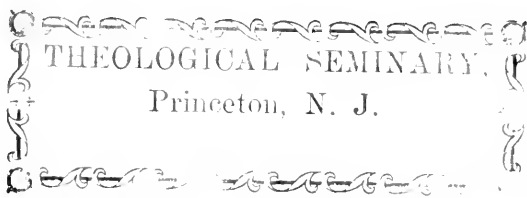


21-3

# Theological Seminary

From

Wm. B. Sprague



BX 6333 .M2 W6 1823 v.2  
MacLean, Archibald, 1723-  
1812.

The works of Mr. Archibald  
M'Lean

2

201

*J. Haddon, Printer, Finsbury.*

# **WORKS**

OF

**ARCHIBALD M'LEAN.**

---

**VOL. II.**

---

REPLY TO MR. FULLER'S APPENDIX, &c.  
DISSERTATION ON DIVINE INFLUENCE &c.  
DEFENCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.  
ON THE IMPUTATION OF SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS  
DIALOGUE BETWEEN A SECEDER AND A BAPTIST.  
PAUL AND JAMES RECONCILED ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.  
ON THE MERITORIOUS GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.  
ON THE OFFICES WHICH CHRIST SUSTAINS IN THE ECONOMY  
OF REDEMPTION.  
CHRIST'S LAW OF DISCIPLINE ILLUSTRATED.  
ESSAYS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.



A  
**REPLY**  
TO  
**MR. FULLER'S APPENDIX**  
TO HIS BOOK ON  
*THE GOSPEL WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.*

---

---

**INTRODUCTION.**

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

He seems to think that it was not very proper in me to animadvert publicly on what he had written only in two private letters. Had I exposed any of his private opinions, communicated to me in confidence, and mentioned his name, I confess it would have been very indelicate; but as neithe

\* Page 159.

of these is the case, and as it is Mr. Fuller himself who has informed the public that these notes refer to his sentiments, I see not the least cause of complaint. "He observes that "if such conduct were proper, some people may be tempted to think, that it is rather dangerous to correspond with authors."\* What danger he may apprehend from corresponding with me I know not, as I am altogether unconscious of having ever attempted to expose or misrepresent him either publicly or privately. Whether Mr. Fuller has been equally cautious on this head, with regard to me and my connections, he best knows.

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

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

\* Page 160.

† Ibid.

‡ The author, at the time of writing this reply, was more than seventy years old.



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

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

#### QUESTION 1.

*Whether the existence of a holy disposition of heart be necessary to believing?*

This holy disposition he terms a divine principle—the moral state or disposition of the soul—a change of heart—a change of the bias of the heart towards God.\* He maintains that this principle must exist *prior* to, or *before* believing, and in order to it; and he frequently represents faith as arising out of it, influenced by it, and partaking of it.† I never considered this *previous principle* to be any part of the difference betwixt Mr. Fuller and me; nor did I observe that he held any such sentiment, my attention being entirely confined to what he says on the *nature* of faith itself. I might therefore justly excuse myself from entering upon the question which he prefixes to his Appendix, because, although the affirmative were admitted, it

\* Page 127, 129, 170.

† Page 171—176.

will not prove that faith is any thing else than simple belief; and because the question betwixt us does not respect what is *previous* to faith, but simply what faith itself *is*. But as Mr. Fuller has brought forward this *previous* holy disposition of heart, and laid it as the fundamental principle of his scheme, it will be proper to examine it a little. After much reasoning he comes at last to state the question thus:

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

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

\* Page 201, 205.

† Page 205, 206.

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

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

\* Dr. Owen ascribes this to the disorder introduced into the soul by the fall; his words are, "The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all its faculties by sin. God created them all in a perfect harmony and union. The mind and reason were in perfect subjection and subordination to God and his will. The will answered, in its *choice* of good, the *discovery* made of it by the mind; the affections constantly and evenly followed the understanding and will. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul, and all the

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

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

He observes, that "though holiness is frequently ascribed in the Scriptures to a spiritual perception of the truth, yet that spiritual perception itself, in the first instance, is ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the HEART." And for this he cites Acts xvi. 4. 2 Cor. iv. 6. 1 John ii. 20, 27.†

Spiritual perception is without doubt the effect of the Holy Spirit's influence upon the heart; but the reader must observe, that Mr. Fuller here uses the word *heart* to sig-

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

\* Page 205, 206.

† Page 206.

nify the will and affections, as distinguished from the understanding or perceiving faculty; so that his meaning is, that the Holy Spirit does not, in the first instance, impart a spiritual perception of the truth, and so make persons to relish or love it; but that he makes them first to relish or love it, and then to perceive or understand it. But, on this subject, the word of God never mentions the word *heart*, in Mr. Fuller's partial sense of it, but always as including the understanding, as well as the will and affections,\* and the former as the avenue to the latter. It has indeed become common with us to confine the metaphorical use of the word *heart* to the affections and dispositions; but in Scripture the heart is said to know, to understand, to study, to discern, to devise, to meditate, to ponder, to consider, to reason, to endite, to doubt, to believe, to be wise, &c. In short, every exercise which we consider as belonging to the intellectual faculty, is in Scripture ascribed to the heart. See Deut. iv. 39. Psal. xlv. 1. and xlix. 3. Prov. x. 8. chap. xv. 28. chap. xvi. 9. chap. xix. 21. Eccl. viii. 5. Jer. xxiv. 7. Mat. xiii. 15. Mark ii. 6, 8. chap. xi. 23. Luke ii. 19, 35.

The Scripture passages which Mr. Fuller refers to, prove this, and are decidedly against him. The Lord's *opening the heart* of Lydia, was his opening her mind, in the first instance, to perceive in some measure the sense and excellency of what was spoken, so as to make her attend to it with judgment and relish. It is equivalent to what the Lord did to his disciples: "Then opened he their UNDERSTANDING (*vsq* *mind*), that they might understand the Scriptures," Luke xxiv. 45. And if we can believe the

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

disciples themselves, it was by his opening the Scriptures to their understanding (which is the same thing,) that their affections were moved: “ Did not our hearts BURN WITHIN US while he talked with us by the way, and while he OPENED TO US THE SCRIPTURES,” ver. 32. To *open the understanding* or *mind*, is a clear and common expression, but to *open the will* or *affections*, seems not intelligible, and is never used. Again, when the apostle says, “ God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6. he certainly does not mean that God had first shined in their will and affections, for these are not the perceptive powers of the heart, which are adapted to receive light in the first instance, but the understanding or judgment. Accordingly this shining of the divine glory in the hearts of these eminent ministers of Christ, is represented as giving them the light (της γνωσεως) OF THE KNOWLEDGE of it; and he also shews that it was in *beholding* this glory of the Lord, that they were changed into the same image, chap. iii. 18. The spiritual light communicated by the Spirit to their understanding, worked effectually upon their will and affections, and changed their souls into the divine image. With respect to the *anointing* mentioned 1 John ii. 20, 27. I cannot conceive how it favours Mr. Fuller’s hypothesis. It is represented as a preservative from the false doctrine of seducers, and cannot be those blind and enthusiastical impressions and emotions which some honour with the name of a *divine unction*; for, as it *taught* and made them *know* all things, it must have been by enlightening their judgment, and seems to have been a portion or degree of that which Christ promised to his disciples, and by which they were to be *guided into all truth*, John xiv. 26. and xvi. 13, 14.

To shew that the will acts prior to the understanding, and independently of it, he says, “ Whatever may be said of particular volitions being caused by ideas received into the mind, original biasses are not so;” and, in a note below affirms, that “ President Edwards speaks with great caution

on the will being determined by the understanding.”\* Yet the citation shows that President Edwards uses no other caution on this point than to explain what he means by the *understanding*, viz. not only *reason* or *judgment*, but also *perception* or *apprehension*.† And this explanation was necessary, because the will is not always determined by what right reason or judgment would dictate, but is often governed by erroneous perceptions and apprehensions. But be the acts of the understanding right or wrong, still they are its acts, and must ever precede and influence the acts of the will, unless we can suppose that the will acts without any previous inducement, motive, cause, or ground of its choice, which President Edwards absolutely denies.‡

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

\* Page 207.

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

‡ In the same Section he says, “By *motive*, I mean the whole of that which moves, excites, or invites the mind to volition, whether that be one thing singly, or many things conjunctly. Whatever is a motive in this sense, must be something that is *extant in the view or apprehension of the understanding, or perceiving faculty*. Nothing can induce or invite the mind to will or act any thing any farther than it is *perceived*, or in some way or other in the *mind's view*: for what is wholly unperceived, and perfectly out of the mind's view, cannot affect the mind at all. It is most evident, that nothing is in the mind, or reaches it, or takes any hold of it, any otherwise than as it is *perceived or thought of*.” *Enquiry on the Will*, Part I. Sect. 2. See also Part II. Sect. 8, 9, 10.

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

Mr. Fuller asserts that "every thing which proves spiritual perception and faith to be holy exercises, proves that a change of heart must of necessity precede them, as no holy exercise can have place while the heart is under the dominion of carnality."\* That spiritual perception and belief are *holy*, is freely admitted; and I have no objection to their being termed *exercises*, if nothing more is meant than simply *perceiving* and *believing*. But how does this "prove that a *change of heart* must necessarily *precede* them?" Why, Mr. Fuller informs us, that "no *holy exercise*," consequently no spiritual perception or belief, "can have place *while* the heart is under the dominion of carnality." True; contraries cannot have dominion in the same heart, and at the same instant; but for the same reason, no *change of heart* can actually have place *while* it is under the dominion of carnality. Here both sides of the question stand upon equal ground. But as it will be allowed that God can change the heart, the question is, Whether does this change *begin* with a removal of the darkness and unbelief of the mind, or whether is the heart actually changed *previous* to this, and *while* it is yet in a state of spiritual darkness and unbelief? The former is my sentiment, the latter Mr. Fuller's. "It is *thus* (he says) I apprehend that God *reveals* the truth to us by his Spirit, in order to our discerning and believing it."† That is, he *reveals* the truth to us, by changing our hearts *before* we perceive and believe it. In this method he thinks it was *revealed* unto Peter, Matt. xvi. 17.—unto babes, Matt. xi. 25.—unto the apostles, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 12, 13, 14.‡ But all these passages are greatly misapplied, when brought to prove, either that the heart is actually changed while yet in a state of ig-

\* Page 207.

† Page 208.

‡ Page 209.



ignorance and unbelief, or that God cannot remove this ignorance and unbelief from the natural man, in the first instance, and so make him spiritually to discern spiritual things.

The Scriptures expressly declare, that the word of truth, or the incorruptible seed of the word, is the means or instrument of regeneration. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," James i. 18. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23. One would think that these plain texts should fully determine the point in dispute; for if it is with the word of truth, that God of his own will begets or regenerates men; if the word of God is the very seed of regeneration; and if to be born of God, born of the Spirit (John i. 13. chap. iii. 5.) and to be born of the incorruptible seed of the word, are expressions of the same import, then this birth must be effected by the Spirit's causing men to *understand* and *believe* the word in the first instance; for it is certain that the word can have no saving influence upon the heart *previous* to this. Mr. Fuller admits, that "we are as properly said to be born again by the word of God, as we are said to be born into the world by means of our parents."\* If so, then we can have no existence as new creatures, *previous* to the instrumentality of the word, any more than we can have an existence as human creatures, *previous* to the instrumentality of our parents.

Yet he does not abide by this, but by means of an imaginary distinction, endeavours to elude the force of the above texts, and introduce regeneration *previous* to, and altogether *abstract* from any influence of the word of God. He affirms, "That the term *regeneration* in the sacred writings is not always used in that strict sense in which *we* use it in theological discussion. Like every other term, it is sometimes used in a more *strict*, and sometimes in a more *ge-*

\*Page 210.

neral sense.”\* Granting this were the case (as it really is not,) how does it determine in which of these senses it is to be taken when ascribed to the word of God?

“*Regeneration* (he says) is sometimes expressive of that *operation* in which the soul is *passive*; and in this sense stands distinguished from conversion, or actual turning to God by Jesus Christ.”† This must be his *strict sense* of that term. But where does he ever find the term *regeneration* used in this sense? Perhaps in theological, or rather metaphysical discussion; but I am confident it bears no such meaning in all the sacred writings.‡ *Regeneration*, strictly speaking, is not the *operation* or agency of the Holy Spirit, but the *effect* of it. It is not his *working*, but his *workmanship*. It is a *spiritual change* produced on man, as to the sentiments and dispositions of his soul, whereby he is made, in some measure, to perceive divine things as they are, and to be affected towards them as he ought; and therefore cannot, in the nature of things, *actually* take place while the soul is purely *passive*, or only physically acted upon, like insensible or unconscious matter. True indeed, the operation or agency of the Spirit must, in order of nature, precede regeneration, as a cause precedes its immediate effect; but so must also the influence of the word of God, to which it is likewise ascribed, because the Spirit operates upon the mind, in and by the word, which is the instrumental cause of regeneration; so that in this matter

\* Page 210.

† Ibid.

‡ The term (*παλιγγενεσία*) *regeneration* occurs only twice in all the New Testament. We find it in Matt. xix. 28. where it signifies the *resurrection*; “Ye who have followed me,” viz. in this world, in the REGENERATION,” i. e. at the *resurrection*, “when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones,” &c. The only other place where the word occurs, is Tit. iii. 5. where it signifies that *spiritual purification* of which baptism is a figure. But as Mr. Fuller understands it here in what he calls a *large* or *general sense*, and as including faith, (page 211) he has not left himself a single instance in Scripture, where it can be understood in his *strict sense*, as above stated; and indeed it is no where to be found in such a sense, but in metaphysical theology.

the influence of the Spirit of truth, and of the word of truth, coalesce in one, and must not be separated. To regenerate men, is to beget them to the faith; and this faith, which is the gift of God, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 17. which is the incorruptible seed whereby they are born again, 1 Pet. i. 23. Whatever influence of the Spirit, or exercise of the mind, may be supposed *previous* to this, it is no where in Scripture called regeneration, nor by any equivalent term. In other words, the Scriptures no where declare that any unbeliever, while such, is actually regenerated; and therefore Mr. Fuller's *strict sense* of the term regeneration, has no foundation in the word of God, nor indeed in the nature of things.

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

\* Page 210.

this faith: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not REVEALED it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven," Matt. xvi. 17. The first thing therefore in regeneration, is the introduction of light into the judgment, whereby the soul is made to perceive and believe the truth and excellency of divine things, and consequently to be suitably affected towards them.

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

\* Page 206.

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

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

\* Page 212.

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

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

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

He says, “ A spiritual perception of the glory of divine things, is not the *first operation* of God upon the mind.”‡ To avoid ambiguity, it must be noticed, that the word *operation* is sometimes used to express the *effect*, at other times the *cause*. If he means that spiritual perception is not the

\* Page 211.

† Page 211, 212.

‡ Page 212.

*first effect* produced on the mind, then the effect prior to this must be entirely of a mechanical or physical nature; for it cannot be a moral effect, where no ideas are communicated, nor any object brought to the view of the mind. But if by *operation* he intends that divine energy or influence which is the *cause* of regeneration, it is freely granted that this must, in order of nature (though not of time) precede that spiritual perception which is the immediate effect of it; but so must also the word of God, which is the means of that effect. As to the operation of the Spirit, whereby the truth is introduced into the mind, so as to produce its proper effects, we can no more explain the manner of it, than we can explain that creating operation whereby God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, or that by which he quickens the dead, to both of which it is compared, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Eph. ii. 1. But we may safely affirm, that there is not any *holy susceptibility* or *relish* for the truth subsisting in the human heart previous to the influence of the word. Indeed, there appears to be no occasion for this; for the word of God, through the effectual operation of the Spirit, is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, Heb. iv. 12. It finds its way into the most unsusceptible and untoward mind, and breaks the stoutest and most obdurate heart. "Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh a rock in pieces?" Jer. xxiii. 29. It storms the heart in its strongest holds, whereby it seeks to fortify itself against the truth. "For the weapons of our warfare (says the apostle) are not carnal, but MIGHTY THROUGH GOD, to the pulling down of strong holds: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Such passages do not admit the supposition, that the heart is possessed of any principle of grace previous to the influence of the word by the Spirit.

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

Further, if men are regenerated and possessed of holy dispositions before they believe, then they must be *godly unbelievers*, a character unknown in the word of God; and should they die in that state, they must be *saved without faith*, for no regenerated holy person shall perish. Mr. Fuller is aware of this plain consequence, and endeavours to elude it. His words are: "If there be a priority (i. e. if regeneration be before faith) in order of time, owing to the want of opportunity of knowing the truth, yet, where a person embraces Christ, so far as he has the means of knowing him, he is in effect a believer."\* This answer appears to me exceedingly confused and incoherent. The point he strenuously contends for is, That regeneration is *before* faith; but here he speaks of it hypothetically, as if he were not sure of it, "If there be a priority in order of time;" and he makes this supposed priority to be only in case of the "want of opportunity of knowing the truth," which imports that none having that opportunity, are regenerated before they believe. Again, such as "want an opportunity of



knowing the truth," are yet supposed to embrace Christ so far as they have the means of knowing him ;" as if they could both *want* an opportunity, and yet *have* the means of knowing him ; or as if they might know and embrace Christ, without knowing the truth which reveals him. Such, he says, are *in effect* believers;" an expression which in this connection I do not understand. "The Bereans (he observes) *searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so* ; therefore it is said, *many of them believed*. And, had they died while in this noble pursuit, they would not have been treated as unbelievers."\* Yet it is not said that *all* of them who searched the Scriptures believed, but *many* of them ; and there is not the least foundation to suppose that *any* of them who searched the Scriptures would have been saved without believing ; and to affirm that men will be saved short of believing, appears to me contrary to the uniform declarations of Scripture, and a very unsafe doctrine, however necessary it may be to support Mr. Fuller's hypothesis.

It is alledged, that the *honest and good heart*, mentioned in the parable of the sower, Luke viii. 15.† represents persons as regenerated previous to their hearing the word. But such an interpretation is a striking instance, among many, of the abuse of Scripture metaphors, whereby doctrines are grounded on similitudes and parables altogether foreign to their design. Because it is a well known truth in husbandry, that if the soil is not good, either by nature or culture, *before* the seed is sown into it, it will not be productive ; therefore it is imagined that it must also be a truth in theology, that the heart of man must be honest and good *previous* to his hearing the word, otherwise it can have no proper effect upon him. But this is far from being the design of that parable, which is to set forth the different reception and effects of the word among those who *actually hear* it. Some consider this parable as respecting the first pub-

\* Page 214.

† Page 174.

lication of the gospel to Jews and proselytes, by our Lord and his apostles, when it found many previously possessed of honest and good hearts, who looked for redemption, and waited for the consolation of Israel, such as Nathanael, Joseph of Arimathea, Cornelius, and many others; but this honest and good heart was not begotten in them without the word, but by means of the Old Testament revelation, which they believed, and by the ministry of John the Baptist, whose office it was "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," Luke i. 16, 17.

But though this affords a good answer, there is no occasion to confine the parable to the first publication of the gospel; for we may easily trace the *order* of things, by comparing the three Evangelists, and harmonizing them into one compound text. The first thing in order is the sowing of the seed, or publishing the word of the kingdom: *A sower went forth to sow*; for how should men hear without a preacher? Those to whom the word was published *heard* it. This was common to all the classes; they were all *hearers*. But then the good effects of hearing the word was confined to one class of them; and these effects are threefold, and in the following order—1. Having heard the word, they *understood it*, Matt. xiii. 23. and *received it*, Mark iv. 20. The word of God, accompanied by the influence of the Holy Spirit, enlightened their minds, removed their prejudices, and made them perceive the import, evidence and excellency of what was declared, so that they understood and received it as the word of God, 1 Thess. ii. 13. as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, 1 Tim. i. 15. Thus they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, 1 Pet. i. 23. and thus God of his own sovereign will begets them to the faith with the word of truth, Jam. i. 18. for faith cometh by hearing the word of God, Rom. x. 17. and now, and not till now, are they possessed of a principle of grace in their hearts.—2. Having heard, understood and received the word, *they, in an honest and good heart, keep it*, Luke viii. 15. i. e. they retain and hold it fast, in

opposition to their letting it slip, like the other classes of hearers : The seed of God remaineth in them, 1 John iii. 9. even that which they have heard, chap. ii. 24.—They continue in Christ's word, and his words abide in them, John viii. 31. ch. xv. 7. which is to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel which they have heard, Col. i. 23. But that *honest and good heart* in which they *keep* (κατεχουσι) or *retain* the word, did not exist prior to their hearing and understanding it, but was evidently produced by that means, as was shown on the first particular. Paul traces the origin of *love*, a *pure heart*, and a *good conscience* (which constitute the honest and good heart) only back to *faith unfeigned*, which respects the word, 1. Tim. i. 5. for it is by faith that God *purifies* the heart, Acts xv. 9.—3. The last thing in order is, they *bring forth fruit with patience*, and in various degrees, Luke viii. 15. Matt. xiii. 23. The word of God which they have heard, understood, and received, *effectually worketh* in them, 1 Thess. ii. 13, and *bringeth forth fruit* in them, since the day they *heard* and *knew* the grace of God in truth, Col. i. 6. This therefore is the order of things set forth in the explanation of the parable. It is by means of the word that the heart is made honest and good, though the nature of the similitude, which is taken from agriculture does not permit it to illustrate that particular.

Mr. Fuller says, "A spiritual perception of the glory of divine things appears to be the first sensation of which the mind is conscious; but it is not the first operation of God upon it."\* If not, then this *first operation* of God makes no impression upon the rational mind of man. It communicates no light to the judgment, no spiritual perception of divine things, nor any sensation respecting them of which a thinking mind is conscious. In his opinion, the understanding cannot be spiritually enlightened, but in consequence of some holy disposition previously

\* Page 212.

implanted in the heart by this first operation; and then he admits that spiritual perception will follow as the first sensation of which the mind, already regenerated, is conscious. So that what he says of Mr. Brine's previous principle, I think will with equal justice apply to his own; it is "something different from what God requires of every intelligent creature;"\* for it is plain that the human intellect has no concern in it, and it is certain that God does not require blind dispositions of his intelligent creatures. He affirms, that the introduction of light into the mind in the first instance is a thing altogether impossible even with God himself, until by some other operation he has *regenerated* the soul, altered its *moral state* and *disposition*, given it a *spiritual relish* for divine things, and produced a *change of heart*, whereby it is *effectually influenced* towards him; and all this previous to, and without any illumination of the mind, or instrumentality of the word of God.†

\* Page 127.

† Mr. Fuller's sentiments on this subject seem to be formed upon the scheme of Messrs. Bellamy and Hopkins, two American divines, who though they have written many good things, have overstrained others beyond the sober scripture medium, in their opposition to Arminian and Antinomian speculations. Mr. Hopkins in a sermon on John i. 13. after having asserted, that regeneration consists *wholly* in a *change of the will or heart*, and not in the intellect or faculty of understanding: and that in this operation the Spirit of God is the *only agent*: he proceeds to shew "That this change is wrought by the Spirit of God *immediately*. That is, it is not effected by any medium or means whatever. I would (says he) particularly observe here, that light and truth, or the word of God is not in *any degree* a mean by which this change is effected. It is not wrought by light—Men are first regenerated in order to introduce light into the mind; therefore they are not regenerated by light, or the truths of God's word." He affirms, that natural men may see every thing in matters of religion but the moral beauty and excellence of divine things: That this moral beauty is not discerned by the understanding, nor can it possibly be made the object of it by an operation on the mind, or any supposed illumination whatever, any more than it is possible by any operation on a stone to bring it to the understanding and discerning of a man, without giving it the faculty of understanding and reason. That therefore men are not regenerated by the word but the heart; (i. e. the will) must first be renewed by the immediate operation of the Spirit of God,

Though man is a fallen depraved creature, yet he is still possessed of intellectual and moral powers however much impaired, otherwise he would not be a rational moral agent, susceptible of instruction, the subject of law, or the object of praise or blame. In regeneration the Spirit of God does not create new powers or faculties, but rectifies those already in existence; gives the lead to the legitimate directing powers, which were blinded and enslaved by corrupt dispositions, affections and passions, and restores the soul to order and harmony. The leading faculties of the human mind, by which, when it acts regularly, all the rest are directed and governed, are the understanding or judgment, reason and conscience. These constitute his mental capacity to receive instruction, to perceive and distinguish truth from its opposite, to discern the fitness or unfitness of things, and the moral qualities of actions and objects. But notwithstanding these natural powers, such is the blindness and depravity of the human heart, that the natural or animal

giving it a *good taste* in order to prepare it to understand and receive the word. See *Hopkins's Sermon* on John i. 13. with the *Appendix*. See also Bellamy's *True Religion Delineated*, and his *Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel of Christ*.

To shew that men are born of God, there is certainly no occasion to reason against, or rather flatly to contradict express Scripture, by denying that God begets them with the word of truth, or that they are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, for both are perfectly consistent. And though it is true that the natural man may speculate on the truths of the gospel, without discerning either their true evidence, or their moral beauty and excellence, so as to have a *taste* or *relish* for them, yet this will never prove it impossible that a *good taste* should be formed by a proper view of divine things in a spiritually enlightened judgment. To affirm that no enlightening influence of the Spirit of God upon the understanding can have any more effect in forming a spiritual taste than if it were exerted upon a stone, is the language of unhallowed reasoning, which serves to exclude the understanding from being the subject of regeneration, as well as the word of God from being the means of it. In my opinion Mr. Fuller would have been more profitably employed in consulting the Scriptures upon this subject, than in adopting the sentiments and reasonings of these authors.

man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God revealed in the gospel; for, judging of them by the preconceived principles, wisdom, and reasoning of a carnal mind, they appear foolishness to him; neither can he know them till he is spiritually enlightened, because they are spiritually discerned. Therefore I conceive that the first operation of the Spirit of God in regeneration is the introduction of spiritual light into the understanding or judgment, which is the same with his opening the understanding to discern the things of the Spirit as revealed in the gospel in their true light; for there is no medium between the introduction of spiritual light into the mind and the mind's spiritual perception of it. This spiritual perception of divine things is attended with a persuasion of their truth and reality, and an impression of their supreme excellence and importance, which gains them immediate access to the will and affections, exciting desire, relish, choice and esteem. Thus the soul is regenerated agreeably to the regular order of its faculties: but to maintain that the will and affections are changed previous to any discernment of spiritual things in the judgment, is to reverse that order, and is the same as to affirm, that the soul relishes, chooses, and loves without an object, that is, its relish, choice and affection, have no relation to any thing, consequently these exercises (could we suppose them to exist) can have nothing of the nature of virtue in them: for it is an undoubted truth, that no motion or exercise of the will and affections can be of a virtuous and holy nature, but as influenced by proper objects or motives.

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

I had said, that the truth is no sooner *perceived* and *believed*, than it takes possession of the will and affections,\* upon which Mr. Fuller observes, "This, I should think, is allowing that perception is *distinct* from believing, and necessarily *precedes* it."† In order of nature indeed, we must have a perception of something, real or imaginary, before we can believe, for belief must respect some object in the mind's view; but then we cannot perceive that object to be *real* or *true*, without believing it, because that very perception is believing it. It belongs, therefore, to Mr. Fuller to show, how a spiritual perception of the glory of divine truth is *distinct* from believing it; or, in other words, how such a perception of divine truth can exist without including in it a perception of its *truth* and *reality*. I am certain he cannot show this without reducing what he terms "*a spiritual perception of the glory of divine truth*," to a mere empty speculation, in which nothing exists as a *reality* in the mind's view.

Yet he proceeds upon this distinction, and says, "But if a *spiritual perception* of the glory of divine truth precede believing, this may be the same in effect as *regeneration* preceding it."‡ But if he really admits that a spiritual perception of the truth is the same with regeneration, then he, in effect, gives up his argument. He has all along maintained, that regeneration is previous to a spiritual perception of divine things, and that the introduction of light into the mind in the first instance is impossible; that it consists in a *spiritual relish* for divine things, and a *change of heart* whereby it is *effectually*

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

† Page 203.

‡ Page 204.

*influenced* towards God, previous to any illumination of the mind, and without the instrumentality of the word. Therefore to admit, that a spiritual perception of the truth is in effect the same with regeneration, is to yield the point, and grant all that I think worth contending for on this head; for I am certain there can be no spiritual perception of the truth without believing it.

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

\* Page 204.



occasion. In answering those who deny the belief of the gospel to be saving faith, and make it to consist in coming to Christ, receiving him, and relying upon him for acceptance, he says, "All this, in the order of things, *follows* upon *believing* the truth concerning him; no less so, than *coming to God* follows a *believing that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. We may therefore," mark the expression, "be REGENERATED BY A PERCEPTION AND BELIEF OF THE TRUTH, and, as the immediate effect of it, come to Jesus, and rely upon him for salvation."\* Here he agrees with my sentiments both as to the nature of *faith*, and its influence on *regeneration*, which is perfectly inconsistent with all the arguments he uses against me on these particulars. What a pity it is that such distinguished talents as Mr. Fuller possesses, should be employed in this manner!

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

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

\* Page 202, 203.

“First, If the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness be *given up*, we shall not be in the practice of urging it on the unconverted.”\* I cannot conceive what ground Mr. Fuller has to suppose, that those whom he opposes have *given up* the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness. However negligent I may be in urging sinners to repentance, it has always been my firm belief that not only the unconverted, but even the converted themselves, need often to be called to repentance, and that in order to forgiveness. He has seen as much of my writings as fully refutes this misrepresentation, and therefore it cannot pass for a mere mistake. I am afraid there will be occasion for some more remarks of this kind before we have done.

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

But I own that, upon Mr. Fuller’s plan, I should be very much embarrassed in pressing true repentance on the unconverted. He had said before, that “It does not come up to the Scripture representation to say, repentance is a *fruit of faith*,”‡ and here he says, repentance must be pressed upon the unconverted *before*, and *in order to be-*

\* Page 214.

† Page 214, 215.

‡ Page 173.

*lieving*. Now my difficulty lies here; According to this *order* of things, I am debarred in urging repentance, from using any arguments or motives drawn from the gospel; for it is certain that such motives cannot possibly have any influence without faith, or till they are first believed, and, according to him, they cannot be believed till men first truly repent; for they must repent *before*, and *in order to believing*. So that this scheme renders the principles and motives of the gospel altogether useless as to their influence on repentance, and therefore can with no propriety be used for that purpose. From all this it plainly follows, that the gospel itself should not be preached to men till they repent.

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

\* Page 173.

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

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

Though repentance ought to be urged upon all who hear

the gospel, and though none believe it, who do not repent; yet I strongly suspect that it would be *leading souls astray*, to press repentance upon them *before*, and *in order to their believing* the gospel. Should a preacher keep strictly to this *order* of things, and speak out plainly, the tenor and spirit of his address must be something to the following effect: "As for you, the unconverted part of my hearers, I have no authority to preach the gospel to you in your present state. To you the word of this salvation is not as yet sent. You are not prepared or qualified for it; for you are nothing but *mere sinners*, and no sort of encouragement or hope is held out in all the book of God to any sinner as such considered. It is only to the *penitent* that the gospel is to be preached; for to such only does it hold out its golden sceptre.\* You have therefore nothing to do with the gospel in the first instance; nor is it your immediate duty to believe it, nor even to take encouragement from it to repent, which supposes your believing it. Let me, therefore, in the first place, call your attention to a *previous* duty; a duty which you must perform *before*, and *in order to believing*; and that is, that you sincerely and heartily repent of all your sins; and when you have performed this aright, from a principle of disinterested love to God, and a thorough hatred of sin, as such, you may then venture to believe the gospel-testimony concerning Christ, and the way of salvation through him, and rely upon him accordingly." This appears to me to destroy the freedom of the gospel; for it brings the word of faith nigh to those only who *view themselves* as converted, and sets it at a distance not only from the stout-hearted, but also from the self-condemned, who can find nothing good in themselves, as a ground of encouragement; and so it lays an insuperable bar in the way of faith, consequently prevents genuine repentance.

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

\* Gospel worthy of all acceptance. First edit. Pref. p. 8.

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

“Secondly, For the same reason that we give up the necessity of repentance, in order to forgiveness, we may give up *all* exhortations to things spiritually good, as *means of salvation.*”\* Though I do not agree with Mr. Fuller, that repentance *before* believing, and *in order to it*, is connected with forgiveness, for I know of no promise of forgiveness to an *unbelieving penitent*; yet I have already shown, that I hold the necessity of *true* repentance, in order to forgiveness, and have also hinted that Mr. Fuller must know this. Let us now attend to his other consequence; he says, “For the same reason, we may give up

\* Page 215.

all exhortations to things spiritually good, as *means of salvation*." This indeed is not a direct assertion that we do so; but mark what follows: "Indeed Mr. M'Lean seems prepared for this consequence. If I understand him, he does not approve of unconverted sinners being exhorted to *any thing spiritually good*, any otherwise than as holding up to them the language of the law, for convincing them of sin. It is thus he answers the question, *Are unbelievers to be exhorted to obedience to God's commandments?* referring us to the answer of our Lord to the young ruler, which directed him to keep the commandments if he would enter into life."\* Here he affirms, that I disapprove of unconverted sinners being exhorted to any thing spiritually good; and, to prove this charge, he refers his readers, at the bottom of the page, to a pamphlet entitled *Simple Truth Vindicated*, page 21, second edit. written about thirty-six years ago, by Mr. John Barnard of London. But did any one inform Mr. Fuller that I was the author of that pamphlet? or can he show from any part of my writings, that I hold the sentiment which he here, without the least evidence, imputes to me? No; on the contrary, he was possessed of full evidence that I hold no such sentiment. To my certain knowledge, he has seen and read my *Essay on the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel*, published first in the *Missionary Magazine*, No. II. III. IV. V. and afterwards more fully in a separate pamphlet. He knew this to be my performance, in which I combat the very sentiment he here attributes to me, and maintain, that the word of God calls upon *unconverted sinners* to repent, believe, be converted, to forsake their evil ways and thoughts, and to return unto the Lord, and call upon him; and have endeavoured to answer at some length the chief objections brought against this. I have also briefly touched on this subject in my *Treatise on the Commission*, p. 86—89. and in *The Beliefs of the Gospel saving Faith*, p. 35—41, 56. first edit. which

\* Page 215

he has also seen. I am therefore utterly at a loss how to account for this mistake, and especially for his declining afterwards to rectify it publicly, though desired by his friend. But he proceeds upon this false ground, and says:

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

“Mr. M’Lean (he says) tells us in the same page,” (i. e. page 21. of Barnard’s Simple Truth,) “that there is no promise of life to the doing of any good thing, except *all* the commandments be kept.”† Though I have no concern in this, yet I must observe, that if Mr. Barnard, by *doing*, means working, in order to obtain justification by the works of the law, he is certainly right in saying, that no *doing* will answer this purpose, except *all* the commandments be kept; for “the law is not of faith,” but its condition of life, as contrasted with that of the gospel, is, “That the man who doeth those things, shall live by them;” while it “curseth every one that continueth not in *all things* written in the book of the law to do them,” Rom. x. 5. Gal.

\* Page 215, 216.

† Page 216.



iii. 10, 12. But I must observe, that Mr. Fuller gives the very same view of our Lord's answer to the young ruler, that Mr. Barnard does; his words are, "That to which the young ruler was directed, was the producing of a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law, which was *naturally* impossible; and our Lord's design was to shew its impossibility, and thereby to convince him of the need of gospel mercy."\* What our Lord directs the young ruler to do, was, to keep the commandments, to sell what he had, and give to the poor, and to take up his cross, and follow him. Now, if his doing these things was *naturally* impossible (as Mr. Fuller affirms,) then, according to his own reasoning,† the young ruler was under no *obligation* to do them, it was not his *duty*, and he was perfectly innocent in neglecting them.

Having mentioned some Scripture calls to faith and repentance, he observes, "That if Mr. M'Lean was called to visit a dying sinner, he would be careful not to use any such language as this; or, if he did, it must be ironically, teaching him what he must do on his own self-justifying principles, to gain eternal life. If he be serious, he has only to state to him what Christ has done upon the cross, and assure him, that if he believes it, he is happy."‡ I should reckon it a piece of wanton cruelty, to speak *ironically* to a dying sinner on the concerns of his soul; but I would tell him *seriously*, that he could not be justified by the works of the law, because that required perfect sinless obedience; and having shown him his guilty and lost condition, I would at the same time set before him the gospel remedy, as the *sole*, the *free*, and *immediate* ground of hope for perishing sinners; nor would I hesitate, from any notion of his being unqualified or unprepared for Christ, or destitute of a previous holy principle, "to state to him what he has done upon the cross, and assure him, that if he believes it, he is happy."

\* Page 158.

† Page 115—124.

‡ Page 217.

Mr. Fuller seems sensible that he has here gone rather too far, and therefore instantly checks himself. "Far be it from me," he says, "that I should disapprove of an exhibition of the Saviour as the only foundation of hope to a dying sinner, or plead for such directions as *fall short* of believing in him. In both these particulars, I am persuaded Mr. M'Lean is in the right; and that all those counsels to sinners which are adapted only to turn their attention to the workings of their own hearts, to their prayers, or their tears, and not to the blood of the cross, are delusive and dangerous."\* But if these are Mr. Fuller's real and fixed sentiments, for what end did he write his Appendix? Is not the most of it adapted to turn the attention of sinners to the workings of their own hearts instead of the blood of the cross? Hereby they are taught, that they must be regenerated, and have their hearts turned effectually towards God without the word, and before they are illuminated or have a perception of the truth, and at any rate, previous to their believing it. That they must truly repent before they believe in Christ, and in order to it. That justifying faith itself is a persuasion influenced by a previous moral state of the heart and partaking of it; a holy exercise of the soul, depending upon choice, implying repentance, and including love and other holy affections; that God does not justify the ungodly, though, however godly they are, he does not impute it to them for righteousness, &c. Now as all these things respect the holy state, dispositions, affections and exercises of the heart; and as they are all stated as previous qualifications in the sinner, and placed in a conditional point of view between him and the Saviour; so all the counsels and directions given to sinners concerning them in that view must have an infallible tendency to turn their attention, in the first instance, to the workings of their own hearts, and not to the work finished by Christ on the cross, consequently, as Mr. Fuller admits, must be "delusive and dangerous."

\* Page 217.

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

He imagines that "Mr. M'Lean, to be consistent, must not seriously exhort a sinner to *come off* from those refuges of lies, to *renounce* all dependence on his prayers and tears, and to *rely upon Christ* alone, as necessary to justification, lest he make him a pharisee."† From what has been already said, the reader will perceive, that this requires no answer from me. Such exhortations are included in the exhortation to faith itself. But if he means them as exhortations to some holy exercises *previous* to faith, then he must suppose that a sinner will *come off* from his false refuges before he knows the true refuge; and that he will *renounce* all dependence on his prayers and tears before he perceives any better foundation to depend on. If Christ is held forth as a free and immediate Saviour to the guilty, such exhortations are very proper, and likely to be understood; but a preacher may so dwell upon the active exercises of the mind in *coming off, renouncing, humbling one's self, &c.* as to counteract the very design of such exhortations. How free and gracious is our Lord's invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Yet some preachers have discovered such a variety of arduous exercises imported in the word *come*, as to lay very great obstacles in the sinner's

\* Page 217.

† Ibid.

way to Christ, and so to increase the burden of those who are heavy laden, instead of directing them immediately to the Saviour for rest to their souls. This is the tendency of all those exhortations and laboured directions how to perform what is called *the great work of believing* in order to be justified. And this is the natural effect of the doctrine which teaches sinners, that they must be true penitents, and possessed of holy dispositions of heart *previous* to their believing; and that their belief cannot be genuine, unless it arise from this moral state of the heart, and partake of it.

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

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

#### QUESTION II.

*Whether justifying faith includes in its nature any thing more than a Belief of the Gospel?*

IN my Treatise on the Commission, p. 74—83. and in a Sermon entituled, "The Belief of the Gospel saving Faith," I think I have sufficiently shewn and proved from Scripture, that justifying faith is neither more nor less than a belief of the gospel, or of God's testimony concerning his

Son; and have also taken notice of the principal objections to this view of it. Therefore, instead of transcribing what I have already advanced, I must refer the reader to these publications, where he will find my sentiments on this subject in their own proper order and connection. In the mean time, as Mr. Fuller has given a very just and scriptural account of faith in the first edition of his book on “The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation,” (which I have perused of late with more attention than formerly,) I cannot give a better view of my own sentiments on this subject than by transcribing his.

“Faith (says he) appears always to carry in it the idea of a *crediting some testimony where intuitive evidence cannot be obtained.*” This he confirms by what is said of the Thessalonians, *Our testimony among you was believed,* 2 Thess. i. 10.—“And thinks that no better definition can be given of true faith than that which is given by the Holy Ghost himself in 2 Thess. ii. 13. THE BELIEF OF THE TRUTH,” p. 10. In answering objections to this definition, he grants that true faith is the belief of scripture propositions, because to believe a proposition is to believe the *thing* or *truth* conveyed by it, p. 21. He admits that “believing, simply considered, is a mere *natural act*, but that believing *such things* as the gospel reveals must be a *spiritual act.*” He also allows that it is “a *rational act*, excited by *rational evidence*,” and thinks it is “no reproach to true faith to be so represented.” That “if it be supported by evidence at all, it must be a *rational act* ;” and that “nothing deserves the name of faith but what is so supported,” p. 25, 26. Farther, he distinguishes true faith from “the *actual outgoing* of the soul towards Christ for salvation in a way of *fleeing* to him, *receiving* him, *resting* on him,” &c. These things he says, are “distinct from the belief of the truth as an inseparable effect is distinct from its cause.” And even *trusting* in Christ he considers as an “immediate *effect* of believing what God says

concerning him.”—That “it does not appear, strictly speaking, to be faith, but its immediate effect—an inseparable attendant on it, but seems to be distinct from it, p. 22, 23.—[Here, it must be owned, there is a sufficient niceness of distinction.] Lastly, he argues for this simple view of faith from the *plainness* of the Scriptures, and from the impossibility of understanding them, had the sacred writers used this term in an uncommon sense. “This view of faith (he says) seems to be plain and easy to be understood, and does not embarrass our minds with a number of words without ideas. Great and glorious as the matter contained in Scripture is, Protestants commonly maintain that it is set forth in *language plain and intelligible*—that the inspired writers made use of terms [in common use in the affairs of life adapted even to the understandings of the common people—and that they did not use these terms in any contrary sense but in the same sense as they were used in the common affairs of life. If they had used them in a sense peculiar to themselves, then had they been unintelligible to their hearers. Then had the Jews been furnished with a sufficient answer to our Lord’s reprehensive question, *Why do ye not understand my speech?* Yea, then must it have been a *miracle* for him or his apostles ever to be understood or their writings, in any future ages. To apply this observation to the point in hand: It is well known that faith, in common speech, signifies the same as *credence; a credit of some report, declaration or testimony, where intuitive evidence is not to be obtained.* Now, if true faith, as mentioned so frequently in the Scriptures, be to be understood according to this easy, obvious sense of the word, then the inspired writers acted in character; but if they included a meaning in the terms faith, believe, believer, &c. peculiar to themselves, then whence does it appear that they spake and wrote intelligibly?” p. 28, 29.

I could not possibly express my own view of faith with greater accuracy or simplicity than Mr. Fuller has done in

the above extract; and had he kept consistently to his own definition of it, and the arguments by which he supports it, there would have been no difference between us on this subject. But notwithstanding his distinguishing faith from the *outgoings* of the soul towards Christ, in *fleeing* to him, *receiving* him, *resting* on, and *trusting* in him, &c. notwithstanding all he says of the term *belief* being so plain, obvious, intelligible and easy to be understood, and his repeated acknowledgment that Christ and his apostles did not use it in any peculiar sense, but in the same sense in which it was used in the common affairs of life; yet he says, "However, to avoid *obscurity*, I shall attempt more fully to explain the terms." p. 10. It seems then that the plain definition given by the Holy Ghost himself, viz. THE BELIEF OF THE TRUTH, (than which, he owns, there cannot be a better) is, after all, so *obscure* that it needs to be explained before we can understand the terms of it!

With regard to the term BELIEF, he explains it to be a *cordial reception* of the truth; and if by this he means nothing more than *belief*, it is far from being so plain an expression, or so suited to convey that idea, as the Scripture term itself which directly expresses it. *Belief* is a term which does not admit of a logical definition, because the act of the mind signified by it is perfectly simple, and of its own kind; nor does it need to be defined, or even explained, because it is a common word, and well understood. But it is evident, that by a *cordial reception* he intends something more than belief, some exercise of the will and affections respecting the truth; and it can admit of no dispute, that all who really believe the gospel as a *faithful* or true saying, must also perceive it to be a *good* saying, worthy of all acceptance, and so receive it cordially: But the question is, Whether is this *cordiality* of reception what the Scripture means by the term *belief*, or the immediate *effect* of it? for it is certain that it is neither the proper nor common meaning of that term, and it is as

certain that the will and affections cannot be moved by any truth till it is first perceived and believed. For this *cordial reception* he produces Philip's words to the eunuch, Acts viii. 37. "If thou believest WITH ALL THINE HEART, thou mayest," taking it for granted that the word *heart* there means the will and affections. But it has already been shewn, that in Scripture, the word *heart* is sometimes put for the intellectual, sometimes for the moral powers of the soul, and at other times for both, and therefore the sense can only be determined by the nature of the exercises ascribed to it; so that when the heart is said to chuse, incline, love, desire, &c. we are certain that it is put for the will and affections; but when it is said to perceive, know, understand, reason, consider, &c. then it must signify the intellect; and this must also be meant by the heart when doubting or believing is ascribed to it, these being exercises of the understanding or judgment, in relation to the truth or falsehood of things. When Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Ye *know in all your hearts, and in all your souls*, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you," Josh. xxiii. 14. he was not affirming any thing respecting their will and affections, but that they had a clear experimental proof and full conviction of God's faithfulness to his promise. So Philip, by *believing with all the heart*, means just a sincere and hearty conviction of mind as to the truth of what he had declared concerning Jesus. And that the eunuch so understood him is plain from his reply, "I believe *That Jesus Christ is the Son of God*;" where we see he expresses the truth which he believed by a proposition,\* which would have been improper, had he meant to express the exercise of his will and affections respecting it; for it

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



would not be language to say, I consent, chuse, or love That Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The same thing may be observed of the expression *believing in*, or *with the heart*, Rom. x. 9, 10. where it relates to the proposition, "That God hath raised him from the dead," and is distinguished from *confessing with the mouth*, and so must import a real inward conviction of the mind, as opposed to a mere verbal or insincere profession of belief. It must always be kept in view, that there is no dispute about the immediate effects of faith on the will and affections, but simply about the nature of faith itself.

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

Now, though I must own, that Mr. Fuller's list of detached articles is far from giving a proper view of what the Scriptures emphatically call *the truth*; yet I cannot help observing, that his stating them in such a light not only tends to depreciate the particulars mentioned, but also that

great truth with which they stand connected, and which is the subject and scope of the gospel testimony; and thus lead his readers to conceive that the belief of the gospel will be of little service to them, and to imagine that there is some other truth of greater importance which demands a preferable regard. The grand foundation truth which the gospel testifies is, That Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, John i. 34. chap. xx. 31. Acts ix. 20, 22, chap. xviii. 5. All its supernatural evidence unites in attesting this great truth, and all its doctrines are founded on, and derive their meaning, glory, and importance from it. This truth includes in it his character and also his work, as the Saviour of lost sinners, as that he died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. 1 Corin. xv. 3, 4. And whatever Mr. Fuller may say about what he calls *general* and *external* truths, which may be believed where no saving faith is, yet the word of God expressly assures us, that those who believe this truth are blessed, Mat. xvi. 17. have life through Christ's name, John xx. 31. have righteousness imputed to them, Rom. iv. 24. are born of God, and overcome the world, 1 John v. 1, 5. and shall be saved, Rom. x. 9. 1 Cor. xv. 2. so that the belief of this truth is saving faith. This is that truth which Paul terms "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, viz. that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and of such the chief, 1 Tim. i. 15. This is the apostolic *testimony* which the Thessalonians believed, 2 Thess. i. 10. and whose faith is therefore described to be a *belief of the truth*, chap. ii. 13.

But it is evident that Mr. Fuller does not consider this as the main thing intended by the term, for he explains it thus, "By *truth* I mean (and I think the apostle means the same) to include with the fore-mentioned doctrines their *qualities* or *properties*, which make a great, and even an essential part of their truth." p. 13. It will admit of no

doubt, that to believe the gospel is to believe (so far as we are enlightened) whatever it testifies, both relating to doctrines and their qualities. The doctrines themselves exhibit the qualities of what they reveal, and it appears to me a contradiction to suppose, that a person may really understand and believe the doctrines of the gospel without some perception of their importance and excellence, though the greatest saint upon earth, even when possessed of the full assurance of faith, perceives the excellence of the truth only in part. But I am of opinion, that the gospel doctrines are termed *the truth*, not on account of their qualities as *good* or *bad*, nor only as exhibiting the *substance* of the legal shadows; but chiefly because they are *true* as opposed to all falsehood or deceit, 2 Pet. i. 16. 1 John ii. 21, 22, 27. The agreement of the gospel testimony with the reality of what it testifies is its *truth* or *veracity*; and as it reveals the most important of all truths, and upon the highest authority, it being the testimony of God who cannot lie, so it is by way of eminence termed *the truth*. Now, though a belief of this testimony includes a belief of the qualities or properties of what is testified, yet it is as *truths* or *realities* that they are the objects of faith; and till they thus exist as truths in the mind, they can have no influence on the will and affections.

But let us see what those truths or qualities are which Mr. Fuller thinks are more especially the objects of saving faith. He specifies the following, viz. "The infinite *excellency* of God, the *reasonableness*, and *goodness* of his law, the exceeding *sinfulness* of sin in itself considered, *mens vile, dangerous* and *lost* condition, the *equity* of God in sending them to hell, the infinite *loveliness* of Christ, and *excellency* of his way of salvation, the *beauty* of holiness, &c. &c. these are truths concerning which every wicked man is an infidel." p. 14, 15. These are indeed very important truths, and without some suitable conviction of them the gospel will not appear in its proper light, nor

be duly esteemed; yet, excepting two general expressions, *viz.* the *loveliness* of Christ, and *excellence* of his way of salvation, I find nothing of what is properly called the gospel in them. These particulars may be learned in a good measure from the law, without any knowledge of the way of salvation; for they are truths altogether independent of the gospel, and would have remained the same immutable truths though Jesus Christ had never come in the flesh. True indeed, the gospel supposes these truths, the whole scheme of salvation infers them, and is calculated to give the clearest views and deepest impressions of them, and also to reconcile the mind to them; yet I do not find that our Lord and his apostles, in preaching the gospel, ever dwell on these particulars as the direct and main subject of their testimony, or as that *truth* which they called upon men to believe unto their salvation. Peter declared *the truth* on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. and also to Cornelius and his house, chap. x. and so did Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, chap. xiii. These discourses are plain and simple, and in perfect unison with each other; they were also countenanced of God, and attended with remarkable effects: yet in none of them is there any direct or explicit mention of what Mr. Fuller chiefly considers as *the truth*. They seem wholly to consist of what he terms *general* and *external* truths, and which he says may be believed where no saving faith is. The apostles declared the testimony of God concerning his Son, and constantly connected salvation with the belief of it; but Mr. Fuller, though he does not exclude the main subject of their testimony, yet he gives it such epithets as tend to depreciate it, while he transfers salvation from it to the belief of some other truths or qualities which he considers as more peculiarly the objects of saving faith.

Hitherto my remarks have been confined to the first edition of his book. He has left out of the second edition the greater part of that description of faith which I have

extracted from the first; yet it is with pleasure I observe, that in this last edition, his account of faith is exceedingly plain, simple, and scriptural. He says, "That the belief of the truth which God hath recorded in the Scriptures concerning Christ is saving faith, is evident from the following passages;" for which he cites Mark xvi. 16. John xx. 31. Luke viii. 12. Matt. xvi. 17. Rom. x. 9, 1 John v. 1, 5. John iii. 33. chap. v. 33, 34. 2 Thess. i. 10. chap. ii. 13. From these passages he observes, that a belief of the gospel—of the word, of the gospel testimony—a belief that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, &c. must be saving faith, because salvation is connected with that belief; and he is so certain of this, that he further says, "If the foregoing passages do not prove the point, we may despair of learning any thing from the Scriptures."\* And I may add, that if Mr. Fuller does not perfectly agree with me on this head, I despair of learning any thing from his words, for no words can more clearly express my view of the subject.

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

\* Page 16, 17, 18.

† Page 160.

all who really believe it. We cannot therefore differ on this subject, while both of us abide consistently by what we have expressly agreed to.

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

But notwithstanding Mr. Fuller's simple and scriptural definition of faith or belief; his express declaration, that he understands the term *belief* according to its ordinary use in the common affairs of life; his nicely distinguishing it from all those exercises of the soul which are either its

\* Page 160.

† In his letter to me, dated Nov. 25, 1794.

concomitants or immediate effects; his professing to consider it as credence, and *nothing else*; and his train of arguments in support of this simple view of it—I say, notwithstanding all this, it is evident he means no such thing; but, on the contrary, labours in his Appendix to prove that belief is *something else* than credence! He professes to have the pleasure of agreeing with me, that the belief of the gospel is saving faith. What pleasure he can have in this, I am not able to conceive, since he endeavours to show that it is only an agreement in the *sound*, but not in the *sense* of that proposition; for he affirms that we disagree on the question, *What the belief of the gospel includes?* and that “there is an important difference in the ideas which we attach to *believing*.”\* For my own part, I honestly declare, that I attach no unusual or double meaning to that word. I think it bears but one simple sense, which needs no explanation, because every body understands it; nay, I attach no other idea to the word *believing*, than what Mr. Fuller himself must necessarily attach to it, if he really means what he says, viz. that he understands it according to its ordinary use in the common affairs of life, to be a crediting some report, declaration, or testimony, or to be credence, and nothing else. If therefore there is an important difference between this and the idea which Mr. Fuller attaches to believing, it must be a difference in his *real meaning* from the *plain sense* of his words, which belongs to him to reconcile.

When I take into view what he advances on this subject, I think Mr. Scott’s definition of faith would have suited his purpose better than his own. The belief of the truth, he says, is “a cordial *consent* to the testimony of God in his holy word;” and faith in Christ in particular he defines, “a cordial *consent* to the testimony of God concerning his Son.”† Had Mr. Fuller fairly retracted his own definitior,

\* Pref. p. viii. Note.

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

and adopted something like this, it would have been more consistent with his real sentiments; but to state true faith as only belief or credence, and then endeavour to explain it into something else, appears to me a deviation both from simplicity and consistency.

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

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

But notwithstanding my express declaration, with the scripture grounds of it, he still persists in his accusation.

\* Page 164, 165.



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

\* Page 165.

Fuller's assertion were true, that it did not contain virtue, yet his conclusion would not follow, viz. that unbelief could contain no sin; because there are many things (some of which I specified) which have no real positive virtue or holiness in them, and yet their opposites would be very sinful. Now as Mr. Fuller denies that there is any *virtue* in believing God with the understanding (the only faculty with which we can believe any thing,) he must, according to the principle of his argument, also deny, that there is any *sin* in disbelieving God with the understanding, or in holding him in our judgment as a liar. He cannot possibly avoid this shocking conclusion without giving up the general principle upon which his argument hinges, viz. That if there is no virtue in a thing, there can be no sin in its opposite.

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

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

\* Page 167, 168.

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

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

\* Page 167.

† Page 167.

Though the act of the mind which is termed *belief* must necessarily be of the same general nature in all cases, and though true faith is nothing more than belief; yet belief in all cases, and indeed in most cases, does not contain virtue. The following distinctions may serve to explain this a little.

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

\* Page 128.

† Page 171.

word, it must be a spiritual belief. Mr. Fuller also admits, that “ though believing, simply considered, is a mere natural act, yet believing *such things* as the gospel reveals must be a spiritual act.” *First edit. p. 25, 26.*—4. With regard to its *influence* and *effects*, as belief in general is the main spring in the life of man, without which he could have no rational motive or end in his volitions, affections, or actions; so the belief of divine revelation, and particularly of the gospel, on the authority of God, is represented in Scripture, as the main spring in the life of a Christian, or as the root or principle of all Christian virtues, Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6. 1 Tim. i. 5. Heb. xi. 1. John v. 4, 5. Hence it is that the same moral influence and effects upon the will, affections and life which are ascribed to the word and Spirit of God, are also ascribed to faith. Now Mr. Fuller admits that “ if faith is the root of holiness, it must be holy itself; for the nature of the fruit corresponds with that of the root.”\* Thus it appears, that the quality of belief depends much on the nature of its productive cause, grounds, objects and effects. When these are not holy and spiritual, neither is belief; but when they are, belief must be also holy and spiritual; and with this Mr. Fuller seems to agree in every particular. I shall only add,—5. That as without faith, it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6.—as faith is highly commended in Scripture, Mat. xv. 28. Rom. iv. 18—23. Heb. xi.—and as it has the promise of spiritual blessings (Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 15. 36. Acts x. 43. ch. xiii. 39. ch. xvi. 31. Rom. x. 9.) it must be spiritual and holy, or rather the radical principle of all spirituality and holiness. And here I adopt Mr. Fuller’s criterion of spirituality, viz. that “ whatever has the promise of spiritual blessings, that is considered as a spiritual exercise.”†

The reader will now perceive with what justice Mr. Fuller represents me as denying that faith contains any

\* Page 166.

† Page 74.

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

It has already been shown that Mr. Fuller, very inconsistently, both admits and denies "that faith is credence and nothing else;" and that not merely in some inadvertent and occasional expressions, but in a train of reasoning on both sides of the question. But the whole scope of his Appendix goes to deny that faith (be its cause, grounds, objects, or effects what they may) can be a holy principle, unless it arise from a previous moral state of the heart, and be produced by an act of the will. But though the gospel is of such a salutary and interesting nature, that no man can be believing it, if his will continues either averse or indifferent to it, yet belief is not an act of the will; for could we suppose a man ever so much inclined to work himself up into a persuasion of its truth, yet he cannot give real credit to it till he perceive it to be the testimony of God. If he could, what is the use of all that accumulated divine evidence which attended and confirmed it at its first publication? Was it not written and recorded for this express purpose, "that men *might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through his name?" John xx. 31. It is this evidence which

\* Page 161.

makes the command to believe reasonable, and which leaves those who believe not altogether without excuse, John xv. 22, 24. But I shall attend a little to the manner of his reasoning on this subject.

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

But the principle here laid down, is so far from being self-evident, that to me it does not appear evident at all. That the commands of God extend both to the will, and to that which comes under its influence, I freely admit; but that they extend ONLY to these, I deny; for it is evident, particularly in the present case, that they extend ALSO to the belief of the revealed truths and motives by which the will itself is influenced. None of his commands whatever extend to blind volitions, enjoining *consent* to, or acquiescence in any thing which is supposed to be neither *perceived* nor *believed* in the judgment; nor could any actings of the will in such a case, supposing them to exist, be of a holy nature, or acceptable to God. The first and great commandment of the law is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, which certainly respects the exercise of the will and affections, and that obedience which comes under their influence; but it is equally evident, that this pre-supposes a *belief* "that God is," that he is holy, just, and good, "and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Without this belief, or *previous* to it, there cannot, in the nature of things, be any holy exercise of the will and affections towards God, nor any acceptable obedience to him, Heb. xi. 6. Every command of God, therefore, extends not only to the will, and what falls under its influence, but also to the belief of the motives he sets be-

\* Page 163.

before us, to influence the will itself. And I cannot conceive of a truth more self-evident than this, that every holy motion of the will and affections towards God, always presupposes the mind's *perception* and *belief* of some manifestation which God hath made of himself.

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



God enlightening the mind to perceive the truth and its evidence. It is of his *own will*, not ours, that God begets us to the faith with the word of truth, James i. 18. Every thing that is holy in the state of the heart, or exercise of the will and affections, is the effect of the truth believed; for faith purifies the heart, and worketh by love, but is itself the gift of God.

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

But if faith "be no further a *duty*, than as influenced by the moral state of the heart," then it can be no man's duty to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son, till he is previously possessed of that moral state. Till then, neither the *revelation* of God's testimony with its *evidence*, his *faithfulness* in that testimony, nor his *command* to believe it, can, according to this, constitute faith a *duty*, nor unbelief a *sin*! So that the obligation which makes it a duty to believe God, must be founded entirely on some *previous good disposition* wrought within us, and not in any *objective revelation*, or *command* of God in his word. Again, if faith is not a duty, unless it arises from a previous moral state of the heart, then no man who adopts this opinion, will find himself warranted to believe, till he knows that the state of his heart is changed. This must be its unavoidable effect, so far as it operates, and, in my opinion a very pernicious one. To say, that he "cannot possibly be *conscious* of this change, till he has believed,"† is no answer at all to this. It is only saying, that in his first believing, he cannot possibly avoid presumption. Further, to assert that faith cannot be genuine, and so a duty, unless it arise from a previous moral state of the heart, is to take for granted the very point at issue, though the regular

\* Page 163.

† Ibid.

exercise of our faculties, the Scripture instances of conversion, the nature of the means to which that change is ascribed, &c. all militate against that assertion. It is contrary to the regular exercise of our faculties that the state of the heart should be changed previous to any illumination of the mind, or while the soul is in a state of total ignorance and unbelief. It does not agree with the Scripture instances of conversion; for in none of them do we read of any real change in the state of the heart previous to their hearing the word and its influence, though some might be less prejudiced and more candid than others. Nor does it comport with the nature of the means with which the Spirit concurs in producing that change, and to which it is always ascribed, viz. the word of God; for it is obvious, that if the word is the means, it can have no influence in changing the state of the heart any farther than it is understood and believed.

He thinks, "We might as well make a passive admission of light into the eye, or of sound into the ear, duties, as a *passive admission* of truth into the mind."\*

But I see no reason why believing should be considered as a mere *passive admission* of truth into the mind. The truths of revelation are not like surrounding material objects which obtrude and act upon our bodily senses. They respect things spiritual and invisible, and are brought to the view of our minds merely by means of testimony, and therefore our belief of that testimony requires the mind's attention to, and consideration of its import and evidence. The gospel report, indeed, comes to us unsolicited, and faith comes by hearing that report, and by the divine influence which accompanies it; yet believing itself is the proper exercise of our own minds, and we are no otherwise passive in believing the testimony of God than we are in believing the testimony of men to which it is

compared. But with regard to that previous moral state of the heart which, in Mr. Fuller's opinion, makes faith a *duty*, it is a thing wherein the mind is *perfectly passive*; for, according to him, it is produced immediately by the Spirit operating upon the will without the word, or any truth communicated to the judgment, and in which the soul is not only *passive*, but of which it is altogether *unconscious*.\* yet from this passive and unconscious moral state of the heart, he supposes the duty and activity of faith to arise; and this faith he describes to be a receiving the truth into the *heart*, or a *voluntary* acquiescence in it. But it is obvious to the common sense of mankind, that no truth can be acquiesced in by the will, or received into the affections, till it is first perceived and believed. And this self-evident truth interferes with all Mr. Fuller's arguments on this head.

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

Here he plainly denies that it is a *duty* to believe the divine testimony merely with the intellect, or that power of the mind termed the understanding, though it is by that alone we can perceive its import and evidence, and assent to its truth. Had he only denied that there can be any real belief of the gospel when it does not influence the will and affections, I should most heartily subscribe to it; but to deny that a belief of the gospel with the *understanding* is itself a *duty*, is to deny that we are under any *obligation* to

\* Page 135.

† Page 128.

believe God; nay, it is in effect to deny that it is our duty to acquiesce in, or love the truth; for that depends entirely on a previous perception and belief of it, and can have no existence without this.

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

He affirms, that “aversion of heart is the *only* obstruction to faith;—that the removal of that aversion is the *kind* of influence necessary to produce it—that the mere force of evidence, however clear, will not change the disposition of the heart,” and that “in this case therefore, and this *only*, it requires the exceeding greatness of divine power to enable a sinner to believe.”\* Now as he restricts the influences of the Holy Spirit entirely to the will, and speaks so diminutively of the understanding, denying that its exercise in believing the gospel is a duty, or of a holy nature, so as to require the influence of the Holy Spirit to produce it; I think it plainly appears from all this, that he does not

\* Page 128.

consider the understanding as the subject of any part of regeneration, or as capable of it; or if he does, he must consider it as changed into something else than the understanding, something "more than rationality, or a capacity of understanding the nature of evidence," and its exercise into something else than a *perception* and *belief* of the truth.

But the word of God speaks very differently on this head. It represents the *darkness, blindness* and *ignorance* of the mind with regard to spiritual things, as the source of mens alienation from the life of God, and of their rebellion against him, Eph. iv. 18, 19—as that by which Satan reigns in and maintains his power over the minds of men, Acts xxvi. 18. Eph. vi. 12. Col. i. 13; and under which he endeavours still to keep them, notwithstanding the publication of the gospel, by blinding their minds lest the light of it should shine into them, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. On the other hand, the regeneration and conversion of sinners is represented as effected by means of light communicated to the understanding. It is described as the opening of their eyes by means of the gospel, turning them from darkness to light, and so from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 18—as a delivering them from the power of darkness, and translating them into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Col. i. 13. The new man is said to be renewed in knowledge, chap. iii. 10, and the spiritual man to discern the things of the Spirit as revealed in the gospel, 1 Cor. ii. 15. and hence it is termed *spiritual understanding*, Col. i. 9. Paul prays in behalf of the Ephesian believers for a further illumination of their understanding by the Spirit, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know," &c. Eph. i. 17, 18. With regard to faith, it is plain that it has its seat in an enlightened understanding. Those on whom the word has

its proper effect are they who hear and UNDERSTAND it, Matt. xiii. 23. and the highest degree of faith is termed "the full assurance of UNDERSTANDING," Col. ii. 2. Many other passages might be produced to the same purpose; but these are sufficient to show, that the understanding is the subject of regeneration as well as the will; that the Holy Spirit exerts his special influence upon it, and that faith has its seat there. Further, as the word is the means of regeneration and sanctification, it is plain that it must be understood and believed in the judgment previous to its influence upon the will.

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

Christ says, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who has sent me draw him," John vi. 44. On this he observes, "That the only bar to which our Lord refers, lies in that *reluctance* or *aversion* which the drawing of the Father implies and removes."\* That God removes the aversion of the will is freely granted; but how, or in what order? By an immediate influence upon it, previous to any communication of spiritual light to the judgment? No; for Christ in the following verse explains this drawing to be by divine *teaching*: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore who hath heard and LEARNED of the Father, cometh unto me,"

\* Page 65.

ver. 45. It is evident therefore that there is a bar of *ignorance* to be removed as well as of *aversion*, and that the former must be removed in order to a removal of the latter. Peter addressing the Jews, says, "And now, brethren, "I wot that THROUGH IGNORANCE ye did it, as did also your rulers," Acts iii. 17. but Mr. Fuller, upon his principle, would have told them, that it was ONLY THROUGH AVERSION they did it, and that though they KNEW, yet they crucified the Lord of Glory. Paul says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it IGNORANTLY in UNBELIEF," 1 Tim. i. 13. but Mr. Fuller would have told him, that had he been duly convinced of his sin, he would have been sensible that he did it KNOWINGLY, and that his unbelief was nothing but *aversion*.

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

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

By a *grace* I suppose he means a *fruit* of the Spirit, and in this I fully agree with him; for faith is the gift of God, and is given on the behalf of Christ, Eph. ii. 8. Phil. i. 29. and I have also inferred from this, that it must be spiritual and holy (see before, p. 35.) But yet we differ as to what faith itself is. I view it as the *belief* of a spiritually enlightened understanding; but he considers it as consisting chiefly of the *consent* or *acquiescence* of the will, and denies it to be holy in any other view. But he proceeds,

"Secondly, Faith is that in the exercise of which we *give glory to God*, Rom. iv. 20.—If faith be what Mr. M'Lean acknowledges it to be, a *duty*, and an exercise of *obedience* its possessing such a tendency is easily conceived, but if it be a *passive reception of the truth*, on which the moral

\* Page 171.

state of the heart has no influence, how can such a property be ascribed to it?\*"

I do consider it as an indispensable *duty* to believe all that God says, and look upon it as *obedience*, because he hath commanded it. As to the nature of faith itself, I have no other idea of it than that which the apostle gives of Abraham's faith in the passage referred to. Nothing can be plainer than that it was his *believing* God's promise respecting his seed, (Gen. xv. 4—7.) And notwithstanding he knew that its accomplishment was altogether above the power of nature, or any fitness in himself, yet being the promise of a faithful and almighty God, he "against hope BELIEVED in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was STRONG IN FAITH, giving glory to God. And being FULLY PERSUADED, that what he had promised he was able also to perform," &c. ver. 18—22. Thus, in believing God's promise, he gave him the glory of his power and faithfulness. This account of Abraham's faith is too plain to need any comment; and what a contrast does it form to the numerous and jarring descriptions of faith with which the world has since been pestered and puzzled! The apostle intends it not only as a description, but commendation of Abraham's faith, as an example of ours, ver. 23, 24, 25. Yet he says nothing of the previous moral state of of Abraham's heart, whatever that was, nor of the actings of his will and affections, which now make the capital figure in modern definitions of faith. Nothing is mentioned but simply his *believing* God according to that which was spoken, and the *strength* of his belief. And indeed nothing

\* Page 172.



could be more foreign, or even opposite to the apostle's purpose, than to dwell upon Abraham's virtuous and holy dispositions when setting him forth as an example of God's justifying the ungodly by faith without works. Another argument he uses is,

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

As to John xi. 40. it contains our Lord's words to Martha respecting the resurrection of her brother, when she appeared to be staggered at the circumstance of his having been so long dead, and are intended to strengthen her faith; “*Said I not unto thee, If thou WOULDST believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?*” i. e. his miraculous power displayed. Mr. Fuller here lays the stress upon the English auxiliary verb *wouldst*, to shew that her belief depended upon her *choice*. Yet he knows that Martha was a believer in Christ already, ver. 27.—that she believed her brother would be raised at the last day, ver. 24. and not only so, but that Jesus could have prevented his death, or *even now* raise him up if he pleased, ver. 21, 22. What then was the belief which now *depended on her will*? Was it a belief that Christ could or would then raise her brother? And does Mr. Fuller think that she did not *choose* to believe this, or that her doubt arose from aversion to it? I should like to know how he accounts for that *slowness of heart* which appeared in the disciples to believe the resurrection of their Lord, Mark xvi. 11, 14. Luke xxiv. 11, 25. Will he attribute it entirely to their *disinclination*, or *aversion of heart* to that joyful event? The truth is, believers may have occasional doubts which do not arise from aversion of heart to the truth, but from remaining ignorance, or the absence of evidence from the mind; but these doubts are not removed by an act of their will, but by a renewed

\* Page 172.

perception of light and evidence in the judgment. Men frequently have doubts respecting things while they earnestly wish them to be true.

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

Another text is Mark ix. 23. "*Jesus saith unto him, If thou CANST believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*" On this he asks, "If believing had no dependence upon choice, or the state of the heart, How is it that our Saviour should suspend the healing of the child, upon the parents being *able* to exercise it? Did he suspend his mercy upon the performance of a natural impossibility; or upon something on which the state of the heart had no influence?"\* To this I answer, that belief is a *natural impossibility* in all cases where there is no information or evidence given; for "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard," Rom. x. 14. and though this had been the case with the parent of the child, yet Christ might justly suspend the cure till that natural impossibility was removed. But it is plain that he must have heard some thing of Christ's fame as to miraculous cures, and given some credit to it, otherwise he would not have applied. The disappointment he met with in his application to the disciples

\* Page 172.

might raise or increase his doubts if even the power of their master extended to that case; and this seems to have been the state of his mind in addressing him thus, "If thou CANST do any thing, have compassion on us." But it does not appear that this doubt arose from his want of *will*, or his not *choosing* to believe that Christ was able to cure his child; for nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to be fully persuaded of this. Nor was his doubt removed by an act of his own *will*, (though not against it,) but by Christ's reply to him, assuring him of the sufficiency of his power, if he only gave credit to it, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

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

There is no dispute about whether faith *implies repentance for sin*. It *implies* many things which it does not *include* in its nature. For instance, it implies both its necessary causes and inseparable effects; but these are not faith itself. He observes, that "it does not come up to the Scripture representation to say, repentance is a *fruit* of faith;" yet he owns, "that a *conviction* of the being and attributes of God, must, in the order of nature, *precede* repentance," i. e. even legal repentance; and he also admits, that whenever the Scriptures speak of repentance as followed by the remission of sins, it will be allowed that faith is supposed; for repentance without faith could not please God, nor have any connection with the promise of forgiveness." This I think is to admit that repentance unto life is a *fruit* of faith in Christ. But then he says, "faith without repentance would not be genuine." I grant it; but neither would faith without works be genuine; yet as faith and works are not the same, neither is faith and repentance, though they are more immediately connected.

\* Page 173.

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

As to *receiving* Christ, Mr. Fuller himself admits that it is “distinct from the *belief* of the truth as an inseparable effect is distinct from its cause,” (see before, p. 39,) and that “*receiving* him, in the order of things, follows upon *believing* the truth concerning him.”† Yet I own that *receiving* the testimony of God concerning him, is the same as *believing* in him.—All who truly believe the truth *receive the love of it*, because they perceive and believe the loveliness of what it reveals; but this does not prove that faith and love are the same.—Christ’s words *have place* in believers; but how does this shew that faith is more than an assent of the understanding?—Those who have heard and believed the word, *keep*, (or *retain*) *it in an honest and good heart*, as I have already shown (see before, p. 20, 21,) but what is this to Mr. Fuller’s purpose? None of these passages prove that faith is the exercise of affection, or that belief and love are the same, though in this case they are inseparable.

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

I have answered this already (see p. 42, 43,) and shall only here take notice of his explanation of these expressions; he says, “Doing any thing *with the heart*, or *with all the heart*, are modes of speaking never used in Scripture, I believe, for the mere purpose of expressing what is internal or mental, and which may pertain only to the understanding: they rather denote the quality of *unfeignedness*,

\* Page 174.

† Page 203.

‡ Page 175.

a quality repeatedly ascribed to faith, 1 Tim. i. 5; 2 Tim. i. 5. and which marks an *honesty of heart* which is essential to it." I have not the least objection to the positive part of this explanation; for if a man does not believe *unfeignedly*, he does not, properly speaking, believe at all, but only professes it with his mouth hypocritically. But I am perfectly at a loss to conceive what *more* there is in an *unfeigned* (or ἀνόποιος, *unhypocritical*) belief, than a real internal or mental belief with the understanding. I suspect it will require something beyond metaphysics itself to explain this, though I own I am no adept in that science.

"Sevently, The want of faith is ascribed to MORAL CAUSES, or to THE WANT OF A RIGHT DISPOSITION OF HEART." John v. 38—44, chap. viii. 45—47.\*

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

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

This argument is much the same with the last, and requires only the same answer; but I may add, that though unbelief is not a *mere* error of the understanding, yet there is some very essential error of the understanding included in it, as the Scriptures abundantly testify; and therefore to affirm (as Mr. Fuller constantly does) that unbelief "is owing *only* to the aversion of mens hearts, and *nothing else*,"‡ is to contradict a great number of the plainest passages in the word of God, and to deny that any direct

\* Page 175, 176.

† Page 176.

‡ Page 177.

illumination of the understanding is necessary to produce faith. It is to affirm, that an unbeliever may have the same *ideas* and *conviction* of the evil and demerit of sin, and the same *discernment* and *belief* of the truth and excellency of the gospel that a believer has, and that the *only* difference lies in the will or disposition of the heart.

Indeed, if Mr. Fuller's sentiments and reasoning on this subject be just, there must be a great deal of *improprieties* in Scripture language, which cannot fail to mislead us. Peter and James inform us, that men are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, 1 Pet. i. 23, James i. 18. But Mr. Fuller tells us, that, *strictly speaking*, this is not the case, for that they are born again of the Spirit without the word.\* The Scripture frequently attributes unbelief to *ignorance* or *not understanding* the truth, as one cause of it in those who hear the gospel, Matt. xiii. 19, Acts iii. 17. Rom. x. 3. 1 Tim. i. 13. But Mr. Fuller argues against this, as if it were a *natural inability*, like what arises from want of information or natural capacity, and so inconsistent with a *moral* one;† and therefore ascribes unbelief *entirely* to aversion.—Paul affirms, that faith is not of ourselves, but is *the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. But Mr. Fuller affirms, that it “cannot with *any propriety* be termed *the gift of God*; but he gives us that from which it immediately follows.”‡ Now if there are so many improprieties in the language of Scripture on this subject, “whence does it appear that the inspired writers wrote or spoke intelligibly?”

In my Treatise on the Commission of Christ, after having shown that true faith must be distinguished by its genuine effects on the heart and life, and having pointed out some of its immediate effects on the heart, I add, “But these *effects* of faith, or, which is the same, of the truth believed, ought not to be confounded with *faith itself*, as is commonly done. Though faith is the confidence of

\* Page 210.

+ Page 120.

‡ Page 209.

*things hoped for*, and also worketh by *love*; yet it is neither hope nor love, for the apostle distinguisheth it from both: *And now abideth faith, hope, love, these THREE*, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. The same may be said of all its other effects upon the heart; for whatever is more than belief is more than faith, and ought to go by another name," p. 82, 83. And in a note below I take notice of what Mr. Fuller had said on this passage in his letter, viz. that "faith, hope and love are THREE considered only in respect of their objects." But he denies that he "ever thought of affirming that they are three *only* in that view."\* If not, why did he give this view as expressive of the sense of the passage? Does the apostle affirm that they are *three* in different senses? He says, "My argument only required me to point out a sense in which they were distinct, provided they were not so in respect of their holy nature."† This, I am obliged to say, is a mere evasion. He knew I never disputed the *holiness* of their nature; and he was also sensible that his argument required him to deny that they are distinct *in themselves*; for to admit this would be to give up his argument, and therefore he places the distinction of faith, hope and love in their *objects*: the object of faith being *revealed truth*—of hope, *future good*—and of love, the *holy amiableness* of God, and of whatever bears his image."

In answer to this I observed, "That the apostle is not speaking of the *objects* of faith, hope and love, but of *themselves*; and if they are not *three* as distinguished from each other, their objects can never make them *three*. The apostle says, *the GREATEST of these is love*; but love is not greater than faith and hope in respect of its *object*, but in its *own nature*; which shows that faith, hope and love are different from each other, and properly termed *three*." Now, what reply does Mr. Fuller make to this? only the following, "I see no solidity in Mr. M'Lean's objection to an objective distinction."‡ This is a very easy reply; but

\* Page 199.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

I can excuse him for once, being confident that if a better had occurred to him, it would not be wanting. The whole drift of his reasoning on the nature of faith is to confound it with love, hope, and other fruits of the Spirit; and though the apostle distinguishes them numerically as *three*, and expressly says, that love is the *greatest* of these three; yet he professes to see nothing solid in my objection to a mere *objective* distinction, i. e. he sees no reason why it may not be admitted that love has a *greater object* than either faith or hope have! But though this absurdity were admitted, it would not favour his cause; for love could not have a greater object than faith has, unless it were distinct from it.

Mr. Fuller was sensible that he could not answer my objection to his view of this passage, and therefore has recourse to misrepresentation. “Mr. M‘Lean,” he says, “thinks that faith, love and hope are distinct as to their *nature*.”—True; but then he adds—“and that the *excellency* ascribed to love, consists in its being *holy*; whereas faith is *not so*.”\* Had he given this as an inference of his own from my view of faith, it might pass as a piece of reasoning, however unfair; but to state it directly as my sentiment, or as what I *think*, is, I am sorry to say, a violation of truth, and altogether unworthy of Mr. Fuller. He also affirms, that “It has been farther objected,” viz. to the holiness of faith, “that the reception of God’s testimony is compared to a reception of a human testimony; and as a disposition of heart, whether holy or unholy, is not necessary to the one, so neither is it to the other.”† But this objection is entirely of Mr. Fuller’s own framing; and he well knows that the note he alludes to (*Commission*, p. 75,) contains no objection to the holiness of faith, as I have already abundantly shown. See before, page 51, 52. Further, he amuses his readers with part of a private conversation which past between us at Kettering: “Mr. M‘Lean

\* Page 199.

† Ibid.



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

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

Though faith, hope and love are all holy fruits of the Spirit, and inseparably connected in the hearts of true Christians, while in this pilgrimage state; yet love is the greatest of them both in respect of its *nature* and *duration*.—1. It is the greatest of them in respect of its *nature*, as being more like God, or bearing more of his moral image than either faith or hope. We are expressly and repeatedly told that “God is love,” 1 John iv. 7, 8, 16. but it does not appear that either faith or hope can with any propriety be ascribed to the Divine Being; for as his wisdom, knowledge and understanding are infinite, and extend immediately to every thing, he has no occasion to receive any thing upon testimony; and as he is possessed of perfect happiness in and of himself, and has every thing that pleases him immediately in his power, so there is no room to hope or wish for any thing beyond this. It is evident that faith and hope, however excellent, are peculiar to dependent and imperfect creatures, and are adapted to our present state, while as yet we have not the immediate sight and possession of their objects. 2. Love is the greatest in respect of its *duration*. The state of things to which faith and hope are adapted will come to an end. Their objects are things not seen, and made known to us at present only by the divine testimony and promise; but when they become objects of sight and enjoyment, there will be no more occasion for faith and hope; “for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?” Rom. viii. 24. They will then give place to the immediate vision and fruition of their objects. But love never faileth. That which supersedes faith and hope perfects love, which shall endure for ever in the glorified state.

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

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

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

Thus it appears that faith, hope and love, are in the strictest propriety of speech termed *three*, and that the *greatest* of these is love. And therefore every attempt to confound faith and love, particularly on the point of a sinner's acceptance with God, is to pervert the Scripture doctrines of justification by faith alone.

### QUESTION III.

*Whether justifying faith respects God as the justifier of the UNGODLY ?*

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

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

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

“ 1. That unless we carefully distinguish faith from its effects, *particularly on the point of a sinner's acceptance with God*, the important doctrine of *free justification by faith alone* will be materially affected. The Scriptures

pointedly declare, That God justifies sinners “**FREELY BY HIS GRACE**, through the **REDEMPTION** that is in **Jesus Christ**,” Rom. iii. 24. and that this justification is received “**through FAITH in Christ’s blood**,” ver. 25. Faith *in this case* is always distinguished from, and opposed to the works of the law, Rom. iii. 26, 27, 28. chap. ix. 32. Gal. ii. 16. chap. iii. 9—15. not merely of the ceremonial law which was peculiar to the **Jews**; but of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, Rom. iii. 20. which says, “**Thou shalt not covet**,” chap. vii. 7. and which requires not only *outward good actions*, but *love and every good disposition* of heart, both towards **God** and our neighbour, Matt. xxii. 37—41. so that the *works* of this law respect the heart as well as life. The distinction therefore between *faith* and *works*, on this subject, is not that which is between *inward* and *outward* conformity to the law; for if faith is not *in this case* distinguished from, and opposed to our conformity to the law both outwardly and inwardly, it cannot be said that we are “**justified by faith without the deeds of the law**,” Rom. iii. 28. or that **God** “**justifieth the UNGODLY**,” chap. iv. 5. Faith indeed, as a principle of action, “**worketh by love**;” but it is not *as thus working* that it is imputed for righteousness; for it is expressly declared, that righteousness is imputed “**to him that WORKETH NOT, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the ungodly**.” “**It is of FAITH that it might be by GRACE**,” chap. iv. 16. and grace and works are in this case represented as incompatible with each other, chap. xi. 6. for “**to him that WORKETH is the reward not reckoned of GRACE but of DEBT**,” chap. iv. 4. Now, when men include in the very *nature* of justifying faith such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary (no matter under what consideration) to a sinner’s acceptance with **God**, it perverts the apostle’s doctrine upon this important subject,

and makes justification to be, at least, “as it were by the works of the law.”

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

The reader has here before him the whole of that passage which Mr. Fuller so strenuously opposes, and loads with the most odious consequences. He will perceive that I am not here speaking of faith as it works by love, or as a principle of *sanctification*, or holiness of heart and life (which I had mentioned a little before), but merely as it relates to *justification*, or respects the ground of a sinner’s acceptance with God; so that whatever Mr. Fuller opposes to it, must be restricted to that point, otherwise it is nothing to the purpose. The reader will also observe, that I am not here denying that faith itself is a holy principle; but I am opposing those who “include in the very nature of faith

*as justifying*, such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary to a sinner's acceptance with God." This I consider as perverting the doctrine of justification by *faith alone*. I had no particular view to Mr. Fuller in this, it being a thing too common with many; but as he finds himself concerned to defend it, he ought to do it in plain and express terms, and deny that sinners are justified by faith *only*, that there is any thing *peculiar* to faith in justification, or that it is any more calculated to exclude *boasting*, and to correspond with *grace* in this matter, than if we were justified by love, or the exercise of any other virtue. But instead of this, he involves the subject in a train of reasoning, wherein he sometimes appears to me both to admit and deny the same things alternately.

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

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

Mr. Fuller sometimes seems to agree with the above statement, at least in part. He admits, that "though faith, as a principle of action, *worketh by love*; yet it is not *as thus working*, that it is imputed for righteousness.—That justification by faith is opposed to justification by the works of the law, even those works which are *internal* as well as those which are external.—That faith is not supposed to justify us *as a work*, or *holy exercise*, or as being *any part* of that which is accounted unto us for righteousness; but merely as that which *unites to Christ*, for the sake of whose righteousness alone we are accepted."\* And with

\* Page 178, 182.

regard to the view which a sinner has of his own character when he believes in Jesus, he says, "He that believeth in Jesus Christ, must believe in him as he is revealed in the gospel; and that is as the Saviour of *sinner*s. It is only *as a sinner*, exposed to the righteous displeasure of God that he must approach him. If he think of coming to him as a favourite of heaven, or as possessed of *any good qualities* which may recommend him *before other sinners*, he deceives his soul: such notions are the bar to believing."\*— "He *worketh not with respect to justification*.—All his hopes of mercy are those of a *sinner*, an *ungodly sinner*."†

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

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

\* Page 111.

† Page 185, 186.



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

In the note (*Commission*, p. 76,) I put the question, "Of what use is it to contend for the moral excellence of faith, *in point of justification*?" To this he answers, 1. That it is of importance that faith be considered as a *duty*. 2. It is of importance that it be *genuine*, or such as will carry us to heaven, and not *dead* or *unproductive*; and, 3. That unbelief be allowed to be a *sin*."‡ All this I admit is of very great importance, and might be a proper answer to a question relating to the marks of true faith; to which might

\* Page 183, 184.

† Page 128.

‡ Page 166.

be added, that it is of importance that faith produce good works, without which it is dead, being alone. But as it is intended as a direct answer to my question on the use of the moral excellence of faith, *in point of justification*, it must import, that faith justifies as a *duty*, and as it is a *moral excellence*, and *productive* or fruitful.

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

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

in the note (*Commission*, p. 76.) I further observed, "That as this *fitness* in God's justifying, is placed upon faith's being a *moral excellency*, it must be such a fitness as is between virtue and its reward; and so this is only a round-about way of saying, that we are justified by faith *as a virtue*, which is above acknowledged to be justification by *our own righteousness*."

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

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

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

But the main thing to be considered on this head, is the peculiar and exclusive suitableness of faith to receive justi-

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

other is annihilated; so that if works of any kind, or upon any consideration whatever, have place in justification, grace and faith, according to Paul's idea of them, can have none. Justification, in that case, would be reckoned of *works*, not of faith; of *debt*, not of grace, chap. iv. 4. And that this is the sense, is plain from what he opposes to it, "But to him that WORKETH NOT, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the UNGODLY, his faith is counted for righteousness," ver. 5. This is indeed a supernatural method of justification, very opposite to our natural notions, and self-righteous bias; and therefore we need not wonder that it hath met with so much opposition from the beginning, under the most pious and specious prettexts. Nothing but a supernatural faith, like that of Abraham, can answer to it, or receive it; and that is the gift of God.

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

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

Why Mr. Fuller mentions the *phraseology* of Rom. iv. 4, 5, I know not, unless it be to insinuate, that it is incautiously or improperly expressed, and so not to be under-

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

considering the nature of the subject, of vast importance. But he proceeds,

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

It is my opinion, that *him that worketh not* means persons who have *never done any good works* in the sight of God, or acceptable to him, *previous* to their believing and being justified; otherwise it would not be true that God justifieth the ungodly; nor would their believing on him as the justifier of such be true faith, but the belief of a falsehood: I have no notion that the apostle means any thing different, far less contrary, to what he plainly says, as if he meant that God justifies the *godly*, though he does it *as if they were ungodly*. Such a sense is not only an addition to the apostle’s words, but flatly contradicts them. On the other hand, it never entered into my heart to imagine that *him that worketh not, but believeth* is descriptive of those who, from the first moment of their believing, “are actually under the dominion of *enmity* against God.” On the contrary, it is my firm belief, that the persons here described are immediately *reconciled to God* by that which they now believe, and as soon as they believe. Therefore my assertion, respecting the perversion of the doctrine of justification, has nothing to do with the execrable sentiment upon which Mr. Fuller wishes to found it; but it is founded upon the following principles which are intimately connected on this subject.—1. That *belief* in its nature is different from the *works of the law*, whether these consist of holy affections and virtuous dispositions of heart, or outward actions; for the law is not of faith.—2. That *believing on him that justifieth the ungodly*, is justifying faith; for this faith is counted for righteousness.—3. That such a belief is incon-



sistent with *working in order to be justified*; and—4. That every convicted sinner till he thus believes must necessarily work *with a view to justification*, for he can have no idea of obtaining it in any other way. If, therefore, Mr. Fuller would disprove my assertion, he must either refute these principles, or shew that the doctrine I oppose is consistent with them.

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

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

have to deal with Christ for pardon and justification more than once; and must always go to him as *working not, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly.*" And this sense of the passage, he thinks, is decisively proved by "the *examples* which the apostle refers to, for the illustration of his doctrine, namely, Abraham and David," who were both holy men many years before they are said to be justified.\*

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

First, There are several things here stated which are not disputed by me, but agree well with my view of the passage; as—1. It is not denied that the apostle is here speaking of *believers*. I have no notion that any are justified till they believe, though I consider their believing and justification to be coeval.—2. Nor is it denied that believing is *a good thing*. It is an effect of the regenerating influence of the Spirit and word of God, and the principle of all holy affections and good dispositions, though in justification it is distinguished from them; and therefore, when I deny that holy dispositions or good works are required as necessary to justification, I surely do not mean to deny that

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

faith itself is necessary to it.—3. Far less do I affirm, (as Mr. Fuller would have me,) that a person who believes is still “actually under the dominion of *enmity* against God;” on the contrary I maintain, that what he believes instantly removes the enmity of his heart, and reconciles him to God, exciting love to him, and hatred of sin.—4. It is admitted, that he that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, worketh not *with respect to justification*, either at the first moment of his believing, or (if he continues in the faith,) through his whole life after; for that would be inconsistent with such a belief.—5. It is also admitted, that a believer needs pardon, not only for the sins of his past life when he first believes, but a continued exercise of pardoning mercy for the sins he commits afterwards, during the whole course of his pilgrimage in this world. Hence believers are exhorted to repent of their sins, to confess them, and to come to the throne of grace that they may obtain mercy, which is promised to them through the atonement and intercession of Christ, Heb. iv. 16. 1 John i. 7. chap. ii. 1, 2. But I observe,

Secondly, That Mr. Fuller explains the term (*ασεβης*) UNGODLY, in this passage, to mean only the GODLY, and none else; for he represents them as persons who have *laboured and wrought for God*, and *done good* in his sight *previous* to their justification; and affirms, that “holiness may precede justification as to time, and that it may be *necessary* on some accounts, that it should *precede* it.” In short, he would have us to believe, that the apostle uses this term in a sense quite opposite to its usual meaning, and such as will fitly apply to the most *godly* saint on earth; for he maintains that “the *character* described by the apostle is not merely applicable to a Christian at the *first moment of his believing*, but through *the whole of life*.” I suppose he will admit there are some *godly* characters in the world, and that he would not reckon them properly characterized by any author who should term them the

*ungodly*, nay, though he should add the opposite character to it, and call them *ungodly godly* persons, which comes nearer the character he has in view. Why then does he attribute such a glaring impropriety of speech to the inspired apostle, who is arguing closely upon the most important subject? The word *ungodly* occurs in the New Testament, I believe, seven or eight times, and the word *ungodliness* about six; but neither of them are ever used to characterize persons actually converted, but the very reverse; and therefore it would be strange beyond all example, if the apostle had used it here in a sense altogether opposite to its usual acceptation.

Mr. Fuller, however, ventures to produce another passage where the word *ungodly* signifies the *godly*, viz. Rom. v. 6. "Christ is said to have died for the *ungodly*. Did he then lay down his life only for those who *at the time* were actually his enemies? If so, he did not die for any of the Old Testament saints; nor for any of the godly who were then alive; not even for his own apostles."\* According to this, Christ could not have died *only for the ungodly* or his *enemies*, unless he had died before there were any saints upon earth! But it is plain beyond all dispute, that the word *ungodly* in this passage has not the least reference to any as godly; and though it may include all the saints both before and at the time of Christ's death, yet it respects none of them as saints, but is expressive of their former irregenerate state, wherein they are classed with all the rest of the ungodly for whom Christ died; and so are strictly and properly termed such, as having been really ungodly, enemies, and children of wrath even as others. The apostle is writing to Christians, among whom he includes himself, and, to set forth the exceeding greatness of the love of God towards them, he brings to view their *former* state and character, as being *without strength, ungodly, sinners*,

\* Page 188.

*enemies*; and so he expresses himself not in the present but past tense, thus; “When WE WERE YET without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.—While WE WERE YET sinners Christ died for us.—If when WE WERE enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” &c. ver. 6, 8, 10. This passage, therefore, makes nothing for Mr. Fuller’s purpose, but proves on the contrary, that Christ died for such as in the strictest sense were *ungodly*, even as ch. iv. 5. proves that God is the justifier of such, and that justifying faith is a believing on him under that character.

Thirdly, Mr. Fuller thinks it makes no difference as to the *freeness* of grace in justification, whether holiness be required in order of time *before* it, or *after* it; for he says, “If *antecedent* holiness destroy the freeness of grace, I know of no solid reason why *consequent* holiness should not operate in the same way.—It is not the *priority of time* that makes any difference, but that of *causation*.” So that, according to him, it makes no difference whether holiness be required *before* justification or *after* it; if holiness is not the *cause* of justification, grace is equally free in both cases. But Paul was of a very different mind, who, in setting forth the *freeness* of grace in election, redemption and justification, lays a great deal of stress upon its *priority* in order of time to any holiness in us, and by this he demonstrates that no holiness or works of ours can possibly be the *cause*. He represents election as *prior* not only to our existence, but to the creation of the world, to shew that it is entirely of grace, and not of our works or holiness; and illustrates the freedom and sovereignty of grace in it, by the distinction made between Esau and Jacob while as yet they were not born, or had done any good or evil *previous* to the revelation of the divine purpose respecting them, Eph. i. 4. Rom. xi. 5, 6. chap. ix. 11—14. With the same view, he represents the death of Christ as *prior* to any holiness, at least either in himself or those he writes to; and that it was when they were yet without strength,

ungodly, sinners and enemies, that he died for them, Rom. v. 6—11. With regard to justification, he takes pains to shew, that Abraham was justified by faith in God's promise *before* he was possessed of that holiness, or had done any of those works which the Judaizers made necessary to it, and while he was only an uncircumcised Gentile, Rom. iv. 9—13. He also founds an argument upon the *priority* of the promise, (which includes the Gentiles,) to the giving of the law of Moses, to shew that the blessing freely promised is not obtained by men's holiness or works, but purely by faith, *that it might be by grace*, and so *sure* to all Abraham's spiritual seed, both of Jews and Gentiles, Rom. iv. 13—17. Gal. iii. 8, 9, 17, 18. Further, he takes notice of the Lord's words in Isaiah, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me," Rom. x. 20. which exclude men's holiness not only as the *cause*, but as *antecedent* to the blessing here promised. And this corresponds with the Scripture instances of God's being found of, and made manifest to guilty sinners; for what holiness had Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, the thief on the cross, the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, Saul the persecutor, the Philippian jailor, or, in short, any of all the idolatrous Gentiles, *previous* to their believing the gospel?

But I must further observe, that when holiness, (under whatever consideration,) is required of a sinner *previous*, or in order to his being justified, justification cannot appear to him to be of free grace, through faith as opposed to works. He indeed may admit, that any holiness in him cannot merit justification, and that in this respect he can only be justified through the righteousness of Christ; but still he must look upon this antecedent holiness as coming betwixt him and Christ, and as absolutely necessary to his obtaining an interest in Christ's righteousness and justification by it. He must necessarily view justification as suspended upon his possessing this antecedent holiness,

and so consider it as the condition on which he is to be justified ; which must have the same effect upon his mind as if he were to be justified by the works of the law. And if he is really concerned about the salvation of his soul, this antecedent holiness will engage his attention first of all, and lead him to strive and pray that he may possess it in order to his obtaining justification. So that while he has this view of the matter, he must necessarily be *following after righteousness*, or seeking to obtain justification *as it were* by the works of the law, or by a kind of antecedent holiness, which, though it may go under another name, yet, when made necessary to his justification, differs nothing in its nature and tendency, for words cannot alter the nature of things. In short, while he considers this antecedent holiness as necessary to his justification, he can have no idea that God justifieth the *ungodly*, nor can he believe on him under that character.

Fourthly, Though Mr. Fuller pleads for the necessity of holiness antecedent to justification, (when the sinner must be supposed without any actual union with Christ, and so in a state of condemnation, as all are till they are justified ;) yet he also maintains, that whatever previous holiness may be required of a sinner, and sought after by him as necessary to his being justified, “he worketh not *with respect to justification*, but in all his dealings with God for acceptance comes not as righteous but as *ungodly*.” But it is most evident, that if an awakened sinner believes that he cannot be justified without antecedent holiness, he must of necessity work to obtain that holiness *in order to his being justified*, and so have a *respect to justification* in his working. He may indeed apply to God while he views himself as an ungodly sinner, but it is to obtain this previous holiness that he may be justified, and his *aim* in all his religious exercises and dealings with God must have this for its object ; because the very nature of such a principle precludes the idea that he can be justified as a mere sinner,

or while he views himself as such, and so is inconsistent with his *believing on him that justifieth the ungodly*.

Fifthly, Mr. Fuller imagines, that if men admit what he calls the grand principle on which the apostle rests the doctrine of justification by grace, viz. *It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in ALL THINGS written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10, and if they also admit, that the righteousness of Christ, and not their own personal holiness, is the *procuring cause* of justification,\* this will sufficiently guard the freeness of grace in justification, whatever antecedent holiness may be required of men, or sought after by them in order to obtain it. But I apprehend this is a very great mistake. True indeed, such as are thoroughly convinced that they have actually incurred and justly deserve the curse of the divine law—that they cannot possibly deliver themselves from that curse by any supposed doing, exercise or holiness of theirs, performed either in their own strength, or by any assistance whatever—that the only work by which redemption from this curse is procured, is already completely finished without their concurrence, by Christ's being made a curse for the guilty, or bearing the punishment of sin in their stead, Gal. iii. 13—that God has accepted this as a full satisfaction for sin, Heb. x. 14, 17. and demonstrated this by raising him again from the dead, and glorifying him at his own right hand, Rom. iv. 24, 25. Heb. i. 3. chap. x. 12.—I say, such as really believe this, must see that justification is entirely of God's *free grace*, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; for this is that very faith whereby they receive justification freely as guilty sinners, and have peace with God. This alone can make them cease from working in order to be justified, and give them other *motives* and *aims* in all their consequent works and exercises, answerable to the freeness of that grace wherein they stand.

\* Page 179, 180.



But it is most certain, that men may admit that sinners have incurred the curse of the law, and are unable to deliver themselves from it, and that the righteousness of Christ is the only *procuring cause* of justification, and yet, after all, oppose the Scripture view of *free grace* in justifying the ungodly. Few indeed will plead that man, strictly speaking, can *merit* any thing at the hand of his Maker, or give unto him an equivalent for his benefits, even although he were innocent and perfectly holy, far less when guilty. “If thou art righteous, (says Elihu,) what givest thou him? or what receiveth he at thy hand?” Job xxxv. 7. Yet, by the help of some ingenious distinctions respecting moral fitness, congruity, and an established connection, natural or pactional, between virtue and its reward, a kind of qualified comparative merit has been strenuously pleaded for, whereby it is supposed that some sinners are better qualified to be justified by grace through the righteousness of Christ, than others who have no such qualifications, but view themselves only as ungodly.

It cannot be shewn that the Judaizers ever formally denied that sinners have incurred the curse of the law, and are unable to deliver themselves, or that Christ's righteousness is the only *meritorious procuring cause* of justification. They indeed taught the Gentile converts, that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved, Acts xv. 1, 5; but this does not prove that they avowedly made it the meritorious or *procuring cause* of their acceptance. They appear only to have added it to the faith of the gospel, as a necessary appendage *without which* they could not be justified by Christ's righteousness; and no doubt their main plea for this addition would be its conduciveness to secure the interests of holiness, and to prevent the licentious tendency of Paul's doctrine on this head. In short, it does not appear that they gave any other place to the *works of the law* in justification than what is now given to that *holiness*

which is supposed to be either *prior* to faith itself, or *included* in its nature as justifying. Yet they are represented as subverting the souls of men, Acts xv. 24; for though they did not formally renounce the gospel of Christ, yet Paul charges them with perverting it to such a degree on the point of justification by pure grace through faith, as to change it into another gospel. See Gal. i. 6—10. It were easy to shew, that the same opposition to the free grace of God in justifying the ungodly continues unto this day, and for the same reason, viz. to guard the interests of virtue and holiness. Nor is this opposition made only by those who deny the leading principles of the Christian faith; but, I am sorry to say, by many who are the professed friends of the doctrine of grace. The ancient Judaizers spoke out plainly what they meant, namely, that men could not be justified by faith in the atonement of Christ without the addition of the works of the law. But the moderns are not so explicit. The *works of the law* is an obnoxious expression on this subject, and therefore they introduce their additions under the notion of acting faith, in which they include every virtuous and holy disposition of heart as necessary to justification. The former paid no regard to Paul's authority as an inspired apostle, but avowedly contradicted him; but the latter admit the inspiration of the apostle, and contradict him only in their method of explaining his words. Both, however, agree in this, that God does not justify the ungodly.

Sixthly, Mr. Fuller affirms, "that the character described by the apostle," namely, the *ungodly*, "is not merely applicable to a Christian at the moment of his believing, but through the whole of life. We have to deal with Christ for pardon and justification more than once, and must always go to him as *working not, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly.*" But the apostle does not say, that the person who worketh not but believeth is *ungodly*, far less that such a character is applicable to a Christian *through*

*the whole of life.* This is a glaring misconstruction of the apostle's meaning, and contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture. The apostle does not use the word *ungodly* to describe the *existing character* of an *actual believer*, but brings it in under a description of his *faith in God*;—he is one who “believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly.” Should we search the Scriptures from the beginning to the end, we shall no where find the word *ungodly* used to describe the existing character of real believers in God, though it is twice used to describe their former state and character. It is, therefore, very strange that Mr. Fuller should put such an unnatural sense upon the word in this passage, as it bears no where else in all the word of God; and it is no less so, that he should fix the character of ungodly upon real believers through the whole of life *after* their justification, in order to prove that they were holy or godly *prior* to it!

In support of these contradictory notions, he finds it necessary to advance another strange sentiment; namely, “That we have to deal with Christ for justification more than once.” I have reason to think that Mr. Fuller's view of justification is pretty singular, and that he does not consider it as any *specific act* of God at all, but only the uniform declarations of the word of God, (the statute book of heaven,) as to what characters are exempted from the curse of the law, and entitled to everlasting life. Nor does he consider it as a blessing conferred at once:—“Justification,” he says, “is not of so transient a nature as to be begun and ended in an instant.—It is described in language which is expressive of its continuity.—It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?—He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.—Hence also believers in every stage of life deal with Christ for justification, desiring nothing more than that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the

righteousness which is of God by faith.”\* Now if it is a truth, that justification is carried on through every stage of a believer’s life, it will indeed follow that he must bear the character of ungodly unto the end, as he is not completely freed from condemnation, nor perfectly justified by the righteousness of Christ, any more than he is perfectly sanctified while in this world. But is this Paul’s doctrine of justification? Far from it. The passages he refers to are nothing to his purpose. I need not shew this as to Rom. viii. 33. and John iii. 36. the reader will perceive it at once; and as to Phil. iii. 8—15. Paul does not there represent himself as dealing with Christ for justification, as if he had not yet obtained mercy, or an acquittal from the sentence of condemnation, or as *labouring* to obtain that justification which is to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth*; but he is guarding the Philippians against the influence of the Jews or Judaizing teachers, by opposing his example to theirs in his setting at nought all his own legal righteousness in which he formerly boasted, and counting it but as loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and of his being found in him, having the righteousness which is of God *by faith* as opposed to *works*. With this view he also sets his example before the Galatians, (chap. ii. 18—21. chap. vi. 13, 14.) not as *labouring* for justification, but *living* by it. In like manner he also sets before the Philippians how earnestly he pressed after conformity to Christ, and pursued the Christian race, that he might at last obtain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, or the crown of righteousness and glory which fadeth not away. See 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. 1 Pet. v. 4. Thus, being already justified by faith, he laboured that he might be accepted, approved and rewarded at last as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 9, 10. A proper view of

\* See Gaius’s paper in the Protestant Dissenter’s Magazine for April, 1793, p. 145.

this would remove any apparent difficulty in reconciling Paul and James on this subject; compare Rom. iii. 28. with James ii. 24. But I must not enter upon this at present.

Had Mr. Fuller only affirmed, that believers have the remains of a corrupt nature in them, and are daily sinning while in this world; that they have constant cause to be humbled on that account before God, to confess their sins, and pray to their heavenly Father that they may obtain mercy through the atonement and intercession of Christ, (Matt. vi. 12. 1 John i. 7, 8, 9. Heb. iv. 16.); or had he affirmed, that pardon does not respect them as *godly*, but as *guilty*, and that, as such, they must always apply for it, I should have most heartily agreed to all this: but to affirm that believers are characterized in Scripture as *ungodly* through the whole of life, and that they are not completely justified at once when they believe in Christ, appears to me a very unscriptural view of this important subject. Our Lord says, "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is PASSED from death unto life," John v. 24. Paul declares, that "by him all that believe ARE JUSTIFIED from all things," Acts xiii. 39. and that "there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Justification is a change of the sinner's state; for hereby he passes from a state of guilt, condemnation and death, into a state of pardon, acceptance, life and peace with God; and this change of state is always represented as taking place at once when men believe the gospel. A person must either be in a state of justification or condemnation, for there is no middle state; and as the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe, so they must be perfectly justified from all things, and accepted in the Beloved, though the privileges and blessings pertaining to this justified state continue to be dispensed according to the believer's need. But I need not insist on this, as Mr.

Fuller, notwithstanding what he says above, admits, “ that we are introduced into this blessed state at the moment of our believing. From that instant we are no more under the law, but under grace. The curses of the former stand no longer against us, and the blessings of the latter become our portion.”

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

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

As Mr. Fuller has misquoted my words, and also represented me as maintaining that Abraham was justified while he was actually the enemy of God, the reader will observe, that the position which he combats is this, viz. “ When men

include in the very *nature* of justifying faith such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart as the moral law requires, and so make them *necessary to a sinner's acceptance with God*, they pervert the apostle's doctrine upon this important subject." *Commission*, p. 84. In this position I suppose that sinners are justified by faith only, as opposed to works—that holy dispositions, affections and exercises are internal works of the law, and effects of faith—that to include these in the nature of faith as it justifies, is to give the same place to them in justification as to faith itself, and so to pervert the apostle's doctrine, who, from the whole of his premises on the subject, draws this conclusion, "That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. iii. 28.

Now, in opposition to this, Mr. Fuller affirms, That the property of *working by love* is not only an immediate and inseparable effect of faith, but belongs to its nature as justifying, and that *as thus working* it is necessary to justification.\* That those who are described as *working not*, and as the *ungodly*, whom God justifieth, are really persons of an opposite character to what the words plainly express; but that they are represented as *ungodly*, and as *not working*, because, however godly they are, and however much they have wrought for God, during a series of years previous to their being justified, yet they work not *with respect to justification*, but in all their dealings with God for acceptance, come not as righteous, but *as ungodly*. And this sense of the words, he thinks, is supported by that part of Abraham and David's example which the apostle has thought proper to omit.† Thus he overturns my position, by reversing the plain sense of the apostle's words, making the *ungodly* to be the *godly*, who have a humble opinion of their own character, and their working for God during a series of years previous to their justification, to be notwith-

\* Page 183, 184.

† Page 185, 187.

standing their *not working* with respect to it! By the same rule of interpretation he might have told us, that those who trust in their own righteousness for justification are *godly*, because they imagine themselves to be so, and in all their dealings with God for acceptance, come not as sinners, but *as godly*; and though they are real *workers* of iniquity, it may, however be truly affirmed of them that they *work it not*, because they do not work it with a view of being either justified or condemned for it.

But it is time to return to the example of Abraham and David. Let it then be observed, that the great apostle of the Gentiles is establishing the doctrine of free justification by faith without works; and though his argument excludes all works of every kind in obedience to any law whatever, whether moral or positive, yet he has a particular view to the state of the controversy as carried on between him and the Jews or Judaizing teachers of his time. They maintained that except men were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved, Acts xv. 1, 5. Gal. vi. 12, 13. In opposition to this, he shows that some of the best and most respected characters among their ancestors, and who had been remarkably distinguished as the favourites of Heaven, were not justified by circumcision or any works of theirs whatever, but purely by faith; and for this he produceth the example of Abraham their venerable patriarch, and the testimony of David who was a prophet and one of the most eminent of their kings.

With regard to Abraham, though he was no doubt justified, or received into a state of favour with God when he called him at first, and made himself known to him, Gen. xii. 1. yet that passage of his history was not sufficiently explicit for the apostle's purpose; for though it supposes, it does not expressly mention Abraham's faith or justification, but only his obedience to the divine call. Nor was it to his purpose to refer the Judaizers to that remarkable instance of his faith, in offering up his son Isaac,



which was so highly approved of God, Gen. xxii. 10—19; for they could have replied, that that was a *work*, and performed after he was circumcised and in covenant with God, and so did not support his position, but was rather a proof of their own doctrine. Therefore, to refute the Jewish argument, he must bring an express proof that Abraham was justified merely by faith, and that before God had formally made a covenant with him, and while he was yet an uncircumcised Gentile.\* And to prove this he produceth Gen. xv. 6. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” This passage was directly in point, and fully to his purpose in all respects. The use he makes of it is chiefly to show—That Abraham was justified by faith alone, or *believing God*, and that not only in distinction from, but in opposition to all works of any kind, done in any view, or required under any consideration whatever, ver. 4, 5, 6, 16.—That he was thus justified while an uncircumcised Gentile; and that his circumcision afterwards was a seal of his being previously justified by faith, that in this he might be a pattern of the justification of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, ver. 9—13. and to this purpose he applies at last all that he had said on the subject, ver. 23, 24, 25. Thus he entirely overturned the argument of the Jews, who could not plead that Abraham was justified by any holiness or good works of his *previous* to his being circumcised, without giving up their plea for the necessity of circumcision to justification.

But it will perhaps be said, That though the apostle’s argument is a sufficient refutation of the Jewish antecedent holiness, it does not exclude that antecedent holiness which Mr. Fuller pleads for, because that was prior not only to Abraham’s circumcision, but also to the time referred to

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

Gen. xv. 6, when he is said to have righteousness imputed to him, and so is beyond the limits of the apostle's argument with the Jews. Now to this I answer,

I. That it is evident from the whole of the apostle's doctrine on this important subject, that he not only excludes circumcision and the holiness which the Jews supposed connected with it, from being antecedently necessary to justification; but he also excludes all holiness or good works whatever, either ceremonial or moral, which can in any sense be denominated *the works of the law*, performed either by Jew or Gentile, *with respect to justification*, or in any other view, from being antecedently necessary to it. He lays the foundation of all that he says upon it, by proving that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and in a state of guilt and condemnation, Rom. iii. 9, 19, 23; and that they are without strength, enemies to God, and ungodly, chap. v. 6, 10. This cuts out every idea that men can possess any holiness, or perform any acceptable works previous to their deliverance from that state; and to suppose they can, is a flat contradiction to the Scripture account of man's natural state. Further he shows that sinners are justified *freely by God's grace* through the *redemption* that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24. Now as justification supposes guilt, and respects the ungodly, so its being of free grace and through the redemption that is in Christ, sets aside every idea of antecedent holiness in the subjects of it, either as meriting it, or qualifying them for it; and thus only can it exclude all boasting, ver. 27. Again, with regard to the way in which men actually receive this blessing, he restricts that to *faith alone*, which he every where opposes to works on this subject, and declares, that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv. 5; and he represents this faith as corresponding with the freeness of that grace by which the blessing is conferred, ver. 16. Now as it is by faith alone

that men are justified, and pass from death unto life; as faith itself is the very beginning of spiritual life, and the principle of all holiness either in heart or conduct; so there can be no true holiness antecedent to it for a moment of time, far less *for a series of years*. And if it was otherwise with Abraham and David, as Mr. Fuller affirms, their case must have been very singular indeed, and their example altogether unfit to illustrate the apostle's doctrine respecting the justification of the ungodly.

2. Though the apostle cites Gen. xv. 6. as sufficient to prove to the Jews, that Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised; yet he does not by that passage intend to show that Abraham was not justified till then. It is plain, beyond all dispute, that Abraham was a believer in God several years before this, even from the time that the God of glory first appeared to him, Acts vii. 2, 3. and called him to leave his country, his kindred, and father's house, Gen. xii. 1. The promises were then originally made to him, which were afterwards renewed at different times, respecting the land of Canaan, the multiplication of his seed, and that all the families of the earth should be blessed in him, ver. 2, 3. To these original promises the apostle refers, when he says the gospel was preached before to Abraham, and terms them the covenant which was confirmed of God in Christ, four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law, Gal. iii. 8, 17; and he explains the spiritual sense of these promises to be the heavenly inheritance, the promise of the Messiah, and of blessing the Gentile nations in him, Heb. xi. 10, 16. Gal. iii. 8, 16. That Abraham *believed God* in these promises when first made to him, there can be no doubt; for the apostle, referring to this date, says, "By FAITH Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, OBEYED; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Heb. xi. 8. His obedience to the divine call, demonstrates his faith in God, and in

the promises he had made to him, and made him yield himself up implicitly to his direction. Now the Scriptures constantly declare, that all that believe are justified—that they have everlasting life—and shall not come into condemnation, but are passed from death unto life, Acts xiii. 39. John iii. 36. chap. v. 24. Therefore Abraham must undoubtedly have been justified when he first believed, and was converted from the idolatry of his father's house, to serve the living and true God, Josh. xxiv. 2. Mr. Fuller himself admits, as was formerly noticed, “that we are introduced into that blessed state,” viz. of justification, “at *the moment of our believing.*” From *that instant* we are no more under the law, but under grace. The curses of the former stand no longer against us, and the blessings of the latter become our portion;”\* and therefore he cannot consistently deny that Abraham was justified from the first moment of his believing in God. And now, what has become of Abraham's *antecedent holiness*, which Mr. Fuller thinks decisive of the question? Can he produce any of it previous to this period, when he first believed God, and was certainly justified? This I am confident he cannot do; for it appears that Abraham till then was an idolater; so that God, in justifying him, in the strictest sense, *justified the ungodly*,

But though Abraham believed God, and was justified when he first received the promises, yet his faith and patience were afterwards to be tried, and his justification to be further *manifested*. The accomplishment of the promises which included his notable seed Christ, was to begin in his having an heir of his own body; but this was delayed till he and Sarah were past age, and every natural ground of hope was cut off. In these circumstances the promise was renewed, Gen. xv. 1—5. when his faith in God who quickeneth the dead, triumphed over every diffi-

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

culty; so that, though he was justified before, on this occasion God manifested his acceptance of him as righteous purely by faith, without works, ver. 6, which is recorded not for his sake only, but for us also, Rom. iv. 23, 24. After he had received the promised heir, his faith was put to a further trial, by the command to offer him up for a burnt-offering, Gen. xxii. 2. This he obeyed in intention, and the faith which now wrought with his works was his "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead," Heb. xi. 19. On this occasion he received the most signal testimony of the divine approbation, and another renewal of the promises ratified by an oath, ver. 16, 17, 18. Thus it appears, that Abraham who was justified when he first believed, being freely forgiven all his past sins, and accepted into a state of favour with God, was afterwards manifested to be in a justified state, and approved of God upon the trial of his faith and obedience.

With regard to the testimony of David, the apostle quotes the two first verses of Psalm xxxii. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," Rom. iv. 7, 8. Now though these words may include that continued forgiveness of sin which is the privilege of the people of God who are already in a justified state, (see 1 John i. 8, 9. chap. ii. 1, 2, 12.) and though David, in a subsequent part of that Psalm, speaks of his acknowledging his sin, and obtaining forgiveness, and likewise shows that this is the exercise and attainment of all the saints: "For this shall every one that is GODLY pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found," ver. 5, 6. Yet it is evident that the apostle does not cite the beginning of this Psalm as descriptive of the blessedness of the man who has been the friend and servant of God for a series of years,\* and in whom the Lord finds previous righteousness and good

\* Page 187.

works, and so is justified by works and not by faith only of which James speaks, chap. ii. 24; but he produceth it as a description of the blessedness of the man unto whom God IMPUTETH RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS, consisting in having his sins freely forgiven, covered and not imputed to him unto his condemnation, ver. 6, 7, 8. which imports the imputation of righteousness to him. This is the only sense which agrees with the whole scope of the apostle's reasoning on the subject of justification; for he is not treating of the blessedness of the godly who have been for a series of years in a justified state, but of the blessedness which comes upon the ungodly when they are introduced into that state upon their first believing.

And now I leave it with the reader to judge, whether Mr. Fuller has proved by the examples of Abraham and David, that *antecedent holiness* is necessary to the justification of the ungodly; and if he has, whether these examples (as he applies them) do not equally prove, that men must be the friends and servants of God *for a series of years* before they are justified; for no singularity can be pleaded in the case of Abraham and David, nor any reason given why their justification should be delayed longer than other mens. As to what he says of the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness: a principle which he thinks requires to be disowned before the position maintained by me can be admitted,\* I have answered that already, page 26—30.

Let us now consider the sense of Rom. iv. 4, 5. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." The apostle is here showing how guilty sinners receive or obtain the blessing of justification, or of pardon and acceptance into a state of favour with God. Two ways are mentioned, viz. *works* and *faith*. As to the

\* Page 188.

way of works, he had before proved, that it is entirely shut up, and that it is impossible for any to be justified in that way, because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, chap. iii. 19, 20, 23; and that therefore men must be justified purely by grace through faith in Christ's blood, ver. 24, 25, 26. In the passage under consideration he shows, that if justification were of works it could not be of *grace*, or of free favour to the guilty, but must be counted as a *debt* due to him for his work; "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of GRACE, but of DEBT." Every body knows, that the reward of a man's work cannot be reckoned as a free gift, or matter of mere favour, but as a matter of debt due to him from his employer; "for the workman is worthy of his hire." The reward may indeed far exceed the value of the work, or any benefit the employer receives from it; and this must always be the case in all the works which the most perfect and innocent creature can perform in obedience to his Maker, for they cannot in the least profit him. "Is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect—If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" Job xxii. 3. chap. xxxv. 7. "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" Rom. xi. 35. In this view there never could have been any such thing as justification by works as a debt; even though Adam and the whole of his posterity had stood in innocency, the reward must still have been of grace. Had this been the apostle's notion of grace, he could not have opposed it to works in justification; for whether it were of works or of faith it would be still of grace or free favour. It is evident, however, that this is not the grace which the apostle has in view, for no Jew or Judaizer could deny that; but the grace he speaks of is such as would be annihilated, if works of any kind, or under any consideration whatever, were to have place in, or influence upon the justification of a sinner. In that case, he says, "the reward

is NOT RECKONED OF GRACE, but of DEBT." So that grace and works cannot mix here. They must both change their nature before they can unite either in the election or justification of sinners, Rom. xi. 6.

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

1. That *him that worketh not*, is opposed to *him that worketh*, in the foregoing verse. No hint is here given that he *worketh for God* in *any respect* more than *with respect to justification*; nor is there the least intimation of his being possessed of holiness for a series of years before this. The apostle expressly says, he *worketh not*, so that all arguments grounded on the contrary supposition are vain and nugatory, as being without the least shadow of support. Instead of *working* he is said to *believe*; "he worketh not, but believeth." On this I observe,

2. That *working* and *believing* are here directly opposed to each other, and the former is altogether excluded in justification: It is "to him that worketh not, but believeth." But if believing were a work, as Mr. Fuller affirms,\* the dis-

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



tion and opposition would be lost; and it would not be true that he *worketh not*, or that he is justified by faith *without works*; but only, that he is not justified by one kind of works, though he is by another. To say, that “though faith be a work, yet it does not justify *as* a work,” is a distinction only necessary for those who, having converted faith into a work, wish to avoid saying that we are justified by a work. The apostle did not use any such unintelligible distinction, because he did not consider faith as a work, and therefore had no occasion for it. While he sets before us the work of Christ as the only procuring cause of justification, he does not scruple to say, “that faith was reckoned to Abraham for (or unto) righteousness,” ver. 9. and to shew at large that this faith was his *believing God*, ver. 18—23. and that it is “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness,” chap. x. 10. In all this he uses no caution or distinction, as if he were apprehensive that he might be misunderstood, as pleading for justification by works. But if faith is really and properly a work, it unavoidably follows, that we are justified by a work, so far as faith is concerned in our justification.

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

(1.) The view he has of his *own character and state*, namely, that he is an *ungodly sinner*, an enemy of God, and a transgressor of his holy, just and good law, both in the state of his mind and course of his life; that he has incurred and justly deserves the infliction of its dreadful penalty; that his case is altogether hopeless as to any thing

the *true bread* that came down from heaven, answerable to which he represents faith as *eating* his flesh and *drinking* his blood; but would it be right to understand this of proper eating and drinking?

he can do for his own relief, and that, but for the sovereign free mercy of God through Christ to the chief of sinners, he must perish for ever: Without some suitable convictions of this kind he cannot believe on him that justifieth the ungodly; because without this he is not cut off from all hope in himself, or his own endeavours; he does not see himself to be absolutely ungodly, or as needing to be justified under that humiliating character. Believing on him that justifieth the ungodly imports,

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

the ungodly such as he is, purely through the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain. This, and this alone, gives peace to his guilty conscience and rest to his soul.

This faith in its very nature is *opposite to his working in order to be justified*; for it is a belief that all his works in that view are *in vain* and *unavailable*, Rom. iii. 20. It is a belief that all his works to that end are *needless*, because he sees that the work which justifies the ungodly is already completely finished and accepted without his concurrence, and that nothing can be added to it as the ground of acceptance, either in point of merit or moral fitness. Nay, it is a belief that all works performed in this view are exceedingly *sinful*, as frustrating the grace of God, and implying that Christ hath died in vain, Gal. ii. 21. Whoever therefore are working and labouring in order to be justified, have not yet believed on God as the justifier of the ungodly. Such a belief would have furnished them with other principles of action, and have made all their works and exercises turn upon a very different hinge. But we must remember that this faith is a supernatural principle opposite to our natural bias and reasonings, and therefore requires the mighty power of God both to produce and sustain it. I observe,

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

plained, I shall here give the sense in which I understand them.

*Faith* here does not mean the *object* of faith, as some explain it, but a man's *believing*. Abraham's faith, which was imputed to him unto righteousness, was his *believing* God, ver. 3.—his *believing* in hope, ver. 18.—his being *strong in faith*, ver. 20. and *fully persuaded*, ver. 21. It is opposed to *unbelief*, *staggering*, or being *weak in faith*, ver. 19, 20. and in this 5th verse it is described to be a person's *believing* on him that justifieth the ungodly. This sense is fixed down by the apostle when he says, "If thou shalt—BELEIVE IN THINE HEART—FOR WITH THE HEART MAN BELIEVETH unto righteousness," Rom. x. 9, 10.

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

But it will be asked, in what sense is a man's faith counted to him for, or unto, righteousness or justification? I cannot better illustrate this than by referring to what is

said of the miraculous cures which Christ performed on the bodies of men. He asks some of those who applied, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Mat. ix. 28. and to another he says, "Only believe; all things are possible to him that believeth," Mark v. 36. It was certainly Christ's divine power alone that healed them; yet not without their believing that he was able to do it; and when they believed that, his power was exerted in healing them according to their faith in it; "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," Mat. viii. 13. "According to your faith be it unto you," chap. ix. 29. And so he places their cure to the amount of their faith, or counts their faith to them unto healing: "Thy faith hath saved thee," Luke xviii. 42. "Thy faith hath made thee whole," Mat. ix. 22. Christ's power was always the same whether they believed it or not; but it was when it became the object of their belief that it effected their cure. Nothing could be more gratuitous and beyond the compass of human power than those merciful cures; so that the manner in which they were conferred clearly illustrates the point in hand. Healing the diseased answers to justifying the ungodly. Christ's *power* effected the former; his *righteousness* the latter; yet it was by *believing* that his power and righteousness are alone sufficient for these purposes, that the benefit was obtained, and so it is ascribed to faith. We may therefore run the parallel thus. To him that worked not for his cure, but believed on him that healed the diseased, his faith was counted for, or unto, healing; so, in like manner, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for, or unto, righteousness," i. e. justification: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," or to the obtaining of justification, Rom. x. 10.

From the whole it appears to me, That God may as properly be said to *justify the ungodly*, as to pardon the guilty, reconcile enemies, heal the diseased, or quicken the

dead; for certainly the character of *ungodly* applies to that state wherein men are really such; and if justification be a taking them out of that state, how could it be better expressed than by *justifying the ungodly*? Indeed none but the ungodly are capable of being *justified* in the apostle's sense of that word. For though faith is necessary to justification; yet as it is not the ground of it, but receives it as a free gift, and as this reception cannot be shown to be prior to it in order of time; so it does not constitute a *godly character* or state, *previous* to justification; for there is no *unjustified godly person*, nor is any person in a *godly state till he is justified*. Therefore justification must respect *the ungodly*, and the apostle's expression is the most correct that could be devised. It also appears, that justifying faith implies the person's conviction that he himself is ungodly and has incurred the curse; for he *believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly*, which he would not submit to but for such a conviction. Further, it is evident, that by this faith he is justified, or receives pardon and acceptance with God; for it is said *his faith is counted for righteousness*. Now, and not till now, his state is changed, and he is no longer ungodly, nor denominated such. That faith by which he is justified is accompanied by true repentance, purifies his heart, works by love, and is productive of obedience; and though sin, to his grief, still remains in him, of which he becomes more and more sensible as he grows in spirituality and the knowledge of himself; yet it shall not have dominion over him, for he is not under the law, but under grace. He lives by the faith of the Son of God, and Christ lives in him.

None can believe in Christ for righteousness without a conviction of sin and its consequences, for they can see no need they have of him, nor any suitableness in him without this. But many may have strong convictions of sin awakened in them both by the word and providences of God; their minds may be filled with fear and distress, and

an earnest desire of deliverance at least from the punishment of sin, and perhaps from sin itself as the means of obtaining that. They may also be very busily engaged in establishing their own righteousness in a variety of ways, and among the rest in fitting and qualifying themselves to be justified by Christ's righteousness. Nay, they may be taught in theory to renounce all this labour, as if they were doing nothing, and to depend upon the merits of Christ alone for acceptance; and so be engaged in doing and undoing, alternately working and, *as it were* humbly renouncing all their works; while in all this exercise they have not the least notion that they can obtain justification by believing in the work and worthiness of the Son of God as alone sufficient to justify the ungodly.

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

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

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

Upon this he proceeds to deny, that the case which I have supposed, is consistent with itself. "It may be questioned, he says, "whether this account of things be consistent with itself; or whether any *mere sinner* ever *views himself merely as a guilty sinner*: for such views include a just *sense* of the evil of sin, and of his own utter unworthiness of the divine favour, which no *mere sinner* ever possessed."‡ This is that part of the scheme whereby persons, previous to their believing in Christ, are taught to extract comfort from their convictions; and some are so extravagant as to imagine that, while in this situation, they

\* Page 189.

† Page 173.

‡ Page 190.



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

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

him; nor the least degree of attachment to the atonement of Christ on account of its securing *his* honour, and who wishes not to be saved *from* his sins, but to be saved *in* them. He also affirms, that I suppose this *hard-hearted* sinner is to be relieved by the assurance of pardon and acceptance with God, and that this is to be derived *directly* from the atonement; by which, he says, I mean, that the mere sinner is pardoned without repentance, or any holy affection to Christ—That no *mere sinner* in my sense of the term, ever derived relief as a mere sinner directly from the atonement; but *believing sinners* only. That by my way of reasoning, it should seem as though impenitent and unhumbled sinners not only derived their comfort in this way; but as if they were the only persons that did so.”\* By this, and a good deal more in the same spirit and strain, he shows his zeal for the holiness of unbelievers, and at the same time beats off the self-condemned, who can find no holiness in themselves, from looking directly to the atonement for relief.

I have not the least idea that a hard-hearted enemy of God, while such, can either receive or enjoy forgiveness; but I distinguish between such a state of mind, and that of an awakened self-condemned sinner, and also between the latter and a real convert who believes the gospel, has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is possessed of holy affections. For strong convictions of sin have often taken place, and been attended with various affections, emotions and resolutions, which yet have not issued in repentance unto life, or a real change, and so cannot be properly termed *holy affections*. Whether such convictions as issue in conversion differ in kind from the former, I will not take upon me to determine; but I am certain of this, that it would be very unsafe to build up any in an opinion of their possessing holiness merely upon the ground of their

\* See Page 190—197.

convictions, while they come short of a real change, and do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That conviction of sin and its desert which is subservient to faith in Christ, will never lead a person to think that it is any part of his holiness; for such a thought would be as opposite to the nature of his conviction, as his feeling a disease would be to his thinking himself whole.

Mr. Fuller ought not to have treated the case of the *awakened sinner* which I have stated above, and which deserves compassion, with such unfeeling contempt, and uncharitable invective; for whether I consider him as possessed of real holiness or not, he certainly deserves no such treatment from any, much less from Mr. Fuller, who ought to have recognized his case as the genuine effect of his own doctrine, and so have vindicated his holiness; but instead of this, he gets rid of the case altogether, by changing it into that of a *hard-hearted enemy to true religion*; and in this form he presents it to his readers, and combats it, as if I had either stated or approved of such a case!

But if he thinks the case which I have supposed not applicable, we shall take a real one, namely, that of the Philippian jailer, Acts xvi. in whom we may perceive a hard-hearted enemy to God and true religion—an awakened sinner—and a true convert; and all this in the space of a few hours. Mr. Fuller will certainly admit that he was a *hard-hearted enemy to true religion* when he attempted to kill himself, ver. 27. I suppose he will also admit, that he was a *true convert* when he rejoiced, believing in God, ver. 34. It remains then to consider his intermediate case as an *awakened sinner*, when he “came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved?” ver. 29, 30. Their answer to this was plain, direct, and pertinent, without any double meaning or reserve. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” ver. 31. But as they knew he could not believe till they

they told him what he was to believe, “ they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house,” ver. 32. The effect was, he believed what they declared as the word of God, and was immediately relieved, and made happy by it ; for he found the gospel-remedy perfectly suited to his case, and reaching him guilty as he stood ; so that he “ rejoiced,” or exulted, “ believing in God.”

Let us now suppose that an answer had been given to this self-condemned jailer upon the principles which Mr. Fuller has advanced. It must be something to the following effect:—“ You ask what you must do to be saved ; to this I answer in general, that if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved. But I must inform you, that there are many things requisite to your believing in a right manner:—You must first be *regenerated* without the word, and have your heart effectually changed, and its bias turned towards God, before you know any thing of Christ.—You must also truly *repent* of all your sins, before you believe in him, and in order to it. And with respect to this repentance, you must observe, that it is not a mere conviction of sin, and a dread of its just punishment, such as you seem at present to possess ; but a holy affection towards God, being chiefly concerned for the dishonour you have done to his name, and reconciled to his justice, though he should send you to hell.—Then with respect to your *believing* in Christ, you must not understand this in the common acceptation of that word, as if it meant simply your giving credit to the gospel-testimony concerning him ; for that would be an unholy speculation, which would never carry you to heaven. There is an important difference between this and the ideas which you must attach to *believing*. It is a grace of the Spirit, influenced by the moral state of the heart, and partaking of it, and including in its nature the exercise of holy affections and good dispositions. For God does not justify the ungodly till they are possessed of such antecedent holiness as I have described, nor perhaps

till they have been his friends and servants for a series of years." Such an answer as this must either have driven the poor trembling jailer into despair, or have set him upon that kind of perplexing labour which I have described in the former case; but could never relieve his mind, or reconcile his heart to God, as the apostle's doctrine did.

Mr. Fuller thinks that his doctrine of *antecedent holiness*, and of *working for God*, previous to justification, can have no bad effect, because, "whatever necessity there may be for a writer, in vindication of the truth, to enumerate these things, they are such as the subject of them thinks nothing of at the time, especially as the ground of his acceptance with God."\* But if the subject of these things thinks nothing of them at the time, it is not Mr. Fuller's fault. He has done what he could to make him both think and act upon them, and that too with a view to be justified. And does he imagine that after all his pains, the thoughtlessness or inattention of his readers will be a proper antidote against the genuine influence of such doctrine? Or does he indeed wish that this may be the case?

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

\* Page 185.



A

**DISSERTATION**

ON THE

**INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**





## P R E F A C E.



THE subject of the following Dissertation deserves to be seriously considered. It is certainly of great consequence to understand the Scripture doctrine and promises respecting the agency of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of men, and how far we are warranted to expect, apply for, and rely upon his divine aids.

Many have run into dangerous extremes on this subject. Some have a strong propensity to ascribe to supernatural agency things which are only the natural effects of second causes, and this is the occasion of much superstition and enthusiasm. Persons of this cast are always upon the marvellous, and, in general, expect little benefit from the word of God, unless it comes to them through inward suggestions, impulses and impressions, to which things they pay more attention than to the intelligible impressive voice of the Spirit of truth speaking to them in the Scriptures. On the other

hand, some are so extremely fond of accounting for every thing by the mere efficacy of second causes, that they will not admit of any divine interposition whatever, and so render it in vain to apply to God for the supernatural aids of his Holy Spirit. They indeed admit, that the word of God was at first given by immediate divine inspiration, but deny that any ordinary influence of the Spirit is necessary to make that word effectual to the salvation of men. It may justly seem strange, that any who profess to believe the Scriptures should embrace such a sentiment; for though they should have no experience of any such influence in their own case, it would be but reasonable to allow that the word of God is clear and express upon the subject.

The following pages on the influences of the Holy Spirit, were written in 1799, for the instruction of some who denied that doctrine, and without any intention of printing them; but several friends having seen the manuscript, earnestly requested its publication. This the author complied with, hoping that through the divine blessing it might be useful to others.

A

# DISSERTATION

ON THE

## INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

---

---

### INTRODUCTION.

The doctrine of the operations of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men in their regeneration and sanctification, is far from being a point of mere speculation. It enters deep into the Christian system, and our belief of it must regulate our practice in matters of the last importance.

This doctrine seems not to have been openly called in question by any professing Christianity from the days of the apostles, till about the beginning of the fifth century, when Pelagius and Cœlestinus, two monks at Rome, began to deny it. They maintained, “ That the sin of our first parents was not imputed to their posterity ; that we derive no corruption from their fall, but are born as pure and unspotted as Adam was when he came from the forming hand of his Creator ; that mankind therefore are capable of repentance and amendment, and of arriving at the highest degree of piety and virtue, by the use of their natural faculties and powers ; that indeed *external grace*, (i. e. outward means,) is necessary to excite their endeavours, but that they have no need of the *internal succours* of the divine Spirit to enlighten the understanding, and purify the heart.”\*

\* See Mosheim’s Eccl. Hist. vol. 1. 422. 2d edit.

These sentiments have been embraced by multitudes ever since, and seem to be gaining ground at this day. They admit that the Holy Spirit inspired the penmen of the Scriptures, and enabled them to confirm revelation by miracles; and also that God by his providence sends his word to men, and puts them in circumstances suited to excite serious attention to it; but deny that any internal influence of the Spirit is necessary to give the word its proper effect upon the heart: So that, according to them, God is the author of regeneration and holiness, only as he is the author of all the outward instructions and providences which are the means of producing them. These, they think, will sufficiently account for the conversion of sinners, without having recourse to any supernatural operation of the Spirit upon their hearts.

But it is evident that Christ not only saves men from the guilt and punishment of their sins by his blood; but also delivers them by his Spirit from the dominion and service of sin, renews them in the spirit of their minds, and fits them for the service and enjoyment of God. Hence they are said to be born of the Spirit; to be saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and through sanctification of the Spirit; which is expressive not only of the great change that takes place upon them, but also of the agency of the Holy Spirit in producing it. But as this last particular is the point in question, it requires a more particular consideration.

We shall therefore prove from the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit of God operates upon the minds of men in their regeneration and sanctification—explain the nature and properties of the operations pleaded for—shew the necessity of them in order to produce such important effects—take notice of some objections; and then, point out the influence of this doctrine upon vital and practical religion.

## SECTION I.

*Proofs from Scripture, that the Holy Spirit of God operates upon the minds of men in their regeneration and sanctification.*

It is almost needless to mention, that when these operations are in some passages ascribed to God, and in others to the Holy Spirit, the meaning is the same; as is clear from other passages which expressly declare that God performs these things by his Spirit.

The scripture proofs for the doctrine under consideration, are so numerous, and so connected and involved in each other, that it is not easy to collect them all, or to reduce them to distinct heads, so as to avoid repetition. The greater part of them, however, may be comprised under the following particulars :

1. There are many *promises* in the Old Testament respecting the conversion and sanctification of men, and that this great change was to be produced by divine agency. The following promises clearly express this; “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul,” Deut. xxx. 6.—“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,” Psal. cx. 3.—“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,” Jer. xxxi. 33.—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,” Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. see also chap. xi. 19. “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me,” Jer. xxxii. 40. To put his Spirit within them, to give them a new heart and spirit, to put his fear in their hearts, and his

law in their inward parts, are words clearly expressive of divine internal operations, producing regeneration and holiness in the inner man; and his causing them to walk in his statutes, and not to depart from him, is evidently a promise, that the same divine influence will secure their perseverance. As the fulfilment of such promises,

2. It is expressly declared in the New Testament, that the Holy Spirit of God *dwells* in believers. They are represented as temples of the Holy Spirit; “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” 1 Cor. iii. 16. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God?” chap. vi. 19. They are also represented as living members of Christ’s mystical body; and as the spirit of a man dwells in, animates, and actuates all and every part of his natural body, even so is the Holy Spirit represented as dwelling in, quickening, and operating effectually in the measure of every part of the mystical body of Christ: See 1 Cor. xii. 11—14. Eph. iv. 4, 16. Paul, writing to the Christians at Rome, says, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you:” where we see he explains their being in the Spirit as opposed to their being in the flesh, by their having the Spirit of God dwelling in them; and he immediately adds, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, (viz. dwelling in him) he is none of his,” Rom. viii. 9. Such as have not the Spirit are described as animal or sensual, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Jude ver. 19.; as in the flesh; as walking after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, and as possessed of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and cannot be subject to his law, chap. viii. 5—8. By the Spirit of God here, we are not to understand the extraordinary communications and miraculous gifts of the Spirit, by which the apostles and first teachers were qualified to reveal and confirm the gospel; for it cannot be said, that if

any man have not these, he is none of Christ's. Nor does the Spirit of Christ in this passage signify such holy tempers of soul as Christ possessed; for these are termed the *fruit* of the Spirit, (Gal. v. 22.); besides, the Spirit here is declared to be "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead," and by which he will also quicken the mortal bodies of the saints at the last day, ver. 11. It must therefore be the Holy Spirit himself that is intended. From all which it is evident, that it is essential to every real Christian to have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him, as without this he is none of his: So that this indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the common privilege of all who belong to Christ, and must import his internal spiritual influences upon their minds; for,

3. The word of God ascribes all the *gracious effects* which are produced upon the souls of men to the *agency* or *operation* of the Holy Spirit, such as regeneration, sanctification in all its parts, growth in grace, and perseverance in it to the end.

The *beginning* of the spiritual life, or of that change which takes place in regeneration, is ascribed unto God, or to the agency of his Spirit. Thus it is said, "Except a man be born again," or from above, "of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 5.—"According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit," Tit. iii. 5. Those who become the sons of God, "are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13.—"Of his own will begat he us with {the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures," James i. 18. That attention to, and understanding of the word which is necessary to faith is ascribed to God, as is clear in the instance of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul," Acts xvi. 14. That faith which credits the gospel, and is the root or principle

of every holy disposition, is expressly said to be the gift of God, and not of ourselves, Eph. ii. 8. and that it is given us in the behalf of Christ to believe on him, Philip. i. 29. When Peter confessed his faith, Christ says to him, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven," Matt. xvi. 17. and he thanks his Father for the display of his sovereignty, in making these things known to some in distinction from others who were equally favoured with the outward means; or because he had "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes," Matt. xi. 25. Agreeably to this, he tells the Jews who heard and rejected his doctrine, "No man can come to me," i. e. believe on me, "except the Father who hath sent me draw him;" and this drawing he explains of divine teaching, according to the promise, "they shall be all taught of God," John vi. 44, 45. From these passages it is plain, that the Spirit of God is the *efficient cause* of regeneration, though he uses the word of truth as the *means* of it; and that there is a divine teaching in begetting men to the faith, which is not vouchsafed to all who hear the gospel. To affirm that the Holy Spirit is only conferred upon men *after* they believe, but that his agency is not necessary to *make* them believers, is not only contrary to all the texts already adduced, but altogether unsuitable to the exigency of the case; for (humanly speaking) it requires a greater exertion of divine power to convert a sinner and create him anew, than to make him grow in grace after that change has taken place.

A number of texts ascribe *sanctification* or *holiness* in general to the agency of the Holy Spirit. Paul, writing to the believers at Corinth, says, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. And to the saints at Thessalonica he says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13.—Peter



designates those to whom he writes, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,” 1 Pet. i. 2; and the Christians at Philippi are encouraged to work out their own salvation by this argument, “for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” Philip. ii. 13.

There are other scriptures which ascribe the *different parts* or particular branches of holiness to divine agency. We have already noticed that *faith* is the gift of God. As to *repentance*, we are told that it is God who grants unto men repentance unto life, Acts xi. 18. and Timothy is exhorted in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves, “if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” 2 Tim. ii. 25.—Christ is “exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins, Acts v. 31.” This imports not only his giving motives to repentance, but also and chiefly his giving these motives their proper effect; for the Spirit works evangelical repentance, by convincing men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, John xvi. 8; and the Lord promiseth to bring the Jews to repentance, by pouring upon them the spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. xii. 10. *Love to God* is the chief part of holiness, it being the first and great commandment of the law; but it is God himself that puts this law in the inward parts, and that circumcises men’s hearts to love him with all their heart, Jer. xxxi. 33. Deut. xxx. 6. *Brotherly love* or *charity*, is another important branch of holiness. This also is ascribed to divine influence; “for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God,” 1 John iv. 7. Paul represents Christians as “taught of God to love one another,” 1 Thess. iv. 9. and this teaching implies not only outward instruction, but a divine influence upon their hearts; for he prays to the Lord for an increase of it—“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men—to the end he may establish

your hearts unblameable in holiness before God," chap. iii. 12, 13.—True *wisdom* is described to be "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy;" but it is also described as "from above," Jam. iii. 17. and we are particularly directed to apply to God for it, chap. i. 5. In short, every suitable affection towards God, and every good disposition towards men in general, or our fellow Christians in particular, every spiritual and gracious temper of heart which is included in true holiness, is ascribed to the agency of the Spirit of God upon the inner man working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight: accordingly, the apostle, enumerating some of these, terms them "the fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22, 23.

The believer's *growth, stability* and *perseverance* in faith and holiness unto the end, are also ascribed unto God and the continued influences of his Holy Spirit. Our Lord says, "My Father is the husbandman; every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit," John xv. 1. 2. see also 1 Thess. iii. 11. Paul mentions the power of God as necessary to establish Christians; "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel," &c. Rom. xvi. 25. Peter prays for the exertion of this power, "but the God of all grace—make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," 1 Pet. v. 10. And this is also promised, "The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil," 2 Thess. iii. 3. As to perseverance, the apostle says to the believing Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Phil. i. 6.—To the Christians at Corinth he says, "God shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. and he puts up this prayer for the saints at Thessalonica, "that he (the Lord) may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our

Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints," 1 Thess. iii. 13. see also chap. v. 23, 24. and Peter affirms, that believers are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5.

Thus it clearly appears from Scripture, that the agency of the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of regeneration and sanctification in all its parts, and also of its increase and continuance.

4. All that *inward consolation or spiritual enjoyment* with which believers are favoured in this life, is attributed to the Holy Spirit. He is termed the Comforter, and as such is promised to those who love Christ and keep his commandments, John xiv. 15—24. He comforts them by means of the truth, or by bringing Christ's consolatory sayings to their remembrance, ver. 26. that his joy may remain in them, and that their joy may be full, chap. xv. 10, 11. Hence this spiritual enjoyment is termed "the comfort of the Holy Spirit," Acts ix. 31.—"The joy of the Holy Spirit," Rom. xiv. 17. 1 Thess. i. 6. which clearly expresses his agency as the author of it. The gospel is in itself glad tidings of great joy, and holds forth the love of God in the clearest manner; yet it is by the Holy Spirit which is given to believers that this "love of God is shed abroad in their hearts," Rom. v. 5. so as to make them "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have now received the atonement," ver. 11. It is "through the power of the Holy Spirit" that "the God of hope fills them with all joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope," Rom. xv. 13. and that he "strengthens them with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness," Col. i. 11. see also Eph. iii. 16—20. It is the Spirit itself that beareth witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, Rom. viii. 15, 16.—that is the earnest of their inheritance, Eph. i. 13, 14. and that seals them unto the day of redemption, chap. iv. 30.

5. The encouragement given for the duty of *prayer*, and particularly *prayer for the Holy Spirit*, clearly proves that the Spirit is bestowed upon men. Our Lord says, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,” Luke xi. 13. This is not to be confined to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; for these were conferred only on some, whereas the promise here is general; “Every one that asketh receiveth,” ver. 10. The apostolic prayers for the Spirit in behalf of the churches (some of which have already been taken notice of) respect his enlightening, sanctifying, strengthening, and comforting influences, which are in some degree common to all real Christians: See Eph. i. 17, 18. chap. iii. 16—20. 1. Thess. iii. 12, 13. chap. v. 23. Rom. xv. 13. No believer of the word of God can suppose, that men would be enjoined to ask the Spirit; that he would be promised to every one that asketh, or that the inspired apostle would so often pray for his inward influences upon the hearts of believers, if indeed there was no such thing to be obtained. It must further be noticed, that these prayers do not respect the outward means of grace; for they were put up for the churches of the saints who were already in possession of these. The book of Psalms also abounds with such prayers. The Psalmist enjoyed all the outward means of instruction and edification with which God had peculiarly favoured the church of Israel, and he was also an inspired prophet; yet he was deeply sensible that he needed the enlightening, quickening, sanctifying and comforting influences of the Spirit to give these outward means their proper effect upon his heart; and this he clearly expresseth in such petitions as these, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law—Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments—Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,

and not to covetousness. "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way," Psal. cxix. 18, 34, 35, 36, 37. And in his penitential Psalm, he prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit," Psal. li. 10—13.

It will not be easy for such as deny the influences of the Holy Spirit to shew the end or use of prayer at all, as to any thing which respects inward piety or the power of godliness upon the heart: For as they admit of no influence but that of the outward means of religion, so when they enjoy these, they cannot consistently pray for any thing more. It would be hypocrisy in them to pray for the blessing of God to make the means effectual; for all such prayers contradict their real sentiments, and evidently suppose that the outward means are insufficient of themselves, and that divine influence is necessary to give them effect.

Some other proofs will fall to be considered afterwards in treating of the necessity of the Spirit's influence.

## SECTION II.

### *The nature and properties of the divine operations pleaded for.*

As there are mistakes about the divine operations under consideration, it will be proper to give some explanation of their nature and properties.

Many are of opinion, that, in regeneration, the Holy Spirit operates upon the mind in a physical or mechanical manner, previous to, and abstract from the introduction of light into the understanding, or by such operations as are suited to work upon material subjects. But waving this metaphysical and useless speculation,\* let it be observed

\* It is not meant to deny absolutely that there are any physical operations in the conversion of a sinner. Man is composed of soul and body

that the operations pleaded for are of a *moral* or *spiritual* nature, suited to the rational spirit of man, to the nature and regular exercise of his mental faculties, or to the constitution of his nature, as a reasonable and accountable creature. They consist chiefly in illuminating the understanding in the knowledge of divine truths, producing a firm persuasion of their reality, and a deep impression of their importance; in moving the will freely, by suitable motives, to choose the good and refuse the evil, and in exciting the affections suitably to the nature and quality of the objects presented to the mind.

Some are of opinion, that the Holy Spirit communicates divine truths to the mind by immediate internal suggestion, or impression, and without the use of outward means. But this sentiment, if not properly guarded, will open a flood-gate for wild enthusiasm and all manner of delusion, and lead men to despise the words of truth and soberness, and to prefer their own disordered and heated imaginations to the revelation which God has given in his word.

The Spirit of God is indeed as able to give immediate revelations now, as when he inspired the prophets and apostles; but as revelation has been long ago completed, attested from heaven by miracles, and committed to writing; as it contains the whole counsel of God, both as to matters of faith and practice, and forbids either to add to or diminish from it, Deut. iv. 2. Rev. xxii. 18, 19. as it is the only preservative from false doctrine, 2 Pet. iii. 2. the alone authorised standard and test for trying the spirits whether they are of

which are so intimately united, that they have a mutual sympathy, and act reciprocally on each other; so that physical operations upon the animal frame may affect the mind, and be made subservient to a real change. Again, if when the Holy Spirit communicates light to the judgment, ideas are raised in the brain, which make impressions there, the operation must be physical so far as the body or animal spirits are concerned. But to what purpose are such speculations upon the present subject, since the will and affections are not moved but by the ideas communicated to the judgment.

God, Isa. viii. 20. 1 John iv. 1—7. and as it denounceth a curse upon either man or angel from heaven that would bring any other doctrine, Gal. i. 8, 9. therefore we have no ground to expect that the Holy Spirit will give any new or additional revelation, far less that he will suggest any thing to the mind, which either differs from, or is opposite to the true sense of the Scriptures. On the contrary, we are assured, that all who pretend to such revelations are possessed of a spirit of error. The Holy Spirit works by *means* upon the minds of men in their regeneration. Awakening providences are often subservient to this end; but the word of God is the chief means, and particularly the word of the truth of the gospel. Providences may be useful to awaken serious consideration and reflection, and the revealed law of God is well calculated to enforce a conviction of guilt and danger; but till the mind is in some degree enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and the way of salvation through him, there is no saving change actually produced. Every thing short of this, however subservient to regeneration, is not the thing itself; for such things may, and often have failed of a gracious issue. Therefore we have no ground to suppose that a principle of grace is wrought in the heart previous to the knowledge of the truth, or distinct from it; for the gospel or word of truth, when believed, is itself the very principle of grace in the heart, and so is termed the incorruptible seed. Men are born again of the Spirit, John iii. 5. but the Spirit, in producing this change, acts upon the mind as the *Spirit* (της αληθειας) *of the truth*, even of that truth which testifies of Christ, John xv. 23, 27. chap. xvi. 13—17. making it shine into the heart in its divine evidence and glory, and so to produce its effects, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. 1 Thess. ii. 13. So that to be born again of the Spirit, is to be born again of the incorruptible seed of the word which by the gospel is preached, 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. The Spirit of God is the *efficient cause* of regeneration, and the word of truth the *means* of it; and therefore the apostle

James unites both in this work, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures,” chap. i. 18. The same thing may be observed of sanctification, which is ascribed both to the Spirit and to the truth, see 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2. John xvii. 17. Though the Holy Spirit communicates to men ideas and impressions of divine truths which they had not before, and also revives in their minds truths already known, either for conviction, direction, or consolation, as the case may require; yet in all this he does not reveal any truth besides what is already contained in the written word, though many events and circumstances in providence may concur to draw their attention to that.

The operation of the Spirit which we plead for is *internal*. It is an (*ενεργεια*) *inward work*, exerted on the mind and heart. Thus God is said to open the heart,—shine into the heart,—write his law on men’s hearts, and put it in their inward parts,—to strengthen men by his Spirit in the inner man,—to shed abroad his love in their heart by the Holy Spirit,—to work in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure,—to work in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight, &c. These, and similar expressions with which the Scriptures abound, clearly denote that the *operations* of the Spirit are *internal* upon the heart, as distinguished from the *mere influence* of outward means. This distinction appears also from facts. God delivered his law to old Israel from mount Sinai in an audible manner, and also wrote it with his own finger on tables of stone; he confirmed it with a train of wonderful works done before their eyes, and urged their obedience to it by the powerful motives of life and death. Here we see they were favoured with the most striking outward means; “Yet (says Moses) the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day,” Deut. xxix. 4. As this sets forth the obstinate blindness and perverseness of their hearts, so it also intimates, that the Lord alone could remove this:



But how? By giving them external means only? No, for these they were already in possession of, but by giving them an heart to perceive, &c. which must import the internal operation of his Spirit on their hearts. There is surely a difference and clear distinction between God's writing his law on Tables of stone, or giving it outwardly to that people, and his putting his law in men's inward parts, writing it in their hearts as he promiseth, Jer. xxxi. 33. Both are indeed divine operations, concurring in their effects, but still the former is external, and the latter internal. The apostle Paul alludes to this distinction where he says, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart," 2 Cor. iii. 3. Though Christ's words are spirit and life, and though the gospel is itself the ministration of the Spirit, yet it is a fact that the outward administration of it proves ineffectual to many who enjoy every natural and outward advantage that might be supposed favourable to it; and therefore its success must be owing not to any natural difference among men, but to the internal energy of the Spirit of God, and to this the Scripture constantly ascribes it.

The word of God also distinguishes the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Spirit under consideration, from the extraordinary and miraculous gifts which attended the first publication of the gospel, and served to confirm it. These extraordinary gifts were conferred only upon some, and that for the benefit of others, 1 Cor. xii. 7, 28, 29, 30. chap. xiv. 12, 22. They were to cease when they had gained their end, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. Some were possessed of them who do not appear to have been regenerated, Mat. vii. 22, 23. and this the apostle also supposeth, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.—Whereas the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit are *common* to all the children of God, and essential to their being real Christians; "for if any man

have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. These influences are absolutely necessary to their eternal happiness; "for except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 5. and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. for they are chosen to salvation "through sanctification of the Spirit," 2 Thess. ii. 13. Again, these divine operations have not ceased, like the extraordinary gifts; for the Holy Spirit is promised to abide in the church throughout all ages, Isaiah lix. 21. John xiv. 16. and this is also imported in the Lord's dwelling in them, and walking in them, 2 Cor. vi. 16. and in Christ's promise of being with them always, even unto the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20. It is clear, therefore, that the divine influences pleaded for are *ordinary* and *common* to all real believers, though they are *peculiar* to them.

The operations under consideration are *supernatural*, i. e. they exceed the mere influence of means, or the natural energy of second causes. So inveterate and deeply rooted is the moral disorder of human nature, that no principle inherent in man, no power within the compass of any of the established laws of nature, nor even the outward proposal of the most powerful motives of revelation itself, can radically rectify it. Hence the necessity of supernatural operations. But these operations, though supernatural, have no tendency to reverse, derange, or supersede any of that order, or of those laws which God has originally established in nature; on the contrary, they operate agreeably to the true nature of things, by causing men in some measure to perceive things as they are, and to be affected and influenced by them as they ought; and, as a sensible and pious writer observes, they "re-establish and promote the most important use and efficacy of natural causes, which is their subserviency to the knowledge and love of God in the hearts of rational creatures. They rescue our faculties from the most unnatural abuse and perversion of them. By

subduing depravity, they restore the primitive and original rectitude of our nature. They re-establish a blessed order and harmony in the inward principles of action, namely, the inclinations and affections of the heart. They render them suitable to the nature of things, proportioned in the main to the worth of their objects (the heart being chiefly attached to the chief good) and subservient to the true perfection of our nature, and the end of our being.”\*

Lastly, The divine operations pleaded for are *efficacious*, i. e. they infallibly produce the effects intended, and obtain their end. Many who admit the inward operations of the Spirit deny their infallible efficacy. They think the Spirit assists men in turning to God, by working in them good impressions and motions which have a tendency that way; but that men are always so far left to themselves that they may resist these good impressions, and continue as void of faith and holiness as ever. It is admitted that there may be many good impressions which are not effectual, and which men too often resist; and that even in those who are truly converted, there is some principle of resistance still remaining, though not predominant. But to affirm that divine influence gives the soul a power or ability to turn unto God, but does not effectually determine or incline the will, is a contradiction; for as the will has no intrinsic power to incline or determine itself, but as it is moved and governed by motives presented to the view of the mind; so the soul has no power whatever to turn unto God farther than the will is determined or inclined to do so, by some consideration or other. The Scriptures always represent the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit as exerted upon the heart, which includes not only the understanding but the will and affections, or the prevalent inclinations and dispositions of the soul. To take away the heart of stone, is to remove the obstinate resistance of the

\* Mr. M'Laurin's Essay on the Scripture Doctrine of Divine Grace.

heart to the will of God; and to give a new heart, and put a new spirit within men, is not only to enlighten the understanding, (though that is the beginning of the work,) but also to produce prevalent holy inclinations and dispositions of heart. The same thing is intended by putting his law in their inward parts, and writing it in their hearts; for the sum of God's law, as it respects the heart, is to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. So God is said to *circumcise* men's hearts to love him, to *incline* their hearts to his testimonies, and to work in them to *will* and to do of his good pleasure. Such expressions evidently import, that divine operations are exerted upon the inmost springs and movements of the soul; that they overcome the natural resistance of the heart by inclining and determining the will, and so are of invincible efficacy to produce the effects intended. Indeed it must be so; for they are the working of God's mighty power in pursuance of his determinate purpose, which nothing can frustrate, Eph. i. 19. 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

### SECTION III.

*The necessity of the Spirit's agency in Regeneration and Sanctification.*

SEVERAL things have already been noticed which clearly prove divine operations to be necessary, and which, with some additional considerations, shall occupy this section.

1. All the passages in the word of God which ascribe regeneration and sanctification in all its parts to the Holy Spirit, clearly testify that his agency is absolutely necessary to produce these effects. If the natural influence of second causes had been sufficient for this purpose, then the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit would have been altogether needless, consequently withheld; for to suppose divine interposition, without admitting it to be necessary

to obtain the end in view, is to impeach the wisdom of God. No reason can be assigned why the supernatural influences of the Spirit are exerted, but that they are necessary to produce the effects intended by them, and which the Scripture ascribes to them.

2. The passages which contain promises of the Spirit, and such as encourage us to pray for his influences, together with the Scripture examples of such prayers, all concur to prove, not only that the agency of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary, but that we should be fully convinced of this, and deeply sensible of our need of his divine influences; for without this we cannot have faith in these promises, nor be sincere and earnest in our prayers for the Spirit.

3. That the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Spirit are necessary, is clear from the Scripture account of the *depravity* of human nature. Notwithstanding all that remains in natural men of the light of nature and reason, their *judgment* is blind to the things of God, and destitute of spiritual discernment, 1 Cor. ii. 14. and their will is obstinately averse from true holiness, and strongly inclined to the opposite: hence they are represented as "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. iv. 18. The law of God, which is the standard of holiness, requires that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves, Mat. xxii. 37—41. But instead of loving God supremely, men are represented as "enemies to him in their minds by wicked works," Col. i. 21. "because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. And instead of loving their neighbour as themselves, they are described as "hateful and hating one another," Tit. iii. 3. From which it appears, that mankind are not merely incidental and occasional transgressors, by particular acts of

sin, but that they are sinful and depraved in the habitual state of their minds, the governing principles and dispositions of their hearts being totally and constantly opposite to the law of God, which is holy, just, and good. This scripture account of the matter is abundantly confirmed by the history of all ages and nations, as well as by observation and experience, and acknowledged upon the whole even by mere heathens.\* No effectual remedy within the compass of nature has ever yet been found out for this malady: No outward reformation of conduct, however good in itself, goes to the bottom of this evil. The disorder, though not essential to human nature, is yet hereditary, inveterate, and as it were constitutional: and this makes the agency of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary to overcome and remove it. All therefore who deny this, must have a very superficial notion of human depravity, and very little knowledge of mankind or of their own hearts.

4. The scripture account of the *greatness* and *excellency* of the *change* produced in regeneration and sanctification demonstrates, that it is a divine work, and that the Spirit's agency is necessary to effect it. To set this argument in a proper light, it will be necessary to distinguish a true and saving change from the various resemblances of it with which many deceive themselves. There are many who have not only a decent outward regularity of conduct, in observing the external duties of religion and morality, but also some common internal impressions, emotions, and affections, which, though in their own nature good, and even necessary, fall essentially short of a radical change, and may be found in different degrees in hearts void of sincere love to God; such as convictions of sin, fear of future punishment, a general desire of escaping it, and of obtaining eternal happiness, and of the divine favour as the means of that happiness.

\* Such as Plato, Socrates, Seneca, Plutarch, Juvenal, &c. The philosophers acknowledged that it was *con-natural* to men to *sin*.

There may be some resemblances of *repentance* in fear, remorse, and sorrow of mind occasioned by sin, as in Cain, Judas, Felix, &c. But a mere principle of self-love will make a man dread the consequences of sin, while he has prevalent inclinations to sin itself. There is a difference between mere fear and sorrow on account of sin, and a prevalent hatred of it; between hatred of sin itself, and mere hatred of its consequences; between that sorrow for sin which flows from the love of God and of holiness, and that which flows from an inferior principle. Men may have even an aversion to some kinds of sin, because they interfere with others, or because they do not suit their natural constitutions, propensities, tempers, habits, age, worldly interests, &c, while they do not hate *all sin* universally, consequently hate *no sin* as such, or from a proper principle.

There may also be some resemblances of *faith* in Christ. It is said that many of the Jews believed in his name, to whom he would not commit himself, because he knew all men, John ii. 24. Others are said to believe on him, who discovered that they were insensible of their bondage to sin, ch. viii. 30—34. Simon Magus is also said to believe, while he thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money, Acts viii. 13, 20. and those represented by the rocky ground are said to believe for a while, but in time of temptation to fall away, Luke viii. 13. From these passages it is evident, that men may give some general assent to the truth of the gospel, while they labour under essential mistakes as to its important and leading design; for he who received seed into good ground is distinguished from such by his *understanding* the word, Mat. xiii. 23. So that whatever appearances of faith there may be in false professors, they have not the same perception of the truth, nor that persuasion of it upon its proper evidence which real believers have. They have not the same realising view of the importance, supreme excellence and suitableness of the

gospel salvation to their lost condition as sinners; nor do they properly discern the glory of the divine perfections shining forth in it, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

There may likewise be some resemblances of *love* to God. The stony ground hearers received the word with joy, Luke viii. 13. and as the gospel abounds with motives to love God, this joy in receiving it has some resemblance of that holy affection; yet it appears to be only a temporary glow of affection, arising from partial views, and which has no deep root or ascendancy in the heart. Men who have no sincere love to God may yet have some delight in contemplating his perfections. The natural desire of knowledge in some minds is much gratified in contemplating whatever is great, wonderful, and sublime in nature, and no wonder there should be some gratification of this kind in contemplating its great Author. There may be a desire after the approbation and favour of God, as knowing this to be necessary to happiness, and this natural desire may influence men to various endeavours in the use of means to obtain that object, while they may be without any real love to the moral character of God and his law, or to that holiness which is essential to their true happiness. This was the case with the young rich man in the gospel; he had an earnest desire after eternal life, and anxiously enquired what he should do to inherit it; yet, notwithstanding this earnest desire and anxiety, he soon discovered that he preferred his worldly possessions to the will of God and the enjoyment of eternal happiness, Mark x. 17—23. A desire after the true happiness of heaven implies love to God, because that happiness consists in the enjoyment of him, which none can desire, or, in the nature of things, relish and enjoy without loving him: but there are many who desire heaven according to their own gross notions of it, who have no divine love, nor any desire after the enjoyment of God himself as their chief happiness, and so cannot say with the Psalmist, “ Whom have I in heaven but thee ?



and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. There is a wide difference between such resemblances of divine love, and loving God with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind, which implies that all the ingredients of the most perfect love should unite in the highest degree in that holy affection; such as a supreme esteem of his perfections; the most grateful sense of his benefits, especially in redemption; a desire of his favour arising from an esteem of his character; of conformity to him in his moral perfections, and of the enjoyment of him as our chief good. This will exclude such affections as are *directly contrary* to divine love, and moderate those which are *different* from it, that they may be duly subordinate and subservient to it.

These things serve to shew, that real religion is a very different thing from what many imagine it to be. The greatness of the change which takes place upon men in their regeneration and sanctification is held forth in Scripture in the most emphatic language. They are said to be quickened from death in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. to be born again of the Spirit, John iii. 5. God is said to take away the stony heart, and to give them a heart of flesh, a new heart, and a new spirit; to put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.—to circumcise their hearts, to love him with all their heart, Deut. xxx. 6. and to put his fear in their hearts, that they should not depart from him, Jer. xxxii. 40. In short, it is represented as a new creation, in which old things are past away, and all things are become new, 2 Cor. v. 17. and as an entire new man which after the image of God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. No expressions can be devised to set the greatness of this change in a stronger light: They represent it as a radical, universal, prevalent, and permanent change, and so demonstrate that the agency of

the Holy Spirit, to which it is always ascribed, is absolutely necessary to produce it.

5. The inward operation of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to regeneration and true holiness, because without this the outward means of salvation would be, and always have been, ineffectual.

By the outward means are chiefly intended the word of God contained in the scriptures, as administered either by reading or preaching, together with such events and circumstances in providence, as have a tendency to excite serious attention to it. When we say all these means are ineffectual of themselves, no disparagement of the word of God is hereby intended. The gospel is termed the "ministration of the Spirit which giveth life," as contrasted with that other part of the word of God, which is termed "the letter that killeth," 2 Cor. iii. 6—11. But the word of God is nowhere called a *dead letter*, otherwise it could neither kill nor make alive: On the contrary, it is said to be "living and powerful," Heb. iv. 12. It is the most suitable and powerful means to operate upon the human heart that can be conceived. Its truths are the most important and interesting, its evidence the most clear and convincing, and its motives to holiness the most weighty and forcible, that possibly can be proposed to the human mind; so that all who have access to the word of God must undoubtedly be without excuse if it has not its proper effect upon them. But all that can be said of the outward means, as to their natural fitness, and the intrinsic power of the motives to holiness, serves only to demonstrate the strength of human depravity which resists and defeats their influence, and consequently to prove the necessity of the supernatural energy of the Spirit to overcome that resistance, and to give the word its proper effect.

The word of God itself clearly teacheth, that all outward means are ineffectual without the internal agency of the Holy

Spirit. Our Lord says, "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him," John vi. 44. This drawing (as has been already observed) is explained to be divine teaching, ver. 45. but not merely the outward teaching of the word; for those who were then hearing him enjoyed that from his own mouth, without being effectually drawn by it so as to come to him, *i. e.* to believe on him. This drawing of the Father, therefore, must signify the inward influence of the Spirit accompanying the word, making it to be understood and believed: And as this proves that faith is the gift of God; so it also proves that the word preached will not profit unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it. The apostle Paul says to the church of the Thessalonians, "Our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance," 1 Thess. i. 5. Though *power* here should intend miracles, yet the addition of the *Holy Spirit* must signify his inward energy upon their minds making them to receive the word with much assurance, so as to produce the effects mentioned in the succeeding verses; for many saw the miracles on whom the word had no such effects. This imports, that if the gospel had come to them *in word only*, or in mere outward administration without the Spirit, it would have been as ineffectual to them as it was to many others who heard it as well as they did. To the church at Corinth he says, "I have planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 6. Here the outward means were used by Paul and Apollos to the best advantage, but the success is ascribed entirely to God; and this he would have to be particularly noticed, for he adds, "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase," ver. 7. The might ascribed to the gospel in subduing the opposition of the human heart, he resolves into the power of God himself; "The weapons of our

warfare are not carnal, but mighty THROUGH GOD, to the pulling down of strong holds," &c. 2 Cor. x. 4.

Lest any should think that the success of the gospel was owing to the eminent qualifications of the instruments employed in publishing it, such as their learning, wisdom, eloquence, and powers of persuasion, the apostle Paul, in the name of himself and fellow-labourers, disclaims the use of these things; and gives this reason for it, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," 1 Cor. ii. 1—6. Speaking of the effects of their ministry, he asks, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and he denies that they had any sufficiency of themselves to preach the gospel with effect; "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. ii. 14—17. ch. iii. 5. Nay, he shews that God had purposely chosen such weak, mean, and despised instruments to preach the gospel, for this very end, viz. "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 1 Cor. i. 26—30. 2 Cor. iv. 7.; *i. e.* that the power which supported them in the discharge of their office, and which made their labours effectual for the illumination and conversion of sinners, might the more conspicuously appear to be of God, and not of themselves.

As to the dispensations and events in providence which have a tendency to suggest serious reflection, and enforce a compliance with the will of God, such is the depravity of human nature, that they are generally perverted to a very opposite purpose. The goodness, forbearance and long-suffering of God, which, in their own nature, are suited to excite gratitude, and lead to repentance, are often abused as an encouragement to harden the heart, and to persevere in rebellion against him, Rom. ii. 4, 5. Solomon observes, that "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11. With regard to afflicting

dispensations which have a tendency to awaken convictions of sin, and humble men under the mighty hand of God, they are often made the occasion of murmuring and repining against him.

These observations upon the inefficacy of external means are sufficiently confirmed both by Scripture history and experience. God delivered the lively oracles to old Israel; displayed his miraculous works before their eyes, and in their behalf; he also wooed them by his mercies, awed them by his threatenings, encouraged them by his promises, and chastised them by his judgments; yet, though he thus plied them with every motive that was suited to work upon their gratitude, their hopes, or their fears, they still remained a stiff-necked and disobedient people, as their conduct in the wilderness, and their succeeding history abundantly testify. Last of all he sent his Son unto them, who published in their hearing the glad tidings of salvation, confirmed his mission and doctrine by numberless miracles done in their sight, and empowered his apostles to do the same. What could have been done more for them in regard of outward means? Yet the depravity of their hearts was proof against them all. Nor were they singular in this; for the same observations will apply to the greater part of those who hear the gospel at this day. These things plainly demonstrate, that something more is necessary to the conversion of men than the outward means of salvation.

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Some objections answered.*

1. MANY object to the supernatural influences of the Spirit from deistical principles. They deny that the Deity performs any supernatural operations, because, they think, this would be to reverse or derange the order he hath established both in the material and intellectual world. They

imagine that every thing happens by the mere natural efficacy of second causes, operating according to uniform general established laws, and so consider all supernatural operations as unsuitable or contrary to the original constitution of things, and as superseding the established connection between causes and their effects.

There is indeed a beautiful established order in the material world, and in the adjustment of every part of it, as well in relation to the whole as to its own particular end; and it is our duty to contemplate and admire the wisdom, power and goodness of God, so conspicuously displayed in the works of his hands. But to limit or bind down the operations of the Deity to the laws he hath established in nature, or to suppose that he produces no effects above the natural power of second causes, is not only an unfounded irrational supposition, but of exceeding bad influence as to natural religion itself. For as it lessens our ideas of the influence of providence, and of God's moral government of the world, so it discourages our dependence upon him as rational creatures, and our applications to him for what we need. It is a notion much the same with the old heathen fate, and tends directly to atheism. But, in answer to the objection, let it be observed, that though the supernatural operations we plead for exceed the mere influence of second causes, yet they do not supersede or render them useless; on the contrary, they concur with these causes in producing their best effects, so as to attain their highest ends. Far less do they reverse or interfere with the original order established in nature, unless we suppose that human depravity is part of that order, which would be to contradict the plainest principles of reason and common sense. Though the moral depravity of man has, in a sense, become natural to him, yet it is not agreeable to the original constitution or law of his nature, but is a most unnatural disorder in the intellectual and moral world. It has in it the greatest contrariety to the moral character of God and his holy law;

the greatest incongruity and unsuitableness to our relation and obligations to him as our Creator, supreme governor, preserver and benefactor; and in its very nature is altogether inconsistent with our own true happiness; so that it is the most *unnatural* and monstrous thing that can be conceived. Now if it be allowed, that those things are the most *natural* which agree best with the original nature, reason and constitution of things, then it follows, that the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit in rectifying the moral disorders of the human soul, are so far from reversing or deranging the true order of nature, that they on the contrary re-establish and promote it, as has been already noticed.

2. A similar objection to the above is made by some who profess to believe divine revelation. They maintain, that all those scripture passages which ascribe men's regeneration and sanctification to God, or to the agency of his Holy Spirit, mean nothing more than the mere influence of the outward means or second causes which God hath appointed for that end. "If (say they) all the effects produced in the natural world, by the general established laws of nature are in Scripture ascribed to God, because he is the original Author of nature and of its laws, why may not all the good effects of his word be ascribed to him for the same reason, without supposing any immediate divine interposition?"

Though the Scriptures ascribe to God the effects produced through the instrumentality of second causes, yet not merely for this reason, because he is the original Author of nature and of its laws; but chiefly because he is the supreme Governor both of the material and moral world, directing, disposing, or over-ruling all second causes, according to their respective natures, to fulfil his holy, wise, just, and good purposes; for he "worketh all things," in the most free manner, "after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. Dan. iv. 35. There is an evident difference between God's creating, or even simply upholding all things, and his go-

verning them. We are told that God rested from all his works of creation on the seventh day, Gen. ii. 3. yet our Lord justifies himself in performing a miracle on that day by this argument, “ My Father worketh HITHERTO, and I work,” John v. 17. This imports a continued operation of the Deity in preserving and governing all things, and includes, at least, occasional interpositions above the natural course and power of second causes, though these interpositions may be so connected with such causes as not to strike us so forcibly as miracles performed under other circumstances. Christ performed a most remarkable miracle when he made the winds and the sea obey him, Mat. viii. 27. yet the scripture does not speak of it as any thing uncommon in the divine administration, that God should make “ Fire and hail, snow, vapour and stormy wind fulfil his word,” or execute his particular designs, Psal. cxlviii. 8. Nor is the world of waters less under his management and controul; he “ rules the raging of the sea ; when the waves thereof arise, he stilleth them,” Psal. lxxxix. 9. He causes the motions and influences of the elements to dispense his mercies, or to execute his judgments, Psal. cvii. He also over-rules the determinations and actions of free agents, however wicked their intentions, to subserve his own most holy, just, and good designs, see Gen. i. 20. Psal. lxxvi. 10. Isa. x. Acts ii. 23. and for the same end, he often frustrates the most likely means, and the best concerted schemes of human wisdom, while he sometimes uses the most unpromising means and instruments to produce effects of the greatest importance, Job v. 12, 13. Psal. xxxiii. 10, 16, 17. 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. These things cannot be resolved in to the mere natural influence of second causes, acting uniformly according to general established laws ; for though second causes are employed in the divine administration, yet the immediate agency of the First Cause is necessary not only to uphold them in their operations, but also so to time, combine, direct, and over-rule these operations in all



their variety, as to make them concur in promoting the particular purposes intended.

If divine interposition be necessary on many occasions, in the administration of providence, it must be much more so in the dispensation of grace, where all the means and second causes, however fit and necessary in their place, are insufficient of themselves to rectify the disorders, or overcome the depravity of the human heart. Nay, though it were supposed, that no immediate divine interposition were necessary to produce any other effects whatever, but those ascribed to divine grace, yet such is the important difference between these and all other effects, that it will sufficiently account for a difference in the manner of producing them, and afford an answer to all objections on this head. All the good effects of God's word are ascribed to him, not merely because he is the original author of that word, it being given by supernatural inspiration; but chiefly, because he makes it produce these good effects through the supernatural influences of his Holy Spirit. These good effects are sometimes attributed to the word, and at other times to the Spirit of God; but we have no more reason to conclude from this, that the word produces them without the Spirit, than that the Spirit produces them without the word. The scripture itself declares, that without divine agency, the outward administration of the word is ineffectual. John vi. 44. 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. And both scripture and experience demonstrate, that it actually proves so to many who hear it under every favourable circumstance. To what shall we ascribe the good effects of the word upon some, while it makes no effectual impression upon others who enjoy equal, perhaps superior, advantages? Not surely to any natural goodness in the former more than in the latter. All are naturally possessed of such a degree of depravity as will defeat the influence of outward means: and as this sufficiently accounts for men's resisting the evidence and motives of the gospel; so nothing short of a

supernatural influence, overcoming that resistance, can account for the saving effects of the word upon any; and to this the word itself always ascribes its success, as has already been abundantly shewn.

3. Another objection against this doctrine is, "That if men cannot repent and believe the gospel without the influences of the Holy Spirit, then all who are not favoured with these influences must be excusable in their impenitence and unbelief."

This is the very objection which is brought against the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and which the apostle terms a replying against God, Rom. ix. 18, 19, 20. The scriptures clearly declare both man's inability and inexcusableness. With regard to man's *inability*, our Lord says to the Jews, "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" John v. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him," chap. vi. 44. "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father," ver. 65. The apostle says, "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. "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. But this inability is not of a *natural* but *moral* kind, *i. e.* it does not arise from a defect of mental faculties, bodily powers, or external advantages, but from wilful ignorance, and the want of a proper disposition of mind to use our natural ability, and improve our advantages aright. It is therefore a *vicious* and *culpable* inability. Our Lord asks the Jews, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" and gives this reason for it, "even because ye cannot hear my word," John viii. 43. *i. e.* cannot endure my doctrine. Their love of worldly honour and the applause of men is given as another reason why they could not believe in him, chap. v. 44. Had their

ignorance and unbelief been occasioned by any defect in their natural powers, or the want of the means of instruction, they would have been excusable; so our Lord declares, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin," chap. ix. 41. Again, he says, "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin;—If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin:" But having declared the gospel to them, and confirmed his doctrine by miracles, he left them entirely without excuse in their infidelity; and therefore he says, "but now have they no cloak (or excuse) for their sin," while he traces their unbelief into their HATRED both of him and his Father, John xv. 22, 24. This was the nature of their inability to believe and repent, as he also shews in these words, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd," chap. iii. 19, 20. This kind of inability is evidently wilful and vicious, and therefore culpable and inexcusable. Every man's conscience, upon the least reflection, must tell him so; and if ever he come to be duly sensible of, and humbled on that account, he will be so far from excusing himself upon the score of such inability, that he will confess it as his guilt, take the blame entirely to himself, justify God and his holy law, and implore the influences of his Holy Spirit to create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him.

4. It will, perhaps, be further objected, "That the doctrine of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, as it makes us distrust our own ability, and lessens our dependance upon the means; so it must discourage our endeavours in the use of them, and tend to promote sloth and indolence."

It is admitted, that mistaken views of this doctrine may have such a tendency. The best things have been often

abused and perverted to very bad purposes. This, however, is not the native effect of the doctrine when properly understood, but the very reverse. Those who have a proper view of the extent and spirituality of the divine law, and are duly sensible of the depravity of their own hearts, had they nothing else to depend upon for the attainment of true holiness but their own endeavours in the use of outward means, would soon sink under discouragements and despondency from repeated disappointments, notwithstanding all their resolutions and endeavours. Now as nothing can be a greater discouragement to diligence than despair of success, so the only preservative against this is the prospect of these powerful and supernatural aids of the Holy Spirit, which God hath promised to them that ask him, and by which alone they can surmount all difficulties. The promises of supernatural assistance, while they lay a foundation for our dependance upon God, they at the same time encourage diligence in the use of means, and discourage the contrary. To be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, is the only way to be diligent, courageous, and successful in the Christian warfare, Eph. vi. 10—20. Paul encourages the saints at Philippi to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, by this argument, “for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” Philip. ii. 12, 13. from which it is evident, that he did not consider the doctrine of supernatural divine agency as an encouragement to sloth, but the contrary, for he uses it as an encouraging motive to persevere in diligence. To argue, that because God worketh in us both to will and to do, therefore we have no occasion to work any thing ourselves, is the same as to argue, that since God makes us both willing and active, therefore we need to be neither, which is a contradiction.

5. It has been objected by some, “That though the Scriptures speak much of the work of the Spirit, yet they also inform us, that the nature of his work is to guide men

into all the truth concerning Christ; but that he does not speak of himself, John xvi. 13. i. e. of his own work upon the souls of men; for that would only tend to draw them off from Christ to establish their own righteousness, or to place their hopes upon some inward work upon their hearts, instead of the work which Christ hath finished upon the cross, and that therefore the internal operations of the Holy Spirit ought to be very sparingly, if at all, insisted on."

This objection involves a contradiction in it; for while it admits that the Scriptures speak much of the work of the Spirit, it denies that the Spirit speaks any thing of his own work upon the souls of men; so that there is no possible way of reconciling this, but by denying either that the Spirit exerts any influence upon the soul, or that the Scriptures we have adduced to prove that point are the words of the Holy Spirit.

It must also be observed, that the objection is grounded on a mistaken view of our Lord's words. When he says, that the Spirit "shall not speak of (Gr. *απο*, *from*) himself; but what he shall hear, that shall he speak," he does not mean that the Spirit was not to speak any thing of, or concerning his own work on the souls of men; but that he should not, like a false spirit, speak from his own private motion, but speak only what he should hear or be commissioned to reveal. And this is what Christ says of his own doctrine, "I have not spoken of myself,"—"the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of (Gr. *from*) myself," John xii. 49. chap. xiv. 10. yet we know that he spoke much concerning himself and his work: so that this passage gives no countenance to the objection.

It is asserted, That this doctrine tends to draw men off from Christ and the work which he finished on the cross, to place their hopes upon some inward work of the Spirit upon their hearts. But as the work of the Spirit upon the heart cannot possibly have this effect, so neither can it be the natural and necessary tendency of the Scripture doc-

trine concerning it, if rightly understood. Yet this part of the objection suggests a most useful and important caution, which ought to be duly attended to. Many have an idea that the work of the Spirit upon the heart is something separate or abstract from the influence of the gospel. Such a mistaken view of the matter must indeed have a tendency to lead men off from Christ, to make them undervalue the gospel testimony concerning him, and to place their hopes upon some other ground than the foundation which God hath laid in Zion. But the work of the Spirit, which we have all along pleaded for, must have the very opposite tendency; for as it is the work of the Spirit to testify of Christ, to glorify him, to receive of his and shew it to his people, and to guide them into all the truth concerning him as revealed in the gospel, John xv. 26. ch. xvi. 13—16. so his work upon the heart must lead directly to Christ, because it consists in bringing the truth concerning him into view; in making that to be understood, believed, and loved, and in causing it to produce all its sanctifying and saving effects.

On the other hand, those who insist much upon this objection, had need to consider well by what principle they are influenced. Some may wish to be freed from the guilt and punishment of their sins, who are not very solicitous about deliverance from sin itself. They may seem very zealous for the righteousness of Christ, and oppose it on all occasions to its sanctifying effects by the Spirit upon the heart, from a real dislike of true holiness, which is an essential part of salvation by Christ, and without which no man shall see the Lord. This principle has led some to deny that sanctification is any evidence of justification, and to represent it as self-righteous to try our state by the fruits of the Spirit, or the effects of the gospel upon our hearts and lives, as the Scriptures direct. And though some of the people of God, who have a real love of holiness, may have embraced such a sentiment in speculation, yet it

is not the less dangerous in its tendency, but must produce pernicious effects wherever it operates.

## SECTION V.

*The influence which a belief of the foregoing doctrine must have upon vital and practical religion.*

NONE of the truths of the Christian religion are merely of a speculative nature. They have all a tendency, as indeed they are all designed, not only to inform the judgment, but to purify the heart, and influence the practice. The doctrine we have been considering, must, if really believed, have a direct tendency to produce these good effects: For,

1. It is a doctrine which tends to humble and bring down the natural pride of the human heart. Nothing is more opposite to the spirit of true religion, or more hateful in the sight of God, than pride, self-sufficiency, and self-dependance. It is this temper of mind which hinders men from submitting to the righteousness of God in justifying sinners freely through the atonement; and all reasonings against the supernatural agency of the Spirit, in regeneration and sanctification, may be traced to the same source. For the amount of the whole is this, that man as a rational and moral free agent, is possessed of a sufficient power within himself to produce these effects without any supernatural aid. But when once a man is convinced of the deeply rooted depravity of human nature, and finds that all his own resolutions and efforts in the use of the most suitable means (however necessary in their place,) are not sufficient to overcome it, or to produce true holiness, without the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, such a conviction must have a tendency to make him renounce all confidence in his own abilities, to keep him from an undue dependance even upon the appointed means, and to direct

his views immediately to God himself as the cause of all the saving benefit which he expects from them.

2. A firm belief of this doctrine is essential to a life of faith, and to an habitual, immediate dependence upon God for those divine influences which are necessary to the mortification of sin, and to the existence, continuance, and vigour of spiritual life in the soul. The word of God not only holds forth redemption through the death and resurrection of Christ, but also the application of that redemption, by the enlightening, sanctifying, quickening, and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit. On this head we have already seen that it contains many great and precious promises, and in such a rich variety as to suit our every need, as fallen, weak, and depraved creatures. Now to what purpose are such promises made? Is it not that they may be believed, and that we may rely upon God for their accomplishment? But it is evident, that those who deny the supernatural influences of the Spirit can have no faith in these promises, nor depend upon God for any influence beyond the natural energy of means or second causes.

3. This doctrine tends to promote a spirit of devotion, and to encourage a continued application to God by prayer for all those supernatural influences and divine aids of the Holy Spirit which we stand in need of. The Scripture abounds with exhortations to frequency, fervency, and perseverance in prayer, and encourages us to this duty by the doctrine of Christ's merits and mediation as the successful way of access to the Father; by the promises of hearing our prayers put up in his name, and of conferring upon us all spiritual blessings for his sake, and particularly that he will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him. By such encouragements believers are induced to come with holy boldness to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. In this way they draw near to God, and pour out their hearts before him; and he often vouchsafes them such spiritual commu-



nications of light, life, strength and consolation, as serve to quell their fears, strengthen their faith and hope, and draw forth every devout affection into the most lively exercise. On the other hand, those who have no faith in the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, or in the promises respecting them, but place all their dependance on the means, and on their own abilities and exertions in the use of them; such persons must be destitute of the spirit of prayer. Whatever discouragements and difficulties they may have to encounter, they cannot, consistently with their principles, look up to God for his direction and assistance, or apply to him for divine aid to support under trials, resist temptations, subdue corruptions, or to purify their affections; nor can they consistently pray that the means may be blest for these purposes. Indeed, all who either neglect the duties of devotion, or content themselves with a cold, formal and lifeless performance of them, if the cause were duly searched into, it would be found, whatever they may pretend, to be chiefly owing to the want or weakness of faith in the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, and in the divine promises respecting them.

4. This doctrine, if believed, must encourage and animate our diligence in the use of the means of grace, and in every other duty. A just sense of our own inability to rectify the moral disorders of our nature, to withstand temptations, or to perform any duty from a right principle, would make us despair of success, consequently give up all endeavours, were it not for the encouraging prospect of supernatural aid. This raises us above all such discouragements as would slacken our diligence, and leads us to trust in God for strength to perform our duty aright, for success in the use of the means he hath appointed, and for grace to help in time of need. The apostle Paul had the deepest and most humbling sense both of his own unworthiness and insufficiency, 1 Tim. i. 15. 2 Cor. iii. 5. yet he was not discouraged; for while he gloried in the cross of Christ as

the sole ground of his acceptance with God, he gloried also in his own infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him, and be made perfect in his weakness; so that he could say, "When I am weak, then am I strong," 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.—"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," Phil. iv. 13. The powerful motive of the love of Christ constraining him, and the firm confidence he had in divine assistance, raised him above himself, and made him courageous, active and diligent in the work of the Lord, in the midst of much opposition and persecution. Having set the example of Christ before the Philippians, he exhorts them to persevere in working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, by this encouraging argument, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. And that the Ephesians might be courageous, active and successful in the Christian warfare, he exhorts them to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," Eph. vi. 10.

5. This doctrine will lead us to ascribe all the glory of our salvation to the sovereign free grace of God, and not to any natural power or goodness in us, whereby we have made ourselves fit objects of the divine favour. It will lead us to acknowledge that we are indebted to God, not only for sending his son into the world to redeem us, and for giving us his word to instruct us, but also for the effectual influences of his Holy Spirit, to bring us to the faith, love and enjoyment of the truth; to make us grow in grace; to support and strengthen us under every trial and conflict; and to keep us through faith unto final salvation. And as it is the declared design of God in the salvation of guilty sinners, to display the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ, Eph. ii. 7. and that we should be to the praise of his glory; so it corresponds with this great design, that we should recognise his grace as well in the application as execution of redemption, and gratefully ascribe to him the praise and glory of both.

Thus it appears that the Scripture doctrine concerning the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit is not only an article of the Christian faith, but that our belief of it is essential to a life of faith; to encourage our trust in God, and our continued applications to him by prayer; to raise us above discouragements, and animate us to diligence in the way of duty; and to lead us to ascribe the glory of all our salvation, first and last, to sovereign, free and efficacious divine grace.



A  
**DEFENCE**  
OF THE  
**DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.**



## P R E F A C E.



THE following short Defence was occasioned by a letter which the Author received, in which the writer attacks the doctrine of Original Sin; maintaining, That mankind derive no corruption of nature from Adam, but come into the world perfectly pure and innocent; for that God being the immediate Father of spirits, the soul must be created pure, and cannot become morally polluted, even after its union with the body, till it arrive at a certain degree of maturity in knowledge, judgment and experience, and consent to the irregular lusts and passions of animal nature.—That there is no sin but what is actual; for that what are called the seeds of corruption are not sinful nor punishable.—That temporal death is the only effect of Adam's sin upon his posterity; and that his sin is fully exhausted in them when they die.—That therefore those who die in infancy have no need of salvation by Christ, because they were never spiritually lost; nor do they need to be regenerated in order to their

enjoyment of heavenly happiness, because they are possessed of original purity and perfect innocency by their creation.

The Author, however, has not confined himself to the particulars contained in that letter, but has taken notice of some of the principal objections which have been urged by others. Those who wish to see the subject handled at large, may consult President Edwards's excellent treatise on Original Sin, from which the Author has borrowed several thoughts.

*Edinburgh, 1799.*



A

## DEFENCE

OF THE

## DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.

---

---

### INTRODUCTION.

BY way of introduction to this subject, it may be proper to say something of man's *original righteousness*, to which original sin is opposed.

Though human depravity is commonly termed *natural*, yet it is not meant that it belongs to the original constitution of man's nature. Moses informs us, that God at first created man *in his own image*; and this is thrice mentioned in the compass of two verses, which marks it with a peculiar emphasis: "And God said, Let us make man in our own image; after our likeness.—So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him," Gen. i. 26, 27. Though the image of God should include every thing in man's nature whereby he excels the inferior creatures, and holds dominion over them as lord of this lower world, (which pre-eminence he still retains in part, though fallen, 1 Cor. xi. 7. James iii. 9.) yet it must chiefly intend his moral image. Solomon, searching into the reason of things, particularly respecting the depravity and wickedness of mankind, and finding so very few of them of approved characters, he comes to this conclusion, "Lo, this only have

I found; that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions," Eccl. vii. 29. He lays the blame wholly upon man, and clears God by shewing that he made man originally *upright*; a word which always signifies moral rectitude when expressivé of the character of moral agents, and so must refer to man's being made in the image of God. The apostle explains what is chiefly meant by the image of God, when speaking of the restoration of it by grace: "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. iv. 24.—"The new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. Here he plainly alludes to the words of Moses respecting man's first creation, and shews that the image of God consists in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness. Adam, therefore, was created not merely innocent in a negative sense, but righteous and holy in a positive sense; *i. e.* he was not created a mere blank, void of knowledge, and equally indifferent to good and evil; but he was endowed with holy principles and dispositions, having God's law written in his heart, the sum of which is love.

But though Adam was created morally upright, and was happy in the enjoyment of the favour of his Maker in the earthly Paradise; yet he was not immutable any more than the angels that kept not their first estate. He was forbid to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil as a test of his obedience, and this prohibition was guarded with an awful sanction; yet, through the subtle insinuations of Satan, and the solicitations of Eve, his mind was corrupted, he disobeyed the divine prohibition, and so brought himself and his posterity, whom he represented, into a state of guilt, depravity and misery.

## SECTION I.

*Proofs from Scripture of Original Sin.*

ORIGINAL sin is not indeed a scripture term, yet the thing intended by it is abundantly held forth in the word of God. Some understand by it Adam's first sin, which was indeed the original of all the sin of his posterity; but it is more generally applied to that *corruption of nature* which is derived from fallen Adam, or to the *innate moral depravity of the human heart*; and this is the sense in which I use that term.

1. The first text I shall mention is Rom. 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." The apostle having "before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin," and that "there is none that doeth good, no not one," chap. iii. 9, 12. he here traceth human corruption up to its source, and shews that sin, as well as death, its wages, entered into the world by one man. It was by Adam's transgression that sin entered, but it did not stop with him; it entered by him into the world of mankind. His first sin was only the inlet of it to all his posterity; and it has ever since proceeded as it began in him, infecting the whole of mankind, just as death hath ( $\delta\iota\eta\lambda\theta\epsilon\nu$ ) passed through him ( $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ) unto all men, in whom all have sinned; so that all the descendants of Adam are as naturally sinful as they are mortal. This is clearly the sense of the passage, as is further evident from what he says in the next verse, "For until the law *sin was in the world*," ver. 13. In the former verse he had shewn how sin *entered into the world*, and here he shews that it actually *was in the world* from its entry until the giving of the law of Moses; by which he cannot mean, that the single sin of

Adam was in the world, but the consequent universal depravity of his whole race. Neither does he mean that the law of Moses put a stop to this contagion; on the contrary, he says, ver. 20. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound." It was given that the guilt and demerit of sin might more conspicuously appear, by the curse which it denounced upon every transgression; and it can admit of no doubt that sin has continued in the world from the giving of the law unto this day.

2. As this depravity comes from fallen Adam as the natural root of mankind, so it must be inherent in our nature, and derived from him *in our very birth*. This is the view that David had of the matter when, confessing his sin, he says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me," Psalm li. 5. Some would choose to have these words rendered, "I was born in iniquity; and in sin did my mother nurse me." But it is of no consequence which of these translations we prefer; either of them clearly shews, that he considered himself as a depraved creature by his birth, or from the womb. Job, speaking of man that is born of a woman, asks, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." ch. xiv. 4. This imports that man is morally impure as he comes into the world, and that this is the state of all that are born of women. The same thing is clearly expressed in these words, "What is man that he should be clean? and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" ch. xv. 4. Here we see that to be *clean* and to be *righteous* are synonymous, and must therefore signify moral purity. But it is strongly denied by these interrogatories that man is thus clean and righteous. "What is man?" *i. e.* any of the human species, "that he should be clean?" and lest it should be thought that this applies only to adults, and that infants must be excepted, it is added, "or he that is *born of a woman* that he should be righteous?" plainly intimating, that he is impure by nature, or from his original.

Our Lord, speaking to Nicodemus of the necessity of being born again, gives this as a reason for it, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. To be born of the flesh, must certainly mean to come into the world by natural generation. Here it has a particular view to the natural descent of the Jews from Abraham, in which that people boasted so much; and if that which is born of the flesh was *flesh* in their case, it must be so universally. But the question is, What is meant by its being *flesh*? In answer to this, let it be observed, That when (*σαρξ*) *flesh*, is set in opposition to (*πνευμα*) *spirit*, as it is here, it always, in the New Testament, signifies something that is morally corrupt or sinful; as does also (*σαρκικος*) *carnal*, or *fleshly*, when opposed to (*πνευματικος*) *spiritual*. To instance in a few passages:—"The law is *spiritual*, but I am *carnal*, sold under sin," Rom. vii. 14.—"In me, that is in my *flesh*, dwelleth no good thing," ver. 18.—"With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the *flesh* the law of sin," ver. 25.—"There is no condemnation to them—who walk not after the *flesh*, but after the *spirit*," chap. viii. 1.—"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the *flesh*, but after the *spirit*," ver. 4.—"For they that are after the *flesh*, do mind the things of the *flesh*; but they that are after the *spirit*, the things of the *spirit*. For to be *carnally minded*" (Gr. the mind, or minding of the *flesh*), "is death; but to be *spiritually minded*" (Gr. the mind, or minding of the *spirit*), "is life and peace. Because the *carnal mind*" (Gr. mind of the *flesh*), "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the *flesh* cannot please God. But ye are not in the *flesh*, but in the *spirit*, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you," ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.—"The *flesh* lusteth against the *spirit*, and the *spirit* against the *flesh*, and these are contrary the one to the other," Gal. v. 17. The *works of the flesh* are also

enumerated, ver. 19, 20, 21. and the *fruit of the Spirit* is opposed to them, ver. 22, 23.

In these passages *flesh* and *spirit* are not merely distinguished as we do the body and spirit of man; but they are stated as the direct opposites of each other, and as altogether irreconcilable in their natures, inclinations, operations and effects. Now if the *flesh* be that whereby men serve the law of sin; if no good thing dwells in it; if it cannot be subject to the law of God; if they that are in it cannot please God; if its mind be enmity against him, and its nature and tendency be death,—then it must certainly mean the corrupt and sinful nature of man. And though this depravity of nature be termed *flesh*, yet it is not confined to the inordinate appetites of the body, and their indulgence; for the apostle enumerates amongst its *works*, not only adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, drunkenness, revellings, &c. but also idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, &c. (Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.) which vicious dispositions are seated not in the body, but in the mind; and therefore *flesh* must signify the corruption of the whole of man's nature, as it consists of soul and body. Hence it is sometimes called the *old man*, the *body of sin*, the *body of death*.

From the whole it is evident, that when our Lord says, "That which is born of the flesh is *flesh*," he means, that man by his *first birth* comes into the world with a depraved and corrupt nature; that therefore he must be *born again*, or born of the Spirit, before he can enter into the kingdom of God.

3. Mankind are represented as wicked from their *childhood*, or from their *youth*. The Lord himself testifies, that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his YOUTH," Gen. viii. 21. Solomon observes, that "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a CHILD," Prov. xxii. 15. and the Psalmist says, "The wicked are estranged from the

WOMB; they go astray as soon as they are BORN," or from the belly, Psalm lviii. 3. Such expressions shew that mankind are corrupt from the earliest period of their existence, and therefore must be naturally so, it being the first thing that appears in them before they have had time to contract evil habits by long practice.

4. The scripture speaks of sin and depravity as what *belongs to man* in his natural state, and as if it were a *natural property* of the species. Thus it is said, "The way of MAN is froward and strange," Prov. xxi. 8.—"Yea, also the heart OF THE SONS OF MEN is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live," Eccl. ix. 3. This is evidently expressive of the whole species of mankind in their natural state. Nay, the Scriptures frequently distinguish actions and things as evil or sinful, merely by saying, that they are *as men, like men, or of men*; as in the following passages.—"If I covered my transgressions as MEN," Job xxxi. 33.—"But they LIKE MEN have transgressed the covenant," Hos. vi. 7.—"I speak as a MAN," Rom. iii. 5.—"Are ye not carnal, and walk as MEN?" Gr. according to men, 1 Cor. iii. 3.—"Concerning the works of MEN, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," Psalm xvii. 4.—"Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of MEN," Matt. xvi. 23.—"That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of MEN, but to the will of God," 1 Pet. iv. 2. Further, the word of God often distinguishes what is evil or sinful, by terming it men's *own*, or what properly *belongs to themselves*. So men are said to be given "up to their OWN hearts lust," Psal. lxxxix. 12.—to "walk in their OWN ways," Acts xiv. 16.—and "in their OWN counsels," Psal. lxxxix. 12.—to walk "after the imagination of their OWN hearts," Jer. ix. 14.—"in the sight of their OWN eyes," Eccl. xi. 9.—and "according to their OWN devices," Jer. xviii. 12. And of mankind in general it is said, "we have turned every one to his OWN

way," Isa. liii. 6. Now why are sinful counsels, devices, lusts, ways, &c. called *our own*? Is it not because they are *natural* to us as depraved creatures, and spring from *our own* innate corruption?

5. The scriptures represent mankind in their natural state as *universally* sinful and depraved, and that without the exception of so much as one. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are ALL gone aside; they are ALL TOGETHER become filthy; there is none that doeth good, NO NOT ONE," Psal. xiv. 2, 3. The apostle cites this passage to prove, that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and that the whole world are become guilty before God, Rom. iii. 9—20. and his argument rests entirely upon the *universality* of human corruption; for if there were any exceptions, he could not draw this conclusion, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall *no flesh* be justified in God's sight," ver. 20. True indeed, in the sight of men, and in relation to human society, there are some characters greatly preferable to others, and it may be allowed that there are some less heinous in the sight of God; yet the best as well as the worst of mankind "have ALL sinned and come short of the glory of God." So that, in point of justification in the sight of God, "there is no difference" betwixt them, ver. 22, 23. Now that which is universally and without exception the case with all mankind, must be rooted in their nature; but the whole human species without exception are declared to be sinners; therefore their nature must be corrupted, and have in it a deep rooted and powerful tendency to sin.

6. The word of God represents the corruption of human nature as *total*, and extending to the *whole man*. The soul is depraved in all its powers: The understanding is blind to the things of God, the will obstinate and perverse, and the affections carnal and earthly: Accordingly, the



heart of man is represented as blind, hard, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Eph. iv. 18. Ezek. iii. 7. Jer. xvii. 9. the imagination of the thoughts of it is said to be only evil continually, Gen. vi. 5. and our Lord speaks of it as the seat of every evil disposition, and the source of every wicked action, Mark vii. 21, 22. With regard to the *body*, all the members of it are also mentioned as instruments of sin, Rom. iii. 13, 14, 15. chap. vi. 19. So that man is naturally corrupt all over, in every part, and to a very high degree; and though some arrive at a higher pitch of depravity than others, yet all have the seeds of it in their nature.

## SECTION II.

### *Proofs of original sin from facts, events, and experience.*

ORIGINAL sin is not only taught in scripture as a point of doctrine, but is confirmed by the history of facts, and the experience of mankind in all ages of the world; and the scripture history is a full illustration of its doctrine on this head.

We have but a short account of the antediluvian age, yet it affords a most striking proof of the depravity of human nature, from the entrance of sin into the world by Adam's transgression. What an early and shocking instance have we of this in Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous? Gen. iv. 8. 1 John iii. 12. As men multiplied upon the earth, they increased in all manner of wickedness; for it is said, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.—The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the

earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," Gen. vi. 5, 11, 12. Here we see that corruption was *universal*; for ALL FLESH had corrupted his way, so that none of the human race were exempted from the deluge but Noah and his family. Now, though we should admit that there was a greater degree of corruption than at some other periods; yet how shall we account for the *universality* of it in any degree, if there is nothing in human nature that tends that way? And if there is a bias in human nature to any supposed degree of wickedness, then it tends to the highest degree of it under certain circumstances.

From the deluge to the calling of Abraham was a period of about four hundred and twenty-seven years. It might be expected that during that period the posterity of Noah would be a righteous and pious race, since they must have known the awful punishment of the old world for its wickedness, and the wonderful preservation of their ancestors; some of whom were alive the greater part of that time; for Noah himself lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years, Gen. ix. 28.; yet the case was far otherwise; the generality of mankind in the course of that period fell off from the worship and service of the true God into idolatry. And though they had such demonstrations of his eternal power and godhead as to leave them without excuse; yet when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; nay, they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened; so that they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Rom. i. 20, 21, 25, 28. This universal defection demonstrates, that men are naturally averse to the acknowledgment and worship of the true God, and that they have a strong propensity in their nature to violate the first and great commandment of the law, as well as the clearest

dictates of reason, by substituting the creature in place of the Creator.

That the knowledge of the true God might not be altogether lost in the world, God was pleased to call Abraham from the idolatry of his father's house, and to separate his posterity from all the rest of mankind by a series of the most astonishing miracles done openly in the view of the world. With this chosen people he entered into covenant, that they might be a peculiar treasure unto him above all people, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. He gave them laws and peculiar institutions to preserve them from the surrounding idolatry, and he favoured them with continued intimations of his will, and a train of miraculous interpositions for upwards of 1500 years. It might reasonably be expected, that a people so singularly favoured would be remarkably pious, holy, and virtuous; but their history abundantly testifies that, in general, they were quite the reverse. Their many provocations in the wilderness amidst the most striking displays of the divine presence among them; their frequent relapses into idolatry afterwards, and their various other national enormities, notwithstanding the constant admonitions and warnings which God gave them by his prophets, clearly shew, that they deserved the character so frequently given them of a stiff-necked and rebellious people, a perverse and crooked generation. The Lord, after enumerating the distinguished privileges with which he had favoured them, puts the question, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isaiah v. 4. He calls heaven and earth to witness their ingratitude and rebellion, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Nay, he represents them as more brutishly stupid than the ox or the ass: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's

crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," Isaiah. i. 2, 3. Nor was this the case with some particular generations of them only ; for Stephen, giving a sketch of the character of that people from the beginning down to the apostolic age, when they rejected the gospel, concludes thus, " Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? and they have slain them who shewed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers ; Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it," Acts vii. 51—54. For these causes the Lord severely punished them, and scattered them among the nations as monuments of his displeasure unto this day. Now to what shall we attribute the constant bent of that people to depart from God and his ways, notwithstanding their having such singular advantages, and such strong motives to the contrary ? Not surely to any incidental or occasional cause, but to the strong and deep-rooted depravity of human nature.

We have already noticed, that before the calling of Abraham, mankind had universally revolted from the worship and service of the true God. From that time till near the end of the Jewish dispensation, a space of near 2000 years, God suffered all the other nations of the world to walk in their OWN WAYS, Acts xiv. 16. so that a sufficient trial was made what human nature would do when left to operate according to its own tendency, and how far man's boasted reason could conduct him into the paths of virtue and happiness without the assistance of divine revelation. The consequence was, that mankind sunk more and more into the most stupid idolatry : " Professing themselves to be wise they became fools ; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping

things," Rom. i. 22, 23. In connection with this, they were given up to a reprobate mind, to vile and unnatural affections, and to every species of immorality, the most degrading to human nature; "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, back-biters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventers of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." In all which enormities, they were inexcusable, because they knew the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, ver. 26—32. This is a picture of the heathen world in general, and which is sufficiently confirmed by their own historians; and it does not apply merely to those uncivilized ages and nations wherein the most brutish ignorance and barbarity prevailed, but also to those of them who had made the greatest progress in arts, learning, and refinement, such as Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Whatever improvement they made in other respects, they made none in religion. Their corrupt imaginations had framed gods like themselves to patronise their vices, and even their boasted philosophic virtue was, in general, the offspring of pride and self-sufficiency. Many of their philosophers, who laughed in secret at the superstition of the vulgar, meanly or politically temporised; and some of them were at bottom mere atheists. In short, the longer that Paganism continued, it degenerated into the greater absurdity, and it prevailed in all its height of absurdity in those nations where learning and civilization had made the greatest progress. A clear proof this, that the world by wisdom knew not God, and that it had no tendency to recover itself from idolatry and vice, but the very opposite; as is further evident from the state of the heathen nations at this day who have never been favoured with supernatural revelation. Nay, they appear to have been entirely insen-

sible of their condition, and to have had no desire of deliverance; for when God visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name, the bulk of them opposed the gospel; and with respect to those who embraced it, God is said to be found of them that sought him not, and to be made manifest to them that asked not after him, Rom. x. 20. Thus we see the tendency of human nature with regard to religion and morality, when men are suffered to walk in their *own ways*.

Further, if we consult the history of what is called *the Christian world*, we shall find no cause to form a better opinion of human nature, but rather a worse; for here we find it capable of abusing the highest privileges and advantages, of perverting the clearest revelation of the will of God to subserve the worst of purposes, and of resisting the most powerful motives that possibly can be proposed to the human mind. Not to insist upon the opposition which the world in general made to the gospel from their loving darkness rather than the light; nor upon the guilt of obstinate and avowed infidels, which our Lord declares to be more aggravated than that of Tyre and Sidon, and of Sodom and Gomorrah, Mat. xi. 20—25. I say, not to insist upon these things, let us take a view of the professors of Christianity themselves. Even in the apostolic age, though the churches were then in their purest state as to doctrine, order, and discipline, though they were endowed with miraculous gifts, and had the Lord's presence remarkably in the midst of them; yet we find the depravity of human nature still operating among them in a variety of ways, as is evident from the epistles directed to them. The mystery of iniquity began to work very early in the churches, through the pride, ambition, and worldly lusts of men, 2 Thess. ii. 7. The native corruption of the human heart, while unsubdued by divine grace, could not brook the restraints of the holy, spiritual, and heavenly religion of Jesus; but in process of time a corrupted profession of it

was used as a pretext for introducing and sanctioning a dreadful system of superstition, idolatry, cruelty, priestly tyranny, and blasphemy, so that the Pagan world could not exhibit any thing more opposite to the kingdom of Christ, it being the very kingdom of Antichrist: Yet this is that which has made the capital figure in church history for the space of 1200 years. This mystery of iniquity shews to what lengths human corruption will go, even in the face of the clearest light, when a concurrence of circumstances favour it. But we need not have recourse to this in order to evince the depravity of those who profess Christianity; it is but too obvious, that the greater part of Protestants as well as Catholics, are Christians only in name, being the genuine children of this present evil world, and conformed to it in their tempers, lusts, and practices.

But what deserves particular notice here is, that the real children of God themselves, who are born again, have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, and are delivered from the reigning power of indwelling sin, have with one mouth confessed the corruption of their nature, and that not only in taking a retrospect of their former state, but from their experience of it since they knew the grace of God in truth. They have still felt in their sad experience the flesh lusting against the spirit, a law in their members warring against the law of their mind, so that they could not do the things that they would, Rom. vii. 21—25. Gal. v. 17. And, to a man, they have set to their seal to all that the Scripture says of the innate depravity of human nature, and its doctrine on this head is to them a clear evidence that it is the word of Him who searches the hearts and reins, and knows perfectly what is in man. Now, as real Christians have the justest views of the nature of sin and holiness, and as they are the most attentive to the state of their own hearts in reference to the spirituality and extent of the divine law; so their judgment and experience in this matter must far outweigh the judgment of a carnal and insensible world, who,

while they indulge in sin, wish for their own ease, to extenuate it, and are disposed to varnish over its deformity with various superficial colourings.

Further, it is an undeniable fact, confirmed by the experience of all ages, that all mankind are not only liable to the afflictions and calamities of this life, but also to death itself, with all its attendant agonies, and often with much dread and horror to minds capable of reflection, it being that which of all natural evils is the most terrible and abhorrent to our nature. The Scriptures inform us, that this was not inflicted upon man by his Creator as an act of mere sovereignty, but as a manifestation of his displeasure against sin, and as acting the part of a righteous Judge in sentencing and punishing mankind on that account, Gen. iii. 17—20. For “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,” viz. as its punishment, “and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” Rom. v. 12. This universal reign of death over the whole of the human race, is therefore a clear proof that they are all sinners without exception: And as death is inflicted upon a great part of mankind in infancy, it follows that infants are in some sense considered as sinners, though they have not committed actual sin, or done any good or evil in their own persons, (Rom. ix. 11.), and we learn from Scripture that they are sinners in two respects. 1. They are involved in the guilt of Adam’s first transgression, as their representative, in consequence of which, they are under the sentence of that death denounced upon his sin, and so derive a mortal constitution from him. 2. They also derive from him by birth, as their natural root, a lapsed and corrupt nature, (being shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin) which experience shews us to have an infallible tendency to actual sin.

From the facts stated in this section it clearly appears, 1. That all mankind in all ages and nations of the world, **and under every circumstance and dispensation, have been**



sinners against God, and transgressors of his holy law. 2. That such an universal, constant and steady effect must have an adequate and answerable cause. 3. That such a cause must be inherent in human nature; *i. e.* there must be a fixed, and, upon the whole, a prevailing bias, propensity, or tendency in man's nature to sin: and, 4. That this evil tendency must be very strong, as it resists (unless subdued by divine grace,) the most powerful motives and inducements to holiness, and maintains a most inveterate conflict even in real believers themselves.

### SECTION III.

*Arguments and objections against the doctrine of original sin, stated and answered.*

THOUGH I fully agree with the advocates for the Scripture doctrine of original sin, while they confine themselves to the point itself, yet there are certain things advanced by some of them, which appear to me extraneous, not clearly supported by Scripture, and, in my humble opinion, of no service to the cause. It will be proper, therefore, before I enter upon the business of this section, to specify these things, as by this means some of the objections will be precluded.

Many have indulged too much of their own fancy upon the first constitution of things, of which the Scripture gives but a very brief account, though sufficient for all the purposes intended. It informs us, that God made man upright after his own image, and vouchsafed to him the happy enjoyment of his favour in the earthly paradise. The prohibition of the fruit of the tree of knowledge was certainly a test of his obedience, and the threatening of death in case he should eat of it, plainly implied a continuance of the happy life of which he was possessed, while he continued

obedient. Further, we are expressly told, that the death which entered into the world by him, and which passes upon all men, is inflicted on account of his transgression, wherein all have sinned, Rom. v. 12. and from this it may be clearly inferred, that he represented his posterity, and that if he had not sinned they would not have died. Some, however, do not stop here, but proceed to conjecture, that Adam was upon trial for a limited time, after which his representative character would have ceased; that had he continued perfectly obedient during that time, he and all his posterity would have been confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness; but as this globe would in time be overstocked with inhabitants, it is imagined they would be successively translated from the earth to the enjoyment of eternal life in heaven; of all which the word of God says nothing. To form conjectures about what would have taken place had Adam stood, is idle and vain, since the event has demonstrated that the first constitution of things was not intended to be permanent, but only introductory and subservient to a more glorious display of the divine perfections in the plan and work of redemption, though the sin of man was not thereby lessened.

Some speak of the first constitution of things established with Adam in such high terms, as if it had been equal in excellence to the new constitution of grace under the headship of the Son of God, and as if redemption were only a restoration of what was lost by the fall. Very different, however, is the Scripture account of that matter. God indeed created and constituted all things at first very good, according to the respective natures he was pleased to give them, and in a suitableness to the wise and holy ends for which he designed them. But it does not follow from this that he bestowed upon all things an equal degree of excellence, nor yet that he endued every thing at its creation with the highest possible degree of excellence of which its nature was capable; for this would be to limit the power of

God, as if he had exerted his utmost in the first creation, and could not bring his own works, which depend upon his will, to any higher degree of perfection. Adam was created not only innocent, but holy and upright, consequently happy; he was endued with such natural and moral powers and abilities as were adequate to the rule of his duty, suited to the ends of his creation, and the situation in which he was placed. Yet he was not impeccable, but liable to be seduced, by what one would think a very slight temptation, to transgress the plainest prohibition, though guarded with the most awful sanction, and involving in it the most dreadful consequences; and therefore he is not to be compared with the second man, who knew no sin, but continued inflexible in perfect holiness, though tried to the utmost with the strongest temptations. Further, Adam was originally made of the earth, and so was of an earthly constitution, depending upon the product of the earth for his sustenance, and his animal body (*σωμα ψυχικον*) is mentioned as the source and pattern of ours. But the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit, whose risen, spiritual and glorified body is the pattern of the bodies of the saints when they shall be redeemed from the grave, and have no more need of earthly enjoyments; so "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural," or rather (*ψυχικον*) *animal*; "and afterwards that which is spiritual." See 1 Cor. xv. 44—50. Again, the happiness of the earthly paradisaical state was no doubt adequate to the original constitution of man's nature, both as to soul and body; but we have no reason to think that it was equal to the happiness of the heavenly state, where the saints shall reign in life with Jesus Christ as the reward of his obedience, and when there shall be no more fear or danger of forfeiture; for Christ came that his people might have life, and that they might have it MORE ABUNDANTLY, John x. 10.

On the other hand, the damage which came simply by

Adam's one offence, or was inflicted as the direct punishment of it, was not equal to the benefit which comes by the one righteousness of Jesus Christ. The sentence denounced upon Adam when he sinned, includes a curse upon the ground for his sake, his enduring the toils, sorrows and afflictions of life, and at last his returning to the dust out of which he was taken, Gen. iii. 17—20. But it is thought that this is not all that was intended in the previous threatening, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," chap. ii. 17. which is commonly understood to mean, that he should die a spiritual, temporal and eternal death; and when we attend to the full explanation which some give of this threefold death, we shall find that they leave no ground for the apostle's doctrine, that the grace of God, and the gift by grace, hath MUCH MORE ABOUNDED, either as to its extent, nature, or degree; (see Rom. v. 15, 16, 17, 20.) for, according to them, the benefit is only equal to the damage in its nature and degree, and it is clear that it is not so extensive.

The death which entered by Adam's sin into the world, was no doubt the reverse of the happy life he enjoyed in Paradise; but it does not follow from this, that it must be the complete opposite of the heavenly life. He lost the sense and enjoyment of the complacential favour of his Maker, which is life, and which gave a blissful relish to the enjoyments of the terrestrial Paradise for which he was formed; and instead of this, conscious guilt filled him with fear and shame; which indeed may be termed *spiritual death*, as it chiefly affected the happiness of his soul or spirit. This again might increase the corruption of his nature, already begun; for his heart was corrupted by the temptation before he finished that sin which brought forth death, and that corruption was the chief part of his guilt. But though God, in his righteous judgment, permitted this infection of the root to continue and spread through all the branches, yet this will not justify the asser-

tion, that God inflicted a corrupt nature upon man as he did death; for that would make him the author of sin as well as of its just punishment, and confound the distinction which the apostle so pointedly keeps up upon this subject, between Adam's SIN, transgression, offence, or disobedience, and the DEATH, judgment, or condemnation which was inflicted on that account.—Further, when Adam sinned he became mortal; *i. e.* he fell under the sentence of returning to the dust by a dissolution of his frame. This is commonly termed *temporal death*; but there was nothing in the first constitution which made this death to be temporal, or for a time, nor did it afford the least prospect of deliverance from it; and therefore it becomes temporal only by virtue of the supernatural constitution of grace to which the resurrection belongs, and which brings life and immortality to light. This is that death which the apostle says entered into the world by the one offence of Adam, and which hath reigned over, and passed upon all men, Rom. v. 12, 17. it being appointed unto men once to die, Heb. ix. 27. and to this death he opposeth the resurrection of the body; “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,” 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.—Further the Scripture also mentions the *second death*, or the everlasting punishment of hell in a future state, Rev. ii. 11. ch. xx. 14. ch. xxi. 8. Matt. xxv. 41, 46. and this is what is commonly meant by *eternal death*. But the word of God never represents this punishment as inflicted upon any of Adam's posterity *simply* for his one offence; on the contrary, it is always represented as the execution of the sentence denounced upon the wicked in the last judgment, and as the punishment of their own personal offences, or of the deeds done in the body, when God shall render to every man according to his works, Eccl. xii. 14. Matt. xxv. 30, 41, &c. Rom. ii. 12, 16. 2 Cor. v. 10. 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. Rev. xx. 12, 13, 15. chap. xxi. 8. There is indeed a connection

between the sin of Adam and the second death; but it is only through the medium of the corruption of nature derived from him, and that too as exerting itself in opposition to a known rule of duty, in voluntary, personal and actual sin; for it is upon this ground, and not upon Adam's sin, that the final judgment and sentence proceed.

These observations serve to shew, that the damage which came by Adam's one offence is not (as some make it in effect,) equal to the benefit which comes by Christ's obedience, either in its nature or degree. The apostle clearly states the difference in Rom. v. 15, 16, 17. and shews, that the free gift of justification and life through Christ far exceeds the condemnation and death which come upon Adam's posterity simply for his sin. And in the whole of the comparison, he gives us to understand that Adam was only a *figure* or type of him that was to come, ver. 14.\*

LET us now consider some of the main arguments and objections against the doctrine of original sin.

1. It is alleged, That the doctrine which teaches that men come into the world with a depraved nature, makes the author of their being to be also the author of their depravity.

*Ans.* Did this doctrine suppose that God created man originally with a corrupt nature, or that by any direct or positive influence from God, corruption was either infused or continued in man's nature, there would be much force in this objection; but no such thing is either affirmed or supposed. The doctrine is grounded upon revelation, which teacheth us, That God at first created man upright after his own image; that he constituted him the representative, as well as natural root of the whole species of mankind, so as that they should either stand or fall with

\* See the Paraphrase with Notes on Rom. v.

him; that he endued him with the knowledge of his will, and with sufficient abilities to obey it; and that he set before him the strongest inducements, and placed him in the most advantageous circumstances for that purpose. In this first constitution, therefore, we may see much of the divine sovereignty, wisdom, holiness and goodness. But with respect to sin and depravity, we are expressly told that this came by the influence of Satan, whereby Adam's mind was corrupted, so that he transgressed the divine prohibition, and fell under the just sentence of death. Now as he was constituted the representative of his posterity, so all were constituted sinners by his sin, and fell under the same sentence; and as he was the natural root of mankind, who all sprang from him as branches from a tree, so they also partake of the corrupt qualities of the root, and are as naturally shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin in their first birth, as they are naturally born mortal. From this it appears, that though God, for wise and holy ends, permitted sin to enter into the world, and to continue ever since, yet he is not the author of it; and though he is the Author of our being, who forms us in the womb, and is the Father of our spirits, yet he is not the author of the depravity of our nature; that being derived from the first man as fallen, and suffered to continue till it is removed by a new creation or spiritual birth, which belongs not to the Adamic constitution, but to the new constitution of grace under the headship of the second man. But then it has been objected,

2. That if Adam was constituted the representative of his unborn race, so that they were to stand or fall with him; if his sin is imputed to them who did not so much as exist when it was committed; if they come into existence with a corrupt nature derived from him; and if the punishment of his sin is inflicted upon them; such a constitution seems altogether unjust, and highly injurious to the human race.

*Ans.* The main things objected to are clearly and repeat-

edly held forth in the following passages of Scripture: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, (ἐφ' ὧ) wherein all have sinned—death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression—through the offence of one many be dead—the judgment was by one to condemnation—by one man's offence, death reigned by one—by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation—by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," Rom. v. 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. "By man came death—for in Adam all die," 1 Cor. 15, 21, 22. Now as every attempt to explain away the plain sense of these passages is foolish and vain, so the objection must amount to a denial of the truth of the Scriptures upon this subject, or, which is worse, to an impeachment of the character of God, as having acted unjustly and injuriously to mankind in placing them under such a constitution.

Again, the objection proceeds upon a partial view of that first constitution. It fixes only on that side of it which affects man as guilty, and which presents nothing but misery and death. But to judge aright of it, we must consider man's original state, the blessings and happiness he enjoyed, and the implied continuance of that happiness to him and his posterity, had he continued obedient according to his obligations and abilities. This certainly balances the evils threatened in case of his disobedience, and shews that constitution to be just and equal. Further, the appointment of Adam as the public representative of his posterity was more likely to be attended with a happy issue, than if every one had been appointed to stand for himself personally; for Adam was created in a state of perfect manhood, whereas all his posterity were to pass through the stage of infancy, and arrive gradually at a state of maturity, and so are less fit to stand for themselves: besides, if he knew that the



happiness of his posterity depended on his obedience, it furnished him with an additional motive to watchfulness, which none of them would have had.

Those who declaim so much against the justice of imputing Adam's sin to his posterity, of condemning them on that account, and dealing with them as if they had actually committed it, must also, if they are consistent with themselves, disapprove of the new constitution under the second man; since, in these respects, it exactly resembles the first constitution, and was typified by it. For the apostle, having said that Adam was the type of him that was to come, Rom. v. 14. and shewn the disparity, ver. 15, 16, 17. states the exact agreement in these words; "Therefore, as by the offence of one," or one offence, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one," or one righteousness, "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.—That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," ver. 18, 19, 21.

But though men should reject the Scripture account of the fall, it must still be admitted as an undeniable fact, that sin, as well as death, has been and still is in the world, and that it discovers itself very early in life. How will they account for this? Can they shew us why the Divine Being permitted sin and moral disorder to enter into the world with all its train of evils? or why he has suffered it so long to continue? Will they tell us, that whatever is is right, or the best upon the whole? or that God could not interfere without destroying the liberty of man's will, and consequently the nature of virtue? These are words without meaning; and indeed it is simply impossible to give any rational solution of this matter, that will consist with the

divine character and government, but upon Scripture principles.

3. It is argued, That mankind derive no corruption of nature from Adam; for as God is the immediate Father of our spirits, he must have created them pure, and they must continue so till they arrive at a certain degree of maturity in knowledge, judgment and experience, and consent to the irregular propensities and passions of animal nature.

*Ans.* Though God is the Father of our spirits, yet as neither the body nor spirit, previous to their union, can be considered as either positively pure or impure in a moral sense; so neither of them, separately considered, constitute a child of Adam, but only as united in one person; and it is this living person that comes into the world with a corrupt nature derived from him, “for that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” As to what is said of the spirit’s continuing pure after its union with the body till it arrive at a certain degree of maturity in knowledge, &c. that can only respect actual sin, which is not the point under consideration.

4. From this erroneous principle it is further argued, That those who die in infancy have no need of salvation by Christ, because they were never spiritually lost; nor do they need to be regenerated, because they are possessed of original purity and perfect innocency by their creation.

*Ans.* It is admitted, that the sentence pronounced upon Adam’s one offence was that death which entered into the world by it, and which actually passes upon all men; that the second death, or everlasting punishment of hell, is the sentence pronounced upon the wicked in the last judgment for the deeds done in the body, or their own personal transgressions, as has been shewn; and that therefore we have no ground from Scripture to think that any of those who die in mere infancy, and have not done any good or evil, (Rom. ix. 11.) shall undergo the positive punishment of a future state. But from all this it does not follow, that they

are not spiritually lost, or that they do not stand in need of salvation by Christ, and that too of sovereign free grace.

So far are they from being originally possessed of any positive moral purity by creation, that, as descendants of fallen Adam, they are shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and born flesh; not only void of a spiritual principle, but with a fixed rooted tendency in their nature to sin. This, in the very nature of things, unfits them for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness; for where there is no spiritual life there can be no relish for divine things, nor any spiritual enjoyment of them. No unclean thing can enter the heavenly Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 27. God is holy, and without holiness no man shall see the Lord, or be capable of enjoying him, Heb. xii. 14. and our Lord declares it as an universal truth, that "Except a man (*τις, any one,*) be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3, 5. Infants, therefore, stand in need of salvation by Christ, for it is only through him they can be delivered from the pollution of their first birth, regenerated, sanctified, and made meet for heavenly happiness. How the Spirit of Christ operates upon them, or at what precise time, whether before or at their dissolution, we know not; but we are sure that God can produce this change in a moment, how and when he sees meet.

Further, they are mortal, and die by the sentence pronounced on the sin of Adam. The promise of a resurrection from that death to enjoy eternal life from the dead, belongs not to the first constitution made with Adam and his posterity, but to the constitution of grace established on Christ's death and resurrection. It is by the second man that the blessed resurrection of the dead comes, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. His own resurrection is the proof and earnest of it; for he rose as the first fruits, ver. 20, 23. Infants stand in need of this part of Christ's salvation also, viz. the redemption of their bodies, that they may bear the image of the heavenly man, as they have done that of the earthy, ver. 49. so that

they must be saved through Christ of pure grace as well as adults, and not on the footing of their original purity.

But some may ask, How do we know that any of them are saved? I answer, Christ himself declares that little children belong to his kingdom, when he says, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.” Mark x. 14. and he describes that kingdom to be such as none can enter but those who are converted, ver. 15. which applies only to his invisible kingdom; and further, to shew that he confers salvation upon little children, “he took them up in his arms and blessed them.” ver. 16. Indeed there is nothing in the word of God that warrants us to conclude that ANY of them dying in infancy, shall suffer the punishment of the second death. But it is argued against original sin,

5. That there is no sin but what is *actual*; and to suppose that men are born in sin, without their choice, or any previous act of their own, is to suppose what is inconsistent with the nature of sin, which is the voluntary transgression of a known rule of duty.

*Ans.* Actual sin consists either in sinful acts of the mind, or in external sinful actions proceeding from these: But it is evident that these sinful acts, whether internal or external, are not their own causes, but the effects of some previous moral disorder in the nature or disposition of the agent. Though mankind, when they first come into the world, are incapable of actual sin, yet the first thing we discern in their dispositions is a tendency towards it, and which in a little time never fails to produce it. This evil bias or tendency is certainly not the *effect* of their choice, or of any previous act of their own. In little children, we may early discern resentment, a desire of revenge and gratification from it, envy, pride, refractoriness, stubbornness, covetousness, impatience, and sometimes such a degree of anger and ill-nature, as would produce the most mischievous effects were their power equal to their inclination. It

will perhaps be said that whatever we discover in little children, it has not the nature of sin in them till they come to the exercise of judgment and reason, and are capable of moral action. But to this, it may be replied, That such dispositions are in themselves of the nature of sin, opposite to original righteousness, and shew a depravity of nature in little children: They are the same kind of dispositions in embryo which are admitted to be their sin, when they become moral agents, and which are the source of their actual sin.

6. Neither Adam nor the angels that fell were possessed of a sinful nature, yet they sinned, and all mankind may, without a sinful nature, sin as well as they.

*Ans.* The case is by no means parallel. Though Adam and angels fell into sin, we cannot from this infer that their nature was originally corrupt, any more than we can infer from a man's first act of drunkenness that he was all along a drunkard, or that he had an original propensity in his nature to that vice. A single and transient effect will not prove a fixed and permanent cause. Nay, though he should afterwards contract an inveterate habit of excessive drinking, it will not prove that he had this originally in his nature; nor is it upon such grounds that the doctrine of original sin rests. But let us state a case as near as possible, and suppose, that a man, at first naturally sober and temperate, has been betrayed into an act of drunkenness by the deceitful insinuations of a pretended friend; that from that moment a propensity to that vice took place in his constitution, and stuck by him while he lived: Let us further suppose, that all his posterity, without exception, discover the same propensity from their infancy, and desire intoxicating liquor as eagerly as the milk of the breast, and that this vicious inclination grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength, notwithstanding all the means and motives that can be used to reclaim them. Would not such an inclination, manifesting itself so early

lead us reasonably to conclude, that it was rooted in their constitution, natural to them, and derived from their progenitor; and that though he had no inclination of this kind, previous to the influence of the temptation, yet the case is very different with them? Just so it is with mankind. Adam had no previous disposition to sin till he was overcome by the temptation; but with regard to his posterity, the case is otherwise. We find them sinning early as soon as they are capable of it, and sinning universally without exception, in all ages, in all places, and in all circumstances, and that too against means and motives the most powerful. Such an universal, constant and permanent effect must undoubtedly have an answerable cause; and what can that cause be, but an internal, fixed, and prevailing propensity in man's nature to sin, and which nothing but supernatural divine influence can overcome, as the word of God every where declares?

7. There is no tendency to sin inherent in man's nature; but it is the result of the constitution and frame of the world into which he is born, and wherein he is placed, where he is surrounded with so many and strong temptations, as have an infallible tendency to lead him into sin.

*Ans.* If by this it is intended to free the Divine Being from having any hand in the sin of man, it is very ill calculated for that end. Suppose then that man comes into the world free of all natural depravity; yet, if God hath placed him in a world which he hath so constituted and furnished with so many temptations as infallibly lead him into sin, it is easy to see where this will fix the blame. Again, if God hath created man with such a nature, that it proves evil in its proper place, or in that situation which he hath assigned it in the universe, then man must have an evil nature. It were easy to shew both from scripture and observation, that the frame and constitution of the world exhibits a most magnificent and striking display of the wisdom, power, and goodness of its Author; that God hath fitted up this earth

as a most convenient habitation for man, and furnished it with every thing that is necessary both for his subsistence and comfort, for it is full of his goodness. Reason will inform us, that these things ought to influence our thankfulness, love and obedience to God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. But if instead of this, these mercies become temptations which infallibly lead us into sin, and are perverted into means and occasions of rebellion against so gracious and kind a benefactor, then it undeniably follows, that human nature is depraved to an exceeding high degree.

8. Without supposing any corruption in man's nature, the general prevalence of sin in the world may be accounted for from his senses, animal appetites and passions being first in exercise, and forming into habits before judgment and reason are capable of assuming the reins.

*Ans.* If man in the early stage of his life, and without his own choice or consent, be put for a considerable time under the government of animal nature, having a prevailing tendency to sin, and if this accounts for the general prevalence of sin in the world, then it must be an evil and corrupt state of things which thus naturally tends to, and issues in that consequence. Again, as we are forbid to attribute this to any corruption of nature derived from Adam, and as it depends not upon the will of man, that animal nature has the start of reason, so this tendency to sin must be resolved entirely into the ordering and disposing of the Author of nature! Indeed those who thus account for the prevalence of sin admit this, and say, that matters could not have been ordered otherwise consistently with the nature of things. But what is there in the nature of things that has made it impossible with God so to have balanced the principles of human nature, as that it should have no prevalent tendency to sin? Was it not so in Adam at first, and afterwards in the man Christ Jesus, who knew no sin,

though he went through the state of childhood, and increased in wisdom as he grew in stature, Luke ii. 52.?

9. It is alleged, that there is a self-determining power in the human will which is essential to its freedom, and that this is a cause which will sufficiently account for the general wickedness of mankind without supposing any depravity of nature.

*Ans.* This cause is very different from the two foregoing, and perfectly inconsistent with them. The freedom of will asserted above is not merely a freedom from *physical necessity*, constraint or compulsion, or a liberty of doing or not doing *as we please*; but it is a supposed *self-determining* power in the will whereby it can determine its own volitions independently of any cause without itself, or without being influenced by any previous motive, inducement or consideration whatever. It is supposed that the will has no inclination towards one thing more than another, but is in a state of perfect *equilibrium* or *indifference* as to good or evil, virtue or vice, but that it is endued with a sovereign power to determine or incline itself any way, either with, without, or against motives, and that herein its liberty consists; and this is assigned as the cause of human wickedness instead of the corruption of nature. But if the will of man has no inclination whatever either to good or evil, virtue or vice, such a state of indifference must itself be exceedingly evil and faulty. Good is always preferable to evil, and virtue to vice, and therefore to be alike indifferent to both must be very criminal in a rational moral agent: But the supposition is absurd, for no man could be a rational moral agent with such a state of mind. Again, should we admit the irrational supposition, that the mind in this state of absolute indifference, has a power to determine (or rather create) its own volitions, without any previous motive, inducement or end, then its determination must be not only capricious, but altogether contingent, having no fixed or



certain connection with any previous ground or reason of its choice, or of its determining itself one way more than another; and therefore such an unfixed and precarious cause can never account for the depravity of mankind, which is a constant and universal effect manifesting itself in all ages, climes, situations and circumstances, consequently requires an answerable cause.

If the will itself is not depraved, or under the influence of an evil propensity, how comes it to pass that mankind so universally agree in the evil exercise of it? Or, if it is indifferent, and equally balanced between good and evil, how comes it always to preponderate one way, *i. e.* to the side of evil? Does not this demonstrate, that it has an evil bias? It does not mend the matter to say, that this constant evil bias is the effect of its own self-determining power; for that is the same as to affirm, that the first moving spring in human nature is corrupt.

10. It has been alleged by some, that bad example will sufficiently account for the corruption of mankind without supposing original sin.

*Ans.* This is to make human depravity account for itself, or to be its own cause. How came bad examples into existence? How came they to be so general all over the world in all ages? Is not this the very corruption of the world that is to be accounted for? Why do men follow bad rather than good examples? In short, there is no accounting for these things without admitting the scripture doctrine of original sin; and every attempt to account for the universal depravity of mankind upon any other principle is vain, and must land in absurdity.



THE  
IMPUTATION  
OF  
SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS  
BEING  
A PARAPHRASE WITH NOTES,  
On Rom. v. 12. to the end.



## THE IMPUTATION,

&c.

---

---

### TEXT.

Ver. 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.*

### PARAPHRASE.

HAVING proved that both Jews and Gentiles, in their natural state, are without strength, sinners, enemies to God, and exposed to his wrath, chap. iii. 19, 23. chap. v. 6, 8, 9, 10. and having also shewn that both of them are received into a state of justification, peace and reconciliation with God by faith in the atonement, without any regard to the difference which the law of Moses made betwixt them, chap. iii. 28, 29, 30. chap. v. 1, 2, 9, 10, 11. it will be proper, for the further illustration of these things, to trace them up to their respective sources, viz. Adam and Christ. *Wherefore as by one man*, viz. Adam, the common father and representative of Jews and Gentiles, *sin entered into the world (a)*, and *death (b)* entered by his sin as its punishment, Gen. ii. 17. chap. iii. 19. *even so (c) death (διηλθεν) passed through him (εἰς) unto all men (ἐφ' ὧ) wherein all have sinned (d).*

### NOTES.

(a) *By one man sin entered into the world.*—This shews that Adam's first sin was the *introduction* or *inlet* to all the personal sin and depravity that is in the world among his posterity, and that it rendered mankind as

incapable of innocence, as the entrance of death by it made them of immortality; and therefore, the continuance of sin in the world has as necessary a connection with its beginning, as the continuance of death has with its entrance. To this it has been objected, that the nature of sin or moral evil, does not admit of *necessity* as death does, but must be the effect of *free choice*. But to this it may be answered, that moral necessity is perfectly consistent with free choice, and is the very moving cause of it. A moral agent who is necessarily and perfectly good has the most perfect freedom in the exercise of goodness, and one who is necessarily and completely evil, must have the most perfect freedom in the exercise of evil.

But it ought to be observed, that sin took place in Adam's heart, and his mind was corrupted through the influence of Satan's temptation, before he finished that sin which brought forth death. And though God, in his righteous judgment, did not interpose, but *permitted* sin to proceed as it began, so as to infect the whole human race; yet we are not warranted to say, that he *inflicted* it upon men by any positive influence as he did death: for this would make him the author of sin as well as of its just punishment, and so confound the distinction between *sin* and its *wages*, which the apostle pointedly keeps up through the rest of this chapter.

(*b*) *And death by sin.*—The death which came by Adam's one offence, as distinguished from the sin which entered by it, is that which was threatened in case he should transgress, Gen. ii. 17. and denounced upon him when he fell, chap. iii. 17, 18, 19. The sentence includes sorrow of mind, toil and distress of body, and at last man's returning to the dust out of which he was taken. The apostle describes it to be that death which actually passes upon all men, ver. 12.—which reigned from Adam to Moses, ver. 14.—which many have died, unto whom the grace and gift of God hath notwithstanding *much more*

abounded, ver. 16. and which reigned by one over them who shall *much more* reign in life, ver. 17.; and he also opposes it to the resurrection of the bodies of the saints from the grave, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. When Adam sinned he lost the sense and enjoyment of the Divine favour which is the true happiness of man, and conscious guilt filled him with fear and shame, Gen. iii. 8, 10. The poison of corruption instilled into his nature by the temptation, must, from its very nature, have made him unhappy, and have alienated his mind from God whom he now dreaded as his enemy. All this may be termed *spiritual death*. He lost also his happy situation in Paradise, and the earthly enjoyments of it, which were suited to the happiness of his animal life, and was sentenced to spend the remainder of his days in sorrow and labour, and at last to return to the dust from whence he was taken, ver. 17—20. This death is commonly called *temporal death*, and it certainly was so in the intention of God; but not by virtue of the first constitution, for that afforded no hope of a restoration from it.

This is what both scripture and experience teach us concerning the death which entered into the world simply through Adam's one offence. With respect to what is called *eternal death*, by which is meant the everlasting punishment of hell in a future state, and which the scripture terms the *second death*, Rev. ii. 11. chap. xx. 14. chap. xxi. 8. the word of God never ascribes that directly to Adam's one offence, but always represents it as the punishment inflicted upon the wicked at the last day for their own personal transgressions, or the deeds done in the body. Matth. xxv. 30, 41, &c. 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. Rev. xx. 12, 13, 15. chap. xxi. 8. So that the connection between Adam's sin and the second death of any of his posterity is not direct and immediate, but only through the medium of depravity, exerting itself in personal and actual sin, for upon this the final sentence proceeds.

To this it has been objected, That the death which came simply through Adam's offence is opposed to *eternal life*, and therefore must be eternal death or the everlasting punishment of hell, this being the adequate opposite of eternal life. But this reasoning is altogether inconclusive, unless it could be shewn, that the damage which came simply by Adam's one offence, is *equal* to the benefit which comes by Christ's obedience, which would nullify all the apostle says in shewing the vast *inequality*, ver. 15, 16, 17. for, in that case, the *grace* of God, and the *gift* by grace, could not be said to be *much more abundant* than the death or condemnation by the first offence. Further, he shews that the death which entered by Adam's one offence is fully executed, and actually passes upon all men, even upon those who notwithstanding shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ, ver. 17. but if God had denounced a sentence of eternal death, or endless punishment, upon Adam and his posterity for his sin, there would have been no deliverance from it, any more than from the final sentence upon the wicked. The question is not about the *desert* of Adam's sin, but about the *nature* of that death which was threatened, and actually pronounced and executed upon him and his posterity. There is no contradiction in saying, that some mercy might be mixed with the sentence, or that God punished him less than his sin deserved.

It is also objected, That as Adam did not die *on the very day* in which he sinned, temporal death cannot be the chief thing intended in the threatening. But may it not as well be argued, that if eternal death had been the main thing intended, he must have been cast into hell that day? The truth is, there is no argument in either of these assertions. The threatening only imports, that on the day he lost his innocence, he should lose his happy life in Paradise, and become mortal or subject to death, as both the sentence and the event clearly shew. The Hebrew phrase, *in the day*, is frequently used with considerable latitude, and does



not fix the precise time in which the threatened punishment is to be executed: See Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13.

(c) *Even so, &c.*—I think *καὶ οὕτως* ought here to be rendered *even so*, as *σὺ καὶ* is ver. 18, 19. for it seems to answer to (*ὡσπερ*) *as*, at the beginning of the verse; and then the meaning will be, that *as* death entered into the world at first by Adam's one offence, *even so* it proceeded on unto all men for that same offence, as they all have sinned in him. This completes the sense without having recourse to ver. 18. and throwing the five intervening verses into a parenthesis.

(d) *Wherein all have sinned.*—Not for that all, or because all *have personally sinned*; for that would be contrary to the whole scope of the passage; but the meaning is, that all were so included in Adam as their representative, and involved with him in the guilt of his sin, as to become subject to death on that account.

## TEXT.

Ver. 13. *For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*

## PARAPHRASE.

That it was through Adam's sin alone that death entered into the world, and passed unto all men, is evident; for though from the fall *until* the time when *the law* (e) was given to Israel, *sin was in the world*, men being transgressors in their own persons; *yet sin is not imputed* (f), or counted unto death, *when there is no law* (g), or constitution of the lawgiver to that effect.

## NOTES.

(e) *Until the law.*—While the apostle's main design in the comparison of Adam with Christ, is to illustrate the grand point he had been upon all along, viz. justification through the obedience of Christ alone, he at the same time so manages matters as to refute the Jewish notions which were opposed to that doctrine. They imagined, that because they were the natural circumcised seed of Abraham, therefore they were in a safe state, and had an exclusive title to the favour of God on that account; whilst they looked with contempt upon the uncircumcised Gentiles as accursed sinners, hated and abandoned of God. But the apostle shews, that they themselves stood connected with a more ancient father than Abraham, viz. fallen Adam, and that they were equally with the Gentiles involved in the consequences of his fall. They also considered the law of Moses as the prime and general rule of judgment for mankind, whereby they were to be acquitted or condemned, and thought that none could be saved unless they complied even with its peculiarities. But the apostle shews, that there was a more ancient and universal law, by the transgression of which, they, as well as the rest of mankind, were constituted sinners, and liable to condemnation as such; and that their law was introduced long after, not with a view to justify them, but to make the offence abound, and lead them to Christ, who is the end of that law for righteousness to every one that believeth. These hints may serve to shew in part why the apostle brings in the law of Moses in ver. 13, 14, 20.

(f) *Sin is not imputed.*—To *impute sin* is to reckon or charge it to account with a view to its punishment; and so *not to impute sin* is to free from the obligation to suffer its punishment. This is the uniform sense of Scripture with regard to the imputation or non-imputation of sin, see 2 Sam. xix. 19, 23. Ps. xxxii. 2. Rom. iv. 8. 2 Cor. v. 19.

The word (*λογιζομαι*) is rendered *laid to their charge*, viz. for punishment, 2 Tim. iv. 16. and Paul writing to Philemon concerning Onesimus, says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." Gr. *impute that to me*, viz. for restitution or repayment, for he adds, "I will repay it," Philem. ver. 18, 19. So that the wrongs committed by one may be imputed or charged to the account of another in respect of satisfaction or redress. When, therefore, the apostle says, "sin is not imputed when there is no law," he means that it is not charged to account for punishment. And this is an universal and self-evident truth; "For where no law is, there is no transgression," or sin, the very notion of which is, that it "is the transgression of a law," chap. iv. 15. 1 John iii. 4. and where there is no sanction or penalty, there can be no imputation of sin unto punishment. But the sin and punishment the apostle has particularly in view are what he had just mentioned in the foregoing verse, viz. the *sin* of Adam, and the *death* which entered into the world, and passed unto all men through the imputation of that sin; and his meaning is, that such imputation could not take place, had there been no law existing prior to the law of Moses.

(g) *When there is no law.*—Mankind had always the law of nature, and part of them had also some degree of revelation before the law of Moses was given. Personal sin was also in the world during that period, and many of them were punished with a violent death on that account, such as the antediluvians, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. But all this does not come up to that imputation of sin which the apostle has in view, nor to the law that was necessary to it. The imputation being that of Adam's sin unto the death of all his posterity, this required such a law as constituted him their representative or moral head, and made him and them legally one, so as that they should either stand or fall with him, and be dealt with accordingly. So that the *law* here includes the first consti-

tution connecting Adam and his posterity, as well as the particular precept with its sanction respecting the forbidden fruit. And that such a law existed before the law of Moses, he proves in the next verse from the universal reign of death since Adam's time.

## TEXT.

Ver. 14. *Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

## PARAPHRASE.

But though sin is not imputed when there is no law, *nevertheless* it is an undoubted fact, that *death reigned* universally, during all the forementioned period *from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression (h)*, as Israel did after they received the law (*i*). They must therefore have died by the law given to Adam, and on account of his transgression of it (*k*), *who*, in thus conveying death, the wages of his sin, to those who have not sinned like him *is the* (*τυπος*) *type of him that was to come*, i. e. of Christ.

## NOTES.

(*h*) *After the similitude of Adam's transgression.*—Adam sinned as a representative, he sinned personally, and he sinned against an express revealed law sanctioned with death. We shall not miss the mark if we include all these ideas in the *similitude* of his transgression. But

the question is, who are intended by them who have not sinned after that similitude? It is clear that it will apply in the fullest sense to infants, who have not sinned personally like Adam, nor done any good or evil; yet it is a fact that death reigns over them, as well as over adults, and that a great proportion of mankind die in infancy; and as this can be ascribed to no other moral cause but Adam's sin, so it clearly proves the imputation of it to them unto their death.

But though infants are doubtless included among those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet it does not appear that the apostle had none else in view. The distinction is evidently between those who were *before the law* of Moses, and such as were *under that law*: And though adults among the former had sinned personally as well as the latter, sin being then in the world; yet they did not like Adam sin in a representative capacity, nor against an expressed revealed law which had death for its penalty, there being no such law given from Adam to Moses, except that against murder, Gen. ix. 6. and therefore the universal reign of death over them must have been by the original law given to Adam.

(i) *As Israel did*, &c.—As those who were before the law of Moses are distinguished from those who were under it by this, that they did not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression, it implies that Israel did sin after that similitude, and consequently that the law given to them resembled or represented the law which Adam transgressed: And it did so in several respects, particularly in its promise of a happy earthly life to their national obedience; in its threatening of the opposite death upon their disobedience; in God's visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, according to that law; so that their disobedience had some similitude of Adam's transgression (as the Lord declares, Hos. vi. 7.), though they were previously involved in the consequences of his sin as well as others.

(*k*) *On account of his transgression of it.*—This conclusion, though not expressed by the apostle in this verse, is the very thing he is proving, and which he clearly expresses afterwards. And it is no objection to this, that multitudes have been punished with death for their own personal sins; for such punishment did not make them mortal, but found them so; and though they had escaped such punishment, they must have died at any rate on account of Adam's transgression.

## TEXT.

Ver. 15. *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. 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.*

## PARAPHRASE.

*But though Adam in this respect, was a type of Christ, yet not as the damage by the offence (l), so also is the free gift (m); i. e. the benefit freely conferred through Christ is not confined to the dimensions of the damage received by Adam's one offence, but very far surpasses it. For if through the offence of one many (απεθανον) have died; much more the grace, or free favour of God, and the gift, or benefit freely conferred by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath (σπερισσευσε) exceeded unto many.*

## NOTES.

(*l*) *Not as the offence.*—The (παράπτωμα) *offence* or *lapse*, strictly taken, signifies the single sin of Adam in

eating the forbidden fruit, which is also termed his (*παραβασις*) *transgression*, ver. 14. his (*παρακοη*) *disobedience*, ver. 19. and is directly opposed to Christ's (*δικαιωμα*) *righteousness*, ver. 18. or (*υπακοη*) *obedience*, ver. 19. But here it is not directly opposed to that, but to *the free gift*, or benefit which comes by it, and therefore must be used here in a larger sense, to signify not merely the *offence itself*, but the *damage* or *punishment* incurred by it, viz. death; accordingly, in the corresponding clause, it is explained by the words, "through the offence of one *many have died.*"

(*m*) *So also is the free gift.*—The (*χαρισμα*) *free gift* here is the same with the (*δωρεα εν χαριτι*) *gift by grace* in the latter part of the verse, and signifies the benefit freely conferred by the favour of God through the obedience of Christ. It is expressed in the subsequent verses by various other terms adapted to the different antitheses and comparisons, such as, *justification*, the *gift of righteousness*, *justification of life*, a *reign in life*, *eternal life*, ver. 16, 17, 18, 19, 21. and it consists of the remission of sins, the gift of the Spirit, the resurrection of the body, and the enjoyment of everlasting life and happiness.

In this 15th verse, the apostle enters upon the *difference* or *disproportion* between the damage by Adam's one offence, and the benefit by Christ's one righteousness, and affirms in general, that the latter greatly *exceeds* the former. In the following two verses he specifies particularly in what respects it does so.

## TEXT.

Ver. 16. *And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.*

## PARAPHRASE.

*And, to come to particulars, not as it was by one sin (n) so is the gift; for the (κρημα) judgment, or sentence, was by one offence unto condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences (o) unto justification (p).*

## NOTES.

(n) *By one sin (ἑνος αμαρτηματος).*—So the Alexandrian copy has it, and the antithesis requires this reading. *One that sinned* may be opposed to *many offenders*, but can with no propriety be contrasted with *many offences*, as here, and therefore *one sin* must be the true reading, and also the sense of the other (ἑνος) *one* in the corresponding clause.

(o) *Many offences.*—i. e. the innumerable multitude of sins which men have committed themselves, whereby they have become liable to the wrath to come, as the word of God declares, John v. 29. Rom. ii. 5.

(p) *Unto justification.*—This is part of the (δωρημα) *free gift* or donation, which is freely conferred through the righteousness or blood of Christ, see above, ver. 9, 10. chap. iii. 24, 25, 26. It is the same with *the gift of righteousness*, ver. 17. and with being *made righteous* by the obedience of one, ver. 19. It consists of the remission of sins, or a discharge from the guilt and punishment of them, and a title to eternal life. Here it is directly opposed to *the sentence of condemnation* by Adam's one sin, as recorded Gen. iii. 19. but is declared to be *not as that was*, but greatly exceeding it; and the inequality lies in this, That whereas the sentence to condemnation was by *one sin*, the free gift of justification by Christ's one righteousness not only answers to that one sin, but also frees from the guilt of an innumerable *multitude of personal sins*; and so not only restores from the punishment of the first death



(Heb. ix. 27.) denounced upon that *one offence*, but also saves from the much sorer punishment of the *many offences* which men have committed themselves, making them liable to the everlasting pains of the second death, Matt. x. 28. Rev. xx. 6, 14, 15.

## TEXT.

Ver. 17. *For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*

## PARAPHRASE.

*For if by one man's (q) offence death reigned by that one man; much more they who receive (την περισσειαν) the abundance or excess (r) of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (s).*

## NOTES.

(q) *One man's offence.*—In the margin it is *one offence*, but the text is nearer the original; for ἕνος does not agree in case with παρῆπτωματι, and the antithesis requires that *man* should be here understood.

(r) *Abundance.*—The word *abundance* does not fully express the sense intended here. The apostle is not speaking of the abundance of the grace and gift *absolutely considered*, but in *relation* to the offence and its effects, in order to shew that they greatly exceed; so that την περισσειαν here should be rendered *the excess, redundancy, or superabundance* of grace, &c. In ver. 15. he had said in

general, that the *grace* of God, and the *gift* by grace hath much more (επερισσευσεν) *exceeded* unto the many. In ver. 16. he shews particularly wherein this *excess* lies as to that part of the gift which consists in *justification*. In this 17th verse he proceeds to the other part of the gift, viz. eternal life, and describes the many who shall obtain it to be such as receive (την περισσειαν) the excess or surplusage of *grace* and of the *gift of righteousness*, or of justification, which he had mentioned in the two foregoing verses.

(s) *Shall reign in life*.—This is the other part of the *gift by grace* conferred through the obedience of Christ, and is here opposed to the *death which reigned* through the offence of Adam; but is declared to be (πολλῶ μαλλον) *much more* abundant, see also John x. 10. for it does not consist barely in such a resurrection from the first death as is common to the saved and damned, (John v. 28, 29. Rev. xx. 12, 13.) which is not equivalent to the loss; nor even in a restoration of the happy life which Adam enjoyed in the earthly Paradise, which, though equal to the loss, cannot be termed *much more*; but it consists in an advancement to *reign in life*, which imports the highest enjoyment of glory, honour and blessedness in the heavenly state, and that without end, or danger of forfeiture, “for the gift of God is *eternal life*, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” chap. vi. 23.

TEXT.

Ver. 18. *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

## PARAPHRASE.

But as we have said that Adam was a type of Christ, ver. 14. and as there is a vast difference between them in the particulars just mentioned, ver. 15, 16, 17. *therefore* we shall now shew wherein the one corresponds with the other; and they exactly agree in this, that *as by* (ἕνεος παραπτώματος) *one offence* or lapse (*t*), the judgment or sentence was (εις) *unto all men unto condemnation* of death; *even so by* (ἕνεος δικαιώματος) *one righteousness* (*u*), the free gift is *unto all men* (*v*) *unto justification of life* (*w*).

## NOTES.

(*t*) *One offence*.—So the words should be rendered, and not *the offence of one*; for (ἕνεος) *one* agrees with (παραπτώματος) *offence* as its adjective, and both are governed in the genitive by δια. It means Adam's single transgression in eating the forbidden fruit.

(*u*) *One righteousness*.—The grammatical observation in the foregoing note applies equally here, so that *one righteousness*, and not *the righteousness of one*, is the true rendering. The plural δικαιώματα, when applied to the law, signifies its various precepts and ordinances, Rom. ii. 26. chap. ix. 1, 10. when applied to men, it signifies their various acts of conformity to such precepts, Rev. xix. 8. But here the word is in the singular, which must signify either conformity to the (δικαιωμα) righteousness of the law in general, or some noted and special act of righteousness in particular. Now though it is true that Christ was perfectly conformed both in heart and life to the righteousness required in the law, Acts iii. 14. 1 Pet. ii. 22. and though it is also true that this was absolutely necessary to the justification of his people, as without it his sacrifice and mediation could not be accepted, see 2 Cor. v. 21. Heb.

vii. 26. ch. ix. 14. 1 Pet. i. 19. ch. iii. 18. yet it appears that *δικαιωμα* here signifies a particular act of obedience, or work of righteousness; for it is termed *one*, answerable to Adam's one act of disobedience, to which it is opposed. By this *one righteousness* is more immediately intended his laying down his life voluntarily at the commandment of the Father as an atonement for the sins of his people, and to procure for them justification and eternal life; for this is the subject upon which the apostle introduceth the comparison with Adam; (see the connection of ver. 6, 8, 10, 11. with ver. 12, &c.) and therefore must be that chiefly which he directly contrasts with the one offence. The *will* of God, which Christ came into the world to do, for which a body was prepared him, and through which his people are sanctified, was the *offering of his body once for all*, Heb. x. 5—11. This is that special *commandment* which he received of his Father, and for the doing of which his Father loves him, and hath most highly rewarded him, John x. 17, 18. Phil. ii. 8, 9. This is the meritorious procuring cause of justification, Rom. iii. 24, 25. ch. v. 9, 10. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. ii. 21. the obedience whereby many are made righteous, ver. 19.

(v) *Unto all men.*—The sentence of death upon Adam's one offence was indeed unto *all men* in the most unlimited sense of that expression; but it cannot be affirmed that the benefit by Christ's one righteousness extends in like manner to every individual of the human race; for though all shall be raised up by Christ from the first death, John v. 28, 29. yet this is far from being a benefit to such of them as shall come forth unto the resurrection of damnation. But as the *all men* on both sides of the contrast seem to be the same persons, and are also termed (*οἱ πολλοί*) *the many*, ver. 15, 19. I am of opinion, that through the whole of this comparison the apostle is not speaking of those who shall finally perish, but only of such as shall be saved. *All* these were first under the condemnation of death by Adam, and

they *all* obtain justification to life by Christ. The same observation will apply to 1 Cor. xv. 22. "For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive," where he is speaking only of the resurrection of the just, or of *them that are Christ's*, ver. 23. as clearly appears from the description he gives of it, ver. 42, 43, 44. This universal way of speaking is frequently used in the New Testament in opposition to the Jewish limitation, and agreeably to the terms of the promise made to Abraham, "In thy seed shall *all the nations of the earth* be blessed;" which does not mean every individual in all nations, but "*a great multitude of all nations*, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," Rev. vii. 9. So that the expression *all men*, while it sets aside every distinction between Jews and Gentiles, with respect to the condemnation of death by Adam, and the justification of life by Christ, comprehends none of either of them but such as shall be saved; like as when Christ says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto me," John xii. 32. by which he means only those who will be effectually induced to believe on him; and so he explains them in a similar passage to be *whosoever believeth* on him, and *shall not perish, but have everlasting life*, chap. iii. 14, 15.

(w) *Unto justification of life*.—This is the benefit or free gift bestowed through Christ's one righteousness; and it imports both justification from every ground of condemnation, and a resurrection to an eternal life of glory and happiness. It is opposed to the condemnation of death by Adam's one offence; but as the apostle has already shewn that it greatly *exceeds* it, therefore the *similitude* or *likeness* between them pointed at in this verse, lies not either in their nature or degree, but in the *manner of their conveyance to all men*, without regard to the difference made by the Mosaic law. So that the comparison stands thus; As the condemnation of death comes unto all men, whether Jews or Gentiles (*δια*), through the one offence of Adam, the common father and representative of both; (*οὕτω και*) even so, or in like manner,

justification of life comes unto all men through the one righteousness of Christ, in whom *all nations* are blessed for it is unto all, and upon all them that believe, without difference, chap. iii. 22. Herein they exactly agree and run parallel.

## TEXT.

Ver. 19. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

## PARAPHRASE.

*For as by one man's disobedience (x) many were (κατεσταθησαν) constituted sinners, (y) being so connected with him in the guilt of his sin, as to fall under the sentence of death passed upon it; even so by the obedience of one (z) shall many be constituted righteous (a), being so connected with him in the merit of his obedience, as to be justified and adjudged to eternal life on that account.*

## NOTES.

(x) *One man's disobedience.*—viz. Adam's disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, termed in the foregoing verse his *one offence* or *lapse*.

(y) *Made, or constituted sinners.*—Some maintain that this phrase is by a metonymy put for being *made mortal*, or subjected to death by the sentence of God. But this makes the apostle to repeat just what he had said in the foregoing verse, without the addition of one single idea; and, which is worse, to repeat it as the reason or ground of

itself; for he introduceth this verse with the causal particle (*γαρ*) *for*. In the preceding verse he had said, that the condemnation of death was unto all men by Adam's one offence; and the reason he here assigns is, because by that one offence many were *made sinners*; which clearly imports, that they were so connected with their representative Adam in that first constitution, as to be involved in the *guilt* of his sin, and so became proper objects of punishment, which they could not be without being guilty in some sense.

(z) *By the obedience of one*.—This is the same with Christ's *one righteousness* mentioned in the preceding verse, and which, strictly taken, was his laying down his life for the redemption of guilty sinners. Here it is termed *obedience*, and that not merely as contrasted with the disobedience of Adam, but as containing in it every thing essential to the most perfect obedience. He performed it in obedience to the *will* and *commandment* of his Father, Heb. x. 7—11. John x. 18. ch. xiv. 30, 31. ch. xviii. 11.—He also did it *voluntarily*, or *of himself*, John x. 18. and so it is frequently expressed by active terms, such as that (*παρεδωκεν εαυτον*) *he delivered up himself*, Eph. v. 2, 25.—*gave himself*, Gal. i. 4. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Tit. ii. 14. *gave and laid down his life*, John x. 11, 15.—and *offered himself up to God*, Heb. vii. 27. chap. ix. 14. Further, he performed it from a proper inward *principle* and *disposition of heart*, viz. the perfection of *love* to his God and Father, Psal. xl. 7, 8. John xiv. 30, 31. and also the most perfect *love* to men, John xv. 13. Eph. iii. 19. 1 John iii. 16. So that it had every property of the most perfect obedience, and was the highest act of it that can possibly be conceived. The divine dignity of his person, and the sinless purity of his human nature concurred in giving it infinite worth and efficacy, Philip. ii. 6—9. Heb. i. 3. chap. v. 8, 9. chap. ix. 14. 1 Pet. i. 19. chap. ii. 22, 24. Hereby he perfectly fulfilled the law, and answered all its demands upon his guilty people whom he represented. So that by this obedience of one

(a) — *shall many be constituted righteous.*—This is opposed to their being *made sinners* by Adam's disobedience; and as that imports their being involved in the *guilt* of his sin as if they had committed it themselves, and so falling under the sentence of death denounced upon it; so their being *made* or *constituted righteous* by Christ's obedience, must signify that his obedience is placed to their account, as if they had performed it themselves; so that they are justified, or absolved from guilt and punishment on that account, and entitled to eternal life with Jesus Christ as its reward.

True indeed, men are made sinners personally through Adam's disobedience, by deriving a corrupt nature from him; and they are also made righteous through Christ's obedience when they partake of the effects of it in the *renewing of the Holy Spirit* sanctifying them through that truth. But the apostle here has neither men's *personal depravity* nor *holiness* immediately in view. He is speaking of the *condemnation of death* coming upon all men by Adam's *one sin*, and not by the sins of the many; and of the free gift of *justification to life* coming unto all by the *one righteousness* of Christ, and not by men's own personal righteousness, see ver. 16, 17, 18. and, as was observed, he proceeds in this 19th verse to give the reason of this, viz. that men were *constituted sinners* by the disobedience of one man, and that, in like manner, they are *constituted righteous* by the obedience of another. How men could be made sinners by Adam's disobedience, or righteous by the obedience of Christ, in neither of which they had any hand, is not easy to conceive without admitting the idea of *imputation*. Those who reprobate that idea would do well to shew us, how the disobedience of the former, or the obedience of the latter, could be any *ground* or *reason* either for the condemnation or justification of men, if neither of them were placed to their account.

The nature of Christ's obedience to the will and special



commandment of his Father, John x. 18. Heb. x. 10. clearly proves the doctrine of imputation. It was an obedience unto death to expiate sin, as was typified by the sin-offerings under the law, Psal. xl. 6—9. as is clearly expressed in prophecy, Isa. liii. 5, 6, 10, 12. and as is abundantly declared throughout the whole New Testament; where he is represented as giving himself for us—dying for our sins—bearing our sins in his own body on the tree—by himself purging our sins—as our high priest, offering the sacrifice of himself without spot to God; and thus obtaining eternal redemption for us, and the promise of eternal inheritance. This was such an obedience as he was under no obligation to perform for himself, because he had no sin of his own, and therefore he must have acted in it as the representative and substitute of sinners, having their sins charged to his account for satisfaction. So on the other hand, when it is said that we are *healed* by his *stripes*, Isa. liii. 5. *justified* by his *blood*, Rom. v. 9. *reconciled* to God by his *death*, ver. 10. *made the righteousness of God* in him, through his being *made a sin-offering for us*, 2 Cor. v. 21. and that by his *one righteousness* the free gift comes upon all men unto *justification of life*, Rom. v. 18. this clearly imports, that his obedience is placed to our account as the ground of our obtaining justification and eternal life; and this is the apostle's meaning when he says, “by the obedience of one shall many be constituted righteous.”

Upon the whole we may observe, that the distinctions commonly made between Christ's *active* and *passive* obedience, and between *pardon* and *justification*, ascribing the former to his passive, and the latter to his active obedience, are unscriptural distinctions, in support of which some have been led to deny that Christ's death is any part of his righteousness, which amounts to a denial that it has any merit or moral worth in it.

## TEXT.

Ver. 20. *Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded grace did much more abound.*

## PARAPHRASE.

*Moreover*, long after the entrance of sin and death into the world, *the* forementioned law of Moses *entered* (b), being delivered by special revelation to the Israelites, to the end *that the offence* incurring death *might abound*: (c) *but where sin abounded* unto death, by the sanction of that law, *grace did much more abound* (d).

## NOTES.

(b) *The law entered.*—The apostle here evidently refers to what he had said of the entrance of sin and death into the world, ver. 12. There he had used the word εισηλθε, here he changes it into παρεισηλεν, which small variation may import, that the law *entered besides* the original law which condemned mankind to death for one offence; or that it *entered a little*, extending only to the nation of Israel. It has been already shewn, that the law of Moses resembled and represented in several respects the law which Adam transgressed: see ver. 14. note (i). The end for which this law entered was,

(c) —*that the offence might abound.*—By this we are not to understand any *occasional effect* of the law upon human depravity, as when he says, “the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death—Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence,”

Rom. vii. 5, 8. Nor can we suppose that God's intention in giving the law to Israel was, that by their obedience to it they might regain the life which they, in common with the rest of mankind, had lost in Adam, or (as some speak,) to give them a trial for life; for though that law promised, that the man that did these things should live by them, Lev. xviii. 5. and on that account may be termed "the commandment which was unto life," Rom. vii. 10. yet the apostle repeatedly declares, that by the deeds or works of the law, no flesh shall be justified in God's sight, or obtain life, Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. chap. iii. 10, 11, 12, 21. on the contrary, he terms the law the ministration of death and condemnation, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. This did not arise from any default in the law, which is holy, just and good, but from the state and condition of men by the fall, which was a state of sin and death, in which none could fulfil the requirements of the perfect law, so as to live by it.

The question therefore returns, For what end did God give the law to Israel? and what is the meaning of the reason here given, *viz.* "that the offence might abound?" For understanding this, let it be observed, that by the (*παράπτωμα*) *offence*, or *lapse*, the apostle means mortal offence, or such as had the penalty of death annexed to it. He had hitherto mentioned only one such offence, *viz.* Adam's; but here he informs us, that the law entered that this kind of offence might abound; for as the law annexed the curse to every personal transgression, so the offence incurring death was thereby greatly increased or enlarged; and Israel, in disobeying that law, sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and their iniquity, like his, was, according to that law, often visited upon their children.

But we must not think that the law put Israel in a worse state than the heathen nations were; for the apostle reckons the giving of the law among their distinguishing privileges, Rom. ix. 4. The law, in making the offence abound, only discovered their real state and condition. It was calculated

to give them the knowledge of sin and its demerits, Rom. iii. 20. chap. vii. 13. that so, perceiving they could not obtain life by their obedience to it, but were liable to its curse, they might be led to Christ, who was held forth to them in promises and types, Gal. iii. 23, 24. Rom. iii. 21. Thus the law was subservient to the promise, and, in that view, a very great benefit.

It may be proper here to observe, that though the Mosaic constitution was neither what is commonly called *the covenant of works*, nor *the covenant of grace*, yet it represented both. Whatever was peculiar to Israel in that constitution, yet it must have contained the law which affected all mankind; otherwise it will be hard to shew how Christ's being made under that law, and bearing its curse, could have redeemed sinners of *all nations*, or have made way for the blessing of Abraham to come on the Gentiles, as the apostle affirms, Gal. iii. 12, 13, 14. It is also evident, that it represented or prefigured the new covenant, as the epistle to the Hebrews sets forth at large; and, in this respect, it must have been set aside when its antitype came to be established in Christ's blood, Heb. viii.

(d) *Grace did much more abound.*—The main design of the apostle in mentioning the abounding of the offence by the law, is to set forth the superabounding riches and power of divine grace, by the greatness of the obstacles which it had to overcome. He had shewn that the single offence of Adam was sufficient of itself to bring death on all his posterity, and even on such of them as had not sinned like him, ver. 12—19. But besides that, he shews in this verse, that the law of Moses entered, and, by annexing the curse to every personal transgression, made the offence incurring death to abound. These were such powerful obstacles in the way of man's recovery, as seemed to render it altogether impossible. The law, sin, and death were all combined against the criminal for his destruction; “for the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law,”

1 Cor. xv. 56. Yet *where* sin thus abandoned by the law; *where* it had the highest advantage over the sinner, and was armed with all its legal power and strength to condemn—even *there* did divine grace fully meet it, and greatly abound over it; for Christ the second Adam was made under that very law, to satisfy all its demands upon his guilty people of all nations, and to redeem them from its curse, by his obedience unto death, wherein he was made a curse for them; and so is the end of the law for righteousness, or justification to life, to every one that believeth, Gal. iii. 10—15. ch. iv. 4, 5. Rom. x. 4.

## TEXT.

Ver. 21. *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## PARAPHRASE.

God having in his adorable wisdom and rich mercy thus ordered matters, to the end *that as sin (e) hath reigned* with an uncontrollable power (*εν τω θανατω*) *in causing death (f)*, and abounded, through many personal offences, exposing men to the wrath to come (*g*); *even so might grace reign through righteousness (h)* with a superabounding power to justify (*i*) from all sin, and to recover from the death which came by Adam *unto the enjoyment of a heavenly and eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## NOTES.

(e) *Sin* and *grace* are here personified, and represented as two opposite monarchs, each reigning in his turn. There

is a comparison of their reigns, but the likeness lies not in an *equality* of power, but in the *sufficiency* of it in each to produce their respective effects. The reign of sin issues *in death*; but that of grace, which succeeds and overcomes it, issues *in eternal life*.

(f) *Sin hath reigned unto death.*—Sin here must no doubt mean Adam's sin in the first place, which has all along been represented as the entrance of sin into the world, and the procuring cause of that death which passes upon all men, ver. 12. for of this single sin it is said, "by ONE MAN'S OFFENCE death reigned by one," ver. 17. But I apprehend that the apostle, in winding up this subject, does not confine himself to that first sin, but speaks of *sin in general*, as including *that*, with the *corruption* of human nature, and all the *personal* and *actual sins* which proceed from it; and consequently, that the *death* unto which sin, in this view of it, hath reigned, must include more in it than that which passes upon all men merely through the imputation of Adam's one offence. The reason for this view of it will appear in the following note.

(g) *Exposing men to the wrath to come.*—This indeed is not expressly declared in the text, but is included in the word *death*, as will appear if we glance over the whole of this passage from the beginning. The apostle, to set forth the amazing love of God, had described the natural state and character, even of those who are redeemed, as being without strength, ungodly, sinners, enemies, and exposed to wrath, ver. 6, 8, 9, 10. He had shewn, not only that sin entered into the world at first by Adam's one offence, but had ever since continued in the world as well as death, ver. 12, 13, 14. by which he must certainly mean personal sin and depravity, and which he terms *many offences*, as distinguished from Adam's *one offence*, ver. 16. He had said, that the law of Moses entered that the *offence might abound*, viz. by shewing that every personal offence incurred the curse; and he immediately adds, "but where SIN abounded,

GRACE did much more abound," ver. 20. that as SIN hath reigned unto death, &c. ver. 21. From the connection of all which it is evident, that by SIN he not only means Adam's *one offence*, but also men's *personal sins* which incur the curse of the law, and consequently, that the *death* here mentioned must import all that is contained in the paraphrase. He frequently uses the word *death* to express the future punishment of personal guilt, see chap. vi. 21, 23. chap. viii. 13. and it is also termed the *second death*, Rev. ii. 11. chap. xx. 14. chap. xxi. 8. as distinguished from the first death which all men are by the original sentence appointed *once* to die in Adam, Heb. ix. 27. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

(h) *Through righteousness.*—By *righteousness* here cannot be meant our own righteousness, either in whole or in part, for, in that case, there would be no room for the objection that follows, " Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound," chap. vi. 1. The apostle had spoken of no other righteousness in this passage, but the *gift of righteousness*, or justification, ver. 17. and the *one righteousness* or *obedience* of Christ, by which many shall be *made righteous*, or justified, ver. 18, 19. One of these two therefore must be meant here. With regard to *justification*, as it is itself part of the gift by grace, ver. 16. it seems improper to say, that grace reigns (*δία*) *through* or *by* that, as any ground or cause for conferring eternal life, which is the other part of the gift, ver. 17. and therefore it is more likely that by *righteousness* here is meant the one righteousness or obedience of Christ (*δία*) *through*, *by*, or *on account of* which both justification and eternal life are conferred, as is expressly affirmed in ver. 18, 29. So we are said to be " justified freely by his grace (*δία*) *through* the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," chap. iii. 24.—*by* his blood," chap. v. 9. and also " *by means of his death*—to receive the promise of eternal inheritance," Heb. ix. 15. Through this righteousness, which was sovereignly

appointed beyond the line of the law, grace is enthroned to reign righteously—

(i) —*with a superabounding power.*—This superabounding of grace clearly appears from the whole of the comparison, and is expressed in the foregoing verse; “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” And the superabounding reign of grace through righteousness, above the offence and all its baneful effects, whether more immediate or remote, may be stated thus: It frees not only from the guilt of Adam’s offence, and the corruption of nature derived from it; but also from the guilt of innumerable personal offences, each of which incurred the curse of the law. Again, it recovers not merely from the death which came by Adam, by a resurrection from the dead; but delivers from the wrath to come, or the everlasting punishment of personal offences.—Lastly, it restores not merely to the happy life which Adam enjoyed in the terrestrial Paradise; but advances the redeemed to the most consummate blessedness in the enjoyment of a glorious, spiritual, and eternal life in heaven; and all this, through the merits, mediation, and power of the second Adam, Jesus Christ our Lord.



A  
**DIALOGUE**  
BETWEEN  
**A SECEDER AND A BAPTIST,**  
CONCERNING  
**The Extent of the Gospel Promise:**

Occasioned by what is said on that Subject in the TREATISE ON CHRIST'S  
COMMISSION TO HIS APOSTLES.

---

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” MARK xvi. 16.

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” ROM. iv. 16.



## DIALOGUE, &c.

---

SECEDER.

WELL, have you been considering what I advanced at our last interview upon the FAITH OF THE GOSPEL, with my objections to Mr. M'Lean's view of that subject as stated in his book on the Apostolical Commission?

BAPTIST.

That conversation ought rather to be entitled, your "Plea for an *absolute promise of salvation* to ALL the hearers of the gospel;" and I should certainly have forgot a considerable part of what you then advanced, had not my memory been since refreshed by a copy of it in print.\*

*Seced.* And what think you of our dialogue, now that you have had an opportunity of reviewing it deliberately?

*Bapt.* My part of it, as might well be expected, makes but a very poor figure; but I think, in publishing your sentiments to the world, you might have omitted some very uncandid insinuations which serve to throw no light upon the subject.

*Seced.* Such as——

\* This was a pamphlet which appeared under the title of "A Conversation between John a Baptist, and Ebenezer a Seceder, &c." which drew forth the following Dialogue by way of answer.

*Bapt.* That the treatise on the Commission is the creed of our church, and adherence to it the terms of admission (page 4.) as if we made the same use of it that some make of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms Larger and Shorter, by adopting it as our standard and test of doctrine.

*Seced.* Is that all? I thought you meant that I had thrown out some uncharitable censures upon your society, or personal reflections upon some individuals in it.

*Bapt.* And in what other light am I to understand these words; "There are some who *think* they have attained to primitive Christianity, if they only be able to cast a scriptural gloss over their systems; and it is sufficient for superficial readers, that, in casting their eye over the margin, they see it spotted with quotations from the Bible, or that the writer make frequent use of the language of Scripture." (p. 6.) Now, as you were speaking of a particular author, of his book, and of a church which, you say, had adopted it as their creed, you must undoubtedly have aimed at that author and his connections in these insinuations, in which you presume to judge their hearts, or what they *think*, and, in effect, to represent them as void of sincerity and of common sense.

*Seced.* Allow me to explain myself: I meant——

*Bapt.* An explanation is needless: I understand you perfectly well. But I do not so well understand what you mean when, unable to solve the grand difficulty which, on every occasion, presents itself against your views of the gospel, you say, "I am afraid, that by insisting upon an answer to similar difficulties, you have stumbled at other articles of the Christian faith, and have laid a stumbling-block before others, which may cause them to take offence at the most precious and fundamental articles of Christianity, nay, at *Christianity itself*." (p. 37.) This is a very heavy accusation; expressed too in what you call a *cool* conversation. (p. 45.) Allowing you were puzzled with a

difficulty, which overturns your whole scheme, especially when you found it impossible to solve it; yet this is not a good excuse for throwing out such rash and uncharitable censures upon those who differ from you. We hold it to be our duty to believe all the mysteries revealed in the word of God, though we should not understand every thing relating to them; but we wish to reject human mysteries, which arise from the inconsistency of their systems, and to which they have recourse as a convenient retreat, when unable to defend them upon any other ground.

*Seced.* Do you not think that men may depart from the faith by seeking to be wise beyond what is written, and not subjecting their reasonings to the word of God?

*Bapt.* I think they may, and often have; but how you come to apply this to the present case, I do not understand. I mentioned a difficulty which does not attach to the gospel, but only to your views of it; and, if I mistake you not, it amounts to this, That though a God of infinite faithfulness and truth hath made an *absolute* or *unconditional* promise of salvation to sinners of mankind as such; yet that a great number of those to whom this promise is made shall never obtain salvation. This sentiment appears to me to militate against the faithfulness of God, which is the very foundation of faith; and is a difficulty of such magnitude, that it certainly deserves a better answer than to class it with other inexplicable difficulties, and to accuse those who wish a solution of it with stumbling at the Christian faith, and laying a stumbling-block before others.

*Seced.* I find that your objection to this great gospel truth still remains, and that it arises, as I said before, from your ignorance of the ways of God. (p. 29.)

*Bapt.* If so, I have the more need to be instructed: Let us therefore, if you please, go over the subject again.

*Seced.* With all my heart.

*Bapt.* But before we come directly to the main point, it will be proper to explain some things. Our author says,

that the gospel contains a *testimony* concerning Christ's person, mission, work, and salvation, with a *promise* of that salvation to whosoever believeth on him. What do you object to this?

*Seced.* I have no objection to his expressing his sentiments respecting the gospel by distinguishing it into its parts, (p. 9.); but he has a different way of explaining the expression, *Jesus is the Christ*, from what I think proper. I consider that it contains the whole gospel as addressed to the Jews. The character and work of the Messiah, and salvation through him, was revealed in the Old Testament; the great thing necessary to be added was, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. (p. 14.)

*Bapt.* Our author understands that expression to import, not only that Jesus of Nazareth was the person promised, but also his mediatorial character and offices.\* The Jews did not so fully understand the meaning of the Old Testament respecting the character and work of the Messiah, as to need only to be told in general that Jesus of Nazareth was the person; hence the apostles had to explain the Old Testament Scriptures to them in preaching the gospel. We have the Old Testament as well as the Jews had, and more abundant access to consult it; yet we need more of the New Testament revelation than merely to be informed, in so many words, *that Jesus is the Christ*. If this expression contains the whole gospel as addressed to the Jews, then the character and offices of the Messiah must be implied in it; and if so, it was highly proper that the author should shew this in explaining it. The apostles addressed the same gospel to the Gentiles, as to the Jews, (see Acts xiii. 42.), and, without making any distinction, declared, that "WHOSOEVER believeth that JESUS IS THE CHRIST, is born of God," 1 John v. 1.

*Seced.* What I had chiefly in view was an assertion of your author, which I think reprehensible. "Take away,"

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 35—39.

says he, "the *promise*, and the testimony will be no longer glad tidings; for unless he that believeth shall be saved, it is of little consequence to the guilty whether Jesus be the Christ or not."\* Now, understanding the words in your general sense, as declaring that Jesus is the Saviour of men, it was highly improper to say that this would not be glad tidings, and that it would be of little consequence to the guilty without the additional declaration, "He that believeth shall be saved." (p. 14.)

*Bapt.* You have no objection to his having distinguished the gospel into its parts, *viz.* a testimony and a promise; but to make way for your reprehension, you make him understand the expression, *Jesus is the Christ*, in such a general sense as does not well consist with that distinction. Whereas the author is shewing that "the gospel-testimony and promise cannot be separated without destroying both;" because the testimony holds forth the foundation of the promise, and the promise contains the end or design of the testimony; and therefore both of them must be matter of faith, otherwise we do not believe the gospel. Had he expressed himself as you did in your former conversation, there might have been some cause for reprehension; but I do not chuse to carp at expressions.

*Seced.* What do you refer to?

*Bapt.* These words: "Now, suppose a person has believed both the testimony concerning Christ, and what you call the promise of the gospel—what will it profit him?" (p. 8.) Here you represent the belief both of the gospel testimony and promise as unprofitable.

*Seced.* Do not mistake me: I meant, "What will it profit to his peace of mind, or to his assurance of salvation?" (p. 8.)

*Bapt.* I would not wish to mistake you; but this explanation is far from being satisfactory. It leaves me still in doubt whether you think such a belief will profit a man to

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 74.

his *salvation*; and from your notion of faith, I suspect you think it will not. Now, if it is of no profit to his salvation, he has no right to peace of mind and assurance; but if it is, then he is certainly a very great profiter, and must also have some peace of mind, although he should not yet have the full assurance of his own particular salvation; for the gospel testimony and promise cannot be believed without some degree of this.

*Seced.* What your author calls the *gospel promise* is not a promise, properly speaking, but the testimony of God concerning faith. (p. 8, 9.)

*Bapt.* You have, no doubt, your own reasons for this novel and strange assertion. The promise alluded to is held forth in such expressions as these: "Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."—"He that believeth shall be saved."—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—"If thou shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," &c. Now, whether you call this a testimony or a promise, it is certain that it is not *concerning faith*; that is, faith is not the *subject* of it, but salvation. Faith indeed is mentioned in these and similar passages; but the thing testified or promised is not that *he believes*, or that *he shall believe*, but that he that believeth *shall be saved*. I call this a *promise*, and so does the apostle, 1 John ii. 24, 25. but you chuse to call it a *testimony*, though in this you differ from all your favourite writers. I hate disputing about mere names. Every body understands a *testimony* to be a declaration or attestation of some fact, and a *promise* to be an assurance given in words of some future benefit; and whether the expressions already mentioned bear the form of a testimony or promise, I leave to the determination of common sense.

*Seced.* I suppose your author holds it also to be a *conditional* promise (p. 14.), for he restricts it to believers, and denies that it is made to sinners of mankind as such



*Bapt.* Whether it be a *conditional* or *absolute* promise, shall afterwards be considered; but as to the restriction you complain of, it is none of his making, but appears on the very face of the promise. The words are not, sinners of mankind, as such, shall be saved, whether they believe or not; but “he that BELIEVETH shall be saved;” and to make this restriction more noticeable, it is added on the other hand, “but he that BELIEVETH NOT shall be damned.”

*Seced.* According to this view of the promise, the immediate ground of comfort is cut off (p. 15.) for no man can know his own particular salvation from such a promise till he know that he believes (p. 20.) and so must attain to it by a process of reasoning in this manner, He that believeth shall be saved; but I believe; therefore I shall be saved. I must, however, be free to tell you, that this is the very (*διαλογισμοις*) *reasonings* which the apostle condemns as opposing the gospel of the grace of God, and which must be cast down, 2 Cor. x. 5. (p. 9.)

*Bapt.* If it is, then your favourite *Evangelista* taught his pupil to oppose the gospel when he directed him to the *primary evidence* of his salvation by this form of reasoning, “Say then, I beseech you, with a firm faith, The righteousness of Jesus Christ belongs to ALL THAT BELIEVE; but I BELIEVE, and therefore it belongs to me.”\* Now, though I do not think that a man obtains the knowledge of his own salvation at first merely by *reflecting* upon his faith or believing, and then drawing it as a formal conclusion from it; yet no man can have the knowledge of his own particular salvation according to the tenor of the promise, without being in some degree *conscious* that he believes.

*Seced.* As to *consciousness*, your author is very inaccurate upon that subject, and uses words which are peculiarly subject to ambiguous interpretation. He speaks of the consciousness of these impressions which objects make upon

\* Marrow of Modern Divinity, Chap. II. Sect. iii. § 3.

our senses, *i. e.* he imagines we are conscious of hearing, seeing and feeling objects. Now consciousness, according to any accurate view of it, extends only to the operations of the mind.

*Bapt.* Upon what authority do you restrict consciousness to these?

*Seced.* Upon the authority of one of the most accurate writers on this subject, who defines it "that immediate knowledge which we have of all the operations of the mind." (p. 19.)

*Bapt.* Another accurate writer might perhaps find some flaw in this definition; but granting it to be perfectly just, what is it to the purpose? Though our author, by way of illustration, uses the word *consciousness* in a large and popular sense, that can never invalidate his main position where he uses it in a strict sense, viz. That "whatever produces *belief*, excites at the same instant an inward *consciousness* of it:" or, That "when the import and evidence of the gospel shine into the heart by the enlightening Spirit, it has at once the double effect of producing *belief* and the *consciousness* of it."\*

*Seced.* Though all men are conscious of the operations of their minds, yet that consciousness is only like the superficial view or passing glance which we obtain of an object which presents itself to the eye, while deeply engaged in contemplating some other thing. An angry man is conscious of anger, and yet his mind is so entirely taken up with the offence, and different circumstances of it, that he cannot make the passion an object of thought and reflection. The same must take place when any important and interesting truth engages the mind. When, for instance, the Spirit causes the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ, to shine into the mind of the sinner, he is so much engaged in contemplating this glorious discovery,

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 94, 95, 96.

that the act of his own mind will never be an object of his attention or ground of his exercise. Consciousness, therefore, is inadequate to the purpose of any judgment about the present operation or act of the mind. In order to this, the mind must be fixed upon the operation itself. (p. 19, 20.)

*Bapt.* The purport of your reasoning, if I do not mistake you, amounts to this, That because a man's consciousness of his belief is such an *immediate knowledge* of it as does not require any discernible exercise of memory, or reflection; therefore it affords him no certainty that he believes. But from such premises, I think, the opposite conclusion may be fairly drawn. Direct and immediate knowledge is the most certain and satisfying of any, and indeed it is the foundation of all other knowledge. The knowledge of our own existence does not come through the exercise of memory, attention or reflection, yet there is nothing of which we are more certain. When we hear, see, or feel objects, we are immediately and perfectly sensible that we do so, without making our seeing, hearing, or feeling the objects of our particular attention. The same observation will apply to what are called the operations of the mind. An angry man, you admit, is conscious of anger; *i. e.* he has an *immediate knowledge* that he is angry, though his mind may be so entirely taken up with the offence, and the different circumstances of it, as not to make his passion an object of thought or reflection: indeed no thought or reflection can make him more sure that he is angry, than his immediate consciousness of it does. Reflection may bring to his view the evil of anger, but it adds nothing to the evidence of his being angry. In like manner, when the Spirit makes the light of the glorious gospel shine into the heart of a sinner, so as to convince him of its truth, suitableness, freedom and excellency, he will be immediately conscious that he perceives and believes it, even while he is so much engaged in contemplating the glorious discovery of the truth itself, as not to make his

belief of it the object of particular attention or reflection. If you doubt this, put the question to him while he is thus delightfully engaged, and he will immediately, and without hesitation, express this consciousness in declaring his belief; for no man can sincerely say he believes, without being conscious that he does so. It was from this consciousness that the first converts immediately declared their *own* belief. See John ix. 38. Acts viii. 37.\* I have only to add, that this consciousness admits of degrees, according to the clearness of a man's views of the gospel, and the strength of his faith in it.

*Seced.* Upon your principles, the person must be satisfied that he has believed the whole of that truth to which salvation is promised, before he can have any reason to think he shall be saved. This overthrows your argument from consciousness. For allowing that when the gospel first shines into a man's mind, it convinces him that it is true, and that he believes it; yet how shall he know that he believes those truths to which the promise is made, until he particularly examine this matter? Nay, I see not how he can come to any certainty upon this principle; for there are various measures of faith. (p. 21.)

*Bapt.* We hold no such principle, as that a man has not true faith till he know the *whole* particulars contained in the saving truth. The faith of the first converts was approved of, while as yet they knew only the first principles, and believed that great radical truth which supports and involves in it all the rest, *viz.* That Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, Matt. xvi. 16, 17. John ii. 49. chap. vi. 68, 69. chap. xi. 27. Acts viii. 37. and salvation is connected with the belief of this, John xx. 31. 1 John v. 1, 5.† All who really believed this were immediately conscious that they did so, confessed it as their faith, and had the hope of eternal life through it; but yet they still needed

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 95, 96. † Ibid. p. 32—34.

much instruction to perfect what was lacking in their faith with regard to the matter of it. Compare I Thess. i. 5. and chap. ii. 13. with chap. iii. 10. So that though there are various measures of faith, and though some have very imperfect discoveries of the gospel, this does overthrow our argument from consciousness; for that must be in proportion to their faith, be it strong or weak.

*Seced.* You have not noticed the main part of my objection. Granting that when the gospel first shines into a man's mind, it convinces him that it is true, and that he believes it; yet he may still be at a loss to know that he believes those *truths* to which the promise is made, till he particularly examine the scripture as to this matter.

*Bapt.* That is, in short, a man may *believe* the gospel, and *know* he believes it, and yet *not know* whether he believes it or not. In the New Testament style there is no mention of *truths* to be believed, but *the truth*; and when the gospel shines into a man's mind, it leaves him in no doubt what that truth is to the belief of which the promise of salvation is made; for it is clearly, pointedly, and constantly declared as the very testimony of the gospel, and held forth as the great foundation and central truth on which all the rest depend, and to which they refer. It is therefore very unsafe to affirm, that the gospel has shined into any man's mind, while he is yet to learn what the saving truth is. I admit, however, that human systems have often perplexed the children of God upon this head: For instance, when they are taught that it will not profit them to believe all that it is openly revealed in the gospel, unless they also believe something which is not true till it is believed; and that saving faith is a *great work*, consisting of a variety of *acts* and laborious *exercises* of the mind, very different from the ordinary way of believing a truth: I say, persons, so far as they are under the influence of such doctrine, must often be greatly perplexed both as to *what* they are to believe, and *how*; consequently, as to

whether they have in a *right manner* believed or not. But as we do not read that the primitive gospel, when it shone into the mind, ever left any in such a perplexed situation, it must be attributed to ignorance, unbelief, or a perversion of the gospel, which can afford you no argument against the consciousness we plead for.

*Seced.* You think our doctrine tends to perplex the mind; but your author's scheme has evidently that tendency. He has two distinct acts of faith; a believing on the Son of God, and a believing that he that believeth on the Son of God shall be saved; and, after all, before the person attain to any peace of mind, there is a necessity of a third act of the mind, a consciousness that he has so believed. Indeed I think this must greatly perplex the mind of any one who is confined to it. (p. 9.)

*Bapt.* I know not exactly what you mean by *distinct acts of faith*. Faith is simply a belief of God's word, and is according to that which is spoken. If we believe God, we shall believe the truth of all he has said, whether it be in the form of a testimony or promise; and if he has limited the promise of salvation to whosoever believeth, we must believe it with that limitation, otherwise our faith does not correspond to that which is spoken; but how this constitutes another *distinct act* of faith, I do not understand. Every thing contained in revelation is matter of faith; but if every particular and circumstance relating to it requires a *distinct act* of faith, you may, at this rate, reckon up many hundreds of such acts. As to what you call a *third act* of the mind, it is not an act of faith at all; but an immediate *inward feeling* of conviction in our mind. In all this there is nothing to perplex the mind of any one. This subject, however, has been rendered very intricate by some of your approved writers, who have given us four different *kinds* of faith, and represented each of them as containing a great variety of different *acts*, exerted by its different *members*, in order

to receive and rest upon Christ freely, wholly, and particularly.\*

*Seced.* I have not yet done with your doctrine of consciousness. Your author makes it to be the very thing which perfects the conscience, and so puts it in place of atonement. True, indeed, he says, “That the atonement alone, or *without more*, is sufficient to remove the fear of divine wrath, perfect the conscience, and give peace with God;” but he also affirms, that a purged conscience “supposes that we both believe the truth, and ARE CONSCIOUS THAT WE DO SO.” † This last sentence and the first that I quoted most certainly disagree. If the atonement *alone*, or *without more*, is sufficient to purge the conscience, why is it supposed that a person must be conscious that he has believed before his conscience can be purged? I think it an undeniable consequence from this, that the atonement alone, or without more, is NOT sufficient to perfect the conscience, to remove the fear of divine wrath, or to give peace with God. Nay, I might proceed farther, and say, that, upon this supposition, it is not the atonement *at all* that pacifies and relieves the conscience: It is the consciousness that the person has believed, and thus fulfilled the condition required in the gospel. (p. 10, 11.)

*Bapt.* Our author firmly holds it as a principle, “That the atonement alone, or without more, is sufficient to remove the fear of divine wrath, perfect the conscience, and give peace with God,” as is evident from this and many other passages in his book: ‡ But you think this is perfectly inconsistent with his saying, that when the blood of Christ produces this effect upon the conscience, it “supposes that we *believe* the truth, and are *conscious* that we do so.” I shall not shift the answer to this by having recourse to mystery, but shall fairly meet the objection. I say, then,

\* Assoc. Syn. Cat. on Quest. 86. *Of the faith in Jesus Christ.*

† Apostolic Commission, p. 100.

‡ Apostolic Commission, p. 51, 54, 85, 233.

that when the blood of Christ purges the conscience, it supposes that we *believe* the truth. This you admit, in these words, "It is the blood of Christ *alone* that purges the conscience, and yet the conscience is only purged *through faith* in this blood," and you give the reason for this at large (p. 12.); therefore, the only question that remains is this, Why does a purged conscience suppose that we are *conscious* of believing? In answer to this it might be sufficient to say, that as *belief* and the *consciousness* of it are inseparable, so whatever supposes the former, must also suppose the latter. And as consciousness must always correspond to its object, so, in the present case, it is neither more nor less than our being *sensible* that we now perceive the atonement to be *alone*, or *without more*, sufficient for our pardon and acceptance with God; which, in the very nature of the thing, is perfectly inconsistent with our putting our belief in place of the atonement to pacify our conscience, as you insinuate. Our author gives no other place to consciousness, but that of a present inward *evidence* that we believe. But to come a little closer to the point, I ask, what do you understand by a purged conscience?

*Seced.* I agree with your author, that "a purged conscience, and the conscious sense of being purged, are one and the same thing." It requires the knowledge that our sins are forgiven us; and I think his reasoning against Sandeman on this head is unanswerable. (p. 10, 13.)

*Bapt.* Do you also agree with him, that the two following questions are distinct, and require different answers: The first is, How may I, a guilty sinner, be justified, or find pardon and acceptance with God? The other is, How shall I know that I am already justified or pardoned?\*

*Seced.* I admit that these questions are of a very different nature; only the second question might rather be, How shall I know that I believe the gospel? (p. 35.)

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 94.



*Bapt.* That makes no difference; for why should you seek to know that you believe, but as an *evidence* that you are justified? And I must notice here, by the bye, that we do not read of any of the first converts putting the question, **Do I believe?** because immediate consciousness precluded such a question, though they were *afterwards* to try their faith by its fruits. But as you have agreed so far, let it now be observed, That our author never supposes that a man's consciousness of his believing is at all necessary to answer the first question, which respects the object of faith, *viz.* How may I, a guilty sinner, be justified? On the contrary, he affirms, that the gospel itself answers it fully and directly, declaring that God justifies sinners "freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiatory in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," &c. and that as this exhibits the foundation of hope, so he who believes it must necessarily have hope from it \*. "He needs not turn away his thoughts from contemplating this, in order to the assurance" *that this is sufficient for his salvation*, "no, not so much as for a moment, in order to reflect upon, attend unto, or form a judgment concerning his exercise. He rejoices in Christ, and that salvation wrought by him." (p. 24.) On this head our author admits all that Sandeman means by purgation of conscience, or that immediate relief which a man receives directly from the saving truth when he believes it; for though it does not assure him directly *that he is justified*, (which belongs to the second question), yet he can say with joy, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*, even the chief; and why not me? (p. 14.) And it is in believing this faithful saying that he is actually justified.

As to the second question, *viz.* How shall I know that

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 94.

I am justified? which you admit is of a very different nature from the former, our author says, that the gospel answers this in general, “If thou believest in thine heart” —“By him all that believe are justified.” It assures him that believeth of justification, but leaves it with every man’s conscience to say whether he really believes or not.\* It is purely upon this question that he brings in *consciousness* of believing, as an immediate concomitant of belief, and as the first and radical *evidence* to a man of his being justified or pardoned through the blood of Christ, according to the Gospel promise.† Now, as you admit that a purged conscience imports the *knowledge that we are justified*, and as it is certain that the gospel does not declare that any are justified but those who believe, nor tell any man directly that he himself believes, it undeniably follows, that a purged conscience supposes not only that we *believe* the gospel, but that we are *conscious* that we do so. You must either admit this, or maintain, that the conscience is purged by an immediate suggestion or revelation of something to the mind, besides what is openly revealed in the gospel.

*Seced.* You have confused my mind by the length of your harangue: Please give me your meaning in fewer words.

*Bapt.* It is briefly this; The gospel holds forth to sinners of mankind, without distinction, a free, full, and suitable salvation through the work which the Son of God finished on the cross, and which was declared to be accepted by his resurrection from the dead. It calls upon all men to believe this as the testimony of God, declaring that he that believeth it shall be saved; but that he who believeth not shall be damned. Those who believe that the work finished by Christ is alone sufficient for their pardon and acceptance with God, are justified accordingly, and must have imme-

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 94.

† Ibid.

diate hope and comfort simply from what they believe, and in proportion to the degree of their faith. But——

*Seced.* Stop a little, if you please: Is any thing more necessary than what you have here stated to assure a man that he is actually justified?

*Bapt.* Nothing more is necessary to assure him as to *how* he may be justified, and that the atonement alone, or *without more*, is sufficient for that purpose; nor is any other assurance necessary to his being justified, or to induce him to fix his hope solely there: But his being *justified* is one thing, and his being *assured* that he is so is another, as has already been noticed; and therefore I was going to add, that as the gospel does not declare that any are justified but such as believe, so he cannot know that he is justified without knowing that he believes, or having a present consciousness that he does so, though the *full assurance* of his being justified is not ordinarily obtained without the evidence of the fruits of faith. And herein our author differs both from you and the Sandemanians; (I mean such of them as admit that the knowledge of our justification is attainable in this life, for I understand that some of them absolutely deny this.) He differs from *you* who affirm, that the gospel assures a man *directly* that he is justified, and calls him to believe that he is so: and he also differs from the Sandemanians who maintain, that no man can have *any* evidence that he is justified till he has proved his faith by a course of obedience in the work and labour of love. These are opposite extremes with which, I am persuaded, neither scripture nor the experience of Christians in general will agree.

*Seced.* The Sandemanians and you found the assurance of your justification upon the same *kind* of evidence. The question with both is, Have I believed? and the only difference is, that you suppose that this is known at the very first by the single evidence of consciousness; whereas they think that a course of obedience is necessary to ascertain it.

*Bapt.* And you, on the other hand, affirm, that a man may be assured of his own particular salvation without any

*Seced.* That is indeed our sentiment. We hold that the promise of salvation is absolute and unconditional; *i. e.* not made to men as *believers*, but as *sinners*; (p. 15, 16.) so that *all* sinners have ground from the gospel to believe their own salvation. (p. 33.) We say, that the knowledge or assurance of our salvation is obtained *directly* and *immediately* in believing, (p. 22.) *i. e.* *directly* and *merely* from the word of God (p. 36.): for the revelation which is made of God in the gospel is such, that sinners cannot believe it without an assurance of their salvation. (p. 33.)

*Bapt.* Here are several assertions which, in my opinion, want proof. I have hitherto been mostly engaged in obviating your objections to our author's sentiments, and now I wish to examine yours so far as you differ from him; but that I may not go wide of the mark, will you be so good as to state the particulars wherein you agree with him; I mean such as have any immediate connection with the subject in hand; for to argue from principles which are not admitted on both sides, or against sentiments which are not held by either, would only turn out a fruitless jangle.

*Seced.* I apprehend we are agreed in the following particulars;—1. That faith is neither more nor less than a persuasion of some truth upon the testimony of another. (p. 6.)—2. That the object or matter of saving faith must be something expressly revealed in the word of God. (p. 15, 43.)—3. That faith is absolutely necessary to salvation. Only those that believe shall be saved. (p. 15.)—4. That the fruits of faith are one source of scriptural assurance and comfort. (p. 36.) And,—5. That Christ died for the elect only, and not for all mankind\*.

\* For this last particular, see Assoc. Syn. Cat. on Quest. 25. *Of Christ as a Priest.*

*Bapt.* I am happy to find that you are thus far agreed with our author, and if you hold these particulars consistently, I suppose the difference will not be very material.

*Seced.* You are quite mistaken: Notwithstanding our agreement in these things, the difference is still very wide. Your author affirms that the gospel *promise of salvation* is made only to whosoever shall *believe* on Christ. Such a view of the gospel presents us with nothing but a *conditional* salvation. If a sinner is told that it is only those that believe that shall be saved, (p. 15.) does not this teach him to look to himself, to consider an act of his own mind as between him and salvation? Is not this to make faith a condition of salvation? It is chiefly on this ground that I oppose the view of the gospel given by your author; because I think it has a tendency to derogate from the grace of God, and the finished work of Christ. (p. 16.) Truth loudly demands that I repeat it, if any *condition* be prescribed, whether it be a *difficult* or an *easy* condition, whether you call it a *work* or *faith*, whether you consider it as including *moral excellence*, or only the *simple bare belief* of the truth, or whatever other name you chuse to give it, if a condition be prescribed, I say, the glory of the grace of God is obscured. (p. 24.)

*Bapt.* I am sorry that you have got so warm upon the obnoxious word *condition*: You should recollect that our author never uses it upon this subject.

*Seced.* I do not indeed perceive that your author has any where in his writings called faith a *condition*, or the promise of salvation *conditional*; but he must allow it, when he declares that sinners *ought to believe* the promise, and when he denies that this promise is *absolute*. (p. 16.) He maintains that the promise of salvation is made to *believers*; this is what I call to make salvation *conditional* to sinners. (p. 15.)

*Bapt.* Your zeal seems to have hurried you into self-contradiction, and led you (inadvertently I suppose) to retract

the third article agreed upon, *viz.* That faith is absolutely necessary to salvation; for according to your way of reasoning, this is to make it a *condition* of salvation, by teaching a man that he cannot be saved unless he believe, and so to consider an act of his own mind as between him and salvation.

*Seced.* It is the *sense* in which faith is held to be necessary to salvation, that makes it a condition or not. It is of great importance that we know in what sense we are said to be saved through faith, lest the doctrine of free justification be injured, (p. 16.) and I cannot better express my sentiments on this head, than by referring you to two quotations. One is from a writer of your way of thinking, who says, “ If salvation, and the knowledge of the grace by which, and of the Saviour by whom, it is conferred, come directly by the divine testimony, I can very well understand how the actual enjoyment of this salvation must come by faith;\* I add, consequently, how salvation is discovered to be all *of grace*, by being *through faith*; because the whole of that salvation which originated in the grace of God, and which displays it, is the matter or object of faith. (p. 24.) The other quotation is from your author, “ Faith (says he) saves in no other way than as it respects a saving object, and all its influence upon the heart and life is, properly speaking the influence of the truth believed.”† (p. 20.) Now, if we view faith in this light, it can never be considered as a condition in any sense.

*Bapt.* I most heartily subscribe to both these quotations, and also to your addition to them. But all this does not shew that the promise of salvation is not made to *believers*, but the contrary; and so your notion of a condition remains entire. The question is not, In what *sense* is faith necessary to salvation? for if you grant that “ only those who believe

\* David and Jonathan, p. 19.

† The belief of the Gospel, Saving Faith, p. 14.

shall be saved," or that the promise of salvation has any respect to faith at all, or, in short, that faith is necessary to salvation in any sense whatever, your refined idea of a condition must still attach to it. It must at least be something *without which* salvation is not received or enjoyed.

*Seced.* I consider faith to be necessary to salvation just as the eye is necessary to perceive an object, or the hand to receive a free gift;\* but would it not be absurd to call the eye or hand a *condition*?

*Bapt.* I confess it would, unless you were required to furnish yourself with these members; but your comparison is altogether improper. You should recollect, that when our author says, "The apostle did not look upon faith as a *work*, but opposeth it, both in its own nature, and in point of justification, to all works of every kind, and makes it to correspond with pure grace;"† you profess not to understand what he means by faith being *no work at all*, and ask, Is it not an *act* of the mind? Is it not *required* by God? (p. 22.) Now you know that neither the eye nor hand are an *act* or *work*. Put the case then fairly: Suppose you were required to perform the act of *looking* at an object, or of *receiving* a free gift, otherwise you should have no benefit from it; would not this be to prescribe what you call a *condition*? For you declare that it makes no difference to you, whether it be a *work* or *faith*, whether it be *holy dispositions* or only *simple belief*, if it is required in order to enjoy the benefit, you consider it as a *condition*, which obscures the glory of the grace of God. (p. 17, 24.) The only possible way, therefore, in which you can keep clear of what you call a *condition*, is to get rid of faith itself, or to deny that it is necessary to salvation; which, after all, I hope you do not intend.

*Seced.* There is indeed an *order* in the application of the

\* Assoc. Syn. Cat. on Quest. 86. *Of faith in Jesus Christ.*

† Apostolic Commission, p. 77.

promises of the gospel, and the attainment of some promised blessings is only in consequence of a previous attainment of some others. There is also frequently a *description* given of the *character* of those that are interested in the blessings promised. But neither of these things prove any conditionality in the promise.\*

*Bapt.* These things evidently involve in them your idea of a condition: For if you admit that in the application of the promises *faith* must be *first in order*, as the Shorter Catechism intimates, (Quest. 30.) and if the attainment of other promised blessings be only in consequence of a *previous* attainment of *that*, “does not this teach a man to look to himself, to consider an act of his own mind as *between* him and salvation? Is not this to make faith a condition of salvation,” according to your own notion of it? (p. 16.) Again, if the persons who are interested in the blessings promised be described by any other *character* than that of *sinner*s, (p. 25.) does not this restrict the promised blessings to persons of another character, and so, according to you, make them conditional?

*Seced.* It is indeed *by faith* that sinners are interested in the promised salvation; but faith is not a condition in any *proper sense* of the word. If faith, or any duty and exercise of ours be the condition of the promise, we are as really under a law of works as Adam was, whose abstinence from the tree of knowledge was the *only condition* prescribed to him.†

*Bapt.* If it is *by faith* that sinners are interested in the promised salvation, then they are interested in it not simply *as sinners*, *i. e.* as you explain it, *in unbelief*, (p. 25.) but as *believing sinners*; and this is what you consider as making salvation conditional, (p. 15.) You say faith is not a condition in any *proper sense* of the word, but have not explained what that sense is. Divines call it a condition, not indeed

\* Christian Magazine, Vol. II. p. 438.

† Ibid.



(*propter quam*) for which, but (*per quam*) by which sinners are interested in the salvation purchased by Christ! and you agree with them in this *sense*, while you reprobate the *term*, which makes the difference to be merely a dispute about a word. I might take notice of your assertion, that the *only* condition of the law of *works* was *abstinence* from the tree of knowledge; but pass it.

*Seced.* If faith be the condition of the promise, it would be necessary to have it determined what that faith is which is made the condition, and what is the *measure* and *degree*. When we speak of conditions, it is necessary to be precise and determinate. Some say, it is the faith of *gospel-doctrines*. But still we might ask, What *particular* doctrines? Or has the faith of the *promise* no place? \* These things being not easily settled, must keep us uncertain as to whether we have performed the condition required.

*Bapt.* I have answered this already; † and shall only add, that no reason can be assigned why we should be more precise and determinate as to these things upon supposition that faith is the condition of obtaining an interest in the promise, than upon the contrary supposition, provided that faith is admitted to be at all necessary to salvation? It seems you think that real believers will be at a loss to determine *what* the saving truth is, what *measure* of faith is due to it, whether they should believe the *whole* of it or only a *part*, or what *particular part* of it they should believe: May I then suppose, that either your scheme is free of all such difficulties, or that it renders a solution of them needless? Indeed I think you are now trifling with the subject. You also speak of *gospel-doctrines* in the plural, as if there were a great number of them to perplex the mind; but though we read of divers and strange *doctrines*, the *doctrines* of men, and the *doctrines* of devils, yet we no where read

\* Christian Magazine, Vol. II. p. 438.

† See before, p. 252.

in Scripture of gospel-*doctrines*, that being but one, *the faith, the truth*, which all believers are taught of God to know, from the least of them even unto the greatest.

*Seced.* One would naturally think, that when it is said that one is interested in a promise by believing, the faith of the promise is included. And to say, after all, that faith is the condition, involves this absurdity—that we must believe a promise, in order that we may have a right to believe it!\*

*Bapt.* There can be no doubt that the faith of the promise is included; but what is that faith of the promise which the gospel requires of all its hearers at first hand? Is it that they shall all certainly be saved whether they believe or not? By no means. Or is it, that if they believe that they shall be saved, then they shall be saved? No such thing. This is not the promise, consequently the faith of it cannot be such a belief. What is it then? It is a belief that the promise is faithful and true, and will be made good to all that believe in Christ. This every one has a right to believe, nay, it is their duty to do so directly and immediately. But it is one thing to believe the *truth* of God's promise, and another thing to believe that I in particular am *actually interested* in the blessing promised. The absurdity, therefore, lies in your confounding these two, whereby you make it to be a believing our interest in the promise, that we may have a right to believe our interest in it; whereas it is a believing the *truth* both of the gospel testimony and promise, and so having a right to believe our *particular interest* in the promised salvation.

*Seced.* You maintain, then, that faith is the *condition* of the promise?

*Bapt.* I have not said so: the word *condition* is never used in Scripture upon this subject, nor has our author ever used it, because it is a word liable to be misunderstood. The obedience of Christ alone is the meritorious procuring

\* Christian Magazine, Vol. II. p. 438.

cause (or condition, if you will,) of all our salvation. But as you have introduced that word, and charged our author with making faith the *condition* of salvation, merely because he maintains that the promise restricts salvation to believers, I have shewn, that you cannot hold faith to be necessary to salvation in any sense, without making it as much a condition as he does; and this has sufficiently appeared, notwithstanding all your refinements upon the subject. The doctrine of Seceders on this head is, that “though the indorsement of the promise to us gives us a *right of access*; yet it is FAITH that gives the *right of possession*.”\* Had our author expressed himself in this manner, you would have had some cause to suspect, that he made faith the condition which *gave a right to possess* the blessing promised. After all, I think there is harm in too much refinement, and that you had better attend to the plain current language of Scripture upon this subject, than to the logomachy of divines about the word *condition*.

*Seced.* I wish not to dispute about words; my concern is for the glory of divine grace, which is evidently obscured by your view. Your author maintains that the promise of salvation is restricted to *believers*. This sentiment takes off a person’s mind from the Saviour, and turns it upon itself; at least it divides his attention. He is partly engaged in contemplating the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, and partly in thinking if he has insured salvation for himself by his own act. Whether this be not to divide the glory, and consequently to “fall from grace,” I leave you to judge. (p. 25.)

*Bapt.* Your zeal for the glory of divine grace is commendable; but that, as well as zeal for the law, ought to be according to knowledge. If you have any meaning, it is not easy to find it out, or, at least, to perceive its consistency with some other things which you admit. You grant

\* Assoc. Syn. Cat. on Quest. 86. *Of faith in Jesus Christ.*

that "faith is *required* by God" of men (p. 22.)—that "it is indeed *by faith* that sinners are *interested* in the promised salvation"\*—and that "only those *who believe* shall be saved." (p. 15.) Does not this restrict the promise of salvation to believers, as much as any thing our author has said? Yet it seems, though God *requires* men to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, they must not *think* of believing on him, lest it should take off their minds from the Saviour! Though they know that it is only "*by faith* they can be interested in the promised salvation," and that "*only those who believe* shall be saved;" yet even when the gospel by the Spirit shines into their minds, so as to produce a hearty conviction of its truth, suitableness, and freedom, they must not have the least knowledge that they now perceive and believe it, otherwise they will divide the glory of their salvation between divine grace and their own act, (as you term it,) and so "fall from grace!" Now, if this is the natural and necessary effect of a man's *knowing that he believes* the gospel, then it undoubtedly follows, that no believer ought to know this either at his first believing, or at any after-period of his life. According to this, when our Lord asks the man he had cured, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" John ix. 35. and when Philip puts it to the eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart," Acts viii. 37. they were directing them to divide the glory, and fall from grace; for they could not answer such a question without *knowing* whether they believed or not. Further, when men professed their faith, saying, "I BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Acts viii. 37.—"WE BELIEVE and ARE SURE that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God," John vi. 69.—"WE HAVE BELIEVED in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the FAITH of Christ, and NOT by the WORKS of the law," Gal. ii. 16. this, according to you, was to

\* Christian Magazine, Vol. II. p. 498.

divide the glory, and consequently to “fall from grace;” for such a confession supposes that they *knew* they believed. Again, the Scripture exhorts professed believers to examine themselves whether they be in the faith, to prove their own selves, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. and to give diligence to make their calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. This you admit, (p. 34, 35.) Now, as the design of this inquiry and diligence is to know whether we have really believed the gospel, (p. 35.) it must, according to your reasoning, take off a person’s mind from the Saviour, and turn it upon itself, to find out if he has insured salvation for himself by his own *act*, and so to divide the glory, consequently to “fall from grace.”

*Seced.* A word, if you please: I distinguish between a man’s *first* believing directly the promise of salvation, and his *afterwards* examining his faith by its fruits. To think or be conscious of our faith in the former case, is to make the promise conditional, and so to divide the glory; but in the latter case it has no such effect.

*Bapt.* This distinction makes nothing for your purpose. In order of nature a man indeed must first believe the gospel, and have hope from it directly, before he can know that he believes; but if the immediate knowledge of his belief at the first, which enables him to confess it, necessarily involves in it his dividing the glory, and “falling from grace,” then it follows, that this knowledge, when obtained by after examination, must necessarily involve in it the same evil. You admit that the inquiry afterwards, is, How shall I know that I have believed the gospel? (p. 35.) and that the end of this inquiry is to know that I have passed from death unto life, or if I am already interested in the promise, and so in a state of salvation. (p. 34, 35.) Now, to adopt your manner of reasoning, does not this inquiry take off a person’s mind from the Saviour, and turn it in upon itself, *more* than that immediate involuntary consciousness does, which at first attends, and is excited and

supported by a direct view of the Saviour? For in this inquiry, his mind is not partly, but *wholly* engaged in thinking upon his faith and its fruits, that he may know if he has secured salvation to himself by his own act of appropriation. If the other be to *divide* the glory, this must be to take the *whole* of it to himself; and as this takes place after he is supposed to have known the grace of God, it looks more like what the apostle calls "falling from grace," Gal. v. 4.

*Seced.* This is very uncandid reasoning, and a most unjust representation of Seceder sentiments.

*Bapt.* I admit it; but it is your own reasoning, pointed against yourself with equal justice and additional force. It is certainly very unreasonable to assert, that the knowledge of our belief, whether obtained *at first* by immediate *consciousness*, or *afterwards* by the additional evidence of its *fruits*, is "to divide the glory, or fall from grace," provided we lay no other stress upon faith than as an *evidence* of our interest in the promise of salvation; but as your objections to it in the former case militate equally, if not more, against it in the latter, you must either give up your argument, or follow it out consistently, by denying that a Christian should either *first* or *last* have any knowledge that he believes.

*Seced.* As you restrict salvation to believers, and so make it conditional, you must necessarily view your belief as the *condition* of your salvation, and so look to it as the first source of comfort; in which case it is all one whether you call it *faith* or *works*, (p. 24.) it is dividing the glory, and falling from grace.

*Bapt.* I have said enough already upon what you call a *condition*, which I wish you to consider. Faith, from its very nature, cannot be the first source or foundation of comfort, though it is the means of receiving it; for as it does not so much as exist without an object of which it is the belief, so the mind in believing must have its comfort directly from what it perceives in the object, viz. Christ;

and even the comfort arising from the assurance of special interest in him must originate from the same source, though faith and its fruits are admitted as evidence. I cannot help remarking what a vast difference there is between the apostle Paul's language and yours on this subject: he did not consider the promise to be the less *free* because it is made to whosoever believeth, *i. e.* he did not think that salvation is the less *of grace* that it is *through faith*; for he considered faith itself to be not of ourselves, but the *gift* of God's grace, Eph. ii. 8. nay, he declares that salvation is *of faith* for this very reason, "that it might be BY GRACE," Rom. iv. 16. Further, the distinction between *faith* and *works*, which you seem to treat so lightly, (p. 17, 24.) he considered as of the last importance, and constantly affirms, that salvation is *through faith*, and *not of works*, lest any man should boast. If God confers salvation through Christ in the way of enlightening the minds of men to perceive and believe it, we cannot possibly conceive any thing more freely conferred.

*Seced.* You cannot believe that salvation is freely conferred, while you restrict the promise of it to him that believeth.

*Bapt.* It seems, then, that no man who believes can receive salvation freely! When our author says that the promise of salvation is restricted to him that believeth, he certainly does not mean, either that the *declaration* of the promise is restricted to believers, or that none but believers are *called to believe* the promise. On the contrary, he shews that the gospel contains both a *testimony* and *promise*, and that it calls all who hear it, without exception, to believe both, and thus to receive salvation freely.\* But his precise meaning is this, That the salvation held forth to all in the promise, and which all are called to believe, is restricted by the very words of the promise to him that

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 86—89.

believeth;\* *i. e.* it is not promised to be conferred upon any but such as shall believe the gospel.

*Seced.* In opposition to this we maintain, that the promise of salvation is to men, not *as believers*, but *as sinners*. (p. 15.)

*Bapt.* Then the promise must run in this form: Who-soever is a *sinner* shall be saved. I would not wish to mistake you; perhaps by *sinners* you mean *believing sinners*. If so, we are agreed; for all believers are sinners, and are deeply sensible that they are so.

*Seced.* My meaning is, that salvation is promised to sinners, as such, *in unbelief*. (p. 25.)

*Bapt.* There are, indeed, many promises respecting the salvation of sinners while they were in a state of unbelief, and even long before many of them had a being, such as those which relate to the calling of the Gentiles, &c.; but these promises include their faith, and it was only by faith they obtained the promised salvation.

*Seced.* You still mistake me: I mean that the gospel promise of salvation is made to men, not as believers, but *as sinners, in unbelief*.

*Bapt.* *In unbelief!* I hope I mistake you still; for if you mean what your words import, you reverse the promise, and make it to be, He that believeth NOT shall be saved: and you not only flatly contradict the whole tenor of Scripture on this head, but even what you have admitted yourself, viz. That “only those who believe shall be saved,” and that “it is by faith that sinners are interested in the promised salvation;” The doctrine of Seceders respecting the promise is, “that it is faith that gives the right of possession.”

*Seced.* However strange you may think this sentiment, I shall demonstrate the truth of it from the case of Abraham.

\* Apostolic Commission, p. 89—93.



*Bapt.* Indeed! Abraham's faith, I know, is much extolled in Scripture; but I never before heard him adduced as an example of unbelief.

*Seced.* The apostle says, "The promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect—Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace." Rom. iv. 13, 14, 16. What think you is meant by the promise being *of faith*? (p. 25.)

*Bapt.* The promise respects the inheritance, or being heirs of it. And as to its being *of faith*, I have no singular view of it, but agree with all the commentators of any repute that I have seen: it signifies that this inheritance is conferred freely on *them who believe*, or that men obtain it *by faith*, in opposition to the works of the law.

*Seced.* You mean that the promise is made to *believers*. Let this be attended unto, for it is the main point of difference between us: we say it is made *to sinners, in unbelief*. Allow me to ask, How was the promise made to Abraham? when he was in belief, or in unbelief? May I not answer, *not in belief, but in unbelief?* (p. 25.)

*Bapt.* The apostle says that Abraham's *faith* was reckoned to him for righteousness, "not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision," Rom. iv. 10.; but he no where says, that Abraham was either justified, or had the promise of being the heir of the world *in unbelief*; but asserts the contrary in the plainest terms, declaring that *his faith* was counted for righteousness, and that the promise was through the righteousness of *faith*, see ver. 3, 4, 13.

*Seced.* That which Abraham believed was a promise, but the question is, Was this promise made to him AS A BELIEVER OR NOT? The apostle indeed refers to a period subsequent to his being called by God, *viz.* Gen. xv. 6. but by turning to chap. xii. 1—4. you will find that the same

promise was made to him when he dwelt in his father's house, and "served other gods." "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Nor are we to consider the promises afterwards given, as made to him *in a different character*. They were only more clear and full declarations of the great comprehensive promise made to him when he was yet *in unbelief*. (p. 26.)

*Bapt.* You begin with stating the question properly, but at the conclusion of your speech you shift the ground a little. The question is not, In what state did God find Abraham when he first called him? It is freely granted that he was in a state of unbelief, serving other gods; and this was also the state of the Gentile nations when God visited them with the light of the gospel, to take out of them a people for his name; nay, all mankind are in a state of unbelief till God bring them out of darkness into his marvellous light. But the question between us is this, Did Abraham hear God's word at the time referred to, *as an unbeliever?* or, Did God promise to confer the blessing upon him *as such?* This is what I absolutely deny; but which you as positively affirm; and not only so, but you also consider the promises *afterwards* given, as made to him in the same character, *i. e. as an unbeliever*.

*Seced.* Can you prove the contrary?

*Bapt.* I think I can: Though God at first found Abraham in a state of unbelief and idolatry; yet his word immediately begat faith in him, so that he believed or received it as the word of a faithful God. The apostle, referring to this very period, tells us expressly, that it was "BY FAITH Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went," Heb. xi. 8.—The promises *afterwards* given, could not be made to him in the character of an *unbeliever*, for this

plain reason, because he was not then an unbeliever, as both his history, and what is particularly said of his faith, clearly demonstrate, Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. Heb. xi. 9—20.—Nor did God promise to confer the blessing upon him either *in unbelief*, or *as an unbeliever*; for it was *through faith* and *patiently enduring* he obtained the promise, Heb. vi. 12—16. The promise of the inheritance made to him and his seed is *of faith*, Rom. iv. 16. You asked me what that expression meant, and I shall now give you the meaning of it more particularly. In our translation the original expression ( $\epsilon\kappa\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ ) is rendered *from faith*, Rom. i. 17. and *through faith*, Gal. iii. 8. but most frequently *by faith*, Rom. v. 1. ch. ix. 32. Gal. iii. 22. 24. and *of faith*, Rom. iii. 26. ch. iv. 16. ch. ix. 30. Gal. iii. 7, 9, 12. To be ( $\epsilon\kappa\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ ) *of faith* is always opposed to being of circumcision, of works, or of the law, as in this passage. When PERSONS are said to be *of faith*, it always imports their being *believers*: thus the original expression, “him who is ( $\epsilon\kappa\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ ) *of the faith* of Jesus,” is translated, “*him who believeth* in Jesus,” Rom. iii. 26. and in opposition to their being of the circumcision only, they are described as *of the faith* of Abraham, and as *walking in the steps of that faith* which he had while he was yet uncircumcised, Rom. iv. 12, 16. They *who are of faith* are expressly declared to be the *children* of Abraham, Gal. iii. 7. and to be *blessed* with faithful Abraham, ver. 9. to be Christ’s, and so Abraham’s seed, and *heirs* according to the promise, ver. 29. Again, when the BLESSING promised is said to be *of faith* it evidently signifies, that it is freely conferred upon *those who believe*, or that it is obtained *by faith* in opposition to works; and so justification is *of faith*, Rom. v. 1. Gal. iii. 24. and in the passage first mentioned, the inheritance is said to be *of faith*, that it might be by grace, Rom. iv. 16. it being freely obtained *by faith*, and not of works. So that from the whole it is demonstrably evident, that the promise did not respect Abraham *as an unbeliever*.

Nor was the promise made to Abraham's seed *as unbelievers*. Even the temporal promise of the earthly inheritance to his natural seed, was not fulfilled to them without an answerable faith; for the generation which came out of Egypt, fell short of it through unbelief, Heb. iii. 15—19. And as to the gospel promise made to his spiritual seed of all nations, it was not made to them *as unbelievers*; for it is only they who are OF FAITH that are the children of Abraham, Gal. iii. 7. and that are blessed with him, and heirs according to the promise, ver. 9, 29. The gospel indeed finds them in a state of unbelief; but it calls them to faith, begets them to it, and promiseth salvation to them in believing, Acts xvi. 31. Rom. x. 8—14. but not in unbelief, Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 36. I shall just point out another text, which entirely overthrows your assertion, that the promise is made to men *as unbelievers*: the apostle says, "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the PROMISE by faith of Jesus Christ might be given"—(to unbelievers, *as such?* nay, but) "TO THEM THAT BELIEVE," Gal. iii. 22. If, therefore, "this is the main point of difference between us," you see it is also a point of difference between you and the apostle.

*Seced.* I admit that sinners must come into the benefit of the promise in the same way as Abraham did; that is, by believing that God will be their God, merciful to their unrighteousness, &c. (p. 28.)

*Bapt.* It is not easy to know what you either admit or deny. If Abraham came into the benefit of the promise by believing, and sinners come into it in the same way, then the promise is not made to them *as unbelievers*, otherwise they would come into the benefit of it *as such*. Therefore I think you ought fairly to acknowledge your error in such an assertion, and candidly give it up as both untenable and dangerous. I suspect that you find this sentiment of use to support your view of faith, and that it is on this account you are so tenacious of it; for you represent *that*

faith whereby sinners come into the benefit of the promise, to be a belief of their own particular interest in it.

*Seced.* Certainly: all sinners, without exception, who hear the gospel, are called immediately to believe their own particular salvation upon the ground of the free promise which is made to them, not *as believers*, but *as sinners* in unbelief. All sinners have a ground from the gospel to believe their own salvation. (p. 29.) The knowledge or assurance of our salvation is obtained *directly* and *immediately* in believing. (p. 22.)

*Bapt.* You mean that saving faith is a person's belief that he in particular shall be saved.

*Seced.* I mean that the gospel lays a foundation for such a belief, and calls *all who hear it* to believe their own particular salvation directly and immediately; so that saving faith may be thus defined, "my being verily persuaded that Christ is *mine*, upon the grant and offer of him in the word to *me* in particular, believing that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*—that *I* shall have life and salvation by him; and that whatever he did for the redemption of sinners, he did it for *me*."\* This is what we call the *appropriating act*.

*Bapt.* You will recollect, that the second particular wherein you agreed with our author was this, "That the object or matter of saving faith must be something expressly revealed in the word of God;"† and by this you distinguish *faith* from *fancy*. (p. 43.) Now, when I compare your definition of faith with this, I must necessarily understand you as affirming, that the gospel expressly declares to all who hear it, that Christ died for each of them in particular, and that they shall all be saved.

\* Assoc. Syn. Cat. on Quest. 86. *Of faith in Jesus Christ*. Marrow of Modern Divinity, Chap. II. Sect. III. §. 3.

† See before, p. 262.

*Seced.* I say, that all sinners have *ground* from the gospel to believe their own salvation. The word of God lays a *foundation* for such a belief. (p. 21, 29.)

*Bapt.* If the word of God lays a *foundation* for such a belief, it must be by expressly declaring it as a truth, that all sinners who hear the gospel shall be saved, and that without any regard to their faith: be so good, then, as to point out where any such declaration or promise is to be found.

*Seced.* In order to ascertain this, it may be proper to examine a few passages of Scripture. The first I shall mention, is the gospel, as preached by the angel to the shepherds: “Fear not; behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” Luke ii. 10, 11. Now, I only ask you, if you think one of the shepherds could have given full credit to this without believing his own salvation?—Accordingly, “the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them, ver. 20.—The report itself is called by the angel, “good tidings of great joy, which are said to be unto all people.” And that nothing might be wanting to perfect the conscience, the heavenly chorus added, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.” Here, however, there is no word of faith. (p. 30.)

*Bapt.* That which was declared unto the shepherds was indeed “good tidings of great joy.” It was so *in itself*, whether men believed it or not; it was so *to the shepherds* who believed it, and so had the joy of it: and it must be so *to all people* who like them give credit to it. But what do these good tidings declare? Is it that *all people* who should hear them shall be saved, which is the point to be proved? No such thing: the angels announced that a Saviour was born, and ascribed glory to God in the highest, for peace on earth, and good will towards men. This was

the *faith* of the shepherds; it was the THINGS they had HEARD and SEEN, as it was TOLD unto them, that made them glorify and praise God, ver. 20. and not the assurance of their own particular salvation; though the hope of that must necessarily have attended their belief of the angelic testimony. You observe, that “here there is no word of *faith*.” And what would you infer from this? Is it that the angelic declaration required no faith, or that the shepherds did not believe it, or that faith is not necessary to salvation? Their faith may easily be traced in this passage; but it contains no declaration that all who hear the gospel shall be saved, so as to lay a foundation for every hearer to believe his own salvation directly.

*Seced.* You may at least see from this passage, that there is undeniable evidence for the relation which Christ stands in to sinners of mankind *as such*. This is such, that when no exception is made, but on the contrary, the gospel which reveals the Saviour is addressed to all, every one is warranted to believe that he shall have salvation through him. (p. 30, 31.)

*Bapt.* I know not what you mean by the *relation* in which Christ stands to sinners of mankind *as such*. The angel says, “I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to ALL PEOPLE; for unto you is born this day a SAVIOUR,” &c. *All people* here cannot mean all the human race; but all Christ’s people, who are given to him of the Father; for however good the tidings are in themselves, they are only good to them, and known to be so when they believe. Nor is Christ a *Saviour* to any other. He took part in flesh and blood, Heb. ii. 14. but it was not with all mankind, but with the CHILDREN which God had given him, ver. 13. his *brethren*, ver. 11, 12. the many *sons* whom he brings unto glory, ver. 10. It was for his sheep he laid down his life, John x. 15. and as their great Shepherd was he brought again from the dead, Heb. xiii. 20. It is for them for whom he died and rose again, that he makes intercession.

Rom. viii. 34. for he prays not for the world, but for them whom the Father hath given him; for them who shall believe on him through the word of his apostles, John xvii. 9, 20. He has, indeed, power over all flesh, all things being given into his hand, but it is that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him, ver. 2. So that Christ stands related as a kinsman Redeemer and Saviour not to the whole human race, but to the elect only, whom the Father hath given him to redeem, John vi. 37, 39, 40. And to them the promise of salvation is made under the descriptive character of *Whosoever believeth*, or *All that believe*. Therefore, though the gospel, which reveals the Saviour, is addressed to all without exception, yet this does not warrant *every one* to believe directly *that he shall be saved*; for no such thing is declared; nor is it a truth in itself with respect to *all* the hearers of the gospel. It is not that truth which the gospel testifies and calls men to believe at first hand, and concerning which it saith, "He that believeth it shall be saved; but he that believeth not hath made God a liar, and shall be damned." This saving truth is another thing, and must be believed before any can know from the gospel promise that they in particular shall be saved. But I am interrupting you; please proceed with your scripture proofs.

*Seced.* I say, All sinners, *as such* are warranted by the gospel to believe their own particular salvation directly. Even those declarations which are of a more general nature warrant this; such as, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."—"It is a faithful saying, that Christ came into the world to save sinners," &c. (p. 31.)

*Bapt.* These are joyful declarations indeed, nor are they the less so that they are general. The first is taken from our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus, John iii. 17. and declares the gracious *design* of God in sending his Son into the world, which was not to condemn the world but that



the world through him might be saved. To make this answer your purpose, you must understand the word *world* here to signify *all mankind*: and then you must affirm, that the real design of God in sending his Son, was to save every individual of the human race. Were this the sense, I own it would fully suit your purpose, and nothing less can warrant all to believe their own salvation directly: but this would be to ground your appropriation upon the grossest kind of Arminianism. This broad ground of appropriation, though it seems at first sight agreeable, yet, upon consideration, will yield little comfort, as it supposes that God's designs may be frustrated, and that many whom Christ was sent to save, and for whom he laid down his life, will notwithstanding perish. But the universal expression *the world* in this passage, is opposed to the jewish limitation; and as Satan has his *world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. his *whole world*, 1 John v. 19. so Christ has his *world* whom God loved, John iii. 16. yea, his *whole world*, for whose sins he is the propitiation, 1 John ii. 2. Of this *world* Abraham was made heir, as the father of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, Rom. iv. 13—17. and it is composed of *all nations* which are blessed with him in Christ his Seed, Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9, 14. and these are the *nations* of them that are saved, Rev. xxi. 24. All this is clear from the passage itself, in which our Lord repeatedly describes those who shall not perish but have everlasting life, to be "WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH in him."

As to the faithful saying, "That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. it is the very testimony of the gospel, and sets forth the abundant grace and ability of Christ to save the very chief of sinners; which was exemplified in the case of Paul, in whom, as the foremost, Jesus Christ shewed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them who should hereafter *believe on him* to life everlasting, ver. 16. so that none after him have cause to despair of mercy on account of the greatness of their sins. But this

saying does not declare that *all sinners* shall be saved, nor indeed that *any* sinner shall be saved who does not *believe on Christ*; and therefore does not warrant all who hear the gospel to conclude from their being *sinners*, that they shall be saved.

*Seced.* There is one passage more to which I would call your attention. "We believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved," Acts xv. 11. You have here an exemplification of saving faith in the exercise of individuals. It contains an assurance of salvation, and the ground of this assurance: "We believe," or are sure, "that we shall be saved." The ground of this assurance was not the consciousness of their faith, but "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." (p. 31.)

*Bapt.* This gloss neither agrees with the scope of the passage, nor supports your argument. The words contain one of Peter's arguments against circumcising the Gentile converts, and amounts to this, that though he and his brethren, the believing Jews, were circumcised, and observed Moses' law, yet they did not expect to be saved by this, but, on the contrary, they believed that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ they should be saved even as the uncircumcised Gentile converts were, and not on account of any thing peculiar to them as Jews: The same argument is used by Paul, when Peter and Barnabas turned aside, Gal. ii. 15, 16. This then, being the scope of the passage, it makes nothing for your argument. But suppose it had been Peter's design, as you seem to think, merely to declare that he and his brethren, the believing Jews, had the assurance of their salvation (a thing not disputed,) yet it would be equally foreign to the point you contend for. The question is not, whether *believers*, such as they were, may have the assurance of their own salvation? for this is freely granted; but the question is this, Does the gospel declare it as a truth, that *all who hear it* shall be saved, and so call upon every one to believe his own particular salvation directly?

None of the texts you have adduced give the least countenance to such a sentiment.

*Seced.* The revelation which is made of God in the gospel is such, that sinners cannot come to the knowledge of it, or, in other words, believe it, without an assurance of their salvation.—Strikingly illustrative of this are the words of our Saviour, “ This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” John xvii. 3. Here salvation is referred entirely to the only true God our Saviour. I cannot conceive what view you can have of this passage in consistency with your stated principles. (p. 33, 34.)

*Bapt.* We have no singular view of this passage. The common orthodox sense of it consists well with our principles: But if you think that it supports your sentiment, that God hath made an absolute promise of eternal life to sinners of mankind as such, which warrants every one of them to believe directly that he in particular shall be saved, you must have a very peculiar view of it indeed.

*Seced.* You deny, then, that God hath made an absolute promise of salvation to sinners of mankind as such, so as to warrant each of them to believe his own salvation directly.

*Bapt.* I do indeed, according to my present light; for I can neither find such a promise in the scriptures, nor can I reconcile it with the faithfulness of God, that any should come short of that salvation which he hath absolutely promised. But as this is the main hinge of your whole scheme, I beg you would now solve the grand difficulty which hangs like a mill-stone about its neck; say then, How can all the hearers of the gospel be required to believe an absolute promise that they shall be saved, when it is certain that many of them shall come short of salvation.

*Seced.* I told you before, that I neither can solve nor will attempt to solve this difficulty. It is a deep mystery which we ought not too curiously to pry into. (p. 37.)

*Bapt.* I admit that with respect to many things it is a

good and sensible answer to say, "I do not know:" But I cannot admit that this point is so inexplicable as you represent it. If God has made an absolute, unqualified, unrestricted promise of salvation to sinners of mankind as such, and without any regard to faith, then we must either admit that such a promise will be fully made good, or deny that he is faithful to his word; for there is no conceivable medium. It is therefore not a point of curious speculation, but essential to the faith of the simplest Christian to be fully satisfied on this head. We may indeed mistake the meaning, extent, or objects of a promise, but it would be downright infidelity to suppose that God will not fully accomplish all his promises to the objects of them, according to their true meaning and intent.

*Seced.* There is one thing of which I have more than once thought, and shall submit to your consideration. Does not the same objection lie against the threatening of the law as against the promises of the Gospel? Are not all bound to believe God's word in the law? And does not the law threaten every one with eternal condemnation? And yet every one will not be finally condemned. (p. 37.)

*Bapt.* The threatening of the law and the promise of the gospel do not run parallel, nor extend alike to all mankind. All without exception have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, consequently all are liable to the curse threatened in the law, Rom. iii. 19, 23. Gal. iii. 10. but it is not promised in the gospel that all mankind shall be saved; on the contrary, it is clearly revealed, that many will come short of salvation. Again, the curse threatened in the law has and will be inflicted to its utmost extent, either on sinners themselves, or on their substitute, Gal. iii. 10, 13. and none are freed from that curse but such as are considered in law as having suffered it; so that no objection can lie against the truth of God in the threatening of his law. But if he has made an *absolute* promise of salvation to all the hearers of the gospel, which will not be fulfilled

to many of them in any sense whatever, how shall we perceive his faithfulness in such a promise?

*Seced.* I would have you to attend to the answer made by the apostle to a similar objection, in Rom. iii. 3, &c. “What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith (or faithfulness) of God without effect? God forbid. Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar.” If the promise was made to *believers*, there could be no shadow of occasion for an objection such as that which the apostle supposes. Examine the objections proposed by the apostle, Rom. iii. 31. chap. vi. 1. chap. ix. 19. and you will find that they are such as natural men might be supposed to make; and we reckon it no inconsiderable evidence of the sameness of our doctrines with those of the apostle, that the same objections are made against them. (p. 38.)

*Bapt.* The apostle’s doctrine in the passage referred to, is, That as the Jews were sinners, and in no wise better than the Gentiles, ver. 9. so they had no preference to them in point of acceptance with God. To this a carnal Jew is supposed to object, “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?” *i. e.* of the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham and his seed, whereby they were separated to God as his peculiar people. To this the apostle answers, “Much every way: chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God,” which revealed his will, and contained the promises of the Messiah, and of salvation through him; so that as to outward means and privileges they had in all respects the advantage of the Gentiles. “For what if some did not believe” these promises, and the greater part of the Jewish nation rejected the Messiah when he came, “shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” shall it (*καταργησει*) defeat his truth and faithfulness, so as that his promise to Abraham and his seed should not take effect, according to all that was intended therein? “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.”

Let us now consider whether this objection of the carnal Jew arises from your principles or mine. You affirm, that if the promise was made to *believers*, there could be no shadow of occasion for such an objection as the apostle supposes. I, on the other hand, maintain, that if the promise of salvation was made to *all* the natural seed of Abraham, not *as believers*, but *as sinners* in unbelief, the carnal Jew had every reason to object to the faithfulness of God in not making it good to his unbelieving countrymen: and had the apostle admitted your principle, it would have been simply impossible for him to have answered this objection. I would have you to attend to the mistaken sentiments from which this Jewish objection proceeded. The carnal Jews imagined, that the Messiah's kingdom was to be of a worldly nature; that the blessings of it were promised to *all* the circumcised natural seed of Abraham as such; and that therefore God's faithfulness was engaged to make good these promises to them at any rate, if they were only the natural descendants of Abraham, of the stock of Israel, Jews outwardly, and circumcised in the flesh.\* From these principles they concluded, that if the blessings promised to the seed of Abraham were not conferred upon them all, God would be unfaithful to his word. You hold the same principle with respect to the promise being *absolute*, and extend it *universally* to sinners of mankind as such; yet you deny the consequence that necessarily follows it, wrapping it up in an inexplicable mystery.

Let us now see how the apostle answers this Jewish objection. When he says, "What if some did not believe?"

\* These Jewish sentiments are frequently refuted in the New Testament, see Matt. iii. 9. John iii. 3. chap. viii. 33—45. Rom. ii. 28, 29. chap. iv. 13, 14. chap. ix. 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. Gal. iii. chap. iv. 28—31. chap. vi. 15. Phil. iii. 4—7. Yet it is amazing to think that among the Gentile nations professing Christianity similar sentiments should be adopted, and Infant baptism established upon a supposed entail of the covenant of circumcision upon the *natural* seed of professing parents.

Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid," Rom. iii. 3, 4. it clearly imports, that those who believed not had no cause to impeach God's faithfulness, though they did not obtain the blessing promised; because the promise by faith of Jesus Christ did not respect any in *unbelief*, but is only given *to them that believe*, Gal. iii. 22. But he answers this objection more fully and directly in Rom. ix. Some might object, that by the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, the promise which God had made to the patriarchs and their seed, had failed in its accomplishment. But he vindicates the faithfulness of God as to this, upon principles the direct opposite of yours, proving, that the promise of spiritual blessings in Christ was not made to *all* the natural seed of Abraham, far less (as you affirm,) to *all* sinners of mankind *as such*; but only to the *children of the promise*, who are counted for the seed. His words are, "Not as though the word of God had taken none effect: for they are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called; that is, They who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed," ver. 6—8. This distinction of the seed he illustrates by instances which the unbelieving Jews themselves would readily admit. Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, (who typified the carnal Jews who were cast out, Gal. iv. 22—31.) was a son of Abraham, yet the promise did not respect him, but only Isaac, Abraham's son by Sarah the free-woman, ver. 9. Again, Esau was this Isaac's legitimate first-born son by Rebecca the free-woman, and so had all that right to be heir of the promise which a natural man could suppose; yet in the sovereign purpose of God, it did not respect him, but his younger brother Jacob, afterwards called Israel, ver. 10—14. And, to bring the matter directly to the point in hand, he makes a distinction even in Jacob's posterity, the Israelites, affirming, that

“ they are not all Israel who are of Israel,” *i. e.* they are not all the true and spiritual Israel of God who have sprung from Jacob according to the flesh; and as the spiritual promise of salvation by Christ was not made to *all* his natural seed as such, therefore there was no failure in God’s promise, though many of them should come short of salvation through their unbelief, since it was only made to them who should believe, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. See ver. 23—33.

From the whole, therefore, it is evident, that the apostle and you are in direct opposition. You maintain that the promise is *absolute* and to *all*, and thereby render the objection of the Jew just and unanswerable; he, on the other hand, denies that principle, and so removes the foundation of the objection. In judging of the extent or limitation of the promise, you ought to consider how the Scripture applies it, and to whom it appears to have been hitherto accomplished. It is no evidence of the sameness of your doctrines with those of the apostle, that the same objections are made against them; for the Antinomians can boast of this as much as you, however just the objections against them are. As to the objections mentioned Rom. vi. 1. and chap. ix. 19. they are not to our present point, and therefore I pass them.

*Seced.* I have still another argument to prove that the promise of salvation is absolute, and made universally to sinners of mankind as such. God gave to the Israelites that came out of the land of Egypt a promise of the land of Canaan in the message which God sent unto them by Moses: “ Say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord; and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians;—and I will bring you into the land concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage; I am the Lord.” Exod. vi. 6, 8. Here, then, is an absolute promise that God would bring them into the possession of



the land of Canaan, and they had every reason to think that they should enter into it; yet they disbelieved his word, stopped short in the way, and thus cut themselves off from the enjoyment of the promised rest. (p. 38, 39.)

*Bapt.* If God made an *absolute* or unconditional promise to that particular generation which went out of Egypt, that he would bring them personally into the earthly rest; and if they notwithstanding came short of it, as you admit, then it unavoidably follows, either that, without any failure on their part, God failed in making good his promise to them, which is blasphemy, or that an *absolute promise* was suspended upon some *implied condition* on their part, which is a contradiction. The only way, therefore, to reconcile this promise with the truth of God and the event, is to understand it, as it respected that generation, to be not absolute, but suspended upon their belief and trust in his power and faithfulness to make it good. Such limitations, though not always expressed, must frequently be understood both in promises and threatenings, as might be shewn at large.

*Seced.* You may introduce as many conditions as you please, but it is at the risk of adding to, or rather confining the promise of God. There is no necessity for your adding to the words of God, in order to make them consistent. God will make out his own truth in his own way. (p. 39.) That his promise to that generation was unconditional, appears farther from what he said to them after they had refused to enter into Canaan through unbelief; “Doubtless, ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein,” Num. xiv. 30. Here you see God absolutely swore to make them dwell therein.

*Bapt.* I see no such thing; but I see a reference, both here and in Exod. vi. 6, 8. to the oath which God swore to Abraham, Gen. xv. 13—19. and renewed to Isaac and Jacob, chap. xxvi. 2—6. chap. xxviii. 13, 14. respecting his giving that land to their seed, and which he actually performed. But, according to you, he first swore to the

generation which came out of Egypt, that *they* should enter into the promised land, (of which we nowhere read,) and afterwards swore that they should never enter into it. Now, as you affirm that the promise or oath was absolute or unconditional as to them, I wish to know how, upon this principle, it can be reconciled with the faithfulness of God that they should come short of it?

*Seced.* Your objection is the very thing that the children of Israel *murmured*, God answered them, “ye shall know my breach of promise,” Num. xiv. 34. Not that breach of promise was justly imputed to God; but they should experience that which they called breach of promise. God would deal with them as they had spoken: “As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you; your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness,” ver. 28, 29. Did their unbelief, then, make the faithfulness of God of none effect? On the contrary, this event afforded occasion to vindicate his veracity. While they endeavoured to charge God, the lie was proved upon themselves. (p. 40.)

*Bapt.* The point you maintain is this, That God made an *absolute* promise to bring that generation into the land of Canaan; and you know God’s *absolute* promise cannot fail through any defect in the creature. But here you seem to affirm, that as they charged God with a breach of promise, so he dealt with them as they had spoken, making their carcasses fall in the wilderness; and which is still more strange, you think this awful event, which deprived them of the inheritance, vindicated God’s veracity in his *absolute* promise of giving it them, while it proved that they themselves were liars, in saying that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness! Now, if I understand you at all, these things are absolute and unqualified contradictions.

*Seced.* Do you maintain, then, that God did not make good his promise?

*Bapt.* God forbid: “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” What I maintain is, That if the principle you

contend for be true, *viz.* that God made an *absolute* promise to bring that generation into the land of Canaan, he certainly failed in making good *such* a promise to them; for their carcases fell in the wilderness. So that, till you give up that principle, every attempt to avoid this shocking consequence, must necessarily involve you more and more in contradictions and absurdities.

*Seced.* How then do you make the promise consistent with the event as to them?

*Bapt.* By maintaining that the promise to them was not absolute, but suspended upon their believing God, and obeying his voice, *Exod.* xix. 5—9. *chap.* xxiii. 20—24. This is evident to a demonstration, both from its being a *fact* that they came short of the promised rest, and from the *reasons* which are always assigned for this, see *Num.* xiv. 11, 22, 23. *chap.* xxxii. 11—14. *Deut.* i. 26—41. *Josh.* v. 6. *Psal.* lxxviii. 10, 22, 32, 33, 37. “So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief,” *Heb.* iii. 19. This solves the whole difficulty at once, and vindicates the faithfulness of God; for he had not promised to give them the inheritance at any rate, but only in the way of their believing his power and faithfulness, (of which he had given them sufficient proofs,) and obeying his voice; so that it was no breach of promise in him, though that unbelieving, murmuring, and rebellious generation did not enter into his rest. Yet God’s promise to Abraham was absolute, “Unto thy seed will I give this land,” *Gen.* xv. 18. and it was actually accomplished to the succeeding generation, as God had said, *Num.* xiv. 31. Accordingly we find Joshua appealing to them for the truth of this; “Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not ONE THING hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; ALL are come to pass unto you, and not ONE THING hath failed thereof,” *Josh.* xxiii. 14.

*Seced.* Do you conclude from all this, that there is no absolute promise of salvation in the gospel to sinners of

mankind as such, but only to whosoever of them shall believe?

*Bapt.* I certainly do: and not only so, but if we consider the many awful cautions which the apostle gives even to believers, drawn from Israel's coming short of the earthly rest, (see I Cor. x. 1—13. Heb. iii. chap. iv. Jude 5.) it will plainly appear, that he did not consider faith to be a confident persuasion, grounded upon an absolute promise, that they should be saved at all events; but only if they continued in the faith grounded and settled, and were not moved away from the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. Hence he exhorts the believing Hebrews, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God," Heb. iii. 12. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest any of you should seem to come short of it," chap. iv. 1.—"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief," ver. 11. It also appears from this, that though the apostle held the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, yet he never taught any of them, that one act of faith secured their state for ever, as some speak; but strongly inculcates their living by faith, and holding it fast, as the only way of believing to the saving of the soul, Heb. x. 38, 39.

*Seced.* Notwithstanding all you have said, I still maintain, that saving faith is a persuasion of personal salvation; and I distinguish the persuasion of faith from imaginary assurance by saying in one word, that it is founded on the testimony and promise of God who cannot lie. (p. 43.)

*Bapt.* I have all along admitted, that the hope of personal salvation must ever attend the belief of God's testimony and promise; but I have also sufficiently shewn, that God no where testifies nor promises, that all who hear the gospel shall be saved, or that any particular persons shall be saved but such as believe what the gospel declares concerning Christ. Saving faith, therefore, is not a per-

suasion that I shall be saved, though that may attend it in some degree, but a belief of what God testifies concerning his Son, and the salvation that is in him. Upon your plan, a man must believe that it is the very testimony and promise of God that he in particular shall be saved, consequently, he must be as certain of his salvation as he is that God is true; and every doubt with respect to this, must be considered as striking directly against the faithfulness of God. Now the natural tendency of such doctrine is to make men undervalue the real gospel testimony as an insufficient ground of hope; to foster presumption in many, and to perplex and discourage the minds of real Christians, who, though they truly believe the gospel, are not so very confident of the goodness of their state.

*Seced.* It was never said by Seceders, that no person has true faith except it answered fully to the description they give of it. Though all believers know the same *truth*, they have not the same *discoveries* of the truth. Though a person's faith may not be so strong as to dispel all doubts, and to give him a *full* assurance of his salvation, yet *some* persuasion of it is necessary to give peace of conscience. (p. 42.)

*Bapt.* I see you are coming down a little; and I suspect that this *assurance* of personal salvation you plead for in theory, when accommodating it to the real experience of serious individuals, must sometimes be brought so very low as not to deserve that name: nay, I should not wonder if, in dealing with some doubting persons, you should drop this assurance altogether as not essential to true faith; though, according to your principles, to doubt their own particular salvation is to doubt the faithfulness of God to his absolute promise. These things appear to me very inconsistent.

*Seced.* Though real believers "are frequently filled with doubts and fears about their gracious state," yet this does not arise so much from their disbelieving the truth of God's

testimony and promise in the gospel, as from their not having the assurance of their own particular interest in the promise.

*Bapt.* Whatever it arises from, if they have saving faith without the assurance of their interest in the promise, then faith does not consist in such an assurance; yet there must certainly be a deficiency in their belief of the gospel itself, if it is not attended with good hope. I cannot help observing, that you and some of your brethren are beginning to adopt a more scriptural style than your predecessors used. You seldom mention the *deed of gift, grant, and offer* of Christ, *warrants* to believe, and *faith's actings* with its *gifted hand* in receiving and *appropriating* this offered gift; but you speak more simply of the *truth*, the gospel *testimony* and *promise*, and of faith being a *belief of the truth*: may I not hope that this prognosticates some approaching change of sentiment also?

*Seced.* I am conscious of no such change.

*Bapt.* Then you had better have retained the old phraseology as more expressive of your real sentiments. To say, that faith is simply the *belief* of a *truth*, and that it respects an *absolute promise* of salvation to mankind *as such*, is to shut yourself up in an inextricable dilemma between universal redemption on the one hand, and the failure of the promise on the other, and this is the grand difficulty which you own you cannot solve. Whereas your predecessors did not consider the promise to be so *absolute*, but that it required the *appropriating act* to give the *right of possession*. Mr. Marshall, in his *Treatise on Sanctification*, recommended by Seceders, denies that there is an absolute promise of salvation; but then he says, we must believe "that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us particularly, not because it is a truth *before* we believe it, but because it becomes a certain truth *when* we believe it, and because it will never be true, except we do, in some measure, *persuade* and *assure* ourselves that

it is so. We have no *absolute promise* or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true *already* by Scripture, or sense, or reason, *before* we assure ourselves absolutely of it.—We are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true whether we believe them or no: but here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the Spirit of God.—None but God can justly require of us this kind of assurance, because he only can make a thing to be *true*, on our believing it, that was *not true* before,” Direct. X. I approve of many things in Mr. Marshall’s book, and am satisfied that he did not follow this direction himself in believing without evidence; but were such a thing possible, it furnishes no objection to the faithfulness of God, as the absolute promise evidently does. But I think it is time to put an end to this conversation.

*Seced.* I think so too, and therefore, for the present, shall bid you adieu.

## APPENDIX

TO

### THE FOREGOING DIALOGUE.

---

---

IN reply to the foregoing Dialogue, the anonymous writer of the first pamphlet published another, entitled, *A Third Conversation*, &c. which it was not thought proper at the time to take any notice of, as it throws no additional light on the point in debate. He labours to shew, that if the promise of salvation is *restricted to believers*, and if faith be an *evidence* of their interest in the promise, (which is all that is pleaded for,) then faith must be the condition which gives a right or title to salvation; nay, that it must be the very thing which purges the conscience from guilt, and not the blood of Christ. Such reasoning, in my opinion, requires no answer; however, I shall take notice of some things in it, which, for uniformity's sake, I shall throw into the form of a Dialogue.

*Seced.* The first and radical evidence to a man of his *being justified* is the blood of Christ. (*3d Con.* p. 22.)

*Bapt.* The blood of Christ is the *procuring cause* of justification; it is the *object* of justifying faith, Rom. iii. 25. and it may be termed the evidence that a sinner *may be justified*; but it is not the evidence or proof to a man that he in particular *is actually justified*. His faith in it is the *evidence* of that.



*Seced.* Justification by faith means *nothing else* than the sprinkling or purgation of a sinner's conscience. (p. 25.)

*Bapt.* Then justification by faith is not the absolution of a sinner from guilt and condemnation, and an acceptance of him into a state of favour; but only a manifestation to his conscience that he is already justified.

*Seced.* All that believe their justification, are justified before God. (p. 27.)

*Bapt.* All that believe the gospel are indeed justified; but your method of stating it makes justifying faith to be a belief that they *are justified*. This looks very like making the *object* of faith to be a man's own justification before God, instead of the blood of Christ. Here I might ask, Was their justification a truth before they believed it? or did their believing it convert it into a truth? The Scripture says, "All that *believe* are justified;" but then it means, all that believe *in Christ*.

*Seced.* To maintain that the promise is *made to faith*, is to make it a conditional promise; and by a *condition* I mean something the performance of which gives a person a *claim, title, or right* to salvation. (p. 30, 31. 47.)

*Bapt.* If so, then, to get rid of a condition, you must deny that the promise is *made to faith*.

*Seced.* If the promise of salvation be suspended upon the person's faith, it destroys the freedom of salvation, and takes away all meaning from the apostle's words, that "it is of faith that it might be by grace." (p. 31.)

*Bapt.* The promise is so suspended upon the person's faith, that it is only he that believeth that shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. This is all the suspension that is meant; and if it destroys the freedom of salvation, the apostle's words will not mend the matter, unless we insert a small supplement, and make him to say, "it is *not* of faith that it might be by grace;" for I suspect you consider faith as a work.

*Seced.* The apostle never denied that faith was a *work*; he knew that the law bound men to *believe* God as well as to love him. (p. 33.)—Faith is a *work of the law*. (p. 40.)

*Bapt.* If so, then to be justified *by faith* is to be justified *by a work of the law*. Yet the apostle not only *distinguishes* these two ways of justification, but constantly *opposeth* the one to the other. Whatever faith was required by the law, the apostle never once mentions it on this subject, but expressly declares that “the law is NOT OF FAITH;” it does not require faith in Christ for justification, but its language is, “The man that DOETH THEM shall live in them,” Gal. iii. 12. This is Moses’ description of the righteousness which is of the law, and which the apostle opposeth to the language of the righteousness which is of faith, namely, “That if thou shalt CONFESS with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt BELIEVE IN THINE HEART, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” Rom. x. 5—12. Further, the apostle opposeth *believing* in its very nature to *working* for justification, when he says, “To him that WORKETH NOT, but BELIEVETH,” &c. Rom. iv. 5. Now, if faith were a *work of the law*, as you affirm, then it would not be true that *believing* is *not working*; but the apostle says, that a man in believing *worketh not*, which I think amounts to a plain denial that faith is a *work*; and indeed all that he says on the doctrine of justification implies this. To affirm that faith is a *work of the law*, or indeed a work at all, is to confound faith and works, and to render all the apostle’s arguments, grounded on that distinction, null and void. To class faith with the works of the law, is to shut it out from having any place at all in justification; for we are assured that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight,” Rom. iii. 20. But this is another expedient of yours to get rid of it as a condition.

*Seced.* A sinner does not come to the benefit of salvation in consequence of having that faith to which the promise is made; but in believing that he shall have all the benefit of that salvation which is in the word of the truth of the gospel. (p. 42.)

*Bapt.* Does he then come to the benefit of salvation in performing a work of the law? You must either admit this, or retract what you have already said. I admit that he comes to the benefit of salvation, *i. e.* is justified in believing: but I ask, in believing what? You make him to come to the benefit of salvation in believing “that he shall have the benefit of it;” this is the immediate object or matter of his faith. But the scriptures present us with Christ and his finished work as the immediate and direct object of faith. The word of faith which the apostles preached says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” It is in believing what the gospel testifies concerning Christ that a sinner comes to the benefit of salvation; “for the scripture says, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Rom. x. 9, 11. This is the foundation that God hath laid in Sion, and which is always a sure foundation in itself whether men believe or not; but till a man believes in him as an all-sufficient, free, and suitable Saviour, he is possessed of no evidence of his own salvation, and all his endeavours to work himself up into a persuasion of this, at first hand, is mere presumption. But when he believes in Christ as revealed in the gospel, he must have the comfortable hope of his own salvation, simply from what he believes, and some present evidence of it in the consciousness that he now believes.

*Seced.* I have no doubt, and never denied, that the first Christians were conscious that they believed, (p. 13.) but you make a person’s belief the condition of salvation, when

you suppose this consciousness necessary to his assurance of his own salvation. (p. 43.)

*Bapt.* No man can be rationally assured of any thing without *evidence*. The first scriptural evidence of a man's own salvation is his faith; but this can be no evidence to a man that he is in a state of salvation, but so far as he is conscious of it. And how his being conscious of his faith should convert it into a condition is beyond my comprehension.

*Seced.* God's word of promise gives us a right to salvation; faith puts us in possession of salvation. (p. 50.)

*Bapt.* By the word of promise you cannot mean that which is declared in the gospel, such as, "He that believeth shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16. or, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," Rom. x. 9. for though that is an encouragement to all to believe on Christ for salvation, and assures them that in believing they shall not be disappointed, Rom. x. 11. yet it gives no actual right to salvation to any who do not believe: for he that believeth not shall be damned, consequently has no right to salvation by the gospel promise. The word of promise therefore which you have in view must be your absolute promise made to sinners *as such, in unbelief*, that they shall be saved; but the question is, where is such a promise to be found? As to faith putting us in *possession* of salvation, I have no objection to it, if you mean that he who believes is actually in a state of salvation. With regard to a *right* to salvation, I would say, the elect have a right to salvation by virtue of their having been chosen to it, and by virtue of Christ's having procured it for them by his blood; but this right is not ascertained to any of them till they are effectually called and believe the gospel.

*Seced.* I know of *nothing* by which a man can ascertain that he has believed the saving truth, but its having brought salvation to his conscience, (p. 57.)

*Bapt.* I admit that he who believes the saving truth will find salvation in it, and experience relief to his conscience; but as some may receive the word with joy, for a while believe, be enlightened, taste of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, (Mat. xiii. 20. Heb. vi. 4, 5.) and yet fall away; so these first impressions, however comfortable, are not the *only* evidence which are necessary to ascertain that he has believed the saving truth. The fruits and effects of faith are also necessary, in their place to ascertain this; and therefore he must give diligence to make his calling and election sure by adding these to his faith; for if he do these things, he shall never fall, 2 Pet. i. 5—12.

*Seced.* Faith is a part of salvation. (p. 58.)—And as you maintain that God engages by promise to bestow the blessing testified of upon the person who believes his testimony, your meaning must be, that God engages to bestow *faith* upon sinners *if they believe!* (p. 59.)

*Bapt.* This is a low quirk upon your own statement, not mine. I had said, that “there are many promises respecting the salvation of sinners while they were yet in a state of unbelief, and even long before many of them had a being, such as those which relate to the calling of the Gentiles, &c. but these promises include their faith, and it was only by faith they obtained the promised salvation.”\* Though *faith* is included in the promises alluded to, (for it is promised, that “in him shall the Gentiles trust,” Rom. xv. 12.) yet it is clearly distinguished here from the *salvation* promised as being that *by which* they obtained that salvation; and who, besides yourself, could understand these words to mean “that God engages to bestow *faith* upon sinners, *if they believe?*”

*Seced.* I admit that the promise of salvation is a promise of faith, for it is salvation applied in that way. (p. 67.)

\* See before, p. 271.

*Bapt.* And if so, it cannot be a promise of salvation to sinners of mankind as such, in unbelief.

*Seced.* Sinners, I grant, cannot come into the benefit of the promise, or enjoy the good of it, whether they believe or not.

*Bapt.* Then they ought not to be amused with empty speculations about their *right* to salvation by virtue of a promise of it made to them in unbelief; for the gospel promises nothing to them at all while in that state, but calls them to believe, and declares that except they believe they shall perish.

*Seced.* With respect to assurance, we do not mean an assurance of being already in a state of salvation—but a persuasion of obtaining salvation upon the ground of the word and promise of God.—Believing this, we must believe our own salvation. (p. 67.)

*Bapt.* Far be it from me to object to a persuasion of obtaining salvation, when that persuasion is grounded on the word and promise of God. But as the word of God promises salvation to none but in the way of believing in Christ, so a persuasion grounded upon any supposed word or promise made to sinners as such, in unbelief, is a groundless persuasion.

*Seced.* The question has all along been, whether is the promise of the gospel *absolute* or *conditional*? I have adduced the promise made to Abraham as an evidence that it is *absolute*; and surely if any thing can be absolute, the following declaration is so, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee,” &c. Gen. xii. 1, &c.—The question is not respecting Abraham’s *hearing*, but God’s *speaking* the promise. The promise was certainly made *before* Abraham *heard* or *believed* it; and so was an *absolute* promise made to him *in unbelief*. (p. 60, 61.)

*Bapt.* You have made a strange piece of work with the promise to Abraham. Though it cannot be proved that

God made a promise to Abraham before he revealed himself to him as the object of faith; yet I have admitted in the most ample manner, that when God first revealed himself to Abraham, he was in a *state of unbelief*, and that this was not only the case with Abraham, but with all whom God calls out of darkness into his marvellous light. Now, if this had been all that you meant by the promise being made to Abraham *in unbelief*, you had no occasion to say any thing more on that head. But you certainly intended something more, for you ask, "Was this promise made to him *as a believer* or not?" you certainly mean it was not; for you argue against its being made to him *as a believer*. (First Conver. p. 26.) So that whatever your meaning was, your words plainly import, that God not only made the promise to Abraham *while he was an unbeliever*, but he made it to him *as an unbeliever*; that is, the promise respected him *as such*, or *under that character*. And in what other sense could it serve your purpose to prove, that God in the gospel makes an absolute promise of salvation to sinners *as such*, and *in unbelief*? In opposition to this, I absolutely denied, that God promised to confer the blessing upon Abraham either *in unbelief*, or *as an unbeliever*;\* but now your meaning turns out to be this, that the promise made to Abraham had no respect to him either as a believer or as an unbeliever. (p. 62.) Yet if we ask, how men come to obtain the blessings promised, we are told that "it is only *by faith* that they come into the benefit of the promise, and so are blessed with faithful Abraham." (p. 64.) Now if the promised blessing is obtained *only by faith*, and never conferred upon any in unbelief, then it is evident to a demonstration, that this restriction, (for so I call it,) though not always expressed, must be intended and implied in the

\* See before, page 275.

promise itself; and if any further evidence were needful, you may consult the New Testament where the promise of salvation is constantly and expressly restricted to him that believeth: so that the whole amounts to this, “He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

*Seced.* I still maintain that the promise of salvation is absolute and unconditional; but as you imagine that we must either admit that such a promise will be fully made good, or deny that God is faithful to his word, I would have you to consider, that the *event* of the revelation, or the *purpose* of God about it, is not the rule of our faith, nor of our duty, Deut. xxix. 29. All that believe God’s word will find him faithful. They that will not believe, come short of the promised good.—How absurd then to plead, that they will not believe God’s promise, unless they know his purpose about the matter? (p. 67, 68.)

*Bapt.* So it seems that though the promise is *absolute* and unconditional, and made to sinners *as such, in unbelief*, yet it is accomplished only to those *who believe*. I need not spend time in shewing, that (supposing God to be faithful) this is an absolute contradiction, as I have done it sufficiently already. But the argument by which you here support such a sentiment, appears to me, if possible, still more objectionable, *viz.* “That the *event* of the revelation,” (namely, as to the accomplishment of the promise) “or the *purpose* of God about it, is not the rule of our faith or duty;” and for this you refer to Deut. xxix. 29. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God,” &c. Here you distinguish between the *promise* of God and his *purpose* as to the accomplishment of it. His promise is a thing revealed, and therefore belongs to us as the rule of our faith, but his purpose as to the *event* of its accomplishment, is a secret thing with which our faith has nothing to do. Now, if this is your real meaning, I must be free



to say, that I know of nothing which is more subversive of all faith in God, or his promise, than this very distinction. Consider, I beseech you, that though the particular *manner* and *time* in which a promise will be accomplished may be a secret, unless revealed in the promise itself; yet the *thing promised* must be *purposed*, otherwise the promiser is not sincere and faithful. While the divine purpose respecting any future event is kept an entire secret, there can be no promise respecting it; for what is God's *promise*, but the *revelation of his purpose* to accomplish the thing promised: and what is *faith* in his promise, but a belief, grounded on the faithfulness of the promiser, that the thing promised *is purposed* by him, and will infallibly be accomplished according to the tenor of the promise? It is impossible in the very nature of the thing for us to believe a promise, while we doubt of the intention or purpose of the promiser to fulfil it. Your distinction between God's *absolute promise* and his *purpose* about it, though inconsistent with faith, is involved in the radical principle of your whole scheme, *viz.* That though God hath made an *absolute* promise of salvation to all the hearers of the gospel; yet, notwithstanding this *absolute* promise, many of them shall come short of salvation. But as neither you nor any man else, can establish such a principle from the word of God, so all you build upon it is a mere castle in the air.

*Seced.* Your only argument against it, first and last, is, that it cannot be reconciled with the faithfulness of God. (p. 70.)

*Bapt.* That it cannot be reconciled with the faithfulness of God is obvious at first sight, and so a sufficient argument against it; but I have also shewn, that it cannot be reconciled with your own principle, *viz.* that it is "*only by faith* that they come into the benefit of the promise;" for an *absolute* promise of salvation to *all* that hear the gospel, cannot be *only* to them that believe, or shall be made to believe.

*Seced.* I am not ashamed to acknowledge that the gospel is full of mystery; and I neither can nor will presume to answer all the *hows* and *whys* that may be brought in against it. But as you admit that such objections are of no weight against other mysteries, why do you lay so much stress on it here? (p. 70.)

*Bapt.* Because I do not admit that there is any inexplicable mystery in the point of difference; and because it is essential to faith in God to believe that he will make good all he has promised to all those who are really the objects of the promise. There is no more mystery in this than in these plain Scripture propositions, "He is faithful that promised," or, "It is impossible for God to lie." But as you, by extending the promise beyond its obvious intention, involve yourself in inextricable difficulties as to its accomplishment, the mystery is entirely of your own making, and must not be attributed to the mysterious nature of the gospel revelation, for the apostles in preaching it did not hold it forth under a veil like Moses, but used great plainness of speech, and particularly on this point.

*Seced.* From the whole you have advanced it is plain to me, that you hold a *conditional* salvation, and that faith is the *condition* upon which the promise of it is suspended, which is the same as to maintain salvation by the works of the law, and is equally opposed to grace.

*Bapt.* I surely consider faith, which is the gift of God, as *absolutely necessary* to salvation; as that *without which* no man can be saved; as that *to which* the promise of salvation is made, and *by which* salvation is received; nay, I can adopt your own words, (which are inconsistent with an *absolute* promise of salvation *to sinners as such, in unbelief,*) viz. that "it is *only by faith* that sinners come into the benefit of the promise, or enjoy the good of it." Let me further add, that no man can know his *own particular salvation* by the promise till he believes in

Christ, and that his faith is the first *evidence* that he is in a state of salvation, and its *fruits* are a further confirmation of this. Now, to refute these positions it is not enough to say, that I hold forth a *conditional* salvation by a *work of the law*. If you would say any thing to the purpose, you must state the opposite positions, and prove them from the word of God, and then the difference between us will appear in a more clear and striking point of view. But I hope that instead of attempting this you will consult the Scriptures a little more attentively on this subject. Sincerely wishing you the faith and comfort of the truth as it is in Jesus, I must now bid you farewell.



THE  
**DISTINCTION AND CONSISTENCY**

OF

*Justification by Faith and Works,*

SHewing

THE AGREEMENT OF THE APOSTLES PAUL AND JAMES  
ON THAT SUBJECT.



THE  
DISTINCTION AND CONSISTENCY  
OF  
**Justification by Faith and Works.**

---

To believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, is to believe that the whole of it is infallible truth, consequently that all its doctrines are consistent with each other. For as truth is essential to God, so it is essential to truth to be perfectly consistent with itself. Owing, however, to the imperfection of our knowledge, and other causes, there are parts of the word of God which we cannot fully reconcile with others, and, perhaps, there are not two passages in the whole volume of revelation, which, at first sight, appear more flatly to clash, than the conclusions of the apostles Paul and James, with respect to justification. The former says, "Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. iii. 28. whereas the latter concludes thus, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only," James ii. 24.

Luther, that eminent reformer, could not, it seems, reconcile these two passages to his own satisfaction, and therefore in his zeal for the important doctrine of justification by faith without works, was for rejecting the epistle of James as spurious. On the other hand, many from this

passage in James have as warmly contended for justification by works, and plainly insinuated, that if Paul's doctrine of justification were to be understood according to the obvious sense of his words, it would loose men from all obligations to holiness, and lead directly to licentiousness, though the apostle himself anticipates such misconstructions, and rejects them with abhorrence. A third class have endeavoured to reconcile the doctrine of Paul and James on this subject, by methods which do not appear to me altogether satisfactory, and some of them evidently tend to enervate the force of both.

As a proper view of these two passages is of great importance, and may serve as a key to a great part of the system of divine truth, and also to guard against the two extremes of what is called Legalism on the one hand, and Antinomianism on the other, I shall offer some thoughts on this subject, and arrange them in the following order:—

- I. I shall notice the different premises or principles from which these seemingly opposite conclusions are drawn.
- II. State the distinction between justification by faith and works.
- III. Shew their consistency and connection. And,
- IV. Make some practical use of this important subject.

I. In considering the principles from which these different conclusions are drawn, it will be proper to begin with those of the apostle Paul, who maintains “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

By the *law* he intends not merely the ritual or ceremonial part of the law of Moses, (though he includes it when arguing with *those* who made it necessary to justification,) for that was peculiar to the Jews. The law he speaks of, is that which gives the knowledge of sin, Rom. iii. 20. which says, “Thou shalt not covet,” chap. vii. 7. and by which he proves that Gentiles as well as Jews are all under sin, and



the whole world become guilty before God, chap. iii. 9, 19. But he could not prove that the Gentiles were sinners in transgressing the ceremonial law of Moses; for they were never under that law; nor could he affirm, that the work of it was written in their hearts, or that their conscience was any way affected by it, as he does, chap. ii. 14, 15. It was never delivered to them, nor could they know any thing about it by nature or reason, it being entirely founded in positive institution. It is plain, therefore, that he must chiefly intend what is commonly called the *moral law*, or that eternal and unalterable rule of righteousness, which requires perfect love to God and our neighbour, Mat. xxii. 36—41. This is the original law of creation, which is founded in the moral perfections of God, and in our relation to him and to one another, as the creatures of his hand, and subjects of his moral government. As Adam was created after the image of God, this law must have been written on his heart, or laid in his constitution as a moral agent; and though mankind by the fall lost the true love of God and their neighbour, and became enemies to God, as well as hateful and hating one another, yet the sense of duty and obligation has never been wholly obliterated. So much of this still remains in the conscience of every rational creature, as to leave him without excuse, shew him that he is a sinner, and suggest apprehensions of deserved punishment. That these ends might the more effectually be answered in a subserviency to the gospel, this law was explicitly revealed and delivered to ancient Israel, written and engraven on tables of stone; and as it pronounces the sentence of death upon all who transgress it, so it is termed the ministration of death and condemnation, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. That it is this universal law which the apostle has more especially in view, is further evident from the various sins, both of Jews and Gentiles, which he specifies as transgressions of it. See Rom. i. 22—32. chap. ii. 21, 22. chap. iii. 13—19.

Paul's conclusion includes in it two particulars; 1. That a man is justified *without the deeds of the law*; and 2. That he is justified *by faith*. In evincing the truth of the first particular,

(1.) He admits, that according to the terms of the law, the doer of it shall be justified, chap. ii. 13. for it declares, that "the man that doth these things shall live by them," Lev. xviii. 5. Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 12. If, therefore, men cannot be justified by the works of the law, it is not owing to any fault in the law itself, which is perfectly holy, just, and good, Rom. vii. 12. So that if any person can be found who has never transgressed the law in any instance, but is perfectly conformed to it in heart and life, he shall certainly live by it. There can be no condemnation where there is no guilt; for it is contrary to the law to condemn the perfectly righteous. But then

(2.) He denies that the transgressor of this law in any one instance can be justified by it, however much he may labour to that end: "For as many as are of the works of the law," or are seeking to be justified by them, "are under the curse; for it is written, (Deut. xxvii. 26.) Cursed is every one that continueth not in ALL THINGS which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. It is as contrary to the law to justify him who has transgressed it in any one instance, as it is to condemn him who has continued in all things which it requires. Every single transgression is a violation of the whole; "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" because, in that instance, he disregards the authority of the one Lawgiver, which extends alike to every precept, and violates the principle of the whole law, *viz.* love. See James ii. 10, 11. Rom. xiii. 10. If, therefore, the law cannot justify a sinner, but, on the contrary, condemns, and denounces the curse against him for every failure, it is evident that no man can be justified by the works of the law, unless from a principle of perfect love to

God and his neighbour, he acts up to its holy and just requirements in every point. The question then comes to this, Are all mankind, without exception, sinners, or not? In answer to this,

(3.) He proves at large, that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, Rom. iii. 9.—That all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, ver. 23.—That there is none that doeth good, no not one, ver. 12.—That the Gentiles, notwithstanding the discovery they had of God in his works, and the natural notices of his law in their consciences, had fallen into the grossest idolatry, and all manner of wickedness, chap. i. 19—32. chap. ii. 14, 15.—That the Jews, though favoured with an explicit revelation of God and his law, were notwithstanding breakers of that very law in which they rested, and dishonoured that same God in whom they boasted as their God, in distinction from the Gentiles, and so were in no wise better than they, chap. ii. 17—25. chap. iii. 9. This he proves by citations from their own Scriptures, containing God's verdict of their state and character in common with the rest of mankind; and observes, that the law gives this character to them that are under it, and so in a particular manner to the Jews, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God, ver. 19. From these premises he draws this obvious conclusion, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin," ver. 20. So that if any of the human race obtain justification, it must be "without the deeds of the law." But all this does not prove "that a man is justified by faith," and therefore he proceeds to shew,

(4.) That "now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets," ver. 21. God's method of justifying the guilty, without any consideration of their personal conformity to the law, is now clearly manifested in the gospel; "for therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to

faith," chap. i. 17. and is also confirmed by the testimony of the law and the prophets. He observes, that this righteousness of God extends (*εἰς*) unto all, and is actually conferred (*ἐπι*) upon all them that believe, there being no difference between the Jew and the Gentile in this respect; "for as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," so none can be justified but by an act of pure grace, ver. 22, 23. Accordingly he shews, that the righteousness of God, which is unto and upon all them that believe, is their "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus," ver. 24, 25, 26.

The term *justification* or *justify*, when it relates to the action or sentence of a judge, as here, must be understood in a judicial or forensic sense. It signifies to make one just or righteous, not by an infusion of inherent righteousness, but by an acquittal in judgment. But there are two ways of acquitting in judgment. If the person be *innocent* of the crimes laid to his charge, then it is a finding or declaring him to be just who was so before; and thus God himself is said to be justified, Rom. iii. 4. But if the person is guilty (as in this case all mankind are) then his justification must be an acquittal from the condemnatory sentence of the law by a free pardon of his crimes, and an acceptance of him into a state of favour. Thus God is said to justify the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. and so it is opposed to condemnation, chap. viii. 33, 34. and is here declared to be *the remission of sins*. None but sinners are capable of being thus justified, and they are said to be justified

—*freely*—(*δωρεαν*,) gratis, or by way of free gift. The word is sometimes translated *without a cause*, Psalm xxxv. 7, 19. and lxi. 4. John xv. 25. There is no cause in

sinners why they should be justified, any more than there was in Christ why the Jews should have hated and condemned him, but in all respects the reverse. Nothing can set forth in a stronger light, that our justification is without the deeds of the law, or any merit whatever in us, yet the apostle adds,

—*by his grace.*—As the former expression denies the cause to be in us, so this shews that it originates entirely in God himself, and ascribes it to his sovereign and self-moving grace, or free and undeserved favour. Now *grace* is always opposed to any *good works* of ours as the cause of justification: “For to him that worketh is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt,” Rom. iv. 4. Though God should enable us to do these works, and though the reward should far exceed their worth; yet, according to the apostle, that reward would be of the nature of a pactional *debt* due to the worker, and so *not of grace*, for that excludes all our works, of whatever kind, from having any influence in this matter. He says, “By grace are ye saved—not of works, lest any man should boast,” Eph. ii. 8, 9. and shews that grace and works cannot consist with each other, either as the cause of election or justification; “And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work,” Rom. xi. 6. So that in proportion as works have place, grace must give way, or change its nature. If then sinners are justified by the grace of God, it cannot be by their own works, either in whole or in part, but entirely exclusive of them. Further, he says it is

—*through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.*—This is the meritorious procuring cause of justification. Though sinners are justified gratis, or without cause in themselves, by the mere free grace of God; yet this grace must be exercised in a consistency with the holiness and justice of God, and the honour of his law and moral

government, which required the manifestation of his infinite opposition to sin in its punishment. Therefore, that the holiness and righteousness of God, as well as his free grace, might be fully exercised, displayed, and glorified in the justification of sinners, they are justified “through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.”

*Redemption* (απολυρωσις) signifies in general a deliverance, and that sometimes *by power*. Thus God redeemed Israel out of Egypt by his great power, Neh. i. 10. and the resurrection of the body by an act of divine power is termed its redemption, Rom. viii. 23. But the word more properly signifies a deliverance procured *by price*, as when captives, slaves, or condemned persons are bought off from captivity, slavery, or death, by paying a ransom for them; and this appears to be the sense of the word in this place. Men had rebelled against God, and fallen under the condemnatory sentence of his righteous law; but God, out of his free grace and infinite mercy, substituted his own Son in their place, transferred the obligation to punishment from them to him, and made him, the Just One, suffer for the unjust, and bear the punishment of their sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. chap. iii. 18. Thus he made him who knew no sin, to be a sin offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, that is, justified, 2 Cor. v. 21. The Scriptures frequently represent Christ’s death or blood under the notion of a *redemption price*. We are said to be bought with a price—to be redeemed with the precious blood of Christ—to have redemption through his blood, 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Eph. i. 7. and he is said to give his life a ransom for many—to have redeemed us to God by his blood—to have redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us, Matt. xx. 28. Rev. v. 9. Gal. iii. 13.

Christ had power to lay down his life and to take it again; and his laying it down voluntarily for the sheep in obedience to his Father’s commandment, (John x. 17, 18.) is that

obedience whereby they are made righteous; see Rom. v. 9, 19. By setting Christ forth to be a propitiation\* in his blood, God declares his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just in justifying, Rom. iii. 25, 26. And this is perfectly consistent with its being freely by his grace; for it was of his free grace that he provided, substituted, and accepted this ransom for us, and that we come actually to obtain justification through it, as the apostle expressly affirms. Grace is not the less free that it reigns through righteousness, Rom. v. 21. The death of Christ so far from derogating from divine love and grace, is the very thing that displays and magnifies it in the highest degree; for it was by the grace of God that he tasted death for every man, Heb. ii. 9. and “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” Rom. v. 8. It is evident that the apostle states justification *through the redemption that is in Christ* in direct opposition to its being *by the works of the law*, and so makes Christ’s obedience and not our own the ground of our justification. † Lastly, he says that sinners are justified

\* Though the original word is *ἰλαστήριον*, *propitiatory*, or mercy seat, and though commentators have endeavoured to shew with what propriety Christ may be so termed; yet I am of opinion, that our translators have given the real meaning of the apostle, by rendering it a *propitiation*; for so Christ is termed, 1 John ii. 2. ch. iv. 10. and the scope of the above passage seems to require this sense. I apprehend that *propitiatory* is by a metonymy put for *propitiation*, even as the altar is put for the sacrifice offered upon it, Heb. xiii. 10. and the temple for the offerings presented there, 1 Cor. ix. 13.

† It may perhaps be objected, That if Christ’s obedience was his fulfilling the condition of the law of works, then to be justified by it is to be justified *by the deeds of the law*, which the apostle constantly opposeth to justification *by grace*. But it should be observed that the condition of life by the law of works is perfect *personal obedience*, “The man who doth those things shall live by them,” Rom. x. 5. and that failing of this in any point, it demands the *personal punishment* of the transgressor, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,” Gal. iii. 10. But it provides no

—*through faith in his (Christ's) blood*, ver. 25. The righteousness of God is “BY FAITH of Jesus Christ,” ver. 22. and God is “the justifier of him who BELIEVETH in Jesus,” ver. 26. It is said that *faith* or *believing* God is counted unto righteousness, chap. iv. 3, 5, 9.—that with the heart man *believeth* unto righteousness, chap. x. 10.—that we are justified *by faith*, chap. v. 1.—and that by him all that *believe* are justified, Acts xiii. 39. All these expressions have the same meaning, and shew how it is that men actually receive and enjoy the blessing of justification: It is *by faith*, or in *believing* the testimony of God concerning his Son, 1 John v. 9, 11. Justifying faith has a special respect to the atonement of Christ, and so is termed *faith in his blood*; it being a belief that the blood of the Son of God, which was shed for the remission of sins, and in which God hath declared his full satisfaction by raising him from the dead, is alone sufficient for our pardon and acceptance into a state of favour with God.

There is no occasion to enlarge on an explanation of what *faith* or *belief* is; for as the sense of the word, when used in the common affairs of life, is universally understood, it is only necessary to add, that the inspired penmen of the scriptures use it in the very same sense. But it is of importance to observe, that, on the point of justification, the apostle constantly opposeth *faith* to *works*, and connects it with the former, exclusively of the latter. He says, the righteousness of God which is *by faith* is *without the law*, Rom. iii. 21, 22. and that it is to him that *worketh not* but

representative or substitute for the guilty, nor does it require that the just should suffer for the unjust, but that the soul that sinneth, it should die; and therefore by the deeds of it, or according to its terms, no sinner can be justified. Hence it follows, that the *substitutional obedience* of Christ is beyond the line of the law, or what it could naturally oblige him to perform, and belongs to a constitution of sovereign free grace, by which he was constituted a substitute for the guilty, and received a commandment from his Father to lay down his life for the sheep, and take it again, John x. 17, 18.



*believeth*, chap. iv. 5. He shews that *faith* and *grace* correspond to each other, and states both in opposition to *works*: “Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace.” chap. iv. 16. “By grace are ye saved, through faith—not of works,” Eph. ii. 8, 9. “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt,” Rom. iv. 4. As therefore justifying faith is not only constantly opposed to the works of the law in justification, but excludes them, it is evident that it cannot itself be considered either as an external or internal work of the law.

The sum of the whole is this: The apostle had before proved that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight, and has further shewn, that the *righteousness of God without the law*, and which is witnessed by the law and the prophets, is *by faith of Christ* unto and upon all that believe without difference; they being justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.—These premises being established, his conclusion undeniably follows, namely, “That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

BEFORE we proceed to consider the premises from which James concludes “that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only,” it may be useful to make a few general remarks.

The terms of the two conclusions are not diametrically opposite to each other in all respects. Paul concludes that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law; but James does not say that a man is justified by works without faith, but that he is justified by works and not by faith only. He admits the necessity of faith as well as Paul does; “Thou believest—thou dost well,” James ii. 19. He forbids us to think that we shall receive any thing of the Lord,

unless we ask in faith, nothing wavering, chap. i. 6, 7. and shews, that Abraham's offering up his son was the effect of his faith which wrought with his works, chap. ii. 22. So that the works he pleads for are evidently the works of faith and labour of love to the name of Christ. ver. 15—19. chap. i. 27. and therefore must be the works of a believer who is already justified in Paul's sense.

Both Paul and James mention the law, but in different points of view. Paul speaks of the law in that sense wherein it is opposed to grace, and is not of faith, but says, "The man that doeth those things shall live by them," Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 12. and so requireth perfect personal obedience as the condition of life, while it "curseth every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10.; and it is evident that none of the guilty sons of Adam can be justified on such terms. But James speaks of the law as it stands in the constitution of grace, and is given to believers as the rule of their obedience and conformity to Christ. He terms it *the law of liberty*, chap. i. 25. by which some understand the gospel; but I rather think he intends what is commonly called the moral law, and which he afterwards terms *the royal law*, which saith, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," chap. ii. 8. This law is the unalterable standard of holiness, and so of perpetual obligation, and the gospel is so far from making it void, that it establishes and enforces it by new motives and additional obligations. Christians are called to follow Christ's example who was perfectly conformed to it in heart and life, and who, in his sermon on the mount, clears it from the lax and corrupt glosses of the Jewish doctors, and delivers it to his disciples in its highest purity and spiritual extent, as it reaches the thoughts and intents of the heart, enjoining them to be perfect as their Father who is in heaven is perfect, Mat. v. 48. Accordingly James terms the law of liberty *the perfect law*, chap. i. 25. and exhorts be-

lievers so to speak and do as they that shall be judged by it, chap. ii. 12.

Some think that the law is termed *the law of liberty*, as being that law of love which makes all men our neighbours, and frees us from those restraints which the ceremonial law and the traditions of the Jewish doctors laid upon them of confining their love and freedom of converse to those of their own nation, or who were circumcised. But I apprehend that the law, as given in the new covenant, is a law of liberty to believers, 1st, In respect of their freedom from the curse; for Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, Gal. iii. 13.—2d, In respect of their freedom from it considered as the law of works, or legal *condition* and *procuring cause* of eternal life, Rom. vii. 6. Were they not freed from the law in this sense, their sins would effectually preclude their being either justified or glorified. But Christ hath obtained eternal life for his people as the reward of his own obedience unto death, Heb. v. 8, 9. chap. ix. 15. and they who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall *reign in life* by Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 17. for this grace reigns through righteousness unto *eternal life*, ver. 21. so that eternal life is the *gift of God* through Jesus Christ our Lord, chap. vi. 23.—3d, It is a promise of the new covenant that God will put (or give) his laws into the mind, and write them upon the hearts of his people, Heb. viii. 10. and in this respect also it must be a law of liberty; for so far as it has place in the heart and affections, obedience to it must be free and unconstrained. This removes the spirit of bondage and slavish fear, and inspires with the spirit of adoption, which is a spirit of freedom and love, Rom. viii. 15. Love to God and man is the sum of the law, Mat. xxii. 37, 39. and the fulfilling of it, Rom. xiii. 8—10. Gal. v. 14. for the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, 1 Tim. i. 5.—So that obedience to the law of

liberty is faith working by love, Gal. v. 6.—4th, In consequence of the foregoing particulars, there is a freedom from the enslaving power and dominion of sin. While men are under the law, considered as a law of works, and as opposed to grace, they are not only under the condemning, but enslaving power of sin, which works in their members to bring forth fruit unto death, Rom. vii. 5, 8, 9, 10, 11. But when they become dead to the law, in this view of it, by the body of Christ slain for their sins, and are married to him who is raised from the dead, then they are made free both from the guilt and slavery of sin, become servants of righteousness, and bring forth fruit unto God; and sin shall not have dominion over them, for they are not under the law, but under grace, Rom. vii. 4. chap. vi. 14, 18.

If the distinction between the law of works and the law of liberty be properly stated above, it will help to reconcile the different conclusions of Paul and James; for though no sinner can be justified by the deeds of the law of works, yet there is a sense in which a believer is justified by the works of the law of liberty, as shall afterwards be shewn.

It must also be kept in view, that Paul and James are opposing persons of very different sentiments. Paul is combating the sentiments both of the unbelieving Jews and judaizing Christians. The unbelieving Jews maintained, that justification and eternal life were attainable by their own obedience to the law of Moses, without any regard to the atonement of Christ, and so they rejected the gospel. Against these he argues at large, and concludes, that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh,” either Jews or Gentiles, “be justified in God’s sight,” Rom. iii. 20. The Judaizers admitted the necessity of faith in Christ, but contended that circumcision and keeping of the law of Moses were also necessary to obtain justification. In opposition to this he maintains, “That a man is justified by faith WITHOUT the deeds of the law,” ver. 28. and that “to him that WORKETH NOT, but BELIEVETH on him that

justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," chap. iv. 5.

James addresses his epistle to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, chap. i. 1. and as he reprehends the unbelieving Jews for the many evils which prevailed among them, chap. iv. and v. it has been thought that some of these held, that if they only believed *that there is one God*, (chap. ii. 19.) it was sufficient not only to distinguish them from idolatrous heathens, but to entitle them to the favour and approbation of God, though they neglected the beneficial works of love and mercy required in the moral law. And indeed they are blamed for something similar to this in Mat. xxiii. 23, 24. Rom. ii. 13, 17, 23. But we must not confine this to the unbelieving Jews who avowedly rejected the gospel; for it is plain that the apostle chiefly addresses those who professed the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and were called by his worthy name, chap. ii. 1, 7. and therefore it can admit of no doubt that he had some professors of Christianity in his view, who imagined that justification by faith without the deeds of the law freed them from the obligation to good works or practical religion, and thus abused the doctrine of Divine grace.

The whole epistle of James is of a searching practical nature, and is pointed not only against this licentious sentiment, but also against that depravity of heart which suggested it, and which screens itself under a variety of specious pretexts. He cautions them against charging their sins upon God, as if he tempted them to evil, and so rendered their sins excuseable, chap. i. 13—17. He reproves them for their intemperate zeal, their inimical wrathful dispositions and unbridled tongues, ver. 19, 20, 26. chap. iii. and shews them that to boast of such things as the effect of true wisdom and zeal for religion, was to lie against the truth, chap. iii. 14, 15, 16. He blames them for their partiality in respecting the rich, and despising the poor, chap. ii. 1—10. and also for their conceit of their own

wisdom and knowledge, which led many of them to affect to be (διδασκαλοι) teachers, acting as judges and censors of others, without attending to their own temper and conduct, or shewing out of a good conversation their works with meekness of wisdom, chap. iii. 1, 13. chap. iv. 11, 12.—As a contrast to all these evils, he exhorts them to “be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath—to receive with meekness the ingrafted word which is able to save their souls;” and not only so, but to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving their own selves”—That the man who “looketh intently into the perfect law of liberty,” (*i. e.* the gospel law of operative love) “and continueth therein, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, he shall be blessed in his doing,” chap. i. 19, 21, 22, 25. He shews that “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,” ver. 27. In opposition to their respect of persons, he exhorts them to “fulfil the royal law, according to the Scriptures, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” chap. ii. 8.; and, in short, that they should “so speak, and so act, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty;” and he enforces this by the awful consideration, that he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath (ποιησαντι) practised no mercy,” ver. 12, 13. see also Mat. vi. 15. chap. xviii. 23—35. chap. xxv. 41—46. But, on the other hand, he adds, “and mercy rejoiceth against judgment;” ver. 13, *i. e.* the merciful man rejoiceth in the prospect of judgment, when he shall obtain mercy of the Lord, according to his promise, see Mat. v. 7. chap. xxv. 34—41.

The apostle having thus enforced Christian practice, he addresses himself particularly to those who neglected this under pretence of faith. Paul, as we have seen, had taught “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;” and it would seem that some had already begun to wrest that important doctrine to their own destruction,

presuming upon the soundness of their faith, and the safety of their state, while they were destitute of Christian tempers, and neglected the works of love and mercy required in the law of liberty; as if practical religion had no binding obligation under the gospel, but was left to their own generosity, as a thing merely optional, which they might practise or neglect as they found themselves disposed. That James considered this error as arising from an abuse of Paul's doctrine, appears evident; for, in refuting it, he repeats the same phrases, testimonies, and examples which Paul had used. Compare James ii. 21, 23, 25. with Rom. iv. 3. Heb. xi. 17, 31.

In combating this pernicious error, he does not absolutely deny that such persons had a kind of faith; but admits it, and argues with them upon that supposition, "Thou believest—thou doest well," ver. 19. and so the stony ground hearers are represented as receiving the word with joy, and believing for a while, Luke viii. 13. Nor does he distinguish their belief from true faith by any difference in the act of believing; for though there may be different degrees of belief, yet if it exists at all, it is still of the nature of belief. Neither does he point out any error in the matter of their belief, for though they certainly had not the same view of the truth which real believers have, yet, if in articles of faith, they adhered to the form of sound words, it would be hard to convince them of any error in their speculative creed. But he goes to work in another way, and shews that their faith could not be genuine, because it did not produce the proper effects and fruits of a true and living faith. He judges of the nature of the inward principle by its effects, even as the tree is known by its fruits. This is the rule which our Lord gave his disciples by which they were to try both themselves and others, Mat. vii. 16—22. John xv. 2, 8. and which the apostle Paul also recommends, Gal. vi. 3, 4. And it is a plain universal rule which admits of no exceptions, nor requires any nice

distinctions in order to apply it. It is founded on this principle, that true faith is operative and works by love. Upon this principle he proceeds to repel their vain pretensions to saving faith by the following arguments :

1. That if a man's faith does not produce good works, it is altogether UNPROFITABLE, or of no advantage either to himself or to others. It is of no profit to *himself*; for the apostle puts a question which imports a strong negative, "Can faith save him?" ver. 14. *i. e.* can such a fruitless faith save him? Nor is it of any profit to *others*, which he illustrates thus, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto him, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give him not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" ver. 15, 16.

2. That it is impossible for a man to SHEW or make it manifest that he has true faith if he has not works, whatever he may pretend in words. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works," ver. 18.

3. That "faith if it hath not works, is DEAD, being alone," ver. 17. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" ver. 20. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," ver. 26. This imports that true faith is a living principle which sets in motion the active powers of the soul, so as to produce love and good works. Therefore, whatever faith a man may profess, if it has no proper influence on his heart and life, the apostle would have such a vain empty professor to know (however unwilling he may be to admit the conviction) that his faith is dead, as really so, as the body without the spirit is dead.

4. That faith if it produce not love and good works, is no better than the FAITH OF DEVILS, or at least cannot be distinguished from it. "Thou believest that there is



one God; thou dost well. The devils also believe and tremble," ver. 19. He did well in believing that there is one God, for this is a fundamental principle of all true religion; and in this he had the advantage of atheists who deny the being of God, and also of pagans who believe that there are many gods: but then the devils also believe this great truth; nay, they believed and confessed, that Jesus is the Son of God,—the Holy One of God, Mat. viii. 29. Mark i. 24. And their belief has such an effect upon them as to make them tremble: yet they are void of all love to God, and of all goodness and benevolence to men. If therefore a man's faith does not produce love and good works, how can it be distinguished from that of devils, unless it be by the person's presumptuous hopes and fearless security?\*

5. He shews that Abraham and Rahab were justified, not by faith alone, but by faith working with their works. With regard to Abraham he says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God," ver. 21, 22, 23. And as to Rahab he says, she was "justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way," ver. 25.

\* It has been said, that "we need not be frighted at the name of a diabolical faith, as long as we are not devils but men." If so, then it was altogether improper in the apostle James to mention the faith of devils at all, as, according to this, it was quite inapplicable to his purpose; for as those to whom he writes were not devils but men, he had no occasion to caution them lest their faith should resemble that of devils, since (if the above sentiment be just) there could be no danger of this while they remained human beings.

These arguments he considers as sufficient to establish his point, and therefore from the whole he concludes, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” ver. 24.

It has been already observed, that James agrees with Paul as to the necessity of faith; and it may further be noticed, that Paul agrees with James as to the necessity of believers performing good works, unto which they are created in Christ Jesus, and which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them, Eph. ii. 10. Yet at first sight they seem to differ flatly in two particulars.—

I. Paul affirms that a man is justified by faith *without* the deeds of the law, or *not working* but believing, *i. e.* by faith alone, exclusive of works: but James affirms, that a man is justified by works, and *not by faith only*.—

2. Paul among many other arguments, adduceth Gen. xv. 6. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,” from which he argues at large that Abraham was justified by faith exclusive of works, and prior to his being circumcised, Rom. iv. But James takes the same text to prove that Abraham was justified by works, and says, that the above “Scripture was fulfilled when he had offered his son Isaac upon the altar,” which was near forty-two years after it is said “his faith was counted to him for righteousness.” Therefore there is no reconciling these things without admitting, that Paul and James do not use the word *justify* or *justification* in the same sense. This leads me to consider

II. The difference between justification by faith and justification by works.

I. We have already seen what Paul means by *justification*, namely, the acquittal of a guilty sinner from the condemnatory sentence of the law, by a free pardon of his crimes, and an acceptance of him into a state of favour.

God herein acts as the justifier of the UNGODLY, Rom. iv. 5. for none but sinners are capable of being justified in this sense. It is opposed to condemnation, Rom. viii. 33, 34. and consists in the REMISSION OF SINS, Rom. iii. 25. The blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, consists in having his *iniquities forgiven*, his *sins covered*, and *not imputed* to him, Rom. iv. 6, 9. It is through the REDEMPTION that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24. and the redemption we have through his blood, is declared to be *the forgiveness of sins*, according to the *riches of his grace*, Eph. i. 7. It is plain therefore, that justification, taken in this sense, must exclude all works of ours, as they can have no influence upon it; and that it can only be received by faith in God as the justifier of the ungodly, through the work finished by Jesus Christ,

2. Let us now inquire what James means by *justification*, or being *justified by works*.—(1.) Many understand him only to mean that by our good works we *make it manifest to ourselves* that we are in a justified state. I grant, that good works, springing from faith and love, are an *evidence* to a man of his being justified; but I do not think that James means to say, that Abraham had no evidence that he was in a state of favour with God till he performed the work of offering up his son. Besides, whatever evidence a man may have from his works that he is justified, it cannot properly be termed his being *justified by works*; for the evidence of a thing is not the thing itself; nor does justification here signify a man's approbation of himself, but the favourable verdict of another respecting him; "for not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." (2.) Another opinion is, that Paul treats of justification *in the sight of God*; for he uses the expression "justified in *his sight*." But that James speaks of it only as it *appears before men*; because he says, "I will *shew thee* my faith by my works." It is indeed true,

that a man's faith is shewn or made manifest to others by its outward effects or good works; and it is our duty by these to make our light shine before men both to promote brotherly love, and that others seeing our good works may glorify our Father who is in heaven, Mat. v. 16. But I cannot think that by being justified James means no more than our appearing just before men, or obtaining their approbation. Was it only thus that Abraham was justified by works, and that by works his faith was made perfect? Paul made little account of being either justified or condemned by men, for he says, "But with me it is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine owself, for I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord," 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. And he thus exhorts Christians, "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another," Gal. vi. 4. That is, he shall have joy in the testimony of his own conscience in reference to the approbation of God, and not merely in the charitable judgment of his brethren. He distinguishes the true Israelite as having his praise not OF MEN, but OF GOD, Rom. ii. 29. James introduces what he says of justification by works with this exhortation, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," chap. ii. 12. where he certainly refers to the judgment of God. We cannot therefore reasonably suppose that he has only the judgment of men in view; for that is always fallible, frequently erroneous, and at best but of small consequence. It is only he whom God commendeth that is approved, Rom. x. 18.—(3.) Some conjecture that Paul means the justification of our *persons*; but that James means the justification of our *faith*. But I cannot perceive the sense of this distinction. Our faith indeed is shewn by our works, but in no other way than we ourselves are shewn to be believing *persons*. According to this distinction the words might read, "by works faith

is justified and not by faith only," which does not make sense. No man's faith can be justified abstract from his person: nor does the text say that *faith* is justified, but by works a *man* is justified.

It will now be asked, What then does James mean by saying that a man is justified by works? Does he mean, that guilty sinners are pardoned, and received into a state of favour with God on account of their good works, or on account of their faith and works taken together? He certainly intends neither; but his meaning is, That believers in Christ, abounding in the work of faith and labour of love, are APPROVED of the Lord, as his good and faithful servants in that respect, and shall at last be openly acknowledged and rewarded by him as such; not according to the tenor of the law of works, but according to the constitution of grace established in the blood and mediation of Christ.

To confirm this sense of the word *justified*, let it be considered, that our Lord uses it not to signify being pardoned, but APPROVED, "By thy words thou shalt be JUSTIFIED," Mat. xii. 37. Paul also uses it in the same sense, when speaking of his work in the discharge of the ministry which he had received of the Lord, "Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine ownself, for I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby JUSTIFIED: but he that judgeth me is the Lord," 1 Cor. ii. 3, 4. Here the apostle is speaking of his being justified by works, but not *before men*; for he says, "with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Nor does he mean only the *testimony* of his own *conscience*; for he says, "yea, I judge not mine ownself; for I know nothing by myself." That is, though I am not conscious of any wilful neglect or unfaithfulness in the work assigned me; "yet am I not

hereby justified;" the approbation of my own conscience cannot avail me unless I am approved of at a higher tribunal: "But he that judgeth me is the Lord," who is greater than my heart, and knoweth all things. It may also be observed, that the sense of the word *justified* in ver. 4. is expressed by *having praise of God* in ver. 5.

The sense in which James uses the word *justified*, is expressed by a great variety of other words in Scripture; such as *God's being pleased*; "When a man's ways please the Lord," Prov. xvi. 7.—"As ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and please God," 1 Thess. iv. 1.—"Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God," Heb. xi. 5.—"With such sacrifices," viz. good works and thanksgiving, "God is well pleased," chap. xiii. 16. It is expressed by being *approved of God*. "Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth," 2 Cor. x. 18.—Study "to shew thyself approved unto God," 2 Tim. ii. 15. Also by being *commended*, and having *praise of God*;—"he whom the Lord commendeth," 2 Cor. x. 18.—"whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii. 29. Further, it is expressed by being *accepted of God*: "He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him," Acts x. 35.—"He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God," Rom. xiv. 18.—"wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him," 2 Cor. v. 9. All these expressions refer to the character and good works of believers, and as they express God's approbation and acceptance of them, so they fully explain what James means by a man's being justified by works, and not by faith only; and as they are all expressions used by Paul, they also shew that he and James are in perfect unison on this subject.

In this sense Abraham was justified when he had offered up his son, James ii. 21. for upon that signal instance of obedience, the Lord declared his *approbation* of his character as a fearer of him, Gen. xxii. 12. "Now I know

that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." And in this, James says, "the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness," ver. 23. For though, according to Moses and Paul, that Scripture was fulfilled above forty years before this, when Abraham believed God's promise, and was justified by faith without works, Gen. xv. 6. Rom. iv. 3—6, yet it was also fulfilled in respect of his being approved and accepted of God as a faithful servant, when "his faith wrought with his works" in offering up his son at the Divine command; "And by works was his faith made perfect," ver. 22. He had before believed God's promise that he should have a son and a numerous offspring, though his own body and Sarah's womb were then as good as dead, Rom. iv. 19. Heb. xi. 11, 12. but now he performed this work, "accounting that God was able to raise his son up even from the dead" after he should be slain and consumed to ashes, Heb. xi. 17, 19. so that in this his faith had its highest exercise, its perfect work, and was complete and entire wanting nothing, but came forth approved from the greatest of trials. Or it may signify, that his faith was further confirmed and perfected by the additional assurances which God then gave him; for, on that occasion, he renewed the promises formerly made to him, including that of the Messiah, and confirmed the whole by an oath, giving this as the reason, "because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son," Gen. xxii. 16—19. Heb. vi. 13—19. Christ also hath promised gracious manifestations of himself to his disciples who keep his commandments, by which their faith is perfected and their joy made full, John xiv. 21, 23. And as Abraham, on account of his faith and obedience, was afterwards called "the friend of God," Isa. xli. 8. so Christ says to his disciples, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," John xv. 14.

We shall now in a few particulars sum up the difference between justification by faith, and justification by works.

1. They differ in the *Judge* or *Justifier*. In justification by faith, Paul represents God in the person of the Father as the justifier: "It is God that justifieth;" and he distinguisheth the Son from him thus, "It is Christ that died," Rom. viii. 33, 34. God the Father justifieth "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom he hath set forth to be a propitiation," chap. iii. 24, 25. So that in this Christ sustains the part of a substitute, propitiation or sacrifice, on whose account alone sinners are justified. But in justification by works, Christ is the judge or justifier. "The Father judgeth no man" immediately in the kingdom of Christ, "but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man," John v. 22, 27. "It is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead," Acts x. 42. It is he who takes account of his servants, and justifies or approves of those who have done well, Matt. xxv. 19, 21, 23. "He that judgeth me," says Paul, "is the Lord," *i. e.* Christ, even the Lord who is to come, 1 Cor. iv. 4, 5. "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," 2 Cor. v. 10. Not as if God the Father had no concern in this judgment. Christ is appointed of the Father as his representative in governing and judging his people. It is the Father who, in the economy of redemption, has committed all judgment to the Son, even as he has given to him a kingdom; and "he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31. And though the saints will not be openly and finally justified by works till the last day, Matt. xxv. 34—41. Rev. xx. 13. yet they are really justified or approved of Christ in the course of their obedience to him in this world, and shall be rewarded by him at the resurrection of the just, Luke xiv. 14.

2. There is a difference in the *previous state and character* of the persons justified. Till men are justified in



Paul's sense, they are described as without strength, ungodly, enemies, sinners, Rom. iv. 5. ch. v. 6, 8, 10. and so in a state of guilt and condemnation, chap. iii. 9, 19, 23. This was their state and character when God commended his love towards them; when Christ died for them; and so their actual deliverance from that state through faith in Christ's blood, is God's justifying *the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5.—But James treats of the justification of *the righteous*, i. e. persons who are not only justified in Paul's sense, but who, in consequence of this, are righteous by doing good and righteous works; “for he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous,” 1 John iii. 7. They are “not forgetful hearers, but doers of the work,” James i. 25.—practisers of pure and undefiled religion, ver. 27.—such as supply the naked and hungry brother or sister, chap. ii. 15. and that so speak and act as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty, ver. 12.—In short, they are the good and faithful servants who are approved and rewarded of their Lord as having done well in the improvement of their talents, Matt. xxv. 21, 23. Not that they are without sin; if any should either say or imagine this, they would grossly deceive themselves, and make God a liar, 1 John i. 8, 10. But they are freed from sin in two respects, (1.) In respect of its *guilt* and *condemning power* which it had over them by the sentence or curse of the law. Christ hath redeemed them from that curse by taking it upon himself, Gal. iii. 13. so that “there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” Rom. viii. 1.—(2.) They are freed from sin in respect of its *enslaving power* and *dominion*, by which it wrought in their members, and made them its servants to do iniquity. They are now set free from it as their lord and ruler, and are become the servants of righteousness, having their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, Rom. vi. 26. Sin has not the dominion over them in either of these respects, “for they are not under the law, but under grace,” ver. 14. So that

though sin is still in them, and is felt in the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, and often hindering them from doing the things that they would, Gal. v. 17. yet as to their state and distinguishing character, they are not *sinner*s, *enemies*, or *ungodly*, in the sense in which Paul applies these characters to the subjects of the first justification.

3. There is a difference in the *nature* of these two justifications. This is a necessary consequence of the former difference; for if the state and character of the persons be different, so must the justifications be which respect these different states and characters. Paul treats of that justification which respects a state of guilt and condemnation, and consists in the *free remission of sins*, Rom. iii. 24, 25. chap. iv. 7, 8. Eph. i. 7. Reconciliation is another word for it. To be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, Rom. v. 10. is much of the same import with being justified by his blood, ver. 9. And what other kind of justification could answer to the state of guilty sinners, but the *free remission of their sins*? or to that of rebels and enemies, but that of *reconciliation* through an atonement?—But the justification which James speaks of signifies Christ's *approbation* of his good and faithful servants in doing whatsoever he commands them; and is the same with their having *praise* of God, 1 Cor. iv. 5. their being *approved* of him, 2 Cor. x. 18. or *accepted* of the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 9.

4. There is also a difference in the *grounds* of these two justifications. The first excludes all our own works whatever from having any place, or being of any consideration in it, and is entirely *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. iii. 24.—through his *blood*, chap. v. 9.—by his *obedience*, ver. 19. This is the alone ground of a sinner's absolution or justification.—But the justification which James has in view proceeds upon a believer's *works* as the fruits of his faith; for he says, “By works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” James ii. 24. and that men are judged by the law of liberty according as they *speak* or

*act*, ver. 12. They are justified by the works of faith and labour of love to the name of Christ; by works of love to Christ's brethren on account of their relation to him, and for the truth's sake which dwelleth in them. And though, when we have done all those things we are unprofitable servants as to any benefit Christ can reap from our works, or as to any proportion between our best works and the reward; having done but that which was our duty to do, and so not deserving thanks from him, (Luke xvii. 9, 10.) nay, in many respects coming far short of our obligations; yet Christ has assured us, that he will approve of the works of faith and love; that they are pleasing to him; that the very least of them shall not lose its reward, Mark ix. 41. but that he will make honourable mention of them in the day of judgment, Matt. xxv. 34—41. and recompense them at the resurrection of the just, Luke xiv. 14. According to the constitution of the new covenant, this corresponds with divine justice and faithfulness as well as grace; for God is not unrighteous to forget his people's work and labour of love which they have shewed to his name, Heb. vi. 10. nor unfaithful to his promise of rewarding them. I shall now briefly notice,

III. The CONSISTENCY and CONNECTION of these two justifications.

After what has been already said on the subject, little need be added on this head. It may, however, be observed,

1. That as Paul and James use the word *justify* in different senses, it is plain that they do not in the least contradict one another; because a man may be justified in Paul's sense by faith without works, and yet, according to James, be afterwards in another sense justified by works, and not by faith only. Is it not perfectly consistent, that a guilty rebel, who is *freely pardoned*, and received into favour without any merit of his own, (pardon always supposes demerit,) should from that moment love and obey his

sovereign, and be afterwards *approved* of by him as an obedient and faithful subject, and even rewarded as such?

2. None can be justified by works till they are first justified by faith without works. Till then they are in a state of guilt, and under the curse of the law; and to suppose that God will approve or accept of their works while they lie under the sentence of condemnation, is a contradiction. Besides, while they are in that state, they can perform no works truly good, or from a proper principle, so as to be approved of God. They are in the flesh, and carnally minded, and while they are so they cannot please God; for the carnal mind is enmity against him, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be, Rom. viii. 7, 8. They may indeed, from a principle of slavish fear, and with a view to make their peace with God, perform many works which are good as to the matter of them, and even submit to a deal of mortification and self-denial, in order to establish their own righteousness; but as the influencing principle is wrong, and opposed to the grace of the gospel, as well as to the true spirit of the law, such works cannot be acceptable to God. But when, through sovereign grace, a sinner is made to perceive the truth and import of the gospel testimony, and *believes* (in Paul's sense,) that the work which Christ hath finished in his death and resurrection, is alone, or without any works of his own, sufficient for his justification, however guilty he may be; then he actually receives justification by that faith, according to the gospel promise. And as the faith of that truth pacifies his conscience, and purifies his heart, so it worketh by love, and is the principle of those good works by which (in James's sense,) a man is justified or approved of God as a good and faithful servant.

3. Though the good works of believers are mixed with much imperfection in this life, and can never lay a foundation for boasting, nor merit a reward of debt; yet as they spring from love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, 1 Tim. i. 5. and are

produced by the Spirit of God working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure, Phil. ii. 13.—as they are the fruits of their union with Christ, John xv. 5. Rom. vii. 4. by which the Father is glorified, John xv. 8. Phil. i. 11. so they are well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, Heb. xiii. 21. and shall be graciously rewarded by him, Col. iii. 24.

From these hints we may see the consistency of justification by faith with justification by works; the order, connection and relation in which they stand to each other, and the dependence which the latter has upon the former. I proceed now,

IV. To make some practical use of the important subject which we have been considering.

1. From Paul's doctrine of justification we may learn the dreadful condition of all mankind by nature. The apostle introduces the subject by proving at large that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, Rom. iii. 9. that the whole world is become guilty before God, ver. 19. and so have come short of his glory, ver. 23. That they are also in a state of misery, subject to the judgment of God, and under the condemning sentence of his law; while at the same time they are utterly unable to make an atonement for their sins, or to do any thing in obedience to that law by which they may obtain the favour of God, or escape the wrath to come. Till men are convinced of the guilt and misery of their natural state, they will have very little relish for the gospel which gives the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. As those who believe not the gospel are averse to admit the Scripture account of sin and its consequences, because it must inevitably land them in despair; so none can have a just view or estimation of the gospel salvation, unless it be accompanied with a conviction of sin and its desert, for these answer to each other like disease

and remedy. Pardon can have no meaning but in relation to guilt, nor deliverance but as it respects danger or misery.

Few admit the Scripture account of man's guilty and perishing state by nature. The striking language by which it is held forth in the word of God, is considered by many as hyperbolic, or applicable only to some notorious characters, and not to mankind in general. Many contradict the history of mankind in all ages, as well as the Scripture account of this matter, by drawing such a flattering picture of human nature as is nowhere to be found but in their own imagination. Their notions of virtue and vice are altogether superficial and essentially deficient; and if they admit that there are any blemishes at all in their ideal character of the good man, they think that, on account of his virtues, it is but just in the Deity to connive at, overlook, or even to indulge him in such weaknesses. Thus men are lulled into fatal <sup>st</sup>iority and presumption; and in proportion as the character of the natural man is extolled, his pride gratified, and his danger lessened, in the same proportion must the character of God be debased, his law relaxed, and his grace despised. Many there are, who, instead of being duly convinced of the evil nature of sin, and of the justice of its punishment according to the sentence of the divine law, blame the law of God itself as unreasonably strict, and its sentence as unjustly severe, and quite disproportioned to the demerit of human guilt. While they have this view of the matter they cannot be humbled for sin, nor thankful for deliverance from the curse threatened against it, because they must look upon that deliverance as only an act of justice, and not of sovereign grace or mere mercy; nor can they reconcile it with the justice of God, that Christ should suffer the penalty of the law as the substitute of sinners, while they view that penalty as in any respect too severe and unjust.

There are others who profess to believe the guilt and

demerit of sin as a Scripture doctrine, who yet have no proper conviction of their own personal guilt and danger. Particular acts of sin may sometimes give them uneasiness; but they have no just sense of the inward depravity of their hearts, as being enmity against God, and directly opposed to his holy law. They cannot fully admit the conviction that their best actions spring from corrupt principles, that they are sinners throughout, altogether as an unclean thing, and all their righteousness as filthy rags in the sight of God; and as they are not cut off from all hope in themselves, so they are not much alarmed as to the danger of their situation, nor reduced to free sovereign mercy through the atonement as their only ground of hope; and while this is the case, they can have no just impression of their need of the salvation revealed in the gospel, a chief means of which is a just apprehension of the hatefulness and danger of sin.

But though a due esteem of redemption is ever attended with a humbling conviction of the evil nature of sin and its desert, it does not follow that a preparatory course of what is called a *law-work*, consisting of tormenting fear of wrath, and distress of mind, is necessary to fit a man for believing the gospel. A conviction of sin merely by the law, and previous to any gleam of hope from the gospel, may be considered either as thorough or partial. If *thorough*, it must infallibly produce absolute despair; for the law, properly understood, cuts off a sinner from every ground of hope. If *partial*, it may indeed leave room for some delusive hope in the way of working; for the law proposes no other way of obtaining life; and for a guilty sinner to hope he shall obtain life in that way must be a gross delusion. Hence it follows, that convictions of sin which are purely legal, with all the slavish terrors on the one hand, or groundless hopes on the other, which attend them, are no infallible signs, or prognostics of conversion. They may, through the sovereign mercy of God, issue in it;

but they often either wear off, or settle in a course of self-righteous labour to obtain ease to the mind independent of the gospel remedy. Such convictions do not of themselves really humble the sinner, nor beget a hatred of sin itself, nor do they reconcile the heart to God and his law, but, on the contrary, suggest very harsh and unworthy thoughts of both. Therefore, though the knowledge of sin is by the law, yet it is by the gospel that men have the deepest impression of its hateful nature, and of the justice of its punishment, from the costly sacrifice that was necessary to expiate it; and while this humbles the soul, and excites true repentance for sin, it relieves the conscience from its guilt, and purifies the heart from the love of it.

2. In Paul's doctrine of justification there is exhibited a complete, suitable, and immediate ground of relief to the most guilty, helpless, and self-condemned sinner. A person under conviction of sin, and fear of divine wrath, is naturally intent upon doing something to make his peace with God, and obtain his favour, or at least to fit and qualify himself for being justified through Christ. He has not the least idea that he can be pardoned or accepted, without finding in himself some change to the better, to distinguish him, in his own estimation, from the utterly worthless. But if he comes to see his real condition, and views himself in that same point of light wherein God beheld sinners when he sent his Son to die for them, and wherein his death respected them, viz. as sinners, enemies, ungodly, and without strength, Rom. v. 6, 8, 10. and is made to perceive the ground of hope held forth in the doctrine of justification for sinners in such circumstances, he will then find relief from an unexpected quarter, which, though he may have often heard of it before, appears to him now in a light altogether new; because the whole train of his former thoughts, aims and exercises, were pointed against it. He will now perceive, that all he was anxious about doing in order to obtain pardon and acceptance with God, is already



completely done and finished by the Son of God in his death and resurrection from the dead, who, as the substitute of sinners, was delivered for their offences, and raised again for their justification, Rom. iv. 25. By this he perceives that the law is magnified and honoured, its curse removed, divine justice fully satisfied, and God well pleased; and all this demonstrated to his satisfaction, by God's raising his Son from the dead, and glorifying him at his own right hand. He will now understand how God justifies sinners, *freely by his grace*, without any worth or good qualifications in them, but entirely *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*; so that he is now persuaded that the work finished by the Son of God in the room of the ungodly for whom he died, is alone sufficient for his justification, guilty as he stands; and what adds greatly to his satisfaction and establishment in this view, is, that he perceives that God is not only merciful, but perfectly *just* in this method of justifying, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. True indeed, he is not justified without faith; but it should be observed, that the view we have just now been describing, is that very faith whereby a man believes unto righteousness, and so receives justification not working for it, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly, chap. iv. 5. And in proportion to the clearness of his view of the revealed ground of acceptance, and the strength of his faith in it, will be his hope, peace, and joy, chap. v. 1, 2. Still, however, it must be remembered, that it is the province of God alone, so to enlighten the mind in the knowledge of the saving truth and its evidence, as to relieve the guilty conscience, and communicate true peace to the soul.

3. It is proper that believers should constantly keep in memory that dreadful state of guilt and misery from which God of his infinite mercy hath delivered them. Old Israel had institutions for recalling their original perishing state to remembrance, Deut. xxvi. 5. The apostle Paul never lost sight of his former character, as a persecutor, blasphemer,

and injurious, and oftens mentions it to enhance the riches of divine grace, 1 Cor. xv. 9. 1 Tim. i. 13—17. He exhorts the Ephesians to recal their former state to remembrance when they were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God, Eph. ii. 12. He sets before the Corinthians the former character of some of them, 1 Cor. vi. 11. and exhorts Titus to put the brethren in mind of this, Tit. iii. 3. This retrospect is of use to maintain upon our minds a humbling view of what we are in ourselves, an exalted view of divine grace, a relish for the atonement, and a lively gratitude for redemption. The songs of the redeemed in heaven are enlivened by the constant remembrance of the misery from which they were redeemed, as well as of the means of their redemption, Rev. v. 9, 10. They will never forget that they were once as worthless and hell-deserving sinners as those who have got their portion in endless misery, and therefore the worthiness of the slain Lamb will be eternally celebrated by them.

4. Believers must hold fast that truth which at first gave them hope towards God as guilty sinners, viz. the sufficiency of Christ's finished work alone for their pardon and acceptance with God, and they must continually live by the faith of that truth. Indeed they are no longer believers than they do so. It is not enough that they once believed it, and experienced relief from it; for Christ shews that some may for a while believe and receive the word with joy, and yet afterwards fall away, Luke viii. 13. They must not imagine that a good thing wrought in them or done by them as believers, can add any thing to the obedience of Christ as the ground of their acceptance, or make them stand less in need of it than when they first believed. Every thought of this kind is self-righteous and a departure from the faith. The Galatians were happy when they at first believed the sufficiency of the atonement alone to justify them, and received the messenger of these glad tidings as

an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus, chap. iv. 14, 16. but some of them were afterwards subverted from the faith of that truth, doubting the sufficiency of Christ's work to justify them without the addition of the works of the law, and so are represented as having fallen from grace, *i. e.* from the doctrine of justification by grace, chap. v. 4. The apostle Paul, though he had been long a faithful and laborious servant of Jesus Christ, had singular manifestations, and was eminent in holiness, yet he disclaims all his own righteousness as the meritorious ground either of his present or final acceptance, and desires to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Philip. iii. 9. Writing to the Galatians, he says, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. and again, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," chap. vi. 14. Christ says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you: Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," John vi. 53, 54. These, and such passages, clearly shew, that it is by faith in Christ crucified, or in the perfection and all-sufficiency of his sacrifice that the spiritual life of a Christian is sustained and continued, even as his natural life is by his daily food; and this is also represented in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. When men lose sight of this truth, or depart from the faith of it, if they fall not into absolute infidelity, they must either have a self-righteous hope, or sink under a spirit of bondage again to fear, by which every generous principle of gospel obedience becomes blasted at the very root.

5. As Christians are liable to sin while in this world, so when guilt distresses their minds, they must beware of

seeking to pacify their conscience by extenuations, by past experience, or by any supposed goodness in themselves, but must have recourse immediately to the blood of Christ, which alone can properly relieve an enlightened conscience, and cleanse from all sin. Sinners are not only pardoned through the blood of Christ when they first believe the gospel, and are brought into a justified state; but they afterwards stand daily in need of pardon through the same blood, and to have their conscience sprinkled by it to maintain their peace with God and fit them for his service. For this continued cleansing ample provision is made. The blood of Christ is represented as a fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness, and so continually ready for use. A throne of grace is established in heaven; and Christ the great high-priest within the veil ever liveth to make intercession with the Father for his people, which secures their continual pardon and acceptance; so that, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 1. Upon this ground believers are exhorted, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16.

6. Though believers are in a justified state, and have continued access to the throne of grace for pardon; yet this cannot tend to make them less afraid of sin, or to give them slighter impressions of its evil nature and consequences. On the contrary, that which relieves the conscience from the guilt of sin and fear of wrath, gives at the same time the deepest impression of its evil nature and desert, namely, the sufferings and death of the Son of God, when the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all. Nor does their faith in the atonement prevent their contrition of soul, and deep humiliation before the Lord for their transgressions. The very reverse is the case; for while it preserves them from despair, and supports their hope in the Divine mercy, it at the same time excites true repentance

and godly sorrow for sin. It is when they look on him whom they have pierced that they are led to mourn and be in bitterness as for an only son. Believers must be deeply affected when they reflect upon the peculiar aggravations of their sins, as being committed against so much light, love, and grace; to think that they should have been guilty of such base ingratitude, and thus have requited the Lord and grieved his Holy Spirit, after having tasted that he is gracious, and been happy in the enjoyment of his favour. In this view past experience of the love of Christ becomes a motive to repentance.

I shall now conclude with a few practical observations on James's doctrine of justification by works. Hence we may learn,

I. That the work finished by the Son of God as our Redeemer does in no respect weaken or loose our obligations to obey him as our Lord and King. This would be to counteract one great end of his giving himself for us, which was to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14. The end of his delivering us from our enemies, and from the hands of them that hate us, is, that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, Luke i. 74, 75. We cannot indeed perform any part of the work which was assigned to him, as the representative and substitute of sinners, in bearing the curse, expiating sin, satisfying all the demands of law and justice, and procuring eternal life for them. He has finished that work himself, and so freed all that believe on him from any obligation to perform it. But then he has not freed them from the holy law of God as a rule of life; for this would be to free them from any obligation to love God supremely and their neighbour as themselves, which is the sum of that law. It would be to loose their obligation to follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, or, in the nature of things, be capable of enjoying him. On the contrary, he has de-

livered his law to his redeemed people in its spiritual extent as the rule of their obedience and conformity to him, and, without vacating their natural obligation to obey it, founded on their relation to their Creator, has superadded the strong and endearing obligations of redemption. This is what the apostle James terms the royal law, the perfect law of liberty. It is the *perfect law*, because delivered in its highest perfection and purity, requiring that believers should be perfect as their Father who is in heaven is perfect, and so to take with and confess guilt in all their short-comings: yet, as it stands in the new covenant, it is to them a *law of liberty*, because they are freed both from its curse and as it is the condition of life, and have the free principle of obedience to it written in their hearts. Christians are enjoined to be conformed to this law, and so to speak and do as they that shall be judged by it, chap. ii. 12. Let none therefore imagine, that, because Christ hath finished the work of redemption, he hath left his redeemed people nothing to do in working out their own salvation. When they are justified freely through faith in his blood, they are only entering into the service of Christ, setting out in the Christian race, and commencing hostilities in the good fight of faith, in which diligence, activity, circumspection, resolution and perseverance are absolutely necessary, and where patience and self-denial must have their perfect work.

2. From James's doctrine we may learn, that the man who indulges malignant tempers, an unbridled tongue, and bitter envy and strife, under pretence of zeal for religion, that man's religion is vain; and to glory in such a conduct is to lie against the truth, see chap. i. 20, 26. chap. iii. 14, 15, 16. All intemperate and wrathful passions, expressed in reproachful, contemptuous, and cutting language, whatever may be pretended, proceed not from true zeal for the glory of God, nor concern for the good of men, but from pride, selfishness, impatience of contradiction, or a contracted party spirit, and are far from promoting the righteous

cause of God, which stands in no need of such unhallowed methods to support it. In opposition to this Christians must be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, chap. i. 19. and the man who would approve himself to be wise and endued with knowledge, must shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom, chap. iii. 13. For "the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy," ver. 17.

3. From what James says of good works we may see what an important place they hold in the Christian religion. There are indeed many who will admit this, but upon false principles. They consider the gospel as a kind of a qualified law of works, which contains only commands and promises to the keeping of these commands, and so magnify works upon the disparagement of grace and faith in Christ, without which there can be no acceptable good works. But there are others who run into the opposite extreme, and wish to hear of nothing but free grace, absolute promises, and faith without works; who place religion entirely in systematic orthodoxy of sentiment, devotional exercises, or in inward feelings and warm emotions of the heart, whilst the beneficial good works of the gospel have scarcely any place in their system or practice; but connect the service of mammon with a strict profession of religion, and are far more solicitous to lay up for themselves treasures on earth, than to make rich towards God by the good works of liberality and mercy. Such cannot endure to hear good works insisted on, even from gospel principles, but oppose such doctrine as legal, or no better than mere morality. But they ought to consider what James says on this subject. He describes that religion which is approved of God in this manner. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the

world." chap. i. 27. He shews that men must be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving their own selves, ver. 22. He repels all pretensions to true faith when it does not work by love in the good and merciful works of the gospel, and shews, that such a faith is unprofitable either to the person himself or to others, chap. ii. 14, 15, 16. That no man can shew his faith to be genuine without works, ver. 18. That without love and good works it cannot be distinguished from the faith of devils, ver. 19. That faith being alone, or without works, is dead, ver. 17, 20, 26. And that Abraham was justified, or approved of God, by works, when he offered his son, in which work faith wrought with his works, and by works his faith was made perfect, ver. 21, 22.

4. We may further observe, That though a man may speculate pretty accurately upon the gospel, yet if this has no proper practical influence in producing love and obedience, he cannot have the joyful testimony of conscience: the simplicity and godly sincerity of his conversation, and his proving his own work are necessary to this, 2 Cor. i. 12. Gal. vi. 4. Without this he has no ground to expect the accomplishment of Christ's promise, that he will manifest himself to him, and that he and the Father will love him, come unto him, and make their abode with him; for this promise is made to him that loveth him and keepeth his commandments, John xiv. 21, 23—Nor can he have the full assurance of hope, which many ground upon their being enlightened and having tasted of the good word of God; for that is ordinarily attained in persevering diligence in the work and ministering labour of love to the name of Christ, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 10, 11.—Consequently, he cannot look forward with joyful expectation of obtaining Christ's approbation in the final judgment, when he shall judge every man according to his works. Mat. xxv. 19. to the end.



THE  
MERITORIOUS GROUND  
OF  
**JUSTIFICATION.**



# THE MERITORIOUS GROUND

OF

## JUSTIFICATION.

---

---

DIVINES have distinguished Christ's obedience into active and passive. By his active obedience they mean the perfect conformity of his heart and life in this world to the precepts of the moral law. By his passive obedience they intend his sufferings, and particularly his death.

Though this distinction is somewhat inaccurate, as Christ was not merely passive, but voluntary and active in laying down his life, (John x. 17, 18.) otherwise it could not be considered as obedience at all; yet I do not object so much to the distinction itself, as to the use which is made of it to support a train of reasoning very opposite to what I apprehend to be the doctrine of Scripture upon this important subject.

Some assume it as a self-evident principle, That obedience or righteousness is essentially different from suffering punishment, and argue, "That as obedience includes not suffering penalty; so suffering punishment includes not righteousness."\* Thus they exclude Christ's death from

\* See Mr. Brine's Sermon on the imputation of Christ's active obedience to his people, p. 7. Many other authors might be quoted to the same purpose.

being any part of his obedience, and absolutely deny that it can be considered as righteousness at all. Such reasoning may indeed apply to the death of a criminal suffering the punishment of his own sin: but it is altogether inconclusive when applied to the death of the Just One voluntarily suffering for the unjust in obedience to the commandment of his heavenly Father. This certainly was the highest act of obedience or righteousness that possibly can be conceived.

In following out the above principle, they proceed to deny that sinners are justified by the death of Christ, in direct opposition to the plain testimony of Scripture. (See Isa. liii. 11. Rom. iii. 24, 25. chap. v. 9. chap. viii. 33. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. ii. 21.) They reason thus, "If his suffering the penal sanction of the law was not righteousness, it cannot with any propriety be said that he is made righteousness to us by placing his suffering and death to our account, but only by imputing that to us which was his righteousness, *viz.* his active obedience to the preceptive part of the law."\*

But if Christ's death is not righteousness, and does not justify us, I ask, what is the use or design of it at all? In forming an answer to this they are obliged to distinguish justification from the remission of sins. Justification, say they, is a *positive* act; it is the imputation of righteousness; but pardon is a *negative* act, or a mere non-imputation of sin; which two acts do not include each other, but proceed upon different grounds; the former upon Christ's active obedience; the latter upon his death.† Yet it is remarkable, that the apostle Paul, who handles this subject most accurately, finds the positive act of *imputing righteousness* included in what they term the negative act of *forgiving* or *not imputing* sin; see Rom. iv. 6—9. from which it appears that he was unacquainted with the modern scholastic distinctions upon this subject.

\* Brine's Sermon, p. 8.

† Ibid. p.

But though we were to admit this unscriptural distinction, it affords no answer to the question; for if Christ's death was not *righteousness* or *obedience*, as is alledged, then it must necessarily follow, that it has nothing of *merit* or *moral worth* in it; and how, in that case, could it possibly procure even the non-imputation of sin, or be a sufficient ransom price to redeem an innumerable multitude unto God, as the Scriptures affirm? Mat. xx. 28. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Rev. v. 9.

There are indeed many who do not carry matters quite so far. They admit that justification includes both the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness, and also acknowledge that Christ's death may be considered as part of his righteousness or obedience: but then they lay the chief stress upon what they term his active obedience to the precepts of the law throughout his life, which they consider as the main thing the apostle intends by his *obedience* whereby many are *made righteous*, in Rom. v. 19.\* though the same apostle in the preceding context declares, that we are *justified* or made righteous *by his blood*, ver. 9. and in 2 Cor. v. 21. that it is by Christ's being made sin (*i. e.* a sin-offering) for us, that we are made the righteousness of God in him, *i. e.* justified.

It is not enough that we hold all the articles of the Christian faith in some sense or other. We must enter into the Scripture ideas of them, and consider their proper place and connection in the general system of Divine truth, with the particular ends which the word of God assigns to each. Every thing that Christ did both in his life and death was

\* Some to set forth what they call the *justifying righteousness*, have collected from the gospels the various precepts of the law which Christ obeyed during his life; and some consider his Sermon on the Mount to be intended rather as a description of his own obedience for the justification of his people, than as a rule of their obedience to him. It is certain, however, that the apostles never go to work in this way, but wherever they speak of the procuring cause of justification, they refer us directly to his death, or atoning sacrifice.

of vast importance in its place, and in relation to the great ends of his mission; but yet every thing he did had not the same particular end, nor the same direct and immediate influence in procuring justification that his death had, though subservient to that end. What I intend on this important subject will fall under the following propositions with their Scripture proofs:

Prop. I. That justification consists in the remission of sins, and acceptance into a state of favour with God.

Prop. II. That the direct and immediate procuring cause of justification is the death of Christ, or his atoning blood, which was shed on earth, and presented to God in the heavenly sanctuary.

Prop. III. That Christ's perfect conformity to the moral law, or the spotless holiness of his heart and life while in this world, was absolutely necessary to our justification, as contributing to the merit and efficacy of his sacrifice and priesthood.

Having proved the truth of these propositions, I shall take notice of some objections.

Prop. I. That justification consists in the remission of sins, and acceptance into a state of favour with God.

The term *justification* or *justify*, is used in Scripture in a judicial or forensic sense, and signifies to make one just or righteous, not by an infusion of inherent righteousness, but by an acquittal in judgment. But there are two ways of justifying or acquitting in judgment: if the person is *innocent* or *righteous*, then it is a finding and declaring of him to be just, who was so before. Thus God himself is said to be justified, Rom. iii. 4. and in this sense James speaks of believers being justified by works, which he exemplifies in the case of Abraham, who was declared to be a fearer of God, and approved of him in offering up his son, James ii. 21—25. Gen. xxii. 12—19. But if the person is *guilty*, then his justification must be his acquittal from the condemnatory sentence of the law, by a free

pardon of his crime, and an acceptance of him into a state of favour. Thus God is said to justify the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. and it is in this sense that the apostle Paul uses the terms *justify*, *justification*, and sometimes *righteousness*, in his epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians. That by justification the apostle means the remission of sins, and acceptance into a state of favour, is evident,

1. From the description he gives of the *natural state* and *character* of all mankind without exception. He proves at large that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and that the whole world are become guilty before God, Rom. iii. 9, 10, 19, 23. and he also describes the previous character of such as are justified to have been that of *sinner*s, *enemies*, and *ungodly*, chap. v. 6, 8, 10. who were *without strength*, and incapable of being justified by the deeds of the law, which requireth perfect personal obedience to that end, chap. iii. 20. chap. x. 5. and denounceth the curse upon every one who continueth not in all things written therein to do them, Gal. iii. 10. Now, in what other way can guilty condemned sinners be justified, than by a free remission of their sins, discharging them from the obligation to punishment, and receiving them into favour? Their natural state and character is such that they cannot in truth, or by law be acquitted from having sinned, or from having deserved punishment, these being unalterable facts; yet by a sovereign constitution of grace, beyond the line of the law, they may, consistently both with law and justice, be freely pardoned and accepted as righteous, not working, but believing on him that *justifieth the ungodly*. That this is what the apostle intends by justification farther appears,

2. From the pointed *description* which he gives of that capital blessing. What he terms “the righteousness of God without the law, and which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe,” he explains thus; “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a

propitiation (Gr. *propitiatory*,) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the REMISSION OF SINS that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 21—27. Here we see, that to be justified freely by God's grace, is to obtain the *remission of sins*. It is through the *redemption* that is in Jesus Christ—through his propitiatory *blood*; but the redemption we have through the blood of Christ, is expressly and repeatedly declared to be the *forgiveness of sins*, Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. It is obtained *through FAITH in his blood*, which agrees with the gospel declaration, that "by him all that BELIEVE, are JUSTIFIED from all things," Acts xiii. 39. and it is evident, that *justified* in this passage is only another word for obtaining the *forgiveness of sins*, mentioned in the verse immediately preceding. This is also clear,

3. From all those passages which *oppose justification to condemnation*, see Deut. xxv. 1. 1 Kings viii. 32. Rom. viii. 33, 34. Condemnation is the passing of sentence against a person guilty, whereby he is subjected to penalty or punishment; and therefore the justification of a sinner, which is directly opposed to this, must be a sentence of absolution from guilt, and an acquittal from the punishment incurred by it. The apostle, by way of challenge, asks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?—who is he that CONDEMNETH?" meaning that no creature can do it with effect; and the reason he gives is, "It is God that JUSTIFIETH," *i. e.* frees and acquits from every charge by which they were subjected to punishment, Rom. viii. 33, 34. The law is termed the ministration of DEATH and CONDEMNATION, because it could not give life to sinners, but condemned them to death. In opposition to this, the gospel is termed, "The ministration of RIGHTEOUSNESS," *i. e.* of justification, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. because it reveals the way of pardon and acceptance to life through



Christ, declaring that "whosoever belieyeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts x. 43. As it is only for sin that men stand condemned by the law of God, so whatever removes the guilt of sin, must free from the condemnation due to it. Now this is completely done in justification, and "therefore there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. That justification is the remission of sins, is also plain,

4. From our being said to be justified *from sin*: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are JUSTIFIED (*απο παντων*) FROM ALL THINGS," (*i. e.* from all sins,) "from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts xiii. 39. So likewise the free gift of righteousness is said to be (*εκ*) "FROM many offences unto justification," Rom. v. 16. Now what can justification FROM all things, FROM many offences, signify, but absolution from the guilt of sin, and acceptance into favour?

5. Justification is expressed by *imputing righteousness*, Rom. iv. 3, 4, 5, 9, 22. The apostle takes this expression from Gen. xv. 6. where it is said of Abraham, "And he believed in the Lord, and he counted (or imputed,) it to him (*εις*) unto righteousness."\* His design in citing this passage, is to prove that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works; consequently, that all who believe are justified in the same way. Commenting upon this passage he adopts its phraseology, and instead of saying in his usual style that a man is *justified by faith*, he expresseth the same idea by saying, that a man's faith "is counted unto righteousness"—"that faith was reckoned to Abraham unto righteousness," ver. 5, 9. *i. e.* unto justification. It is evident, that the blessing conferred by the imputation of righteousness is the remission of sins; for the apostle cites

\* So *εις δικαιοσυνην* should be rendered throughout this chapter, even as it is in chap. x. 10.

David's words to that purpose, and calls them a description of the "blessedness of the man to whom the Lord IMPUTETH RIGHTEOUSNESS without works;" the words are, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," ver. 6, 7, 8. Now if to have one's sins *forgiven, covered, or not imputed*, be a proper description of "the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord IMPUTETH RIGHTEOUSNESS without works," then to have righteousness imputed, or to be justified, is to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

6. Justification is much the same as *reconciliation to God*. The only difference seems to be this; that the former respects men considered as *sinner*s, the latter as *enemies*; which is little else than a verbal distinction. The apostle having said that we are "JUSTIFIED by Christ's blood," changes the expression into our being "RECONCILED to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 9, 10. And in his epistle to the Colossians, having said that they were sometimes alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, adds, "yet now hath he RECONCILED in the body of his flesh through death," chap. i. 21, 22. Now the benefit obtained in receiving the reconciliation, is the remission of sins; for the same apostle says, "that God was in Christ, RECONCILING the world to himself, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES unto them," 2 Cor. v. 19.

7. Though justification, as we have seen, consists in the forgiveness of sins, yet not exclusive of acceptance into a state of favour with God. Divine forgiveness is not a mere *negative act*, as some affirm, consisting only of the non-imputation of sin, and a non-infliction of punishment. An earthly judge may indeed free a criminal from the temporal punishment which he deserves, without receiving him into the enjoyment of his special favour or friendship; but the gospel never represents divine forgiveness in this partial light, but always includes in it an acceptance into a state of

favour, and entitling to positive happiness. Men frequently amuse themselves and others with imaginary distinctions, founded merely upon the negative and positive forms of expression, which often include each other, and mean the same thing without any existing medium. Not to perish—not to be condemned—not to come into condemnation, is, in other words, to be saved—to have passed from death unto life—to have everlasting life, John iii. 15, 16, 17. chap. v. 24. So in justification, there is no medium between the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness, nor between an exemption from punishment, and a title to that life and blessedness which lies in the enjoyment of the divine favour. The gospel promise to whosoever believeth is variously expressed; such as, “he shall receive the remission of sins”—be “justified from all things”—“be saved,” &c. Acts x. 43. chap. xiii. 38, 39. chap. xvi. 31. Rom. x. 9. but these expressions are of the same import, and equivalent to that most frequently used by our Lord, *viz.* he “shall not perish, but have eternal life,” John iii. 15, 16. chap. v. 24. chap. vi. 40, 47. The redemption in Christ’s blood, by which we have the remission of sins, is not a mere freedom from punishment, or exemption from the curse of the law; for he died “for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, that they who are called might receive the promise of ETERNAL INHERITANCE,” Heb. ix. 15. which certainly means eternal life; for we are “justified by his grace” through that redemption, “that we might be made heirs, according to the hope of ETERNAL LIFE,” Tit. iii. 7. The design of Christ’s being *lifted up* on the cross, and giving his *flesh* and *blood*, was to procure the *life* of the world, that “whosoever believeth on him might have eternal life, and be raised up at the last day,” John iii. 14, 15. chap. xi. 51, 53, 54. The apostle infers, from God’s “NOT SPARING his own Son, but DELIVERING HIM UP for us all,” that “with him also he will freely give us ALL THINGS,” Rom.

viii. 32. which must certainly include all spiritual and eternal blessings. Hence justification is termed **JUSTIFICATION OF LIFE**, Rom. v. 18. for those who obtain it “shall **REIGN IN LIFE** by one Jesus Christ,” ver. 17.

From the whole, it is evident that justification consists in the remission of sins, and acceptance into a state of favour with God. Consequently, such as maintain that Christ’s death has only procured the negative benefit of exemption from punishment, but not justification, or a title to eternal life, err considerably from the truth of the gospel on this subject, and derogate from the merit and efficacy of Christ’s death.

Prop. II. That the direct and immediate procuring cause of justification is the death of Christ, or his atoning blood, which was shed on earth, and presented to God in the heavenly sanctuary.

I call it the direct and immediate procuring cause, to distinguish it from other causes which contributed in a variety of ways to the same end; such as, the Father’s appointment of him to that work, the divine dignity of his person, his assumption of human nature, the perfect conformity of his heart and life to the holy law of God, &c. For though all these were absolutely necessary in their place, yet it was not till Jesus, in obedience to his Father, had poured out his soul unto death, and through the eternal Spirit had offered himself without spot to God, that sin was expiated, and justification to life procured.

It should be noticed, that this proposition involves in it, not only his laying down his life, but his entrance into heaven, and priestly actings there, answerable to the service of the high priest on the great day of atonement.

Though God justifies sinners freely by his grace, *i. e.* gratuitously, of his own mere favour, without any merit in them, yet not by a mere absolute act of indemnity, at the expence of law and justice; for that would be inconsistent with

his character as the moral governor of the world. The infinite holiness of his nature is necessarily irreconcilable to sin, and his justice and faithfulness engage him to punish it according to the sentence of his holy law. Therefore, that he might be just as well as merciful in justifying the guilty, the demands of his law must be answered, the claims of justice fully satisfied, and his hatred of sin and love of righteousness clearly manifested. Now, that which the gospel holds forth as answering all these purposes, and procuring justification and a title to eternal life for sinners, is the meritorious death of the Son of God. The proofs for this are so numerous, that to take notice of them all would be to transcribe a great part of the New Testament; I shall therefore only adduce such as appear to me the most plain and conclusive.

I. This appears from the apostle's accurate statement of the doctrine of justification. Having said that sinners are "justified freely by God's grace," he adds, "through the *redemption* that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins;—that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus," Rom. iii. 24—27. *Redemption* (*απολυτρωσις*) signifies in general a *deliverance*, and that sometimes by *power*; as when God promised to redeem Israel out of Egypt with a stretched out arm, Exod. vi. 6. and the resurrection of the body by an act of divine power is termed its *redemption*, Rom. viii. 23. Eph. i. 14. But the word more properly signifies a deliverance procured by *price*; as when captives, slaves, or condemned persons are bought off from captivity, bondage, or death, by paying a ransom for them. That this is the sense of the word *redemption* in the passage under consideration, is clear from the words immediately following; *viz.* "whom God hath set forth to be a PROPITIATION through faith in his BLOOD, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." This shews that

it is a redemption procured by the propitiatory blood of Christ. Men were in a state of condemnation by reason of sin, for which they could make no satisfaction, and so must have perished for ever, had not God of his infinite mercy sent his only begotten Son into the world, who as the representative and substitute of the guilty, voluntarily suffered in their stead, giving his precious life and blood as the price of their redemption. And so he is said "to give his life a ransom for many," Matt. xx. 28.—"a ransom for all," 1 Tim. ii. 6. and believers are said to be "bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 20.—"to be redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.—to be "redeemed unto God by his blood," Rev. v. 9.—and to "have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," Eph. i. 7. Since therefore God justifies sinners "through the REDEMPTION that is in Jesus Christ," and since this redemption is IN HIS BLOOD, it is plain that that must be the meritorious procuring cause of justification. This further appears,

2. From the scripture doctrine concerning the *nature*, *design*, and *effects* of Christ's *sacrifice*. His death is represented as a true and proper sacrifice, and the legal sacrifices, being so many types or prefigurations of it, serve to illustrate it. The apostle Paul, particularly in his epistle to the Hebrews, points out the correspondencies between those typical sacrifices and that of Christ the great antitype; and while he shews the vast disparity, to set forth the superior excellency of the latter in point of worth, efficacy, and extent, he at the same time traces an exact analogy between them as to the main design of their respective appointments; and, in speaking of Christ's sacrifice, he uses the same terms which are applied to the typical sacrifices in the Septuagint version of the law of Moses. To instance in a few particulars. The general name *sacrifice* (*Θυσια*) is given to both, Lev. xvii. 5, 8. Heb. ix. 26.—The sin-offering is elliptically termed *sin*,

(ἁμαρτία,) and *for* or *concerning sin* (περι ἁμαρτίας,) Levit. iv. 20, 24. chap. xvi. 5. So Christ is said to be *made sin*, (ἁμαρτιαν ἐποίησεν,) 2 Cor. v. 21. and *for sin*, (περι ἁμαρτίας,) Rom. viii. 3.—The ram that was slain for sin is called the *ram of atonement* or *propitiation*, (κρίως τῆς ἰλασμοῦ,) Num. v. 8. Christ also is termed the *propitiation*, (ἰλασμος,) or *atonement* for our sins, 1 John ii. 2. chap. iv. 10.—The design of the blood of the sin-offering was to make *reconciliation* or *atonement* (ἐξίλασασθαι,) for the people; to *cleans* (καθαρισται,) them, that they might be *clean from all their sins* before the Lord, Lev. xvi. 27, 30. So Christ is “a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to *make reconciliation*” or *atonement* (ἰλασκεσθαι,) “for the sins of the people,” Heb. ii. 17. and his blood “*cleanseth* (καθαριζει,) from all sin,” 1 John i. 7.—In offering himself he is said to *bear* (φέρειν, ἀνανεγκεν,)\* our sins, Isa. liii. 4. Heb. ix. 28. 1 Pet. ii. 24.—to *take away*, (αἰρεν,) or *bear away* the sin of the world, John i. 29. and to effect the *putting away*, (ἀθετησις,)+ or *disannulling* of sin, Heb. ix. 26. which the legal sacrifices could not do in reality, chap. x. 4. From all which it is abundantly clear, that Christ was the only true and effectual sacrifice for sin; that he died as the substitute of sinners, bearing the punishment of their sins in his own body on the tree, 1 Pet. ii. 24. or suffering for sins, the Just FOR the unjust, chap. iii. 18. and that he hath effected our redemption from the curse of the law, by being made a curse FOR us, or by enduring the curse in our stead, Gal. iii. 13.

But it must be observed, that the mere slaying of the sin-offering under the law did not complete the atonement. It was necessary to this, that the high-priest should carry its blood within the vail into the holiest of all, and there present it to God, and sprinkle it upon and before the

\* This last word imports to *bring up* a victim to be offered.

† This is rendered *disannulling* in Heb. vii. 18.

mercy-seat, after having offered the incense, see Lev. xvi. Now the apostle shews at large, that this peculiar service of the high-priest on the great day of atonement, was a figure of Christ's entrance into heaven with his own blood, to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 11, 12, 14, 24. So that he not only suffered on earth as a *sacrifice* for sin, but also rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven as our great *high-priest* with his own blood, to present it unto God, and, as it were, sprinkle the heavenly mercy-seat with it, see Heb. viii. 1—5. chap. ix. 23, 24. Thus his work of atonement was completed, and in this view he is "set forth as a PROPITIATORY\* in his blood," Rom. chap. iii.

Further, the divine *acceptance* of the typical sacrifices is expressed by the Lord's smelling *an odour of a sweet savour*; † Gen. viii. 21. Lev. i. 9, 13, 17. or, as the Hebrew has it, *a savour of rest*. ‡ But though he accepted them for the temporary ends of their appointment, yet he had no pleasure in them as an adequate atonement, or proper satisfaction for the sins of men, Ps. xl. 6. Heb. x. 6, 8. This was reserved for the sacrifice of Christ, who came to do his Father's will, by giving "himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for A SWEET SMELLING SAVOUR," § Eph. v. 2. In this one offering God hath smelled a *savour of rest*; having accepted of it in full of all demands, he requires no more offering for sin, but declares that the sins

\* The word is (*ιλασηριον*) *propitiatory*, alluding to the *mercy-seat*, upon and before which the blood was sprinkled in completing the atonement, Lev. xvi. 15, 16. The Alexandrian copy has it, *a propitiatory in his blood*, omitting the words *through faith*.

† οσμεν ευωδίας.

‡ The Chaldee explains this expression of "receiving a thing with favourable acceptance;" and so it is translated in the Jerusalem Targum and Onkelos. See *Ainsworth on Lev. i.*

§ οσμεν ευωδίας.



and iniquities of his people he will remember no more. Heb. x. 12—19.

Again, the sacrifice of Christ has obtained not merely the non-imputation of sin, but acceptance into a state of favour and positive happiness. It is through the *blood* and *priestly office* of Jesus that we have liberty with boldness to enter into the holiest with acceptance, in all our approaches to and correspondence with God while in this world, see Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. ch. x. 19—23. And it is through his entering heaven with his own *blood*, in the character of our *high-priest* and *forerunner*, that he hath secured our future admission into glory, Heb. vi. 19.

Now, since Christ's death was a true and proper sacrifice for sin—since his blood shed on earth, and presented by him in the heavenly sanctuary, has been accepted as a satisfactory atonement for sin, and has removed its guilt and punishment, Heb. ix. 12. chap. x. 14. Gal. iii. 13.—since it hath procured peace with God, Col. i. 20.—present freedom of access to the throne of grace with acceptance, Heb. x. 19—23. and future admission into the possession of the eternal inheritance, Heb. ix. 15.—I say, since these things are ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ, and his priestly service in offering it, that must undoubtedly be the meritorious procuring cause of justification. This is also evident,

3. From those passages which ascribe justification to his *obedience*, or *one righteousness*. The apostle opposeth the obedience of Christ to the disobedience of Adam, in these words; “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,” Rom. v. 19. I think it will be granted that to be *made righteous* here signifies to be *justified*; but as to the nature of that *obedience* which is the immediate procuring cause of it, we must consult the scope and connection of the passage. In the preceding context, he had said that “Christ died for the ungodly,” ver. 6.—that

“while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,” ver. 8.—that we are “justified by his blood,” ver. 9.—“reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” ver. 10.—and “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation,” ver. 11. To illustrate this subject of Christ’s death and its effects, and to shew he acted therein as a public representative, the apostle introduces the comparison with Adam, connecting it closely with what goes before by a (*δια τιστο*) WHEREFORE, ver. 12. If, therefore, any attention at all is to be paid to the obvious scope and close connection of this whole passage, the *obedience* of Christ must particularly mean his *laying down his life* for the ungodly, while yet sinners, that they might be justified, or reconciled to God by his blood, as is plainly set forth in the foregoing verses. There is no other kind of obedience mentioned in any part of this chapter; for as to our being “saved BY HIS LIFE,” ver. 10. it does not mean his life in this world, but his life from the dead as a priest in heaven, where “he EVER LIVETH to make intercession for us,” and so is able “to SAVE to the uttermost them that come unto God by him,” Heb. vii. 25.

Christ’s laying down his life, and offering himself a sacrifice to God for sinners, contains in it all the essential properties of the most perfect and proper obedience; for—(1.) To constitute obedience, there must be a *law* or *commandment* enjoining it; for as where no law is there is no transgression, so neither can there be any obedience, that being conformity to a law. But Christ, in laying down his life, acted in obedience to a commandment; for he says, “THIS COMMANDMENT have I received of my Father,” John x. 18. and going forth to yield himself up into the hands of his enemies, he says, “As the Father gave me COMMANDMENT, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence,” chap. xiv. 30, 31. So that in offering his body once for all, he DID his Father’s WILL, Heb. x. 7—11.—(2.) It is necessary to proper obedience that it be *voluntary*. Mere

suffering, or even acting, be it ever so great and arduous, if without or against the consent of the will, does not partake of the nature of that obedience which God requires. But Christ was voluntary in laying down his life; as he declares, "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," John x. 18. His obedience is most frequently expressed by active terms; such as, that he (*παρεδωκεν ἑαυτος,*) *delivered up himself*, Eph. v. 2, 25.—*gave himself*, Gal. i. 4. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Tit. ii. 14.—*gave and laid down* his life, John x. 11, 15.—and *offered himself up* to God, Heb. vii. 27. chap. ix. 14. Had he not been voluntary and active in this matter, it could not with propriety be termed *obedience*, nor opposed to the active disobedience of the first man.—(3.) It is essential to true and acceptable obedience, that it proceed from a proper *inward principle and disposition of heart*. The law of God extends to the inward principles, motives, and state of the mind, and requires that we should act from a principle of love to God and our neighbour, Mark xii. 30—34. therefore, though a man should give all his goods to feed the poor, and, which comes nearer the point, give his body to be burned, yet if this does not proceed from love to God and man, it has nothing of the nature of holiness or moral excellence in it, but the contrary; it is of no account in the sight of God, nor rewardable by him, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. But Christ was influenced by the most perfect love to his Father, when he came to obey his will in offering the sacrifice of himself: so he declares, "Lo I come—I DELIGHT to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart;" or, as the original has it, "in the midst of my bowels," Ps. xl. 7, 8. Heb. x. 7—11. And when going to deliver himself up, though there was no cause of death in him, he says, "But that the world may know that I LOVE THE FATHER, and as the Father gave me COMMANDMENT, even so I do," John xiv. 30, 31. With regard to his love

to men, I need not mention that his laying down his life for them while yet sinners, is represented as the highest expression of love, John xv. 13. 1 John iii. 16. far transcending all human affection, Rom. v. 7, 8. and exercised to such a degree as passeth knowledge, Eph. iii. 19. As love is the fulfilling of the law, Rom. xiv. 8—11. so Christ, having, out of perfect love, obeyed his Father's commandment in laying down his life for the sheep, has fulfilled the law, and satisfied all its demands upon them, and so has become "the end of it for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. Now, as the apostle affirms that by this obedience many shall be made righteous, or justified, it must undoubtedly be the meritorious procuring cause of justification.

The same thing is affirmed in these words, "Therefore  $\alpha\varsigma$  ( $\delta\iota$   $\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$   $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\pi\lambda\omega\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ,) BY ONE OFFENCE judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so ( $\delta\iota$   $\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$   $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ,) BY ONE RIGHTEOUSNESS\* the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Rom. v. 18. The *one offence* is evidently the single transgression of Adam, which he committed at once in eating the forbidden fruit; therefore, by analogy, the *one righteousness* which is opposed to it, must be one particular work of righteousness performed by Christ. For though Christ was perfectly righteous throughout the whole course of his life in this world; yet the apostle is not here speaking of all the

\* *One righteousness* is literally the sense of the original, and so the translators have rendered it in the margin. The words are not  $\delta\iota\alpha$   $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\sigma\eta\varsigma$   $\tau\eta$   $\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , by the righteousness of one, but  $\delta\iota$   $\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$   $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , by one righteousness, or one righteous act; for  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\mu\alpha$  here is singular, but when expressive of the various precepts of the law, or of a course of obedience to them, it is put in the plural. See in the original, Rom. ii. 26. Rev. xix. 8. It was not for a course or train of offences throughout Adam's life that the sentence of death passed upon all men, but for *one single offence*. Even so it is by *one eminent act of righteousness*, which Christ performed in laying down his life for sinners in obedience to his Father, that the free gift is unto all men unto justification of life.

righteous actions of Christ's life collectively, and opposing them to the single offence of Adam, but of one notable act of righteousness, *viz.* his ONCE offering up of himself to God for the redemption of sinners. And this is farther evident from what has been already said of his obedience; for his righteousness and obedience in this passage are the same. Now, as it is (*δια*,) *by* or *through* this one righteousness, that "the free gift comes (*ετις*,) to all men unto justification of life," it must certainly be the meritorious procuring cause, not only of pardon, but of acceptance to eternal life. For if the single offence of a mere fallible man brought misery and death upon all his posterity, surely this one righteousness, performed by a person of divine dignity and infinite worth, in offering himself through the eternal Spirit without spot to God, must be more than an adequate reparation for that one offence. Accordingly, the apostle shews that the benefit procured by it greatly exceeds the damage which came by the fall; see ver. 15, 16, 17.

4. That Christ's death is the meritorious procuring cause of justification, also appears from our *reconciliation* to God being ascribed to it. It has already been observed, that reconciliation and justification are much of the same import; at least, the latter includes the former. Now the apostle expressly affirms, that "we were reconciled to God BY THE DEATH of his Son," Rom. v. 10. or "in the body of his flesh THROUGH DEATH," Col. i. 21, 22. The word of reconciliation which the apostles preached was this; "to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" and the method in which this reconciliation was effected is explained thus; "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," 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. We have seen that to be *made sin* is, in the sacrificial style of the law, to be *made a sin-offering*; and here we are told, that the end for which Christ was made a sin-offering for us, was "that we might

be made the righteousness of God in him;" *i. e.* justified, or pardoned and accepted of God as righteous on account of his meritorious sacrifice. This explains how "God hath RECONCILED US to himself by Jesus Christ," ver. 18, 19. and if there be any difference between this and his *making us the righteousness of God* in him, there is certainly none in the procuring cause, for both are here ascribed to Christ's being made a sin-offering for us. That this is the procuring cause of justification is farther evident,

5. From the apostle's argument against the doctrine of the Judaizers, who maintained that righteousness or justification was to be obtained by the works of the law. In opposition to this he says, "If RIGHTEOUSNESS come by the law, then Christ is DEAD in vain," Gal. ii. 21. and he admits that "if there had been a law given which could have GIVEN LIFE, verily RIGHTEOUSNESS should have been by the law," chap. iii. 21. By *righteousness* in these passages he means justification; for it is a righteousness which would have been by the law, upon supposition that the law could have *given life*; *i. e.* justified sinners, and entitled them to life: so that the sense is, "If justification come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;" since, in that case, there would have been no occasion for his death. But this consequence would not follow, unless the main, if not the sole design of Christ's death had been to procure righteousness or justification of life for sinners. I shall only add,

6. Lastly, That the apostle, in the most plain and direct terms, ascribes justification to the death and resurrection of Christ. He expressly says, that we are "JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD," Rom. v. 9. And afterwards, having said, "It is God that JUSTIFIETH," he adds, "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," Rom. viii. 33, 35. There we see that Christ's *death* as a sacrifice for sin, with his *priestly mediation* in heaven

upon that ground, are stated as the procuring cause of justification: and this is also affirmed in these words; “who was DELIVERED for our offences, and RAISED AGAIN for our justification,” chap. iv. 25. These texts are plain, direct, and decisive proofs, that Christ’s blood, shed on earth, and presented by him to God in the heavenly sanctuary, is the meritorious ground of justification.

Several other arguments might be drawn from the word of God to corroborate this truth; such as, That the main design of Christ’s coming into the world was “to GIVE HIS LIFE a ransom for many,” Matt. xx. 28.—That it was for this end a body was prepared him, Heb. x. 5, 10. and that he took part with God’s children in flesh and blood, chap. ii. 14, 17.—That this is given as a special reason why the Father loves him, and hath most highly exalted and rewarded him, John x. 17. Phil. ii. 8, 9.—That the church of the redeemed celebrate the worthiness of the Lamb on this account, and ascribe all their salvation to it, Rev. i. 5, 6. chap. v. 9, 10, 12.—And, in short, that the great and distinguished theme of the gospel is Christ *crucified*, or his *death* and *resurrection* from the dead, 1 Cor. i. 18, 23. chap. xv. 3, 4. which is uniformly held forth to guilty men as the object of faith, and the only ground of hope towards God. But as enough has already been said to evince the truth of the proposition, I shall not insist upon these particulars.

Before I proceed to the last proposition, it may be necessary to premise a few things.

It seems not to have been the design of the Spirit of God to give us a particular account of the greater part of Christ’s life in this world, or to set forth in detail his obedience to all the particular precepts of the moral law. For from the time of his infancy till he began to be about thirty years of age, the only account we have of him is, that at twelve years old he went up to Jerusalem with his

parents to the feast, conversed with the doctors in the temple, returned with his parents to Nazareth, where he was subject unto them, and, in general, that he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man, Luke ii. 40—52. So that by far the greater part of his history respects his public ministry, and falls within the three last years of his life.

But the Scripture testifies abundantly that he was altogether free from sin, and perfectly conformed to the will of God. He came not into the world by ordinary generation, so as to derive a corrupt nature from Adam, but was miraculously conceived of a virgin by the immediate power of the Highest, and so was that HOLY THING born of her, Luke i. 35. God's holy child Jesus, Acts iv. 27. He was indeed in all things made like unto his brethren, that he might be susceptible of trials and sufferings; yet we are expressly told, that he was without sin, Heb. ii. 17, 18. chap. iv. 15. and that he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, 1 Pet. ii. 22. His whole life was a course of perfect obedience and submission to the will of his Father; for he did always the things that pleased him, John viii. 29. and that with the greatest cheerfulness and delight; for his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work, chap. iv. 34. That supreme love to God, and that benevolent disposition towards men which the law requires, possessed the soul of the man Christ Jesus, and wholly influenced him in all the actions of his life. The Holy Spirit was given to him without measure, John iii. 34. and all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, Col. ii. 9. so that he was perfectly fitted to do the will of God, and secured from every the least taint of moral turpitude, either in heart or life. Those, therefore, who maintain that he was peccable, or liable to sin as Adam was in innocency, greatly err, and place the salvation of men upon a very precarious foundation.

All that Christ did throughout the course of his life, was



in obedience to his heavenly Father, and necessary in one view or other to the salvation of men; yet every thing he did was not performed directly IN THEIR STEAD, as what was universally incumbent upon them to have done. He observed the *ceremonial institutions* of the law of Moses, which were peculiar to the Jews, and never enjoined upon any other nation. In his public ministry he performed the *duties of his office*, as the great prophet and lawgiver of his church, and confirmed his mission and doctrine by *miracles*. These things, though an important part of the work which the Father had given him to do, were never required of us by any law.

The only law, therefore, which extends to all mankind universally, and is of indispensable obligation, is what is commonly called the *moral law*, or eternal rule of righteousness which is founded on the perfections of God, and on our relation to him and to one another. It has been shewn that Christ was perfectly conformed to this law throughout his whole life in this world; and it will further be shewn, that this was absolutely necessary to our justification; but in what respects it was so, must be learned from the express word of God, and not from human systems and reasonings.

Few will affirm directly, that the obedience of Christ's life to the precepts of the moral law stands for that holiness of heart and life which that law requires of us. But many maintain, that he thereby fulfilled the condition of the old covenant, or law of works in our stead, and so hath procured justification and eternal life for us, according to the tenor of that law as described by Moses; "The man that doth these things shall live by them," Rom. x. 5. But as the law of works requires our own personal and perfect obedience, it cannot justify us by the obedience of another; nor can it justify us by our own obedience, because we have sinned, and cannot fulfil its terms: hence the apostle constantly denies that we can be justified according to the tenor of the old covenant, or law of works. It is, there-

fore, only by the new covenant, which admits of a mediator and substitute, that any of the human race can be justified. But this covenant was not of force till Christ's death, Heb. ix. 16, 17. it being made and ratified in his blood, or upon his sacrifice, Matt. xxvi. 28. Heb. xiii. 20. and it was by doing his Father's will in offering the sacrifice of himself as mediator of this covenant, that he procured for his people the remission of sins, and the eternal inheritance promised therein, Heb. viii. 10—13. chap. ix. 15. chap. x. 14—18.

Some, to set forth the *merit* and *substitutional* nature of Christ's obedience to the moral law throughout his life, maintain that it was not due from him, or that he was under no obligation to perform it.\* The Scripture indeed supports us in saying, that he was not *naturally* or *originally* under any obligation to become a man, and to act the part of a Redeemer; and even after he had assumed human nature, there was no precept of the moral law which obliged him, who was perfectly innocent and holy, to lay down his life. His obligation to do these things was founded entirely in the special commandment of his Father, and in his own voluntary engagement to become the representative and substitute of guilty men. But with respect to the conformity of his heart and life to the moral law, which is the immutable and indispensable rule of righteousness, we are not warranted to reason in this manner. For though it would be improper to say, that, as God, he was under an obligation to obey a law, as it would suppose him subject to the law of a superior; yet, as God, he is necessarily, or from his nature, holy, just, and good, and cannot act *contrary* to his own pure and righteous law, which is a transcript of his moral character, though, as sovereign, he may act *beyond* the line of it as given to his finite creatures and subjects. But in condescending to assume the nature of man, he

\* Brine's Sermon on the imputation of Christ's active obedience, p. 22, 23.

thereby became subject to the law given to man; and to suppose him under no obligation, as a man, to be holy, or perfectly conformed in heart and life to the eternal rule of righteousness, is a wild and unscriptural imagination, which seems to defeat its own end by annihilating the obedience of Christ's life altogether; for where there is no *obligation* there can be no *obedience*, these being relative to each other.

I shall just take notice of another sentiment which is adopted in support of this scheme; *viz.* That Christ yielded obedience to the precepts of the law by power resident in himself, and which he did not derive from his Father.\* But this sentiment flatly contradicts many passages of the word of God, and particularly his own repeated declarations; see Isaiah xi. 2, 3. chap. xlii. 4, 5, 6. John xix. 20, 26, 27, 30. chap. viii. 26, 28. chap. xiv. 10. Acts ii. 22. chap. x. 38. so that neither in his obedience to the moral law, nor to the special and peculiar law of his office, was he without his heavenly Father's aid. As to the underived power of his Godhead, it is essentially the same with that of his Father; but in the economy of redemption, he is always represented as deriving all power from him that sent him, as acting under his authority, and as supported by him in his work.

These things being premised, I shall now proceed to prove,

Prop. III. That Christ's perfect conformity to the moral law, or the spotless holiness of his heart and life in this world, was absolutely necessary to our justification, as it contributed to the merit and efficacy of his sacrifice and priesthood.

It has been already proved, that Christ's obedience in laying down his life for the guilty is the immediately pro-

\* Brine's Sermon, p. 24, 25.

curing cause of justification. Here it is affirmed, that the spotless holiness of his heart and life contributed to render his sacrifice and priesthood acceptable, and so effectual to the attainment of that end. I say, *contributed*, because something more must be taken into the account, and particularly the Divine dignity of his person.

Had he been only a man, however holy, it is not easy to conceive how, in strict justice, his temporary sufferings could have redeemed one individual, much less an innumerable multitude of mankind, from everlasting punishment, and not only so, but have also procured eternal life for them. To account for this, the Scriptures hold forth his Divine dignity and infinite worth, declaring that it was God who purchased the church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. That the person who took upon him the form of a servant, humbled himself, and became obedient unto the death of the cross, is he who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, Philip. ii. 6—9. That he who hath by himself purged our sins is the Son of God, by whom he made the worlds, and upholds all things, and who is the the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 2, 3. see to the same purpose Col. i. 13—21. If we believe this, we can entertain no doubt of the acceptableness and efficacy of his sacrifice and mediation: and when we also consider his relation to the Father as his own Son, and that he is the object of his supreme love, we must admit the conclusiveness of the apostle's reasoning, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32.

But the Divine dignity of his person is not the sole and exclusive consideration here. In order to his being our proper representative and substitute he must be a real man, made under the law. Considering him in this view, it is affirmed in this proposition, that his perfect conformity to the law, or the spotless holiness of his heart and life was

absolutely necessary to our justification, as contributing to the merit and efficacy of his sacrifice and priesthood. For proof of this let it be considered,

1. That God, from the moral perfections of his nature, necessarily delights in holiness and hates every thing opposite to it; and this he has clearly manifested in the perfection and purity of his law, and the sanction he has annexed to it. Hence it follows, that Christ's perfect holiness in conformity to that law was absolutely necessary to the acceptance of his sacrifice and mediation; for had he transgressed it in any one instance, his death would have been due for himself as the just punishment of his own sin, and would not have been accepted of a holy and just God as meritorious obedience, nor be placed to our account for justification. This further appears,

2. From what was required in the sacrifices under the law. The apostle in most of his epistles, especially in that to the Hebrews, shews, that these sacrifices were typical representations of Christ's sacrifice: that they might be fit types of this, the Lord expressly and repeatedly enjoined that they should be perfect, and without the least blemish; not blind, broken, bruised, cut, maimed, &c. and declared that all such blemished sacrifices were an abomination to him, and that he would not accept of such for them, see Lev. xxii. 20—26. Deut. xv. 21. chap. xvii. 1. Nay, he denounces a curse upon the deceiver, who hath a male in his flock, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing, Mal. i. 14. Now the reason why it was so strictly enjoined that the legal sacrifices should be without any spot or blemish was, that in this respect they might prefigure that spotless holiness of Christ's heart and life which was necessary to his being a true and acceptable sacrifice unto God for the sins of the world. This is clear from the allusions made to the typical sacrifices in this particular, in setting forth the holiness and perfection of Christ's sacrifice; thus it is said, "He hath made him to be sin (*i. e.* a sin-offering) for us, WHO KNEW NO SIN, that we might be made the righteous-

ness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. And to shew the superior efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to the legal ones, it is said, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself WITHOUT SPOT (or fault) to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. "Ye were not redeemed (says Peter) with corruptible things—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb WITHOUT BLEMISH and WITHOUT SPOT," 1 Epist. i. 19. Again he says, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the JUST for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," chap. iii. 18. see also Isa. liii. 9, 10. 1 Pet. ii. 22—25. From all which it is evident, that the spotless holiness of Christ, according to the spirit of the law, rendered his sacrifice meritorious and acceptable to God, as a sweet smelling savour, in which he rests for ever well pleased. Again,

3. This holiness was absolutely necessary to his officiating with acceptance as our high-priest in offering his sacrifice, and making intercession for us. The priests under the law were to be free of all bodily deformities, blemishes, or defects, purified from all occasional ceremonial pollutions, and kept separate from improper connexions with profane persons, see Lev. xxi. otherwise they were not permitted to come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord, ver. 21. And the reasons for this are given, "They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God; for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God they do offer; therefore they shall be holy.—Thou shalt sanctify him, therefore, for he offereth the bread of thy God; he shall be holy unto thee; for I, the Lord who sanctify you, am holy," ver. 6, 8. Hence the high-priest is called God's HOLY ONE, Deut. xxxiii. 8. Now it is in reference to this typical holiness that the apostle sets forth the superior sanctity of Jesus our great high-priest, "For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," Heb. vii. 26.

## THOUGHTS

ON GEN. XV. 16. COMPARED WITH ROM. IV. 5, &c.

---

MANY from the laudable design of excluding all human works or merit from having any place in justification, have contended that the word *faith* in this passage does not signify *believing*, but the *object* of belief, or the obedience of Christ; and in this sense they also explain the word *righteousness*, and so make faith and righteousness to signify the same thing; so that when the apostle says, a man's faith is imputed to him unto righteousness, they understand him to mean, that the obedience of Christ is placed to the account of the believer as his justifying righteousness. But though it is an undoubted truth that human merit has no place in justification, which is bestowed freely of God's grace, respects the ungodly, and is only through the obedience of Christ, yet there is no occasion to give such an unnatural turn to this passage in order to establish that point.

Though the word *faith*, or *the faith*, frequently signifies the doctrine of the gospel in general, yet it is never put for the obedience of Christ in particular. What the apostle means by *faith* here is obvious at first sight. Abraham's faith is expressly said to be his *believing* God, ver. 3. and is described at large thus; "Who against hope, BELIEVED in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be.

And being not weak in faith—he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was **STRONG IN FAITH**, giving glory to God; and being **FULLY PERSUADED**, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him unto righteousness,” ver. 18—23. To affirm that *believing*, being *strong in faith*, and *fully persuaded*, which are opposed to *unbelief*, *staggering*, or being *weak in faith*—I say, to affirm that these expressions signify the *object* of belief or the obedience of Christ, is, to say the least of it, a very glaring mistake. Nothing can be plainer than that Abraham’s faith was his *believing* God’s promise, and his ability to perform it, notwithstanding all the natural impediments which lay in the way; and this is what the apostle repeatedly affirms, according to Gen. xv. 6. was imputed to him unto righteousness, see ver. 3, 9, 22. He also describes a man’s faith which is imputed unto righteousness, to be his “**BELIEVING** on him that justifieth the ungodly,” ver. 5. and, in the application of the subject, he says, that faith shall be imputed to us unto righteousness even as it was to Abraham, “if we **BELIEVE** on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” ver. 23, 25. In connection with this, and by way of inference from it, he immediately adds, “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” chap. v. 1. It is evident, therefore, that to have *faith imputed unto righteousness*, according to the phrase in Gen. xv. 6. is the same as to be *justified by faith* in the apostolic style; and from the whole it is as plain as words can make it, that *faith* in this passage is a man’s *believing*, and not the *object* of belief; which is also clear from what the same apostle afterwards declares, *viz.* that it is “**WITH THE HEART** man **BELIEVETH UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS**,” or justification, chap. x. 10.

Many consider believing as a *work*, and think that if that



were imputed unto righteousness, a man must be justified by works. But the apostle never speaks of believing as a *work*; on the contrary, he constantly opposes it on this subject to all works of every kind, and says, “to him that **WORKETH NOT**, but **BELIEVETH** on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto righteousness,” Rom. iv. 5. He affirms, that to be justified *by faith* is to be justified *without works*, chap. iii. 28. Gal. ii. 16. and that it is *of faith* that it might be *by grace*, *i. e.* of pure free favour, Rom. iv. 16.

If it be asked, How can faith be imputed to us unto righteousness? or, which is the same, In what sense is justification ascribed to our believing? I answer, Just in the same sense as miraculous cures were ascribed to the faith of the patients. Our Lord says to those whom he cured, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” Luke xviii. 42. “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” Mat. ix. 22. By their faith he evidently means their *believing*; for he asks some of them, “**BELIEVE** ye that I am able to do this?” Mat. ix. 28. and to others he says, “**Only BELIEVE**,” Mark v. 36. It was certainly Christ’s *divine power* alone that healed them, yet not without their *believing* that he was *able* to do it; and when they believed this, his power was exerted upon them according to their faith in it; “As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee,” Matt. viii. 13. “According to your faith be it unto you,” chap. ix. 29. And so he ascribes their cure to their faith, or imputes their faith to them unto healing; “Thy faith hath made thee whole.” Nothing could be more free, gratuitous, and beyond the compass of human power than those merciful cures; so that the manner in which they were obtained clearly illustrates the point in hand. For as to him that worked not for his cure, but believed on him that healed the diseased, his faith was counted unto healing; so in like manner, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto righteousness.”

It must further be observed, that the word *righteousness* throughout this fourth chapter, and in several other places, (such as Rom. ix. 30. chap. x. 4, 10. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. ii. 21. chap. iii. 21.) does not mean the obedience of Christ, which is the procuring cause of justification, but the blessing of *justification* itself; for to justify a sinner is to free him from guilt, *to account him just or righteous*, and accept of him as such.

I shall only add, that as *righteousness* in the passages referred to signifies *justification*, it follows, that when faith is said to be *imputed unto righteousness*, it cannot mean that a man's believing is that righteousness, as some affirm, but only that it is counted to him (*εἰς*) unto his obtaining righteousness, or free justification, through the atoning obedience of the Son of God; for this blessing is obtained *through faith in his blood*.

ON THE

OFFICES WHICH CHRIST SUSTAINS

IN THE

**Economy of Redemption.**



ON THE

OFFICES WHICH CHRIST SUSTAINS

IN THE

**Economy of Redemption.**

---

As the gospel testimony is frequently summed up in a declaration that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, it is of great consequence to have just and scriptural views of the sense of that proposition.

When it is declared in the Gospel that Jesus is the Christ, or the promised Messiah, *i. e.* the Anointed, it imports his mediatorial character and offices. Under the Jewish economy, men were consecrated to, and invested with the most eminent offices, by pouring on their head the holy oil, which was prepared by divine direction, and kept sacred for that end, **Exod. xxix. 7. ch. xxviii. 41. 1 Sam. x. 1. chap. xvi. 13.** Hence they were called the Lord's Messiahs or Christs, *i. e.* anointed ones, **1 Sam. xxiv. 10. chap. xxiii. 1.** in which character they typified God's true Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, whom he anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, **Acts x. 38.** The principal offices to which Jesus is anointed, are those of a Prophet, Priest and King; but though we may consider these separately, as distinct offices, yet we must remember that they are all united in him, and exercised by him, as the one

Mediator between God and man. He is a priest; but a priest on his throne, a royal priest after the order of Melchisedec.—He is a prophet; but a prophet like unto Moses, who was a deliverer, a mediator, a lawgiver, and ruler. I shall consider at present,

#### THE PROPHETIC CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

ONE reason for his being termed the Christ, is because he is the anointed *Prophet* or Teacher sent from God, by whom he hath spoken unto us in these last days, Luke iv. 18. chap. xxiv. 19. Heb. i. 1, 2. To have a scriptural view of him as a prophet, it may be useful to take notice of the original promise respecting him under that character, and the occasion on which it was given.

In the day of the Assembly at Mount Sinai, when the Lord gave forth his law to ancient Israel, he manifested himself under such visible emblems of terrible majesty, holiness, and jealousy, as were suited to impress their minds with a sense of their state and condition in his sight, as guilty sinners, and exposed to his just displeasure, and of their utter inability to stand before or correspond immediately with such a holy Lord God. The dreadful appearance of the consuming fire, blazing on the mount to the midst of heaven; the blackness, darkness, earthquake, and tempest; the awful flashes of lightning, with peals of thunder, and the sound of the celestial trumpet waxing louder and louder; the strict prohibition of man or beast from touching the mountain under pain of immediate death; and above all, the voice of words delivering the fiery law, the ministration of death and condemnation, Exod. xix. chap. xx. Heb. xii. 18, 19.—these things struck the people with such terror and amazement, that they could not endure that which was commanded, Heb. xii. 20. but entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more,

ver. 19. saying unto Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die," Exod. xx. 19. Deut. v. 24—28. The Lord approved of their request; and whilst he gave them Moses in the mean time as the mediating prophet of that typical covenant, he, on that occasion, directs him to lead their views forward to another prophet, by the following remarkable promise; "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee, a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God; neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," Deut. xviii. 15—20.

This promise evidently respects a single person, not a succession of prophets. It was not fulfilled in any of the famous Old Testament prophets that succeeded Moses; for we are told "that there arose not a prophet since in Israel LIKE UNTO MOSES," Deut. xxxiv. 10.\* The Jews, even in our Lord's time, were still expecting the accomplishment of this promise; for they ask John the Baptist, "Art thou that prophet?" John i. 21. and when Jesus fed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, the multitude said, "This is, of a truth, that prophet that should come into the world," chap. vi. 14. Nor were they mistaken; for both the apostle Peter and Stephen apply this promise to Christ, Acts iii. 22, 23. chap. vii. 37.

\* These words were probably added by Ezra when he collected the books of Moses after the Babylonish captivity.

He is, therefore, the prophet of whom Moses wrote, John v. 46. and fully answers the description given of him in that promise. For he was raised up unto Israel *of their brethren*, being of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, Gal. iii. 8, 16. He is *like unto Moses* in every distinguishing character of his office, as a deliverer, a mediator, and especially as a revealer of the will of God, and an establisher of a new religious constitution. But he is infinitely superior to Moses in the divine dignity of his person, and in the nature of his administration, as well as station in the house or church of God. He excels him as far as the antitype excels the type—as the Son and heir excels the servant—the builder the house—or God the creature, Heb. iii. 1—7. “The law,” which condemned the sinner and typified the gospel “was given by Moses; but grace,” instead of condemnation, “and truth,” in place of shadows, “came by Jesus Christ. No man,” no, not even Moses, who, of all the Old Testament prophets, had the most immediate communications from God, Num. xii. 6, 7, 8. “hath,” like Jesus, “seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,” and so privy to all his counsels, “he,” as the great prophet, “hath declared him,” John i. 17, 18.

As a great prophet, it behoved him to be inspired and commissioned to that office. Accordingly the Lord saith, *I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* Jesus applies this to himself, when he says, “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things—the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me—I have not spoken of myself,” *i. e.* uncommissioned, or self-moved, “but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak,” John viii. 28. chap. xiv. 24. chap. xii. 49. He spoke the words of God from a plenary inspiration of the Spirit; so God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him, John iii. 34.



To this agree the words of the prophet, with which Jesus opens his prophetic mission; "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," Isa. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18, 19.

In his doctrine he declared the gracious errand upon which he came into the world; *viz.* to save sinners from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin, and to confer upon them eternal life, Matt. xviii. 11. John iii. 16, 17. and that, in order to effect this, he was, in obedience to his Father's commandment, to lay down his life for the sheep, and to take it again, John x. 15, 19. He laid open the extent and spirituality of the law, teaching as one having authority, or as a divine lawgiver, Matt. vii. 29. He explained the prophecies of the Old Testament, and shewed their accomplishment in himself, his sufferings, and following glory, Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 44, 46. He also foretold things to come, some of which have been most minutely accomplished, Matt. xxiv. others of them relate to the consummation of all things, and a future state, Matt. xxv. Lastly, he confirmed his divine mission and doctrine by a vast number of the most wonderful miracles, and so manifested himself to be a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, Matt. xi. 5. John v. 36. Luke xxiv. 19.

When Christ had finished his personal ministry on earth, and ascended into heaven, he acted as a prophet, by sending the promised Spirit upon his apostles, to bring his sayings to their remembrance, to guide them into all truth, and to qualify them for publishing and confirming the gospel to the world, Acts ii. 32, 33. chap. iv. 20, 31. Rom. xv. 19. and it is as a prophet that he is represented as opening the sealed book, and disclosing what was to befall his church

and its enemies unto the end of time, Rev. v. Though revelation has been long ago completed, and the whole counsel of God committed to writing, yet Christ still continues to exercise his prophetic office by the Spirit, giving gifts unto men for the work of the ministry, and the edification of his body; opening the understanding of men, that they may understand the Scriptures, and perceive the truth and excellency of what is revealed in them, and so making the gospel come to them not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. Luke xxiv. 45. 1 Thess. i. 5. whereby it works effectually in them, influencing their faith, hope, love, and obedience, chap. ii. 13.

Men are commanded to hear this prophet. *Unto him shall ye hearken*: or, as Peter quotes it, *Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you*, Deut. xviii. 15. Acts iii. 22. The same command was given from the excellent glory at his transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," Matt. xvii. 5. Thus he is anointed from heaven to be that prophet who was promised to Israel in the day of the assembly, when they could not endure to hear the voice of the Lord delivering his law to them; and here they are delivered over from Moses to Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, and commanded to hear the beloved Son of God, by whom he now speaks unto us, Heb. i. 1, 2. To hear him, is to give earnest heed to his doctrine, to believe him, and to obey him.

The Lord threatens all who shall reject his words from the mouth of this prophet, with the severest punishment. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him*; or, as Peter expresses it, *he shall be destroyed from among the people*, Deut. xviii. 19. Acts iii. 23. This was signally accomplished upon the unbelieving Jews who rejected this prophet, and did not receive

his doctrine; they were cut off from being the people of God, and the wrath came upon them to the uttermost, Rom. xi. 20. I Thess. ii. 15, 16. But it imports also the punishment of a future state; "for he that believeth not shall be damned. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him," Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 36. "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them who heard him," Heb. ii. 2, 3. chap. xii. 25.

#### THE PRIESTLY CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

JESUS is the Christ as being the anointed HIGH-PRIEST over the house or church of God. In the family state of the church, the first-born had a right both to the government and priesthood. Under the law these offices were separated when God took unto him the Levites for priests instead of all the first-born of Israel, Num. iii. 12. ch. viii. 10—19. and particularly ordained the family of Aaron to minister in holy things, Lev. viii. Their office was to offer both gifts and sacrifices, Heb. v. 1. to intercede for, bless and instruct the people, Num. vi. 23—27. Deut. xxxiii. 10. Mal. ii. 7. But the high-priest alone had access into the holy of holies, and that but once every year, on the great day of atonement, to make reconciliation for the sins of the whole nation of Israel, Lev. xvi. 2—4. The priesthood under that first covenant, was but a temporal prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, who is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, Heb. viii. 2. In him the kingly and priestly offices are again united; for he is a priest on his throne, a royal pontiff,

not after the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedec, who was both a king and priest, Heb. vii. 1, 2, 11.

But before this Divine person could actually be a priest, it was necessary he should partake of the nature of those for whom he was to officiate. He must stand related to the children of God, as the first-born among them, Rom. viii. 22. in order to his being their proper representative in approaching unto God on their behalf. Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, must be all of one nature and father, Heb. ii. 11. otherwise there would be no connection between his sanctifying himself, and their being sanctified, John xvii. 19. It was necessary that a body should be prepared him, that he might have something to offer, Heb. viii. 3. ch. x. 5—10. His priesthood also required that he should have the feelings of human nature, that by experience of sufferings and temptations he might know the heart of a tempted sufferer, be qualified to sympathize with his brethren in all their afflictions and infirmities, and the more feelingly engaged to succour them in every time of need. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, &c.—For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted,” Heb. ii. 14—18.

In order that Christ might be a priest, it was necessary that he should be *called* and *appointed of God* to that office. He could not be a priest by the law which established the Levitical priesthood, for that confined it to the tribe of Levi, whereas Jesus sprang from the tribe of Juda,

of which Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood, Heb. vii. 13, 14. And as no man can lawfully take that honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron :\* “ so also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest, but,” was called and appointed to that office “ by his Father, who said unto him, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,” Heb. v. 4—6. As these passages are cited for the express purpose of shewing Christ’s appointment to the priesthood, so they mark the time when he was actually vested with that office. The first passage, viz. Ps. ii. 7. declares him to be God’s Son, begotten from the dead, and exalted above angels, as explained Acts xiii. 33. Heb. i. 3—5. The other passage, viz. Ps. cx. 4. contains Jehovah’s oath, constituting the Son a priest for ever, Heb. vii. 28. and is connected with his saying unto him, “ Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool,” Ps. cx. 1. And as Aaron was consecrated to the office of high-priest by the blood of the ram of consecration, Lev. viii. 22—25. so it appears that Christ was consecrated to that office through his sufferings, or the blood of his own sacrifice ; for God is said to “ make the Captain of our salvation PERFECT through sufferings,” Heb. ii. 10. It is said, “ he learned obedience by the things which he suffered ; and, being MADE PERFECT, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him ; called (or deno-

\* We read of Aaron’s call and appointment to the priesthood in Exod. xxvii. 1. ch. xxix. Lev. viii. He was set apart or consecrated to that office, by the application of the anointing oil, and the blood of the ram of consecration, Lev. viii. 12, 22—24. This ram is in Hebrew termed *the ram of fillings*, and in Greek *the ram of perfections*. Hence to consecrate a priest is in Hebrew to *fill his hand*, because his hand was filled with a sample of the sacrifices ; but in the Greek translation it is to *perfect him*, because he was thereby thoroughly confirmed a priest, and fitted to appear before the Lord and minister with acceptance. See Exod. xxviii. 41. ch. xxix. 9.

minated) of God an high-priest after the order of Melchisedec," ch. v. 8—10. The original word (*τελειωσαι*), rendered to *make perfect*, is the same that is used by the LXX. to express the *consecration* of Aaron and his sons; and being applied to Christ in relation to his priesthood, must signify his *consecration* to that office, and so it is translated *consecrated*, Heb. vii. 28. Thus Christ being consecrated through his sufferings, and brought again from the dead (*εν*) in, or with, the blood of the everlasting covenant, Heb. xiii. 20. he was thoroughly qualified as high-priest to enter with it into the heavenly holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us, ch. ix. 12, 24.

But the apostle insists chiefly upon the word of the oath, Ps. cx. 4. "The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec:" and he comments upon every word of it, in setting forth the excellency of Christ's priesthood above that of the Aaronical.

He leads us to consider how great this man was after whose order Christ was made a priest; and the account he gives of Melchisedec is so extraordinary in some particulars, that many have been led to think he was the Son of God himself appearing in human likeness. But I cannot adopt this opinion.—1. Because he is said to be *made like* unto the Son of God, ver. 3. but I think it would be improper to say the Son of God was made like unto himself.—2. Because Christ is said to be made a priest *after the order* of Melchisedec, ver. 17. and to arise *after the similitude* of Melchisedec, ver. 15. If he and Melchisedec were the same person, this would import that he was made a priest after his own order and similitude; and also that he was twice consecrated to the priesthood, he being a priest in the days of Abraham, and also made a priest since the law by the Divine oath.—3. Because it behoved Christ to be a man before he could be a priest; but he was not a man in the days of Abraham. To suppose him a priest before he was a man, overthrows the apostle's argument, ch. ii. and

if Melchisedec was not a real proper priest, it overturns all the arguments from the order of his priesthood, ch. vii.—4. Because the apostle argues the excellency of Christ's priesthood from that of Melchisedec; but if they were the same, there could be no arguing from the one to the other. For these reasons I consider Melchisedec only as an eminent type of Christ.

The apostle, in the first place, draws our attention to his name and titles. His name *Melchisedec*, he observes, is by interpretation, king of righteousness, importing the justice of his administration; and he was also *king of Salem*, which signifies king of peace, which was the effect of his righteous government, Heb. vii. 2. Herein he was a fit type of Christ who is promised as a king that should reign in righteousness, and is styled the Prince of Peace, Isa. ix. 6. ch. xxxii. 1. Melchisedec was also *priest of the Most High God*, and so he was both a king and a priest, ver. 1. In this also he typified Christ, for both these offices concentre in him, who is a priest on his throne, a royal priest seated at the right hand of God, Heb. viii. 1. And because the Hebrews might object to Christ's priesthood, that he was not of a priestly lineage or descent, which was so necessary to the legal priests, that all who could not shew their title to that office from the register of their genealogy, were put from the priesthood as polluted, until the Lord should give counsel in the matter by Urim and Thummim, Ezra ii. 62, 63. therefore the apostle shews, ver. 3. that the order after which Christ was made a priest, required no such thing; for Melchisedec was in this respect "without father, without mother, without descent," *i. e.* priestly descent. He received not his priesthood by his father, but immediately from God himself: he had "neither beginning of days," *i. e.* priestly birth, "nor end of life:" he lived during the whole term of that priesthood, and did not die out of office, so as to leave it to a successor, as the sons of Aaron did, see ver. 23. "but," was, in this respect, "made

like unto the Son of God, (*who*)\* abideth a priest continually."

Further, to set forth the dignity of Melchisedec as priest of the Most High God, he represents him as superior to Abraham, and consequently to all the priests of the tribe of Levi, who descended from him. Abraham was justly held in the highest esteem by the Jews. He was not only their venerable patriarch, the root of their nation, but the friend of God, the father of the faithful, and to him originally were the promises made, not only of the land of Canaan, but that he should be heir of the world, Rom. iv. 13. and that all

\* Our translators have frequently had occasion to supply an ellipsis of the relative, see ver. 26. ch. ix. 24. John i. 9. 1 Cor. xv. 26. 2 Cor. iii. 13. 1 John iii. 12. Rev. i. 5. and as the construction allows it in this place, so the sense seems to require it; for it cannot properly be said of Melchisedec, though in some circumstances he resembled the Son of God, that he literally *abideth a priest continually*, this being peculiar to Christ himself, see ver. 24, 25.

It must be owned, however, that there is something in this extraordinary account of Melchisedec not easy to be understood. The most difficult part in it, I think is in ver. 8. "And here men that die," viz. the Levites, "receive tithes; but there," viz. in the case of Melchisedec, "he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." We have a plain historical account that Melchisedec *received tithes* of Abraham, Gen. xiv. 20. but it will be hard to find where it is testified *that he liveth*, i. e. still continues to live as a priest. The passage on which the apostle is commenting is Ps. cx. 4. but that does not testify that Melchisedec liveth as a priest, but that Christ was to be a *priest for ever* after his order. This testimony therefore does not respect Melchisedec, but Christ, of whose *ever living* the apostle afterwards explains it, ver. 16, 17, 25. I think it would solve the difficulty, could we suppose the apostle to mean, "And here the mortal sons of Levi received tithes; but there Christ, in or by his type Melchisedec, received them, of whom it is witnessed in Ps. cx. 4. that he lived as a priest for ever." This sense seems to be confirmed by the words immediately following, "And as I may so say," or to use the same manner of speech, "Levi also who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father," i. e. his great grandfather Abraham, "when Melchisedec met him," ver. 9, 10. So that it may as properly be said, that Christ received tithes in or by his type Melchisedec, as that Levi paid them long before he was born in his father Abraham.



nations should be blessed in him, Gal. iii. 8. Yet the apostle argues, that Melchisedec was greater than Abraham, from his receiving tithes of him, and blessing him that had the promises; and his argument is founded on this principle, "That without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better," ver. 6, 7. it being an undoubted truth, that he who blesses officially, is commissioned of God, is greater than he whom he blesses. He further observes, that as Levi, the father of the priestly tribe, who receive tithes of their brethren the people of Israel, was in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchisedec met him, so he may be said to have paid tithes to Melchisedec in Abraham, ver. 5, 9, 13. consequently Melchisedec's order of priesthood must be superior to the Levitical order. Having finished what he has to say of Melchisedec, he proceeds to take notice more directly of the words of the oath, whereby Christ is constituted a priest after his order, and to show particularly wherein his priesthood excels the Aaronical. He observes,

1. That the appointment of Christ to be a priest after the order of Melchisedec, evidently "disannuls the commandment going before" respecting the Levitical priesthood, ver. 18. and changes the law by which it was established, ver. 12. As there cannot be two different kinds of priesthood over the house of God at the same time, so the latter institution must necessarily set aside the former; and the law which restricted the priesthood to the tribe of Levi, must be changed to give place to a priest after the order of Melchisedec, "for he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood," ver. 12—15.

2. That the disannulling of the institution of the Levitical priesthood, proves its insufficiency to answer the great ends of that office, namely, to expiate sin, purge or perfect

the conscience, and to procure access to, and acceptance with God: "For if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law)," or concerning it the people received a law, "what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" ver. 11. The law concerning the Levitical priesthood must therefore have been disannulled, "for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect," ver. 18, 19. He observes,

3. That "those priests were made without an oath," which left their office in a repealable state; but Christ was made a priest with the irrevocable solemnity of an oath, "by him that said unto him, **THE LORD SWARE**, and will not repent, **Thou art a priest for ever**," &c. So that in proportion to the superior solemnity of the Divine oath, and the security given by it for the stability, unchangeableness, and perpetuity of his priesthood, "by so much was Jesus made a surety\* of a better covenant," than that made at Sinai, of which the successive sons of Aaron were sureties, ver. 20—23.

4. That under the law there "were many priests," succeeding one another, "because they were not suffered to continue" during the whole term of that priesthood, "by reason of death." But the oath constitutes Jesus a priest in his own person for ever, "after the power of an indissoluble life;" for it runs thus, "Thou art a priest FOR

\* The word *εγγυος* rendered *surety* occurs no where else in the New Testament. The Greek interpreters explain it by *μεσσητης*, a mediator, which appears to be the true sense; for Christ is called *the mediator of a better covenant*, chap. viii. 6. and *the mediator of the new covenant*, chap. ix. 15. chap. xii. 14. and it evidently belongs to his priestly character. If we consult its etymology, it signifies *one that draws nigh*, or *one by whom we draw nigh*, viz. to God; and as the apostle had, just a little before, termed Christ "a better hope, by the which (*εγγιζομεν*) we draw nigh unto God," ver. 19. it is likely that he terms him *εγγυος* with reference to that; for it is only through him as mediator that we can draw nigh to God.

EVER;" "and because he continueth ever, and dieth not out of his office, "he hath (*απαράβατον*) an unsuccessive priesthood," which passeth not from him to another. "Therefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost," or for ever, "that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," ver. 16, 23—25.

5. That the Aaraonical high-priests were imperfect sinful men, and also subject to all the natural infirmities of this mortal state, and so had to offer for their own sins. But "such an high-priest" as Jesus "became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily,\* as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins," (for he had none, ch. iv. 15.) "and then for the people's; for this he did (*εφαπαξ*) at once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high-priests who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son," who, being now freed from all the weakness of his mortal state, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. "is perfected, or consecrated, an high-priest for evermore," ver. 26—28.

6. Lastly, he shews, that the oath makes Christ an high-priest not on earth, but in heaven. "For if he were on earth he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law, who serve in" the earthly tabernacle, which is "the example and shadow of heavenly things," ch. viii. 4, 5. There was no place on earth for the high-priest to perform the service peculiar to him, but in the worldly sanctuary, and this by the law was restricted to the order of Aaron: therefore Christ, if he were on earth, could not be a high-priest, or officiate as such. But the oath makes him a priest after the order of Melchisedec in the highest heavens, it being connected with the Lord's saying unto him, "Sit thou at my right hand until

\* As the apostle is speaking of the service of the high-priest, *καθ' ἡμεραν* here must signify every great day of atonement, which was once a year.

I make thine enemies thy footstool," Ps. cx. 1. which was not accomplished till he rose from the dead, entered heaven with his own blood, and sat down at the Father's right hand. Heaven, therefore, is the place of his ministry; for he is a great high-priest that is (*διεληλυθота*) passed through the heavens," Heb. iv. 14. and "made higher than the heavens," ch. vii. 26. "Such an high-priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the" heavenly "sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man," ch. viii. 1, 2. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself;" nor did he enter there "with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, now to appear in the presence of God for us," ch. ix. 12, 24. Thus hath Jesus "obtained a more excellent ministry" than the high-priests, who ministered in the worldly sanctuary, "by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises," than those upon which the Sinai covenant and its priesthood were established, ch. viii. 6.

The apostle makes the following improvement of the doctrine of Christ's priesthood, "Seeing then we have a great high-priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high-priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy" for the pardon of our sins, "and find grace to help in time of need:" *i. e.* Divine aid to support us under all our infirmities, trials, and afflictions, ch. iv. 14—16. "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh: and having an high-priest over the house of God; let us draw

near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast (*την ομολιαν της ελπιδος*) the confession of hope without wavering, &c. ch. x. 19—24. “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name,” &c. ch. xiii. 15,

### THE KINGLY CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

JESUS is the CHRIST as being the anointed KING whom God hath raised up, and set upon his holy hill of Zion, Ps. ii. 6. and to whom he hath given all power in heaven and in earth, Matt. xxviii. 18. as head over all things to the church, Eph. i. 22. Indeed it is to his kingly character that the title Christ or Messiah more especially applies. We shall therefore take a view of the original promise respecting Jesus under this character.

After David had brought up the ark to mount Zion, and obtained rest from all his enemies, he purposed to build a temple to the God of Israel at Jerusalem. Upon that occasion the Lord spake in vision to his holy one, Nathan the prophet, and sent him to David with the following promise:—“I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more.—Moreover, I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee, that the Lord will build thee an house. And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons, and I will establish his kingdom: He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he (or rather,

*whosoever*\* shall) commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle him in mine house, and in my kingdom for ever, and his throne shall be established for evermore." Compare 2 Sam. vii. 11—17. with 1 Chron. xvii. 9—15.

This is the oath which God swore by his holiness to David, the covenant which he made with him respecting the perpetuity of his royal seed and kingdom, Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4, 35, 36.—the word upon which he caused him to hope, Ps. cxix. 49. and which is afterwards so much insisted on throughout the Psalms, and by the succeeding prophets. This promise, like that made to Abraham, has a two-fold aspect. One to David's fleshly seed and temporal kingdom. The other to the Messiah, and the kingdom of heaven. And it respected the former only, as types and pledges of the latter.†

That it had a respect to David's natural seed who were to succeed him on the throne of Israel, is evident from

\* The Hebrew word,  $\text{וְשֹׂאֵן}$ , bears this sense in several other places; such as Josh. xv. 16. Judg. i. 12. Exod. ix. 21. 1 Sam. xi. 7, S. It cannot mean, *If the Messiah shall commit iniquity*; but *whosoever of David's natural seed shall commit iniquity*, as appears from Psal. lxxxix. "If his children forsake my law." See also Psal. cxxxii. 12.

† Some restrict this promise entirely to the Messiah, and deny that it had any respect at all to David's natural seed. The passages which seem to apply any part of it to these, they think, refer to another promise made unto David, which was of a temporal nature, and altogether distinct from this. See *Whiston's Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies*, p. 247. &c. But we have no account of any such promise in all the history. The truth is, this promise, like many others in the Old Testament, has a two-fold sense; it takes in the type as well as antitype; so that those who saw it accomplished in what respected David's temporal house, had a proof that the Lord spoke by the prophet, and consequently a pledge that he would also in due time fulfil the spiritual part of it, by raising up the Messiah to sit for ever on his throne, which is the main thing intended in the promise, as the Scriptures abundantly testify.

David's application of it to his son Solomon, in whom the temporal part of it had a begun accomplishment, 1 Chron. xxii. 6—11. chap. xxviii. 5—8. The Lord himself also applies it unto Solomon, when he appeared unto him, 2 Chron. vii. 7, 18. It contains a threatening against such of David's children as should commit iniquity, 2 Sam. vii. 14. Ps. lxxxix. 30—33. which was verified on his royal posterity who succeeded him on the throne, whom the Lord punished for their transgressions, as sacred history sufficiently shows. It was to fulfil the temporal part of this promise, that the Lord continued the house of David so long on the throne of Judah, notwithstanding all their rebellion against him, 1 Kings xi. 36. 2 Kings viii. 19. 2 Chron. xxi. 7. and it was frequently pleaded by the Jewish church, when the judgments inflicted upon David's temporal house and kingdom seemed to make it void, Ps. lxxxix. 38—52. Ps. cxxxii. This promise, as it respected David's natural seed, was conditional; so that though the Lord at length deprived them of the kingdom, he did not thereby make void the covenant with his servant; for this was what he had threatened to do, in case they should forsake his law, Ps. lxxxix. 30—32. Accordingly David tells Solomon, "If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever," 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

But how then was the promise made good, that David's seed should sit for ever on his throne? I answer, the spiritual and eternal part of this promise respected only the Messiah, who was to come of the seed of David according to the flesh, and to be raised up from the dead to sit for ever on his heavenly throne. The promise, as it respected the Messiah, was absolute, and in him it had its full accomplishment. That David understood it in this sense appears from his last words; where, having mentioned the Lord's description of a king after his own heart, he adds, "Although my house, (*i. e.* temporal house,) be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant,

ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow," 2 Sam. xxiii. v. It is plain from these words, that David's hopes were not very sanguine with respect to his temporal house; he seems rather apprehensive that they would provoke the Lord to deprive them of the sovereignty; yet he comforts himself in this,—that the covenant made with him was an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; and confesses that it was all his salvation and all his desire, at the very close of his life, when an earthly kingdom could yield him little comfort. But we are not left to our conjectures upon this subject. Peter, by the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us expressly how David understood this promise. After having cited his prophecy of Christ's resurrection from Psalm xvi. he adds, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption," Acts ii. 25—32. From these words, it is evident that David understood from this promise, not only that the Messiah was to come of his seed, but that he was to be raised up from the dead to sit on his throne.

All the succeeding prophecies of the Messiah have a reference to this oath or promise made unto David, and are just so many renewals, illustrations, and enlargements of it. I shall just produce a few of them for a specimen. Isaiah says, Isa. ix. 6, 7. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, *upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom*, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even *for ever*." This is just



a renewal of the promise formerly made unto David respecting his seed who should sit for ever on his throne. Accordingly the prophet farther describes him as a rod coming forth out of the stem of Jesse, and as a branch growing out of his roots. He also sets forth his qualifications as a king, the righteousness of his government, and the concord, peace, and tranquillity of his subjects, Isa. xi. 1—10. In the same prophetic book the Lord most earnestly calls men off from every empty delusion and unsatisfying pursuit, and directs them to look for all their salvation and happiness in the accomplishment of the promise made unto David; “Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an *everlasting covenant* with you, even the *sure mercies of David*. Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people,” &c. Isa. lv. 1—5. David in his last words calls the promise of the Messiah made to him, an *everlasting covenant*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. here it gets the same name. There he says it was ordered in all things, and *sure*; here it is called the *sure mercies of David*; which also points to the words of the promise, “My *mercy* shall not depart from him,” 2 Sam. vii. 15. “My *mercy* will I keep for him for ever, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed (*i. e.* the Messiah,) also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven,” Ps. lxxxix. 28, 29. Jeremiah also refers to this original promise; “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, **JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,**” Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. And it is very remarkable, that whilst Jeremiah was foretelling the downfall of David’s temporal house, which happened about two years after, he should at the same time prophecy that the promise made unto David would

have a sure and full accomplishment, see Jer. xxxiii. 14—26. After David's house was deprived of the sovereignty, the Lord promised by Ezekiel that David his servant should be king over his people, and that he should be their prince for ever, Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. chap. xxxvii. 24, 25. The same thing is promised by Hosea, Hos. iii. 5. But this in fact was never accomplished, either in David personally considered, or in any of his natural seed; nor indeed could any mere mortal man be *their prince for ever*. This promise must therefore respect the Messiah, who in prophetic style is called David, in reference to the promise made unto David, that he should sit for ever on his throne, and because he is David's antitype in respect of his kingly office. Thus after the tabernacle (or kingdom,) of David had fallen down, it was promised to be raised up again in the kingdom of the Messiah; compare Amos ix. 11. with Acts xv. 16, 17.

Whatever gloss the modern Jews may now put upon this promise and the corresponding prophecies, yet their ancestors in our Lord's time applied them to the Messiah, though they rejected Jesus on account of his low and humble appearance, as was also foretold in these prophecies, Isa. liii. 2, 3. The chief priests and scribes understood that Christ was to come of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was, Matt. ii. 5, 6. John vii. 42. The miracles which Jesus did made many of them ask, "Is not this the son of David?" Matt. xii. 23. On his entry into Jeusalem, the multitude that followed him cried out, "Hosannah to the son of David!—Blessed be the kingdom of our father David!" Matt. xxi. 9. Mark xi. 10. This shews that there was at that time a general expectation of the Messiah among the Jews, grounded on the promise made unto David respecting his seed who should sit for ever on his throne; but they understood this promise of a worldly prince, who should abide with them for ever, John xii. 34. and had no notion that he was to suffer death, rise

from the dead, and enter into his glory, though that was also most clearly foretold, Dan. ix. 26. Psalm xvi. 10, 11. Psalm cx. 1.

The writings of the New Testament not only shew in general that this is a promise of the Messiah, but apply it directly to Jesus, and shew us particularly how it had its accomplishment in him. The angel, foretelling his birth to his mother, says, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke i. 31—33. compared with 2 Sam. vii. 14, 16. Isa. ix. 6, 7. Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied that the child to be born of the virgin, was the horn of salvation which God had promised to raise up in the house of his servant David, Luke i. 68—70. with Psalm cxxxii. 17. Peter declares, that the oath which God swore unto David respecting the raising one up of the fruit of his body to sit for ever on his throne, was fulfilled in God's raising up Jesus from the dead, and exalting him by his right hand, Acts ii. 30—37. with Psalm cxxxii. 11. The apostles also give the same explanation of Ps. ii. 1—8. xlv. 6, 7. cx. 1. Isa. lv. 3. applying these passages directly to Christ's resurrection from the dead, and exaltation to the throne of his kingdom; see Acts iv. 25—29. chap. xiii. 33, 34. Heb. i. 5, 8, 9, 13.

The kingdom of Christ was to take place during the last of Daniel's four monarchies, *viz.* the Roman empire. "In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed," Dan. ii. 44. And as it was set up by the God of heaven, it is termed in the New Testament, *the kingdom of God*, or *the kingdom of heaven*. This kingdom was typified by the Jewish theocracy, and declared to be *at hand* by John the Baptist,

and by our Lord and his apostles in the days of his flesh ; but it did not come with power till he rose from the dead, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, Acts ii. 32—37. Our Lord declares, that his kingdom is not of this world, John xviii. 36, 37. It is not of a worldly origin, or nature, nor has it this world for its end or object. It is not promoted or defended by worldly power, influence, or carnal weapons ; but by bearing witness unto the truth, or the preaching of the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Its *real* subjects are only those who are of the truth, and hear Christ's voice ; for none can enter it but such as are born from above, John iii. 3, 5. nor can any be *visible* subjects of it, but such as appear to be regenerated, by a credible profession of faith and obedience. Its privileges and immunities are not of this world, but spiritual and heavenly ; they are all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, Eph. i. 3. In these respects, his kingdom and church are the same, and consequently, the government of it requires the exercise both of his prophetic and priestly offices.

**CHRIST'S**

**LAW OF DISCIPLINE**

**ILLUSTRATED.**



# CHRIST'S

## LAW OF DISCIPLINE

ILLUSTRATED.

---

*“ Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother: But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”* Matt. xviii. 15—17,

IF we look back to the beginning of this chapter, we shall find that this discourse of our Lord's was occasioned by his disciples asking him “ Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ver. 1. which point they had been disputing among themselves by the way, Mark ix. 34. Luke ix. 46. As this question arose from their ignorance of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of heaven, and was dictated by their ambition, pride, envy, and covetousness, “ Jesus called a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom

of heaven," ver. 2—4. Here he gives them to understand, that the road to preferment in his kingdom, ran in a counter direction to that which leads to promotion in the kingdoms of this world—that it is he that abaseth himself that shall be exalted, Luke xiv. 11. that if any man desire to be the first in his kingdom, the same shall be least of all, Mark ix. 35. and that they must be converted from the views and dispositions which influenced their present dispute, and the question they were agitating, before they could so much as enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The example of a little child is not only intended to teach men that they can do nothing to merit admission into his kingdom, which is true in itself, but in this and other passages it is set in opposition to pride and ambition, ver. 4. Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2.—to malice, 1 Co. xiv. 20.—to guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil-speakings, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. and, in short, to every thing whereby offences arise and are fomented among brethren.

Our Lord declares that such as are converted and humbled as a little child, are the greatest and most honourable in his kingdom, ver. 4. and that he loves them so dearly, that every act of kindness done to them, he counts as done unto himself, ver. 5. and on the other hand, that whosoever shall offend, scandalize, or lay a stumbling-block in their way to make them fall from the faith, (see Lev. xix. 14. Matt. xi. 6. ch. xiii. 21, 57. Rom. xiv. 13, 21. 1 Pet. ii. 8.) it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea, ver. 6, 7.

He pronounces a woe unto the world, because of offences or stumbling-blocks, and strictly charges his disciples to part with every worldly lust or attachment of whatever kind, that might prove an offence, snare, or occasion of falling to them, though such things should be as dear and near unto them as a hand, a foot, or an eye, and this they must do as they would escape being cast into hell fire, ver. 8, 9.



He then cautions them against despising one of these little ones who believe in him. This he urges by the following arguments:—1. That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of his Father which is in heaven, ver. 10. *i. e.* The highest order of created beings do not despise these little ones, but stand in the presence of God, Luke i. 19. always ready waiting for his orders to minister to them; Heb. i. 14. how much more ought we, their brethren, to esteem and serve them?—2. That he himself had come to seek and save them when they were lost, ver. 11. Did the Son of God himself, a person of infinite dignity, the Creator of all things, and Lord of angels; instead of despising, did he love them so dearly as to come into this world to seek and save them at the expence of his own most precious life? And shall we despise, slight, or condemn those whom he loves and honours so highly? Did he come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for these little ones? Matt. xx. 28. and shall we, from some vain conceit of our superior station or excellency, think it too great condescension, and far below us to esteem, honour, and serve them?—3. That when any of his little ones go astray, he does not give them up as unworthy of his care, but compares himself to a shepherd going into the mountains, and seeking that which was gone astray, and when he hath found it, as rejoicing more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray, ver. 12, 13. see also Ezek. xxxiv. 11—17. “Even so,” says he, “it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish,” ver. 14. If therefore we would imitate the example of Christ, and concur with the will of our heavenly Father, we must neither despise our weak brother, nor hastily give up with him, and neglect the means of his recovery when fallen.

But because many questions might here arise, such as, how we are to seek and reclaim a fallen, straying, or transgressing brother?—how we are to distinguish him from

an apostate or wicked person?—and how far we are to persist in dealing with, or seeking after him, consistently with our separation from the world, and the purity of brotherly love; therefore, to obviate these difficulties, and direct our conduct in dealing with an offending brother, our Lord, in the words of the text, delivers a rule containing the form of procedure to be observed in such cases. In discussing the subject, it may be proper, first of all—To illustrate the rule according to the order of the words; and then, to make some general observations upon the whole.

*Moreover, if thy brother, &c.]* 1. The word *brother*, intimates that this rule of discipline does not respect mankind in general, but only the Christian brotherhood, the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, Col. i. 2. as distinguished from the world. Mankind at large are indeed our brethren, as being of the same species, created by the same hand, and descending from the same common parent. Those also of the same nation, tribe, or family, are called brethren; and to such we lie under obligations of duty by the law of God. But the word here is expressive of a spiritual relation; a brother in the faith; and for whom Christ died, 1 Cor. viii. 11. This relation is founded in adoption, and regeneration, by which they become the sons of God, and brethren of Christ, 1 John iii. 1. Heb. ii. 11, 12. Rom. viii. 29. and so are related to one another as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, Heb. iii. 1. and that in distinction from the world, and every political or fleshly relation. This spiritual fraternity was prefigured by the fleshly brotherhood of old Israel, who had the typical adoption. To this holy brotherhood, Christ's new commandment of brotherly love, and all the expressions of it, are peculiarly enjoined, John xiii. 34, 35. and to them are all his New Testament laws and ordinances delivered, 1 Cor. xi. 2. even as God's laws and ordinances were formerly

given to ancient Israel in distinction from the nations, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20.

2. The whole context shews that this rule is given only to Christ's disciples, and that too in a state of separation from the world. The very reason of the rule is founded on their spiritual connection with one another. It is calculated only for it, and intended to preserve the love and unity which belongs to it. It is also intended to maintain their separation from the world, by excluding from among them all who appear to belong to it, who are here denominated heathen men and publicans. Indeed it is absolutely impossible that this rule should be observed by the nations of the world, or by the disciples of Christ themselves while in communion with the nations, as shall be shewn more fully afterwards.

3. This rule does not merely respect brethren as they are *really such* in the sight of God, but as they *appear to be such* to one another in the profession of the faith. Many of the real children of God *do not appear such to one another* in this world. Others who are not his children may assume the scriptural appearance of such; and whilst they retain that appearance, they are entitled to our charity as brethren for whom Christ died, because we cannot discern the heart. The rule, therefore, respects *visible brethren*, i. e. those who by their outward profession and practice have a claim to our charitable regard; but concerning whom, upon some change in their principles or conduct, we may have occasion to alter our judgment: for we find, that he who is twice called a *brother*, ver. 15. and to be dealt with as such, is no more to be esteemed a brother, when he refuseth to hear the church upon any particular trespass he hath been guilty of, but must be held as an *heathen man* and *publican*, ver. 17.

4. This rule is delivered to Christian brethren as members of a *visible body*, and connected together in church fellowship; for if the private steps of this discipline should

not have the desired effect of gaining our brother; we are directed in the last resort to tell the trespass to the church, or congregation of which we are members, and by them, in their united capacity, and when gathered together, the matter must be judged and determined in the name and authority, of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. v. 4.

*Trespass (αμαρτηση, sin) against thee, &c.*] Though the trespass is here supposed to be committed *against a brother*; yet the rule is not restricted merely to such trespasses as respect the *private* or *personal* concerns of a brother. These indeed are included; but it also comprehends every breach of the plain law of Christ, whether it respects our duty to God, ourselves, or others; in short, every trespass whereby a brother's charity comes to be affected or weakened towards the offender. The eating of things sacrificed to idols was not a direct sin against the person of a brother; yet the apostle calls it *sinning against the brethren*, 1 Cor. viii. 12. because they viewed it as a transgression of God's law, and a species of idolatry, and so were grieved, and ready to be stumbled at such freedoms. This sinning against the brethren, he also calls *sinning against Christ*, because Christ interests himself in their welfare, and hath forbidden, under the severest penalties, to offend or stumble his little ones. To sin, therefore, against the brethren is to sin against Christ, who hath commanded us to love the brethren, and takes every injury done to them as done to himself, Acts ix. 4. And to sin against Christ is to sin against all the brethren who know it, upon account of the interest they have in their Lord, the regard they have to his honour, the concern they have in one another's conduct, and the obligation they lie under to love one another for the truth's sake. The fact is, Christ and his members have only one common interest; sin is opposite to this; and therefore it cannot be committed against a part without affecting the whole, nor against the

whole without affecting every part, in as far as it appears. If we are only concerned about private and personal injuries as they strike against ourselves, we have good reason to suspect the sincerity of our love either to Christ or our brethren. This is far from imitating the example of Christ, who, on the contrary, was meek and patient under personal injuries, but zealously affected in every thing that concerned the glory of God and the good of his people. Hence it is said, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up," John ii. 17. and again, "the reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me," Rom. xv. 3.

We need not explain what our Lord means by a trespass. It may, however, be observed, that a trespass is either the omission of something which Christ hath commanded us to do, or the commission of what he forbids us, and that either by words or actions; for it must be visible to the brother who is offended. As the law of Christ is the only rule by which we can judge our brother's conduct, we must beware of making him an offender by any law of our own, or even by forced or unnatural interpretations of Christ's law; for this indicates a domineering, quarrelsome disposition, and a desire to criminate our brother, which is most opposite to brotherly love. Farther, as nothing can warrant our being offended, but a *visible* trespass, we must beware of judging our brother's motives and dispositions any further than they evidently appear in their genuine effects; for "love thinketh no evil."

3. As to the *degree* of guilt, or *quality* of the trespass which calls for discipline, we have no warrant to make any distinction. If it be a visible trespass, or breach of Christ's law at all, it falls within the rule, unless it be of such a nature as at once to denominate the offender a wicked person, and require a summary exclusion. But we must not look upon any visible plain transgression of Christ's law to be so trivial as to fall below the line of this rule. Though it must be admitted, that there are many imper-

fections in the children of God, which must be forborne or passed over with a gentle admonition or caution, provided they are not allowed or justified.

*Go and tell him his fault* (ελεγξον αυτον, reprove or convince him) *between thee and him alone.*] 1. This is the first step of procedure with respect to private offences; and though it is of the utmost consequence that it be rightly conducted, as well for reaching its end in gaining our brother, as for clearing the way to the succeeding steps, in case he continues impenitent; yet it will be found that we are in greater danger of neglecting or mismanaging this than any other part of the process. Indeed to manage it properly requires more love, simplicity, and faithfulness, than we are often possessed of.

2. Here is an express injunction laid upon the offended brother, to tell the offender his fault. The word (ελεγκω) signifies to *reprove* or convict him, which is more than simply to tell him his fault. It imports our laying before him the law of Christ which he hath transgressed, and solemnly bringing home to his conscience, as in the sight of God, the evil nature and danger of his sin. It is the same word that is used, John xvi. 8. where our Lord, speaking of the Holy Spirit, says, "he shall (ελεγξει) *reprove* or *convince* the world of sin." In Luke xvii. 3. the word is different, but of the same import, "If thy brother trespass against thee (επιτιμησον) *rebuke* or *charge* him." The same thing was also commanded under the law, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

3. This rebuke, conviction, or reproof, must be administered in the spirit of meekness: so the apostle exhorts the Galatians, chap. vi. 1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." The first impression of a brother's guilt upon

us is generally strong, and is apt either to throw him at once out of our charity, or at least to heat and ruffle our temper to an immoderate degree, in either of which cases we are not in a proper condition to perform the office of love here enjoined. It is necessary, therefore, that we strictly watch over our spirit. We must not cast our transgressing brother out of our charity till all the instituted means of his recovery have been found ineffectual; and, in the use of these means, we must exercise meekness, patience, and humility. We must not glory over our brother with pharisaical pride and self-confidence, but, (as the apostle exhorts us in this case) to consider ourselves lest we also be tempted, and not to be high-minded, but fear. Nor must we attack him with a boisterous and lordly spirit; for, if he is not duly humbled, this will tempt him to recriminate, and strive, if possible, to find something in our own conduct equally sinful, instead of confining his attention to his own guilt; for so unreasonable are men oftentimes, that they think the faults of the reprover a sufficient argument against the conviction and acknowledgment of their own sin. But when we appear deeply impressed with a sense of our own infirmities and liableness to fall: when we discover a sympathy and concern for our fallen brother, and deal with him in the spirit of love and meekness, then he must be convinced we have nothing in our eye but his profit, and, if he is not entirely hardened, it will lead him to confine his view to the trespass he hath committed, and lay it to heart.

4. The rebuke must be administered with *plainness* and *faithfulness*. As we are not to exaggerate his guilt, neither are we to extenuate or excuse it, but must set it before him in its just magnitude and evil consequences. We must beware of soothing or flattering his pride: for, however consonant this may be to what is called good nature and breeding, it is not consistent with true Christian charity, or that honesty and freedom with which we ought

to deal with an offending brother. Though we should compromise matters in this way, we do not truly gain or restore the offender. Men naturally have too slight views of their own sins, and self love makes them ingenious to excuse them. They will own, perhaps, that the thing in itself is bad, but then the temptation was so strong they could not resist it; or their intention was good, though the action was wrong; or, perhaps, they will plead it was mere inadvertency without any design; and, in short, that it was an effect of weakness rather than wickedness, an error of the head, not of the heart! But we must strip off all such varnishings, and lead our brother to see his transgression in its naked form, as displayed in the glass of the perfect law, which represents all our sinful actions, as the impure streams of a still more corrupt fountain, and as springing from our own lusts, or the want of love to God or our neighbour. And though we are forbidden to rebuke, or rather (as the word *επιπληρω* imports) to strike or gall our brother with harsh and injurious language, 1 Tim. v. 1. which can have no other tendency than to irritate him; yet there are certain cases wherein some degree of *sharpness* is necessary to shew him the deep sense we have of his sin, and to rouse his attention to a due consideration of it. See 2 Cor. xiii. 10. Tit. i. 13. But in this we must take care that we are influenced by a zeal for the truth and love to our brother.

5. This dealing must be *private*, “betwixt thee and him alone.” This supposes that the trespass is private, and that none of the rest of the brethren know of it; but if it be committed before two or three more in the first instance, then this direction cannot be followed; because the two or three are privy to it, and must accordingly join in telling him his fault. Further, if it is committed openly, so as to be known to the whole church, then the two first steps of the rule are superseded, and the matter must come directly before the whole church. For, either the whole church are



offended, or they are not. If they are offended, then they all require satisfaction by an open confession of guilt in their presence. If they are not all offended for a plain trespass against Christ's law, then it is evident that some have too slight views of his sin, and are in danger of following his example; and therefore it becomes the more necessary to rebuke him before all, that others also may fear, 1 Tim. v. 20. even as Paul rebuked Peter, Gal. ii. 14.

But in the case here supposed, which is that of a private trespass, our Lord's rule is, "Tell him his fault *between thee and him alone.*" This is nothing but what love will naturally dictate: we shall be loth to expose the faults of those we love, till we have tried every private method to reclaim them. But if our love should not be strong enough to dictate this conduct, we ought to consider that Christ has enjoined it. It is not, therefore, a matter of mere option, as we find ourselves disposed towards our brother, but of indispensable duty to Christ; and nothing can loose us from this obligation of secresy, but the same authority enjoining us to proceed to the second step, and that only when we have failed of success in the first, and our brother continues impenitent. This secresy has a tendency to gain our brother, as it convinces him of our love to him, how tender we are of his character, and how loth we are to proceed any farther, unless we are constrained by his own obstinacy. But if on the contrary, we divulge and spread about our brother's trespass among the brethren, either openly, in confidence, or by insinuations, we thereby transgress this law of Christ, and manifest our disaffection to him; for what else but disaffection could make us take pleasure in publishing our brother's guilt? We can have no view of benefiting or reclaiming him by such conduct; on the contrary, it must prejudice the minds of others against him, and should it come to his ears after being privately whispered about, it must appear to him in a very

unfriendly light, and tend to raise his resentment, rather than strike him with conviction. Besides, it seldom fails, that the same disposition which leads us to whisper about the fault, inclines us also to exaggerate it; and as it circulates from hand to hand, it generally gains strength, though without any design. Should it therefore come to his knowledge, or be laid home to him in this exaggerated state, he will be apt to be more affected with the injustice of the charge than with the real state of the crime. Many are the excuses made for spreading a brother's fault before we mention it to himself. One will tell us, that it was extorted from them by the inquisitiveness of some whose curiosity had been raised by an undesigned hint. Another, that he mentioned it only with a view to obtain advice. This, in some cases, may be needful; but it is not needful to advise with many, far less to expose the individual, since a state of the case is sufficient for that purpose. A third will bring it out in the way of a pious lamentation over his brother, accompanied with expressions of love and concern for him. If you ask him why he does not deal with him? he will perhaps tell you, he has no stated offence, that every Christian has failings; and that he cannot look for perfection in this world.—Another will impart it to his intimate friend in the way of confidence with an injunction of secrecy, and own he should have spoken to himself, but could not as yet find a proper opportunity. But were we for a moment to try such conduct by our Lord's golden rule, of doing to others what we would have them do to us in like circumstances, our consciences would immediately tell us we were transgressors.

It may be farther observed upon this particular, that all who give a favourable ear to such whisperers, are partakers of their guilt, and encourage them to go on; and, all who repeat what they have thus heard, are equally guilty with their author. When we hear one brother divulging the trespass of another, before he has dealt with himself in pri-

vate, we ought to check him immediately, urge him to his duty, or bring the parties face to face, otherwise we cannot be innocent. Were every transgression of this kind taken up in this manner, it would effectually remedy the evil.

There are some who do not intend to divulge their brother's trespass, but neither do they tell him his fault. Such must have a very superficial impression of the evil and danger of sin, or be exceedingly defective in charity: I mean that charity which rejoiceth not in iniquity; but with the truth. Had they a proper view of sin as it is dishonouring to God, and destructive to their brother's soul: did they really love their brother for the truth's sake, and interest themselves in his immortal concerns; it is impossible they could rest until they had used the prescribed means for his recovery. But though they should have little concern for their brother, they ought at least to pay some regard to the authority of Christ, who hath commanded them to "go and tell him his fault." The neglect of this duty, therefore, not only discovers a want of love to their brother, but of loyalty to Christ, the king of Zion. Many excuses are also made for this neglect; such as,—their own unfitness to discharge the duty either as to capacity or influence—the unconquerable delicacy of their natural temper, whereby they cannot prevail upon themselves to deal plainly, or have words with any—their love of peace—their hope that the person would come to a sense of his guilt of his own accord—their charitable view of him as a Christian, in the main—or, perhaps, they will plead their youth and inexperience—the inferiority of their station, or ability to that of the offender—his proud and passionate disposition—the little hope they had of success—their fear of making matters worse, and even of bringing themselves into a snare, by his credit and influence in the church, in case they should fall under his displeasure, &c. We might very easily give a particular answer to these and all such

excuses; let it suffice, however, to observe, that they all originate in the fear of man which bringeth a snare—in slight impressions of Christ's authority—in diffidence of the divine blessing upon, and assistance in, the discharge of our duty—and in want of true love to our transgressing brother. Our neglect of this duty is expressly ascribed, in the law, to our hatred of our brother; "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour." Lev. xix. 17. Here the duty is commanded to be done *in any wise, i. e.* at any rate, whatever may be the consequence; it must by no means be neglected under any pretence whatever. To enforce this peremptory command still farther, it is sanctioned by a dreadful threatening against the transgressors of it; for the latter clause of the verse ought to be rendered, "that thou bear not sin for him," *i. e.* lest thou partake in the guilt and punishment of his sin by thy neglect; which agrees with Ezek. iii. 18—20. ch. xxxiii. 6—8. Nor is this the language of the Old Testament only; for when Paul declares that he was pure from the blood of all men, by a faithful discharge of the trust committed to him, Acts xviii. 6. ch. xx. 25. he plainly intimates, that their blood would have been upon his head, had he neglected it.

No brother can excuse his neglect of this duty by pleading, that he is not appointed as a watchman over his brethren, like the prophets, or even ordinary pastors of a church, whose office it is to watch over the flock, and therefore cannot be accountable as they were; for the command, both in the law and gospel, is directed not to church officers only, but to every private individual who has access to observe his brother's conduct. In Luke xvii. 3. our Lord introduces the rule with this general charge, "Take heed to yourselves," *i. e.* take mutual care of each other; and then in the next clause he shews how this care was to be exercised: "If thy brother trespass

against thee, rebuke him." The apostle enjoins the Hebrews to "exhort one another whilst it is called to day; lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. "And to look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God," &c. chap. xii. 15. The word (*επισκοποουντες*) signifies to *oversee* one another. If therefore all the brethren are commanded to take heed to, rebuke, exhort, and oversee one another, it is plain they have a mutual charge of one another, and consequently are accountable for the discharge of their duty in this respect.

Lastly, We ought to tell our brother his fault *immediately*, and without delay. With respect to the offender, our Lord commands him to be reconciled to his brother, before he offers his gift, or approaches unto God, Matt. v. 23, 24. intimating that his access to God is suspended while he neglects to give satisfaction. We must not, therefore, let him continue in this situation, or delay the means of his conviction or recovery. Besides, we are not ourselves in a proper case to approach the Lord, "lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting," 1 Tim. ii. 8. if we are harbouring grudges in our mind against our brother, and unnecessarily protracting a reconciliation. The apostle says, "be ye angry and sin not," Eph. iv. 26. which by the bye, shews, that anger in itself is not absolutely sinful, except when it is without a just cause, immoderate, or mixed with personal hatred, for our Lord himself is said to be angry, Mark iii. 5. but then it is immediately added, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," *i. e.* Let not anger rest in your bosom, as it does in that of fools, Eccl. vii. 9. but before the sun goes down, and the offering up of your evening prayers, study to reconcile your brother. This speedy reconciliation will prevent many of the irregularities which have been already mentioned.

*If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.]*

1. *To hear*, in the Scripture language, implies not only to pay attention with the outward ear, but also to approve of, and comply with what we hear. When it respects petitions, it signifies to give a favourable ear to them, and grant the thing desired, Ps. xxxiv. 4. 1 John v. 14, 15. When it respects doctrine or precepts, it signifies to believe and obey them, Matt. xvii. 5. John viii. 47. ch. x. 27. In this and the two following verses, it relates to correction or reproof, and signifies to take it in good part, receive conviction, and profess repentance. Accordingly, Solomon opposes it to refusing or despising reproof, Prov. xv. 31, 32. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction, (or conviction) despiseth his own soul; but he that heareth reproof, getteth understanding." That the words, "If he shall *hear* thee," import his repentance, is evident from the parallel passage in Luke xvii. 3. where the words are, "If he *repent*:" and it is farther evident from this same passage, where our Lord explains it by his being gained; "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." Hence we may learn, that what some consider as hearing the church, falls greatly below what our Lord here intends. They think, if the offender gives some outward attention to what is said to him; if he does not absolutely contradict it, or if he makes soft and discreet replies, that he is hearing the church; but all this gives no proper evidence of true conviction, and repentance, or of his truly being really gained. Regard, indeed, ought to be had to the very first and slightest symptoms of repentance, and there may be such appearances as call for a little patience and delay before we proceed to the next step; but we ought never to rest short of the great end of discipline, which is to purge out the old leaven either by reclaiming or expelling offenders.

2. If our brother repent, we are commanded to forgive him, Luke xvii. 3. We are even to forgive and love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that spitefully use and persecute us, Matt. v. 44. This forgiveness is opposed to avenging ourselves, or harbouring any desire of it in our hearts, and consists not only in wishing them well, but in doing them good as we have an opportunity, Rom. xii. 19—21. and in fervent prayers to God for their repentance and salvation, as is exemplified by our Lord on the cross, Luke xxiii. 24. and by Stephen when they were stoning him to death, Acts vii. 60. This forgiveness of enemies must have no dependance upon their repentance, otherwise we could not forgive them as enemies at all. And, this kind of forgiveness we ought still to exercise towards brethren, even when we are obliged to excommunicate them for their impenitency. But the forgiveness which our Lord intends in this discipline, is of another kind, and depends entirely upon our brother's repentance; because it is a renewal or confirmation of our complacential love to him as a brother, for the truth's sake dwelling in him; and, therefore, the very nature of the thing requires that we should perceive him to be under the influence of the truth, which we cannot do, whilst he continues impenitent. But, when he gives proper evidence of his repentance, our Lord commands us to forgive him, and he urges this duty of forgiveness upon us in the strongest manner, even as we tender the divine forgiveness. Towards the latter end of this xviii<sup>th</sup>. chapter, he delivers a parable on this subject, concerning a king who took account of his servants, and who, upon the entreaty of one of them, who owed him the enormous sum of ten thousand talents, frankly forgave him the whole debt. But that servant, forgetful of his lord's kindness and generosity to himself, took his fellow servant by the throat, who owed him the petty sum of an hundred pence, and, regardless of his most earnest and humble en-

treaties, cast him into prison till he should pay the whole : upon which his lord was wroth, and delivered that ungrateful and unmerciful servant to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him. The application of this is, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses," ver. 23—35. He hath taught us to pray to God for the forgiveness of our sins, even as we forgive others ; and hath assured us, that if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our Father forgive our trespasses, Matt. vi. 12, 15. This duty is also urged upon us from the motive of gratitude to God, and in imitation of his grace in forgiving our sins. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 32.—"If any man hath a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye," Col. iii. 13. It highly concerns us, therefore, to see that we forgive our brother when he appears to repent of his trespass, and that we do it fully and heartily, not harbouring any grudge against him in our hearts, or mentioning his fault to reproach him, but restore him to our intimacy and fervent love.

This forgiveness must be exercised as often as our brother repents, as is plain from ver. 21, 22. "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven:" which we may compare with Luke xvii. 4. "If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." This will not apply to such crimes as are mentioned, 1 Cor. v. 11. chap. vi. 9, 10. for surely seventy times seven acts of fornication, drunkenness, extortion, &c. are more than sufficient to denominate a man a fornicator, a drunkard, or an extortioner; with whom we are commanded not to eat, but to put such an



one away as a wicked person. But the faults which must be so often forgiven, are such as Christians are daily liable to in this imperfect state, through the remainder of corruption that still cleaves unto them; such as the workings of pride, ambition, envy, covetousness, &c. the effects of which will appear among disciples, as the context exemplifies, and our Lord's discourse supposes, ver. 1—7. But when a brother does not give himself up to the power and dominion of these, but appears upon every transgression to repent in good earnest, we must as often forgive him, conscious that we ourselves need daily forgiveness of God for such things lurking in our hearts, which proper temptations may soon draw forth to the view of our brethren. We can never cut off any from the communion of the church, until they appear under *the reigning power* of such corrupt dispositions; and the evidence of this is, their neglecting to hear the offended brother, the one or two more, and the church; or in other words, when all the instituted means of their recovery prove ineffectual. It is for this, and not the original offence that they are rejected.

Ver. 16. *But if he will not hear thee—*] *i. e.* receive the admonition, lay it to heart, and repent, as already explained; then our Lord directs, in the next place, to

—*Take with thee one or two more—*] This is the second step of discipline, and the end of it is two-fold.

1. To give weight to the admonition, and more effectually to reach conviction to the offender; and it is wisely calculated for that purpose. The offending brother may happen to be superior to the offended, both in natural abilities and education, and so may be apt to perplex and puzzle him as to the grounds of offence. He may perhaps consider him as weak, narrow minded, and an incompetent judge of the affair, and so despise his admonition; or he may think him impertinent and intermeddling in presuming to correct one who knows better than himself. If the trespass is of a personal nature, he may think the injured

person too much a party to judge candidly and impartially in the affair, and attribute his rebuke to resentment, rather than a sense of duty, or a concern for his recovery. But when he finds one or two more of his brethren, whose judgment he respects, and whom he has no reason to suspect of partiality, or want of affection, entertaining the same opinion of his trespass, and joining in the admonition, (which they are supposed to do, for it is said, "If he hear not them;") this, in the very nature of the thing, must give additional weight and solemnity to the rebuke, and if he be not entirely insensible, and under the power of pride and obstinacy, must greatly tend to his conviction.

2. Another end for taking one or two more, is, "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established;" *i. e.* that as witnesses they may attest and confirm the whole matter to the church, in case there should be a necessity for laying it before them. Our Lord here evidently refers to the law, Deut. xvii. 6. "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death:" also chap. xix. 15. "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin that he sinneth; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." To this there are several other references in the New Testament; see John viii. 17. 2 Cor. xiii. 1. Heb. x. 28. This law respecting witnesses is evidently intended for the benefit of the accused, that he may not suffer wrongfully by a false charge, or a rash and unjust sentence, which might often be the case were one witness sustained as sufficient evidence against him. In the very nature of the thing, one witness cannot be a sufficient evidence; for if the fact be denied, the evidence is equal on both sides; *i. e.* there is no positive evidence at all, unless there be some other circumstances to corroborate the charge. Our Lord here, agreeable to the law, states the least number that can be admitted as evidence, *viz. two*; and we are

absolutely forbidden to receive an accusation upon the testimony of a single witness, 1 Tim. v. 19. A question may here arise, *viz.* Whether the offended party is to be considered as one of the witnesses? It appears that he is, because the number he is commanded to take with him is *one* or *two*, which, by including himself as a witness, are called *two* or *three* in the very next clause. This supposes that the accuser and another witness are sufficient evidence. Indeed, where there is no personal injury in the case, nor any ground to suspect the accuser of disaffection or prejudice, he ought to be sustained as one of the two witnesses against the offender; but when the case is otherwise, and the accuser is under great temptations to be biassed, or to depose a partial or exaggerated testimony, his words require to be established by two other witnesses; and perhaps it is for this reason that *three* are mentioned as well as *two*, as the lowest number that in such a case can be admitted.

—*If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church.*] This is the third and last step of procedure in the discipline, to which recourse must be had when the former two have failed of success.

1. Many disputes have arisen about the meaning of the word *church* in this passage. The advocates of national establishments will have it to be an assembly of church officers, exclusive of the body of the people, whom they consider as incompetent judges in such matters; and they produce this passage, to prove that the word *church* is sometimes used in a representative sense. But we have no instance of any such use of the word when applied to a religious assembly, nor have we any example of a church composed of church officers in distinction from the people, in all the New Testament: on the contrary, the people are frequently called the church in distinction from their pastors; as in Acts xiv. 23. "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles, and elders." Again, Acts xv. 22. "Then

pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church." From which it is evident, that the church means the assembly of the brethren as distinguished from their pastors, and they are distinguished, ver. 23. "The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting." To argue that the word church must have another sense in our text, because the brethren are incompetent judges in discipline, is to contradict the Scripture, which sustains the brethren as proper judges of them that are within, 1 Cor. v. 12. and commands them to proceed to the last and highest act of discipline "in the name of the Lord Jesus, when they are gathered together," ver. 4, 5. Indeed, if the brethren were incompetent to judge of those whom they are to receive or reject, or if they were excluded from it, they would also be unable to obey Christ's new commandment of loving one another, which depends upon this judgment. Pastors are indeed to lead and preside in discipline, as well as in all other church matters; but they can only proceed in the presence of, and with the consent and concurrence of, the whole church, Acts xv. 4. It is, therefore, to the whole assembly of the brethren, with their bishops and deacons, that the trespass must be told.\*

\* *Tell it to the church.*] It may not be improper in this place to notice an innovation, which has of late been introduced into some recently formed churches, both in England, Scotland, and Ireland; namely, that of having the *third* step of discipline administered *publicly*, before a promiscuous assembly of believers and unbelievers. It surely would not be easy to find any *scriptural* authority for this practice, and it is much to be feared that it owes its origin solely to the love of paradox and change! Could those who are advocates for it, only acquire a sufficient portion of self-possession to examine it calmly and impartially by the rule of the word of God, they could scarcely fail to perceive two things concerning it. First, That it is an entire and most unwarrantable departure from the rule which Christ has laid down in his word: and secondly, That it is in flat opposition to the whole spirit of Christian discipline.

1. *Public disciplines are an unwarrantable departure from the law of Christ.* Nothing can be more plain, explicit, and definite, than the rule which the King of Zion hath laid down to regulate the conduct of his sub-

2. The two or three witnesses attest the truth of the charge to the church; for "in the mouth of two or three

jects on each step of discipline. He supposes an offender to be deaf to the word of reproof administered to him, first by an individual, and then by that same individual accompanied by one or two others, and he has declared his will as to all further proceedings in the affair; they are to "tell it to the church." Nay, but say the advocates of public discipline, that is not sufficient—it does not carry the matter far enough—we must "tell it to the church *and to the world.*" Now let us see what this *improvement* leads to. Let it be granted, for argument's sake, that we are warranted to add to Christ's words in the instance of the *third* step of discipline, and what should hinder us from doing it *in the second*? He has indeed said in relation to that matter, "take with thee *one or two more*;" but suppose *we should think it best* to take with us one or two and twenty—what should hinder us from doing it?—and the same reasoning will hold equally good when applied to the *first* step, viz. our going to the offender *alone*. Should it be replied, that the directions of Christ are full and express in relation to both the first and second steps of discipline, and that we have no authority to depart from them—we reply, so also are his directions respecting the *third*; and it is plainly impossible to produce any reasons which can justify a departure from the rule he has laid down for conducting the last step of discipline, which will not equally justify us in doing it when we go about either the second or the first. And thus the law becomes *our own*, and not that of the Lord Jesus! But further,

2. *Public disciplines are entirely at variance with the very end and design of the ordinance.* We need not take up much time or room in shewing, that the end for which the Saviour hath graciously instituted the discipline of his house, is not the gratification of our malignant passions in the way of being revenged on the offending brother for his contumacy, should he refuse to hear the church—but solely *the good of the offender*, by bringing him to repentance, converting him from the error of his way, and reclaiming him to the fold of Christ. In all our proceedings, from first to last, during this painful process, the only disposition which we are warranted to exercise towards him is—Love. It is "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." But to suppose that love would dictate the measure of blazoning the offender's fault to the world, is, surely, of all imaginations, the wildest! Let us only suppose ourselves in the situation of such an offender, and ask ourselves, how we should like any church to act towards us after that manner?—should we not be disposed to conclude, that their "love was turned to hate?" Men may speculate and wrangle as they please, but *no man would like it in his own case, and it is perfectly repugnant to the spirit of the Saviour's gracious institution.*

witnesses must every word (*viz.* of the accusation,) be established." See also Deut. xix. 15. Though they are not all supposed to be eye witnesses of the original trespass, yet they can testify how far it was admitted or denied in the private dealing, what evidence they have for the truth of it, and what appearance the offending brother made when they were laying it home to his conscience.

3. The church is obliged to receive the testimony of the witnesses as decisive evidence upon all facts, relating to the matter, which they have access to know. We must beware lest our good opinion of, or partiality and attachment to the offender, lead us to suspect, or wish to invalidate the evidence. This is a common case, and cannot be too much guarded against, as it is attended with the most pernicious consequences; such as hardening the offender, injuring or irritating the witnesses, dividing the church, and perhaps dissolving it. When people are previously disposed to it, they will fall upon various methods to discredit the evidence, or to perplex and render it of no effect. They may perhaps tell us that they believe the witnesses are honest, and that they speak as they think, but that in the present case they may be mistaken—that they were probably warm and prejudiced, and did not calmly attend to the state of the facts. If this will not do, they will endeavour to extenuate the guilt of the offender, by attributing it to ignorance, provocation, inadvertency, or perhaps to good intentions. But if neither of these methods succeed, they will very probably endeavour to impeach the witnesses, and leaders of the discipline, and should they discover any flaw in their conduct, or any informality in their method of proceeding, they will attribute it to disaffection, or some malicious design against the accused, and upon this ground attempt to overturn or nullify the whole proceeding. And though this should not be entirely effected, yet it can scarcely fail to divide the members of the church in their opinions, draw off their attention from the original offence, introduce

one discipline in the midst of another, discredit the testimony of witnesses, fortify the offender in his impenitency, and, in short, perplex and confound the whole matter. These consequences can only be avoided by our laying aside partiality and undue attachment to the offender, and giving that place and credit to the testimony of witnesses which our Lord here assigns it; for by their joint testimony must every word of the charge (τὰ ἀσθη,) be established, or made to *stand* firm. Nothing but their disagreement among themselves, evidence of equal weight on the opposite side, or a clear proof of their being maliciously combined against the person accused, can warrant us so much as to suspect their testimony. They may indeed have failed of their duty in several respects in the preceding part of the discipline, and when this appears, it belongs to the church to admonish them; but to reject their testimony, or stop the proceedings upon that account, would be both unreasonable and hurtful. It must be something that evidently affects their veracity that can justify this; something that discovers not merely a deficiency of love and duty towards the offender, but such a degree of hatred or ill-will, as will lead them to give a false and exaggerated statement of facts.\*

4. The charge being established by the witnesses, it then belongs to the church to consider—1. The nature and quality of the trespass, with its different circumstances, and to point out the law of Christ against which it is committed; for they must not judge their brother by arbitrary opinion, human rules, or the nostrums of a party, but by the clear and express law of the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Lawgiver of his church. It is *his* authority, and not that of men, that must appear in this matter.—2. They must lay

\* “If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong, then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother; so shalt thou put the evil away from among you,” Deut. xix. 15—21. see also Prov. xix. 5, 9.

the matter home to the conscience of the offender, with all that solemnity, faithfulness, and concern which the nature of the case requires, and which becomes those who are acting in the name, and by the authority of the Lord Jesus. Every one who speaks ought duly to weigh his words, and consider their tendency to the point in hand. Rash and unguarded expressions have often a very bad effect. They must beware of entering into any altercation or dispute, either with the offender or one another, which must greatly mar the solemnity, and lessen the weight and effect of the admonition. Their business is not to dispute and argue with him, as if every thing were yet to be established, but to convict and humble him, by dealing with his conscience from the word of God. We may overcome him in all his arguments, and drive him from every subterfuge, without gaining him in the least degree, but rather irritate and affront him. We should ever remember, that it is the power of God's word and Spirit, and not our own wisdom, or ability for reasoning, that can humble, and bring a guilty sinner to repentance; and however anxious we may be for our brother's recovery, we must beware of using any improper influence to force and extort a confession which does not arise from true conviction and contrition of heart.—

3. When the church have thus discharged their duty, in laying before him his guilt, and urging him to repentance, by all the motives which the word of God affords, they are then called to form their judgment, and come to a determination respecting him, according as he appears to receive or reject the admonition. Every member of the church is obliged to come to a decisive verdict upon the case. It is laid before them as judges in the last resort; from their sentence there is no appeal under heaven. None, therefore, must hold themselves neutral and unresolved. They must deeply interest themselves in the matter, and weigh it with the greatest attention and deliberation, as they are to



give the judgment of God from his word, and act in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus.

—*But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*] Our Lord here speaks after the manner of the Jews, and with a reference to their practice, which was well understood by the Jewish disciples who at first heard him. The term (*ο εθνικος*) *heathen* or *Gentile*, was applied to all who were not of the stock of Abraham, or within the pale of the Jewish church. It literally signifies, *a man of the nations*, and that, in distinction from Israel the peculiar people of God, who were not reckoned among the nations, Num. xxiii. 9. but were separated from all the nations of the earth by circumcision, and the peculiar covenant at Sinai, as a holy people to the true God. To Israel, in distinction from the nations, “pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,” Rom. ix. 4. On the other hand, the Gentiles, or people of the nations, are described as “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and being without God in the world,” Eph. ii. 12.

*Publicans* (*τελωναι*.) were officers of the Roman revenue, or tax-gatherers, and generally persons of dissolute lives, as well as extortioners. They were particularly odious to the Jews, who valued themselves on their freedom as the seed of Abraham, and could not endure this badge of subjection to a foreign power; so that those of their own nation who undertook this employ, were looked upon as no better than uncircumcised heathens, and were treated in the very same manner. When, therefore, our Lord says, “Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican,” he means, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican were to the Jews. This implies,

I. That we should no longer esteem the impenitent and incorrigible offender as a brother, but count him as an

alien, who has lost the visible character of a child of God, and forfeited all title to our charitable regard as such. This was the judgment which the strict Jews formed of heathens and publicans; they considered them either as aliens or apostates from the God of Israel, and so having no title to the peculiar privileges of his people. And such is the judgment which our Lord commands us to form of those who neglect to hear the church; so that we are not left at liberty to exercise and express our charity for them as Christians; for if they are guilty, and hear not the church, our Lord hath expressly stated what judgment we are to form of them. In this matter, therefore, our judgment ought to be regulated by his law, and not by the vague and capricious influence of our own feelings, by slight views of sin, by partialities or attachments. Though the offender should have been a person of the most amiable character, both in the church and in the world—though he should have been eminent in usefulness, both by his gifts, and the liberal distribution of his substance—though we should be united to him by the nearest ties of blood and the dearest friendship, or under the strongest obligations of gratitude—nay, though we should have had the clearest evidence of his Christianity, and have been often refreshed and edified by his heavenly conversation while we took sweet counsel together; yet none of these things, nor all of them put together, (though they may heighten our sorrow and regret,) ought to bias our minds, or keep us from coming to the decisive judgment here enjoined, when he neglects to hear the church. This judgment does not respect his *final state*, but his *present condition* as it appears to us, judging him by the open rule of God's word; and it consists well with our hopes of his repentance, and our earnest desires and prayers to God for his recovery, which is indeed the main end of discipline.

2. It implies that we should exclude him from the communion of the church, and hold no religious fellowship with him whilst he continues impenitent; and that either private

or public. The Jews would have no religious fellowship with heathens. Indeed their law was very strict and pointed in this matter, prohibiting all intercommunity of worship with the people of the nations; see Deut. ch. vii. *passim*. They considered the place of worship defiled by the very presence of such, Acts xxi. 28. xxiv. 6. and even Gentile proselytes were not admitted to full communion. If, therefore, the impenitent person must be to us, "as a heathen man or a publican" was to them, we must surely cut him off from our religious communion; and this the apostle expressly commands in the case of the incestuous person, "Therefore put away from among you that wicked person," 1 Cor. v. 13. or as it may be literally rendered, (*καὶ ἐξαλείψετε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν*), *put away the evil from among you*, which are the very words used by the LXX. in Deut. xiii. 5. xvii. 6, 7. xxi. 2. xxii. 21. The same thing is meant by the apostle, when he exhorts the Corinthians to purge out the old leaven, that they may be a new lump; and the reason is, because "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. This exclusion of an incorrigible offender must be a solemn, express, and formal deed of the whole church, as the apostle directs, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. Whatever may be considered as peculiar to the apostolic age in these words, one thing is clear in them, *viz.* that putting away impenitent persons from the communion must be a solemn deed of the whole church when gathered together; for it is called *the punishment inflicted of many*, 2 Cor. ii. 6. It must be done with unanimity and agreement. A dissatisfied minority would be a schism in the body; and in vain should we attempt to compliment one another with an unscriptural forbearance in such a difference, because it is scarcely

possible it should be either sincere or lasting. Besides, it must frustrate the effect of the discipline on the offender.

3. It implies that we should neither keep company nor eat with the excommunicated person; for so the strict Jews carried themselves toward heathen men and publicans. Hence we find them blaming our Lord and his apostles, for keeping company and eating with publicans and sinners, *Mat. ix. 11. Luke v. 30. xv. 2.* This is further evident from Peter's words to Cornelius and his house, "Ye know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation," *Acts x. 28.* Accordingly, the Jewish Christians blame him in this manner: "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them," *ch. xi. 3.* The prohibition to keep company or eat with expelled members, is not only clear from the practice of the Jews towards heathens and publicans, to which our Lord here refers us; but the apostle also expressly lays the same prohibition upon the Corinthians: "But now I have written to you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat," *1 Cor. v. 11.\**

\* To prevent mistakes upon this subject, it will be proper to observe, that our Lord, in referring us to the practice of the Jews, is not continuing the ancient separation betwixt the fleshly Israel and the nations, for this he set aside by his death, *Eph. ii. 13—20.* and now calls his people out of all nations without difference, *Rom ix. 24.* Nor is he establishing the same kind of separation betwixt his subjects and the world at large; for the Jews were forbidden to inter-marry with the people of the nations, *Deut. vii. 3.*—The prohibition of certain meats as unclean, belonged also to that separation, *Lev. xx. 22—26,* and this prohibition they also understood as making it unlawful for them to keep company or eat with those of another nation, see *Acts x. 14, 15,* with *ver. 28, ch. xi. 3.* But the true Christian separation from the world, does not consist of any of those particulars, as is clear from *1 Cor. vii. 12, 13, 14, ch. v. 9, 10, ch. x. 27. Rom. xiv. 14, 17,* where we find that marrying, keeping company, and eating with unbelievers, are permitted under the gospel. It follows, therefore, that this command of our Lord, which refers us to the conduct

Some may perhaps think this sort of carriage toward an excommunicated person, very forbidding and pharisaical, and tending rather to alienate his mind, than to gain him. But surely Christ knows better that we do what is best suited to gain or reclaim an offender; and we ought cheerfully to acquiesce, without gainsaying, in the means which unerring wisdom hath prescribed for that purpose. No part of this rule, indeed, is suited to humour the pride of the human heart; but it is well calculated to reach conviction to the offender, to awaken in him a sense of his sin and danger, and so to excite that godly sorrow which worketh repentance. Putting him away from the Christian communion, serves to remind him, and awaken his fear of being put away and for ever separated from the assembly of the just in the day of Christ's appearing, when the judge shall pronounce that terrible sentence, "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity;" or, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire pre-

of the strictest Jews towards the heathens and publicans, is not intended as a rule for our conduct toward the world in general, but is restricted to the subject in hand, viz. the case of an impenitent and incorrigible person who is called a *brother*. This distinction is plainly stated by the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 9, 10, 11. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the *fornicators of this world*, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a *brother* be a fornicator; &c. with such an one no not to eat. Here is a plain difference made betwixt our keeping company and eating with men of wicked characters in the world, and our doing it with a *professed* brother of such a character. The former is permitted on necessary occasions; the latter is absolutely prohibited. By eating, here, some understand eating the Lord's Supper. But the eating which is forbidden with one that is called a *brother*, is such as is allowed with the *fornicators of this world*, and therefore cannot be eating the Lord's Supper. Besides we are forbidden even to keep company with such an one, which must preclude every kind of eating whatever. Should we associate or eat with him in any sense, he would not be unto us as the heathens and publicans were to the Jews; for they did not only exclude such from their religious fellowship, but would neither associate nor partake with them in their common meals.

pared for the devil and his angels." Mat. vii. 22, 23, chap. xxv. 41—45. Indeed it is the very instituted sign of that judgment, which will infallibly and irrevocably follow it in due time, unless he repents.—Our avoiding to keep company or eat with him, is intended as a standing memorial of the same thing, viz. to lead him continually to reflect on his sin which has reduced him to such a state, and to let him see, that unless he is delivered from his pride or worldly lusts, he can have no part or portion with the children of God.

This concluding part of the discipline is not only intended for the recovery of the offender, and that the "spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;" but also for the benefit of the whole church. It is designed for an example, to excite in each member a holy cautious fear of offending. This was the end of putting away the evil from old Israel, Deut. xvii. 12, 13. "And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously." When the Lord cut off that earthly nation from being his church and people, the apostle directs Christians to make the following use of it: "Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith: Be not high-minded but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off," Rom. xi. 20, 21, 22. And writing to Timothy, he shews that this fear is one end of the Christian discipline: "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear," 1 Tim. v. 20.—The prohibition to keep company or eat with him, if properly complied with, is also of great benefit to the church, as it prevents his evil influence from contaminating the members. Whilst he continues impenitent he must be disaffected towards the brethren, at least towards those of them whom he considers to have been most active in the discipline against him;

this will naturally lead him to throw out such reflections as may disaffect the minds of the brethren, and perhaps sow the seeds of discord and animosity among them, whereby the whole body may at last become infected. This evil influence is represented as leaven which leavens or ferments the whole lump; to prevent which we are commanded to purge it out, and that not only by casting the offender out of the church, but also by avoiding his company after he is thus cast out; for without this, the evil is not put away from amongst us, as we are directed, 1 Cor. v. 13. Let none therefore think this particular trivial or indifferent, a thing they may observe or neglect as they find themselves disposed. It bears the stamp of divine authority which ought to bind every one of us; it also carries its reason in its own bosom; and experience may have taught us by this time its utility, as well as the evils which arise from the neglect of it. To disregard this prohibition is not only a disobeying of Christ, and a tacit impeachment of his wisdom and goodness, but it also argues a good deal of self-confidence, as if an individual could have greater weight with the offender than the whole church, and was sufficient proof against his evil influence: though it will be found that those who are most apt to transgress in this matter are generally the most deficient in these respects. When once the offender is cut off from the communion by a solemn deed of the whole church, we have no warrant to deal with him any farther, but are prohibited even from associating with him. Nothing, therefore, can open the door of communication but his repentance. This is an essential preliminary to a renewal of correspondence. And should this appear genuine and hearty, we are bound by the law of Christ to forgive him, to comfort him, to restore him into communion, and to confirm our love towards him, and thus give proof that we are obedient to the word of Christ in all things, as directed by this apostle, 2 Cor. ii. 6—12. “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise

ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it, in the person of Christ; lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

II. We come now to make some general observations upon the whole of what has been said. And

I. It is manifest that the discipline of Christ's house is a most gracious institution, and has for its object the best of ends. There are many persons who look upon it in an unfavourable light, and though they are obliged to acknowledge that it is the law of Christ, and, on some occasions, necessary; yet they are very far from being heartily reconciled to it; for when such occasions occur, they are found either opposing it under some pretence or other, or undetermined about the conclusion of it, when they are obliged to admit, both the guilt and impenitency of the offender. They will speak a great deal about patience, meekness, forbearance, mercy, and charity, as it were by way of contrast to the most unexceptionable exercise of discipline, all which indicates that they consider it in some degree as harsh, uncharitable and cruel. But the very contrary is the case. The more strict and faithful we are in adhering to the rule in all its parts, the more do we display of real mercy and love both to the offender and the church; for it is a rule full of grace, and suited to our imperfect state in this world. This will appear if we consider some of the principal ends of it.

(I.) It is intended to maintain the separation of Christ's church from the world, and so to keep up the purity of the communion, as the apostle exhorts, "Be ye not unequally



yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. By looking diligently lest any fail of the grace of God—lest there be any profane person among us as Esau, preferring the gratification of his lusts to the heavenly inheritance, we come to discover the root of bitterness, which springing up might trouble and defile the communion, Heb. xii. 15, 16, and by the timely putting away of the evil from amongst us, the church comes to be freed from the dangerous infection. Many complain of a mixed and impure communion, who have not the least notion of the cause, nor of any part they have to act either to prevent or remedy it; nay, who would be the very first to cry out against the means which Christ hath appointed for that end. Many persons withdraw from the National Church because they see that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and that a worldly nation cannot be a church of Christ, or a pure communion; but then in their separate communion, there is nothing further from their heart, than strictly to put in practice this rule of our Lord which is the only way to preserve the purity of the fellowship even in congregational societies, and without which they will in process of time, grow the most contemptible and corrupt of any societies on earth. The purity of a church does not depend merely on a proper admission of members; but *principally* on the faithful exercise of discipline, nor can it be preserved unless every individual discharge his duty in this respect as occasion requires.

(2.) Another end of discipline is to recover or reclaim an erring or transgressing brother. In this imperfect state, possessed of deceitful and wicked hearts, and surrounded with numberless temptations, we are all liable to err from the path of truth and duty. The whole of the New Testament supposes this, and consequently abounds with cautions,

warnings, and exhortations to watchfulness, lest we should be entangled and overcome by the power of temptation or the deceitfulness of sin. But this matter is not left to bare exhortations. Christ, out of his great love to his people, hath instituted churches, and also ordained that every member of these churches should have the same care of one another; and hath given them this rule to direct them how they are to recover a transgressing brother from the error of his way. The preacher says, "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up." Eccl. iv. 10. But how great is the privilege of the Christian brotherhood, when each one is concerned to lift up his fallen brother and where this mutual care is conscientiously exercised according to this gracious rule. To encourage us in this, James says, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins," Jam. v. 19, 20. How beneficial a work is this, TO SAVE A SOUL FROM DEATH! and must not that be a work of love, to which James ascribes the same effect that Peter does to charity, (1 Pet. iv. 8.) "it hides a multitude of sins." In this, we, as it were, co-operate with God in bringing him to repentance, or with the good Shepherd, who seeks out and finds his straying sheep, Matt. xviii. 12, 13. How honourable, how merciful, and divine an employment is this! This watching over and faithfully dealing with one another in love, is one of the greatest privileges of our church connection. By this, conviction is more pointedly brought home than it can be supposed to be in the public doctrine. The speaker, indeed, from a knowledge of the general corruption of human nature, and from experience of the plague of his own heart, may hit the mark very nearly in many cases. But we can hear general doctrines and perhaps relish the discourse, while we do not properly lay to heart our own case, however

clearly described. Ezek. xxxiii. 30—32. We can apply that to others which we do not take home to ourselves; nay, we can highly censure that in others which we indulge in ourselves; so deceitful a thing is self-love, 2 Sam. xii. 5. Rom. ii. 1. We can freely own our sinfulness in general, as every professor must do, and yet be loth to admit particulars. We may even bear to have our particular faults set before us in the public doctrine; while we think the speaker has not intentionally singled us out. All this is very consistent with impenitency. But this rule has still a more pointed direction; it pitches upon and singles out the individual offender, as Nathan did David, with, "Thou art the man." Besides, it has this farther advantage above the public doctrine, that it does not conclude with our merely telling him his fault, but directs us to press for the end, viz. his repentance; and that by such a process, as at every successive step increases in its weight and solemnity. And though we should at last be obliged to cut him off; yet this is so far from being an unmerciful or cruel act, that it is the greatest deed of love we can in such circumstances render him, it being designed for "the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Lord Jesus."

(3.) It is also intended for an example to deter others from similar practices, as was formerly observed. We have a remarkable instance of this effect of discipline, in the church at Jerusalem, when the Lord himself exercised it in an awful manner upon Ananias and Sapphira; for it is said, "Great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women," Acts v. 11, 13, 14. Here we find a threefold effect produced by the punishment inflicted upon the hypocrites. It filled the whole church with a solemn reverence and religious fear of offending God.

Christ evidently manifests himself among them, in the effects of his jealousy and holiness, "with his eyes as a flame of fire and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," making the church to know, that it is he who searcheth the reins and heart, and will give to every one according to his works. Rev. ii. 18, 23.—The world around them, who heard of these things, saw that God was among them of a truth, and were filled with consternation and dread, like the men of Bethshemesh, (1 Sam. v. 20,) as unable to stand before this holy Lord God; and though they venerated and spake respectfully of the apostles and their adherents, yet they durst not presume to join themselves to them, lest they should be found unapproved, and fall victims to the divine jealousy. But those who really believed in Christ, and found refuge under the covert of his blood, were by this, and every display of God, the more induced to join themselves unto the church. Then it was that the church appeared "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Song vi. 10. And wherever discipline is faithfully exercised according to the word of God, it must have some degree of the same effects, both on the church and those around them.

(4.) Lastly, The discipline of Christ's house is designed to preserve the fervent exercise of brotherly love among all the members, so that it may circulate freely through the whole body. In this imperfect state, where the best men are sanctified only in part, it is impossible but that offences among brethren will arise. Our Lord well knew this, and has therefore wisely and graciously instituted this rule of discipline for the purpose of removing them; and unless his churches pay a constant and scrupulous attention to it, the purity of their communion, and their separation from the world cannot possibly be long maintained. When no care is taken of the field, roots of bitterness will unavoidably spring up to the defiling of many. Churches that may have

been originally formed upon the purest principles, will degenerate, by the neglect of discipline, into synagogues of Satan. In process of time they come to lose every feature of a Christian church, exposing themselves to the Saviour's righteous displeasure, until he, at last, fight against them with the sword of his mouth, and scatter them in his indignation. And we may add, that without the proper exercise of discipline, no church can long hold fast the faith, hope, and love of the gospel. Inattention to discipline, will gradually pave the way for corruption in doctrine, while a relaxing from the form of sound words will unavoidably introduce that leaven, which the faithful exercise of discipline can alone purge out, and which, if suffered to remain, "must leaven the whole lump."

2. From the whole of what has been said, we may see that this discipline is neither calculated for, nor indeed is it practicable by any *National* church, nor yet in a *parish*, which is a part of the former, and of the same kind with the whole. Take the inhabitants of any whole district, such as a parish, and selecting the most moral and religious that can be pitched upon, the exercise of Christ's law of discipline will be found utterly impracticable in it. Their minds are neither principled for, nor disposed to comply with the laws of brotherly love which Christ has enjoined on his disciples. The generality of men, when offended, either through pride despise the offender; or harbour it in their breasts and keep their distance; or seek retaliation. Perhaps a regard to their worldly interests may induce them to drop the affair; or time may wear it off. If the offence should not affect their worldly interest, however sinful in their neighbour, it does not affect them; they are neither concerned about their brother's soul, nor the dishonour done to Christ!

Even a disciple of the Lord Jesus, while connected with such worldly churches, cannot put this rule in practice. Let us suppose that he considers a parish as his brethren,

and himself bound to love them as such; and so to proceed, according to this rule, to remove every thing that mars his love or affects his charity. Without looking very diligently, he will find many trespasses committed in a country following the course of this world. But how shall he reclaim them or obtain satisfaction? Were he to go and tell them their fault, some of the more licentious would probably curse him for a canting hypocrite—others touched with keen resentment at the supposed affront and at his impudence in calling them to account, might proceed to summary vengeance, as Herod threw John the Baptist into prison—others again, might think it an attack upon their characters, and perhaps prosecute him for scandal or defamation. Even the religious Pharisees of the age, who cry out against the vices of others, would be ready to say, “Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?” Whilst the majority of them would consider him as an impertinent intermeddler, and intolerably censorious. “Thus, in throwing pearls before swine, and giving that which is holy unto dogs, they would trample them under their feet, turn again and rend him.”

And how shall he avail himself in the last resort? shall he tell it to the church? He has neither access to do this, nor are they permitted to judge in the matter—neither indeed are *they* capable of determining such affairs, who have no proper knowledge of the law of Christ themselves, or love to their brother. He must therefore content himself with telling it to the rulers, who will pay little attention to the satisfaction of the informer, unless it be a matter of public scandal; and even in that case, some formal piece of penance, or pecuniary fine, is all the repentance they require. From all which it is clear, that a disciple of Christ cannot put this rule in practice in any such society. Hence it follows, that such societies cannot be real churches of Christ; they are not agreeable to his institution, nor

subject to his laws. That therefore, the children of God should come out from amongst them, and separate themselves unto the law of their God, uniting in love and charity among themselves, to observe all Christ's commandments. And let those who are thus united, see that they highly esteem their privileges, walk worthy of them, and suitably improve them, lest the Lord should scatter or unchurch them.





**ESSAYS**

ON

**VARIOUS SUBJECTS.**

---

REPRINTED FROM THE THEOLOGICAL REPOSITORY,  
LIVERPOOL, 1800—1802.



## ESSAY I.

---

### ON THE SUITABLENESS OF THE GOSPEL METHOD OF SALVATION TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MAN.

---

---

IT has been already shewn, that the contempt and indifference which the Gospel meets with from the greater part of those who have access to hear it, arises from *false hopes*; and that these spring from ignorance of the true character of God, of the purity and extent of the divine law, and of the guilty and ruined condition of man. We shall now point out, in a few particulars, the *suitableness* of the Gospel method of salvation to the circumstances of man.

The subject of the Gospel which the apostle Paul preached, was Jesus Christ and him crucified, 1 Cor. i. 23. chap. ii. 2. This doctrine, he says, was to the unbelieving Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. However much these two classes of men differed in their sentiments in other respects, they were agreed in this, that the gospel method of salvation, through a crucified Saviour, was altogether unsuitable and absurd, unworthy of God, and inadequate to any valuable end. In opposition to this, the apostle affirms, that “unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the

wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. If this method of salvation be the power and wisdom of God, then it must necessarily be the most suitable, and in all respects effectual for attaining the great ends which he intends by it.

We can have no proper view of the suitability of the gospel method of salvation to man's circumstances, without taking into consideration the concernment of the divine perfections in it, and how it comports with the honour and glory of God. God's chief and ultimate end in all his works and ways, is the display of his own glorious character and perfections; and this is repeatedly declared to be his end in the work of redemption. It is "to the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. i. 5, 6.—It is "that we should be to the praise of his glory," ver. 12, 14.—and "that he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus," chap. ii. 7. His wisdom, power, and goodness are clearly manifested in the works of creation and providence; but it was reserved for the work of redemption to give a complete, consistent, and satisfying display of his moral character, and particularly of his good will towards fallen man; for herein his manifold wisdom, infinite holiness, inflexible justice, amazing love, and sovereign free grace, are displayed and exercised in the highest degree. To believe and esteem the gospel salvation, we must see it to be worthy of God; we must in some measure perceive the glory of God shining in the face of Christ; and that "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Next to the glory of God, the eternal happiness of man is the declared end of redemption. God, out of his infinite love, "sent his only begotten Son into the world" for this end, "that we might live through him," "that the world through him might be saved," or "that whosoever believeth

in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," 1 John iv. 9. John iii. 14—18. To have a proper view of the plan of redemption, and a due esteem of it, it is necessary that we should be deeply sensible of our need of it, as being in a perishing state, and shut out from all hope from any other quarter, and that we should also perceive that it is fully adequate and suitable to our lost condition.

In pointing out the suitability of the Gospel method of salvation to the circumstances of man, we might insist upon the suitability of the Saviour, and his qualifications for that great undertaking, in respect of—His divine dignity, being over all, God, blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5. and so mighty to save;—the constitution of his person as Emmanuel, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Heb. ii. 14—17. whereby he was fitted to be a proper Mediator between God and man, to make reconciliation for sin;—his headship and representative capacity as the second Adam, with his relation to, and intimate union with the children whom God has given him, that they might be made righteous by his obedience, as they were made sinners by the disobedience of the first man, Rom. v. 19;—the offices with which he is invested as Redeemer; and, in a word, the fulness that it hath pleased the Father should dwell in him as the head, for a complete supply to all the exigencies of his body the church, Col. i. 19. chap. ii. 9, 10. But to enter particularly into these things, would greatly exceed the bounds allotted us in a short essay. We shall, therefore, state a few leading particulars wherein the Gospel method of salvation appears fully suited to the fallen state of man.

1. Man is in a state of guilt and rebellion against God, and so has incurred his righteous judgment and just displeasure. The apostle proves at large, that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin; that there is none righteous, no not one; and that the whole world is become guilty before God, having all sinned, and come short of his glory, Rom.

iii. 9, 10, 19, 23; that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, ver. 20. as none can either make atonement for his past offences, or yield perfect obedience to the law in time to come, so as to obtain pardon and acceptance on that account; that therefore all mankind are liable to the curse denounced in the law against the transgressors of it, and are exposed to the everlasting wrath of God, Gal. iii. 10. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9.

Man could not be delivered from this hopeless state of guilt and condemnation by a mere act of divine power, or of absolute indemnity at the expence of law and justice. It must be accomplished in a method consistent with, and manifestative of the character of God as the moral governor of the world. Provision must be made for the display of his holiness, righteousness and truth, as well as of his mercy and sovereign free grace. Justice must be satisfied, the holy law magnified, the honour of the supreme Lawgiver vindicated, and his hatred of sin, and love of righteousness fully manifested. Now all these ends are fully answered by the obedience unto death of the Son of God, as the representative and substitute of sinners. His death was an atoning sacrifice for our sins, the ransom price of our redemption; for as the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all, so he suffered the just for the unjust, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; and thus he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; and was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. See Isa. liii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 24. chap. iii. 18. Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. v. 21. In this sacrifice of his beloved Son, God hath manifested himself well pleased, by raising him again from the dead, and exalting him to the highest glory and honour at his own right hand, Rom. iv. 25. Philip. ii. 8, 9. Heb. i. 3. And it is through this voluntary and meritorious sacrifice of the Son of God, that sinners obtain remission of sins, peace

with God; the adoption of sons, and the eternal inheritance, Eph. i. 7. Rom. v. 1. Gal. iv. 5. Heb. ix. 15. How suitable is this remedy to the guilty circumstances of man! and what a striking display does it give of the character of God, as just and merciful in perfection! such as is suited to excite a mixture of holy awe, supreme esteem, and lively gratitude.

2. Man by the fall lost the moral image of God, and his nature became wholly corrupted. His understanding is blind to divine things; his will is perverse, and his affections carnal and earthly; so that he is represented as alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, and as possessed of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Eph. iv. 18. Rom. viii. 7, 8. This depravity of nature, which we derive from Adam, is frequently termed the flesh, or the old man. While men are under the reigning power and dominion of sin, they cannot, from the very temper and state of their minds, be happy; they are alienated from God, the object and source of all true happiness, consequently are incapable of enjoying him.

But the Gospel also contains a remedy for this moral disorder of the soul. It provides, not merely for the justification of the ungodly through a divine atonement, but also for their regeneration and sanctification by means of the word and Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit, by enlightening the mind in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and by discovering its evidence, suitableness, and excellency, brings the will and affections under the prevailing influence of its motives, and so sanctifies the soul by means of that truth, which gives peace and hope towards God, removes the enmity, and reconciles the heart to his true character, and excites supreme love to him. Thus the heart is purified by faith, and faith working by love is the new creature. See John xvii. 17. Acts xv. 9. Gal. v. 6.

chap. vi. 15. And thus men are born again of the Spirit, John iii. 5. by means of the incorruptible seed of the word which by the Gospel is preached, and which is also the means of their progressive sanctification and growth in the divine life, 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. chap. ii. 2, 3.

3. The absolute freedom of the Gospel method of justification is also most admirably suited to the guilty and helpless condition of man. It is not suspended upon his performing the works of the law; for by these no flesh can be justified in God's sight. Nor does it require any previous exertions or exercises of his to entitle him to be justified, to qualify and prepare him for it, or to enter into his consideration as a ground or warrant for his trusting in the merits of Christ for acceptance. But salvation comes to him freely, by means of the report or testimony of the Gospel concerning Christ, and the work which he hath finished by his death and resurrection for the justification of sinners; and he receives it in believing that testimony, wherein he finds every thing suited to his own case, guilty, unprepared, and unqualified as he stands. Thus he is justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, not working, but believing on him that justifieth the *ungodly*, Rom. iii. 24. chap. iv. 5, 24, 25. But as the natural ignorance, pride, and legal bias of the human heart will not permit them to submit to the righteousness of God, and the freedom of his grace; so that faith which corresponds with grace, and whereby men believe unto righteousness, is not of themselves, but is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8.

4. The children of God, while in this world, though they are washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God, yet are they still weak and imperfect creatures. They know but in part, and are imperfect in their sanctification. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that they cannot



do the things that they would," Gal. v. 17. They are also often tried with afflictions and temptations, and surrounded with many spiritual enemies, which they are unable of themselves to overcome. How well adapted to these circumstances is the merciful constitution of grace revealed in the Gospel! A throne of grace is established in heaven upon the sacrifice and mediation of the Son of God; believers have continued access to come to this with freedom that they may obtain mercy to pardon their daily failings; for the blood of Jesus Christ is a fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness; therefore, if any man sin, they have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for their sins; so that if they confess their sins, God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and cleanse them from all unrighteousness. They have also access to the throne of grace, to find grace to help in time of need, or suitable assistance and support under every trial or affliction. Christ, their great high-priest, is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as they are, yet without sin; and as he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted, making his grace sufficient for them, and his strength perfect in weakness. Thus by a continued supply of the Spirit of grace they are supported under all their conflicts, preserved from apostacy, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. See 1 John i. 9. chap. ii. 1, 2. Heb. ii. 17, 18. chap. iv. 15, 16. 2 Cor. xii. 9. 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

5. Man is a mortal creature, and his body must return to the dust, according to the sentence denounced upon the first man; for "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed through him unto all men, in whom all have sinned," Rom. v. 12. so that "it is appointed unto men once to die," Heb. ix. 27. Believers are not exempted from this sentence, for the body is dead because of sin, Rom. viii. 10. Death is a serious and

awful subject; but the Gospel is well calculated to support the minds of believers in the prospect of their dissolution, as it brings life and immortality to light. Christ by his death hath taken away sin, which is the sting of death; he hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivers them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage, 1 Cor. xv. 56. Heb. ii. 14, 15. The Gospel assures the believer, that when his earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, and he is absent from the body, he shall be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 1, 6, 8. Luke xxiii. 49. It also assures him of the resurrection of his body at the last day. Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, hath repeatedly promised this, John vi. 39, 40, 44. He is himself risen from the dead as the first fruits of them that slept, and has the keys of hell and of death; and he will at last destroy that formidable enemy, and raise his people from the grave, with their bodies fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to him, 1 Cor. xv. 20, 21, 26, 54. Philip. iii. 20, 21. Then all enemies will be finally subdued, and the happiness of the saints will be consummated in eternal glory.

Thus the Gospel method of salvation is fully suited to the circumstances of fallen man. It not only answers to the damage which came by the one offence of Adam, but greatly exceeds it, and advances the redeemed to a higher state of perfection and happiness than that which was lost. See Rom. v. 15, 16, 17, 20, 21. And thus grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30.

## ESSAY II.

---

### OBJECTIONS AGAINST DIVINE INFLUENCE

#### Answered.

[In a Letter to a Friend.]

---

WHILE I need consolation to my own mind, I wish I could say something to relieve yours; but I own I have no hope of doing this but what is formed on the very ground of your objection, viz. *divine influence*; for even a Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. I am the more discouraged in this attempt when I consider, that your objection lies also against the divine authority of the Scriptures, as being inconsistent with the character of God; for while that sentiment has hold of your mind, no argument from the word of God can have any weight with you.

You ask, “how does it appear that the Gospel is adapted to men in their present circumstances, since they can derive no benefit from it without divine influence?” By the Gospel you must either mean the *glad tidings* of salvation, or the *salvation* itself which these glad tidings reveal.

If by the Gospel you mean only the revelation or *glad tidings* of salvation, then I answer, that, as the Gospel is a sufficient revelation of all that is necessary to be known or believed unto salvation; as it reveals this in great plainness of speech, so as to be level to every capacity; as it carries in it sufficient rational evidence, both external and internal, that it is a revelation from God; and as it is the means which God hath appointed, and with which his Spirit

concur for the salvation of men, so it must necessarily be well adapted to their circumstances, and have all that fitness or suitableness in it to enlighten, convince, and gain upon their hearts, which belongs to the nature of outward means, and which is sufficient to render all to whom it comes altogether inexcusable in rejecting it. So Jesus himself declares, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now have they no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father," John xv. 22, 24. Here you see, that he considered the Gospel which he preached to them, and confirmed by his miraculous works, so well suited to beget conviction, as to leave them no excuse whatever for their unbelief, which unbelief he attributes, not to any deficiency in the means, but to their hatred both of him and his Father. Their minds were averse to the character of the true God, as exhibited in the Gospel, which was so far from being a reasonable excuse, that it was a very high aggravation of their guilt. But your objection sustains this as a sufficient excuse; for, in reply to the reason I gave why men do not believe the Gospel, viz. the deep-rooted prejudices and aversion of the human heart, you say, "Though this should be admitted, I cannot see it any answer at all to the objection, since this is exactly the ground of it, that the Gospel itself, without divine influence, is insufficient to overcome these deep-rooted prejudices." Now, if this objection be well founded, the Jews might have replied to Christ, "Your doctrine, however clear, interesting, and well attested, is no way adapted to convince us; and to say that this is owing to our love of darkness, and hatred of you and your Father, is no answer at all to the objection; for that is what we cannot help without divine influence, which we are not disposed to ask for such an end, and therefore are excusable in our obstinacy and unbelief." This objection imports, that sin is

a sufficient excuse for itself; that the greater sinners men are, the more excusable and the less guilty they must be; consequently, that if they are completely sinful, they must be perfectly blameless! To draw an excuse for unbelief from the want of divine influence (which God is obliged to confer upon none, though he has graciously promised it to them who ask him) is highly unreasonable, unless it could be shewn, that there is nothing in the Gospel which is suited to convince a rational creature, let him be ever so well disposed to receive it: whereas, on the contrary, it can be demonstrated, that the Gospel itself, *even without divine influence* (I mean supernatural influence) affords every rational ground of conviction to the human mind, and that men who reject it daily believe other things with the greatest firmness for which they have not the thousandth part of evidence that there is for the truth of the gospel, so that they are altogether inexcusable. The Jews gladly received any impostor that came in his own name, and suited their carnal taste, while they rejected HIM who came in his Father's name, with every credential of his divine mission. See John v. 13. I hope you will admit, that means may have a natural fitness, and be well adapted to the attainment of their ends, though their success should still depend upon the divine blessing; and if this be admitted in other cases, why should it be any objection to the suitability of the gospel, considered as a mean, that it is not in itself omnipotent, so as to produce spiritual and supernatural effects, independent of God; or, because, it is mighty only *through* God to the pulling down of the strong holds whereby the human heart is fortified against it?

But if by the gospel you mean the *salvation* which it reveals, then your question is, "How does it appear that the salvation held forth in the Gospel is adapted to men in their present circumstances, since they can derive no benefit from it without divine influence?" This question supposes

that a salvation which requires divine influence cannot be adapted to the present circumstances of men! whereas, the very reverse is the truth; and therefore my answer is, that the Gospel salvation is well adapted to the present circumstances of men, because it includes divine influence, without which it would not be suited to their present circumstances, nor indeed be that salvation which the Gospel reveals. This may be demonstrated from the scripture account of men's *present circumstances*, and of the *nature* of the gospel salvation. I know not if you admit either of these; but you cannot reasonably object to a defence of the Gospel upon its own principles, since it is not answerable for any other. The Scriptures represent all mankind, in their present circumstances, as *guilty before God*, and so liable to punishment as the effect of his just displeasure, Rom. iii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 19. and every man's conscience must in some measure admit this, let him reason as he will. The remedy which the Gospel presents for this is, the sufferings of the Son of God in the room of the guilty, whereby he made an atonement for their sins, and rendered it consistent with the holiness and justice of God to pardon and accept guilty sinners believing in him, Rom. iii. 24—27. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. iii. 13, 14. But in the application of this remedy, divine influence is necessary to make men duly sensible of their need of it, and to lead them to credit the sufficiency of the atonement for their pardon and acceptance, John xvi. 9. chap. vi. 44. Eph. ii. 8. Again, the Scriptures represent men, in their present circumstances, to be under the power of *sin*, or *moral depravity*, and *corruption of nature*, ignorant of, and alienated from, God and divine things, and so incapable of spiritual enjoyment or true happiness, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Eph. iv. 18. Col. i. 21. Rom. vii. 14. chap. viii. 6, 7, 8. Men are delivered from this state by being regenerated, made new creatures, or created anew in Christ Jesus, in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, which is always ascribed to divine influence accompanying the word. See

John i. 13. chap. iii. 5, 6, 7, 8. Rom. viii. 9. I Cor. vi. 11. Tit. iii. 5, 6. This is an important part of the Gospel salvation, without which no man can see the Lord, or in the nature of things be capable of enjoying him: so that if persons really believe the scripture account of men's *present circumstances*, and are duly sensible of it in their own case, instead of objecting to the scripture doctrine of *divine influence*, they would see it to be not only well adapted, but absolutely necessary to deliver from these circumstances.

You reply to a few things which I had formerly written. I had said, that no man can be believing the gospel, while he views it as not adapted to his circumstances; and this, I think, is a self-evident truth; for to believe the Gospel is to believe that the salvation revealed in it is worthy of God, consequently, suitable to our circumstances. Nor can a man be believing the Gospel, while he does not view unbelief as a sin; for to believe the Gospel is to believe it to be the testimony of God, consequently that unbelief, which is a discrediting his veracity, and holding him for a liar, 1 John v. 10. is a sin of the first magnitude. The Spirit is promised to convince men of this sin, John xvi. 9. which is represented as constituting an evil heart, and as hardening it in a deceitful manner, Heb. iii. 12, 13. It is no answer to this to say, that faith is the gift of God, and therefore unbelief is no sin; for all true holiness is the gift of God, who worketh in us to will and to do that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, Phil. ii. 13. Heb. xiii. 21. But does it follow, that the opposite of holiness is not sin? If it does, then there can be no such thing as sin at all in the world. I had also observed, that a man is not believing the Gospel while he does not see his need of the influence of the Holy Spirit, which God hath promised to them that ask him. This is also evident; for if he believe the Gospel, he must necessarily believe what the Gospel says, both with regard to his need of the Spirit, and the promise of it. To say that the Spirit is promised

only to believers, or to them that *ask in faith*, is no answer to this; for though that were the case, still it holds true, that a man is not believing the Gospel if he objects to what it says respecting his need of the Spirit, and the promise of it. But it ought to be observed, that a man's warrant to ask the Spirit is not his *knowing* that he is a believer: his *sense of need* is a sufficient inducement, and the *promise of God* a sufficient warrant, though it is certain he will not ask in faith unless he believes the promise.—When the self-condemned publican applied, he viewed himself only in the character of a *sinner*; but he believed there was mercy with God for the chief of sinners, and in that persuasion he applied with success, Luke xvii. 13, 14. The same may be observed of the returning prodigal, chap. xv. 17, 25. See the calls and promises to the wicked and unrighteous, Isa. lv. 6, 7. chap. i. 16—19. Acts iii. 19. Jam. iv. 7, 8.

But you think “men, may have a partial view of their own ignorance with respect to divine things, and a desire to be better informed, with a conviction that this information can come alone from God, and yet have no ground from the Scriptures to pray for the Holy Spirit. In Luke xi. 9—13, Christ is addressing his disciples only; and again, in Jam. i. 5, 6. it is said, If any of you (writing to the brethren) lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But (it is added) let him ask in faith. Now, if there is no promise to unbelievers, it is impossible they should ask in faith. They may use words, but that (as whatsoever is not of faith is sin) would be an abomination in the sight of God.”

I freely admit, that those who object to *divine influence* cannot possibly pray in faith for the Spirit, while that objection predominates in their mind; it being an objection of such a nature as is directly opposite to that faith. But the case you suppose is of a different, nay, an opposite nature. It is the case of one who has a *partial conviction* of his own ignorance of spiritual things, who has a *desire*



to be better informed, and is *convinced* that this information can *come alone from God*: yet you think that such an one has *no ground* from the Scriptures to pray for the Holy Spirit. But in this you are exceedingly mistaken. The person you describe is fully warranted from Scripture to pray for the Spirit, even while he has no other view of himself than as a guilty sinner, as has already been shewn. Though Christ, in Luke xi. 9—13. is immediately addressing his disciples; yet he is setting forth the ground of encouragement to all who are convinced of their own ignorance of spiritual things, and desire divine instruction, to apply to God for the Holy Spirit; for he says, “*Every one* that asketh receiveth;” and to ask believing this is to ask in faith. James says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God;” and he lays down this general ground of encouragement, that he “giveth to *all men* liberally, and upbraideth not;” and he is so far from discouraging any from asking, who are sensible that they lack wisdom, desire it, and are convinced that it can come alone from God, that he bids them “ask in faith,” i. e. not doubting, but believing that God is both able and willing to bestow it upon them: so that there is nothing here of a forbidding, but of the most encouraging nature. The only thing forbidden is doubting; but that is only to forbid the very thing that discourages. As to Rom. xiv. 23. the apostle is speaking of weak believers, who doubted of the lawfulness of certain meats, in which case he would have them to abstain from them, because they could not eat them in faith of their being lawful; adding this argument, “for whatsoever is not of faith is sin:” but this has nothing to do with our present subject. With regard to the sacrifice and prayer of the wicked being an abomination in the sight of God, Prov. xv. 8. chap. xxviii. 9. that does not apply to the case which you have stated above, but to hypocrites, and incorrigibly wicked persons going on in their sins. The Lord frequently declares, that he will not accept the sacrifices nor hear the

prayers of such, they being an abomination unto him. See Psal. l. 16, 23. Isa. i. 10—16. chap. lxvi. 3, 4. Jer. vi. 19, 20. chap. vii. 21—29. You say, “If there is no promise to unbelievers, it is impossible they should ask in faith.” To this I answer, that, though there are no promises made to unbelievers, *as such*, or as continuing in a state of unbelief, yet there are many promises respecting the conversion of unbelievers to the faith; and all the promises in the word of God may be considered as so many motives to this; and so the Gospel holds them out to men who are yet in a state of unbelief, as encouragements to faith and repentance. If, therefore, they do not ask in faith, it is not owing to the want of encouraging promises, but to their own faithless hearts. The Lord calls upon “the *wicked* and *unrighteous* man to forsake his evil ways and thoughts, and to return unto the Lord;” and adds this encouraging promise, “he will have mercy upon him—he will abundantly pardon,” Isa. lv. 6, 7. If it be objected, that such promises are not made to unbelievers, or to the wicked and unrighteous, *as such*, but upon supposition of their repentance, I answer, they are addressed to the wicked and unrighteous *while such*, with a view to bring them to faith and repentance; and promises to such, in any other view, would only be promises of impunity in their unbelief and impenitence, which could never be made by a holy God.

Towards the conclusion of your letter you say, “The difficulty with me lies just here; how to reconcile with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, his denying to *any* of his creatures that knowledge that is absolutely necessary to their salvation and eternal happiness. I see no possible way of reconciling this objection: and until this is done, *it is impossible to admit the Scriptures to be the word of God*, without a direct denial of his character and perfections, and consequently as impossible to derive any comfort or hope from them.” I am exceedingly sorry that this difficulty should so operate upon your mind, as to shut you up

to the dreadful alternative of denying, either the divine authority of the Scriptures, or the character and perfections of God. Yet I can see no reason why you should be thus shut up; for you might easily conceive it to be by far the most probable, that this difficulty arises entirely from your own misapprehensions. A person may be well persuaded, on the clearest evidence, that the Scriptures are the word of God, while at the same time he is sensible that, owing to the imperfection of his knowledge, there are some parts of that word which he cannot reconcile with his ideas of the divine character. As your objection strikes against the truth of the Scriptures, it precludes all arguments which are grounded simply on their authority; but, as you say you have long and most sincerely wished for a solution of this objection, it encourages me to offer a few thoughts upon it to your serious consideration. Your difficulty lies here; you cannot reconcile with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, his denying to *any* of his creatures that knowledge that is absolutely necessary to their salvation and eternal happiness. Now let it be considered,

1. That God originally bestowed upon mankind all that knowledge that was necessary to their happiness, and had they acted up to it, they would have been happy. But mankind apostatized from God, and as in this situation their thoughts of him must have been painful to them, so they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but their foolish hearts were darkened, as to that knowledge which was necessary to their happiness; and, though they still retain so much knowledge as is sufficient to constitute them sinners in acting contrary to it; yet, without divine revelation, they have no proper knowledge of the true character of God, or of the way in which guilty sinners can obtain salvation, but are without Christ, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. See Rom. i. Eph. ii. 12. But if you discredit

the Scripture account of this fallen and apostate state of mankind, consider,

2. That it is an undeniable fact, attested by the history of all ages, as well as of the present time, that the greater part of mankind have never heard the Gospel, nor know any thing of the way of salvation revealed in it. Now, if God has given *all his creatures* that knowledge that is absolutely necessary to their salvation and eternal happiness, then it clearly follows, that the Gospel is not necessary to their salvation; and that even the knowledge of the true God is not necessary to that end; for a great part of mankind are sunk into the grossest ignorance and most stupid idolatry. But if you admit that the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is absolutely necessary to salvation, then how, upon your own plan, do you reconcile it with your ideas of the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, his denying such a vast number of his creatures that knowledge?

3. If it does not consist with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, to deny *any* of his creatures that knowledge which is necessary to their eternal happiness, then his conferring that knowledge cannot be of *grace*, or *free favour*, but from a *necessity of nature*; for, as God cannot possibly act contrary to his holiness, justice, and goodness, so he has no option in this matter, he must either confer this saving knowledge upon all his creatures, or cease to be holy, just, and good, *i. e.* cease to be God! It is evident, then, that in bestowing this knowledge there can be no room for the exercise of that free grace and sovereign mercy to which the Scriptures always ascribe it; for that supposes that the Deity might have withheld it, had he pleased, without acting inconsistently with his character; but, according to your objection, he has it not in his power to withhold it, any more than he can divest himself of his holiness, justice, and goodness. This at once overthrows the whole Scripture doctrine of divine grace.

4. Your objection supposes, that mankind have done nothing to forfeit the divine favour, or that justly deserves punishment; for if that were admitted, as the Scriptures state it, it might easily be conceived how God might bestow or withhold his favours, and punish or pardon guilty rebels just as he pleased, in a perfect consistency with his goodness, and in the exercise of his justice and holiness as moral governor of the world. You might then see, that when he withholds his special favours, and punishes sinners, he does them no wrong, it being what they deserve at his hand as a righteous judge, Rom. iii. 5, 6. and that when he pardons others who are equally guilty, it is what he is no way obliged in justice to do, but is entirely of his sovereign free grace, whereby he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, Rom. ix. 15, 16. Till men's mouths are stopped by a conviction of sin and its desert, and they are brought to renounce all claim upon the divine favour, but purely on the basis of free sovereign mercy, they will never relish the gospel plan of salvation, nor be reconciled to the character of God displayed therein.

5. As you declare that it is impossible for you (till your objection is solved) to admit the Scriptures to be the word of God, without a direct denial of his character and perfections, it is evident that your ideas of the divine character must be the direct opposite of what you find delineated in the Scriptures, particularly with respect to his holiness, justice, and goodness. May I ask, then, from what sources have you derived your ideas of these moral perfections of the Deity? Besides the Scriptures, I know of no sources of information, but the works of creation and providence, with the impressions which these make upon our rational nature, Rom. i. 19, 20. Acts xiv. 15—18. Let us, then, for a little, shut our eyes, if possible, against every gleam of light derived from revelation, and open them to the book of nature alone, and try how far we can trace in it a clear and consistent display of the holiness, justice, and goodness

of its Author. The wisdom, power, and common goodness of God towards all his creatures, are clearly displayed in the works of creation and providence. With respect to his *holiness*; which is the perfect rectitude and moral purity of his nature, whereby he necessarily delights in moral purity, and hates every thing contrary to it; from whence do you derive your notions of this divine perfection? Is it from the works of creation? Of all God's creatures in this lower world, man alone is capable of receiving a stamp of his holiness: but do the generality of mankind exhibit this? Far from it. Or do you discover God's holiness by manifestations of his love and righteousness, and hatred of iniquity, in the dispensations of his providence towards men? Though this may sometimes appear, yet you cannot affirm that it does so uniformly or constantly. On the contrary, the wise man says, "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean," Eccles. ix. 1, 2. Nay, he goes further, and observes, "That there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous," chap. viii. 14. It is evident, therefore, that we need some clearer information than this respecting the holiness of God. As to his *justice*, it is that attribute whereby he is perfectly righteous and equal in himself, and in all his ways towards his creatures; but, if we form our notions of it by such rules of justice as ought to regulate men's conduct towards each other, we shall in many respects be greatly mistaken. God has his own sphere of exercising justice, and he has assigned to men theirs; so that, in many cases, it would be altogether unjust in them to do to one another what would be perfectly just and equal in the supreme Being; because he has rights peculiar to himself, and which he delegates to none. Do you form your notions of his justice from his

providential government of the world? Here you may perceive the wicked often prospering in their wickedness, and leaving this world with impunity, while the righteous are frequently oppressed by the wicked, and die without redress.—How will unassisted reason reconcile this with the justice of the divine administration? With respect to the *goodness* of God, it is that property of his nature whereby he is infinitely good in himself, and kind and beneficent to all his creatures; and this is manifested by the communications of the blessings of his bounty unto them, in creation and providence. (We must not here mention *redemption*, for that is made known only by revelation.) But how do you reconcile with his goodness the innumerable natural evils that are in the world? It is matter of universal experience, in all ages, that “man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” He is seldom without some distress, either in his mind or body, his circumstances or connexions; and, though some may enjoy a greater share of good than others, yet, if we take mankind upon the whole, and balance the proportion of good with evil, throwing into the scale of the latter, death, that worst of all natural evils, and most abhorrent to our nature, which none of mankind can escape; how shall reason or observation determine, whether the quantity of good or evil, or of human happiness or misery in the world, is greatest? Solomon, who had access to try all the means of happiness that this world can afford, repeatedly declares, that all under the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit. But suppose you were able to refute him, and demonstrate, that good or happiness preponderates upon the whole, how do you reconcile it with your notions of divine goodness, that there should be such a quantity of natural evil or misery as all must admit? The Scriptures, indeed, throw a satisfying light upon all these difficulties; but, till you admit them to be the word of God, you cannot consistently have recourse to them for a solution.

From what has been observed, permit me now to ask, How can you, from any manifestation which God hath given of his holiness, justice, and goodness, either in creation or providence, or in the whole compass of nature, conclude with certainty, that he must bestow upon *any* of his creatures that knowledge that is necessary to their salvation and eternal happiness? Nay, I would further ask, Upon what evidence do you rest your belief that there is any such thing as *salvation*, and an *eternal state of happiness*, allotted for any of the human race after this life is at an end? Can nature or reason give you any certain information as to these things? No; it is the Scriptures alone which give a clear and consistent view of the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, which alone reveal salvation, and which, with any certainty, bring life and immortality to light. Would it not, therefore, be highly unreasonable to reject the Scriptures, because you cannot reconcile some parts of them with your notions of the divine character, since it is evident you cannot have recourse to any other source of information, which is attended with fewer difficulties, or even so few? The deist, because he cannot reconcile the Scriptures with his preconceived ideas of the divine character, denies it to be the word of God; and the atheist, because he is wilfully blind to the manifestations of God in his works of creation and providence, therefore denies there is any such being; while at the same time he is so credulous as to believe the most glaring contradictions and absurdities.

I have already observed, that it is revelation alone that gives the most clear and consistent view of the holiness, justice, and goodness of God; and I now add, that it is revelation which gives the most rational and satisfying solution of every difficulty that can arise in our minds respecting the divine administration. The holiness, justice, and goodness of God, are conspicuously held forth throughout the whole Scriptures. His revealed law, which is holy,



just, and good, is a transcript of his moral character. His signal dispensations, either of mercy or judgments, are explained to be the effects of his love of righteousness, or hatred of iniquity; and he declares himself, that he delights in exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. But his moral character is most conspicuously displayed in the work of redemption: herein the infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and love of God towards men, shine forth more illustriously than in all his other works, as might be shewn at large. A God all mercy is a God unjust; but here he appears just and merciful in perfection. All the glories of the divine character shine forth with united beams in the face of Christ. With regard to the natural evils that are in the world, and death itself, these the Scriptures represent as not causeless, but the effects of the original apostacy and the curse denounced upon it, whereby the creature was subjected to vanity, in the just judgment of God: but it is also revealed, that all these natural evils work together, in a variety of ways, for good, to them that love God; and that death itself is their exceeding gain, it being a complete deliverance from all those evils, as well as the cause of them, and a transition into a state of everlasting happiness, where there shall be no more curse, no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away, Rom. viii. 28. 2 Cor. iv. 17. Philip. i. 21, 23. Rev. xxi. 4. ch. xxii. 3. With regard to the clouds which seem to obscure the justice of the divine administration in the affairs of this world, where we often see the wicked loaded with his bounty, and prospering in their wickedness; while the righteous are often pinched in their circumstances, and injured and oppressed by the wicked; which was a most stumbling consideration to the Psalmist, till he was relieved by revelation, Psal. lxxiii.—the word of God clears up this matter, by shewing us, that this momentary scene is but an introduction to an eternal state

of happiness or misery; and that to judge of the justice of the divine administration, we must not confine our views to this present state, but extend them into futurity, and form our judgment upon the final result and eternal settlement of the whole. The afflictions of the righteous in this world, are represented as salutary chastisements, to fit and train them for future happiness; whilst it is also declared, that the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. Who would envy the rich man, because he received his good things in his life-time, or deprecate the state of Lazarus, because he received his evil things, when he takes into view their different situations in a future state, where Lazarus is for ever comforted, and the rich man for ever tormented? Luke xvi. In the final judgment, God will fully vindicate the justice, holiness, and goodness of his administration; he will fully redress all the wrongs done to his people, and make up for all their present sufferings, by conferring upon them eternal happiness, while he will punish the wicked with everlasting destruction. But all this information comes only from the word of God, without which we must have perpetually groped in the dark, without any certainty.

I have lengthened out this letter beyond what I at first intended. If any thing I have suggested should be of service to remove your prejudices against the Scriptures, and reconcile your mind to the character of God, as revealed therein, it will give me the most sincere pleasure. But this depends upon the blessing of God; to whom, and to the word of his grace, I commend you; and am, &c.

## ESSAY III.



### ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN COMMON AND SAVING GRACE.



MR. EDITOR,

IN your eighth number, PHILEMON, having admitted a distinction between what is called *common* and *saving* grace, or between the common and special operations of the Spirit of grace, puts the following queries: “ Does the Scripture lead us to consider the grace or influence alluded to as different in *kind*? or is it specifically the same, and different only in *degree*? and if the latter, by what criterion may a professor know that his joys are not the joys of the hypocrite, and that he is not one of the stony ground hearers?”—If by *grace* he means the influence or operations of the Spirit abstractedly considered, the question, I apprehend, is unanswerable; for we know not the abstract nature or manner of the Spirit’s operations, so as to distinguish one kind of them from another. We cannot, for instance, explain by what kind of operation God created the world, so as to distinguish it in its nature from that whereby he upholds it; nor can we shew whether these operations differ in *kind* or *degree*, or in either. But I rather suppose that by *grace* he intends the *effects* produced by the Spirit’s operations, and then the question will be, Do the common

and saving *effects* produced by the Spirit upon the souls of men differ in *kind*, or only in *degree*?

Though I am of opinion that the distinction of *kind* and *degree* is very improper on this subject, as shall afterwards be shewn, yet it would be rash to deny absolutely that there is any difference between common and saving grace in their nature or kind. The Scripture, however, does not lead us thus to distinguish them. It speaks in the same terms of the attainments of such as draw back unto perdition, as of those who believe to the saving of the soul. With regard to the former, it supposes that they may be *enlightened*, *know* the truth and the way of righteousness, for a while *believe*, *taste* of the good word of God, and receive it with joy, escape the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and yet, after all, be entangled and overcome, and the latter end be worse with them than the beginning. See Heb. vi. 4, 5. chap. x. 26. Matt. xiii. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. This will be allowed to be common grace; but how is it distinguished from that which is saving? Not by any thing that we can discover in the *cause*, *kind* or *object* of the illumination, knowledge, faith, joy, &c. but by its turning out in the issue to be *temporary* in its duration, and from hence it is supposed, that it must have been all along essentially different in its very nature. But of this the Scripture says nothing, but leaves it as an open and universal caution to all Christians, however singular their attainments, that they who think they stand, may take heed lest they fall. If this were not the case, then all who consider themselves as possessed of saving grace would have nothing to do with the cautions against apostacy, with which the Scriptures abound, but look upon them as addressed only to hypocrites, or to such as had received only common grace. Saving grace may be distinguished from common by its being *permanent* and *abiding*, yet this does not seem to arise from any thing in its nature or kind, but from the continued influences of the Holy Spirit, whereby

the elect are kept through faith unto salvation. It is upon this, and not upon the nature of any present attainment, that the Christian's hope of perseverance must rest.

If we attend to the Scripture characters of a saving work of the Spirit, we shall find that it is *universal*, extending to the whole man—*predominant*, over the corrupt principle—*habitual*, and not in transient impressions and emotions—and *permanent*, as opposed to its continuing for a time. Now, if it is essential to the very nature of saving grace, that it be habitually predominant over the opposite principle, then the distinction between its *kind* and *degree*, has either no meaning at all, or a bad one. To distinguish the *kind* of any thing from its essential properties, is not a very intelligible distinction, and is at best but metaphysical. To give it a plain meaning on this subject, we must suppose, that a real, saving change may be produced in *kind*, where the opposite principle may have the habitual ascendancy over it in *degree*, which is a most dangerous sentiment. This will appear if we state the question thus: May not my love to God be true and genuine in *kind*, though other objects have habitually a higher *degree* of my affection? The Scriptures decidedly answer this in the negative. Our Lord represents that subordinate degree of affection which we ought to have to our nearest relations, and even to our lives, in comparison of him, as *hating* them, Luke xiv. 26. How much more must our loving God less than other objects be to hate him, seeing he has the only just and exclusive claim to our supreme affections.

Many have got into a dangerous way of thinking and speaking upon this subject. They observe, that faith is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, and hence infer, that the smallest conceivable degree of faith or love must be of a genuine and saving kind, however much they may be exceeded in degree by their opposites, even as one drop of water is as real water as the whole ocean. Hereby they lull men in security as to the safety of their state, whilst

they may be under the power of unbelief, and the love of this present world; always presuming that there is some latent spark of true grace in the heart, however much it may be smothered or buried under the ashes. It is freely granted, that saving grace admits of different degrees; but I apprehend, that the first or lowest degree which we can safely reckon upon as of a saving kind, commences at that point where it turns the scale of the balance upon its opposite; so that (to use the metaphor of weighing) if faith be compared to a grain of mustard-seed, that grain is genuine only by being down weight. All that is short of this, must be classed with what are called common and temporary influences. In these the children of this world may go hand in hand with the children of God; but at this turning, this distinguishing point, they stop short.

We may therefore take both sides of the question, and answer it thus: Common grace is different in *kind* from that which is saving, because it is not habitually prevalent in *degree*. Or thus: Such as have only common grace, have no true or sincere love to God in kind; because no love to God is of a true or sincere *kind*, but that which has the habitual ascendancy in *degree*.

As to the other question, *viz.* "By what criterion may a professor know that his joys are not the joys of the hypocrite, and that he is not one of the stony ground hearers?" On this I observe, that when a person is at first enlighten<sup>d</sup>, believes the Gospel as the testimony of God, and receives it with joy, as a suitable remedy for him a perishing sinner, though he must necessarily have a present consciousness of these effects, attended with the hope of his own salvation; yet from all this he is not assured that his illumination, faith, and joy, are of a different kind from any thing that has ever been experienced by stony ground hearers; nor is his comfort, if genuine, founded upon a discernment of this supposed difference, but arises directly from what he perceives in the Gospel itself. The comfort of many has been, as it

were strangled in the very birth, by having their minds drawn off from the true source of comfort, to seek it in something distinguishing in the nature of their first impressions; and when they cannot ascertain this to their own satisfaction, they are often upon the point of razing foundations, as it is termed. Others, upon the same principle, are very confident that their first impressions were of a true and genuine kind, because they experienced some relief from the distressing fear of divine wrath, had a degree of joy, and some warm glow of affection. Upon this they built the assurance of their election, calling, and final perseverance; and to this they have recourse upon all occasions to support their hopes with respect to the safety of their state. This often proves a source of self-deception.

But to return to the question. It is said that the stony ground hearers *receive the word with joy, and for a while believe*, Luke viii. 13. It does not appear to me that this belief and joy, while they continue, can be distinguished *by us*, from that which takes place in true Christians. For any thing that we can discern, *believing*, as to its nature, is the same in both, and so is *joy*. Will it be said, that the belief and joy of the former are formed on some *mistake*, as the latter are said to *understand* the word, Matt. xiii. 23. Be it so; but unless we know with certainty wherein this mistake lies, or could point out some truth of which they are ignorant, but which true believers understand, this can be no infallible criterion by which to distinguish our faith and joy from theirs. Our Lord says, that it is the *word* which they believe and receive with joy; but does not shew wherein they misunderstand it. Besides, there are other passages which suppose that they have received the knowledge of the truth—know the way of righteousness—have the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—and tasted of the good word of God, as has already been shewn; so that it will be hard from any of these things to distinguish the common from the saving influences of the Spirit. If it

be asked, By what criterion then may we know the difference?—I answer, The Scriptures always distinguish them by their *comparative fruits* and *habitual effects*; and no professor has any other infallible rule by which to distinguish them, or to form a decided judgment of his own religious impressions. It is by this criterion that they are distinguished in the parable of the sower. Neither the stony nor thorny ground hearers brought forth any true fruit. The impressions made upon them by the word were not saving nor lasting, because not radical nor predominant. The belief and joy of the former could not support them under persecution for the word; and as for the latter, the influence of the word was choked in them by worldly cares and lusts. From all which it is evident, that this present life, and the enjoyments of it, had still the ascendancy in their affections over the love of God and the things of eternal life. Not so the good ground hearer; he hears the word and *understands*, or (*συνιόν*) considers it. Matt. xiii. 23. He *keeps* or *retains* it in a *good* and *honest heart*, and *brings forth fruit* with *patience*, viz. under trials and persecutions, Luke viii. 15. In all which particulars he is contrasted with the other classes of hearers. Let us, therefore, examine ourselves, and give diligence to make our calling and election sure, by such evidences; for if we do these things, we shall never fall. And let us have our dependance on Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to work in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.



## ESSAY IV.

### ON THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH.

[*To the Editor of the New Theological Repository.*]

SIR,

GLANCING over the Biblical Magazine, for February 1802, No. ix. I met with an extract from the American Theological Magazine, stating *the difference between the faith of God's elect, and the faith of devils and wicked men.* I shall extract the substance of it, and add a few remarks.—

*“ Saving faith consists in a sight of the true, transcendent, divine beauty and excellence of the things of the moral kingdom of God, and in all those views and exercises in which such a sight and discerning does consist.*

“ Devils and wicked men do not see the divine beauty of the things of the moral kingdom of God. They may have a sort of conviction of conscience, or of their speculative judgment, that they are beautiful and excellent; but they have no real, true idea of this. A sight of this beauty supposes and involves a true taste and relish of heart for such kind of beauty and excellence, and consequently a love of it; for discerning and seeing the beauty of an object cannot be distinguished, since they are really one and the same thing.

“ Beauty is the object of taste, which belongs to the will or heart, and not to the intellect as such. No applications or influences, even of the Spirit of God, can give the mind

the least true light in this matter, while the heart remains wholly corrupt, and so without all right taste and discerning, this being in the nature of things impossible; or, which is the same, a direct and perfect contradiction.

“ True *faith*, considered in its general nature, consists in this discerning of divine things, which originates in a right taste and disposition of mind, and is an exercise of such a taste, and so really an exercise of—*love* to moral beauty and excellence.

“ Hence it appears, that the *object* of the faith of God’s elect is moral beauty and excellence. It also appears, that there is an essential difference in the subject, which consists in the taste and disposition of the heart. Hence there is also an essential difference in the *exercise itself*. The faith of the true christian implies love to the objects of it. The life and active nature, and the *whole* of the exercise of saving faith, is an exercise of heart, and consists in love. In this, and *in this only*, it stands distinguished from all other kinds of faith.

“ *Corollary.* Hence learn, that the faith maintained by Mr. SANDEMAN and others, who place it in a mere intellectual view and belief of the truth, *is of the same nature with the faith of devils and wicked men, and is not true saving faith.*”

#### REMARKS.

When polemical divines, the disputers of this world, have some unscriptural hypothesis to establish, they generally have recourse to what the apostle calls, the wisdom of words, or the words which man’s wisdom teacheth. Here we have the word *taste* used metaphorically, and which, in that use of it, frequently signifies something very unfixed, whimsical and capricious; but here it is explained to be a *relish* or *disposition* of heart, i. e. of the will and affections. If the word *intellect* is here used in its ordinary sense, it

must include what the scripture terms the *understanding, judgment, reason, conscience, &c.* And with respect to *moral beauty*, I suppose it must signify what a simple christian would term *holiness*. If I have lit upon the sense in which these terms are used, permit me to observe,

1. That this *taste* or *relish* of heart for moral beauty is supposed to be prior to any *true light*, or the *least idea* of such beauty in the mind or judgment; for it is affirmed, that, "as beauty is the object of *taste*, which belongs to the will or heart, and not to the intellect as such, no application or influences, even of the Spirit of God, can give the mind the least true light in this matter, while the heart remains wholly corrupt, and so without all right taste and discerning, this being in the nature of things impossible; or, which is the same, a direct and perfect contradiction." Were it only affirmed, that *while the heart remains wholly corrupt*, it can have no spiritual taste or relish for moral beauty or holiness, I suppose none would controvert this; for a total corruption of heart, while it remains, is inconsistent with such a relish. But the principle here maintained is, that the mind cannot possibly have the least true light, or the smallest idea or conception of moral beauty, till the will is first possessed of a relish for it; and that God himself cannot give the mind the least true light in this matter till once this relish or affection for holiness first takes place. And if this is true, then it clearly follows, that this taste, relish or disposition of heart is not formed upon, nor excited by any object whatever existing in the view of the mind; nor does it depend upon any revelation which God has made, either of his character or moral kingdom, in his word; nor is it produced by any divine influence enlightening the eyes of the understanding in the knowledge of divine things, but is supposed to be prior to this. So, that according to this hypothesis, the intellectual powers (which form the distinctive characteristic of a rational and accountable being) have no more concern in this taste, nor influence upon it,

than the bodily sight has upon the taste or relish of the palate!

2. This scheme reverses the regular exercise of the human faculties. It gives the lead and direction to the will and affections, and makes the understanding, judgment, reason and conscience to follow these, i. e. it makes the human soul, in the first instance, to relish and love, and then to perceive and believe the object of its relish and love; or, in other words, it supposes the soul to have a taste and relish for an object before that object exists in the view of the mind; nay, before it is possible to communicate to the understanding the least true idea of it. Hence it follows,

3. That this scheme renders all the outward instruction and means of grace, which God hath appointed for opening the eyes of sinners, and turning them from darkness to light, perfectly useless. The word of God, administered either by reading or preaching, with all its truths, precepts, evidence, arguments and motives, cannot, according to this hypothesis, be of the least service as means to communicate any true light to the judgment, and so to move the will; nay, it is denied that God himself, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, can possibly concur with these means to give the mind the least true light in this matter, till, by a *previous* influence, altogether abstract from means, he gives the will a taste or relish for something, of which the mind as yet knows nothing. All means, therefore, are rendered entirely useless as to any saving effect, and the preaching of the gospel is to no purpose.

4. *Saving faith* is here described to be “a *sight* of the true, transcendent, divine *beauty* of the things of the moral kingdom of God.” This beauty, we are told, is not the object of intellect, but of the will; faith, then, must be a *sight* of the will, not of the understanding or judgment! Accordingly, it is said to “originate in a right taste and disposition of mind,” and to be “an *exercise* of such a taste.” This exercise is explained to be “really an *exercise of heart*,

even of *love* to moral beauty and excellence;" and from these paradoxical assertions it is roundly concluded, "that the *whole exercise* of saving faith consists in *love*," and that "in this, and *in this only*, it stands distinguished from all other kinds of faith." From all this we are to learn, that the faith maintained by Mr. Sandeman and others, viz. the belief of the truth, *is of the same nature with the faith of devils and wicked men, and is not true saving faith.*

To enter upon a particular refutation of this shallow piece of sophistry, would be to affront the understanding of your readers, as well as to encroach upon your room. Every one may perceive, at first sight, that this account of faith agrees neither with scripture nor common sense, either as to its object or nature. With regard to the matter or *object* of saving faith, the scriptures declare it to be the gospel, the truth, the testimony of God concerning his Son, &c. But here there is not a word of this; but only some high-swelling words of vanity about "moral beauty," or "the true, transcendent, divine beauty and excellence of the things of the moral kingdom of God;" which can only tend to lead the mind away from the solid truths of the word of God, or to depreciate them. Again, with regard to *faith* itself, the scriptures always represent it as an *understanding* and *belief* of the truth testified concerning Christ. But here it is represented as originating in a *right taste* of the will, and to consist, not in any belief of the judgment respecting revealed truth, but in the will's *sight* of moral beauty and excellence, and in the *exercise of love* to it. Thus *love* is put for *belief*, and the scripture notion of faith entirely set aside or reprobated, as what belongs to devils and wicked men. So that the whole difference here stated between the faith of God's elect, and that of Sandeman and devils, amounts to this; the former is the *love* of moral beauty; the latter, the belief of the truth!

It may, however, be said, in favour of the belief of the truth, that it is the only faith that can give hope to a self-condemned sinner, who can say very little as to his love of moral beauty; the only faith from which all true love of holiness springs. It is that faith without which the love of moral beauty is a mere imagination, or empty conceit, very like the enthusiastical ravings of some modern deists. Perhaps it was this view of matters that made Mr. Sandeman so tenacious of this simple view of faith, that he would not yield it though devils themselves should confess it, and though he should be ranked with them for holding it.

It is but doing justice to the memory of Mr. Sandeman to observe, that though he always admitted that there is an essential difference at bottom between a true and false faith, yet he did not think that this difference can be distinguished by us in the abstract nature of *belief* itself, but only by its *object* and *effects*. And though he fully exposed the absurdity of making faith to be love, yet he made no account of that faith that did not *work by love* as its immediate effects; nay, he made no account of that faith that did not produce *the labour of love* in the good works enjoined in the gospel; and thus it is that the apostle distinguishes a living from a dead faith, or the faith of devils, Jam. ii. 14. *ad fin.* and not by abstract speculations about certain actings of the mind which never influence the life. What I have stated of Sandeman's sentiments might be evinced from many passages in his writings, but I shall only adduce the following: "No sooner does any man know the grace of God in truth, than love to it takes place in his heart. Love is the activity of that life which a man obtains by faith; for faith worketh by love. No man, then, however sound his profession of the faith may be, can enjoy the life which lies in God's favour, further than he loves God and keeps his commandments. Let a man talk like an angel about the things of God, if he wants this love he is nothing."

*Letters on Theron, &c.* vol. ii. Let. 6. Hence we may learn, with what injustice Mr. Sandeman is treated in the above *corollary*, and how little regard to truth appears either in the writer or inserter of that paper, notwithstanding all their *taste* and *relish* for moral beauty.

---

## ESSAY V.

ON THE NATURE OF THE MILLENNIUM.

---

*To the Editor of the New Theological Repository.*

SIR,

IN your *Theological Repository* for September, 1802, p. 128, I find Philologus expressing a doubt if there is any ground to expect an “exalted state, and blessed rest to the church of God in this world, previous to the second coming of Christ, and the last judgment; such as a remarkable effusion of the Holy Spirit—a national conversion of the Jews—great purity of gospel worship and ordinances—great peace and prosperity of all kinds, inward and outward, spiritual and temporal.”

Though I am far from agreeing with many things which have been advanced respecting the millennial reign, which ought ever to be understood in a sense consistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world; yet the word of God gives abundant ground to ex-

pect, that, previous to Christ's second *personal* coming, the *literal* resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment, there will be a binding of Satan, or a restraint of his influence upon wicked men; Rev. xx. 2, 3.—a more universal spread of the gospel than has hitherto taken place; Psalm xxii. 27. and lxxii. 11. Isaiah xi. 9—13 Hab. ii. 14.—such an effusion of the Spirit as will qualify men for spreading the gospel, and will also give it effect; Isaiah xxxii. 15—19. chap. lix. 20, 21. Ezek. xxxvi. 27.—a remarkable conversion of the Jews to the acknowledgment of Jesus as the true Messiah, to the salvation of multitudes of them, Isaiah lix. 20, 21. Hos. iii. v. Rom. xi. 11—33. 2 Cor. iii. 14—17. Matt. xxiii. 39.—purity of church communion and gospel worship, Dan. viii. 14 Isaiah xl. 21. ch. lii. 1. Zech. xiv. 21.—outward peace, and safety from wars and persecution, Isaiah xi. 6—10. chap. ii. 4. chap. lxxv. 17, 25. Micah iv. 3, 4.—and, in short, that the kingdom and cause of Christ shall prevail in this world over every opposition, Dan. vii. 18, 27. Rev. v. 10. chap. xi. 15. chap. xx. 4, 6. How else shall the grain of mustard seed grow up to a tree, and the little leaven leaven the whole three measures of meal? Matt. xiii. 31—34. Or how else shall the “stone cut out of the mountain without hands” become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth? Dan. ii. 35.—or the kingdoms of this world become our Lord's and his Christ's? Rev. xi. 15. Shall we consider these things as extravagant hyperboles, that shall never be realized in this world? This would be throwing dishonour on the Spirit of prophecy. Or shall we refer them to the ultimate heavenly state, when the saints shall be glorified with Christ in their resurrection bodies? This will not agree with the *place* of the millennial reign which is repeatedly said to be on this *earth*, even that earth on the breadth of which the enemies of the saints come up against them, Rev. xx. 9. Nor will the literal resurrection and heavenly state accord with what *succeeds* the thousand years' reign, viz. the attempt of Gog and



Magog, and the general resurrection and final judgment both of the just and unjust, Rev. xx. 7. ad ult. John v. 28, 29.

But Philologus asks, "How shall we reconcile the prosperous state of Christ's kingdom in this world with his ruling in the midst of his enemies till they are made his footstool, at his second coming?"

*Ans.* His ruling in the midst of his enemies shews, indeed, that he will have enemies during his reign; but the passage referred to also shews, that he will overcome and punish them, Psalm cx. 2, 5, 6. and Psalm ii. 9. The Jewish and heathen Roman powers opposed him; but he came and destroyed them both, Matt. xxii. 7. Rev. vi. 12. ad ult. After this the antichristian beast and false prophet rose up as adversaries; but he will overcome and punish them, and also bind Satan a thousand years, Rev. xix. 11. ad ult. chap. xx. 2. This is the period during which the kingdom of Christ will have peace and prosperity in this world, ver. 4. And though he will still have many enemies, yet their efforts will be restrained till the thousand years are expired; when they shall make their last attempt, and be destroyed by fire from heaven, ver. 9. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, when Christ shall come personally to raise the dead and judge the world, 1 Cor. xv. 24—26. Rev. xx. 11—15. Thus he shall rule in the midst of his enemies till the very last of them is made his footstool at his second coming; which is perfectly consistent with the peace, prosperity, and prevalence of his kingdom during the millennial period.

It is further objected, "that the whole strain of the New Testament represents Christ's people as hated of all nations for his name's sake to the end; and that his church must be conformed to him in his humiliation in this world, till he appear to conform them to the glory of his resurrection."

*Ans.* Christ indeed forewarns his disciples, that they shall be hated and persecuted of all nations for his name's sake, Matt. xxiv. 9. John xvi. 2, 3.—which has been fully verified, not only in the apostolic age, but more or less in all succeeding ages of the church. But though this hatred will continue to the end, yet its effects have been often restrained, and will be more perfectly so during the millennium, when Satan shall be bound, and nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain; but at the end of that period, when Satan is loosed, this hatred will appear again in the nations deceived by him. Conformity to Christ *in his humiliation* is no where opposed to the peace and prosperity of his kingdom in the world. The churches were conformed to Christ in his humiliation when they had rest, and were edified, and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, Acts ix. 31. While the saints are absent from the Lord, and the body of their humiliation is not changed, nor the last enemy destroyed, they must still be in a state of humiliation and mortality, even when the kingdoms of this world are become our Lord's and his Christ's. Conformity to Christ *in the glory of his resurrection* is not the millennial state, which continues but for a limited time, and is succeeded by an attempt of their enemies; but is the state of ultimate glory, not on earth, but in heaven, Matt. v. 12. Heb. x. 34. 1 Peter i. 4.—and that not for a time, but for ever, where “ dangers ne'er shall threat again.”

Lastly, It is asked, “ How we can reconcile such an abundant faith in the Jewish nation, and in all other nations, before the Lord's coming to judgment, with that plain account given in the New Testament of the state of the world, and of the profession of Christianity, towards the second coming of Christ, Luke xviii. 8. with many others?”

*Ans.* In Luke xviii. 8. our Lord is speaking of his coming to avenge his own elect on the unbelieving, persecuting

Jewish nation, who, notwithstanding their having many warnings and signs of their approaching punishment, had no faith in these warnings, but, like the inhabitants of the old world, continued perfectly unconcerned, till vengeance came upon them unexpectedly, Matt. xxiv. 37—40. And this will also be the case with the unbelieving world, when Christ comes to execute judgment upon them at the last day. “The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night: for when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” The saints, however, shall not be without the faith of Christ’s coming, so as to be overtaken by it at unawares; for the apostle adds, “but ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief,” 1 Thess. ver. 2—4. The bringing in of the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles, must be consistent with the want of faith in the wicked towards Christ’s coming; for the former is as plainly revealed as the latter. And these things are easily reconciled, if we reflect, that the millennium is not coeval, or does not synchronize with the state of the world and the profession of Christianity immediately before the coming of Christ. It is *after* the thousand years are expired, and *before* the second personal coming of Christ, that Satan is loosed out of his prison, that the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth are deceived by him, and gathered together against the saints: so that in this vast multitude, which go up on the breadth of the earth, there will be no faith found respecting Christ’s coming in flaming fire to punish them, till they are suddenly and unexpectedly destroyed, Rev. xx. 7—11. 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10. If the chronological order of events is understood, and properly kept in view, I know no passage in all the word of God which may not be easily reconciled to what is said of the peace, prosperity, and prevalence of Christ’s kingdom in this world during the millennial period.

## ESSAY VI.

---

### ON THE PRACTICE OF COMMUNICATING IN THE LORD'S SUPPER WITHOUT A PASTOR.

---

---

*To the Editor of the New Theological Repository.*

SIR,

IN your Repository for August, 1802, p. 109, T. M. puts the following question: "Is there any thing said in the New Testament, from which it can be inferred, that it is not the duty of a Christian church to eat the Lord's supper unless it be dispensed by an elder?"—To this I answer, in general, that there are many things said in the New Testament from which it may be inferred, that a society of Christians cannot regularly eat the Lord's supper while they have none among them who by office is authorised to administer it to them. This may be inferred,

1. From the *example of Christ* at its first institution, Matt. xxvi. 26—29. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 23—26. Here we see that he acted, not merely as an institutor, but also as an administrator of this ordinance: "He took bread, blessed it, brake it, and gave it to his disciples thus broken. Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them." These actions he accompanied with words, explaining the mystery of the bread and cup, and the use they were to

make of them: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. This cup is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you; drink ye all of it; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." These are evidently the actions and words of an administrator, the actions of the receivers being distinguished from them, and are their taking the bread and cup, their eating of the one and drinking of the other, and doing both in remembrance of Christ. As therefore Christ hath set an example how this ordinance is to be administered in the churches of the saints till he come; as this is the only rule or example referred to in all the New Testament (see 1 Cor. xi. 23—26.)—and as it cannot be denied that Christ, in administering the supper, acted as the chief shepherd and bishop of his church,—I think it may fairly be inferred from all this, that the administering of this ordinance belongs only to such as are appointed officially to feed the church of God, and not to the members in common, or to any one of them who may assume that office for the time. So that, without a pastor, no church can eat the Lord's supper agreeably to its original institution.

2. This may also be inferred from what is said in the New Testament of the peculiar work assigned to elders. Christ enjoins Peter (who was also an elder, 1 Peter v. 1.) to feed his sheep and lambs, John xxi. 15—18. The elders of the church at Ephesus are exhorted to "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," Acts xx. 28.—and Peter exhorts the elders to "feed the flock of God," 1 Peter v. 2. They are represented as stewards, whom their Lord makes rulers over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season, Luke xii. 42. Now, though the brethren in general are exhorted to perform the various parts of divine worship, both in private and in their assemblies, and also, in their sphere, to teach, exhort, and admonish one another; yet they are never exhorted to feed the flock or church of God; for the original

word rendered *to feed*, when it respects a flock, signifies to feed them as a *shepherd* or *pastor*. It carries in it both the idea of rule, and of officially administering to them the word and ordinances, among which the Lord's supper must certainly be included. If, then, feeding the flock of God be the peculiar work of pastors, and if the dispensing of the Lord's supper be a part of that feeding, it follows that none but pastors or elders have a right to administer it.

3. The same thing may be inferred from the account which the New Testament gives of those churches to which the Lord's supper was at first delivered by the apostles. On this I observe,

(1.) That the Lord's supper was not delivered or administered to single individuals separately, like baptism; for it is a social ordinance, exhibiting the visible communion of saints, in their jointly partaking of the body and blood of the Lord, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.—and so we find the first Christians *came together* to eat the Lord's supper, or to break bread, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 20, 33. Acts xx. 7.

(2.) There is no example in Scripture of this ordinance being observed by parts of a church meeting separately, or in different places. The church at Corinth, whatever disorders were among them, came together *in the church*, or *into one place*, for that purpose, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 20.—and the apostle supposes the *whole church* being come together *into one place*, chap. xvi. 23. But there is no instance of the members belonging to one church assembling in separate societies, and in different places, to eat the Lord's supper, though individuals might have occasional communion with sister churches.

(3.) It does not appear from Scripture, that any company of Christians did eat the Lord's supper, till they were set in order, and had gifted persons appointed over them for government and the work of the ministry. We are expressly informed, that the church at Jerusalem, the church at Troas, and that at Corinth, observed the Lord's supper, Acts ii.

12. chap. xx. 7. 1 Cor. xi. But the church at Jerusalem had both apostles and elders, Acts xv. 2, 6. The church at Corinth was enriched by Christ in all utterance, and in all knowledge, so that they came behind in no gift, 1 Cor. i. 5, 7.—and what the apostle says of an organized body, he directly applies to them, chap. xii. 27, 28. There is no reason to doubt that the church at Troas had elders. To argue from the mere silence of Scripture that they had not, is to deny that the apostles established any uniform plan of church order. If the silence of Scripture prove that they were not an organized body when they came together to break bread, it will equally prove that they were not baptized; for neither is that expressly mentioned: nay, it will equally prove, that many of the apostolic churches did not eat the Lord's supper; for none of them are expressly said to do so but the three above mentioned. But if it was the practice of the apostles to ordain elders *in every church*, Acts xiv. 23. or to appoint others to ordain them, Titus i. 5. there is no ground to think that the church at Troas was an exception, but every reason to believe the contrary.

(4.) All the metaphors under which a particular visible church of Christ is represented, are descriptive of its order and organization. Is it compared to a temple, house, or habitation of God? 1 Cor. iii. 16. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Eph. ii. 22.—then it is not a mere mass of materials, however numerous; but a building (*sunarmologoumene*) *fitly framed together* into a regular edifice, Eph. ii. 21. Is it compared to a living human body? 1 Cor. xii. 12.—then it cannot be a mere collection of members; but of members (*sunarmologoumenon*) *fitly joined together*, and regularly disposed into one living system, Gal. iv. 16. The apostle illustrates the subject at large by this metaphor, and, as has been observed, applies it to the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. xii. 27, 28. He is not there speaking of the number of individuals in a church, but of the variety of gifts and offices conferred upon the church; and he shews, that if the whole had but one

kind of gift or office, however excellent, it could no more answer all the exigencies of a church, than an eye or an ear those of the natural body: "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? And if they were all one member, where were the body?" ver. 17, 19. As if he had said, If the whole were teachers by office, where were the taught? If the whole were rulers, where were the ruled? As one member does not constitute an organized natural body, so neither does any one gift or office, which is common to the whole, constitute an organized church. With regard to the natural body, he says, "But now hath God set (or placed) the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him," ver. 18.—and he applies this to the gifts and offices placed in the church: "And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues;" ver. 28. (see also Eph. iv. 11, 12.) But then he asks, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?" &c. ver. 29.—plainly intimating, that those gifts (some of which were extraordinary) were not conferred upon every individual, but only on *some*, who were appointed to exercise them for the good of the whole. See also Rom. xii. 3—9.

Now, as it has already been shewn, that the Lord's supper is a communion ordinance appointed to be observed by a church when assembled together in one place for that purpose; and as a church of Christ, when particularly described, is represented as an organized body, furnished with the necessary gifts and offices; it may justly be inferred from this, that the Lord's supper can neither be orderly administered, nor received, but by a church which in some measure answers to that description.

Upon any other plan, it cannot be maintained that the Lord's supper is an ordinance peculiar to a church. For if once it be granted that a number of disciples is warranted



to eat the Lord's supper without being set in church order, then a ground is laid for the smallest number that can assemble, suppose two or three, to plead the same right, and to argue that the Scriptures do not restrict it to any precise number; and, upon the same ground, a private Christian family, who, from distance, cannot assemble with a church, may plead their right to observe it by themselves at home, as well as any other part of family worship. This is not mere supposition; for such pleas have actually been set on foot, by some who wished to accommodate the Lord's supper to their own particular situation. Christians will, no doubt, earnestly desire to partake of that comfortable ordinance; but no sober-minded Christian, who pays a reverential regard to the scriptural order of the house of God, will desire or presume to receive it in any other way than Christ hath appointed and the apostolic churches have exemplified.

FINIS.

LATELY PUBLISHED,

*In two large and closely printed volumes, with a new and beautiful Burgeois Type, embellished with numerous Maps and Plates,*

**The BIBLICAL CYCLOPÆDIA ; or, Dictionary of the Holy Scriptures.** Intended to facilitate an Acquaintance with the Sacred Writings. By WILLIAM JONES, Author of the History of the Christian Church.

“ It is evidently Mr. Jones’s object in this, as in his former productions, to represent the religion of Christ in its genuine form: to exhibit it, not as it has been generally seen, distorted and abased, but in its original beauty, and adorned with its native attractions, as displayed by its author. We only do justice to the labours of Mr. Jones, in describing them as designed to serve and promote the cause of primitive Christianity. There are several important articles in the present compilation, which have left on our minds so strong an impression of their excellence in this respect, as to obtain from us this commendation, *in limine*, though we are not fully prepared to vindicate the propriety of allotting so much space to them as they fill in these pages. So luminously, however, are some important topics of Theology treated in these volumes, that we admit the author to all the benefit of the plea he may be disposed to urge in favour of the execution of his Work.

“ The view which is given by Mr. Jones of many subjects included in the Bible, is very different from that which has been taken by some other writers, whose early-formed prejudices have perverted their minds from the proper means of forming a correct determination on their merits: such are the questions which involve the character of the Christian fellowship and discipline; and though, as we have already intimated, some doubt as to the propriety of their insertion may be felt, while the Biblical Cyclopædia is regarded as a “ Dictionary of the Bible,” such is their excellence and their importance, and so reasonable do we consider the publication of them, that, without pledging ourselves to an unqualified approval, we do most seriously and strongly recommend them to the perusal of Christians.

“ Much time and labour have certainly been consumed upon the Work, which altogether possesses qualifications sufficient to justify our recommendation of it as a compilation of interesting and useful articles from our most valuable Biblical writers, mixed with no inconsiderable portion of original matter relative to the faith, the practice, and the discipline inculcated in the New Testament.

*Ectectic Review.*

---

“ The compiler of this Work is advantageously known to the public as the Author of a valuable “ History of the Waldenses.”—He has evinced much diligence in collecting and arranging the materials of his Cyclopædia, and the Geographical part is particularly well executed.”

*Horne’s Introduction to the Critical Study of the Scriptures, Vol. II. p. 516.*



Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries



1 1012 01195 8313

