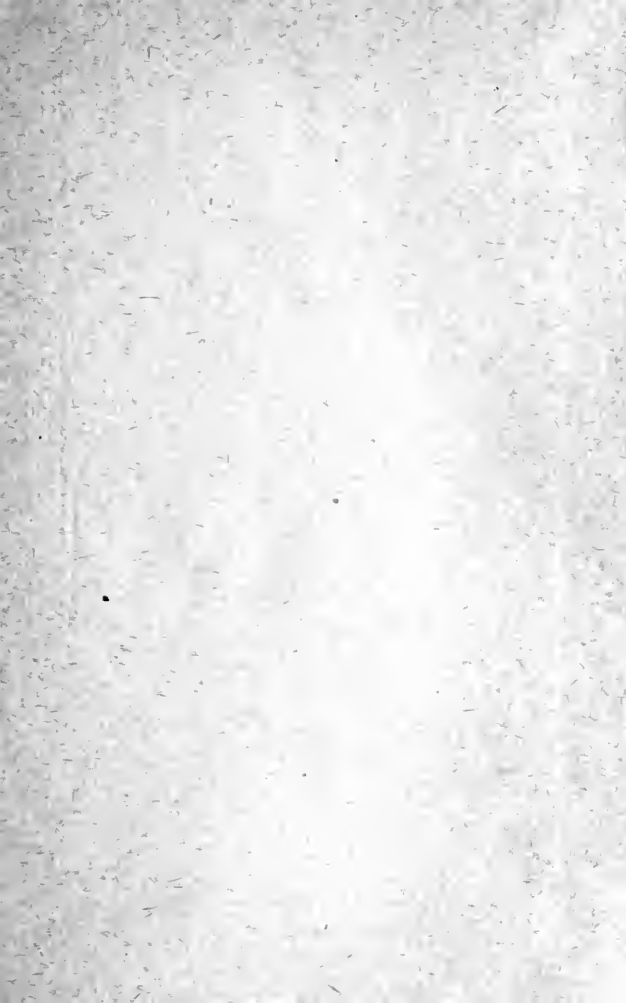




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THE

TRUE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

CONCERNING SOME

IMPORTANT POINTS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH:

PARTICULARLY

ETERNAL ELECTION, ORIGINAL SIN, GRACE IN CONVERSION,
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH, AND THE SAINTS'
PERSEVERANCE.

BY

JONATHAN DICKINSON, A. M.

FORMERLY MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ELIZABETHTOWN, N. J.

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A DISCOURSE

ON

THE DECREE OF ELECTION.

EPHESIANS i. 4, 5.—According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

THAT there is a Supreme and Eternal Being, and that he is possessed of all infinite perfections, are truths so visible by the light of nature, that to call these into question, is not only weakness and ignorance, but the height of stupidity and madness. “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” But then we are soon covered with thick darkness, when we begin to inquire into the manner of his existence and operations. We have clear light to discover that he is, and that he is infinite; yet none but his own infinite mind can fully understand what he is, or how he exists. Here the inquiries of the most exalted creatures

are unavailing, and the angels are charged with folly. What haughty arrogance is it, therefore, for poor worms to pretend to soar to these boundless heights, to bring the glorious properties of the divine nature to a trial at the bar of their own reason; and confidently to contradict what they cannot fully understand. Such bold attempts, through the successive ages of Christianity, have brought great dishonour to God, and confusion to the Church of Christ; and perhaps in nothing more than in the unsearchable mysteries of the decrees of God. I have been ever astonished at the daring boldness and presumption of the disputants on this tremendous subject; and at their confident assurance, that the counsels of that great God must be according as they imagine it is fit they should be. Here the schoolmen and metaphysicians bring in their curious learning as a test of this doctrine; as though the nature of God himself was to be tried by their vain philosophy, and opposition of science, falsely so called. Here some asserters of absolute decrees have too boldly arraigned the sovereignty of God, as though he could not have an absolute dominion over his creatures, if they mistake in some of their nice and abstracted speculations. Here the opposers of this doctrine have presumptuously ventured to put the justice, goodness, and truth of God upon a level with their schemes; and to assert that he cannot be just and good, nor his promises true, in a contrariety to their sentiments. Thus "vain man would be wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt."

These considerations should awaken in us a most solemn caution, not to look too boldly into this ark, nor venture too curiously to inquire into,

nor too confidently to define, what is infinitely above our reach. We should not, it is true, be contentedly ignorant of what God has revealed of himself, in his word and works, because his nature is incomprehensible. We are bound firmly to believe, frequently to meditate, and humbly to adore so much of his nature and counsels, as he has manifested to us ; though the greatest modesty, humility, and reverence become us, in our consideration of those deep things of God. I shall accordingly endeavour to treat the arduous theme, which my text leads me to contemplate, with an humble sense, that God is in heaven, and I upon earth ; and to avoid plunging into this ocean beyond my depth, I shall purposely overlook all the curious questions and scholastic distinctions, so commonly found in authors upon this subject, as things too wonderful for me, which I know not ; and with all the plainness and perspicuity I am capable of, consider the doctrine as it is set before us in the words of the text ; in which is worthy our notice—

1. The eternity of God's electing love. "Before the foundation of the world." This expression does not, I confess, necessarily imply a strict eternity. Millions of ages before the foundation of the world, fall infinitely short of that ; but the nature of the thing makes it necessary, that the words should be thus understood in this text. All time and even eternity itself being always present in the infinite mind of God, whatever counsels were at any time entertained, must have been at all times, and even before all time, entertained by him. But of this more hereafter.

2. Here is set in view the object of the decree of election. "According as he hath chosen us •

having predestinated us to the adoption of children ;” by which cannot be understood the Ephesians only, to whom this epistle was immediately directed, but all that then were, or ever shall be true believers in Christ, and adopted into the number of his children, and none but such ; or in other words, all, and only those who ever have been, or ever shall be heirs of eternal salvation. The text plainly shows us, that election and adoption are of equal extent. For if these Ephesians were, all others likewise were, “predestinated to the adoption of children,” who are privileged with so near a relation to God. And as all the children of God, and none but they, shall inherit eternal life, so all that shall inherit eternal life, and none but they, were predestinated to the adoption of children.

3. These words also set before us what are the predestinated and fore-determined price and terms of salvation to all the elect. They are “chosen in him ;” and predestinated “to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.” The means and the end were united in the divine decree. God never designed salvation to any unbeliever : but eternally determined to give his own Son a ransom for the elect ; and to give an interest in him by faith, and thereby a title to eternal life, unto all those that are chosen to it.

4. We have here likewise the pre-determined qualifications of all the elect, by which they shall be made meet to partake of the salvation appointed for them. “That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.” Those who are chosen to salvation, are chosen also to holiness of life, as a necessary preparation for it. It is by God’s decree as well as by his revealed will an

established truth, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And it is further remarkable in the words, that none are chosen to salvation, because God foresaw they would be holy : but we are chosen “that we should be holy.” The holiness of the elect is not the cause, but the consequence of the decree. This brings me to the last thing I would take notice of in the words, which is,

5. The only motive (if I may so speak) by which God was actuated in the decree of election : “According to the good pleasure of his will.” He was himself his own motive and end. As there was nothing eternally existing but God, so there could be nothing out of himself to influence his eternal counsels. But of this I shall afterwards have occasion to speak more particularly. Thus I have given a brief and general view of the words before us ; and shall now attempt a more distinct consideration of them under these propositions :

1. That God has according to the good pleasure of his will, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life.

2. All that God has elected, are chosen to salvation by and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. All who are thus chosen to salvation, shall be sanctified and made meet to partake of it.

PROP. I. God has according to the good pleasure of his will, from all eternity, elected some of mankind to everlasting life. The main business before me is to clear up this proposition ; I shall therefore be somewhat particular in considering what we are to understand by the decree of election ; in confirming this truth ; and in answering some objections that lie in our way.

1. I shall attempt a description of this decree. And by the decree of election I understand God's eternal purpose, according to the good pleasure of his will, to give grace and glory to a certain number of the children of men. I shall here only consider the decree of God, as my text does, with relation to men, and not to angels, as the objects of it. For though the eternal counsels of God must have considered and determined the state of all his creatures, whether of a superior or inferior nature, yet it does not so much concern us, what were his dispensations towards the angels, as towards ourselves; nor is this so particularly revealed to us in his word. That I may give a clearer view of what I intend by this description, I shall consider the several parts of it somewhat distinctly, with some evidences of the justice and propriety of each of them. This is not the place to prove the truth of the proposition, and to offer the evidences of such a decree of God, but upon the supposition of such a decree, to consider what it is necessary, from the nature and word of God, to understand by it.

I describe God's decree to be his eternal counsel. For though we have no adequate idea of eternity, nor of Him who inhabits eternity, yet we must suppose, either that all God's determinations with respect to us were eternal, or that they had a beginning in time. If the latter, there must have been a time wherein God did not know, or did not conclude, what the future state of his creatures should be; which I think none dare suppose. We may not imagine the counsels of an infinite mind like our own, gradual and successive, temporary and mutable. This were to attribute to the glorious God a state of forgetful-

ness and inactivity, or doubtfulness and uncertainty, before he came to a result in his mind how he would be glorified in his works, which is infinitely unworthy of him. Besides, we must consider of the decrees of God as of God himself decreeing, and consequently if he himself be eternal, his decrees must likewise be eternal. To conceive of God's knowledge and will to be something distinct from his nature, is to suppose him a composition of parts and powers, which is altogether inconsistent with his being infinite; and if we consider these as the necessary result of his nature, they must be, as his nature is, eternal. The special acts of God's purpose or counsel cannot, indeed, be considered as essential to God. His choosing Peter, (for instance) to salvation, does not appear so necessarily to flow from his essence. He might have been the same God, if Peter had not been elected. But that will of God, by which Peter was chosen to salvation, does belong to his being, and must necessarily act from eternity, in that way which is most agreeable to all the perfections of his nature. Thus, in whatever view we consider this case, the decree of God must be his eternal counsel: "He hath from the beginning (i. e. from eternity) chosen us to salvation." 2 Thess. ii. 13.

I consider the decree of election as an act of sovereignty, according to the good pleasure of his will; and so it is considered in the text, as I observed before. Every rational agent must, in all he does, be always actuated and influenced by the highest motive and inducement before him. But to suppose an higher motive to the eternal God than himself, is to suppose something higher than the highest, which is absurd. To imagine any

cause of God's will or decree out of himself, is to suppose something in God which is an effect, and so to assign a cause of the first cause, which is equally absurd. We cannot, indeed, in propriety of speech, attribute any motive or end to God after the manner that they are found in us, but only in a way of analogy. We must, nevertheless, speak of God after the manner of men, or we cannot speak of him at all. But then, when we do speak after this manner, we must remember, that nothing below God himself can be his end. He could not, from eternity, have any motive but his mere good pleasure to give existence to any future beings; and therefore could have no other inducement to determine their kind of existence, or what circumstances he would place them in. All beings in the world, but God himself, were, before the creation, nothing, their future existence and manner of existence were nothing, but the good pleasure of God concerning them; and therefore, there could be nothing but his good pleasure as a motive to the decree. I may add to this, that God must be considered as being from eternity the absolute proprietor, as well as the rector and governor of the future world with all its inhabitants. As he has in time made all things for himself, so he must from eternity have designed to make all things for himself, and therefore to be governed, guided, and ordered by himself according to his own pleasure. Moreover, the Judge of all the earth must have determined to act right with respect to his creatures; but there could be no other rule of rectitude but his own good pleasure. If he had any other motive besides his own will, it must have been a finite motive, and therefore not only unworthy of

an infinite mind, but such as could not be infinitely good, and consequently might be in some instance wrong and irregular. But we must by no means attribute any possibility of mistake either to the purposes or operations of God. From all which it is apparent, that the eternal counsels of God must be wholly resolved into this—Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Matt. xi. 26—Being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Eph. i. 11.

It may possibly be objected to this, that the decree of election was the acting of grace and love to the objects of it, and not merely an act of sovereignty. God is accordingly said to love his people with an everlasting love. Jer. xxxi. 3.—And they are called with an holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. 2 Tim. i. 9—It is sufficient answer to this objection to observe, that this eternal grace and love of God was arbitrary and sovereign, and could be excited by nothing but his own will. It is true, God had eternal designs of mercy and compassion to the elect; but it is equally true, that his own will and pleasure were both the fountain and end of these gracious designs; there could be nothing else. And the apostle accordingly resolves it into this—Rom. ix. 15. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

I have described the decree of election to be God's purpose to give grace and glory to the elect: and it is for want of a due attention to this,

that so many objections have arisen in men's minds against the doctrine now before us. Should we conceive of the decree of God, as his unalterable determination to give eternal life to any particular persons, without giving them previous qualifications for it, this would plunge us into difficulties that we could not get out of. If he absolutely determined the eternal salvation of any, whether they were prepared for it or not, where were his holiness? If he designed to save some, and leave others that would be equally meet subjects of his saving mercy, where were the rectitude of his moral government? If he purposed salvation to any, upon other terms or conditions than those proposed in the gospel, where were the truth of his word? But if we consider him as having no design to save any but gracious and sanctified persons; if we consider him as determining to give grace to the elect, and thereby to make them meet for glory, all these difficulties vanish at once. And thus the Scripture, thus the nature of the thing represents the case to us. Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Rom. viii. 29—God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. 2 Thess. ii. 13—We have repeated assurance from the whole tenor of the gospel, that repentance, faith, and new obedience, are necessary qualifications for eternal life; and if God has made these necessary to salvation, he eternally decreed that they should be so. He has not decreed one way of salvation in time and another from eternity. And how can any man obtain these gracious qualifications, unless God be pleased to give them? Or how can

God be supposed to give them, if he had not eternally designed it? unless we suppose him to be actuated by different, and even repugnant views, which were blasphemy to imagine. It is, therefore, most evident, that God did decree to sanctify the elect, in order to their glorification; to give them new hearts, that they might be fitted for future happiness; and to give them faith in Christ, and thereby an interest in his righteousness, that they might be entitled to it. There is not, it is true, in God any first and last, any succession of purposes or contrivances; these are incompatible to an infinite mind, to whom all things are present at one view. But yet, though God did not first determine to give grace to the elect, and by a successive act of his will, decree to glorify them, he did by that one eternal act of his will, decree to sanctify them, that they might thereby be made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light. And we must conceive of the decrees of God in this order, if we would have any right apprehensions of them.

I have considered the objects of the decree to be a certain number of the children of men. The whole world of mankind could not equally be the objects of electing love, for then there could be no choice. For all to be chosen is a contradiction in terms; a choice necessarily implying a preference of one to another. The number of the elect could not be indefinite and undetermined, unless we attribute doubtfulness and uncertainty to God, which were to suppose him altogether such an one as ourselves. The decree of election must have respected every individual person that shall ever be saved, or else there will some obtain salvation whom God did not eternally pur-

pose to save, which must argue want of foresight or change of purpose in God, both of which are unworthy of him.

I know of but one considerable objection against this doctrine, which is, that the decree might be conditional; they who are chosen to salvation, might be chosen upon condition of their faith and repentance; and their number could not therefore be certain, since it depended upon conditions that were in themselves uncertain.

To which I answer, that if this doctrine be true, there could be no election of any at all to eternal salvation; for God knows, and did eternally know, that none of us can ever obtain either faith or repentance, or other condition of salvation unless he gives them; and a decree founded upon such conditions as can never be fulfilled, leaves the case hopeless and remediless for ever. To suppose any chosen to salvation upon impossible conditions, is to suppose those designed for salvation in God's eternal counsel, whose perdition is absolutely necessary from that very decree, which is the height of absurdity. If any should answer to this, that God might decree to give men ability to comply with these conditions, this supposition obviates the objection at once, and shows that the decree could not be conditional; for if God has absolutely decreed to sanctify the elect, he has absolutely decreed to save them; sanctification and eternal salvation being necessarily connected in the nature of things. If he has not absolutely decreed to sanctify them, he has not decreed to give them ability to be saved; for he knows they have no power to sanctify themselves, nor is there any possibility of salvation without sanctification. If it should be yet further urged

in this case, that God decreed to save those, that should duly improve those powers which they have in common with the rest of the world, and none but those, this would not help the case; for our grand impotency lies in our wills, and God knew from eternity that none of us would ever have a will to comply with even these terms of salvation, unless he should work in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. From these premises it appears to me necessary, that the objects of the decree of election must have been a certain number, and that there could have been no uncertain precarious conditions in God's eternal counsel. But since conditional decrees have been so warmly espoused even by some men of figure in the learned world, it may be proper to consider this case yet more particularly.

If the decrees of God are conditional, the foundation of those conditions must be either in God, or in man, or in both; but if it be made evident that it can be in neither God nor man, I think the consequence must necessarily follow, that there are no conditions in the divine decrees, but that the objects of the decrees are a definite certain number.

That the foundation of these conditions cannot be in God, appears to me most certain, from the following considerations:—It is, I think, allowed by all that have any just idea of the divine perfections, that the will of God is his essence, or an essential principle of operation in him. God cannot be a composition of parts, powers, or properties, and therefore his will cannot be any thing distinct from his essence, consistently with his infinite nature, as I have observed before. From whence it follows, that to suppose any con-

ditions of the will of God, or of the decree of God, (which is his will with respect to us,) is to suppose conditions of the divine nature and essence: that is, that God may be or may not be what he is, upon certain conditions; which is too shocking to a serious mind, to need any animadversions. Besides, if the eternal counsel of God was infinitely right, just, and good, it could admit of no conditions; for infinite rectitude must always be invariably the same, whatever conditions can be supposed. There can be nothing better, and the counsels of God cannot be worse, than infinite rectitude; his counsel must, therefore, without any conditions, be always the same, and the elect must be a certain and definite number. I add to this, the absolute will of God is both the first cause, and the ultimate end of the salvation of the elect, as has been already considered. It must be the first cause, because their very being, their qualifications for salvation and their salvation itself wholly depend upon his will, and had neither of them ever been, if he had not willed them. It must be his last end, because there was nothing eternally existing but himself, and a non-entity could not be an higher end and motive than his own will. There could be no future end and motive in his creatures superior to his will, since they all depended upon his good pleasure for their existence and all their valuable qualifications, as has been observed. Now for the first cause of our salvation to be the absolute will of God, and yet that first cause to be conditional, is a contradiction in terms. To imagine any previous conditions to the will of God, is to suppose something prior to the first cause, which is likewise a contradiction. To suppose any subsequent conditions

to the will of God, is to suppose the first cause to be precarious and uncertain, mutable and liable to the control of some other cause; or, in a word, to be the first cause, and yet no certain cause at all, which is equally absurd. And if we consider the will of God as the last end of our salvation, the same absurdity will follow from the supposition of any conditionality therein. For if God's will be the last end, there can be no other end superior to it, that can control or change it, that is, it can have no conditions. If God's ultimate end be conditional, it is because there may be some other motive greater than that, which may prompt him to change his mind; which supposes that there may be in God an end or motive higher than the highest, which is too gross an absurdity to meet with any entertainment. Thus, I think, I have shown that if we have any reverent conceptions of the divine nature, we can find there no foundation for a conditional decree.

I proceed to consider whether there be any foundation for such conditionality in the decrees of God from the nature of man. If there be any thing in man, that could occasion any conditions in God's electing love, it must be some good qualifications, foreseen in him, upon the condition whereof he is chosen to salvation. This, I think, is what the advocates for conditional decrees always suppose. They imagine that God chooses men to salvation upon condition of their faith, repentance, and holiness of life; that he foresees who will believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and live to God; and upon such foresight, determines their eternal happiness. But could God foresee any good in man before he willed to them their first good; or any power to be or do good,

before he willed to give them such power? Could he foresee their improvement of such powers as he determined, before he determined them that assistance by which alone they should be able to improve them? It is impossible to imagine greater absurdities than these are. If there were any conditions from the nature of man, in the will and counsel of God, these conditions must exist, or at least the foresight of them must be supposed before God's eternal counsel; and so there must be something older than eternity, and something existing before the will and counsel of God, which suppositions need no refutation. If God foresaw these conditions in us before he willed them, he foresaw them before they had any foundation; and consequently before they were future. For I think that there is nothing more certain, than that the only eternal foundation and cause of the futurity of any good in us, was the will of God to give us that good, and to enable us to improve it. Besides, if God foresaw these conditions in us before he willed them, his foreknowledge must be prior in time to his will, and consequently his will must not be eternal; there must be successive properties and faculties in God; which are utterly inconsistent with his eternal un-compounded nature.

From what has been said, I think I may now safely come to a conclusion, that the decree of election necessarily implies, that God has without any conditions in his will and counsel, chosen a certain number to grace here and glory hereafter. Thus the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. 2 Tim. ii. 19.

After all, it must be acknowledged, although

there can be no conditions in God's decrees, yet he has decreed, that the salvation even of the elect themselves shall be conditional: that they shall be saved upon the only conditions of their faith in Christ, and other corresponding graces; which conditions he has decreed to give them, that they may be meet for the salvation to which they are designed. There is nothing more certain than that God has proposed these conditions of salvation in his word to all that shall ever be saved; and it is from thence certain that he decreed so to do; for his will is always the same. There are therefore conditions of the event, though there be no conditions of the decree. Nor is the event the less certain because of the conditions, since God has immutably decreed to give them also; to enable all the elect to believe to the salvation of their souls. It may be perhaps for want of a due attention to this, that many are prejudiced against the doctrine of absolute decrees. Because they do not consider, that though the will of God in itself has no condition, yet the effects of his will have conditions. There are even in the counsel of God conditions of our salvation, though none of our election. God has decreed to the elect necessary qualifications for salvation, without which they shall never obtain it. And so the secret and the revealed will of God are always and in all things the same.

Thus I have briefly shown what we are to understand by the decree of election, upon the supposition of such a decree: and I have endeavoured to explain and confirm each part of my description.

II. I am next to consider what evidence we have that this doctrine is true, which I have

hitherto taken for granted. I have indeed been already led to take occasional notice of some of those arguments, that are now to be offered in confirmation of the proposition. It is, however, necessary to endeavour to set those arguments in a closer view and stronger light, that we may more clearly see the truth and importance of the doctrine I am pleading for. Repetitions are preferable to obscurity, and I had rather be censured for repeating the same things, than for falling short in point of evidence, and thus leaving the cause doubtful and uncertain.

1. It is necessary from the very first idea we have of an infinite God, that he is omniscient. The supposition of the least degree of ignorance in an infinite mind, is an affront to common sense. An infinite being with but a finite knowledge, is the greatest contradiction. So that we must necessarily allow an omniscient God, or no God at all. This appears evident at the first view, and admits of no debate. It must therefore be allowed, that all things future were eternally open to the view of this omniscient mind. He could not have been omniscient, if any thing present or future was from eternity unknown to him. I shall not here concern myself with the debate among the schoolmen, how or in what manner all futurities were eternally present with God. That is a subject vastly above the inquiry of such short-sighted creatures as we are; for "God is higher than heaven, what can we know?" We may safely, and must necessarily conclude, that the knowledge of God is equal to his infinite nature; and that he must consequently foreknow whatsoever shall come to pass, though we know not how.

Thus far we go upon firm ground ; a step further plunges us into an unfathomable depth.

To apply this to the present purpose : God's foreknowledge of the sanctification and eternal salvation of all that shall ever be saved, renders those events certain and necessary ; that they will not, they cannot be otherwise than he foreknew they should be. If God's foreknowledge were not certain, it would not have been knowledge, but conjecture. If God's foreknowledge was certain, the event must be likewise certain and necessary. How could he otherwise certainly foreknow it ? If God did not eternally foreknow these events in all their circumstances, just as they would come to pass, it would not have been knowledge, but mistake ; and if he did foreknow these events, just as they would come to pass, they must necessarily come to pass, just as he foreknew they would. A necessity of infallibility must therefore be unavoidably connected to the foreknowledge of God. And whether we can form any just notion how the several perfections of the divine nature did eternally co-operate with respect to our future salvation, or not, it must follow from these considerations, that there was with God from all eternity, an infallible certainty and necessity of the whole progress of the salvation, both in grace and glory, of every individual person that will ever be saved. It is absolutely impossible, that the salvation of any one of them can fail (the certainty of their salvation being founded upon the nature of God) unless we dare suppose even God himself to be fallible.

I presume that even the opposers of absolute decrees will themselves generally allow the foreknowledge of God, with these undoubted conse-

quences of it. How unreasonable is it, therefore, to quarrel with the doctrine of absolute decrees, when they must allow the absolute certainty of the event, or deny the foreknowledge of God? and whatever objection can be imagined against an absolute decree, the same can, with the same force, and upon the same grounds, be urged against a certain and absolute foreknowledge? For it is the same thing, and the same consequences in all possible instances will follow, if the certainty and infallibility of the event do flow from the knowledge, or the will of God. Those objections can therefore be no just reason with such men against God's pre-determination, that equally militate against his prescience, which is what they dare not deny.

It has indeed been objected against this doctrine, that the salvation of particular persons is in itself a contingency; what may be, or what may not be, according to their compliance or non-compliance with the terms and conditions of salvation proposed in the gospel; and, therefore, that it must necessarily have been foreknown of God to be a contingent and uncertain event; for such it certainly is, and God foreknew it to be as it is.

To which I answer, that although the event be contingent with respect to us, while we do not certainly know whether we shall comply with these terms of salvation, or not; it could not be contingent with respect to God, who from eternity did certainly know whether we should comply with these conditions, or not; and therefore did certainly know what the issue and consequence of our compliance or non-compliance would be. God could not have been omniscient, if he did not eternally foreknow all the minutest circum-

stances of our whole conduct with their consequences, all our dispositions, affections, and conversations here in this world, as well as our eternal state in the world to come. He must have foreknown these events, as they would be in themselves, when they come to pass; and not as they would be to such short-sighted creatures as we are, before they come to pass. These events will be no longer contingent or uncertain to us, when they are fully accomplished; and therefore could never be contingent or uncertain to God, who did from eternity as well foresee their full accomplishment, as the conditions on which they depend.

To conclude this head, if God did not eternally foreknow all events, and the accomplishment of all circumstances and conditions of events, with respect to all his creatures, it must be either from defect of knowledge in God, or from some obstruction or obstacle in the creature, that hid the event from the view of an omniscient eye. Not the former; "Let no such arrogancy come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." 1 Sam. ii. 3.—Not the latter; a finite being cannot control an infinite nature; nor cast any obscurity in the way of infinite knowledge. It is in vain "to seek deep to hide our counsel from the Lord. If we say, the darkness shall cover us, even the night shall be light about him; yea, the darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to him." Psal. cxxxix. 11, 12.—"Neither is there any creature, that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 13.

And now I think, I am got safely thus far.

And there can no objection lie in the way of this truth, that God did eternally and certainly foresee the salvation of all that will ever be saved; and that this foresight of his renders their salvation necessary and infallible. I therefore proceed a step further.

2. It is also necessary that the eternal God be a perfect being; and that all the perfections of his nature should always concur in all his operations. The holiness (for instance) and the goodness, the truth, the mercy, the justice, so likewise the knowledge and the will of God, do most necessarily agree together, in all his dispensations. Some of God's attributes are indeed very different, and even contrary in their exercise upon the creatures. It is a vastly different thing to us, to be the objects of God's favour, or of his justice, wrath, and displeasure: that we must consider some of the operations of God towards us, as the actings of one and not of another of his glorious attributes. Thus his bestowing salvation upon any, is an act of his grace and not of his justice; and punishing any with eternal destruction, is an act of his justice and not of his grace. Yet all his attributes must always unite and agree in his own infinite mind. His grace is not in the instance mentioned, inconsistent with his justice, nor his justice inconsistent with his grace. There can be no contrariety, no opposition or repugnancy in the divine nature. This must not be supposed of an infinitely perfect being. To suppose that God ever ceased in any one act to be holy, to be just, to be good and merciful, or to have every one of his essential properties in exercise, is to suppose that he ceased to be God. For he must be an omniscient God, a holy God, a merciful God, a

just God, &c. at all times, and in all instances, or be no God at all. Whatever attributes or properties necessarily belong to the Divine nature, are either essential to him, or else God may cease to be what he is, or be at one time what he is not at another. But this is what no man dare suppose. And if all the attributes or properties which necessarily belong to the divine nature, are essential to him, no one of them can ever be removed, not so much as in one instance, or one moment, without the destruction of his being. To apply this to the case before us. The decree of election is not to be supposed an act of God's knowledge separate and distinct from his other essential perfections; but an eternal act of his mind, wherein they all unitedly concur. If God did eternally foreknow the salvation of the elect, he did foreknow it in a manner agreeable to all his essential properties; and consequently in a manner agreeable to his will, which is one of them. Whatever difficulties there may be in our minds with respect to the eternal concurrence of God's will with his knowledge, relating to some things that either have or will come to pass, and were consequently the objects of his prescience; it is certain that in some way or other, their futurity was agreeable to his will, or else his knowledge and will would have been at disagreement, which may by no means be imagined. What is God's knowledge, but God himself knowing? And what is God's will, but God himself willing? To suppose these at disagreement, is therefore to suppose God at disagreement with himself, which is the highest blasphemy.

It is also impossible from the very nature of God, that he could eternally foreknow our future

salvation in a way repugnant to his will, not only because all his perfections and consequently his knowledge and will must always agree; but also because it is impossible that our salvation should have been future, contrary to his will. It was certainly in his power to have hindered it, if he had not willed it; and then it never would have been, and consequently would not have been fore-known. Nay, it is certain that the salvation of all that shall ever be saved, did eternally depend upon the will of God, as the first cause of it; as I have observed before. There could be nothing else from eternity to make our salvation possible; and therefore it could not have been the object of God's knowledge, if it had not been the object of his will. This, I think, is clearly evident, that the future salvation of every individual person that shall ever obtain it, did eternally depend either upon God or the creature, as the cause of it; for an effect, without a cause, is a flat contradiction. It could not depend upon the creature, who had no existence, nor could have power to give either grace or glory when existing. It must, therefore, have necessarily depended upon God, as the only possible cause. And if so, it must either have depended upon his will, or upon some other of his divine perfections without his will, and agreeable to it; upon something in himself, that should necessarily constrain him to bestow salvation upon the elect, whether he would or not. But this none dare imagine. It must therefore have depended upon the will of God, or upon nothing at all, for its futurity and possibility. From which it necessarily follows, that if the future salvation of the elect could not possibly have been, God could not have eternally fore-

known that it would have been, except he had willed it. This is also evident from the very nature of the decree of election; if God has eternally chosen any to salvation (as is asserted in our text) he has eternally willed their salvation, willing and choosing being the same thing. To choose any thing, and not to will the object of such choice, is a contradiction in terms.

From all these considerations it is, I think, manifestly true, that God hath eternally known and eternally willed the whole future salvation of each individual heir of everlasting life and glory, and that their salvation, being founded upon the foreknowledge and will of God, is like his glorious nature necessary and infallible, which is the thing to be proved. The salvation of the elect is the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself. Eph. i. 6.

3. It is also necessary, that an infinite God must be an immutable being, and that there cannot be in any of his perfections, the least variation or possibility of change. All the counsels and purposes of God must have been from eternity infinitely wise, infinitely holy, and infinitely good; there can, therefore, be no possible reason why they should change, since there can be no change for the better, and we cannot suppose that infinite Wisdom should change his purposes without any reason for it. Nor, indeed, is it possible that they should change or alter in the least instance or degree, such change necessarily implying that God would cease to be infinite. How can God be infinite, if he be in any respect what he was not before, unless we allow a different kind or different degree of infinite Being, which is

absurd? "He is the Lord, he changes not." Mal. iii. 6. "He is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." Heb. xiii. 8. "With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James i. 17.

Where the Scriptures speak of God's changing his purposes or counsels, they speak after the manner of men, and represent to us that God acts in those cases, as we do when we change our purposes. As a change of purpose in us procures a change of conduct, so a change of conduct towards us is represented as a change of purpose in God, by way of condescension to our weak capacities. The change in reality is in us, and not in God: this occasions an alteration in his providence towards us, though there can be none in his nature or will. "The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent." 1 Sam. xv. 29. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Rom. xi. 29.

And now what hinders our coming to a safe and certain conclusion, that God has decreed in his eternal purpose, "according to the good pleasure of his will," to give grace and glory to a certain number of the children of men? I have proved from the very nature of God, that he must eternally, certainly, and infallibly foreknow the state of each individual heir of salvation, and be fully acquainted, from eternity, with the whole progress of their grace here, and their glory hereafter. I have proved that this foreknowledge of God was according to his eternal will and pleasure. It could not be disagreeable to, but in the order of our conceptions must be founded upon his will, since it would not have been, and conse-

quently would not have been the object of his knowledge and foresight, if he had not willed it. I have proved that God's foreknowledge and will are, like all other perfections of his nature, immutable, and that they are the same now, and will be the same for ever, that they were from all eternity. And when these premises are put together, does not the conclusion necessarily follow? Admitting these premises to be true, (and I think I have proved that they are true) we must of consequence admit the truth of the proposition which was to be proved.

Having thus considered the evidence of this proposition, as being founded upon the nature of God, I proceed in the next place,

To consider whether it be not also a truth clearly manifest from plain declarations of the word of God.

I begin with the consideration of that text in Romans viii. 29, 30. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In which words we find the foreknowledge of God, his pre-determination, the sanctification, justification, and eternal salvation of the elect, as so many links in an inseparable chain, necessarily connected together; and of necessary consequence we here find the truth of the proposition before us made most certain and evident. If God did foreknow and predestinate the future state of every heir of salvation, if he does actually call, justify, and glorify every one that was foreknown and predestinated in his eternal counsel, then God has from

all eternity elected a certain number to everlasting life, which is the thing to be proved. But the former is asserted in the text, and therefore the latter is true. I can here see no room for any plausible evasion. The words are plain, full, and pertinent to the purpose. To question the truth of the doctrine I am pleading for, is to question the truth of this sacred text.

The like evidence of this truth is also found in Acts xiii. 48. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Here the decree, and the consequences of it, are both asserted, and shown to be of equal extent. For if all that were ordained to eternal life believed, all that were ordained to eternal life shall be certainly saved; faith being salvation begun, and salvation being every where in the gospel promised to true believers.

Nothing can be clearer to the same purpose, than that in Romans ix. 23. "That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." That this fore-preparation unto glory, here spoken of, was in God's eternal counsel, appears manifest from the instance of God's decree with respect to Jacob and Esau, from which the apostle draws the consequence here before us. It was before they had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand. Verse 11.—That this preparation unto glory was an act of God's sovereign counsel, is strongly asserted in verse 15. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy."—That it is an act of his eternal and unchangeable purpose, is asserted in the cited text. He actually makes known the riches of his glory on all those vessels of mercy

which he had, in his eternal purpose, afore prepared unto glory. Were it even granted unto the opposers of this doctrine, that the decree of God with respect to Jacob and Esau, from whence the apostle argues throughout this chapter, referred only to their temporal circumstances, it would nothing affect the cause. For if the apostle thought it to be just arguing from thence, to God's decree of making known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, we should think so too.

This truth is likewise confirmed from Romans xi. 5, 7. "Even so then at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." If it was true then, it is true now, and at all times, that the remnant of God's children are according to the election of grace; and consequently that he hath eternally chosen all that shall ever be his children. If it be true, that the election obtain, and the rest are blinded, it thence follows, that all the objects of his electing love shall obtain salvation, and none but they.

But the time would fail me, to consider particularly all the texts of Scripture, where this doctrine is clearly revealed. I shall therefore but just hint at some few of the many other scriptural evidences of this truth. If it be true, that the elect "are predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" as is asserted in Eph. i. 11; if it be true, that "God hath appointed them to obtain salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ," according to that in 1 Thess. v. 9; if it be true, that "God hath from the beginning chosen them

to salvation," according to 2 Thess. ii. 13; if "God has saved them, and called them with an holy calling; not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began," as in 2 Tim. i. 9; if they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," as in 1 Pet. i. 2;—it must then necessarily be true, that God hath according to the good pleasure of his will, from all eternity, elected a certain number to everlasting life, which was the thing to be proved.

I have not hitherto been considering, nor attempting to remove the difficulties that lie in the way of this doctrine; but have only endeavoured to explain it, and to inquire into its truth and certainty. It is soon enough to consider and solve the scruples that arise in our minds upon the supposition of any fact, when the fact itself is established and received. There is no occasion to exercise our minds with difficulties about that which we have no reason to believe. It is not, therefore, the question now before us, How can these things be? but whether this doctrine be the truth of God or not. If it be evidently true, we must receive it for truth, whatever objections arise in our minds, and not reject it because we do not fully understand it. If we suspend our assent unto every truth until all the difficulties concerning it are removed, we must remain sceptics as long as we live, and never fully consent to the being of a God, nor even to our own being; for there will always remain insuperable difficulties with respect to both. Here then we should make a pause, and review without prejudice the arguments which have been offered, and con-

sider their force; and let our assent to this doctrine be as strong as the evidence of its truth. If it be founded upon the nature and word of God, there is no room to dispute it. If it be founded upon neither of these, there is no reason to believe it.

I do not speak this to discourage all proper and modest endeavours to obviate the difficulties that may arise in our minds from the contemplation before us. For though we cannot expect to search out and comprehend the perfections of God, so as to have a full and clear view of the eternal operations of his infinite mind; yet we may find sufficient answers to all the objections that can be thrown in the way, to satisfy a sober and humble inquirer after truth.

III. I shall now accordingly endeavour to refute some of the chief of these objections that lie in our way; and I hope I shall at least be able to make it appear that there are no absurdities in the doctrine of absolute decrees.

One of the chief objections against this doctrine is, that it takes away the liberty of the creature; is inconsistent with that freedom that must necessarily be supposed of a rational and accountable being. If God has absolutely decreed the event, and the salvation of the elect is by virtue of that decree absolutely necessary, that it cannot fail of accomplishment, it is in itself unavoidable, and the elect must be saved whether they will or not. And what liberty or freedom can there be then left them in the affair of their salvation?

This being a principal objection, upon which the most of the difficulties that are raised against

this doctrine do very much depend, I shall be somewhat particular in answering it.

And I would first ask of the objector, whether he does not find himself at full liberty in all his actions. Let him look into the operations of his own mind, and inquire whether he has any force or constraint put upon his affections, appetites, or inclinations, in any case whatsoever; and whether he does not act voluntarily and spontaneously in all his moral conduct. I think every one will in this case answer in the affirmative. And what room can there then be for this objection? He cannot perhaps see how this is consistent with an absolute decree. What then! Must we dispute against a plain manifest fact, because we do not know how it can be? We cannot see how it is consistent with an immaterial spirit, to have any relation to space; or to act upon matter. Must we therefore dispute the union of the soul and body, and the subjection of our bodily members to the dictates of our minds, because we cannot see the consistency of it? Are there not a thousand undoubted realities in the material world, wherein there are such apparent inconsistencies, as we cannot see through? Must we therefore reject the greatest certainties, because we are but short-sighted creatures?—I think I have proved from the infinite nature and perfections of God, that the decrees are certainly absolute, and without any possible conditions; and that the futurity of the decreed event must be certain and infallible. And yet we find by experience, that we are at full liberty and freedom, that we act in all our moral behaviour according to our own wills. And does not this consideration make it necessary, that the liberty of the creature

is consistent with the decree of God, whether we can see through it or not?

It is a great deal too bold and assuming, for any man to say, that it cannot be; for how does he know that it cannot be? Is it a necessary consequence that because God is infinite, because his knowledge and his will are infinite, and must always agree together; and because the objects of both are consequently certain and infallible, that therefore he cannot make a creature in a state of freedom and liberty? If this be possible, if God can make a creature at full liberty, notwithstanding his predestining what he would make him for, how he would be glorified in him, and what his state should be, there is then no inconsistency between an absolute decree and the liberty of the creature. And who dare venture to say, that God cannot make a creature in a state of freedom, and be, notwithstanding, possessed of these infinite perfections of his nature? Nay, these infinite perfections of his nature make it necessary, that God can make a creature in a state of perfect liberty. If his knowledge and will are infinite, his power must be also infinite. He cannot be infinite in one, and not in all his essential properties: and it cannot be impossible to Omnipotence, to make a creature at full liberty, if he pleases. What then becomes of this objection?

If it be replied to this, that it is a contradiction, to suppose, that such a decree as makes men's salvation unavoidable and necessary, whether they will or no, is consistent with liberty and freedom; that this therefore cannot be argued even from the

omnipotence of God, for God cannot perform contradictions or absurdities ;—

I answer, who ever dreamed of such a decree as would make men's salvation thus unavoidable, or that will save them whether they will or no? I have shown already, that God as well decreed to give grace, as to give glory to all the elect; and that their interest in Christ, with all the blessed consequences of it, was decreed to be the object of their own free choice, and earnest pursuit; what they should freely choose, and diligently labour after, in all the methods of God's appointment; and in that way, and that only, obtain it. And this is so far from contradicting the freedom of the elect, that it fully establishes it. It is necessary even from the decree of God, that they shall act freely and at full liberty, in choosing their own salvation, "and working it out with fear and trembling." Where then is the contradiction? Is it a contradiction, for any event to be infallibly necessary with respect to a rational being; and that being to be notwithstanding in a state of freedom? Is it not infallibly necessary for the saints in heaven to be everlastingly glorious and happy; and do not they nevertheless enjoy the perfection of freedom? Is it not infallibly necessary, that the glorious God shall be eternally infinite? and dare any man imagine, that God himself is not at full freedom and liberty to act according to his own good pleasure?

It is yet further urged, that according to this doctrine of the decrees, there is a necessity that the elect shall *will* the means of their salvation, since God has decreed to give them such a will; and the same necessary certainty, that those who are not elected shall not *will* the means of

salvation'; and is it not a contradiction, that either the one or the other should be in a state of freedom, since they cannot *will* the contrary to what they do?

In answer to this I must observe, that a power to will, or not to will, any particular object of choice, or a power to choose indifferently either the one or the other of two contrary objects, is so far from freedom, that it is utterly inconsistent with it; and is what cannot be predicated of any being that is perfectly free. We could not be free agents, if we had not a power to will what appears to us from our present view of things most fit to be chosen; or if we had a power to will what appears to us from our present view of things unfit to be chosen. For either of these supposes the will itself to be the effect of some constraint from something without us; and not to be the result of our own understandings, affections, and appetites, as it always is in every free agent. This is equally true, whether our wills are always excited and actuated by some apparent good, as has been generally supposed; or whether they are commonly actuated by some present uneasiness, as has also been supposed; or whether by both of these. Freedom therefore cannot be opposed to necessity. Every free agent must necessarily will what his understanding, appetites and affections, represent to him the most fit object of choice; he cannot do otherwise. To suppose a power to do otherwise, is to suppose a power that is extrinsecal to him, that must move his will as a clock or watch is moved; and is therefore utterly inconsistent with freedom. If freedom consists in a power to will or not to will what appears to the mind, in its present view of things, the fittest

object of choice, then the holy angels and glorified saints are not free: for they cannot help but will the glory of God, and their own holiness and happiness. Nay, the blessed God himself, upon this supposition, cannot be free: for he cannot do otherwise than eternally will the glorious perfections of his own excellent nature; he cannot will any event, the futurity of which is not in some way agreeable to them. Freedom, therefore, is only opposed to coercion or constraint. He that can act according to his own will, and do what he does—of choice, without any constraint, is therein free; though perhaps he may not be capable to do every thing that he would do, if it were in his power. Thus, the merchant acts freely, who by his trade advances his estate but a hundred a year, because he acts of choice, and is under no constraint, though he may probably desire to double the increase. And thus the believer acts freely, in his acceptance of Christ, and living to him; for that is according to his own will and choice, without any constraint; though he is not capable of all those gracious attainments, which he desires. Thus likewise impenitent sinners act freely, because they act voluntarily, in all their sinful indulgences, though they may be incapable to obtain some particular sinful gratifications, which their lusts prompt them to. In a word, he that acts voluntarily and without any compulsion or constraint, acts freely; and he that has a power so to do, is in a state of freedom and liberty; for freedom consists in nothing else. The freedom of a creature does not consist in a power to do every thing which he might choose to do, (that seems to be the peculiar prerogative of God himself, and implies omnipotence) but in a

power to act of choice in all that he does do. From which it necessarily follows, that the infallibility of the decree of God can no ways obstruct the liberty of the creature; in that every rational agent does nevertheless always act voluntarily in all his moral conduct; and is therefore always in a state of freedom and liberty.

I know that it has been the common doctrine of divines, that the will of man has full freedom with respect to things natural, yet not in things spiritual; but that in these things it requires supernatural grace to move and influence it. However, I cannot but think, (with Mr. Locke) that it is a very inaccurate and obscure way of speaking, to attribute freedom, or want of freedom, to the will. The will being but a property or faculty of the mind, can no more than any other of our intellectual powers, be the subject of other properties or faculties. Free agency implies personality, which I think no man applies to the will. On the contrary, every one will allow, that there is a great difference between an act, and an intelligent agent; and that it is the latter only, that can properly be the subject of freedom, or want of freedom. And therefore to attribute either of these to the will, is to make that the agent, or person, when it is indeed no more than a personal act, or the person acting in a way of choice:—the confusion of which is obvious, and has been too manifest by the multiplied impertinent debates upon this subject. I nevertheless fully agree with the meaning of these divines, if I understand them. I agree, that no man has a power to will the exercise of saving grace, and a life of holiness and piety, until the Spirit of God, by his supernatural influences, represents these to him as most fit to be chosen, and

makes such a powerful impression upon his mind, as conquers his natural aversion, and excites him to will them. It is evident in every man's experience, that our natural propensity to evil is only to evil, and that continually. But these things that are evil, appear in a false light to our carnal minds, especially to our appetites and affections, as things most fit to be chosen; and while they thus appear to us good and eligible, we could not be free, if we did not will them. While we act as rational and free agents, we must will and choose what appears to us from our present view of things most worthy our choice. And it is therefore because we are in a state of freedom, with respect to the affairs of a spiritual and moral nature, that we cannot habitually choose a gracious, spiritual, and heavenly life, until by the powerful agency of divine grace we have such an habitual impression upon our minds, as overcomes our contrary inclinations, and represents such a life most worthy of our approbation and pursuit. Though we may sometimes want freedom and liberty in things natural (a man in a dungeon cannot be said to be in a state of freedom) yet a rational creature, while such, can never want freedom in things spiritual and moral; since whatever he acts in those concerns, he acts voluntarily, and therefore freely. It is true indeed, that sinners may in some sense be said to be in bondage to their lusts: that is, they freely and willingly perform their base and sordid drudgery, and cannot will to do otherwise while in an unsanctified state. Nothing but "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," can make us free from a chosen subjection to "the law of sin and death." The man is notwithstanding in a state of freedom, even in this vassalage of his affections.

For though a life of sin and sensuality is in itself of the nature of thralldom and bondage, the sinner does not esteem it so; but freely puts and keeps the yoke on his own neck. He does but what he wills to do, in his subjection to his lusts; and the believer does what he wills to do, in his subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ; both act freely, though both are voluntary servants. It is impossible, that a rational creature should act otherwise than freely, while he acts by counsel, whatever the decrees of God are concerning him.

A right apprehension of the decrees of God will make them appear to be so far from taking away the freedom and liberty of the creature, that they must make it absolutely necessary, that every rational agent shall act freely in his whole moral behaviour. If God in his eternal counsel did join the means and the end together (as I have already proved that he did) then he did decree, that the elect should be saved by faith in Christ and other concomitant graces, which are in themselves free and voluntary acts of the renewed mind, and that they should voluntarily and of choice comply with the terms of salvation. He did also decree, that those who are not elected, shall be finally punished for sin freely and voluntarily committed. And consequently the freedom and liberty both of one and the other are infallibly necessary even from the decrees of God. Which consideration alone might have been sufficient answer to this objection.

It may be further objected against this doctrine, that if God has infallibly decreed to give grace and glory to a certain number of mankind, and to none but them, he is then a respecter of per-

sons; which is directly contrary to his word. Acts x. 34.

To which I answer: To be a respecter of persons implies an unequal distribution of justice, from favour and affection; and not an unequal distribution of benefits, by a benefactor and absolute proprietor. When a judge is chargeable with partiality or injustice, because biassed by something in the person or circumstances of the party before him, such as greatness, riches, relation, or flattery, &c. he is a respecter of persons. But when an absolute proprietor, and sovereign disposer of his own benefits, bestows an undeserved kindness upon one, and not upon another, he is no respecter of persons. Thus, if God should forgive and save one penitent believer, and not another, out of a partial respect to the one or the other, because they were or were not Jew or Gentile, of high or low circumstances in the world, or the like (notwithstanding they both stand on a level in the gospel covenant, and have equal rights belonging to them in the court of governing grace) he might in this case be denominated a respecter of persons. But inasmuch as he will equally and indifferently adopt, justify, and finally glorify all penitent believers, whatever their external circumstances may be, he cannot be charged with respect of persons, how differently soever he distributes, among a world of rebels, such unmerited favours and benefits, as no man can have a right to by any law, covenant, or rule of justice.

Thus in the quoted text, he is said to be no respecter of persons, because "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." As he is the ruler and judge of the world, he is equal and impartial in bestow-

ing his rewards, according to his law and covenants of promise, which he has made the rule of his dispensations towards us. As he is a sovereign proprietor and benefactor, he bestows his benefits how and where he pleases, without being a respecter of persons; for he is absolute master of his own favours.

It is plainly visible, to every man's observation and experience, that God does not bestow his benefits equally upon all that are of equal demerit. He has not made every man an angel; nor every angel an archangel. He has not made every stone a beast; nor every beast a man. He has not given to every man equal powers or faculties of mind; nor equal advantage to get riches or honour, health or comfort in the world. And dare any man call him to an account for these acts of his sovereignty, as a respecter of persons?

If we apply this to the case before us, there will be found no room at all for this objection. In the decree of election God acted as a sovereign benefactor; and had he not a right as such, to "have mercy upon whom he would have mercy," when he was under no obligation by any law, covenant, or promise, or by any thing else but his own sovereign pleasure? Could he not determine who should be the objects of his special grace and favour, without respect of persons? Though "many are called and but few chosen, is our eye therefore evil because he is good? Is it not lawful for him to do what he will with his own?" As our Lord argues in this very case. Matt. xx. 15, 16.

It has been objected also against this doctrine, that it cuts the sinews of all endeavours to obtain salvation; and brings presumption into the world. For if we are elected, we shall be sure to obtain

salvation, do what we will; and if not, we shall be sure not to obtain it, do what we can. It is therefore to no purpose to strive.

In answer to which I would observe, that if this objection be just from the infallibility of God's eternal counsel and purpose, it is equally just from the infallibility of God's eternal foreknowledge. For the foreknowledge of God renders the event as certain and necessary, as his eternal counsel can do. What God did foreknow should come to pass, must certainly and infallibly come to pass, or else he could not have foreknown it, as has been considered before. And now let the objector consider whether he dare deny the omniscience of God, upon such kind of reasoning as this in the objection; whether he dare venture to say, that God cannot be omniscient, that he could not foreknow all future events; for if he did foreknow our salvation, we shall be saved, do what we will; or if he foreknew that we shall not be saved, we shall not be saved, do what we can. I presume there are but few will venture so far as to deny the knowledge of God, from such vain imaginations of their own. How then dare they venture to deny the decrees of God, from such reasonings as prove a great deal too much, if they prove any thing at all, and which must be wholly impertinent, if they do not prove that God cannot be infinite? This therefore shows that the objection cannot be well grounded, how plausible soever it may appear, since it militates against the perfections of God, and even against his very Being: for a God without omniscience is no God.

I must further observe, that this whole objection is founded upon a mistaken apprehension of the

decrees of God. God has not decreed to save any but persevering saints; and he has decreed to save all such: hence there can be no room for supposal, that any shall be saved, do what they will; or that others shall perish, do what they can. If God has chosen any man to salvation, he has chosen him also to sanctification; he has decreed that by faith in Christ, by a life of holiness, and by perseverance in both, and in no other way, he shall obtain eternal life; as I have particularly shown above. And what grounds can there then be for these consequences? What grounds for presumption, in this doctrine of the decrees? When it is certain, not only from the word, but from the decrees of God, that no finally impenitent unbeliever shall ever get to Heaven; and that no persevering saint shall ever fall short of it. The latter make their election, and the former their reprobation sure. They who are chosen to salvation, are chosen to it in a way of faith and holiness; and therefore, they who have these qualifications, are certainly elected, and shall be eternally saved. But they who want these qualifications, who finally continue to reject an offered Saviour, and to live slothful and irreligious lives, have no decree in their favour.—They will never obtain salvation by virtue of God's decree, that do not obtain it upon the terms proposed in the gospel; for God has never decreed salvation to any man upon other terms.

These things being considered, it will appear, the absolute decrees of God are so far from encouraging presumption, that they are in themselves a powerful argument to the utmost diligence and activity in the concerns of our souls and their eternal safety. If God has never decreed salva-

tion to any man in any other way but this, may I hope to be saved in the neglect of this only appointed means to obtain it? Does it not concern me to be in earnest in this matter, since I am certain from the nature and counsels, as well as from the word of God, that I must inevitably perish, unless I give up myself to Christ, and live to God in all holy conversation and godliness? In this way I may make sure to myself that I was eternally chosen to salvation; but in the contrary way, my eternal perdition will be most certain and unavoidable. Does not therefore my eternity depend upon most active diligence "to make my calling and election sure?"

If we should consider this objection with a reference to the common affairs of life, it may perhaps set the unreasonableness and injustice of it in a fuller and clearer light. We read, Job xiv. 5.—"That our days are determined, the number of our months is with God, he has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass." Now will any man argue from hence, that there is no occasion to eat or drink, or use any means for the support or preservation of his life; for if the continuance of his life be decreed, he shall live, do what he will; and if not, he shall die, do what he can? Does not every one see that their lives are preserved, and consequently that God decreed they should be preserved, by meat, drink, medicine, and other methods of support and sustentation; and that there is no decree will preserve them in the neglect of these? And do not they act accordingly? Our secular affairs were certainly the objects of God's decrees, as well as the more important concerns of our souls' eternal interests. Even the hairs of our head are all numbered,

in the counsel of God. And will any man argue from hence, that there is no need to plough or sow ; that if God has decreed him a harvest, he shall have it, do what he will ; if not, he shall have none, do what he can ? Does not every one see, that the decree of God will not till the ground, sow the seed, or bring them a crop, while they loiter away their time, and neglect their business ? Do not all men see, that if God has decreed them a harvest, he has decreed that they shall obtain it in the use of the appointed means, and not otherwise ; that if they do not sow, they cannot hope to reap ? And do not they behave accordingly ? How unreasonable then is this objection ! How unreasonable a presumption would it be, for any to venture their eternity upon such an issue, as they dare not venture their lives or their estates upon !

Having thus obviated the common objections that have been thrown in our way, I must proceed now to the consideration of the other propositions before mentioned. But inasmuch as these have been occasionally anticipated in the foregoing discourse, I shall be very brief in their discussion.

PROP. II. " All that God has elected to eternal life, he has chosen to salvation by and through the Lord Jesus Christ."

•We do see, in fact, that the whole race of mankind are fallen creatures ; and that if any of them do attain eternal life, they must be saved from a lost, perishing condition. And it is consequently evident, that man was considered as a fallen creature, in God's eternal counsel ; and that the elect were chosen to be saved from this lost, undone state, which the fall has brought us all into. Now, if fallen man was the object of God's electing love,

he must be chosen to salvation in a way agreeable to all the perfections of the divine nature. Since therefore we find from the word of God, that our salvation by the merits and mediation of Christ is the method, whereby God has provided to have mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other; we may safely conclude that this is the way in which God eternally determined the salvation of the elect. In this way he has in time provided, and therefore eternally determined, "to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus;" according to Rom. iii. 26. We are accordingly told that the crucifixion of Christ was "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Acts ii. 23—"What his hand and counsel determined before to be done." Acts iv. 28—That the elect had "their names written in the book of life, of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. xiii. 8.—And that "their salvation is according to God's own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. i. 9.

This then is the way of salvation, which God has decreed: this the only foundation of our hope. Both the decrees of God, and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, secure salvation to the believer in this way; and in no other. Whoever are chosen to eternal salvation, will be brought to see their undone state and inability to help themselves; to despair of salvation by anything they can do; to receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; and to depend upon him as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Until they thus lead the life that they live here in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God, they can have no evi-

dence at all of their election. But I pass to the other and last head.

PROP. III. "All who are chosen to eternal salvation in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be sanctified, and thereby made meet to partake of it."

The marks and evidences of their election must, in ordinary, be found with all the elect, even in this life. "They are chosen in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love."—I am not now considering the case of elect infants, who die in infancy. He who has told us, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," knows how to give them a title to it; and does doubtless qualify them for salvation by the sanctifying influences of his Spirit. Nor shall I venture to limit the holy One of Israel, by determining, as some have done, that none can be converted in the last hours of their lives, and never have opportunity to evidence their election, to themselves or others, by a life of holiness. But as we may safely conclude, that this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with us, and that such conversions are always to us suspicious and doubtful; so we may certainly conclude, that in adult persons a holy life is the natural, and, in ordinary cases, the necessary fruit and consequence of God's electing love. He that has not been brought to submit to God, and walk humbly with the Lord, and to mourn for his sins, to hate and forsake them: he that does not cut off his right hand or foot, and pluck out his right eye, if it offend him: he that does not habitually watch over his heart and life, and hate every false way; that does not seriously and diligently attend all the ordinances of religious worship, and live in the exercise of every grace, and

the practice of every duty towards God and man ; that does not, after all, lament the imperfections which necessarily accompany his highest attainments in this imperfect state, and “look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life ;” such an one, I say, has not the marks and characters of God’s electing love upon his soul, nor sufficient grounds to conclude upon his interest in it. He has no grounds indeed to conclude the contrary, because he is yet in his state of probation ; and though he has not obtained, he may yet obtain the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of grace, that will both incline and enable him to live a life of holiness, and thereby evidence his election of God. This, however, is to be received for an undoubted truth, that the will of God is always invariably the same ; and that what he has revealed to be his will in his word, was his will from all eternity ; and, consequently, since God’s word requires holiness, as the way to happiness, they who are a chosen generation, are also “an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of him that has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.” 1 Pet. ii. 9.

There is so little reason to fear the decrees of God, when rightly considered, will prompt to a life of carelessness and security, wickedness and impiety, that they evidently have every way the strongest tendency to the contrary. They who, from sanctification, have no evidences of their election, had need use earnest diligence to obtain them ; for, as I have already shown, they can be obtained no other way ; and they can have no grounded comfort or reason to conclude either their election or salvation, while they live in a

habit of wilful negligence or impiety. They who have good evidences of their election do not only live a life of holiness in course, without which they cannot possibly have any such evidences; but they must necessarily, from the principles of their renewed nature, take pleasure and delight in a conformity to the whole will of God. In a truly sanctified soul, "old things are passed away, and all things are become new." The understanding, the will, affections and dispositions of the renewed mind are all spiritual; whence he cannot but approve, choose, and delight in a new and spiritual life and conversation. "He is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that he should walk in them." Eph. ii. 10.—Satisfying evidences of God's eternal love will fill the mind with admiring, adoring thoughts of such distinguishing kindness, and be a continued source of love, thankfulness, and obedience in the soul that lives under the light of God's countenance. They who know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, are thereby filled with all the fulness of God. Eph. iii. 19.—"The love of Christ constraineth us." 1 Cor. v. 14.

I shall now proceed to make some reflections upon what has been said, by way of improvement.

USE I. It is, I think, a natural inference from what has been said and proved, that there is a certain number of mankind, who are not elected to eternal life, and who will, of consequence, certainly fall short of it.—I shall not here undertake the dispute, whether all that perish, are by a positive and absolute decree of God predetermined to a life of sin, and to eternal destruction for their

sin. There has been such bold disputing on both sides of this question, and such bold consequences drawn from the ideas, which both parties have entertained of the nature of God, that I cannot read those controversies without horror. And what occasion is there for these over-curious inquiries? Cannot such poor dust as we, be contented to acknowledge our ignorance of these unsearchable mysteries of the divine nature? Methinks the apostle's solemn reprimand might be sufficient to stop our mouths, and silence our confident metaphysical disputes about the operations of the mind of God, and the manner how his infinite perfections concur in the decree of reprobation. Rom. ix. 20. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"—As there is nothing more clearly revealed in the Scripture, nothing is a more necessary deduction from the essential perfections of God, as I have shown above, than God's absolute choice of a certain number to grace and glory; it is from hence certain, that the number of the elect can neither be increased nor diminished. Their number is no more capable of change, than the eternal counsel by which they are chosen. Thus the foundation of God, with respect to each individual of that chosen number, standeth sure. So likewise, on the contrary, God's electing a certain number does necessarily imply his not electing of the rest, whose number must be equally certain to God; and therefore equally incapable of increase or diminution. As those will certainly be saved, so these will certainly fall short of salvation. The certainty of the salvation of the elect depends upon

God's decree to give them eternal life, and by grace to qualify them for it. Is there not then an equal certainty, that they will not obtain salvation, to whom God has not determined to give these gracious qualifications? Whoever obtains eternal salvation, must be made meet for it by faith in Christ, and holiness of heart and life. But fallen creatures can have neither of these, neither the will nor the deed, unless God change their hearts, and renew them in the spirit of their minds. And can we suppose that God will do this for them, if he has not pre-determined to do it? This were to suppose a change of purpose in God; which is inconsistent with all his perfections.

I am sensible that very great difficulties may arise in our minds from the contemplation of this awful subject, which perhaps may never be fully and clearly removed, until we come where we shall "know even as also we are known." A reconciliation of all the mysteries of God's eternal counsel, with his revealed will, seems to be reserved for one of the employments and enjoyments of the heavenly world. In the mean time, it becomes us with humble adoration, to fall down at the footstool of God's sovereignty, with such language as that, Rom. xi. 33, 34. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments; and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"

I think, however, that God has not left us without sufficient light to clear it up to every humble mind, that God's ways are equal, and our ways are unequal.

If it here be objected, that this seems inconsistent with the goodness and justice of God, to make our sin and guilt necessary, and punish us eternally for what we cannot help,

I answer, if God's decrees were the cause of our sin and guilt, there might then perhaps be some foundation for this objection. But inasmuch as the decrees of God have no causality at all, either of the sin or perdition of wicked men, the objection is groundless.—Though we cannot fully understand the order and manner of the divine counsels, with respect to the perdition of those that are not chosen to salvation by Christ; but this, like the appearance in Ezekiel's vision, is high and dreadful; yet we may certainly know, that God never decreed the destruction and perdition of any man, but for final continuance in sin. And we are likewise certain, that he cannot by his decree, or in any other way, be the cause and author of that sin which he will finally punish. The former of these is certain from the word of God, where we are assured, that "the soul that sins shall die;" that "God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" and that he will eternally punish none but those, who "after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up wrath against the day of wrath;" and consequently that he decreed to punish none but such. The latter of these is certain from the nature of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and consequently cannot be the author of what his soul hates. The sins of the reprobate are from Satan and their own hearts; their future punishment will be for the sins which they have voluntarily committed and impenitently continued in. The decrees of God have no hand in procuring either

the one or the other. How then can we say, that the way of the Lord is not equal? Certainly it will appear in the conclusion, that the Judge of all the earth hath done right. He will "be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges."

The certainty and infallibility of the event does indeed follow from the decrees of God, consider them in what sense we will. If we allow no more than God's foreknowledge of the sin and punishment of the reprobate, that makes the futurity of both most certain; as I have fully proved already. But by what consequence will it follow, that God cannot be good and just, because he is omniscient? Is it not, on the contrary, most certain that he must be good and just, because he is omniscient? For if he be infinite in one, he must be infinite in every one of his perfections. This makes it evident, that there may be from the decrees of God an infallible certainty of the sinner's perdition, consistent with the divine justice and goodness. And we must not venture to suppose such a decree, as is necessarily inconsistent with either.

The common occasion of the confusion of men's minds upon this subject is this. They do not distinguish between the necessity or infallible certainty of the event from the decree of God, and God's causing, compelling, or some way or other bringing to pass that event by his decree. But in the present case there is an infinite difference between these two ideas. The former implies no more than the eternal operations of God's mind within himself (if I may so speak) without any influence upon the creature, and utterly unknown to him. The latter supposes God's agency upon the mind of the creature, inclining him to sin

and thereby constraining him to perish. The former is a necessary deduction from God's infinite nature, as I have shown: the latter is tremendous blasphemy, to be rejected with abhorrence. There is no necessity to be supposed in this case from the decrees of God; but a necessity of infallibility; that is, that the event will be certain and cannot fail. But how does that imply any compulsion upon the creature, whereby the event is brought about, and he constrained to sin and perish? There is no connexion between such necessity and constraint, as I have proved already. Men may act in this sense necessarily; and yet act most freely and voluntarily, without any compulsion. They cannot be compelled by the eternal counsel of God, which could not act upon them infinite ages before they had any being. They cannot be compelled by God's influencing them to sin: for "God cannot be tempted of evil; neither tempteth he any man." James i. 13. And why is not this sufficient to satisfy our minds? What occasion can there be for our perplexing ourselves with unnecessary difficulties, about the hidden and unsearchable counsel of God?

It may perhaps be further objected; that this does not appear consistent with the general calls and offers of salvation in the gospel. How can these be sincere, when God knows that a great part of the world of mankind can never accept them? He has not determined to give them grace; and it is therefore necessary that they must live and die in a graceless state. And is it not a mockery, to propose such conditions to them which they cannot comply with; and yet punish them for their non-compliance with these impossible conditions?

To this I answer : How comes it to pass, that they cannot comply with these proposals of the Gospel ? The decree of God is no cause of their impotency, any more than it is the cause of their sin. God made man upright, capable of obedience to his whole will concerning him ; and his not decreeing to give him grace, is no cause of his wanting this primitive perfection. If God's not decreeing to give Adam persevering grace, was the cause of his apostasy, then the cause of his apostasy was in God himself ; and God was the author of his sin ; which is blasphemy to suppose. The cause therefore of our first apostasy, and of all the impotency flowing from it, is from man himself. And must God change his law, or retract his demands of obedience from us, because by our own fault we are become incapable of obedience ? If a master in a morning command his servant his work till night, is the servant guiltless and unworthy of punishment, if he wilfully break his axe or spade, and thereby render himself incapable of obedience ? If God had left all the sinful progeny of Adam to perish in a graceless state, we should have had no cause to find fault ; for he owed no grace to any of us. If he gives grace to some and not to others, he acts as a sovereign benefactor, that may do what he will with his own. If he require perfect obedience from an impotent creature, he requires no more than what is due to him by the law of nature ; and the impotence of the creature being his fault, deserves punishment ; and not the reward of sanctifying grace from God. The sum of the matter then is, that God makes proposals of salvation indifferently to all. They that comply with them shall reap the benefit ; and as for

others, whether they are considered as impotent, that they cannot, or obstinate, that they will not comply, the fault is their own ; and God and his throne are guiltless. I have here, it is true, considered all mankind under the guilt of Adam's sin, which is a fact so clearly revealed in Scripture, that it ought not to be called in question. See Rom. v. 12, forward, Psa. li. 5, with many other places. And though it would be an impertinent digression, to endeavour an illustration of that point at present ; I hope hereafter to attempt that also, if God shall give me ability and opportunity.

I add to this : God has decreed to give even to the reprobate more power and ability, than they will ever improve. God does in fact give, and therefore has decreed to give, even to them, a natural power to consider of their sinful and dangerous estate and condition, to endeavour to mourn for their sins, to watch against them, and reform them, to pray to him in some manner with diligence and constancy for the sanctifying influences of his blessed Spirit, to attend upon all the appointed means of grace, in order to obtain both grace and glory ; and to endeavour to be sincere in all this. And none of them will be able to plead in the day of Christ, that they went as far as they could by their natural power, in a compliance with the will of God, and in seeking his gracious influences ; and yet after all he denied them special grace. It is true, that God knew from eternity that they would not improve these natural powers : but he also knew that it would be their own fault, that they do not improve them. Must not he offer them terms of salvation worthy of a rational creature, endued with such powers

and faculties, because he knew that they would not embrace them? Do not they deserve perdition, that will not so much as endeavour to perform what obedience they are capable of? And is not this the case of every impenitent sinner?

Let us further consider where is the seat of this impotency, in those that are not chosen to salvation, that it is in their wills. They "will not come unto Christ, that they might have life." John v. 40.—It cannot be said of any man, that he is truly willing to comply with the terms of salvation, to accept of Christ as offered in the gospel, to depend upon him only as the fountain of grace and life, and to live to him in the exercise of godliness and honesty; and yet that he wanted ability to live conformably to his will. For what is faith in Christ, but the proper exercise of our wills? He that indeed chooses the Lord Jesus Christ for his Saviour, his portion and confidence, has unfeigned faith in him. It is true, an unregenerate man cannot believe in Christ; that is, he cannot be willing to accept of him upon gospel terms. Were he sincerely willing to comply with the proposals of the gospel, he would have actual faith in Christ. What is repentance, but the exercise of our wills? He that rejects and renounces all his lusts and idols, and chooses a life of holiness, is a true penitent. The inability of a natural man to repent of his sins, consists especially in this, that he cannot be sincerely willing to forsake all his sins, and to live a life of holy obedience to God. The like may be said of all the graces of the spirit. Every rational creature is, while such, a free agent, in his whole moral conduct; and every free agent acts

according to his own will.—Let the sinner's impotency therefore be rightly denominated; and it must be called obstinacy. Let this objection be fairly represented, and it must stand thus: How can God be sincere in the general offers of salvation in the gospel, when he foresaw from eternity an obstinate part of mankind, that would not by any means be persuaded to comply with them? This is a just stating the case; and a bare stating it in this form is sufficient.

Once more. There is no man living knows that he is not chosen to eternal life; nor can know it, but by an obstinate final perseverance in sin and impenitence. As the offers of salvation in the gospel are made indifferently to all, so all have a like natural capacity to be moved and influenced by them. And no man whatsoever has any more grounds of discouragement before him upon the account of God's decrees, than every man in the world has. Our business therefore is not to stand disputing about the unsearchable mysteries of God's eternal counsel; but to be most active and earnest and constant in seeking an interest in Christ and his salvation. In this way we may hope for the saving efficacy of his grace, and in no other. If we are found in this way, there is no decree that will compel us to sin and perish. If we are never found in this way, there can be no decree to save us.

USE II. This doctrine administers matter of unspeakable comfort to true believers, to all that have experience of a work of grace in their souls; in that their security of persevering in grace unto eternal salvation, is thereby proportionable to the evidences of their sanctification.—It is certain, that if God has begun a work of grace in their

souls, he has done this agreeably to his eternal counsel. He has had no new purpose or design, no new motive to act with respect to them. And if he eternally purposed to sanctify them, he also eternally purposed to glorify them. He never designed their sanctification to any lower end. They may therefore be ascertained, that as he has begun, he will also carry on this work of grace in their souls, unto the day of Christ. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? since it is God that justifieth them. Who is he that condemneth those who have thus evidenced their election of God? It is Christ who died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for them. Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No surely! They may be persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. viii. 33—39.

What a distressing consideration must it be to those who have once experienced the joy and peace of believing, if they had greater reason to fear a total apostasy from this happy state, than to hope for perseverance in it? And such must be their case, if their hope were not built upon this sure foundation. For if their stability depended upon any thing in themselves, upon their good purposes, promises, or designs of a religious life, how many thousand dangers would there be in the way! What a dreadful hazard would

there be, that by the strength of their own corruptions, the subtle and powerful temptations of Satan, the vanities of the world, the allurements of wicked men, or a gradual decay of their graces, they should draw back unto perdition!

But on the contrary, what inexpressible comfort must it be to them, to consider that the present influences of the Spirit of grace which they experience in their own souls, are the pledge and earnest of their perseverance in grace, and of their eternal reward! And this is the necessary consequence of the doctrine I have been insisting upon. For he that has manifested his love to any of us by giving us sanctifying grace, has loved us with an everlasting love; and will certainly love us to the end. Could such therefore but keep a just view of this comfortable doctrine before them, how would it fill their souls with even raptures of admiration and praise of the eternal distinguishing love of God! How would it quicken and invigorate them in their spiritual race, when they have such a clear prospect of the glorious prize before them! How would it strengthen them in all the rough encounters they may meet with, when they consider what a glorious captain they fight under, and what assurance they have of victory in the conclusion! How would it endear the Lord Jesus Christ to them, in whom they are chosen to eternal life! How would it fill them with love to God and his service, when they consider him as a kind indulgent Father; and themselves, though most unworthy, as adopted heirs of the eternal inheritance! How would it fill them with a perpetual abhorrence of every sin, as vile ingratitude to such a bountiful

benefactor! How would it sweeten even death itself, when they consider it as an entrance into the joy of their Lord! And how would it prove a constant source of peace and contentment in all their trials; be their song in the house of their pilgrimage; and make the ways of wisdom appear indeed the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace!

USE III. This doctrine may be improved by way of most earnest exhortation to every one, to "give all diligence to make his calling and election sure;" according to that 2 Pet. i. 10. It is certainly attainable in this life, to make sure to ourselves, that we were chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world; otherwise it would not be urged upon us by the apostle, as our duty and interest. And if attainable, how justly does it challenge our utmost care, concern, and application! We are careful to secure a good title to our houses and lands; and are uneasy while we think our title precarious. But it is of infinitely greater importance to see to it, that our foundation for eternity is well laid. And I venture to say, I am persuaded that there is no individual person among us but may, if he be not really wanting to himself, make it certain to himself that his name was, from eternity, enrolled in the book of life. Though it be true, that this is not in fact the case of every one, as I have proved before, yet it is also true, that it in reality is the case of all those who, with the utmost care, watchfulness, and diligence, and with an humbling sense of their own unworthiness, are constantly found at the footstool of divine grace, seeking for an interest in Christ, and the gracious influences of the blessed Spirit; and who earnestly and constantly, with an humble

dependence on the grace of God, endeavour after all holy conversation and godliness. They who neglect this, have dark symptoms upon them, and have no grounds to conclude their election of God. Though we cannot claim either grace or glory on account of what we do or can do, yet if we persevere in the way described, God has encouraged us to expect that he will, and therefore we may hope that he certainly will for his own sake, not for ours, glorify his free grace in our sanctification and salvation. He has not said to the house of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. If we are "stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." They who are not elected will not indeed ever come to do this, and so will certainly perish. But then the immediate cause and moral reason of this is wholly in themselves. They neglect the great salvation; they resist and quench the Holy Spirit; they will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord. Thus they are wanting to themselves, and they will perish through their own fault.

There is something therefore before us, of much greater importance than over-curious inquiries, abstract speculations, and distracting debates about the decrees of God. It is a vastly greater concern to get some solid evidence of our interest in God's electing love. O why are we not then in earnest in an affair of such everlasting consequences? Why does not this exercise our thoughts and care more than every thing else? Why does it not lie down and rise with us, and accompany us in the whole conduct of our lives? Can we rest contented in a dreadful uncertainty, whether we are like to be saved or damned to all eternity? Can we be contented while we have no grounds to con-

clude, that we must not spend a doleful eternity in weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, under the intolerable agonies of infinite vengeance? Let us then be up and doing, and we may hope the Lord will be with us. There is no need to search into the archives of eternity to know our state. There is no need to say in our hearts, Who shall ascend into heaven to bring us an account from thence, or who shall descend into the deep to bring up one from thence? The evidence is nigh us, even in our own hearts and lives, conformed to the word of Christ, and if we do but follow these two directions, we cannot fail of obtaining it.

1. Let us make our calling sure, and that will make our election sure. "Whom he predestinated, them he also called." If we are effectually called, it is an evidence for us that we are also predestinated. If we make this sure, the other will be equally certain.

Let us then strive to make sure to ourselves the sincerity of our repentance toward God: that we have seen the evil of sin, have seen our sinfulness by nature and by practice, and abhorred ourselves in our own eyes; have heartily mourned for, hated and forsaken our sins without reserve, and turned from them to God; that we indulge no sinful way, either of heart or conversation, either of omission or commission; but watch and pray against them all, and are burdened with, and long for deliverance from, all our remaining imperfections. Let this be sure, and our election is also sure. For God has promised, and therefore he has decreed, that he who repents and is converted shall have his sins blotted out, when the

times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Let us make sure of a lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we may be sure of our election. "As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed." Acts xiii. 48. Let us then get good evidences that we have renounced all confidence in the flesh; that we have come, wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked to Christ; that we have heartily received him upon his own terms; that we are looking unto Jesus as our righteousness and strength; that we depend upon him alone as the author of our eternal salvation, and we shall thereby have good evidence, that we were ordained to eternal life.

Let us make sure of a true love to God, and we shall thereby make sure to ourselves that he hath eternally loved us. "For we love him because he first loved us." 1 John iv. 19.—If we can make it evident to ourselves, that we have chosen an interest in God's favour above all the world; that we delight in a conformity to his imitable perfections; that we delight in his ordinances, prize communion with him, and love his people; this makes our calling, and so our election, sure.

2. Let us make sure to ourselves, that we maintain an habitual course of holiness in heart and life; and this also will be a good evidence for us, that we were eternally chosen of God to be heirs of everlasting salvation. If we are chosen to salvation, it is through sanctification of the Spirit, as I have particularly shown already. It concerns us, therefore, to make it sure to ourselves, that we maintain a strict watch over our hearts and lives, exercising ourselves unto godli-

ness, striving against sin, and labouring to perfect holiness in the fear of God; that we are conscientiously careful to be found walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless; that our affections are placed upon things above; that we have our conversation in Heaven; and that we are diligently endeavouring to maintain a life of piety towards God, and righteousness towards men. And in this way, though many disallowed imperfections will accompany our highest attainments, we may be assured, that He who has given us his own Son, and in him given us grace to serve him, will with him also freely give us all things. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. **AMEN.**

A DISCOURSE

ON

ORIGINAL SIN.



ROMANS v. 12—Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

IT has been an ancient observation with respect to original sin, that there is nothing more familiarly known—nothing harder to be fully understood. The being of it, with its dreadful consequences, is but too evident to all the world. The manner in which we came under the pollution and guilt of it, is more difficult to be rightly conceived. Many strong prejudices have therefore arisen in men's minds against it. Our natural pride and haughtiness is hardly brought to stoop to such an humbling and abasing consideration. And there are some apparent difficulties in the doctrine, which make some men imagine it inconsistent with the divine perfections, and therefore unworthy to be received or taught. But whatever opposition this may meet with from these or other like reasons it is clearly and fully revealed in the

Scriptures; and it is therefore certain, that the objections against it cannot be just, how plausible soever they may appear. As the whole tenor of the Bible everywhere considers, directs, and treats us as apostate, sinful creatures, so the nature, manner, and consequences of our apostasy, are particularly described in sundry passages both of the Old and New Testament; but perhaps in none more fully, than in the words before us, with the following context. In these words we may note,

1. The apostle's design in introducing them in this place, represented by the illative word, "wherefore." That we may have a clearer view of this, we must recur to the foregoing verses of the chapter, where our being justified by Christ's blood, our being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and our receiving the atonement by him, are particularly celebrated. That this doctrine of our justification by the merits of Christ's death might not be matter of prejudice, it is here illustrated and explained by another doctrine more wonderful, which was notwithstanding always received for an undoubted truth. Wherefore, as it is on all sides allowed, that by the imputation of Adam's sin we are all become sinful and guilty before God, it cannot be thought strange, that by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, we should be justified in his sight. If it be allowed to be just in God, to impute the guilt of our first parents' sin to us, it may much more easily be supposed, that God may from the riches of his grace impute the merits of Christ's death to believers, without any appearance of injustice. "For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God and the

gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." This is plainly the scope of the apostle's argument in this context. From whence it appears, that the words of our text are not only to be allowed for a truth not controverted; but for a truth generally received in the apostolic times, in that they were here improved by the apostle, as a medium to illustrate and evince another doctrine by. As it cannot be just arguing, to bring any thing for a medium to prove another by, unless it be more clear in itself, or at least more known and generally received; it is therefore necessary, that the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity was known and generally received by those to whom the apostle wrote; for it is not more clear in itself, than the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers; but more difficult to conceive of: that being a display of justice, this of goodness and mercy; that an imputation of sin and guilt, this of merits and benefits. In that, God acts as a judge, whose conduct must be equal and right according to the rules of justice; in this, as a gracious benefactor who may be as good as he pleases. It being therefore necessary, that this was a known and received truth, it also appears, that we are not mistaken in supposing this doctrine taught in the Old Testament; for from thence they must have learned it, unless they were particularly instructed in it by the inspired teachers of those times. And if this was the case, it must have been an ancient doctrine, though now more clearly revealed.

2. We may note in the words, a plain and full declaration of the sin and guilt brought upon the world of mankind. "Sin entered into the world—

All have sinned." No words can possibly be used, more fully to express the universality of the contagion and pollution of original sin. Sin has not only entered into the world; but ALL, universally without exception, have sinned, and are consequently under the guilt of that sin, which they are all chargeable with. If it be objected, that the particle ALL is not here to be accepted in its largest extent, as implying every individual person, inasmuch as the same particle is used by the apostle in this discourse, where it cannot be so understood—thus in verse 18th he tells us, that by the righteousness of one the free guilt came upon ALL men to justification of life—I answer, that if the scope, and design of the apostle's reasoning be considered, it will be found that this particle must be understood as carrying in it the idea of universality in both these verses. The apostle is there comparing Adam with Christ, and running the parallel between them, as they were both public persons, and representatives of their posterity. He shows us, that as ALL Adam's natural progeny whom he represented, were without exception chargeable with his sin and guilt, so ALL Christ's spiritual posterity whom he represented, are also without exception, partakers of righteousness unto justification of life. The term ALL must therefore be understood in our text to be of universal extent, as including every individual person, that proceeds from Adam by ordinary generation. Our Lord Jesus Christ, indeed, though truly and really man, is not included in this number; because he was not a descendant from Adam in a way of nature; though none of Adam's natural descendants are exempted. It is further observable, that sin and death are here repre-

sented, as being by the same means of equal extent, by the same universal particle. "Death passed upon ALL men, for that ALL have sinned." As natural death therefore is, without distinction, the common lot of all mankind, it being appointed for all men once to die, so the sin and guilt of Adam's natural posterity are as universal as their mortality. I might add, that it would be no ways favourable to the cause of our adversaries, if this particle ALL were taken in a more limited and restrained sense; for if it be just and equal in God to impute Adam's sin, with its consequences, to any of his posterity, it is for the same reason just and equal to impute his sin to ALL without distinction. He was as much the general head and representative of one as of another. And what serves further to illustrate this matter is, that the words of the text now under consideration should not be rendered as in our translation, "for that all have sinned;" but, "in whom all have sinned;" and so are they accordingly rendered in several Latin versions; and so are they corrected in the margin of our English Bibles. From whence it is apparently manifest, that if ALL sinned in him, ALL that were in him, as their original stock, and all that naturally descended from him, have this sin imputed to them.

There is indeed another sense put upon the words under consideration, by a modern author, (Chubb,) who being loth to leave so clear a text in its full force against his opinion, has contrived this evasion; that by sin is here to be understood mortality, the cause being put for the effect; and that the apostle must intend no more by the words before us, than that all men are become mortal by Adam's apostasy. But this construc-

tion not only appears inconsistent with the whole scope of the apostle's argument in this context; but it represents him as speaking incongruously and impertinently. If this be the meaning of our text, it should be thus understood: By one man mortality entered into the world, and death by mortality; and so death passed upon all men, for in him all are become mortal.* And if by sin is to be understood mortality, it must be supposed to have the same meaning in the subsequent verses, for there can be no reason why the apostle should annex new ideas to the same term, in the same continued discourse, without giving his readers any notice of it; and consequently he must in them also be chargeable with the greatest impropriety. Upon that supposition, we shall understand the following context in this manner,

“Until the law mortality was in the world; but mortality was not imputed when there was no law.” Verse 13.—“Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not been mortal, after the similitude of Adam's mortality.” Verse 14.—“But not as the mortality, so is the free gift; for if through the mortality of one many be dead,” &c. Verse 15.—The like impertinency would be found throughout the chapter, the mere representation whereof is a sufficient refutation of this trifling construction.

The words are in themselves most plain and familiar; and fully represent us all as being under the imputation of original sin. There is no other difficulty to understand them, but men's unwillingness to believe them.

* See Dr. Wigglesworth on the Imputation of Adam's Sin.

3. The words represent to us the deadly consequences of our apostate sinful state. "And death by sin; and so death passed upon all men," Death, we see, has the same universal extent with original sin, and has passed upon all the natural offspring of Adam. And if we understand these words to refer only to natural death, the experience of all the world has put the truth of them out of doubt. But it appears manifest, that the Apostle used the word death in its largest extent, to imply spiritual as well as natural death. For it is considered as the fruit, consequence and wages of sin. It is that death which came by sin. It "hath passed upon all; for in him all have sinned." And I think every one will allow, that the law of God hath annexed a greater penalty upon sin, than merely a natural death; and consequently, that there is more implied in the death under consideration. Besides, death is here considered as being all the miserable fruit of sin from which Christ came to redeem us; and must therefore imply a greater evil than mortality. Our Lord Jesus Christ is represented throughout this chapter, as delivering us from the sad effects of our first parents' apostasy. And if we would know what they are, we may recur to the first covenant between God and Adam, where we find nothing worse threatened upon the violation of that covenant, and consequently nothing worse has been inflicted than death. That death, therefore, with which Adam was threatened in the first covenant, was all the misery consequent upon his fall; and all the occasion of Christ's undertaking our redemption; and must consequently imply more in it than natural death. And whatever was included in the threatening, from which

Adam was redeemed by the promised seed of the woman, is included in the word death in the text; for it is of that the apostle speaks. It is that death which "has passed upon all men; for in him all have sinned." The apostle accordingly represents "the grace of God, and the gift by grace, by one man, Jesus Christ, and the grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," as our redemption and recovery from this death, which is through the offence of one and is the consequence of his sin reigning in the world. (In the 15th, 17th, and 21st verses in this chapter.) This death must therefore imply, that our sinful nature and sinful actions which flow from it, our state of condemnation, and exposedness to eternal misery, are the fruits of Adam's sin, as well as natural death; for from all these Christ came to redeem us. I might also add, that this death implies in it our condemnation, as the apostle himself assures us, in the 16th and 18th verses of this chapter: and consequently must signify spiritual as well as natural death. I think it is a clear case, that if by "the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men unto condemnation," as the apostle asserts, there have worse effects of that offence come upon all men, than merely a state of mortality. We cannot be in a state of condemnation, unless we are spiritually dead.

4. Our text sets before us the occasion of the universal sin, guilt, and misery, of the world of mankind.—"By one man sin entered into the world." It is allowed by every body, that Adam is the one man here intended; and that it was by him that "sin entered into the world, and death by sin." If it be inquired, how Eve comes to be

excepted from having a hand in propagating this contagion to her miserable posterity, when she was first in the transgression, I answer, that it is probable that she may not be excepted, but included, in these words of the apostle. She may be considered as belonging to Adam; and being, as it were, a part of him. The term *man* may be a collective term, including both male and female according to that, Gen. i. 26. "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion," &c. The like phraseology is frequently found in Scripture. But if otherwise, we must suppose, that as the covenant was made with Adam personally, though Eve was included in the prohibition, yet she was not, as Adam was, considered in that covenant, to be the head and representative of a future posterity.

The greatest difficulty in these words before us, is to understand in what sense sin and death entered into the world, by this one man. In answer to which it has been the common received doctrine of the Church of Christ, that as Adam was the natural, he was likewise constituted the moral head and representative of all mankind; and that the first covenant with its sanctions, was made with him in that capacity and relation. He was therefore to stand or fall, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. Had he obeyed that single and easy precept given for his probation, he and all his progeny had been established in a state of life and happiness. But his disobedience to such an easy and reasonable command, incurred the penalty threatened, both to himself and to all whom he represented. That Adam is thus considered by the apostle in such a public capacity, as representing and acting for all his

posterity, appears manifest from the whole scope of this context, in which he is every where compared to Christ, and the parallel run between them; and in which sin and death are represented, as brought upon the world by Adam, in the same manner as the free gift of justification and life, are procured for us, by the Lord Jesus Christ. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," verse 19. To the like purpose also are the 15th, 18th, and 21st verses. Now as it is confessed on all hands, that the Lord Jesus Christ represented us and acted for us in his work of redemption, so it seems necessary to allow, in order to make the apostle's discourse pertinent and intelligible, that Adam is here considered, as representing us and acting for us in his first transgression. In what else can the parity between his offence and Christ's righteousness consist; but in their being both public persons and representatives of others? Agreeable to this, the apostle in 1 Cor. xv. 47, speaks of Adam as the first man, and Christ as the second; as if there never had been more than those two men in the world. But in what respect can we possibly imagine these two to include and comprehend the rest of mankind, unless they be considered as public heads and representatives of them?

It is certainly most clearly evident from this text, that we are some way or other become sinners by Adam's disobedience. And can this possibly be, but either merely by our descent from him in a way of generation; or by our being in him as our public head and representative? It cannot be true that in the former sense we any

more sinned in Adam, than in our immediate parents and in each individual person of our progenitors; and therefore in that sense it cannot be true, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." For if sin and death are derived to us merely in a way of natural generation, they entered into the world not by one man only, but by more than ten thousand men. It must therefore necessarily follow, that sin entered into the world by this one man, as the legal head and representative of his whole race; and that what he did in that character was done for them all, as well as for himself.

Having thus taken a general view of these words, and explained their meaning, I shall now endeavour a more distinct consideration of them under the following propositions; which by the foregoing explication appear manifestly contained in them.

1. That the whole world of mankind are by nature in a state of sin and guilt.

2. That this state of sin and guilt, which we are naturally in, is the fruit of Adam's apostasy.

3. That we are by virtue of this sin and guilt justly liable to death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

PROP. I. The whole world of mankind are by nature in a state of sin and guilt.

That I may illustrate this proposition, I shall endeavour to consider distinctly, what is the formal nature of this original sin; and show by the way how we come to be guilty by it. Then I shall proceed to show, how this appears to be the case of all the world of mankind.

1. I am to consider what is the formal nature of this original sin, and show by the way, how

we come to be guilty by it.—In order to which, I shall briefly observe, that this sin consists in a privation of our original righteousness; and in the corruption and pollution of our whole nature, whereby we have a native enmity to God and that which is good; and a strong and powerful propensity to the ways of wickedness and impiety.

In the first place, I am to consider this sin as being a privation of original righteousness. We were, in our first parents, created “in the image of God.” Gen. i. 26. But alas! the crown is fallen from our heads. We “have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Rom. iii. 23. Our first parents were endued with superior degrees of knowledge, whereby they were capable of understanding so much of God, of themselves, and of the creation, as could contribute to their happiness in their paradise-state. But how are the noble powers of our souls weakened and darkened by our apostasy! How are we alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our hearts! Our first parents were created in a state of righteousness and true holiness. All their powers and faculties, all their affections and dispositions, had a natural promptitude to the love, service and enjoyment of God; and to a life of benevolence and beneficence to one another. They had no sinful affections, no turbulent passions or sensual desires, naturally hurrying them away from God and godliness: but their whole souls and bodies were adapted to a ready obedience to the whole will of God. These were not, it is true, immutable in their nature; nor incapable of wrong impressions from the craft of a

subtle tempter. For sad experience has taught us, that though God made man upright, he is fallen from his integrity; and how great is his fall! How lamentable is the state of his wretched progeny, who have lost this rectitude, who have all the faculties both of their souls and bodies depraved and vitiated; and who naturally have every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts only evil; and that continually! Our first parents were created with a power of persevering in this state of righteousness and holiness. They were capable of a continued dependence upon the Fountain of their being and of their stability, who would never have deserted them, while they had continued to trust him. They were therefore capable of withstanding the strongest temptations; and of triumphing over the strongest efforts of hell itself; and consequently of continuing in a perpetual state of holiness and happiness. Their yielding to the temptation, was not from a defect of power to resist; but from want of dependence upon him, in whom was their strength and sufficiency: and from an inadvertent hearkening to the crafty seducer. But how is the scene now changed! How impotent are we now become! How does every good thought die even in the thinking; and every good disposition naturally languish and decay! How are we an easy prey to every temptation; and continually betrayed by our own lusts to the enemy, that lies in wait to destroy us!—that even a sanctified person could not persevere in holiness, unless he were “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” Thus “we are all gone aside, we are together become filthy, there is none that doeth good; no, not one. We are all like

sheep gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." Such is our depravity, such our impotency by the fall, that we cannot so much as accept of the remedy, that is in infinite mercy provided, without supernatural influences inclining and enabling us to do it. "No man can come unto the Son, except the Father draw him." John vi. 44.

This loss of the image of God in which we were created, this privation of our original rectitude, and depravation of all the powers of our souls and bodies, is not only our misery, but our guilt. For if there be guilt in defacing, and in a great measure destroying, the best piece of God's workmanship in the whole lower creation; if there be guilt in subverting the great ends of our being, and in rendering ourselves incapable to answer them; if there be guilt in debasing ourselves from our original dignity, from the immediate service of God and fellowship with him, to a state more low and vile than the beasts that perish, this privative part of original sin renders us all guilty in the sight of God.

I am further to consider that this original sin consists in a general corruption and pollution of our natures, whereby we have a natural enmity to God and to that which is good; and a strong and powerful propensity to the ways of wickedness and impiety. That this is now the condition of all men by nature, is most evident both from Scripture and experience; and that this is derived to us from Adam, I shall endeavour to make evident.

No man that will view the circumstances of an apostate world, and consider the state of his own soul can find room to doubt the universal in-

fluence of this contagion. If we look into our understandings, what darkness covers them! What ignorance of God, and the things of God, is seen, not only in the heathen world, where stocks and stones and inanimate things are worshipped as the author of their being and happiness; but even in the most enlightened part of the world, where the “natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God! but they are foolishness unto him;” what error and mistake are we liable to, while many perish by believing strong delusions, many grope in the dark, not knowing in what way to walk; and all are liable to error, while clothed with mortality! What folly and madness are in the hearts of men, that they will by no means be persuaded to consider the things of their peace, and to consult and pursue their best interest; until their understandings are enlightened by the powerful influences of divine grace! If we look into our wills, what opposition do we find there, to the love, fear and service of God! How do all men naturally choose the service of sin and Satan, and the vanities of time and sense, before the favour of God, and eternal happiness! How obstinate, how refractory are they in their sinful gratifications; notwithstanding all the terrors and dangers of which they have such a dreadful prospect! If we consider our affections and appetites, how irregular, how vile do they appear to be! How little is God in the thoughts of carnal men! How far he is from being the object of their desire or delight! How disagreeable are all the perfections of his nature to their minds! How are the ways of godliness their aversion, that they cannot by any motives be prevailed with, to walk in them! How are their hearts

glued to these perishing shadows! What base and sordid lusts do they gratify at all adventures! How impetuously do their appetites hurry them on in those pursuits, which they cannot but know to be repugnant to all their most valuable interests, both in this world and that to come! If we consider our passions, how violent, inordinate, and ungovernable will they appear! how hard to be tamed, regulated, and kept under proper restraint! How do they often drive us like a hurricane, against all the dictates of reason, and indeed against all our powers of opposition!—Again, if we consider our imaginations, how vain are their objects! How restless are they in their operations! How roving, and wandering from one vanity to another! How impertinently and unseasonably do they interrupt and hinder us from any serious application to our more important concerns! How ready are they to run astray, after forbidden objects! How ready to receive sinful impressions; and even to set the whole soul on fire with their wicked suggestions! In a word, whatever faculty of the soul comes into view, it appears to be altogether pollution and defilement. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; nor indeed can be. They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Rom. viii. 7, 8.—“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Jer. xvii. 9.

And this pollution does not only extend to our minds; but the members of our bodies too are all become instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The body is not only many ways a clog and hinderance to the soul, from making any progress in its spiritual concerns; but the bodily senses are

the inlets to multitudes of those sinful disorders, with which the soul is defiled. So that the whole man is corrupted, and we need to be "sanctified wholly, in our whole spirit, and soul, and body." "For we are all as an unclean thing; and our iniquities, as the wind have taken us away." Isa. lxiv. 6.

Now, that this state of pollution is a state of guilt, is manifest; because it is a constant violation of the law of nature. "God made man upright," and had therefore a just claim upon him, for a sincere, entire, and universal obedience. God had a just demand of his heart and affections, of his fear, love, complacency, and delight; as well as of an external conformity to the duties of natural religion. If, therefore, instead of loving God, our hearts are full of enmity against him, and opposition to his holiness and other perfections of his nature; if, instead of choosing God for our portion, we prefer the world and our lusts before him; if, instead of spiritual and heavenly affections, our hearts are full of vanity and sensuality; if instead of the religious exercises which nature itself teaches, these things are such a burden, as to be either wholly neglected, or hypocritically performed; if, instead of that obedience, which is due from a creature to his Creator, we are serving divers lusts and pleasures: it is from hence most evident, that we are all become guilty before God. And that in all these instances I have been drawing the character of every unsanctified person, appears evident from what has been said above. It is an impertinent plea, to say that this depravity of our nature is what we cannot help: and therefore what cannot be our fault. For certainly there is a fault somewhere, that we are thus

estranged from God and godliness, and thus in love with sin and vanity. None dare be so hardy as to impute this fault to a just and holy God; it must therefore lie at their own door; and we must be guilty, whatever are men's imaginations about it.

But this I shall have occasion to consider more particularly, under another head.

2. I am to consider the evidence of this proposition; and to show how it appears, that all mankind are naturally in a state of sin and guilt. And here,

1. I think this is most evident from the experience of all the world. We see in fact, that this certainly is our case; and to debate it, is even to dispute against our senses, and against the clearest observations that we are capable of in any case whatsoever. Does not every body see, that in our first actions there is no appearance at all of love to God or holiness; no spiritual affection, no promptitude or towardliness to any thing that is morally good; nor anything of this nature to be introduced, but by great care, pains, and culture, all which meet with strongest opposition from a contrary bias? What then is become of the image of God, in which we were at first created? Is it not most evident, that this is not only defaced, but utterly lost in our souls? If we still extend our view further, that pollution of all our powers and faculties, which I have described, is a fact every where experienced and observed. What is the first propensity of our children, if they are suffered to follow their own inclinations without restraint? What courses do undisciplined youth choose and pursue? How does their enmity to God, and their delight in sin and sensuality appear with a witness,

if the reins are thrown on their necks, and they are set loose in the world, without education and government? By this we see their natural disposition; for that they follow. And there is no room to dispute what the fountain is, from whence these streams so naturally flow. The deep root that these sinful dispositions have taken in our souls, is obvious, from the impossibility of eradicating them, without the omnipotent agency of divine grace. We every day see men go on in sinful courses, against all their valuable interests, temporal and eternal; against the light of their own consciences; and even against frequent apprehensions of eternal damnation. We frequently see them wearing off all convictions, breaking through all purposes and promises of reformation, and venturing upon the thick bosses of God's buckler; though they cannot but know, when they at all consider, that it is for their lives. And how strong and impetuous must those lusts be, that the fear of eternal damnation will not mortify and restrain! If it be objected, that I am here only describing the case of the most profligate and abandoned part of mankind, I may demand, How came they to be thus profligate and abandoned, how came they by these corrupt and sinful inclinations, if their natures are not polluted and defiled? But I may even appeal to the experience of the most virtuous and religious of the children of men, whether they do not find a continued struggle with the same sinful affections and appetites, that are so visible in the lives of the more careless and secure: whether they are not forced to maintain a continued warfare with their lusts, if they would live a religious life. And whence is it that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; but from the

remainders of those corruptions, that reign in the un sanctified? From thence it was, that the apostle himself found cause to groan under this burthen; and to exclaim, as in Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

I might further argue from our constant experience of the dreadful effects of original sin, upon the whole world of mankind. What a vast variety of miseries and calamities do we see every where prevail in the world! And what meaneth the heat of this anger; and what is the source of this affliction and wo? Whence is it, that we are thus "born to trouble as the sparks fly upward?" Surely God would not delight to punish an innocent creature; and to make him thus miserable. If it be pretended, that this is the fruit of our actual sin, I inquire how infants that have never been guilty of actual sin, came by their share in the common calamity? We see that sickness and death invade them as well as others. And if death be the wages of sin, as the Scriptures assure us it is, they would not be liable to punishment, if free from sin and guilt. Hence, if we had no other evidence than our own experience, we might plainly discover, that we are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins," according to Eph. ii. 1. But,

2. This also appears evident from the redemption of Christ. What can make the misery of our natural state more evident, than the infinite price expended for our recovery out of it? Did the glorious God contrive this wonderful method of salvation for us, when there was no necessity for it? Did the Lord Jesus Christ shed his own blood for the ransom of innocent creatures? Or

was it not because we were without strength, that Christ died for the ungodly? May we, not thus judge, that if Christ died for all, then are all dead? As in 2 Cor. v. 14. Was not Christ's precious blood shed as a ransom for sin; and were not they therefore sinners for whom the ransom was paid? Was not the Lord Jesus Christ "made a curse for us;" and does not that evidence that we are all under the curse of the broken law? Was not the end of his death as a propitiation and atonement to free us from condemnation; and does not it therefore follow, as he himself has told us, that we are condemned already, while we do not believe on the only begotten Son of God; and that we are by nature the children of wrath?—In a word, Christ gave himself "a ransom for all," either as innocent or guilty creatures. The former can hardly be supposed; there was no need to purchase pardon at so dear a rate for those that did not need it. Whence it follows, that we are fallen, guilty creatures, in that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ.

If it be pretended, as some have pretended, that Christ came not into the world to redeem us from a fallen state, but to give us a new edition of the law of nature, very much effaced and worn out of the minds of men; to propose easier terms of salvation to mankind than perfect obedience; and to confirm the truth of his doctrine, by sealing it with his blood:

I answer, this pretence is as directly contrary to the Scripture account of this matter as can possibly be conceived. We are there taught, that he was set forth to be a propitiation for sin, that he was delivered for our offences, that he died for the

ungodly, that he gave himself up for our sins, that he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, that he also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust; and the like. Now can any man read such texts as these, and deny that we are in a state of sin and guilt, and that Christ came to redeem us from that state with his own blood? If this may be justly denied, it is impossible to understand any thing by the strongest and plainest expressions that can be used. But suppose this imagination were not contradicted by the Scriptures, might we not inquire of such objectors, what need there can be of a new edition of the law of nature, if we are not fallen creatures? If we had retained our original integrity, we should certainly have light enough to know our duty. It cannot be supposed, that God made us at first ignorant of, and incapable to answer, the end of our being. And if we had this capacity at our first creation, we still retain it, unless we are fallen from our original rectitude, and have lost those powers with which we were created. Neither time nor custom could obliterate such powers of nature, and make the world ignorant, without special revelation, of the very first principles of faith and practice. But it is pretended that we wanted easier terms of acceptance with God, and that the great Redeemer came into the world and shed his precious blood to procure them. I would here again reply, What need can there be of easier terms of acceptance? God was not a hard master, to require impossible or unreasonable terms of his favour. He certainly at first gave us powers equal to the obedience he required of us. And we must still retain the same capacity, unless we

have lost it by our apostasy from God. If obedience to the law of nature was our reasonable service at first, it is so still. If it was at first easy to be performed, it yet remains so, if we have the same natural powers with which we were created. And why is it not as just in God, to require of us the improvement of those natural capacities now as at the first? Nothing therefore can be more repugnant to the whole tenor of the gospel—nothing more unreasonable than this supposition. We must acknowledge ourselves to be apostate guilty creatures, or we can give no good reason for the infinite price of our redemption, the blood of Christ.

3. That we are all by nature in a state of sin and guilt, is most frequently, clearly and expressly revealed to us in the Scripture. It cannot, indeed, be declared in more strong, plain, and intelligible expressions, than what are found in our text and context. We have there an express dissertation upon the subject. The doctrine is there strongly asserted, and clearly illustrated. But this is not the only evidence to be found in Scripture of the sad truth under consideration. The whole word of God considers us as fallen creatures, as being in a state of sin, pollution and condemnation. And there is no way to avoid the force of the many full and plain texts to this purpose, but by strained and unnatural glosses and interpretations upon words, in themselves most familiar and easy to be understood. What can be plainer than such texts as these? “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” *Psa. li. 5.*—“The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born.” *Psa. lviii. 3.*—“There is not a just

man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Eccles. vii. 20.—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jer. xvii. 9.—"We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. There is none righteous, no, not one." Rom. iii. 9, 10.—"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. iii. 23.—"For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Rom. vii. 18.—"The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7.—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14.—"And were by nature children of wrath, even as others.—Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ." Eph. ii. 3, 5.—"We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." 2 Cor. v. 14.—"We know that the whole world lieth in wickedness." 1 John v. 19.—Many more testimonies from the Spirit of God might be produced to evince the truth of this proposition. But these are sufficient to satisfy every one, that is not prejudiced against the doctrine, and resolved not to believe it. And it is in vain to endeavour the conviction of such as these. I shall therefore proceed to the next general head.

PROP. II. This state of sin and guilt, which we are all naturally in, is the fruit of Adam's apostasy.

I think I have proved, that we are by nature in a state of sin and guilt; and there must be some cause of these corrupt affections, appetites and

passions, of this universal depravity of our natures, and corruption of all our powers and faculties. We must either have come thus imperfect and impure out of the hands of God at our first creation; or we must some way or other have lost our original righteousness. If the latter, no other supposition can carry equal probability in it, with this in our text, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

To make way for a more distinct view of this case, it may be proper to consider, whether we could be at first created in the same state, in which we now find ourselves. And I think this, upon inquiry, will be found most inconsistent with all the perfections of the divine nature. How could it be consistent with the holiness of God, to make a creature with prevalent enmity to himself, and love to sin and sensuality? Could a pure and holy God take delight in such ignorance and darkness, as naturally clouds our understandings, and alienates us from the love of God? could he take pleasure in having all the powers of our souls most contrary to his own excellent nature; and in having us under the government and guidance of sinful dispositions, irregular affections, and turbulent passions? The great God must certainly be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, or to look upon sin with approbation. And consequently could not create us with such depraved souls, under the influence of such vile lusts and sinful appetites, as naturally reign in our hearts and lead us away from God. How could it consist with the goodness of God, to make a creature in a state of misery and calamity? Can it be supposed agreeable to infinite goodness, kindness,

and compassion, to see us agonizing from our births to our graves, under the disorders of a vitiated soul and the infirmities of a distempered body, to see us prompted by pride and ambition, lust and avarice, to destroy and devour one another; and to keep the world in convulsions and confusions, as it has always been? Could it be agreeable to him, to see so noble a being as man, the necessary subject of continual affliction in this world, that he might be thereby prepared for eternal torments in the world to come? This certainly cannot be supposed; and therefore it must not be imagined, that a good and gracious God did at first create us in this state of sin and misery. Could it be agreeable to the justice of God, to make us under a natural necessity of sinning against him; and yet punish us for those sinful affections which he himself had given us; or for such sinful practices as are the necessary result of them? No surely; the Judge of all the earth will do right. He could not make us on purpose to delight himself in our misery. From these considerations, it must necessarily follow, that God made man upright; that our defection proceeds from some other cause; and what that is, I shall apply myself more distinctly to consider,

1. By endeavouring to show how, or in what way, we became sinful and guilty, by the sin of Adam.

2. By clearing up the justice and equity of God, in imputing the sin and guilt of Adam to his posterity.

I. I am first then, to show how, or in what way, we became sinful and guilty by the sin of Adam. In order to which I shall observe,

That God entered into a covenant with Adam, as the head and representative of all mankind, to bestow life upon him and all his posterity, if he did not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or to inflict death both upon him and them, if he did eat of that forbidden fruit. The sum of this covenant is set before us in Gen. ii. 7. "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This covenant transaction is indeed here, as all God's dispensations in the Mosaic history are, but very briefly and generally represented. Here is no express mention, that Adam should be confirmed in a state of life and peace, upon his obedience to this particular precept; nor is there express mention, that Adam was in this transaction considered as the head and representative of his posterity. It may, I think, nevertheless be made most evident, that both of these are implied in this short account of that matter.

That a promise of life is implied in this covenant, upon condition of Adam's obedience, appears from the threatening of death in case of disobedience. The threatening must necessarily imply some evil, consequent upon his violation of that precept, that would not have otherwise happened. God's threatening death upon this single condition, does plainly suppose, that it was the only condition upon which it was to be feared and expected. For how could it be consistent with the justice, goodness, or even sincerity of God, to threaten Adam with death in case of disobedience, which would have been his lot, had he been ever so perfect in his obedience? This threatening was certainly designed as a motive to obedience:

which it could not be, if Adam had no good in expectation by continuing in his duty. And it was certainly unworthy of God, to raise his expectation of a benefit, which he should never partake of, had he complied with the terms on which he expected it. This therefore appears plainly to be the case. Adam was by the law of his nature under a perpetual obligation to a conformity unto the known will of God, upon the penalty of receiving from him the just demerit of his disobedience against him. The demerit of such disobedience in any instance would have been death: for that, the apostle assures us, is the "wages of sin." Rom. vi. 23. But God was graciously pleased to put Adam upon a more limited and easy trial, in order to his establishment in a state of life and happiness. Had he continued obedient, and withstood this temptation, had he retained his integrity, and overcome the attack of the seducer in this instance, he would have been no more in danger of apostasy from God; nor any more exposed to death or misery. In the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit, he was to die; and does not this necessarily imply a promise of life, if he had not eaten of it at all?

If it be here inquired, whether our first parents would not have died, if they had been guilty of any other act of disobedience, while under this trial, though they had refrained from eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, I offer the following considerations in answer to it.

1. Though they were undoubtedly under the law of nature during the time of their trial for confirmation, as much as they were before; and therefore equally liable to its penalties in case of disobedience; yet, I do not know how the law of

nature was in any respect a covenant of life, between God and them. I do not know how their obedience to it would have entitled them and their posterity to the continued favour of God, at this time of their trial, any more than at any other time, either before or after it; or how their disobedience to it at this time would have involved their posterity in their guilt, without some special transaction between God and them to that purpose. They were, as creatures, under penal obligations to their Creator and Benefactor; but I cannot see how they were, as such, the legal head and representative of their offspring; nor how they had, as such, a claim to perpetual life and happiness from their Creator, had their obedience been ever so perfect. I cannot therefore but suppose a real difference between the law of nature, and the covenant made with our first parents in Paradise.

2. By all the account we have of this matter in Scripture, the death or life of our first parents and their offspring, was wholly put upon their eating or forbearing to eat of the forbidden fruit. The law of nature is not, that I know of, any where mentioned as a part of this covenant-transaction. The tenor of this covenant in its first exhibition is "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And accordingly after the fall, God only demands of Adam, "who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" Agreeable to this, we find the sentence was inflicted upon Adam for this cause, without mention of any other. "Because thou hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the

ground for thy sake," &c.—We have no knowledge of this transaction, but from the Scriptures; no other representation of it that I know of, in Scripture. And what consequence must therefore follow? Here are two trees placed in the garden; of the one he is forbidden to eat, upon pain of death; of the other he might freely eat, and live for ever. By eating of the one he exposed both himself and posterity to perdition; by eating of the other he might have confirmed both himself and them in a state of life and peace. Did not therefore his happiness depend upon his conduct with relation to the fruit of these trees?

3. It is certain in fact, that God did not, and thence we know his foregoing determination that he would not leave our first parents, during the time of their trial, to any other prevalent temptation, but what related to the forbidden fruit. I think it just arguing, from what God has done, to what he fore-determined to do. It is certain from the infinite perfections of his nature, that his conduct is always agreeable to his counsel; and consequently, that God did determine to put them upon no other trial for their establishment, but in this single instance. And accordingly infinite goodness and condescension is displayed in this covenant-transaction, as far as we have any account of it in Scripture. It must indeed be granted, that our first parents seem to have violated the law of nature, before their actual eating the forbidden fruit; by their hearkening to the serpent's temptation, by their unbelief of God's truth and faithfulness, by their ambitious aspiring to be "as gods, knowing good and evil;" and their irregular appetites to the forbidden fruit; but these all had an immediate reference to this

inhibition, and were directly introductory to its violation. By these the sin was committed in their hearts, and the lust conceived, that brought forth the actual sin, which ended in their death. And it is remarkable that God does not challenge them for these things, as violations of the law of nature ; but as infractions of this particular covenant, by which they were to stand or fall. In a word, God expressly made this the instance of their trial ; the Scripture mentions nothing more, and I know of no authority we have, to be wise in this case beyond what is written. The integrity of their nature would keep them from falling, where there was no strong temptation to overcome it. God did not permit, and therefore we are sure that he determined not to permit any other prevalent temptation to assault them. They were not therefore exposed to fall, in any other instance. He threatened death upon condition of this disobedience ; there was no other condition expressed in the threatening. They were challenged for this disobedience and no other, after their fall. Life was consequently promised upon condition of obedience in this instance ; for this was the only condition of their establishment, that I find any where mentioned in the Bible. Adam was put upon no other trial, that I know of, but this only ; and this might have been as short as he pleased. For it is remarkable, that he had full liberty to eat of the tree of life : and it seems plainly hinted in Gen. iii. 22, that if he had done so at any time before his fall, immortal life would have been secured to him ; that it seems left to his own choice, how long his probation should continue. It is therefore evident, that there was a promise of life in this covenant, inasmuch as

there was a pledge and seal of his confirmation appointed, ready for him at any time before his apostasy; though guarded and kept by cherubim and a flaming sword afterward. It is evident, that as according to this dispensation of astonishing grace and condescension, he was to expect death upon no other condition but the violation of this precept, so he was on the contrary to expect life upon the actual observance of it. This, though not directly, is however implicitly promised in this covenant recorded by Moses.

If after all any will suppose, as some have supposed, (though, I confess, I do not know upon what foundation,) that the observance of the law of nature was implicitly enjoined by this prohibition, both upon Adam and his posterity, as the condition of their escaping the death threatened; and that this prohibition of the tree of knowledge was but an additional injunction for the trial of their obedience; it must nevertheless be allowed, that God intended, and Adam understood, a conditional promise of life, in the threatening of death. If death was threatened only upon his disobedience, it certainly implies that it would not have been inflicted if he had not disobeyed. By this threatening, death was made the wages of his sin, and neither the justice nor goodness of God can allow the righteous to receive the wages of the wicked.

But it is time that I should return to take notice, how Adam was, in this transaction, considered as the head and representative of his natural posterity.

It must be confessed, that the Mosaic account of this covenant between God and our first father,

does not so evidently represent his posterity to be immediately concerned in it. But this also may be fully evinced from the following considerations.

It is manifestly true, in fact, that Adam's posterity do partake of the bitter fruits of his apostasy. The experience of all the world carries this beyond debate. We all see that sin and death, with all their terrors, have invaded all the natural progeny of Adam; that all the calamities of life, and even death itself, reign "over those that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." And how comes the curse annexed to the covenant made with Adam to fall upon the heads of his posterity, if they were not included in that covenant? This punishment must be the effect of sin. "Far be it from God, that the righteous should be as the wicked." "The soul that sinneth shall die." And yet it is inflicted upon such as are not capable of actual and personal sin, who consequently must have sinned in Adam, or we cannot conceive how the Judge of all the earth does right, in bringing the penalty threatened to him, upon his otherwise innocent posterity. The sentence pronounced upon Adam after his fall, is in every article of it executed upon his posterity in the same extent as upon himself. From whence it is evident that they were partakers of the guilt of that apostasy, in the same degree that they bear the punishment of it. And consequently he must be considered as their head and representative in that first covenant.

The same thing is abundantly confirmed to us by various plain and clear passages in Scripture.

Our text assures us, that "by this one man sin entered into the world," and that "in him all have sinned." We are told, 1 Cor. xv. 22, that "in Adam all die." Now, as I before observed, sin and death must descend from Adam merely in a way of natural generation; or else we must have fallen in him as our legal head and representative. The former cannot be the case; these did not descend to us in a way of natural generation from one man only; for if that be the means of their derivation, they descended to us from all our progenitors; and we no more died in Adam than in our immediate parents. He must therefore have sustained a public character, and was considered as our representative in that covenant-transaction. But of this I found occasion to speak something particularly before, and need not therefore insist upon it in this place.

II. I am to endeavour to clear up the justice and equity of God, in imputing Adam's sin and guilt to his posterity. The adversaries of this doctrine under consideration, do principally found their opposition upon its inconsistency with the perfections of God. They pretend that God would not be just in appointing Adam our surety and representative, when he knew he would fall, and involve his posterity with him in his guilt and misery; that it were repugnant to the divine goodness, to contrive such a covenant, as would bring unavoidable misery upon millions of souls, who would be personally innocent of that transgression; and consequently that there could be no such constitution made by him, who is infinite justice and goodness. I shall therefore be somewhat particular in my endeavours to obviate this

difficulty, and to show how this doctrine is consistent with the perfections of God. This will appear by considering,

1. That such a covenant with Adam would have been in itself more likely to subserve the interests of mankind, than for him and his posterity to have been left under the law of nature; and consequently what all mankind would have chosen for themselves, had they been then existing.

2. That we were all seminally in Adam, and in that respect parties in this covenant.

3. That the good promised by this covenant, was more than proportionable to the evil threatened by it. And,

4. That God has, in infinite mercy, made a glorious provision for our recovery from the sad effects of Adam's apostasy. We are then to consider,

1. That such a covenant with Adam would have been in itself more likely to subserve the interest and advantage of mankind than for him and his posterity to have been left under the law of nature; and consequently, what all mankind would have chosen for themselves, had they been then existing. The condition of Adam's establishment in a state of life and happiness, was certainly much easier to be complied with than the demands of the law of nature. It was much easier for him to refrain from eating a particular fruit in a garden, where there was so great a plenty, and such a grateful variety of whatever could contribute to his support or delight, than for him to stand engaged in perpetual obligations, under a penalty, to perform an exact and perfect obedience to the law of nature. So that

with respect to Adam himself, the goodness of God was gloriously displayed, in bringing the terms of his life and stability so low. And if we consider the case with respect to his descendants, it will appear every way their interest also, to have their safety put upon this issue. There would have been the same manifestation of goodness to us, as to our first parents, if each individual of the human race could have had perpetual life and perfect happiness personally proposed to them, upon the same terms as they were to Adam: and consequently the goodness of God must be equally acknowledged, in joining their interest with his in that covenant-transaction.

This will appear if we consider, that every one of Adam's posterity would have been perpetually under the strictest obligations of the law of nature, if they had not been included in this covenant. They must therefore every one of them be much more likely to fall than Adam himself was, in that their safety would have depended upon a much more extensive obedience. Their obligations to the law, and their danger of violating it in some instance or other, would have been perpetual, and their stability would therefore have been for ever precarious and uncertain. Now was it not better for them, that their confirmation in a state of continual life and peace, should depend only upon one such easy instance of obedience, than that each individual of them, left to act for himself, should be always exposed to the loss of God's favour upon their violating any part of the law of God, and always uncertain of their future happiness.

It will add further weight to this reflection, if we consider, that Adam, in case he stood in a public capacity, was much more concerned to obey this precept, and to obtain the blessed consequences of his obedience, than any one of his posterity could have been, had they personally been put upon the same trial. His own eternal interest was at stake; he had therefore all the inducements from hope or fear, from a desire of happiness, or a prospect of misery, that any of his progeny could have had, were they in his place. But what an additional concern would it naturally excite in him, to consider, that the welfare of all his posterity was embarked upon the same bottom, and that they as well as he must be everlastingly and incomparably happy or miserable, according to his conduct in this most important affair. Let it then be considered, whether we have any reason to find fault, when the terms of our safety were made so very easy; when our interests were put into the hands of our natural parent, who was not only as much concerned to secure his own happiness as ours, but also under the powerful influence of paternal love and affection to the numerous offspring of his own bowels, and therefore in all those respects much more likely to procure our establishment in a continued happy life, than we could have been ourselves, if we had not been interested in this covenant, but left to stand or fall by the law of nature.

It may be also further considered, that Adam being God's immediate workmanship, and having immediately received the law from the mouth of God himself, must have had more lively impressions of his interest and duty, than any of his natural posterity; and was in that respect also

more likely than they could be, to have kept this covenant, and thereby to have secured the benefits of it to himself and them.

I may also add to this, that it seems absolutely necessary to the comfort and the happiness of mankind, that there should have been some terms of confirmation and establishment proposed to them. How much would it have lessened and abridged the comforts and delights even of Paradise itself, to have considered that happy state as being always mutable, and liable to be forfeited and lost? How could Adam or his posterity, have been any of them truly and completely happy, even in a state of integrity, under the stinging reflection, that they should be for ever exposed, through the prevalence of temptation, to fall from their innocence, and from the favour of God? All the innocence, purity and perfection of our nature, in its original rectitude, could have been no security against this melancholy apprehension; for some of the angels themselves are become devils; and dreadful experience has taught us, how not only Adam himself, but all his posterity, would have been always liable to the dreadful consequences of apostasy from God. What, therefore, but some terms of confirmation in their state of life and integrity, could have banished this uneasy apprehension from their breasts, and have put them into a capacity for complete satisfaction and happiness? And what easier terms could have been thought of than what were proposed? Had it been left to Adam himself to state his own terms, he could have devised nothing more easy and practicable.

From what has been said, it appears to have been in the nature of the thing much safer for us,

and more to our advantage, to be represented in this covenant by our first parent, than for each one of us to have been left to act separately for ourselves. In short, some terms of confirmation were wanted. Those proposed were as easy as could be desired. Adam was, in all respects, more likely to have come up to these terms than we could have been; and had he continued in his obedience, as there was the greatest reasonable prospect that he would have done, we should have perpetually acknowledged and adored the wisdom, equity and goodness of God, in this contrivance, to secure the holiness and happiness of mankind for ever. Since therefore, this transaction was in itself good, just and reasonable, most worthy of God, and most likely to subserve our best interests, the event that has happened, gives no cause of complaint. God is just; and we are justly miserable.

To urge God's foresight of the event, as an argument against the justice and equity of this dispensation, is impertinent and unreasonable. The great God makes the perfections of his own nature, and not the conduct of his creatures, the rule and reason of his dispensations. Since this method was from the nature of things needful for us, and most likely to secure our happiness, God was good and just in proposing it, whatever the event would be. Besides, we have reason to suppose, God knew that the event would have been very much worse for us, than it is now, if we had each of us been left to stand or fall by the law of nature. God certainly knew how it would have been: and we have reason to conclude from all appearances, that it would have turned out to our still greater disadvantage. We should have

had no terms of confirmation ; and therefore at the best should none of us have ever been removed beyond fear and danger. The conditions of our enjoying God's favour would have been much more difficult ; but the inducements to take heed to ourselves, nothing equal to what Adam was under. Our exposedness to temptations would not have been, as his was, short and temporary : but of a perpetual continuance. It is therefore the strongest probability, that God knew how in that case we should every one fall ; and how much worse our state would then have been, than it now is, since in that way there could have been no room for the glorious remedy now provided.

2. It should also be considered, that we were all seminally in Adam, and in that respect were all parties to this covenant. I shall not here insist upon the philosophical speculations of some very great and learned men, who suppose that every individual of the human race was actually included in the loins of our parent, and were actually existing in miniature as a part of him, and as such, partakers with him in his first transgression. Though these think that they have carried their hypothesis higher than mere conjecture, and made it at least appear probable to be true, and if true, to be a solution of the greatest difficulties relating to the propagation of original sin, yet I think we ought to have a more sure foundation to build our faith of this important article upon. It may, therefore be considered, whether the words of our text do not directly lead us to a view of the propagation, as well as imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. We are therefore informed, that "in him" (so in the Greek) "all have sinned." And the same thing seems to be likewise illus-

trated from 1 Cor. xv. 22. "In Adam all died." We were in him, it is true, as he was our moral or legal head and representative. And if we were only thus in him, we must with him be jointly concerned, and accountable for his conduct. But it is certain we were, if not personally, yet virtually in him, as our natural, as well as our legal head; and this may probably be referred to in the text now cited. We were in him, as the fruit is in the seed; as the sprouts are in the root; as Eve was in him, when one of his ribs; and were really derived from his essence. Adam was guilty, totally and universally so. No part of him was innocent; but every part chargeable with the same guilt. And if we were then a part of him, as it is certain we were, we must have been so far guilty of his apostasy. Let it therefore be supposed, that when the covenant was made with Adam (whereby he was to stand or fall, according to his eating or forbearing to eat of the forbidden fruit) we were all of us at this time a part of him; will it not hence follow, that the covenant was made with us, as well as with him; that it was made with every part of him; and that every part of him must partake of the consequences of his conduct while in that state of trial? This being supposed, it will not follow that his sin and guilt descends to us merely by natural generation, or that the sin of our immediate parents, as well as of our first parents, is imputable to us, as being a part of them. For, as Adam was but once, and none of his descendants were at all, in a state of trial for confirmation and establishment in original righteousness and happiness, so that covenant could be but once broken, either by himself or his posterity. We could not

be guilty of original sin in Adam, but only when he himself was guilty of it by eating the forbidden fruit. We are guilty, not merely as descendants from Adam; but as being naturally, as well as legally in him when he violated the first covenant. We were, it is true, in the loins of our immediate parents, during all their transgressions of God's law, as well as in the loins of Adam when he broke this covenant; but we could not be in them, as we were in him, guilty of violating any terms of establishment in life and peace; for there were no such terms made with them. And therefore we could not in them forfeit a confirmation in a state of life and happiness, which was never proposed to them, either for themselves or us; nor could we in them bring upon ourselves the dreadful consequences of such forfeiture, in our death and ruin. The terms of life proposed in the covenant of grace, are in and by a Mediator; and our interest in the benefits of that covenant is only in the way of our personal faith in him and acceptance of him and his offered salvation; and therefore by the tenor of the new covenant, neither the holiness nor impiety of our progenitors can descend to us, or so far affect us, as that we should stand or fall by it. But in the present case, all Adam's interests were concerned in that covenant transaction, and his whole self was to stand or fall on the terms proposed.

If it be objected, that our souls were not so much as seminally in Adam at all; and consequently not in this respect chargeable with his sin and guilt;—I answer, it would be proper for us to know something more about the time and manner of the union of our souls and bodies, before we decree too positively in this matter. Whether our

souls were all created in the beginning; whether the organized bodies of the whole human species were included in miniature in Adam's loins, and all their souls then united to them; whether the soul of each fœtus is immediately created and infused at the time of conception; or else united to the embryo in the mother's womb; or whether in some other unknown time and manner; these are things, which, for my part, I profess to know nothing about. And it is possible, that they who talk most boldly and confidently upon this subject are really as ignorant of it as I am. And why should we grope in the dark, to remove difficulties out of our way that we are not certain were ever in it? Thus much appears evident to me, that we were in the same sense in Adam's loins, and a part of him, when he violated the covenant, as we now are his natural posterity. And as truly as we are his seed, descended from him, so truly did we in the same respect sin in him, when he fell. The apostle tells us, Heb. viii. 10, that Levi was in the loins of his father Abraham, when Melchizedec met him. And it is as true, that we were all in the loins of our father Adam, when he broke the first covenant. But in how lax a sense soever this be allowed to be true, it serves to clear up the justice and equity of God in making us parties in that covenant, when we were branches in him, with whom the covenant was personally made. If it was equitable for God to covenant with him on his own behalf, it was equitable to covenant with him on ours also, who were a part of him, and so nearly concerned with him in that transaction. Doubtless we should have thought it equal in God, to make us joint partakers with Adam in the glorious consequences of his obedience, if he had

stood. We should perhaps have thought it hard, if we who were so nearly united to him, both by nature and interest, should have been debarred the blessed privilege; and put upon harder terms of happiness than he was. And the equity of God's dispensation is the same, however the event turned out. In a word, it was from the nature of the thing most agreeable, that we should be in Adam as our covenant-head, since we were in him as our natural head; that the streams should partake of the quality of the fountain, and the branches be of the same kind with the stock, from whence they sprung.

3. It may be further considered that the good promised by this covenant, was more than proportionable to the evil threatened by it.—By what I have already said upon this subject, the justice of God, is, I think, cleared from all imputation, in including Adam's posterity with himself in the covenant made with him. And what is now proposed, may serve to display the goodness of God, in the gracious terms and tenor of that covenant. Had the threatening and promise annexed to that covenant, been but proportionable to one another, the terms must have been allowed to be equal and right. Hence, therefore, so much of the goodness of God was manifested in that dispensation, as the promised good was in proportion greater than the threatened evil.

Let the case then be considered, and it will appear that the obedience which God claimed of Adam in this instance of his trial, was vastly less than what was due by the law of nature; and that the penalty annexed to his disobedience was no more than would have been by the strictest rules of justice, the demerit of his violating the law

of nature in any instance whatsoever; and would therefore have been eminently due to his sinning against so much goodness, as appeared in bringing the terms of his establishment so low as they were brought. But then on the other hand, he could have had no claim to eternal life, but from the mere grace and favour of God, if he had not only obeyed this precept, but been perfect in his obedience to the whole law. For, though a happy existence may be reasonably expected by an innocent creature, so long as God sees cause to prolong his being; yet as God cannot be in debt to any of his creatures, he cannot owe them so much as the benefit of any existence at all; and therefore cannot owe them an eternal continuance of life and happiness. As God could not owe us our being before we had it, neither can he be brought in debt to us by any thing we can do, to continue our being when we have it. Our obedience cannot lay him under any obligation to us. "If we be righteous, what give we him? or what receiveth he at our hands?"

This, then, is the true state of the case. A complete and perpetual obedience to the whole law of nature, was due to God by our first parents, as he was their Creator, and the Author of their being and powers. Death was the just and natural penalty of their disobedience in any instance. So far, therefore, as God lessened the obligation, he relaxed the penalty of their disobedience. While on the other hand, eternal life was infinitely more than could be claimed as a debt for the most perfect obedience; and therefore there was certainly astonishing grace and goodness in making it the reward of their refraining from the forbidden fruit. Thus we see how vast the disproportion

appears, between the threatening and the promise annexed to this covenant. The former was a debt by the laws of strictest justice; the latter an act of mere grace and goodness. The former would have been the just wages of sin, if there had been no threatening annexed to the command of God; the latter is what Adam could never have deserved for himself, and much less for his posterity. In the former, God did, as it were, depart from his own right, and give up part of his just claim; he might have demanded perfect, universal and eternal obedience, as the only condition of his favour: and yet he promised perpetual life and happiness upon a single temporary, and easy observance of his will. In the latter, God secured to Adam more than his right, infinitely more than he could have claimed by the laws of natural justice. How then can we complain of the inequality of this dispensation in which there is such a manifestation of condescending grace and goodness, as deserves our perpetual acknowledgment and admiration? To all this may be added,

4. That God has in infinite mercy made a glorious provision for our recovery from the sad effects of Adam's apostasy. Our adversaries imagine it inconsistent with the goodness of God that we should all perish on account of Adam's sin. But how could it be inconsistent with his goodness, to reward us according to our desert? I think I have made it appear that the terms of that covenant with respect both to Adam and his posterity, were equal and right; that there was no appearance of severity, but special manifestations of gracious condescension in that admirable dispensation. And what have we now to say for

ourselves, why sentence should not be executed upon us, according to the tenor of the broken law? Cannot God be good in the display of his justice? Was it inconsistent with God's goodness, to take the forfeiture at the hands of the fallen angels? Or would it have been any more contrary to his goodness, to have reserved us, as he did them, in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day? But be sure all murmuring and complaint should be silenced for ever, when we consider what a reprieve was granted to such poor criminals at the bar of justice; and when we consider, at what an infinite price our redemption from death and ruin was provided and purchased.—Shall we complain, who are thus distinguished from the angels that fell, by the glad tidings of a Saviour; while the fruit of their first disobedience was hopeless and remediless perdition? Shall we complain, when God has such compassion on our perishing circumstances, as to purchase our deliverance with the blood of his own Son? Shall we complain, who have opportunity to be restored with so much greater advantage, and to be partakers of so much greater blessedness, than could have been hoped for from the law of nature? Here is grace worthy of our highest gratitude; grace, that shall be admired, adored, and praised both by angels and men to all eternity.

Upon the whole, then, it appears that some terms of confirmation in our original state of happiness were necessary for us; that the terms proposed were most equal, easy, and good; that it was from the nature of the thing best for us, and what we should have chosen for ourselves if we had been then existing, that Adam should re-

present us ; and stand or fall for us, as well as for himself ; that we were in Adam, and a part of him, when he represented us in that covenant relation. And it was therefore to be expected from the reason of the thing as well as from the tenor of the covenant, that the branches should partake of the quality of the stock, from whence they sprung ; and that the good contained in the promise of this covenant was vastly more than proportional to the evil threatened. Is not all this sufficient to quiet our minds, and make us silently and humbly acquiesce in this dispensation as most just and equal ? It will certainly appear to be so, when we further consider the infinite compassion that has looked upon us in our blood ; said unto us, Live ; and redeemed us from the demerit of our apostasy by the blood of “ God manifest in the flesh.”

God omniscient knew indeed, that we should fall and violate this covenant ; and that all the posterity of Adam would become guilty and miserable by his eating the forbidden fruit. This may perhaps at first view appear a hard dispensation, that God should, without our consent, join our lot with our first parents, when he knew that they would fall, and we in them. But then if we not only consider what has already been said in answer to this ; but remember, that he who knew we should fall, did also design us a glorious recovery from our fallen state, that he designed to display his grace and love in the redemption of fallen, perishing creatures with such an infinite price ; and to bring them into so much better circumstances than they were in by the law of nature ; surely every hard thought of God must vanish before this reflection ; and we must rather adore and

praise, than complain of this glorious contrivance. Did God foreknow that Adam would break through the most just terms of life and happiness that were proposed to him in this first covenant, and involve himself and his posterity in guilt and ruin? But did not God also foreknow that he would contrive a method of redemption, that should distinguish Adam and his descendants as peculiar subjects of his grace and favour, above the rest of the rational world, purchase their happiness with an infinite price, make the terms of their salvation most easy and honourable, bring them near to himself, and put them under the best advantages to be happy here, and happy for ever? Where is murmuring then? It is excluded. By what law?—Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. If all this will not satisfy us, in the equity of this dispensation of God towards us, it must be because we are unwilling to see the lost and undone state that we are naturally in; or else because we are willing to shift off the blame of it somewhere else. But it is time I should proceed to the consideration of the other part of my subject.

PROP. III. We are all, by virtue of our original sin and guilt, justly liable to death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

I have already in a great measure anticipated what would naturally occur under this proposition, and shall therefore be very brief upon the illustration of it, in two or three particulars; and then proceed to obviate some objections that lie in our way.

1. Then, as I have already shown, it is a plain fact which cannot be reasonably disputed, that the temporal and spiritual penalty annexed to the first

covenant, are inflicted upon all Adam's natural posterity. It is open to every one's observation, that "the ground is cursed for man's sake, that in sorrow we eat of it all the days of our lives, that in the sweat of our face we eat our bread, until we return unto the ground." And it is indisputably evident too, that we are naturally dead in trespasses and sins; and that we have hard hearts, corrupt affections, irregular appetites and passions, and a dreadful promptitude to the ways of sin and death. We can be no more certain of our being, than of this corruption of our natures, and this depravity of all the powers and faculties of our souls and bodies. That all this is the fruit and consequence of our original apostasy, I have largely shown already. If any should object, and say, How can these things be? I answer, they are so by the divine designation and appointment; and they are therefore certainly most equal and just. If all that has been said already will not quiet the minds of objectors, this one consideration is sufficient to do it; That God, whose ways are all judgment, who is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right, has annexed these penalties to our first transgression; and he has inflicted them upon us; and therefore we are sure, that it is equal and right that he should do so. Let it be further considered,

2. That while we continue in this state, which we are naturally in, we are utterly unqualified for eternal life. It cannot be supposed that a God of infinite purity and holiness will admit polluted and sinful creatures into his immediate presence; and reward their sinful natures and practices with the glories of the heavenly world! No! He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; and cannot look

upon iniquity. Heb. i. 13.—If the heavens are not clean in his sight, but he chargeth the angels with folly, how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water! Job xv. 15, 16.—But were it even supposed, that we could be admitted to this heavenly state with our natural corruptions and sinful affections, with that enmity to God and godliness, which we all experience in our unrenewed natures; what comfort could we find there? What comfort could the sensualist find, where there would be no objects to gratify the perpetual cravings of his sensual appetite? What comfort would be found in the enjoyments and employments of heaven, by those to whom these spiritual exercises would be matter of eternal aversion? What comfort would be found in being eternally confined to such company, as is our burthen here; and would be for ever opposite and disagreeable to our natural dispositions and inclinations? To such as these, heaven itself would be a sort of hell; and even the glorious presence of God an everlasting torment. Whence it is apparent, that unless we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and have our corrupt natures sanctified, we cannot be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; for no unclean thing shall enter there. We are naturally impure and defiled; “and none but the pure in heart shall see God.” Matt. v. 8.—This brings me to observe,

3. That all who live and die in that state of moral defilement, which we are brought into by our original apostasy must necessarily perish eternally. I have already observed, that such as these are not meet for the kingdom of glory. No! when they leave this world, he that is unjust

must be unjust still. None but they that do God's commandments, will have right to enter through the gates into the city of heaven. Where then must they go? There is no middle state to be expected in the future world. Either heaven or hell, eternal happiness or eternal misery, must be the portion of all the children of men, when they have done with time.—Whence it is evident, that our original sin exposes us to eternal death. We are accordingly represented in Scripture, as being “by nature the children of wrath.” Eph. ii. 3. As being condemned already, and having the wrath of God abiding on us, whilst without an interest in Christ by faith. John iii. 18, 36.—We are plainly and positively informed by our blessed Lord himself, that except we are born again, except we be converted and brought out of that state of sin and death, which we are naturally in, we “shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God.” John iii. 3. Matt. xviii. 3.—There is no salvation to be hoped for, unless our old things pass away, and all things become new in our souls, unless we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath fore-ordained that we should walk in them.—This then is the sum of the matter. The sin of Adam has reigned unto death; for “the judgment was by this one man unto condemnation; and by the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation!” as in the 16th, 18th, and 21st verses of our context. It is therefore a sad and dreadful truth, and will certainly be found so in the conclusion, whatever imaginations men may entertain to the contrary, that our original sin is in itself sufficient to render us eternally

miserable, if it be not washed away in the blood of Christ.

It may be here objected, that God himself has cleared up the equality of his dispensations toward the children of men, by assuring us that "the soul which sins shall die," and that he will not charge sin upon any but them who commit it. How then can it be equal with God to charge the sin of Adam, any more than the sin of others, upon those that never committed it, nor consented to it?

To this I answer: "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God!"—I think I have already made it evident, that this is an undoubted fact, and plainly true, that Adam's sin is imputed to us. And shall we dare to arraign God's justice and equity, because we cannot fully see through the methods of his dispensations? "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth;" but let not proud worms contend with their Maker. We see that we are corrupted and defiled; we feel that we are sinful, and therefore guilty and obnoxious to God's wrath; and we know, from the infinite perfections of the divine nature, that the righteous God has done righteously, whether we see through it or not.

I further add, to what has been said to clear up the equity of God's dispensation towards us, that we do all of us naturally consent to Adam's sin, and in that way also make it our own. There is none of Adam's progeny but what are by nature prompted to, and thereby manifest their approbation of the like sins with those that our first parents committed. Did they call in question the truth of God's word? And does not every un-sanctified person daily do the same thing? Did

they yield to the temptation of Satan? And does not every man in a natural state likewise do so continually?—Were they actuated by pride and ambition to seek a more exalted station than God had placed them in? And are not the same aspiring views in the hearts of all men by nature? Are not we, as they were, influenced by irregular sensual appetites? And do not we continually violate God's commands and prohibitions?—Thus we manifest our approbation of our first parents' sin, and as it were act it over again. We are by nature of the same temper and disposition that they showed in the commission of this sin. By a just construction, we may be said to be inwardly pleased with their disobedience; and are thereby partakers with them in their iniquity. As our blessed Saviour threatened the Scribes and Pharisees, and other leaders of the Jews, that “upon them should come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zecharias, son of Barachias;” Matt. xxiv. 35.—because they were influenced by the same cruel and bloody dispositions, and went on in the same methods of persecuting the saints of God with their wicked and malignant ancestors; and by approving and imitating their sin, brought their guilt on their own heads; in the same manner are we all guilty of Adam's sin, and liable to the penalty of it. We are upon the same account as much chargeable with his apostasy, as these Jews were with all the blood shed from Abel to Zecharias. If we did not personally commit that sin, we are naturally disposed to the same kind of disobedience, and are daily imitating, and thereby approving and making ourselves guilty of that first transgression.

I might yet further observe, that this objection proves too much, if any thing at all. I think that not only the Arminians, but all that acknowledge the divine authority of the Scriptures must own, that temporal calamities are some way or other the consequences of Adam's fall. And it is equally unjust to inflict a greater as a lesser penalty, without demerit. We are certain, that God doth actually, and by consequence that he doth justly, inflict temporal punishments upon us for Adam's sin; and it therefore cannot be unequal with God, to punish us for a sin that we have not personally committed. Besides, if we are, on account of Adam's apostasy, justly liable to temporal calamities, we are justly liable to eternal misery also. We have not merited the former, unless we are thereby become sinners; and if we are sinners, we as well deserve the latter—for eternal death is the just wages of sin. This objection is, therefore, ungrounded and unreasonable.

It may be further objected, that God has expressly declared in Ezek. xviii. 20, that "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."—How then can it be true and consistent with this declaration from God's own mouth, that our first parents' sin should be imputed to us?

To this I answer, that this passage refers only to those children that do not imitate or walk in the sinful practices of their parents, but hate and forsake them. And thus God himself expounds his meaning in the context. "If the son seeth

all his father's sins, and considereth and doth not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live." But then on the contrary, God has threatened those children which imitate their parents' sins, that he "will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him." Exod. xx. 5.—And the reason of the thing is obvious. The sin of their parents should have been a warning and admonition to them, to have watched against and avoided their sinful courses. These should have been as a beacon to caution them against the rock upon which their fathers have struck and perished. They should have deterred them from going on in the same way of destruction. Had any of our parents fallen a sacrifice to human justice for treason and rebellion against their prince, or had they brought any remarkable calamity upon themselves by their irregularities and misdemeanours, should we not improve it as a warning against imitating their example, lest we bring the same misery and ruin upon ourselves, as we have seen to fall upon our parents' heads? And is there not much greater reason to avoid the paths of sin, in which any of us have seen our parents walk, to their eternal ruin in another world? But if instead of taking warning by their wicked life, we imitate and approve it, if we go on in the same courses of impiety which they lived in, and thereby justify their sinful conduct, we make ourselves partakers of their crimes, and upon that account deserve also to be partakers of their punishment. It is accordingly offered as a reason of Belshazzar's ruin, that he saw his father's obstinacy, pride, and fall, and yet he his son had not

humbled his heart, though he knew all this. Dan. v. 22.—And if we apply this to the present case, I have shown already, that we all naturally imitate and approve the sin of our first parents, and are, therefore, all justly liable to the penalty. We are partakers of their guilt, and therefore deserve to share in the punishment of it.

I may also observe, that if this and other such texts of Scripture were taken in the most unlimited sense possible; if it were since the fall, in all cases, and all instances true, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father, it would nothing affect the case before us. For no parents are considered now as the legal representatives of their children, as transacting in a moral capacity for them, and standing or falling in their place and stead, in the same sense as I have proved to be the case with respect to our first parents. As Adam was set in a public capacity, he sinned as the covenant-head and representative of all his posterity; and for that reason his first transgression is imputed to us. But the following sins of his life were not imputed to us. The reason of this is, as I have shown above, because the original dispensation or probationary state Adam was put under, came to a period on his first sin and fall, so that he no longer acted in the capacity of a public person, our federal head and surety; therefore none of his subsequent sins were imputed to his posterity, any more than the sins of our immediate progenitors. It will not therefore follow, that God doth not impute the guilt of our first parents' apostasy to their posterity, because he doth not punish us for the sins of our immediate parents, since the former acted in a public rela-

tion, but the latter act only in a private and personal capacity.

It may be further urged against this proposition, that it dooms multitudes of poor infants to hell, who never committed any actual sin, and is therefore a doctrine so cruel and unmerciful as to be unworthy of God.

To this I answer, that the greatest modesty becomes us in drawing any conclusions on this subject. We have indeed the highest encouragement to dedicate our children to Christ, since he hath told us, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" and the strongest reason for hope as to the happiness of those deceased infants, who have been thus dedicated to him. But God has not been pleased to reveal to us, how far he will extend his uncovenanted mercy to others that die in infancy. As, on the one hand, I do not know that the Scripture any where assures us, that they shall all be saved; so, on the other hand, we have not, that I know of, any evidence from Scripture, or the nature of things, that any of these will eternally perish. All those that die in infancy may, for aught we know, belong to the election of grace, and be predestinated to the adoption of children. They may, in methods to us unknown, have the benefits of Christ's redemption applied to them, and thereby be made heirs of eternal glory. They are, it is true, naturally under the guilt and pollution of original sin; but they may notwithstanding this, for any thing that appears to the contrary, be renewed by the gracious influences of the Spirit of God; and thereby be made meet for eternal life. It therefore concerns us, without any bold and presumptuous conclusions, to leave them in the

hands of that God, whose tender mercies are over all his works.

Having thus briefly stated and explained the doctrine of original sin, and endeavoured to obviate the difficulties that lie in the way, I shall now proceed to make some practical reflections upon what has been said, by way of improvement.

USE I. This shows us the miserable perishing circumstances of all unconverted sinners; of all that continue in the state of pollution and guilt that they are naturally in. It is a dreadful thing to be enemies to the living God, a fearful thing to fall into his hands. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, how terrible is the wrath of the omnipotent God! How terrible will his eternal indignation be to all those who are the miserable subjects of it! This is a thought that might justly surprise the securest sinner living. For who can stand before his indignation, when his fury is poured out like a fire; and the rocks are thrown down by him! What heart can endure or hands be strong, when the Lord shall deal with them! How shocking a thought must it therefore be, to consider the far greatest part of the world of mankind as obnoxious, eventually to suffer the eternal displeasure of a just and almighty God! All that live and die in a state of nature, are inevitably miserable for ever. Their original sin, as I have shown, is sufficient to condemn them. They can never be admitted to heaven with that corruption and defilement, with that hardness of heart, and enmity to God, which they have derived from our first parents. And while they remain unsanctified, they are continually adding to this original weight dreadful loads of guilt, by their innumerable actual

sins; and thereby increasing their misery, and exposing themselves to more amazing condemnation. And is this a state to be continued in? Can men sleep secure, while the flames of infinite wrath surround them? Can they be content to dwell with devouring fire; and to inhabit everlasting burnings? Does it not infinitely concern every one, to meditate a deliverance from that undone condition, which they are naturally in; and to flee for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope that is set before them? Is it not of infinite importance, that our hearts be changed, our natures renewed and sanctified, and we made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light?

Let men now dispute as artfully as they please, against the doctrine of original sin; let them flatter themselves with the goodness of their hearts, and the goodness of their state, till they lull their consciences asleep, and quiet their minds with the vain dream of safety and happiness. It will, nevertheless, appear in the conclusion, that our carnal minds are enmity against God; and can never, without a renewing, sanctifying change, be admitted into his presence. Of what vast consequence is it, therefore, for every one to see and consider his state as it really is; and not cry peace to his soul, when God says, "There is no peace to the wicked!" How dangerous it is to live ignorant of our original sin and guilt! How dangerous to remain quiet and secure in a state of death; and not to be undeceived, until it is too late! The doctrine I have been treating of, is not to be considered as a matter of mere speculation, that may, without prejudice to our souls, be indifferently either believed or rejected. The disease is too dangerous to be carelessly neglected; and will

certainly prove mortal to all that do not discover their misery and hazard, and repair to the great Physician of souls for a recovery from it. It will not do to dispute the malady when the symptoms of death are upon our souls. I cannot see how any man can be in the way of salvation, while insensible of his natural misery and sinfulness, while ignorant of the corruption of his mind and conscience, the hardness of his heart, the obstinacy of his will, the vileness of his affections and appetites, the depravity of his passions, and the pollution of his whole soul. For how can he mourn after a pardon of the sin that he neither sees nor feels? How can he in earnest seek a recovery from such a condition as appears good enough already? To what purpose would it be, to endeavour to purify the streams, when the fountain is corrupt and polluted; to seek a reformation from particular sins, when the whole nature is sin and defilement, the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint? "Verily the whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." Matt. ix. 12. It is therefore of the last necessity, for sinners to see the sinfulness and misery of their state by nature, to see that they are undone and perishing in their present condition, to have a lively impression of their dreadful danger, while enemies of God, and heirs of perdition; that this awakening prospect may make them in earnest repair to the fountain of grace and life. If ever sinners are brought to a sincere repentance, they will be deeply humbled under a sense of their original sin and the corruption of their natures, as well as the transgressions of their life. They will groan out David's complaint, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother

conceive me ;” and will, with the apostle, mourn after deliverance from the body of this death. As for others, that are sleeping secure in this perishing condition, they must quickly awake out of sleep, or be terribly convinced that God is most just in imputing and punishing the sin of our first parents, when every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world be judged in righteousness.

USE II. Let this subject be improved by way of earnest exhortation to every one, to make it the special care and business of their lives to get out of that state of sin and guilt which they are naturally in. Methinks the consideration of what has been already said, might be argument enough to prevail with every one seriously and earnestly to endeavour an escape from their misery and danger. Are you dead in trespasses and sins? Are you under the condemnation and curse of the law? Is the eternal God, as a righteous judge your enemy? Are you exposed to everlasting ruin and perdition? Is this your estate by nature? Are you thus exposed to God’s wrath by the sin of our first parents? What a far more exceeding weight of wrath must you then be under, by the vast addition you have made to your original guilt! How dreadful will your final condemnation be, when not only your original, but all your numerous actual sins, attended with such mighty aggravations, are hereafter punished according to their demerit! Let the appeal be therefore made to your own consciences, whether it be not of greatest concernment to get into a better and safer state than this is; to get your nature sanctified and renewed; to secure the favour of God; and to be fitted to appear before your judge with comfort, when he

shall appear, and his reward shall be with him! Have you any desire of the comforts of a religious life? Have you any desire of the favour of God, now in this world, or hereafter in your eternal state? You must then make it your present and active care, to obtain a saving conversion unto God. In order to which, let me propose the following directions.

1. Meditate much upon your present misery, in all its aggravations. I hope what has been said may give you a rational conviction of the sad truth I have been treating of: but this is not sufficient to awaken your care and diligence. Multitudes that acknowledge this doctrine, do, notwithstanding, sleep on in a fatal security, and perish for ever. And this is like to be your case also, if you are not brought to such an awakening, lively impression of your guilty, perishing circumstances, as makes you cry out with distress of soul, "What shall I do to be saved?" Labour therefore for a realizing, affecting apprehension of your extreme misery, and dwell in a continued view of it. View your circumstances as they appear by the law of God, which thunders forth "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" against you. View them as they will appear when you come to die, and have nothing in prospect but the dreadful effects of your sin and guilt; when nothing remains but a fearful looking for of fiery indignation, ready to consume you, except you repent and be converted. View them as they will appear, if you are found in your present state, at the last day, before the tribunal of your Judge, when with horror and amazement you must hear the terrible sentence "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for

the devil and his angels." View them as they will appear to condemned sinners in the place of torment, when weltering in the flames of intolerable vengeance, without hope or help to all eternity. And let the dreadful view excite in you all possible endeavours to flee from the wrath to come, and secure the salvation of your souls.

2. Labour after an humble sense of your utter inability to relieve and save yourselves. Do not attempt this change of your heart and state in your own strength. Alas, you are "dead in trespasses and sins!" as you have heard before, and a naturally dead man is as capable to revive himself and to reassume vital power and action, as you are to create yourselves anew unto good works. As you are not indeed naturally dead, you are therefore capable to attend upon the means of grace and life, in order to have the "good pleasure of God's goodness wrought in you, and the work of faith with power." But then, as you are spiritually dead, you cannot by any skill or strength of your own, change your hearts; nor do anything that will give you a claim to have it done for you.

You must become new creatures. You must be born again. You must be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The heart of stone must be taken out of your flesh, and a heart of flesh given you; and in a word, as I observed before, old things must pass away, and all things must become new in you. And can it be in your own power to produce this wonderful change? You must live in the exercise of faith in the Son of God, without which it is impossible to please him: you must live in

the love of God: your affections must be placed upon the things that are above: you must be spiritually minded, and have your conversation in Heaven. But is it possible to exercise these graces before you have them? Is it possible for you to beget them in your own souls, when all your powers, faculties and affections are directly opposite to them? Or is it possible to deserve the blessing of this renewed nature from God; when your whole conduct is one course of enmity against him, and indignity to him? No! Consider your case as it is. You are dead, and cannot help yourselves. You are guilty, and cannot deserve that God should help you. If you perish for ever, God is just, and you have no cause of complaint. And if God have mercy upon your souls, he will bring you to his footstool, with an humble, abasing sense of this your impotent and miserable, guilty and exposed state. He will bring you to be thus poor in spirit, if ever he gives you a title to the kingdom of Heaven.

3. Resolve to cast your perishing souls upon the riches of the sovereign free grace of God in Christ. You deserve to perish, and cannot help yourselves. Destruction and death are before you, and there is no remedy in your own power. What will you do? What course can you take? If you rest in your present condition, you are undone for ever. If you betake yourselves to any sufficiency of your own, it will not help the case. But here is your relief and encouragement. With God there is forgiveness, that he may be feared, and with him is plenteous redemption. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that "Christ Jesus came to save even the chief of sinners." If you are sensible of your lost estate—

if you are burthened with the weight of your sin and guilt—if you are solicitously inquiring after a deliverance from the misery you feel and fear, the Lord Jesus Christ is inviting you to come unto him, and so doing he will give you rest. Resolve therefore to commit your souls to the righteousness of Christ for justification, to the influences of the blessed Spirit for conversion and sanctification, and rely only upon the riches of the free mercy of God in Christ, that the work of grace may be carried on in your souls with power, that you may be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

4. Persevere in a constant and diligent attendance upon all the means of grace, in order to have this change wrought in you. Though your deliverance from your miserable condition entirely depends upon the sovereign grace of God in Christ, which you can neither merit nor have any claim to, by any thing you do, or can do; yet you must seek it if you would find it. You must knock at the door of mercy, if you would have it opened unto you. It is God that must sprinkle you with clean water, and make you clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, he must cleanse you. He must take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. He must cause you to remember your own evil ways, and your doings that are not good, and to loath yourselves in your own sight, for all your iniquities and for all your abominations. "Not for your sakes will he do this for you, be it known unto you; but for his holy name's sake. But yet he will be inquired of by you, to do this for you." Ezek.

xxxvi. 25, 37.—“Be therefore found watching at his gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors.” Be found seeking God in all the ways of his appointment, with utmost earnestness and diligence. Whatever discouragements you meet with, resolve to persevere in your unwearied application to the infinite mercy of God through Jesus Christ. Resolve that if he slay you, yet you will trust in him; that if you perish, you will perish at his feet. Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Be not slothful in this business; but fervent in spirit, seeking the Lord. Thus commit your ways to the Lord, trust also in him, and you may hope that he will bring it to pass.

To conclude—Let such of you as have already experienced a converting change, give all the glory to the free grace of God in Christ, mourn the remains of indwelling sin, pray for more and more of the sanctification of the Spirit, and diligently attend all the means of edification.

My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. AMEN.

A DISCOURSE
ON
CONVERSION.

EPHESIANS ii. 4, 5.—But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved.

HAVING, in the foregoing discourse, somewhat distinctly considered the sad effects of our original apostasy, I am now led by the words before us, to take notice of the methods of our recovery from the misery, death, and ruin, which the fall has brought upon us. In the text we have,

1. A representation of our state of nature in these words, “When we were dead in sins.” We are, by our apostasy from God, dead as to all the powers and faculties of our souls in their moral consideration: they are wholly pollution and sin, and naturally incapable of any thing that is spiritually good. We are dead by a just sentence of the law of God. We are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on us. And we

are not only spiritually but eternally dead, by the execution of that terrible sentence upon our souls, if infinite mercy doth not step in to our rescue and deliverance, as I have observed in a former discourse.

2. Here is set before us the great change, which by conversion is wrought on the soul; in that expression, Hath quickened us; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, hath made us alive from the dead. The blessed Spirit of God, when he pleaseth, renews our nature, sanctifies our affections, and fulfils in us the whole good pleasure of his goodness. By his gracious operations upon our souls, he mortifies our corruptions, brings our sinful appetites and passions into subjection, and creates us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, that we may walk in them. This makes a great change in the soul, such as may very aptly be compared to a quickening, or resurrection from the dead.

3. Here is intimated the powerful efficiency, by which this change is wrought, in those words, "together with Christ." As the almighty power of God was gloriously exerted and displayed, in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, so is the same Almighty power manifested and magnified in the resurrection of sinners from their spiritual death. Thus they are quickened together with Christ; as truly quickened as he was, and by the same divine efficiency.

4. We have the motive unto, or the impulsive cause of this change, suggested in these words, "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us. By grace are ye saved." There could be no motive out of himself, nothing

but his own infinite mercy, love, and grace, to excite his kind regard to such poor guilty, hell-deserving rebels as we are. Should he leave us all under the guilt of our sins and the damning power of our lusts, unto inevitable and remediless perdition, he would be most just, and we most justly miserable. We should have no cause of complaint, if he should bestow no mercy upon any of us, for he owes us none, we have nothing to claim but his just displeasure. What then but sovereign distinguishing grace, looks upon any of the fallen race of mankind while in their blood, and says unto them, LIVE? Why is one, more than another, partaker of these quickening influences, but from the mere good pleasure of God's goodness?

But that I may more distinctly explain the words before us, I shall endeavour to consider,

First, In what manner the Spirit of God powerfully quickens dead sinners, and brings them into a state of spiritual life.

Secondly, In what respect we are thus saved by the rich mercy and grace of God.

I am then to consider,

I. In what manner the Spirit of God quickens dead sinners, and brings them into a state of spiritual life.

To this I shall in general observe, that the principal method by which this great change is wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit of God, is his giving him a realizing view of the great truths revealed in the word of God, and enabling him to see things as they are. It may be some prejudice against the doctrine of our sanctification by the special influences of the Spirit of God upon our hearts, that men may

imagine, there is thereby intended the infusion of some new faculty into the soul, which it had not before; and that the new creation implies our becoming a new sort of being, with respect to the natural powers and properties of the soul, which we were not before. But let it be considered, that the Spirit of God does no more in the conversion of a sinner, than bring him to the right exercise of those rational powers with which he was born, give him a just view of his greatest concerns, and enable him to act worthy of a reasonable being. Observe this, and all the prejudices against the doctrine before us are obviated, and vanish away. Now that this is the case, I shall endeavour to show, by taking some particular notice of the usual progressive steps by which a sinner is brought out of a state of carnal security, to the possession and exercise of the divine life.* And I think it will appear that the whole change is wrought in him by spiritual illumination, by impressing a right view of things upon his mind, or by enabling him to act reasonably.

1. Then, if we consider the first change wrought in a sinner by the Spirit of God, it will appear to be no more than his bringing him to realize his own miserable condition, and see it as it is. It is awfully certain from the word of God, that every impenitent sinner is an enemy to God, under a sentence of condemnation, and an heir of hell

* Though I have, on another occasion, formerly endeavoured to represent the methods of the blessed Spirit's operations in the conversion and sanctification of a sinner, in a discourse published on that subject, the reader will see the necessity of considering these things over again in another view, in order to clear up the case before me.

and eternal misery. And it is equally certain, that the most of the world are easy and quiet, careless and secure in this dreadful state. No means that can possibly be used, will put the most of mankind upon a proper solicitude about their eternal welfare. The most awakening addresses, that can be made them in the name of the Lord, the most surprising alarms of God's providence, the most pathetic and compassionate entreaties of their godly friends, have no effect upon them, to stop their career for hell and damnation. They will yet sleep upon the brink of the pit. They will yet run upon the thick bosses of God's buckler. They will yet indulge their lusts, though they perish for ever. And what is the source of this indolence, thoughtlessness, and security, but their want of a just view of their state and danger? Could they but realize these things, and see them as they are, they would sooner rush upon a drawn sword, or leap into a burning furnace, than further incense the eternal Majesty against their souls, and venture upon everlasting damnation. But their misery is, that they have no feeling apprehension of these things. They consider them but as the rumbling of remote thunder, and as affairs of no special consequence to them; and thus they will consider them, unless the Spirit of God set home the important concern upon their minds, and give them a lively sense of what they are doing, and whither they are going. But if once the blessed Spirit undertakes the work, he will make the long neglected and slighted means of grace effectual to open their eyes, that they may see their state as it is. Though they could before sit under the most powerful ministry from year to year, with-

out care, fear, or sensible apprehension of their danger; yet now an ordinary sermon, or a particular passage in a sermon, which perhaps they had heard hundreds of times before without concern, shall awaken their sleepy consciences, and make them with trembling and astonishment cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" Why, what is the matter now? Whence is this wonderful change? Why cannot the poor sinner do now as he was wont to do? Why cannot he go on in his mirth and jollity, in his worldly pursuits and sensual gratifications? What means this darkness and distress, this melancholy countenance and solemn concern? Is this the man that lately laughed at preciseness; that bantered serious godliness, and ridiculed vital piety, as enthusiasm, or a heated imagination? Whence is he now as much an enthusiast, as any of those whom he lately derided and scoffed at? Whence is he now so afraid of hell and damnation, that could lately "mock at fear, and laugh at the shaking of God's spear?" This wonderful alteration is wholly wrought by the Almighty Spirit's impressing a lively view of what the secure sinner could have no feeling sense of before. Now he sees his sins, in their number, nature and aggravations. Now he sees his danger, and thence feels that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." He sees in such a view, that he can be no longer quiet and easy, in such a state of guilt and misery. But this, though open to every one's observation, and plainly visible from the word of God and the nature of things, is what he never would have seen to purpose, unless the Comforter had been sent to "convince him of sin." And the reason is as-

signed, 2 Cor. iv. 4. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not;" and Isa. i. 3, "Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider."

2. If we consider the case with respect to a sinner's humiliation, the Spirit of God works this also in the soul, by showing him his state as it is; and by giving him a realizing sight of his unworthiness of divine mercy, of his spiritual impotency, and utter inability to help himself. These are indeed truths plainly revealed in Scripture, as well as necessary deductions from the light of nature. By both of these it is clearly manifest, that we are guilty creatures, and thereby obnoxious to the wrath of God; that we are imperfect creatures, and therefore cannot fulfil the demands of the law of nature; much less can we make satisfaction for our past offences. But though these things are in themselves evident as the light, they have no impression upon the minds of the generality of mankind. Though deserving nothing but destruction and death, they are as easy and secure, as though they had a title to God's favour, and a claim to eternal happiness. Though utterly incapable to change their own hearts, or to deserve that God should do it for them, they are yet attempting their salvation in their own strength, if they attempt it at all; and being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. Even those who are convinced of their guilt and danger, are usually struggling after deliverance in their own strength, and betaking themselves to some self-righteous refuge or other. And thus in their highest attainments, will they continue to "com-

pass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling," till the Spirit of grace by his powerful influences humble them at God's feet ; and show them that they are " poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked." And how is this done, but by giving them a sight of their case as it is ? They had a doctrinal knowledge before, that they were sinful, guilty, helpless, and hopeless in themselves. But this had no special influence upon their affections, or their conduct. But when they have a feeling sense of this, it must bring them low. They now see their sin and guilt, that there is no resting in their present condition. They see the defects of their duties, that these cannot recommend them to God's favour. They see their own impotency, that they cannot take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and give themselves a heart of flesh. They see the strict demands of God's law, that it is impossible to come up to them. They see the purity and holiness of God's nature, that he cannot look upon sin and sinners with approbation. They see that they have no capacity to help themselves, though they are utterly undone in their present condition. And what is the necessary result of a realizing sight of such a lost, helpless, perishing condition, but that, Psal. cxxx. 3. " If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who should stand ?" Or that, Neh. ix. 15. " Behold, we are before thee in our trespasses ; for we cannot stand before thee, because of this !" What should be the result of this prospect, but that they lie at God's footstool, as condemned malefactors, having nothing to plead, save unmerited and forfeited mercy, why sentence should not be executed upon them, to their eternal confusion !

3. In the same manner, is a convinced sinner brought to a solicitous inquiry after an interest in Christ. This also is wrought in him, by a lively view of his case as it is. We are all indeed from our earliest age, indoctrinated in this essential article of the Christian faith, that there is not salvation in any other but Christ, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. And yet the most of the world, are whole, and need not the physician. They are more concerned about any thing else, than about an interest in Christ. It is beyond human art and means, to make them at all solicitous about this great salvation, though they know that their eternal welfare depends upon it. And what can be the reason, that this madness is in the hearts of men? Can condemned perishing sinners be unconcerned, about the only method of escape from eternal damnation? Can they set more value on their lusts and pleasures, on the world and its vanities, and even on the merest trifles imaginable, than on Christ and his saving benefits? Can they rather choose to perish eternally, and to lose all the glories of the heavenly world, than to come to Christ, that they might have life? How astonishing soever this conduct appears, it is visibly the case of the world of mankind in general. And what reason can possibly be imagined of such unparalleled stupidity, but this, that they have not, they cannot have, while under the power of a blind and carnal mind, any realizing view of this great concern? Could they but see their case as it is, a condemned malefactor could as easily set light by a pardon, or a drowning man by deliverance, as these perishing sinners by an offered Saviour. We accord-

ingly find, that when the Spirit of God comes upon them with his illuminations, and opens their eyes to see their misery and impotency, they can be no longer careless about an interest in Christ. They can no longer make excuses; and go their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. They can no longer amuse themselves with divers lusts and pleasures; and forget their necessity of Christ and his salvation. No! they have now nothing so much at heart, as the securing an interest in this blessed Saviour. Now this thought lies down and rises with them, What must I do to be saved? How shall I obtain an interest in Christ? Now their distressed souls are groaning out these pathetic desires—O for an interest in Christ! Let me have Christ, whatever I want!—The world now with all its blandishments, all its riches and glory, dwindles to nothing in the eyes of such a humbled sinner, when compared with this excellent and needed Saviour. I may appeal to every one that has been truly converted to God, at an age of observation, whether they have not experienced these things in their own hearts. And indeed these operations of the mind are so rational, that it would be in the nature of things impossible we should neglect a most active concern about an interest in Christ, if the eyes of our understanding were enlightened. But alas! “The light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.” We see by experience, that men never do, never will show themselves thoroughly in earnest about this everlasting concern, till the Spirit of God open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light; and that when they are thus illuminated, they cannot do otherwise. This wonderful change in men’s desires

and pursuits, is a necessary consequence of divine illumination, and of a just and reasonable view of things. Without this, they cannot attain it; with this they cannot fail of it. To this therefore the apostle ascribes it. 2 Cor. iv. 6. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

4. In the same manner also is the actual conversion of a sinner accomplished. In order to this, the Spirit of God gives him a realizing sight of the fulness and sufficiency that there is in Christ; and of his willingness and readiness to save him: the attainments before described, do not necessarily imply a saving conversion to God. Though these are the influences of the blessed Spirit, they are not his special and saving operations. The sinner is not brought into a state of favour with God, till he accepts a tendered Saviour upon his own terms. It is by receiving him, that we have power to become the sons of God. The first act of saving faith is that conversion, by which the sinner effectually turns from sin to God, passes from death to life, and becomes interested in Christ and all his saving benefits. Now, which way is the sinner brought to this, but by an impressed lively discovery of things as they are?—By a lively sight of his sin and danger, powerfully applied to his mind and conscience, and appearing as it is, he is awakened to an earnest inquiry after the way of salvation. By a clear discovery of his unworthiness and impotence, he is brought to the footstool of God's sovereignty, and to an earnest desire of an interest in Christ; as I observed before. But here the soul

is often plunged into greatest darkness and distress : his guilt stares him in the face ; he sees he has no claim to mercy, nothing that can entitle him to it ; he has been struggling in vain, to mortify his corruptions, to enliven his affections, and to do something to recommend himself to God's favour ; and is now perhaps ready to give up the case, as helpless and hopeless ; he cannot see how God can have mercy upon such a guilty, polluted, hard hearted, hellish sinner, as he is. Propose to him the only remedy for such lost sinners ; and how many objections will lie in the way ! How many arguments will he bring against believing in Christ ; from his own unworthiness and want of qualifications to come to him ; from the decrees of God ; from his having sinned away the day of grace, and the like ; even till he runs into despair, unless the Spirit of God disperse the dark cloud, and give him a right view of redeeming mercy ! But when once such a distressed soul sees this as it is, when once he has an impressed sense of gospel grace, and is brought to see indeed, that he is invited to come to Christ, notwithstanding all his guilt and unworthiness ; and that this precious Saviour is able and willing to bestow all that salvation upon him, which he stands in need of, then his objections are silenced ; and he cannot refrain from heartily complying with the offer. Then he can commit his soul to him ; for he sees that there is the utmost safety in doing it. Then he can depend upon him as the author of his eternal salvation ; for he sees that he has no whither else to go, and that Christ has the words of eternal life.

It is remarkable that the Scriptures every where annex salvation to faith, and to the belief of the

truth ; and we are told, 1 John v. i. " Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." But what are we to understand by this belief? Will a cold and inactive assent to this truth interest us in Christ and his salvation? No! " Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. In which is more than a bare assent implied. It implies such a realizing view as makes all the offers of salvation by Christ certain, and his purchased benefits present to the believer. And when a weary and heavy laden soul hath such a sight of the fulness and sufficiency, of the kindness and compassion of Christ; and of his willingness to save him upon his coming to him, as makes this comfortable truth as it were personally present to his mind; when he has such a view that this Saviour is offered freely to him, " without money and without price;" it is impossible for him to do otherwise than consent to such reasonable terms of salvation. How can he refuse his consent to these terms, when his distress of soul had before prepared him for a compliance with any terms of obtaining God's favour? It is impossible for him to do otherwise than set the highest value on such a Saviour, when he has this sight, that grace here, and glory hereafter is implied in his interest in Christ. It is impossible for him to do otherwise than have his dependence upon Christ only, when he has this sight, that in him all fulness dwells, and that there is no safety any where else. But I hope, if God will, more particularly to describe a true saving faith. I am now only endeavouring to show, that the Spirit of God works this grace in us by illuminating our

minds ; and giving us a right exercise of our understandings.

5. The Spirit of God does likewise carry on the work of grace in a believer's sanctification, by continued views of spiritual things as they are. By faith the soul is united to the Lord Jesus Christ ; and becomes one spirit with him. By faith, believers have an interest in all the benefits of Christ's redemption. They have thereby a claim to all the promises of the covenant of grace, and may safely and confidently depend upon the faithfulness of God, that he will give them grace and glory ; that they shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation ; that he who hath begun a good work in them, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ ; that he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for them all, will with him also freely give them all things ; and that upon their believing in Christ, out of their bellies shall flow rivers of living water. And what way is this glorious work of grace carried on in the soul, but by the continued assistances of the blessed Spirit to act reasonably, and to maintain a lively apprehension and impression of invisible realities ? How comes the believer to hate every false way, but by a lively view of the vileness and unreasonableness of sinning against God ? What excites him to live in the love of God, but a realizing impression of the excellency of his nature, the infinite value of his favour, and the endearing attractions of his goodness, kindness and compassion ? What makes him in love with holiness, but a sensible discovery of its internal beauty and agreeableness to a reasonable being ? How comes he weaned from the world, but by a true sight of its vanity and utter insuffi-

ciency to satisfy the desires of an immortal nature? How come his affections placed upon the things above, but from a like discovery of the value and importance of things unseen and eternal? What is communion with God, but a just impression of what pertains to God and godliness? And what the evidences of God's favour, but a realizing sight of the actings of grace in our souls, and of the truth of the invitations and promises of the gospel? The extraordinary influences of the Spirit in his immediate communications of light and joy to the believer, are but still a brighter discovery of things as they are. In a word, in whatever aspect this case is considered, what I am pleading for will, I think, appear to be truth. The whole work of sanctification is carried on by illumination, and by the soul's being brought, through the influences of God's Spirit, to the exercise of knowledge and understanding; and to this the Apostle ascribes it. Eph. i. 17, 18, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercy, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling; and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Upon the whole, I cannot see that the Spirit of God does in any other manner work this wonderful change in the hearts of sinners, than by giving them a just view of things as they are, by bringing them to act reasonably, worthy the dignity of their rational nature, and the intellectual powers they are endued with. By this he conquers the enmity to God there is in their

hearts; and brings them from the power of their lusts, of Satan, and the world, into the fear and favour of God. By opening their eyes, he turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may have an inheritance among those that are sanctified.

If it be objected, that the will must be changed and renewed, as well as the understanding enlightened, in the conversion of a sinner; that the Spirit of God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and Christ's people must be made willing in the day of his power;—this is readily granted. But the question is—in what manner is the will changed; and how doth the Lord Jesus Christ bring the stubborn obdurate will of the sinner into subjection to himself? To this I answer as before—by giving them a realizing affecting sight of things as they are. It is impossible for a reasonable being to do otherwise than will what appears to be, in all circumstances, best for him and most agreeable and desirable to him. Did therefore carnally secure sinners see things as they are; did they realize to themselves the folly and danger of their lusts, the misery of an unconverted state, their need of a Saviour, the excellency of Christ, the advantage of an interest in him, the benefits of a life of religion with respect both to this world and that to come:—I say, did they see these things in a just and powerful light, their wills would necessarily be changed. They would no longer choose the way of destruction and death, before the path of life and peace. They would no longer venture eternal damnation, rather than accept of happiness here and for ever. We are not therefore to suppose, that the Spirit of God properly puts any force upon men's

inclinations, when he changes their wills. The will admits no violence. He does but give them a true discovery, a realizing view and powerful impression of what is best for them; and that necessarily determines their choice. Let sinners, if they can, be willing to rush upon the pikes of God's displeasure, when the Spirit by strong convictions and illuminations, gives them a full and clear sight of their sins, and of the flaming vengeance that hangs over their guilty heads. Let them, if they can, refuse a tendered Saviour, when they are brought to see their extreme necessity of him, with his fulness, sufficiency and readiness to save them. Or let them, if they can, choose the service of sin and satan before the service of God, when they have a feeling sense of the danger and misery of the one, and the excellency, desirableness and safety of the other. In a word, though men may have the greatest degree of doctrinal knowledge, in the things now treated of, understand them well, discourse of them rationally and distinctly, and receive them for truth, without any change of their wills and affections; yet if through the Spirit they had any lively and affecting apprehensions of these unseen and eternal concerns, they must of necessity have an influence upon their hearts and lives, proportionable to the kind and degree of the light impressed on their minds. Though a notional knowledge of these things will serve no other purpose, but to leave the sinner the more inexcusable; yet when the Spirit of God sets them home with power upon the soul, in their own proper light and evidence, this prospect cannot fail of a blessed effect. But it is time I should proceed to consider,

II. In what respect this quickening and sanctifying change is to be attributed to the rich mercy and grace of God.

And here let it be observed,

1. This is to be ascribed to the riches of divine grace with respect to the sovereignty of God, in distinguishing some from the rest of the world of mankind, in the application of the benefits of Christ's redemption to their souls. There is nothing more visible to every observer, than the dreadful security and stupidity, neglect of Christ and salvation, chargeable upon the far greatest part of those who enjoy the best advantages for their eternal welfare. How sad and melancholy is the reflection, that such multitudes of those who are lifted up to heaven by their privileges, must yet be cast down to hell; and nothing that is or can be done for them in the use of the best means whatsoever, will prevent their final and eternal ruin! And whence is it that all the world, without difference, are not boldly going on the same paths of destruction and death? Whence is it that there are any of the race of Adam brought to see their danger, to inquire the way of salvation; and to betake themselves to Christ for refuge. Is it from any superior natural powers, that they thus become wise to salvation? Constant experience shows us that God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty. Is it from the enjoyment of better means and external advantages for their souls' eternal interest? Do we not daily see, that under the very same ordinances and providences of God, one is taken and another left? Is it from their more innocent and regular lives and con-

versations? How often do we see scandalous and flagitious sinners savingly converted to God, when others that are free from such gross pollutions, remain in unbelief, and live on in the neglect of Christ and his offered salvation? Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, when Scribes and Pharisees are shut out. Is it from better education? Whence then is this difference in the children of the same family? Is it from a better natural disposition? Alas! every unsanctified carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. What cause then, can this possibly be ascribed to, but that which is assigned by our blessed Lord? Matt. xi. 25, 26. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." God is absolutely sovereign in the disposal of his own benefits. He bestows them when, where, and how he pleaseth. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." "He makes known the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself." Eph. i. 9. What reason therefore have those that are effectually called, to admire and adore the infinite riches of the sovereign free grace of God to them, in distinction from so many others, that continue in their sin and guilt, in a state of death and perdition! "Who has made them to differ? What have they that they did not receive?" What was there in them more than in others, that could excite the divine compassion? Had they not the same corrupt nature, the same enmity to God, the same hardness of heart, the same, if not greater

degrees of sin and guilt, that are found in the un-sanctified world? And has God passed by them when in their blood, and said unto them, Live, while such multitudes of others, as good by nature as they, are like to perish eternally? O the riches of the free distinguishing grace of God! What manner of love hath the Father bestowed upon them, that they should be called the children of God! What cause have they now to begin the eternal anthem, "To him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

2. The conversion of a sinner is a display of the rich mercy and free grace of God, on account of the strong opposition there is in the hearts of sinners to this change. This opposition to vital piety is everywhere visible, in the unsuccessfulness of the means of grace, and in all the fruitless endeavours that are used to persuade men to turn and live. All that can be done by the faithful ministers of Christ, will not prevail with a great part of mankind, so much as seriously to consider those concerns that are of infinite importance to their souls. And what but the enmity of their natures to God and godliness, can be the cause of this stupidity and insensibility? They have the same natural powers to consider their eternal interest, which the believer exercises to his everlasting advantage; and yet they cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; but they are foolishness to them. And whence is this impotency but from a fountain of enmity and opposition in their hearts? They are strongly attached to their lusts and sensual gratifications; and therefore will not

realize to themselves, that these will in the conclusion, sting like a serpent, and bite like an adder. Their affections are glued to the world and its vanities; they therefore will not allow themselves any suitable and solemn reflections upon the shortness, the emptiness and vexation of these ensnaring amusements. They have a natural aversion to a spiritual and heavenly life; and therefore cannot dwell in the views of those things that are unseen and eternal; nor at the utmost proceed further than to a form of godliness, without the power. The way of salvation by Christ is so contrary to the proud and self-righteous disposition of their souls, that they cannot see any comeliness in him, that they should desire him. They are so immersed in the affairs of time and sense, that they will not allow themselves leisure for any deliberate thought and concern about an eternal world. Though they may be reasoned into an acknowledgment, that this their way is their folly, how quickly does the consideration vanish, and the sensual appetite recover its dominion! Though they may be awakened to some temporary concern about their state, by the ordinances or providences of God; such are the rooted prejudices in their hearts against a religious life, that the dog soon returns to his vomit, and the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

In a word, they are under the dominion of sin, and the empire of Satan; and as long as the strength of their own corruptions, in concert with all the powers of hell, can keep the palace, they will enjoy their lusts in peace. There must be one stronger than the strong man armed, to take from him the armour wherein he trusteth, and

divide the spoil. This is manifestly the case of every unregenerate man. What a powerful work of divine grace must it therefore be, to bear down this opposition, to bring these madmen to their reason; and bow their souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ! How wonderful is this grace of God, to exercise such compassion to their souls, while they are enemies both to him and themselves! The mercy of God does herein shine with peculiar glory, that it not only enlightens the eyes of the blind; but of those that are voluntarily and obstinately so; that do and will refuse a recovery, until he anoints them with his eye-salve, that they may see! This will be the subject of the eternal admiration of the redeemed, that "when they were enemies, they were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Rom. v. 10.

3. The riches of God's free grace appear in a sinner's conversion, in that none can have any claim to the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit, by anything they can do. If we consider the whole race of mankind, in our apostate circumstances, what was there in us more than in the angels that fell, to excite the divine compassion? What was there in us, that could incline the blessed Redeemer to take upon him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham? Could guilt and pollution, could enmity to God, and vile sensual affections and appetites, entitle us to the favour of God, and the infinite love of the glorious Redeemer? If we consider the evangelized world, as distinguished from those that sit in darkness and see no light, but are perishing for lack of vision, whence is this difference? Were they not all the offspring of the same ungrateful rebel, all under the power of the same

original corruption, and all in the same manner guilty before God? What therefore but infinite free grace has distinguished us from the darkest corners of the earth? If we consider this with respect to the elect of God, what out of God himself could be an eternal motive to choose them from the rest of the world, to be the heirs of eternal glory? What qualification has he seen in them, who were nothing but sin and defilement, to recommend them to his sanctifying and saving mercy? What have they done, or what can they do in their unsanctified state, that can give any title to the grace of God? Without faith it is impossible to please God. Can unbelievers entitle themselves to God's favour, while it is impossible they should please him?

If any should pretend that God has promised to bestow sanctifying grace upon those that diligently seek it; that he has promised to "those which seek, that they shall find; and to those which knock, that the door of mercy shall be opened unto them;"—I shall not dispute whether these should be considered as promises made to unsanctified persons, or directions to be found in the way of life, and gracious encouragements to diligence in duty; for at the present I cannot but think, that in which soever of these views such texts of Scripture are considered, the consequence will be the same; and that if these are considered as promises, no unconverted sinner can so far comply with the condition, as to have a title to the benefit of such promises. None can, I think, pretend that these promises are made to an idle, slothful and intermittent performance of duty. And will the mere powers of nature ever carry any man so far, as to be constant, fervent

and persevering in all the ways of known duty? None can pretend, that these promises are made to an hypocritical performance of duty; to those that "flatter God with their lips, and lie to him with their tongues, while their hearts are far from him." And can any unsanctified person be hearty and sincere in all his religious performances? None can pretend, that these promises are made to such as bring their lusts with them to God in all their approaches before him. No, surely! "If they regard iniquity in their hearts, the Lord will not hear them." And is any unsanctified person capable to keep his lusts always in subjection, and to approach the presence of God with a "hatred to every false way," when it is always true of them all, that "their heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" If it be here urged, that God has given a promise of grace to those who seek it as well as they can; and that they therefore have a claim to it, upon the terms of using their best endeavours to obtain it: I must yet observe, that no unsanctified person ever came up, even to these low terms. Can any of them pretend, that they have always gone as far as they could, in watching over their hearts, in keeping out of the way of temptation, in bridling their lusts, in attending upon all known duties, and in being serious and affectionate in their performance of them? If not, how have they a title to mercy for doing as well as they can? If it be further urged, that God has promised to overlook our imperfections, and to bestow grace upon us in the way of seeking it, notwithstanding the great defects of our duties: I inquire, where is the promise to be found, that God will overlook the imperfections of Christless

sinner? They are under the law, which curseth every one that continueth not in all things to do them. Gal. iii. 10. Christ has indeed purchased for believers, that their imperfect performances shall be accepted, through the merit of his atonement and intercession. But how does that affect the case of unconverted sinners, who have no interest in Christ, nor in the benefits of his redemption; and can therefore have no claim to mercy upon his account? Upon the whole, then, it is most evident that the conversion of a sinner is of sovereign free grace; what God without injustice can deny to any man in the world; and what none have any right to by any possible qualification of their own. And every partaker of this unspeakable gift has cause, with highest admiration, to say as the apostle, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

If it be objected, that if this doctrine be true, "it is in vain for unconverted sinners to seek for grace, since they have no claim to it when they have done all they can; and it is impertinent to press the duties of religion upon them, when their utmost endeavours will give them no title to salvation;"—

I answer, the apostle improves this argument quite the contrary way. Phil. ii. 12, 13. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." If God only can bestow grace upon us, we should be the more in earnest to obtain it from him. If we have no claim to mercy, we should the more humbly prostrate our souls at God's footstool, pleading for acceptance through the merits of the great Re-

deemer. Would it be just reasoning in a condemned malefactor, because none but his offended sovereign can pardon his offence, reprieve him from execution, and restore him to his forfeited favour, that therefore he will not petition him for it? Would it be just reasoning in a miserable beggar, because he must die and perish with hunger, if the rich man, at whose door he lies, will not extend his undeserved charity to him, that therefore he will not ask alms of him to save his life? We are condemned malefactors; what need have we therefore to seek a reprieve at the footstool of divine grace, where alone it can be hoped for! We are perishing with hunger; what need have we therefore to “repair to our Father’s house, where there is bread enough and to spare!” Were there but a mere possibility of mercy, it were sufficient incentive to the most active endeavours, since there is no hope of it in any other way. God can bestow grace upon us if he pleaseth. A word from him is sufficient to change our hearts, sanctify our affections, and qualify us for eternal salvation; and this is what all the angels in Heaven, and men upon earth cannot do for us. “To whom then shall we go, but to Him who has the words of eternal life?” Sinners do not know indeed that he will do this for them; but they do know they must perish, if he does not bestow his salvation upon them; and they know nothing to the contrary, but that they may obtain, if they seek it. They have now all the encouragement to seek, that any others have ever had, who have sought and obtained. And will they sit still and perish, because God is a sovereign benefactor, that may do what he will with his own benefits?

I add to this, that God has given gracious invitations unto sinners, to seek the renewing and sanctifying influences of his blessed Spirit. "He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." How many offers of mercy are made in the gospel, to every one without difference, that are found watching at Christ's gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors? If their own attainments will not give them a claim and title to sanctifying grace, they will yet put them in that way in which alone it is to be had, and in which they are encouraged to hope, that their labour will not be in vain. They cannot indeed deserve it, do what they can; but is it not as well to receive it of sovereign mercy as of merit? They cannot claim it on account of their own performances; but is it not as well to receive it on account of the merits of the great Redeemer? They may be, and it is best they should be, afraid, lest they fail of the grace of God; but if they have a heart to seek it in earnest, to seek it upon the terms proposed in the gospel, and to persevere in thus seeking it, they may hope that God will, for his own name's sake, though not for their sake or for their duties or deservings, make good to them all the gracious words of encouragement given them in the gospel. What then stands in the way of their most active industry, but the pride and naughtiness of their hearts? Should condemned rebels stand upon terms with their prince, in order to their acceptance of his pardon? Is it not enough that pardon is to be hoped for upon their petition, though they neither do nor can deserve it? If they will refuse to seek it upon the gracious offer, because they cannot claim it as due to them, let justice be done; they must receive the

deserved reward of their rebellion and foolish contumacy. So if sinners will rather make their damnation sure, than seek and hope for mercy at the hand of God, upon such blessed encouragement as is given them in the gospel, they must even be left to their unhappy choice; they must be left to repent their madness when it is too late.

It may be further objected against this doctrine, that it takes from man all freedom of will, and renders him a mere machine, incapable of all moral good, even as if he were a tree or a beast.

I have said something to this objection in a former discourse, and endeavoured to show the impropriety of all the debates, with which the church has been harassed, about the freedom or want of freedom in the will of man. The question ought not to be—Whether the will be free? but whether the man be free; and whether the present doctrine does necessarily deny, even to unregenerate men, full freedom in all their moral conduct? Having spoken so particularly to this case before, I need not enlarge upon it now. I shall therefore only propose a few queries to the objector, which will, I think, be sufficient to illustrate the case. And,

1. I inquire, whether an irreligious life does not appear most desirable to an unsanctified person, and whether he can refrain choosing such a life, while it does appear so. If it does not appear most desirable, why does he choose it? If it does appear most desirable, how can he decline choosing it, until he has another and better view of things? To choose what does not appear most desirable, or not to choose what does appear most desirable, is a contradiction in terms, and implies

to will and not to will at the same time, and in the same respect.

2. I inquire, whether freedom consists in acting contrary to our inclinations, or in acting agreeably to them. If freedom consists in acting contrary to our inclinations, then freedom and constraint are the same thing; for no man acts contrary to his inclinations but by constraint. If freedom consists in acting agreeably to our inclinations, then unconverted sinners are in a state of freedom, for they always act in their moral conduct as they incline to act. If they have some transient inclinations to a better conduct, yet the most powerful and prevailing inclinations of their minds are to do as they do.

3. I inquire, whether it is possible that an unconverted sinner, while such, can comply with the terms of salvation, and yet remain in a state of freedom. Every unconverted sinner is an unbeliever; or in other words, he is unwilling to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ upon gospel terms. To be willing to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ upon his own terms, is a true saving faith: and can be affirmed of none but those who are savingly converted to God. If therefore an unsanctified person does comply with the terms of salvation, he does it against his will: and where then is his freedom? To act freely and unwillingly, at the same time and in the same respect, is the most glaring contradiction; as was hinted before.

4. I inquire, whether it is not consistent with the most absolute freedom, to have such new views of things, as change our wills and affections. It is most evident, that a rational and free agent must act according to his present view of things. He must choose what appears most desirable to

him ; and his freedom consists in nothing else, but in acting voluntarily, or according to his inclinations. Whence it follows, that impenitent sinners, while such, must necessarily pursue the gratification of their lusts : for these appear most desirable ; and are therefore the objects of their choice. But then on the contrary, when the Spirit of God gives them a new prospect and a just apprehension of things, the same sinful and sensual pursuits, that before appeared most pleasant and delightful, do now appear most hateful and burthensome ; the same ways of piety and holiness, that were before their aversion, are now become infinitely more desirable in their eyes, than all the pleasures of sense. These therefore must necessarily become the objects of their choice. And is there not in both cases the greatest freedom ? The sinner acts most freely, in choosing what his darkened understanding and vitiated appetites represent to him most worthy of his choice. The convert acts most freely, when his enlightened understanding gives him a contrary view of things ; and represents the objects of his former detestation and abhorrence, to be most worthy of his desire and delight. While on the other hand, neither the one nor the other would exercise any freedom at all, if they did not choose, as they do, what upon their present view of things appears most desirable. How vain therefore and frivolous is that pretence, that the sovereignty of God's efficacious grace infringes the liberty of the creature ! How is it inconsistent with human liberty, for a man to be convinced of a former mistake, and induced by such a conviction to a different temper and conduct ! To have his understanding enlightened to see things, which he did not see

before; to have new views and impressions of objects, and to be assisted and enabled to act conformably thereto; that is, to act reasonably, and to show himself a man! It might be as justly pretended, that a liberal education is inconsistent with freedom, in that it gives new prospects to the enlightened understanding; and consequently new desires, inclinations and delights.

But I hasten to make some improvement of what has been said. And here,

USE I. This teaches us the dreadful danger of placing any confidence or dependence upon any attainments of our own, for salvation. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." What then will become of all those in the day of Christ, who sew together the fig leaves of their own righteousness, to cover their nakedness; who instead of repairing to, and depending upon the riches of God's free grace in Christ, are placing their confidence upon something of their own, for justification and salvation? These will all be found with the hypocrite's hope, when it comes to the decisive trial. If they can now quiet their consciences, or raise their hopes of happiness, from any qualifications in themselves, if they can now put such glosses upon the plain doctrines of grace in the gospel, as will gratify their proud self-righteous dispositions; yet the time approaches, when they will find, if they have not founded their hope upon God's free sovereign mercy and love in the great Redeemer, that they have built upon the sand, and therefore that their hopes must fall in the stormy hour; and great will be the fall thereof. Certain it is, that there is not, there cannot be, any danger at all in placing all our hope and confidence in the free

unmerited mercy of God in Christ. But on the contrary, the appeal may be made to the most resolute opposers of this doctrine, whether they be not capable of a mistake, in their opinions and conclusions on this most important concern. Can they pretend to infallibility? Are they certain that they cannot be deceived, when so many, as great and as good men as themselves, do, at least, imagine the greatest certainty, that they both see and feel their fatal delusion? And what will be the consequence, if they are too late ashamed of their hope? Is it not much safer to venture our eternity upon a foundation that cannot disappoint us, than to run the dreadful hazard of having a deceived heart turn us aside, and of perishing with a lie in our right hand? If I have any knowledge of the gospel of Christ, or any acquaintance with the method of divine grace in the conversion and sanctification of sinners, they who raise their expectations of happiness from any other grounds than the sovereignty of God's free grace, as it has been described above, will find in the conclusion, that they have compassed themselves about with sparks of their own kindling; and what they must receive at the hands of God, will be, to lie down in sorrow. But with what inexpressible horror and confusion will these hypocrites be filled, when they too late discover the disappointment! How dreadful will the mistake appear, when they find it remediless, when there will be no rectifying the fatal error, no recovering the lost soul, no more seasons or means of grace left them, for the reforming their deluded conduct! How terrible will their amazement prove, when they find that their false confidences are rejected, and have undone them to all eter-

nity! To have our hopes vanish and our expectations cut off, in things temporal, though many times accompanied with circumstances dismal enough, is but light and trivial, compared to an eternal disappointment. Who can imagine the dreadfulness of being miserable for **EVER** and **EVER**! Can the awful thought be entertained without horror and astonishment!

How dangerous therefore is the case of those, who depend upon their inoffensive practice and moral virtue, as the only foundation of their eternal hope! And yet this, I fear, is the case of too many, who live under gospel-light. They either flatter themselves with their negative holiness, that they are not drunkards, nor swearers, nor cheats, openly profane, or the like; and thence boast with the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or even as this publican." Or else, they raise their expectations of happiness upon their outward positive conformity to the moral law; vaunting with the young man in the gospel, Matt. xix. 20. "All these things have I kept from my youth up." Or satisfying themselves with Saul, before his conversion, that they "are, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Phil. iii. 6. But is this all our plea for eternal safety? How then is our case better than that of the moral heathen? What do we more than they? and are we not then without hope as much as they? "If righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain. Christ is become of none effect unto us, whosoever of us are justified by the law. We frustrate the grace of God, by going about to establish our own righteousness."—What occa-

sion was there for the dear purchase of our redemption by the blood of Christ, what occasion for the gospel of salvation, if our morality will entitle us to the heavenly inheritance? Will our imperfect obedience to the law atone for our original guilt, and our multiplied actual sins? Will it pacify God's displeasure; free us from the curse of the broken law; and purchase eternal salvation for us? No surely. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Rom. iii. 23. "But as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." Gal. iii. 10. Though good works are what God requires, and are on that account pleasing in his sight, yet they are not the price of our salvation. "The opinion of merit changes their nature, and turns gold into dross." Our dependence is upon divine grace, and therefore not at all upon our moral attainments. "For if it be by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Rom. xi. 6. Though it be true, that no man can be saved without morality; that being a necessary qualification of a real Christian, and a necessary fruit of justifying faith; it is also true, that no man can be saved by his morality; for our imperfect obedience must not be placed in Christ's stead; nor rob him of the honour of his redeeming mercy. We must not expect to purchase the eternal inheritance, with a price that is less than nothing; nor hope for heaven on account of our obedience, when it has sin enough cleaving to it, to condemn both that and us. Whoever are so mad as to venture their souls upon this treacherous bottom, will certainly sink into the ocean of eternal misery.

How dangerous also is the case of those, who

depend upon their external performances in religion and devotion, as what will give them a claim to eternal life ! I have spoken something particularly to this before ; and shall only add, that although duty is indeed the prescribed way of entering into life ; and if ever we obtain salvation, we must seek it diligently in this way ; yet our best performances will not bring God in debt to us ; nor lay him under any obligation to show us favour. They who attend to duty do well, but they who depend upon what they do, are among the proud in heart, whom God abhors, and dooms to destruction. If we do not bring our persons and services to the footstool of divine grace for acceptance, through the merits of the Mediator's atonement, they will both be found as an unclean thing, in the day of Christ's appearance. Then we may plead, " that we have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence, and that he has taught in our streets ;" that we have prayed in our families and closets, and read and meditated in his word, attended public ordinances, and the like ; and yet be the subjects of that terrible sentence, " I tell you, that I know you not, whence ye are ; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke xiii. 26, 27.

In a word how dangerous is the case of those who depend for salvation upon transient affections, convictions, or other inward experiences consistent with reigning hypocrisy and unbelief. Alas ! we may have a sense of the infinite defect of all our moral attainments, and of all our religious duties ; and yet sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag : so consequently have all our hopes end in disappointment and confusion. Such will be our case, if we

depend upon our convictions and apprehensions of our guilt and danger. The greatest degrees of terror for our sins will not secure the awakened sinner from an eternal portion with Cain and Judas, if he rests short of a saving conversion to God ; and fails of becoming such a new creature, that old things are passed away, and every thing is become new in his soul. Such likewise will be our case, if we build our hope upon our legal repentance. Salvation is indeed promised to a sincere repentance : but every one that mourns for sin, or rather because there is a hell to punish sin, has not a claim to that promise. The greatest degrees of grief under a sense of our sin and guilt, will prove but the earnest and foretastes of eternal horror ; unless it brings the soul to the blood of Christ for pardon, and ends in a renovation of our nature, a change both of heart and life.

The case will also be the same, if we depend upon an historical faith, for salvation. Many are ready to flatter themselves with vain expectations of happiness, upon such grounds as these : they believe the truths of the gospel, they believe that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that there is no salvation in any other ; and therefore apply to themselves the promises made to believers, and delude their imaginations with a dream of future salvation. But alas, poor souls ! such a faith as this is not only common to reprobates ; but even to devils themselves ; for the devils believe and tremble. Their persons and hopes must therefore perish together, unless they have a faith that receives the Lord Jesus Christ upon his own terms, depends upon him only for salvation, purifies the heart, works by love, and is accompanied

with all the graces and fruits of the blessed Spirit. The same may be said of those who depend upon their enlargements, affections, and good frames in religious duties, upon their sudden joy and comfort in their approaches to God, upon their imaginary zeal for God and godliness, and the like, without the quickening influences of the Spirit of God, enabling them to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and to walk in him.

USE 2. This gives direction and encouragement to poor distressed sinners to repair to the fountain of sovereign grace, to have God fulfil in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. Were we to depend upon our own performances for salvation, the imperfections of our duties, the prevalence of our corruptions, the hardness of our hearts, the irregularity and sensuality of our affections, and the infinite defects of our best attempts in God's service, might justly discourage us. But the rich and free grace of God is sufficient for the greatest sinner, for the oldest sinner, for the most hard-hearted sinner, for the sinner that has longest enjoyed, and most profanely abused the treaty of salvation in the gospel. It is not the number and aggravation of their sins, but their impenitence in them, and their wilful rejection of offered salvation that shuts so many miserable souls out of heaven. If the mercy of God was not superior to the sins of the greatest transgressor, and the blood of Christ sufficient to cleanse from all sin, the case would indeed be desperate. But, blessed be God, we are assured, that where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded. Though none may take encouragement from

thence to turn the grace of God into wantonness, and continue in sin, that grace may abound; yet all may take encouragement from hence, to cast their perishing souls upon the free grace and mercy of God, hoping for the justification of their persons through the merits of the Redeemer, and the sanctification of their nature by the influences of the blessed Spirit. Let none therefore be discouraged, for God receiveth sinners that are poor and contrite, and who tremble at his word. He invites to mercy the chief of sinners, and offers them, that "although their sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 18.

Are you burthened with a sense of your guilt and want of pardon? Plead the free grace of God, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for justification, and for a freedom from wrath and condemnation. You may be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption there is in Christ Jesus. Rom. iii. 32. Come to Christ, for "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 1.

Do you want converting and sanctifying grace? Here is a full supply. From Christ's fulness you may all receive; and even grace for grace. John i. 16. Go to him for faith, whereof he is "the author and finisher." Heb. xii. 2. Go to him for repentance; we are told, "He is exalted with God's right hand, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." Acts v. 31. Go to him for love to God, for if you are brought to love him, it must be because he first loved you. 1 John iv. 19. Go to him for every grace you want; for he "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" Phil. ii. 13.

Do you want strengthening grace? Here you may repair for that also. "His grace is sufficient for you, and his strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. xii. 9. By him you shall be more than conquerors over all temptation and opposition. Rom. viii. 37.

Do you want persevering grace? You may be "kept by his power through faith unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 5. And in a dependence upon him, you may have a supporting confidence, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Are you humbly sensible, that you have no qualifications to recommend you to the favour of God? Come to this fountain of grace, in your lost and abject condition, as you are. Come, poor, wretched, miserable, blind and naked, though you have nothing but guilt and pollution to bring with you, Here is mercy, rich mercy, freely offered. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come and buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." Isa. lv. 1. What then stands in the way of the sinner's salvation, but his ungrateful neglect or rejection of offered mercy!

USE 3. Finally, let every one see to it, that they have the experience of this rich mercy and free grace of God in their conversion and sanctification. To what purpose, as to you, will be the glad tidings of mercy and grace, if you should fail of an interest in it? O take heed, therefore,

that you receive not the grace of God in vain ! Be not high-minded, but fear. Fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. It will be dreadful indeed, to perish from under the gospel, to have these displays of God's infinite grace and love rise up in judgment against you in the day of Christ. You have now the offers of grace. But a little while hence, all hope of mercy, all possibility of salvation will be past and gone for ever, if you turn a deaf ear to the present entreaty. Therefore "to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," lest the judgment threatened be executed upon you, that because when Christ "called ye refused, when he stretched out his hands ye did not regard, he also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh : when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall you call upon him, but he will not answer ; you shall seek him early, but shall not find him."

Let such of you as are in a state of carnal security, take heed lest you sleep the sleep of death, from whence there is no awaking. Take heed, that you do not quiet yourselves with delusive hopes, and live contented without such a sense of your sin and danger, as may make you restless in your desires and endeavours to flee from the wrath to come. O awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead. Labour to see your misery, meditate upon it, and cry to God to show you your state as it is ; that you may no longer be such a stranger to distress of conscience for sin, and to fear of the wrath of God.

Let such of you as are under an awakening sense of your guilt and hazard, take heed, that you rest not short of a hearty compliance with the terms of salvation proposed in the gospel. Take heed, that you neither rest in your own attainments, nor grow discouraged in your pursuit of an interest in Christ. Labour to see thoroughly your own emptiness, your undone and helpless state, and the infinite sufficiency there is in Christ to supply all your wants. Resolutely, readily, and constantly commit your souls to him, and steadily rely upon him, and him only for justification and life.

To conclude—Let such of you as entertain hopes of an interest in Christ by faith, take heed that you do not content yourselves with a dead faith, nor rest short of the renewing, sanctifying, and quickening influences of the Spirit of God. Take up with no evidence of your converted state, until you have obtained a victory over your lusts, and got the dominion of sin subdued, until you are brought habitually to maintain a life of true and universal holiness, of piety towards God, and of righteousness and charity towards men. Labour to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and by this prove yourselves. Show your faith by your works, and by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, that in the end you may inherit eternal life. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; but without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure. And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whoso-

ever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. He that saith, I know Christ, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true. And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. And they that know his name, will put their trust in him.—Now grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.
AMEN.

A DISCOURSE

ON

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROMANS iii. 25.—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

THE glorious transaction of our redemption by Jesus Christ, is the just surprise and wonder of the reasonable creation. The angels desire to look into these things; and man, who is immediately interested herein, has especial reason to adore the amazing love, that shines with such lustre in his deliverance from death and hell. And what brightens the glory of this stupendous work, and gives us occasion of the highest exercise of gratitude, is the infinite price, by which our salvation is purchased. For thus saith the Scripture—“We are redeemed, not by corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” And God hath purchased his church with his own blood. Thus the price of

our deliverance bears proportion to the degree of our misery and guilt. When these were so aggravated, that all the angels in heaven were insufficient for our rescue ; when no created wisdom could invent an effectual expedient ; when no created power was equal to the vast design ; God our Saviour looked, and there was none to help ; and wondered that there was none to uphold. He therefore himself interposed, and his own arm brought salvation. According to the appointment of God the Father, our Lord-Redeemer has undertaken to be a propitiation for us, that through faith in the merits of his blood, we may be interested in his righteousness, and obtain the remission of our sins ; as we are instructed in the words of our text ;

In which we may note the following particulars :

1. Observe the person here spoken of, represented by the relative *whom*, which leads us to the last words of the foregoing verse—"Jesus Christ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation."

2. We may observe the character here attributed to this person, that is, a propitiation or atonement. The Greek word here rendered propitiation, is very emphatical, and signifies one person's being substituted in the room and place of another, to bear his guilt, or to discharge his debt ; and thereby to make atonement or satisfaction on his account. By which is exhibited to us, how the Lord Jesus Christ undertook to become a curse for us, to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that he might thereby expiate our guilt, pacify offended justice, and reconcile us to God.

3. We are here shown the divine appointment of this glorious person to be a propitiation for us. "Whom God hath set forth," proposed or ordained. This merciful provision of God for our recovery from ruin by the atonement of Christ, is the fruit and consequence of the eternal covenant of redemption, or counsel of peace between them both. God the Father, as the first in order in the blessed Trinity, is represented as proposing or appointing, and God the Son as undertaking this glorious work. Whereby is not only shown how the operations of this blessed Three in One do follow the order of their personality, but also how God the Father, as sustaining the character of supreme in the economy of redemption, demands satisfaction to offended justice, and has allotted this way of obtaining it, by Christ's being a propitiation for us, that in this way "he might be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

4. Here is pointed out to us the means or method of our getting actually interested in this propitiation, "through faith in his blood." It is through a believing acceptance of, and dependence upon the death and sacrifice of the Redeemer, that we are to partake of the benefits of his atonement. His satisfaction is sufficient for all, but actually applied, and effectual to none but the believer.

5. We may note the blessed fruit and consequence of an interest in this propitiation of Christ; "the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." All the sins committed before justification, while God so patiently exercised his forbearing goodness to the guilty sinner, are fully remitted and for ever done away, through the merits of this atone-

ment, upon the first exercise of a true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, insomuch that the sinner is at once reconciled to God, and instated in his favour.

But there are three things here, that more especially demand our attention, and which I shall endeavour more distinctly to consider :

First, What is implied in our Lord Jesus Christ's being a propitiation for us.

Secondly, What we are to understand by that faith in him, by means of which we are interested in this propitiation.

Thirdly, How faith in Christ operates or influences to bring about our remission and justification in the sight of God. As to the nature of justification, I shall have occasion to consider that in my next discourse, and therefore pass it at present.—Here,

I. Then, I am to show what is implied in Christ's being a propitiation for us.—And that I may illustrate this in the most familiar and perspicuous manner I am capable of, I shall endeavour to be somewhat particular and progressive in my attempts to explain it.—Now,

1. This implies, or rather presupposes the guilty condemned state of apostate man, and our utter inability to recover ourselves. The apostasy of Adam, I mean the guilt thereby contracted, was, by a just imputation, transmitted to all his natural posterity, so that we are all become guilty before God. And the contagion or pollution, contracted by the apostasy, being also propagated to the miserable progeny of a condemned rebel, hence all our affections and passions are corrupted and defiled, and our conversation being a stream from this polluted foun-

tain, is become irregular and sinful, whereby we have lost the favour of God, and are the objects of his righteous displeasure. This is plainly the case of the whole world of mankind, while in a state of nature. This fatal fruit of the fall does indeed seem one of the darkest dispensations of providence, and is what carnal reason is exceedingly apt to cavil at. But I think I have given such answers to the chief objections made against it, in my discourse on this subject, as may justly quiet our minds, and silence all our opposition.

This, then, being our distressed case, whither could we flee for help? It is evident to every one's observation, that we cannot come up to that unspotted obedience, which God has the justest claim to from a rational creature; that our best duties and most careful observances of the law of nature, are sadly defiled with sin; that we have vicious habits and inclinations, which we cannot conquer; and that our carnal minds are enmity against God, are not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. Whence it is certain, we are so far from being capable of atoning for our apostasy, that we are utterly incapable to live up to the law of nature, had that breach been made up.

If any will suppose, that our repentance would have been sufficient to have appeased the divine displeasure, without any other satisfaction: I would ask them how they can be certain of this. I would desire them to show what necessary connexion there is between the sorrow of guilty rebels for their sins, and the favour of an offended God, without a satisfaction or atonement. And I would inquire, whether they have this good news for the fallen angels. It would be such glad tidings, as

I dare say, they had never heard since their first apostasy. But were even this supposed, still I inquire, how would that afford any relief in our case? For we are naturally incapable of a true repentance, by any power of our own, as much as of making a strict and adequate atonement. We are too much in love with sin, to loath and abhor it, as of ourselves. The habits of sin too intimately adhere to our souls, to be wholly subdued and forsaken, by any attempts or resolutions of ours. And can we please God with a partial and insincere repentance, which is all we can pretend to? Can God be deceived, or will he be mocked? No, surely! We can neither discharge the debt already contracted, nor avoid running further into debt every day.

2. This also implies or presupposes that divine justice demanded satisfaction for our offences, in order to our reconciliation unto God. I shall not undertake to determine whether the punishment of sin be indispensably necessary from the nature of God; and naturally results from his essential righteousness and purity, absolutely considered. It is indeed certain, that holiness and justice are essential perfections in God; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and that his justice being infinite, must be inflexible. But, mankind not having adequate ideas of these divine perfections, we may err in our reasonings and deductions from them. However, I think we may safely affirm that God's requiring satisfaction for sin, is agreeable to his rectoral holiness and governing justice; and that as he is the supreme Judge and Governor of the world, he justly requires sin should be punished; that by this he may illustrate and vindicate his own

holiness, and convince the world, that the "righteous Lord loveth righteousness;" and that "the wicked his soul hateth." Psal. xi. 5, 7. That by this he may testify his adherence to his own laws; and let the world see, "that Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle shall pass from them." Matt. v. 18. That by this he may discover the value he puts upon the obedience of his creatures; and show that their observance of his law is not a vain thing for them, because it is their life. Deut. xxxii. 47. And that by this he may assert his own sovereignty; and the world may see, that "verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." Psal. lviii. 11. I might add, by this he also brandishes a flaming sword against the impiety of future transgressors; and discovers, that "to him belongeth vengeance and recompense." Deut. xxxii. 35. The truth of God does certainly make satisfaction for sin necessary. He threatened death as the consequence of the fall. Gen. ii. 17. And his word is immutable, like his infinite nature. Hath he said it, and will he not do it? What he has spoken, he is able also to perform; and being the God of truth, will he not bring it to pass? In a word, God's actually requiring satisfaction for sin, is a fact abundantly confirmed in the Scriptures; and therefore cannot but be owned a reality. Among the multitudes of Scriptures that might be cited in this case, you may consider these that follow. Exod. xxxiv. 7. "That will by no means clear the guilty." Josh. xxvi. 19. "He is an holy God, he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Rom. iii. 5, 6 "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance. I speak as a man, far be it: For how then shall

God judge the world?" Which shows, that as God is judge of the world, it is a righteous thing for him to take vengeance. Rom. iii. 26. "To declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Which shows, that the satisfaction of Christ was requisite, in order to God's being just, in the justifying of sinners; and that it would not have been agreeable to his justice, to have saved them without satisfaction. Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." This is so, both from the justice and law of God.

3. This implies, that the blessed Redeemer undertook to represent poor guilty criminals; and to give himself a ransom for them. This is a doctrine discoverable only by revelation; and I can no ways explain it, but by showing in what light the Scriptures set this before us. And in those blessed oracles, God the Father is exhibited as admitting, by virtue of his supremacy in the dispensation of man's redemption, the transferring our sin and punishment to the Mediator; and accordingly as sending him to undertake our salvation. Thus, John iii. 16, 17. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Rom. viii. 3. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." 2 Cor. v. 21. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the

righteousness of God in him." 1 John iv. 9, 10. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us; because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God: but that he loved us; and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The Scriptures also represent the Lord Jesus Christ, as freely and voluntarily consenting to undertake this great work; unto which he could be liable to no constraint. Mark x. 45. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many." John x. 17, 18. "I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Tit. ii. 14. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." Heb. x. 7. "Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." The Scriptures do moreover set forth the Redeemer, in the quality of our surety and representative, in this wonderful transaction. Heb. viii. 22. "By-so much, was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." 1 Pet. ii. 24. "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." 1 Pet. iii. 18. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit." In which texts, the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ in our room and stead is clearly and strongly expressed, in his bearing our sins, and suffering for us, and the like expressions are very numerous throughout the New

Testament. I will only add, that the Scriptures represent the sufferings of Christ, and his obedience unto the death, as a proper sacrifice and atonement for us, and as the purchase of our redemption. Isa. liii. 10. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." Eph. v. 2. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." Heb. iii. 17. "That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." See also 1 Cor. vi. 20. Tit. ii. 14, with many other passages to the same purpose, which frequently occur in the sacred pages. Let men therefore strain their wits as much as they can, to put false glosses upon these and such like texts of Scripture, there is nothing more certain, than that the proper satisfaction and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of the world, is in the strongest, most plain and familiar terms, repeatedly asserted in the word of God. If we have any regard at all to the way of salvation proposed in the gospel, we must expect redemption through the alone merits of his life and death; and depend upon him as our ransom, as the propitiation for our sins, and the Lord our righteousness.

I am aware, that there are some difficulties in the way of this doctrine, which the carnal mind is ready to stumble at. It is an objection against this, that it is not just, to accept of and punish the innocent instead of the guilty. To which I answer :

It must be granted, that in human judicatures this would be most unjust, thus to transfer capital punishment; because no man has power to dis-

pose of his own life at pleasure, nor power to give his life for another, be sure not the just for the unjust. Neither hath the civil magistrate power thus to sacrifice a good man for a bad, though even with his own consent ; because it would be highly injurious to the community to cut off the innocent and valuable member, and to spare the guilty criminal as a pest and nuisance to society. But these reasons do not affect the case now before us. Our Redeemer had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again. As he was the Lord from heaven, he had the absolute property and disposal of his own life. And he has declared himself the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead. And instead of this being injurious to the community, it has brought most glorious advantages to us, both with respect to the present and future world. I may add to this, that our blessed Saviour, did not finally perish ; as a substitute must do, in capital punishments among men. No ; he underwent but a short temporary death, and received his life again, with greatest advantage. From whence it appears, that those objections, which would be just in other cases, can have no place here. The character and quality of the substitute, and the absolute sovereignty of the supreme Judge, render the case exempt from all the rules of human judicatures. It is true indeed, that the justice of God could not have demanded satisfaction from the Redeemer, if he had not voluntarily made himself responsible for us : but Christ having a more absolute and sovereign disposal of his own life, than any man can have of his estate, he might as freely offer it, and God the Father as justly accept it, in satisfaction for our

sins, as any man can be accepted as surety for another man's debt.

It may also be objected, that this seems derogatory to the goodness of God, to have penal satisfaction lead the way to the exercise of mercy; and that this represents the divine Being too like the most merciless of human creatures, who have such an appetite to revenge, as cannot be satisfied without blood: whereas it would seem more agreeable to infinite goodness, to pardon freely.

I answer, the mistake lies in the objector, and he only, I think, has unworthy notions of God. To imagine the death of Christ flowed from an irregular appetite to vengeance, is indeed to measure the divine perfections by our depraved lusts and passions. But to suppose, that God's demand of satisfaction arises from, or at least is consonant to, the infinite purity of his nature, whereby he cannot look upon sin with approbation, but testifies his abhorrence of it to all the rational world: to suppose that the righteous Governor of the world, should inflict punishments, as well as bestow rewards, according to the rectitude and equity of his own glorious nature: to suppose, that this glorious lawgiver should insist upon maintaining the honour of his own laws, whereby he has determined to govern the world; this is not to entertain thoughts in any respect unworthy of infinite grace and goodness. The goodness of God does hereby shine in its brightest lustre, that he is willing to save poor guilty rebels at such an infinite expense; and that in such an admirable method, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

4. Christ's being a propitiation for us does also imply, that God did accept of the passive obedi-

ence of Christ, together with his active, as sufficient satisfaction to the demands of justice. "Jesus Christ hath made reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb. ii. 17. And he has reconciled the world to God, that their trespasses are not imputed. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. Thus peace is made with God, and we reconciled to him by his cross, the enmity being slain. Eph. ii. 15, 16. So that the imputation of the obedience of Christ, does fully and perfectly acquit the believer from the guilt of sin, the empire of Satan, the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. God has received satisfaction from the surety; and therefore will demand no more from the principal debtor.

Thus I have briefly considered what is implied in Christ's being a propitiation for us; and have endeavoured to confirm each particular, by full and clear testimonies from the word of God. From this view of the case, it appears to me as reasonable, to call the whole of divine Revelation into question, as to doubt of this great article, Christ's having made a proper satisfaction and atonement by his blood, for the sins of his people.

Now of the things of which I have spoken, this is the sum. That by our first apostasy we have violated the fundamental laws of nature, have been traitors and rebels to the Sovereign of the world, have plunged ourselves into guilt, debased and polluted all the noble faculties of our souls; and separated between our God and us; whereby we are not only become guilty, but impotent and helpless: that the Supreme Governor of the world, willing to assert the infinite purity and holiness of his nature, and his eternal and immutable antipathy to sin and sinners, has testified the value he puts

upon his righteous laws, and upon the observance of them; has vindicated his sovereign dominion, and the truth of his threatenings; and has set before the rational world the dreadful consequences of rebelling against him; by insisting upon a satisfaction to his offended justice; that when we were utterly incapable to make atonement, by any thing less than eternal sufferings, the great God, as Supreme Judge and Arbiter of his own laws and affairs of government, was pleased of his infinite goodness and compassion, so far to relax the threatening, as in our stead to accept of a surety in the person of his dear Son; who was with his own voluntary consent appointed by the Father to work out our redemption, by taking upon him our sin and guilt, bearing our punishment, and fulfilling the law for us, and thereby purchasing our acquittance from death and hell, and recovery to life and happiness. The blessed fruit of his mediation is, that there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus; but whoso hath the Son, hath life, life everlasting.

Thus I am prepared to take notice, in what way we may hope for the benefits of this redemption; which brings me to consider,

II. What are we to understand by that faith in Christ, through which we have an interest in this propitiation. And it may be proper to take notice, that a saving faith is variously described in the Holy Scriptures. Particularly,

1. It is sometimes described, as an assent of the mind to the gospel revelation of Christ. Thus, Mark i. 15. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." So, 1 John v. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." And, Rom. x. 9. "If thou shalt confess with thy

mouth the Lord Jesus; and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." In these and many other like passages of Scripture, a saving faith is proposed as an act of the understanding; and as an assent unto, or belief of the truth of the gospel.

2. Faith is sometimes described in Scripture, as a consent of the will to the gospel offer of salvation by Christ. Thus, John i. 12. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name." And, John vi. 35. "He that cometh unto me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me, shall never thirst." So, Col. ii. 6. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." In which texts we find, that receiving Christ, and believing on his name, and coming to him, and believing in him, are terms of the same significancy; and all of these expressions imply a willingness to obtain the salvation by Christ, upon his own terms.

3. Faith is also described in Scripture, as a confiding in and depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Thus, Eph. i. 12. "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Phil. iii. 9. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law: but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." 2 Tim. i. 12. "For I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." In which texts, faith is considered as our trusting in Christ, hoping to be found in him, relying upon his righteousness, and committing our souls to him.

By this it appears, that faith is sometimes described by one of its essential properties, and sometimes by another: but we must always remember, that when it is described by one of these properties, the other two are not excluded, but included; and that therefore each of these descriptions, if duly considered, will amount to the same thing.

If we, for example, consider faith as an assent to the gospel revelation concerning Christ, which, by the way, is the primary signification of the word faith, it will necessarily include in it a consent to what we believe, and an affiance in him on whom we believe. For this assent, or belief of the truth, must be supposed such a strong and thorough persuasion as will have a proper and effectual influence upon our minds. A mere doctrinal belief, or speculative opinion, cannot be recommended in Scripture as a saving faith. And this being supposed, that we have a firm realizing belief, and a lively impression, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, that his righteousness imputed to us is the only ground of our justification, that without this we must inevitably perish, and that he is both able and willing to save us; it will necessarily excite in us earnest desires after an interest in him, after union and communion with him, and bring us to place our hope and confidence in him only for salvation. We may have, as most of the professing world have, a disciplinary or notional belief of the truth of the gospel, that will produce no proper effect upon our souls, but will leave us, against the conviction of conscience, to neglect an offered Saviour, indulge our lusts, and perish in them. But though such a dead faith will profit us nothing, yet we cannot

but esteem the Lord Jesus Christ to be precious, we cannot but choose him for our portion, and depend upon him to do all in us and for us, if we have lively and clear impressions of the truth of what the gospel reports concerning him. Though a careless indifferent or unsteady assent unto the gospel revelation, will not bring us off from our lusts and sinful pleasures, from our own righteousness and self-sufficiency, to receive Christ and depend upon him; yet a full realizing and hearty assent to this will bring us to consent to the offers of the gospel, and to place our confidence in the only object of our hope. Thus we see, that this first description of faith includes the other two, and if we distinctly consider them also, we shall find the same conclusion.

A consent, for instance, to the offers of Christ and his salvation in the gospel, necessarily implies an assent to the truth of the gospel. For it is impossible that we should, with our wills, concur to any proposal, that our understandings are not convinced of the truth of. It implies also a dependence upon Christ for salvation. For it is impossible to consent to receive Christ for our Saviour, and not depend upon him as such.

The same thing may also be observed, with respect to trusting in Christ, the last description of faith. For we cannot depend upon Christ, and confide in him, unless we assent to the gospel revelation, and consent to accept him as our Saviour. Upon the whole, these several descriptions of faith, do mutually imply and involve each other, and all of them do always belong to the essence of a saving faith; which makes way for this general description:—

Faith in Christ is such an assent to the Chris-

tian revelation, as brings us heartily and fully to receive him as he is therein exhibited to us, and to depend on him only for salvation upon gospel terms.

Here let it be distinctly observed,

1. Faith in Jesus Christ necessarily implies an assent to the gospel revelation. I am not now considering how far God may discover his salvation to the heathen world, who are strangers to the gospel. As on the one hand, I would not limit the Holy One of Israel, who may, for aught I know, reveal his Son in an extraordinary manner to some that never heard of the gospel; so on the other hand, I would leave secret things to God, unto whom they belong. The business now before me is to consider a saving faith, as it relates to us, who dwell under gospel light, and are arrived at an age of consideration and observation. And in that view of the case, a hearty assent to the truths revealed in the gospel, is certainly essential to a true faith in Christ.

Unto this assent it is necessary, that we have a knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, and of the way of salvation therein proposed. "How sha!l they call upon him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?" Rom. x. 14. Faith always follows the understanding, and cannot go before it. It is impossible to believe strictly and properly, what we do not in some respect understand. We may, indeed, in the general, believe that to be the truth, the special nature of which we neither understand nor believe. We may, for instance, believe the doctrine of the Trinity to be an undoubted truth, though we can

neither understand, nor believe the particular modes, or manner how the divine Being is One in Three, and Three in One. In such cases, we can believe no more than what our understanding represents to us, from the word of God, as reasonable and credible. This being applied to the present case, makes it evident, that they who remain grossly ignorant of the doctrine of Christ, and the method of salvation, proposed in the gospel, cannot concur in it, nor comply with it. Ignorance here slays men in the dark, and makes them incapable of any benefit by an offered Saviour. We must therefore first know all that is really necessary to be believed; upon which account knowledge is sometimes in Scripture put for faith. Thus, John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And, 1 Cor. ii. 2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Though men may be capable of faith in Christ without brightness of parts, or eminent degrees of knowledge, either in polemical or systematical divinity, as it is called; yet it is needful that they be acquainted with the principal doctrines of Christianity, such as relate to the one only Mediator, Jesus Christ, his person, offices and benefits, his incarnation, life, sufferings and death, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession; and such as relate to their own lost estate, and necessary dependence upon his righteousness and grace for justification and life, in order to their believing in Christ.

Moreover it is also needful, that we heartily receive this revelation for divine truth, when we do understand it. It is necessary, that we re-

ceive it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, in order that it should effectually work in us, as in them that believe. 1 Thess. ii. 13. It is not sufficient to believe this from the bias of education, or because we have been early and all along taught these doctrines. Alas, we should have been likely to have had the same faith in Mahomet, if we had been as early and constantly instructed in the Koran. It is not sufficient to have an implicit belief of these truths, to take them upon trust from any man or society of men whatsoever; this is to depend upon other men's faith, and have none of our own. It is not sufficient inconsiderately to take these things for granted, without making particular and due inquiry; this may possibly amount to opinion, but not to faith. Nor is it sufficient to give a cold and inactive assent to the gospel, though founded upon the best evidence, and most rational argumentation; for this will not effectually convince us of our absolute necessity of Christ, nor of his sufficiency to supply all our wants. But we must receive the testimony of God concerning his Son, and assent to the gospel report as the truth of God, as that upon which our eternal welfare depends, and as that which we are above all things in the world concerned about. If it be objected, that this will yet fall short of true faith; that the devils themselves give as firm an assent to the truth of the gospel as we can do—"they believe and tremble"—I grant that a bare assent to the gospel, separately considered, if never so steady and strong and rational, is not a saving faith; but yet it is always an essential part of it, though faith,

as I before observed, has more implied in it ; which brings me to consider,

2. That a saving faith does also imply a receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, as offered in the gospel. This, as I showed before, is given as a description of faith, John i. 12. By which we are to understand, a hearty desire of an interest in Christ, and a sincere willingness to comply with the offers he makes of himself and his saving benefits, upon gospel terms.

This necessarily supposes, that we have an impressed sense of our necessity of an interest in Christ. Sinners are but hardly brought to embrace an offered Saviour. The most of the world are quiet and secure in a state of guilt, without any just apprehension of their danger, and without any serious concern about the welfare of their immortal souls. These go their way to their farms and merchandise, and excuse themselves from coming to Christ—they have something else to do. And as to others that are under some conviction of their sin and danger, they are ready to fly to any other refuge than the Saviour Christ, and to quiet their consciences with their good purposes or performances ; until they are brought to see, that “in vain is salvation hoped for, from the hills and from the multitude of mountains ;” that they have no where to go for salvation but to Christ alone, for he and he only hath the words of eternal life. These two things are essentially necessary to a true faith in Christ, a lively sense of our own emptiness, and inability to help ourselves, and a like sense of the sufficiency of Christ to relieve us. By the former we discover the last necessity of some remedy, beyond what we can possibly provide for our dis-

tressed souls. By the latter, the only door of hope is set open to us ; and by both, we are made willing to comply with the blessed proposals of life and peace in the gospel, and submit to the terms whereon they are offered. While sinners can think themselves “ rich, and increased in goods, and that they have need of nothing,” they will set no special value by an offered Saviour. They must see themselves “ wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” before they will repair to him, for “ gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich ; for white raiment that they may be clothed ; and for eye-salve, that they may see.” And this is the great reason of the unsuccessfulness of gospel ordinances, and of the unpersuadableness of the greatest part of the world to come unto Christ, that they might have life. They are insensible of their undone miserable state while at a distance from him : “ The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” They can rest quiet in their present attainments, and will therefore look no further. They will never come to Christ, till they are first brought to utterly despair of all help in themselves. And when they are even brought to this, it will have no better effect, than to fill them with horror and amazement, unless they have also a discovery that there is help to be had ; that there is hope for their souls, from the sufficiency of redeeming love. But when they have both these discoveries, they cannot but see their necessity of Christ ; and whatever else they want, they cannot but be willing to receive him upon any terms.

Moreover, this receiving of Christ does also suppose our complying with him as our King, as

well as our Saviour. It is true, that sinners under a sense of their misery and danger do, in the first place, desire salvation from the wrath to come, of which they have awful apprehensions, and therefore repair to Christ for deliverance. But this is only a legal work. If they rest here, they will never be interested in Christ and his saving benefits. A true evangelical faith excites an earnest desire of salvation from the power and pollution of sin, as well as from guilt and danger. The believer desires Christ to save him from his sins, and not in them; he desires that Christ may reign in his heart, and that his whole man, in all its powers, may be subjected to him. There is no man willing to perish; destruction from God would be a terror to the worst of men, if realized; and since they know that there is no way of salvation but by Christ, they desire by him a salvation from hell, yet, however, it is with a reservation of their lusts and sinful pleasures, which they cannot part with. But this is very far short of a genuine saving faith, which receives a whole Christ with our whole heart; Christ in all his offices, as well as with all his benefits; the grace of Christ for our sanctification, as well as his righteousness for our justification. As a true penitent looks upon his sins as his greatest burthen, and groans after deliverance from the pollution and dominion of them, so the true believer values an interest in Christ upon this account, that he may break the yoke, and destroy the empire of his lusts: that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, may make him free from the law of sin and death. Thus faith receives Christ as our Prince and Saviour. And this is the constant language of a true faith.

Isaiah xxxiii. 22. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: he will save us."

I add to this, that it is also necessary unto a receiving of Christ, that we most earnestly endeavour in the use of all appointed means to obtain an interest in him upon his own terms. If ever we receive Christ at all, it must be in that way. We are not to wait in an idle unconcernedness for the operations of the Holy Spirit to compel us to come to Christ—no, but with an humble sense of our own impotency, and with a dependence on the spirit of grace, we must seek and strive, and lay ourselves out with unwearied diligence in the methods of duty prescribed in the gospel, to obtain an interest in Christ and his salvation. Receiving of Christ is indeed a metaphorical expression, that denotes an active acceptation, and it would be an abuse of it, to imagine from it that we are to sit still, without care or pains, until this glorious gift be thrust into our hands; but we must put ourselves into the way where it is offered, if we ever hope to receive it. And it may be depended upon, that Christ will never bestow himself upon any, but those who are first brought to think an interest in him worth seeking after. He is said to "walk in the midst of the golden candlesticks," Rev. i. 13, thereby intimating, that he is to be found in the way of his own ordinances. And we are directed, if we would find him, to go our way forth, by the footsteps of the flock, Cant. i. 8, that is, in the way in which all true believers have sought, and in which they have found communion with him. In this way we must seek grace to receive the Lord Jesus Christ,

and in this way we must exercise that grace, when we have obtained it. If we be partakers of Christ at all, it must be by an active reception, by a faith accompanied with earnest diligent seeking him in the ways of God's appointment; for the neglect of duty is not a receiving, but a rejecting of Christ, and a practical declaration, that we "will none of him," that we "will not have this man to rule over us." The act of faith by which we receive the Lord Jesus Christ, is indeed distinct from the duties of religious worship; but as faith must be obtained in a way of duty, so it is necessarily productive of a life of duty in all that have it. The faith therefore, which I am describing, though in its nature distinct from diligence in duty, yet implies this as necessary, both to its being and operations. And* thus I am prepared to take notice of the other thing contained in the description of this grace.

3. That faith in Jesus Christ does also imply a depending upon him, and him only, for salvation. That is, it implies a believing in him, as the author of our eternal salvation, as "the Lord our righteousness," as "the fountain of life," and of all our grace. It implies, that we "look to him," to do all in us, and all for us, and that we bring both our persons and services to God "in his name," pleading the merits of his cross, and his perfect righteousness, as our only title to the divine favour.*

But that we may have a just view of what is signified by our depending upon Christ, it must be premised—That it is necessary in order to this, that we heartily renounce all dependence on ourselves, upon what we have done, are doing, or can do, as to justifying us in the sight of God, and

procuring our acceptance with him. We must indeed be diligent in duty—we must endeavour to be found “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.” It is in vain to hope for salvation in any other way, than that of diligent seeking and striving for it. But then, when we have done all, we must not only see ourselves to be unprofitable servants, but to have fallen infinitely short of the demands of justice, and therefore to have no claim to the least favour from the hands of God. We must be sensible, that “all our righteousnesses are but filthy rags;” that there is so much sinful imperfection cleaving to our best duties, as might justly condemn both us and them; that the “iniquity of our holy things” might “separate between God and us,” and that our very tears of repentance want washing in the blood of Christ. Thus, while engaged in a most diligent application to duty, and in a most strict life of religion, we must at the same time cast our best performances at the foot of Christ, and account all that we are, have and can do, “but dung, that we may win Christ.” Phil. iii. 7. We shall otherwise build upon the sand, and our hopes will fall in the day of trial.

Our depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ does also suppose, that we actually and sincerely place all our hopes of acceptance with God, upon what he hath done and suffered for us. We are, by our sins, become guilty before God, and under a sentence of condemnation, and the blood of Christ is the only atonement to expiate this guilt, and to free us from the damning power of the law. We have forfeited all title to future happiness, and Christ’s obedience unto the death, is the only purchase of our eternal salvation, by which we may

hope for it, or lay claim to it. Now a saving faith is such an effectual apprehension of this as causes us to disclaim all other pretensions to God's favour, to "make mention of Christ's righteousness and that only," as the price of our pardon and happiness, and to expect, that "being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The sum of the matter is, all our hope of pardon and justification is from the merits of the cross and obedience of Christ; all our hope of salvation is from Christ's having fulfilled all righteousness for us, and it is through receiving him by faith, that we are interested in this righteousness, and in the way of depending upon this righteousness, that we claim the favour of God. Faith looks upon Christ as our Redeemer, and expects "justification from God freely by his grace, through the redemption that there is in Christ." By faith we consider him as our only hope, our only help, and our only salvation, and rely upon him accordingly. As faith empties us of ourselves, and shows us that we are lost and undone, notwithstanding any thing we do or can do; so it discovers an abundant fulness and sufficiency in Christ, upon which we may safely trust, and venture our eternal interests. It shows us, that although we can do nothing ourselves, which will procure the favour of God, or entitle us to it, yet Christ has done enough for us, to reconcile us to God, and to answer all the demands of justice. Thus by faith we rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. We go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach; and go up from the wilderness, leaning upon our beloved.

If any should now inquire—What place is there

for good works, if we are to have all our dependence upon what Christ has done and suffered for us? I answer, we must depend upon him in the way of a carefulness to maintain good works. Tit. iii. 8. And we can safely depend upon him in no other way. All other dependence, exclusive of this care of exemplary living, is not faith, but presumption. "For faith without works is dead." Though we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, Rom. iii. 28; yet the faith by which we are justified, is never, in case of opportunity, without the deeds of the law, though in truth animated by gospel motives, and springing from evangelical principles. They that have faith unfeigned dwelling in them, will live godly in Christ Jesus. Faith alone justifies, by receiving and depending upon the righteousness of Christ for justification; but the faith which justifies is never alone. For being thereby united to Christ as a branch to the vine, we shall bring forth fruit, much fruit, whereby our heavenly Father is glorified. It is a sanctifying faith, as well as a justifying.

Thus I have endeavoured briefly to set in view the nature and properties of a true saving faith. I have shown that the essence of a true faith consists in a hearty assent to the gospel revelation concerning Christ; in a hearty consent to the gospel offer of Christ, his offices and benefits; and in a hearty dependence upon what Christ has done and suffered for us, as the ground of our pardon and justification, and the price of eternal salvation. I have shown that our assent to the gospel revelation supposes a sufficient knowledge of the way of salvation therein revealed, for faith must follow the understanding, and cannot go be-

fore it ; and that it supposes a reception of this revelation for divine truth, when we do understand it ; for our-faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. I have shown that our consent to the gospel offer, or our receiving of Christ upon gospel terms, supposes such a sense of our necessity of an interest in Christ, as makes us earnestly desire, and cheerfully comply with any terms of obtaining it ; for we shall never accept an offered Saviour upon his own terms, as long as we can do without him ; that it supposes we accept him as our King, as well as our Saviour, for he must save us from our sins, and not in them ; and it supposes that we receive him in the use of means, and not in the neglect of them, for the neglect of duty is a practical rejection of Christ. I have shown that our dependence upon Christ supposes that we renounce all confidence in ourselves, in any thing we do or can do ; for he will be a complete Saviour, and the only Saviour, or none at all ; and that it supposes we place all our confidence in his active and passive obedience ; for he is the Lord our righteousness, and in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

And now I am prepared to consider,

III. How faith in Christ is concerned in bringing about our remission and justification in the sight of God. And I shall endeavour to explain this, by observing,

1. Negatively, that faith does not reconcile us to God, considered subjectively, or as it is our own act. The act of believing is no more a condition of our justification, than the act of repenting, or the exercise of any other grace or duty. There are no works of righteousness which we have

done, or can do, that will save us, whether they be considered as our legal or evangelical righteousness. Our legal righteousness, or deeds of the law, cannot save us, because they cannot atone for our past offences, nor can they in any instance come up to the demands of the law, but in every thing fall short of the perfection thereby required. Nor may we imagine, that our evangelical righteousness or obedience to the gospel can save us, because that would be to place merit in our repenting and believing, and to set our faith in the room of Christ's obedience, which is the only price of our justification. Though we are said to be justified by faith, we are no where said to be justified for it. This act of ours, as well as all others, is very imperfect, and accompanied with much sinful unbelief at the best, therefore stands in need of pardon itself, and so cannot possibly merit our salvation.

But now I would say affirmatively,

2. Faith justifies us, as it is the instituted means of our obtaining an interest in what Christ has done and suffered for us. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 10. We are espoused by faith to Christ, and in this way his benefits are dispensed to us. The Lord Jesus Christ has performed a perfect obedience for us, as I have particularly shown above, and has purchased salvation for all that are interested in that obedience. He has done and suffered all that the law required of us. He has fully answered its penal demands. He has been made sin for us, who knew no sin. He has borne our sins in his own body upon the cross. He has undergone the wrath of God, as

well as of men and devils, for our sakes, that he might propitiate an offended God, and pay the debt which our sins had contracted. He has obeyed the whole preceptive part of the law; been perfect in his compliance with all its commands, and fulfilled all righteousness, that he might entitle us to the eternal inheritance and purchase salvation for us. And all this he has done in the capacity of our surety. It is in our name, place, and stead that he has wrought out this perfect righteousness. An interest in him does therefore invest us with this righteousness, and make it as much ours, and pleadable by us, as if it had been in fact personally performed by ourselves.

Now it is by faith that we obtain an actual interest in him, and so are clothed upon with his righteousness, and in that respect we are justified by faith. The gospel proclaims the happy tidings of Christ and redemption; faith assents to, and entertains this blessed proclamation. The gospel makes a free tender of purchased salvation to sinners, sensible of their need of it, and willing to accept it; faith complies with the offer, and readily embraces a tendered Saviour. The gospel proposes Christ's righteousness, and that only, for our justification; faith makes us "esteem all things but loss and dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him." The gospel requires a life of holy obedience unto God, as a proper fruit and evidence of faith, as a testimony of our acceptance of this offered Saviour, and our gratitude to him. Unfeigned faith produces this happy effect wherever it is. Faith purifies the heart, and works by love. So that faith is in every thing a compliance with what the gospel requires to the

constituting and determining us justified persons. Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. He that is once brought to live by the faith of the Son of God, is no longer under the law, but under grace; no longer considered as in Adam, by whose disobedience he was made a sinner, but as in Christ, by whose obedience he is made righteous. And thus faith brings us pardon and salvation, as it unites us to Christ, interests us in his perfect obedience, and makes his righteousness ours. Whence the righteousness of God is said to be "revealed from faith to faith." Rom. i. 17. And we are told, that "the righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe." Rom. iii. 22.

3. Faith has the promise of Christ's continual intercession for us. Our highest attainments in faith and holiness, are accompanied with many imperfections. In many things we all offend. And as we are daily chargeable with new sins, we stand in daily need of renewed pardon and justification; upon which account Jesus Christ, the righteous, is represented as our advocate with the Father, to procure this for us; and to bestow it upon us, 1 John ii. 1. The apostle puts an emphasis on Christ's intercession, Rom. viii. 34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Now being interested in Christ by faith, we have an interest in his intercession: and by the efficacy of his intercession, the believer obtains a renewed pardon of his daily transgressions, and a confirmed pardon of all his trespasses. We have, through faith renewedly exercised, a claim to have all our new sins pardoned,

and blotted out, by a fresh application of Christ's blood, an imputation of his righteousness. The believer is made accepted in the Beloved; and by virtue of his advocacy, the prayer of faith receives an answer of peace. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25.

I shall now proceed to make some practical improvement of what hath been said.

USE 1. This administers matter of conviction and awakening, to all that rest in a state of unbelief. If we are interested in the propitiation of Christ, by faith in his blood, what must be the case of those who are destitute of a saving faith? We are told, John iii. 18, 36, that they are condemned already, that they shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on them. Which awful consideration might justly startle and surprise the securest sinners; and put them upon the most solicitous inquiry after Christ and an interest in him by faith. Can you esteem it a trifling concern, whether you are saved or damned; whether you are by faith partakers of the salvation Christ has purchased, or whether you are by your unbelief shut out of the glories of the heavenly world, and left to lament your misery and loss with most amazing horror, to all eternity? Remember, that if you continue and die in unbelief, your misery must bear proportion to the mercy you have abused and forfeited; and it would have been better for you never to have heard of a Saviour, than to perish in your sins, from under gospel light and grace. This will be your condemnation, that light is come into the world, and you have chosen darkness rather than

light; because your deeds are evil. John iii. 19. You have the revelation of this salvation; and the continued offers of it, upon most easy and honourable terms. You have it pressed upon you, by repeated inculcation, in the ordinances of the gospel: and how aggravated will your guilt be, if you set light by this precious Saviour, and reject his salvation! O that neglectful sinners might therefore be awakened out of their security, to see their misery and danger, before it be too late; before the things of their peace are hidden from their eyes; and before the offers of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, be for ever past! O foolish unbelievers, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you! O the astonishing folly of Christ-despisers, and gospel-neglecters, who notwithstanding you are brought in view of the heavenly Canaan, will after all perish in the wilderness; and have your final lot assigned you among hypocrites and unbelievers! O how can you rest thus contented in an estate of unbelief, until you provoke God to swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest! Had you not better accept the Saviour now, than to have him your angry judge at last, and reject you with a "verily, I know you not!" Had you not better hearken to the offers of mercy now, than to have the gospel itself, and all the ordinances of salvation you have ever enjoyed, rise up in judgment against you, to aggravate your condemnation! But alas! till your eyes are opened, to see your sin and danger, you will not come unto Christ, that you might have life: you will rather run the venture of eternal perdition, than

accept of this precious Saviour and his great salvation, though so freely offered. This seems to be the case of the greatest part of the gospelized world. And they must be left to the consequences of their unhappy choice. They must find, by sad experience, the dreadful effects of neglecting so great salvation, before they will receive conviction.

USE 2. Let all be exhorted to make it their concern to obtain a true faith in Jesus Christ, by which alone they can be justified in the sight of God. What has been said already, gives full evidence, that this is an affair of everlasting importance, a concern, that your eternity depends upon; and that you may expect to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, or mourn bitterly, with the sharpest accents of horror and agony, according to your compliance with, or rejection of this gospel exhortation. It is founded on Scripture calls and precepts, enforced with the most solemn and affecting sanctions, both of promises and threatenings. You have many examples, both to encourage and to warn you. You are invited to be followers of them, who through faith and patience do inherit the promises. And to a care of obtaining like precious faith with them, you are strongly excited, by the endearing attractions of Christ's infinite love, in his giving himself for and to his people. I therefore beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God our Saviour, that you come unto Christ as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious. To this you are also most awfully warned by the awakening alarms of your guilt and danger. Take heed therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from

the living God. It is high time to fly from the impending storm, to this hope set before you. Be prevailed with to take hold of this instruction, and not let it go, but to keep it; for it is your life.

Labour after an effectual sense of the infinite importance of a saving faith in Christ. Get it impressed upon your mind, that you must believe in Christ, or perish without remedy. Do not put off this eternal concern; but think of it now, and think of it solemnly, as you must think of it, when you come to your final trial. Let this consideration lie down and rise with you; "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Labour after a lively impression of your incapacity to produce this important grace in yourselves. Keep up a constant remembrance, that flesh and blood cannot reveal this to you: but our Father which is in heaven. Let the humbling thought bring you to God's footstool; and make you deeply sensible that you lie at his mercy, unable to help yourselves, and unworthy of divine relief.

Let a discovery of this your distressed case quicken you to greater diligence in seeking the influence of the blessed Spirit, to work this faith in you. Be importunate in prayer, and in all ways of duty, to have the good pleasure of God's goodness, and the work of faith with power wrought in your souls.

And labour to exercise faith in Christ. Though you cannot work this grace in yourselves, yet if ever you obtain it, you yourselves must use and exercise it. The principle is from God, but the act must be your own. If God bring you to exercise this grace, you must be "made willing in

the day of his power," and act with your free consent. This is his commandment, the great command of the gospel, that you should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. It is therefore your duty to believe, and by consequence to labour to believe in Christ; and if God gives you the grace to do so, it will be by quickening and strengthening you in the way of your prayers and your endeavours. Labour therefore to comply with the gracious offer and call of the gospel, to see your perishing condition without Christ, and to realize his ability and readiness to help and save you. Contemplate his infinite excellencies and complete sufficiency for you; and endeavour, looking to God for his gracious assistance, to choose Christ for your Saviour and portion, to prefer an interest in him above all the world, to rely upon him as the author of your eternal salvation, and to plead his righteousness before God as your only claim to mercy. In a word, endeavour to accept him upon his own terms; and be earnest with God in your continual supplications, for grace to help you that you may indeed "receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him." Though you are without strength, yet through Christ strengthening you, you can do all things. And you should attempt, in his strength, to do what otherwise you are utterly insufficient for.

USE 3. Let all be exhorted to the utmost care and caution, that they be not deceived in this momentous affair, and that they do not take up with a false and counterfeit faith, which will issue in a fatal and eternal disappointment of all their expectations. Multitudes have been, and we may be deceived; and it is impossible to imagine the

confusion that will cover us, if we are too late convinced of our mistake, and ashamed of our hope.

See that you evidence to yourselves the sincerity of your faith, by an earnest desire after Christ for your portion, and by the highest esteem for him. If you have a true faith, you will have the Lord Jesus Christ represented to you as the "chief among ten thousand, altogether lovely;" and will certainly value him accordingly. Hence it is said, "unto you that believe Christ is precious." 1 Pet. ii. 7.

Evidence the sincerity of your faith by a universal hatred of sin, and by an earnest, constant endeavour after the victory over all your lusts, without any reserve. We are told, that "faith purifies the heart." Acts xv. 9. And that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." 1 John iii. 9.

Evidence the truth of your faith by a life of universal holiness, by a careful constant endeavour after conformity to the whole revealed will of God, by purity of heart and hands. Walk in all the ways of God and godliness, in all the duties of religion, and in all the duties of each relation which God has placed you in; and endeavour to approve yourselves to a pure and holy God, in the discharge of them all. You may depend upon it, that no other evidence of sincerity without this can stand you in stead. Resolve then as he, James ii. 18. "I will show my faith by my works."

Evidence the truth of your faith by having your affections weaned from the world, and by

seeking the things which are above, where Christ Jesus sits at the right hand of God. If you are true believers, you “look not at the things that are seen and temporal; but at those which are unseen and eternal.” You are looking upon all the affairs of time, but as trifling and vain, compared to the concerns of a future and everlasting world. For “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” 1 John v. 4. Faith worketh by love, not to the world, or the things of it, but to God, and the things of God. Love not the world, therefore, or the things of the world; for if you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you.

Finally,—Evidence the sincerity of your faith by an habitual subjection of soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, and fervent applications unto him, to work in and for you the good pleasure of his will. Commit the whole concern of your salvation to him. Look to him in a way of constant earnest prayer and active diligence, for all supplies of grace. Whatever darkness, whatever deadness, whatever afflictions or temptations you may meet with, still repair to him, that you may “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need,” that “of his fulness you may receive even grace for grace.” You cannot trust too little to yourselves, nor too much to him in the way of duty. Resolve therefore constantly to come, empty and self-insufficient, to him, and “open your mouth wide, that he may fill it.” If you thus “believe in him, you shall never be confounded.” I conclude with these words of the apostle, 1 John iii. 21—24. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. And whatsoever we ask, we re-

ceive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

A DISCOURSE
ON
PERSEVERANCE.

ROMANS viii. 30.—Whom he justified, them he also glorified.

THIS brief clause is the last link of that golden chain, which extends from everlasting to everlasting, and connects a past and future eternity. It takes its rise in God's foreknowledge and eternal purpose of grace to the elect, and reaches through their vocation and justification on earth, unto their eternal glorification in heaven. It shows us the inviolable connection between the decree of God, and the progressive execution of it, in our present preparation for, and final admittance, to everlasting glory. And as we are here assured, that "the counsel of the Lord shall stand," firm as his own being, and without any variation or shadow of turning, so we are equally assured, that where God's eternal counsel is manifested, in our effectual calling and justification, by consequence our eternal salvation is also

manifest and certain. The perseverance of the saints through faith unto salvation, is here founded upon the same immutable certainty with the purpose and decree of God. As all "whom he did predestinate" shall be certainly called; not only by the outward invitations of the gospel, but by the inward powerful influences of the blessed Spirit, whereby they shall be brought to a hearty compliance with gospel offers; so they whom he thus calleth, he as certainly justifieth, through Christ's righteousness imputed to them and received by faith. And being thus justified, they shall with the same certainty be also glorified.

But that I may set the text in a more clear and distinct view, I shall consider,

1st. What we are to understand by our being justified.

2d. How it appears, that all who are justified, shall be also glorified.

Finally, Make some practical improvement.

I. I shall premise some hints on the article of justification. And I would here observe, that having already in a former discourse particularly considered both the price and the means of our reconciliation to God and acceptance with him, I am now only to set in view the nature of this precious benefit, as personally received; and it may be summarily represented in the following description.

"Justification is the gracious sentence of God, whereby a sinner is on account of Christ's satisfaction, at or upon his believing, actually acquitted from guilt and condemnation, accepted as righteous in the sight of God, and thereby entitled to eternal life."

I consider justification as a gracious sentence of God; and so the apostle considers it in the 33d verse of our context, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Justification is a forensic term, and signifies the sentence of a judge, whereby an accused or condemned person is discharged from the imputation of guilt, or the infliction of punishment, and whereby he is pronounced just, and accepted as such. Thus in the present case, the person justified has a gracious sentence passed upon him in a judicial way. The great lawgiver and judge of the world pronounces his absolution, and acknowledges him to be in his favour and friendship, accepted as righteous in the court of heaven. Sanctification and justification are carefully to be distinguished. That is a qualifying—this a relative change. That is a change of our moral state, nature and disposition; but this a change of our covenant state, law condition and character in reference to God. That is an incomplete change, defective as to the decree at present; but this is a full and perfect one. That is a change by the operation of the Holy Spirit within us; this by the declaration of the Sovereign Judge without us. Justification is also to be distinguished from the approving sentence of our own conscience. For conscience misguided may acquit, when God condemns. The man may vote himself "rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing," whom yet this Supreme Judge pronounces "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." So on the other hand, conscience may condemn when God acquits. The man may "walk in darkness, and see no light," whom yet this Supreme Judge

invites to "trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God." The justifying sentence then is that of God, and not of conscience. "It is God that justifieth;" herein following his own revealed will, the external rule of justification, and not always accompanying it with the internal testimony of his Spirit in our conscience. The divine sentence may be actually pronounced, and yet not sensibly perceived by the soul on which it is passed.

I give the subject of this gracious benefit the denomination of a sinner; because I would keep it in mind, that justification is an act of God's free sovereign grace towards lapsed, guilty, unworthy creatures; that "not according to works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us;" that although we are justified in the way of believing, yet even our faith is not so much as in part our justifying righteousness; that although the sentence of justification does, in order of nature, follow our union to Christ by faith, yet it is an instantaneous benefit, and no interval of time passes between the one and the other. When the spirit of grace comes to work in us faith, the means of our receiving Christ's righteousness to justify us, he finds us in our sins, dead in trespasses, as well as dead in law. Hence though in one place God is described as "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 26, yet in another he is spoken of in that language, "him that justifieth the ungodly." Rom. iv. 5. Not that he leaves us ungodly, although he finds us so. For God purifies our hearts by faith, at the same time that he justifies us through faith. And indeed faith is in its nature a sanctifying principle; it is itself a

branch of the new creature, and is influential upon progressive sanctification. However, in the first act of faith we consider ourselves as condemned sinners, and "flee for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us; looking unto Jesus, we receive the atonement," for our pardon and justification; whence it is called "faith in his blood." Rom. iii. 25. And then faith operates as a principle of sanctification, "works by love," and excites a care to "purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." But further, in a larger sense, even the renewed believer may be called a sinner; he is so in the eye of the law, as coming infinitely short of its just demands in his personal qualifications and performances; but although in himself a sinner, yet at the instant of conversion being vitally united to Christ, and absolved from the curse and penalty of the law, there is thenceforward no condemnation unto him. And then I characterize him a sinner, because the very idea of pardon, and of the justification we are upon, speaks the propriety of so describing him. For although a believer may, in some sense, be said to be justified by works, as they are evidences for him, and plead in his vindication, against the charge of hypocrisy, upon his trial as a gospel professor; yet in the case before us, as standing at the bar of the law, he is not justified by works, but by grace. Although a criminal in the view of justice, he has, by an act of sovereign grace, his sins covered, and righteousness without works imputed to him.

By our being justified on account of Christ's satisfaction, at or upon our believing, is to be understood, that we are pardoned and accepted with

God through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and reckoned ours in the construction of redeeming mercy upon our receiving Christ by faith, and not before. Hence it is said in our context—"Whom he called, them he also justified." And hence the "righteousness of God is said to be revealed from faith to faith." Rom. i. 17. Our first actual participation in the righteousness of Christ, is upon the Spirit's first working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling: the continued application of it, and renewed benefit by it, is upon the continued existence, and renewed exercise of the same faith. And thus, "the just shall live by faith;" that is, they are in a state of life and peace with God, from their union to Christ by faith. "He that hath the Son, hath life." The justification of life commences with their being made partakers of Christ; and Christ dwells in their heart by faith. It is through faith that they are interested in the benefits of his redemption; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. All pretences therefore to eternal justification are superseded, as unscriptural and unreasonable. The believer's justification, it is true, was determined in God's eternal counsel, and in the covenant of redemption; and so likewise was his sanctification and his future glory. But will they pretend, that we were sanctified or glorified from all eternity? Neither can they with any better show of reason, pretend to an eternal justification. These all stand on the same foot, as to the decree of God, and the promise in Christ; and may be said in their causes to be eternal, though neither of them so in themselves, but are events that fall within the compass

of time, as to their actual accomplishment. That justification imports a real event in time, coming to pass at or upon believing, and not before, is evident from those Scriptures, which speak of it as a future consequence: "By his knowledge SHALL my righteous servant justify many. By the obedience of one SHALL many be made righteous. That righteousness MIGHT BE imputed unto them also."—All that hold mankind to be children of wrath by nature, do confess such an imputation of sin in time, as is utterly inconsistent with justification from eternity. If the curse of the law be a real thing, and not imaginary, then the justification that reverses and removes it must be what takes place in time, and must be acknowledged a transaction in time as real as the condemnation it stands in opposition to. In short, the elect as well as others, before their vital union to Christ by faith, are in a state of actual condemnation; and therefore, while so, most certainly cannot be in a state of actual justification. It is without any distinction of persons always true, that "he who believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John iii. 18. But in believing, the soul passes from death to life, by virtue of a perfect righteousness revealed and applied to him, which he actually had not before his believing. "Man believeth unto righteousness." Rom. x. 10; unto the obtaining and possessing of it. Faith is the means of receiving the gift of righteousness. No unbeliever is in the possession and enjoyment of it. A man is personally justified no otherwise than by Christ and his righteousness applied.

Our justification is considered as an acquit-

tance from guilt and condemnation. No: that the justified person is free from remaining sin and imperfection. For, in many things we all offend. And if we say that "we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But though the believer has contracted guilt enough, to separate him from the favour of God for ever, yet the atonement that Christ has made for him, is a sufficient satisfaction to the demands of justice. Though in his highest attainments he is chargeable with renewed and repeated offences against God, he will yet be saved to the uttermost, seeing Christ ever lives to make intercession for him. This therefore is his comfortable and happy state, "being justified by faith, he hath peace with God." Rom. v. 1. Christ's righteousness being imputed to the believer, hence his sins, how great and aggravated soever, will no more be imputed to him unto condemnation. Justice is satisfied, and the law fulfilled by the Redeemer. The believer's guilt is therefore finally taken away, and he freed from all obligation to punishment for ever. Nor is it a mere conditional absolution, but an actual discharge; putting him not merely in a state of salvability, but of present and everlasting safety. This is the case of them, "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; unto whom the Lord WILL NOT impute sin." Rom. iv. 7, 8.

Our justification does likewise imply an acceptance of our persons, as perfectly righteous in the sight of God. Though God knows, that numberless spots and blemishes cleave to the brightest performances, that the best of the children of men are capable of in this life, and that their very

tears want washing in the blood of Christ; yet the believer's faith interests him in all that Christ has done and suffered for him; and clothes him in that white raiment, which covers all his sins, that the shame of his nakedness do not appear. His inherent personal righteousness is full of flaws and imperfections, but his Surety's righteousness, which he hath received by faith, is absolutely perfect and complete. This being imputed to him, he is accepted of by God on this account; and in this his justifying righteousness, the pure eyes of divine justice can see no defect. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Rom. x. 4. Hence such are said to be "made accepted in the beloved." Eph. i. 6.

Justification must also be considered as including a title to everlasting life, a full right to the whole of salvation with eternal glory. "Being now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved from wrath through him." Rom. v. 9. And verse 21. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." This is most undoubted, that these must either be heirs of eternal life, or heirs of eternal destruction. But how can the latter be supposed of those who are interested in Christ, reconciled to God, and favourites of heaven? Can it be supposed, that those whom Christ has purchased with his blood, those to whom he has applied the merits of his cross and benefits of his redemption, shall fall short of the purchased possession? Are they drawn to Christ by the powerful influences of divine grace? Are they united to him by a lively faith? Are they accepted of God as his

children and friends? Are they dear to him: and does he regard them as the apple of his eye? Are they "renewed in the spirit of their minds; and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light?" And shall any such, after all, spend a dreadful eternity in amazing anguish and horror, among devils and damned spirits. How monstrously inconsistent is the supposition, and how contradictory to the whole tenor of the gospel! John v. 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Justification is a final and perfect absolution from sin and the curse, and invests us with an actual and complete right to positive happiness for ever. Hence the pardoned man is pronounced the blessed man. Rom. iv. 6. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Whoso is wise, will observe and understand these things.

Now if any should surmise and object, that true believers may fall away from grace, dissolve their union to Christ, lose their near relation to God, and provoke him to cast them off for their apostasy; our text assures us of the contrary. "For whom he justified, them he also glorified." This brings me to the other thing proposed for consideration.

II. How it appears, that all who are justified, shall be glorified.

And here let it be remarked,

1. This appears from the immutability of God's eternal counsel. We read, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—The Lord

knoweth them that are his." 2 Tim. ii. 19. If God has chosen them to eternal life, "his counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure." If he has not chosen them to eternal life, how came they by the qualifications for it? Are not these the fruits and consequences of electing love? "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified. He hath chosen us in Christ, that we should be holy. He hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Now if he has predetermined these qualifications as the means of salvation, if he has connected the means and the ends together in his eternal purpose, as the Scripture assures us that he has, it then follows, that all those "whom he has justified, them he will also glorify;" there must otherwise be a change of purpose in God, which it were blasphemy to suppose.

If any man apostatize and fall out of a justified state, it must be either because some do in time come to Christ, whom the Father had not given him in his eternal counsel; or because he hath eternally given some to Christ, and determined that they should come to him, who shall nevertheless be left to fall away and finally miscarry.

Not the former: "For all that the Father hath given unto Christ, shall come to him;" and none but they. John vi. 37. The election obtain this grace, and the rest are blinded. Rom. xi. 7.—How can any man come unto the Son, unless it be given him of the Father? And how can this be given him in time, if God did not eternally determine to give it him, without a change of purpose and counsel in God?

Not the latter: "For him that cometh unto

Christ, he will in nowise cast out." John vi. 37. "He that believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. "This is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given to Christ, he should lose nothing; but should raise it up again at the last day." John vi. 39.

Let us consider this argument in one view, and see whether it can admit of an answer, without a flat contradiction both to the Scriptures, and to the nature of things. If no man can come to Christ, unless he were given to him in God's eternal counsel; if all that were given to Christ in God's eternal counsel shall come to him; if none that do come shall be cast out or lost, but all be raised up to salvation at the last day, then surely all that are justified, shall be glorified; which was the thing to be proved.

I might add to this, that we are exhorted, 2 Peter i. 10. "to make our election sure;" which must intend, that we make it sure to ourselves, or make ourselves sure of it: for as to the decree of God, or the final event, these are in themselves as sure already as they can be made. We can contribute nothing to the immutability of the divine counsel, or certainty of the future issue. This exhortation does therefore suppose, that an inward consciousness and assurance of our election is attainable in this life; it would otherwise be unreasonable and impertinent to press it upon us. And if there be a certainty of our election attainable, it must necessarily follow, that all true believers shall certainly persevere to the end. For how can I be sure of my election by any possible qualification, if my salvation be not with the same certainty connected to such qualification, as it is to the eternal decree of God? I may be sure,

that I am now interested in Christ by a lively faith; but I cannot be sure, that I am chosen to eternal salvation, or shall ever obtain it, but from a certainty of my perseverance in my present state of safety. This argument may be thus summed up: all that are elected, shall certainly be saved; and all that have a true faith in Jesus Christ are certainly elected; for by this only we can make our election sure. From hence the conclusion is necessary, that all who have a true faith in Jesus Christ, shall "be kept by the power of God to salvation." Or, in other words, that the saints shall persevere in grace, and all whom God hath justified, he will also finally glorify.

2. This appears also from the sufficiency of Christ's Redemption, for the recovery and happiness of all to whom it is applied.

Our blessed Redeemer has not only procured for believers the pardon of their sins, and a reconciliation unto God, but he has also purchased for them a title to God's favour here and to eternal happiness hereafter. Whence heaven is called the believer's inheritance, and his purchased possession. Eph. i. 14. Now if Christ has purchased this inheritance for the believer, and made over the title to him in his justification, who shall deprive him of his own estate, procured for him at such an infinite price?

Can it consist with the justice of God, to accept of a vicarious satisfaction for all our sins, and in consequence of that to give us a discharge from sin and guilt in our justification; and yet to require personal satisfaction from us, in our everlasting punishment? Will he accept of the full price of our eternal inheritance from our Surety,

and yet refuse us the possession? Will he give us a right to eternal life upon Christ's account, and yet finally exclude us from it? Our Lord assures us, it cannot be. "My sheep hear my voice, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John x. 27, 28.

Can it consist with the goodness of God, to bestow an interest in Christ upon the believer, and yet to withhold from him the glorious benefits of his redemption? The apostle assures us, it cannot be. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

It should be here remembered, that our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased the means, as well as the end, for all that believe in him: not only eternal life, but also continued supplies of renewing grace, whereby they shall be made meet for it. This is certainly purchased for some believers. Whence do they else obtain persevering grace, if not from this fountain? And if for some believers, why not for all? unless the faith of some gives them but a partial interest in Christ's redemption. It cannot be doubted, but that some believers do in fact persevere, through grace and strength received from the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can it be doubted but that Christ has purchased that grace and strength for them, which he bestows upon them. Now every justified person is either interested in all the redemption purchased by Christ, or only in part of it. If any are interested but in part of it, they are but partly justified, which is too great an absurdity to be supposed. If they are interested in all the re-

demption of Christ, upon their believing in him, they partake of all the spiritual blessings, that any others are entitled to, and consequently persevere to eternal salvation.

And thus the case is accordingly represented in the Scriptures. Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. "Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Tit. ii. 14. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Heb. x. 14. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." By which texts and many others that might be cited, it appears, that Christ has purchased sanctifying and persevering grace for believers. From whence they may confidently draw this comfortable conclusion, that they are "begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." 1 Pet. i. 3—5.

3. This is likewise evident from the tenor of the gospel covenant.

As the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased a persevering grace for believers, so God hath, in a way of covenant, obliged himself to bestow it upon all such. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Isa. lv. 3. "I will make an everlast-

ing covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isa. lxi. 8. "I will direct their work in truth; and I will make an everlasting covenant with them." Jer. xxxii. 40. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Ezek. xxxvii. 26, 27. "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant—Yea, I will be their God; and they shall be my people." Heb. viii. 10. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be unto them a God, and they shall be to me a people." By these cited Scriptures; we see the tenor of the covenant of grace. It is a covenant everlasting and sure; a covenant that he will not turn away from them to do them good, that he will put his fear in their hearts, that he will put his laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts; and what is full to the purpose, a covenant, that they shall not depart from him.

And agreeable to the tenor of this covenant, we have repeated assurances in Scripture, that believers actually shall be preserved through all difficulties, dangers, and temptations, to the heavenly kingdom. Thus, Psa. xxxvii. 28. "For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever." John iv. 14. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Matt.

xviii. 14. "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. xi. 29. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. "Who shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 2 Thess. iii. 3. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." 2 John 2. "For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." From these, and multitudes of such like Scriptures, it is most apparent, that God has by covenant, by his immutable promise, and the gracious encouragements of his word, secured the confirmation, establishment, and final perseverance of true believers.

And is he not "faithful that has promised?" Will he not guide them by his counsel, and afterward bring them to glory? Will he not strengthen them? Will he not help them? Yea, he will uphold them by the right hand of his righteousness. Believers may certainly and safely depend upon the faithfulness of God; for his "promises are all yea, and all amen in Christ." They may depend upon it, that their whole

spirit, and soul, and body shall be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; for faithful is he that calleth them, who also will do it. 1 Thess. v. 23, 24. Verily if his covenant be not with day and night, if he hath not appointed the ordinances of heaven, then will he alter the word that is gone out of his mouth, and suffer his faithfulness to fail, in regard to the covenant of grace and promise of eternal salvation to believers.

4. The perseverance of the saints is likewise evident and certain from the intercession of Christ.

We are told, Heb, vii. 25, that "Christ is able to save to the uttermost, all them that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And, 1 John iii. 1. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And may we not from this comforting consideration, make the same challenge as the apostle does? Rom. viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

By the intercession of Christ for believers, I think, is unitedly and universally understood, his pleading the merits of his blood, and applying the benefits of his redemption, for the increasing or renewing their graces, for the renewing their pardon and justification, and for their final confirmation and establishment. It is his appearing in the presence of God for them, his pleading the cause of their souls in the court of heaven, representing their persons before the Supreme Judge and Governor of the world, making reconciliation for

their sins by a new application of his sacrifice, and perfuming their persons and services by the incense of his merits. It is his praying the Father, and thereby procuring for them, that they receive of his fulness, even grace for grace, and be carried from strength to strength through all the opposition they meet with from their own hearts, from Satan, or from the world, until they are presented without spot, faultless and unrebukable, before the throne of their Judge, with exceeding joy.

Now this intercession of Christ, is either promised to every justified person, as such, or but to some true believers, in distinction from others. If the latter, then some justified persons must have qualifications of their own to recommend them to the intercession of Christ, which others want. There must be something that distinguishes their case; and makes this infinite difference between them and others. An interest in the benefits of Christ's redemption it cannot be, for these every justified person equally partakes of. It must therefore be something of their own; and consequently they must be partners with Christ in the merit of their salvation; and they must have something to boast of, which others have not. But this is opposite to the whole scheme of our salvation by Christ; and therefore absurd. If on the contrary, the intercession of Christ is promised to every justified person, then every one that is justified, shall be also glorified; for Christ's intercession is always effectual. If we are interested in Christ by faith, we are interested in a whole Christ, and all his benefits. If we are interested in all the benefits of Christ's redemption, we are interested in his intercession, which

is one of them ; and if so, we may safely conclude, that he will “ save to the uttermost, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for us.”

5. This is also evident from the state of peace and safety, which the Scriptures every where declare believers to be in.

Thus we read, “ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access into this grace, wherein we stand ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so ; but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the atonement.” Rom. v. 1. 2, 10, 11. “ Now the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” Rom. xv. 13. “ Our consolation also aboundeth by Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor. i. 5. “ And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.” Phil. iv. 7.

Now let it be considered : What joy and peace can the believer possibly obtain, or entertain, from the clearest evidences of his justification, if he has no promise to rest upon, that he shall continue in his present happy state ; and has consequently before him, a dark and distressing prospect of final apostasy, and eternal perdition, as possible to happen to him, and as certain in case a merciful God do not uphold him by his free Spirit !—If it be answered, that he may find peace and comfort from the supporting hope, that in a way of diligent duty he shall from time to time obtain new supplies of grace ; and be finally esta-

blished in the possession of his inheritance: I would inquire what foundation he has for such a supporting hope, as will afford him joy and peace in believing.

Can he found it upon his own good frames and present purposes or resolutions? This were to set his foot upon a quicksand. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Alas! he knows by experience, that his "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." He knows that he has an alluring world, a tempting devil, and the contagious examples and enticements of wicked men to deal with; and if that be all his encouragement, the probability is every way against him; there is a much greater prospect of his final apostasy than of his perseverance; this therefore can afford him no peace. He cannot rejoice in this gloomy and dismaying view of his case. Where then can he found his hope?

Can he found it upon the grace of God, as being sufficient for him? This would indeed afford him peace and comfort, if he had any promise to build upon. But, alas! according to the opinion I am opposing, his present faith gives him no security of future grace. God has not promised, and therefore the believer cannot conclude, that he shall not yet be left to a hard heart and a reprobate mind, to final security and impenitence. All his expectations of future supplies of grace may, for aught he knows, be vain presumption. And what joy or consolation can flow from thence? What peace can he find in believing, when he has no encouragement, but what belongs to the unbeliever, as much as to him?

Perhaps it will be pretended, that this hope, from which he should derive his comfort, may be

founded upon his sincere endeavours to live to God, to exercise the graces, and to discharge the duties of the Christian life. But I must yet inquire, what he has to depend upon for maintaining the exercise of this pretended sincerity. He may imagine himself sincere to-day, and yet under the prevalence of temptations or corruptions, prove a hypocrite to-morrow; and in that case, what would become of his hope and peace? Or what would become of them for ever, if he should die in such a state?

Should it be even supposed, that the common grace, which is generally communicated to such as live under gospel light and advantages, were sufficient to support this hope, yet this concession would nothing affect the present argument. For how does that hope flow from faith in Christ, which is common to the unbeliever? How is that peace the consequence of our justification, which is common to the Christless sinner, as well as to them that are in Christ?

In fine, how can the believer have "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, to keep his mind and heart," without a well grounded hope of eternal salvation? How can he have such a hope, without any security of his continuance in a state of safety, either from his own qualifications or from a divine promise? Indeed how can he possibly have any such security, while actually always liable to a final apostasy? It therefore appears to me, that by this opinion, the believer must be left comfortless, and the Scriptures I have cited, with a great many others of the like kind, must be wholly unintelligible. But blessed be God, there are many, who from happy experience can "set to their seal that God is true,

from a lively hope, a hope that maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them."

It may be objected against the doctrine of perseverance, that it is contrary to fact and experience. Noah, David, Solomon, and Peter did fall from grace. And that we find by our own observation, some of the most flourishing professors, who for a time appeared very eminent Christians, have finally apostatized.

In answer to this, it must be remembered, that it is not the present inquiry, what kind or degree of declension from a life of vital piety, is consistent with a justified state; but whether any justified person will finally apostatize. Let it, therefore, be considered, whether any of the instances mentioned in the objection, or any other that can be mentioned, will necessarily produce this conclusion, that a man may fall finally away from a true lively faith in Jesus Christ, and from a state of favour with God, and so perish eternally. This must be proved, or the objection is nothing to the purpose. But I think there is no instance in the Bible which will support that conclusion. The instances commonly brought by our adversaries, are the falls of such believers, who are now glorified saints in heaven; and they are therefore exceedingly impertinent to the present purpose. How does it appear, that true believers may finally apostatize, because some true believers have fallen into sin, who did not finally apostatize? That "the righteous may fall seven times, and rise again," is what I make no doubt of. But that the true believer may finally miscarry, is what I

could never see proved from any instance on Scripture record.

And as for the plea from our own observation, it proves nothing but the shortness of our sight, and our incapacity to search men's hearts. Among the apostles there was a Judas, who, though a devil, was not discerned by his fellow disciples, till his open treason proclaimed his hypocrisy. And there will always be foolish virgins, among the wise, who will never be distinguished by their companions, till that midnight cry is heard—"Behold, the bridegroom cometh."

It may be likewise objected against this doctrine of perseverance, that it is contrary to Scripture; that there are many texts of Scripture, which speak of the "righteous turning away from their righteousness," and their finally falling from eminent attainments in religion.

In answer to this, my designed brevity will not allow a distinct consideration of the several texts quoted by our adversaries to this purpose. I shall only in general observe, that I know of no text in the Bible, which supposes a total and final apostasy from a saving faith in Christ, or from a justified state.

That men may fall from great attainments in moral righteousness is frequently supposed, and that such might have apostatized from the profession of Christianity, who had obtained the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, seems to be insinuated, Heb. vi. 4, 6. But as in this text there is no mention made of repentance towards God, or of a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; so, I think, upon trial it will be found there is no text in the Bible that gives the least hint of any

man's totally and finally falling away from such attainments.

I have already shown, that the contrary is asserted in the plainest and strongest terms, not merely in some few and doubtful, but in multitudes of clear, plain and express texts of Scripture. And as for any other passages of a more dubious aspect, they ought to be so interpreted, as that one place of Scripture should not be made to militate against another. And in this case, the appeal may be made even to our adversaries themselves, whether the advantage is not every way on our side of the question.

Could they prove that Christians may finally apostatize from every attainment short of justifying faith, it doth nothing affect the case before us. Could they prove that persons of distinguished eminence in morality, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless; that such who boldly profess the truths of the gospel, and conscientiously attend all the external ordinances of the Christian dispensation; that such who have found great comfort and joy in their Christian profession, and have been zealous in the cause of religion; that such who could give all their goods to feed the poor, and could even have given their bodies to be burned, from their firm belief of the favour of God to them; and that such who with Balaam, Judas, and perhaps Demas, had the prophetic and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; that persons of this character may totally apostatize to a life of wickedness, heresy, and even atheism, it would make nothing against the perseverance of sound believers; for all these attainments may be supposed without the least degree of true justifying

faith. And more than this amounts to, I do not find so much as attempted by our adversaries.

If any should urge in this case the apostle's care, "lest when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away;" I answer, no more can be fairly argued from it, than that they who actually persevere to eternal life, do obtain the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls, in the way of watchfulness and holy diligence. It does not prove that the apostle was anxiously afraid he should eventually be cast away; but that he knew he, as well as others, must use the appointed means in order to prevent it, among which a fear of caution and circumspection is one, and of the first importance. Nor does it prove, that any true believer is liable to finally miscarry; but that they who do obtain eternal life, must and shall persevere in the way and means by which alone it is to be obtained and hoped for. And this is the character of every true believer, that he doth persevere to eternal life, in the way of holy vigilance, and keep his body in subjection, lest he should be a cast-away.

But further, it is objected against this doctrine, that it opens a door to licentiousness. For, say they, if once persons can imagine themselves in a justified state, they may give the reins to their lusts, and a loose to their sensual appetites, and yet notwithstanding entertain hopes of salvation.

I answer, the objection is founded upon an ignorance of the nature and properties of a true justifying faith. A true faith purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. No man, therefore, can, upon good grounds, take the comforts of a justified state, but from a

consciousness of these fruits of faith, the purity of his heart, and sanctity of his life. So that this doctrine, whatever abusive application may be made of it, has no direct tendency to licentiousness. But it is so far from this, that nothing is, or can be, such a constant source of real vigorous Christianity and vital piety, as the manifestations of the love of God to our souls, and the evidences of his favour. And it may be certainly determined, that such persons cannot be in a justified state, upon whom the imaginary evidences of God's favour have a contrary effect.

All that now remains, is to make some brief improvement of what has been said.

USE 1. This teaches us, that we have no grounded hope of eternal salvation, but what flows from the evidences of our justification. Multitudes indeed presume upon acceptance with Christ at his coming, that have no such foundation to build upon. But, alas! these are like to meet with a dreadful disappointment, when it comes to the trial.

Do they hope that they may possibly be in God's favour, though they want the evidences of it? Alas! what can this mean, but that they hope, though they do not know why; and that they hope, when they have no reason to conclude, that they shall not be eternally miserable?

Do they hope, from designs and expectations of future repentance and faith in Christ? At this rate, why may not every impenitent sinner in the world entertain the same hope upon the same grounds? But what reason can any man have to expect an interest in Christ hereafter

that neglects him now? Such cannot expect it from a prospect of better dispositions in themselves. For a continuance in a Christless state will make their hearts worse, certainly not better; it will harden rather than soften them. They cannot expect it from the grace of God; for he has nowhere suspended the offer of his grace to them, upon condition of their future acceptance of it. Surely the neglecting, abusing, and affronting his grace is not the way to obtain it.

Do they entertain hope from the infinite mercy and goodness of God? But they ought to remember, that he is just as well as merciful, and that it belongs to his name that he "will by no means clear the guilty."

Do they hope in the merits of the Redeemer? These are a sufficient foundation of hope, if they have an interest in them, but not else; their hopes therefore cannot justly be more than proportionable to their evidences of this—all further hope is presumption—all further expectations of happiness, are like to end in amazement and confusion at last.

With what compassion should we, therefore, look upon a poor, stupid, presumptuous generation of men, who are crying peace and safety to themselves, while walking in the imaginations of their own hearts, and quieting their consciences with hopes of heaven, without experience of a work of grace in their souls! Alas! how vast is the number of such self-deceiving hypocrites! How great a part of our people, every where, are thus weaving the spider's web, and are like to perish with a "lie in their right hand!" How very few, that have a rational, well grounded hope of appearing at the right hand of Christ

* when he comes! And where will all the rest appear, at the great and terrible day of the Lord!

How much does it therefore concern us to see to it, that we are emptied of our self-sufficiency, and brought to the foot of God's sovereign grace; that we have chosen the Lord Jesus Christ for our portion, received him upon his own terms, and do depend upon him only, as the author of our eternal salvation; that our faith in him is accompanied with the concomitant graces and fruits of the blessed Spirit, in our hatred of every sinful way, in our love to God and Christ, and our love to men, especially the children of God; and that we show forth our faith by our works, by living to God, in an habitual course of spiritual thoughts, tempers and behaviours. How much does it concern us, not to entertain hopes of salvation, but upon these or such like evidences of our justification! A hope thus founded will stand us in stead—a hope built upon any other foundation will end in astonishing disappointment and confusion.

USE 2. This administers solid, substantial comfort to the true believer, notwithstanding all the darkness, desertions, troubles and temptations, that he may meet with in this militant state.—Though there be no encouragement to any, to be careless and secure, (this, as I have observed, would be an evidence against their sincerity and hope) there is nevertheless glorious encouragement to the mourners in Zion. “Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.”

Such Christians as have had special manifestations of the love of God to their souls, are liable to peculiar darkness and distress, when they have

lost those sensible views of God's gracious presence. The time was when they could clearly discover some lively exercise of the graces of the Holy Spirit; but now their souls are covered with darkness and deadness. They cannot find those vigorous actings of faith and love, which heretofore have warmed and comforted their hearts. The sacred flame now seems almost extinguished. The time was when they were greatly refreshed by their intercourse with heaven, in the duties of religious worship. Then they could say, Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; but now their Beloved has withdrawn himself, and is gone; their souls cleave to the dust, and they cannot quicken them. The time was when they could have such lively impressions of the things unseen and eternal, as carried them above the world and its vanities, sweetened their expectations of death, and made them rejoice in hope of the glory of God; but now their prospect is dark, their faith weak, and their hope almost cut off. This is ready to plunge them into the Psalmist's discouragements and complaints. "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"

But remember, poor soul, that those whom Christ loves, he loves to the end. Though you cannot and ought not to sit down contented in such a state, yet you may be supported with this comforting conclusion: "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." Who is he

that condemneth those for whom Christ has died, or who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Your Father, which gave you to Christ, is **GREATER THAN ALL**; and none shall pluck you out of your Father's hands. He has promised that he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Heb. xiii. 5. And he will be as good as his word. Trust in him, therefore, with humble courage and confidence. Resolve with holy Job, "If he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Be content to follow him in the dark. If you can find comfort no where else, do as the Psalmist did in your case: "Call to remembrance the song you have had in the night." Say of your doubtings and darkness, "this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." I will support my soul with the manifestations of the love of Christ, that I have heretofore experienced; and I will renew my pursuit of these blessed manifestations. I will still follow hard after him, till I find him. In this way you will first or last know by happy experience, that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

But perhaps you are afraid, that you may meet with such shocking trials, as will be too hard for you. You may be afraid that you may meet with persecution for the cause of Christ, and like faint-hearted soldiers you shall quit the field. Or you may be afraid, that you shall be terrified and dismayed with the approach of death, and dishonour your profession by your terrors and despondings. If this be your case, check your unbelief, and say with the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within

me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." Though you have no strength and sufficiency of your own to depend upon, is not the power, the goodness and the faithfulness of God a sufficient refuge for your distressed soul? Trust him. "The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. As thy days, so shall thy strength be. When thou passest through the waters, he will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; for he is the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." He has been often tried in such distresses, and never yet failed those that uprightly believed and trusted in him. This therefore may be your constant support, that he is faithful who has promised, "that all things shall work together for good to them which love God, to them which are called according to his purpose."

USE 3. Let this be improved by way of solemn admonition to every one, to look to it, that you evidence the truth and reality of your justification, by your perseverance in faith and holiness.

Instead of encouraging yourselves in a life of carelessness, sensuality and security, from the doctrine before us, the improvement of it should be quite the contrary way. If perseverance be the certain consequence of a justified state, then apostasy in any, from the profession and practice of godliness is a sad evidence, that such have never indeed attained to that safe and happy

state. Every degree of declension should therefore awaken you to the greatest watchfulness over your hearts and lives, to the greatest diligence in duty, and to the most earnest and importunate applications to the throne of grace, for the incomes and influences of the blessed Spirit to excite, quicken, and invigorate you in the ways of God.

What though some of the children of God have been recovered from great and remarkable falls into sin? How much greater is the number of those that have securely flattered themselves with dreams of their good estate, but were not "of them which believe to the saving of the soul," and finally have "drawn back unto perdition?"—When you think of the falls of Noah, Lot, David, Peter, and other servants of God; think also of Judas, Demas, Hymeneus, and Alexander, Philetus, Phygellus, Hermogenes, with other hypocrites and apostates; and think that it is impossible for you to know, that you are not of the latter sort, while in a backsliding way, under the power of your corruptions.

Instances of the imperfections of the children of God are left on sacred record, to comfort those whose hearts are right with God, and are following hard after him, notwithstanding their darkness and infirmity; but not designed to encourage the careless and secure in their declensions and apostasies. "Thou standest by faith, be not therefore high-minded but fear. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Press on with earnest and constant diligence "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;"

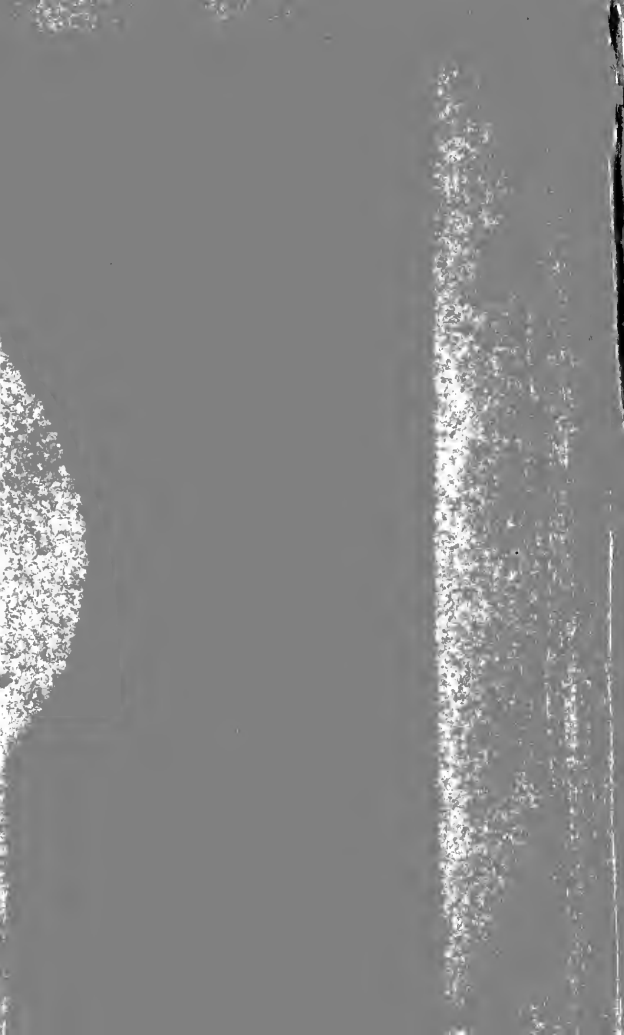
always considering, that those, all those and none but those who endure to the end shall be saved.

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.
AMEN.

THE END.







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Dickinson, Jonathan

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