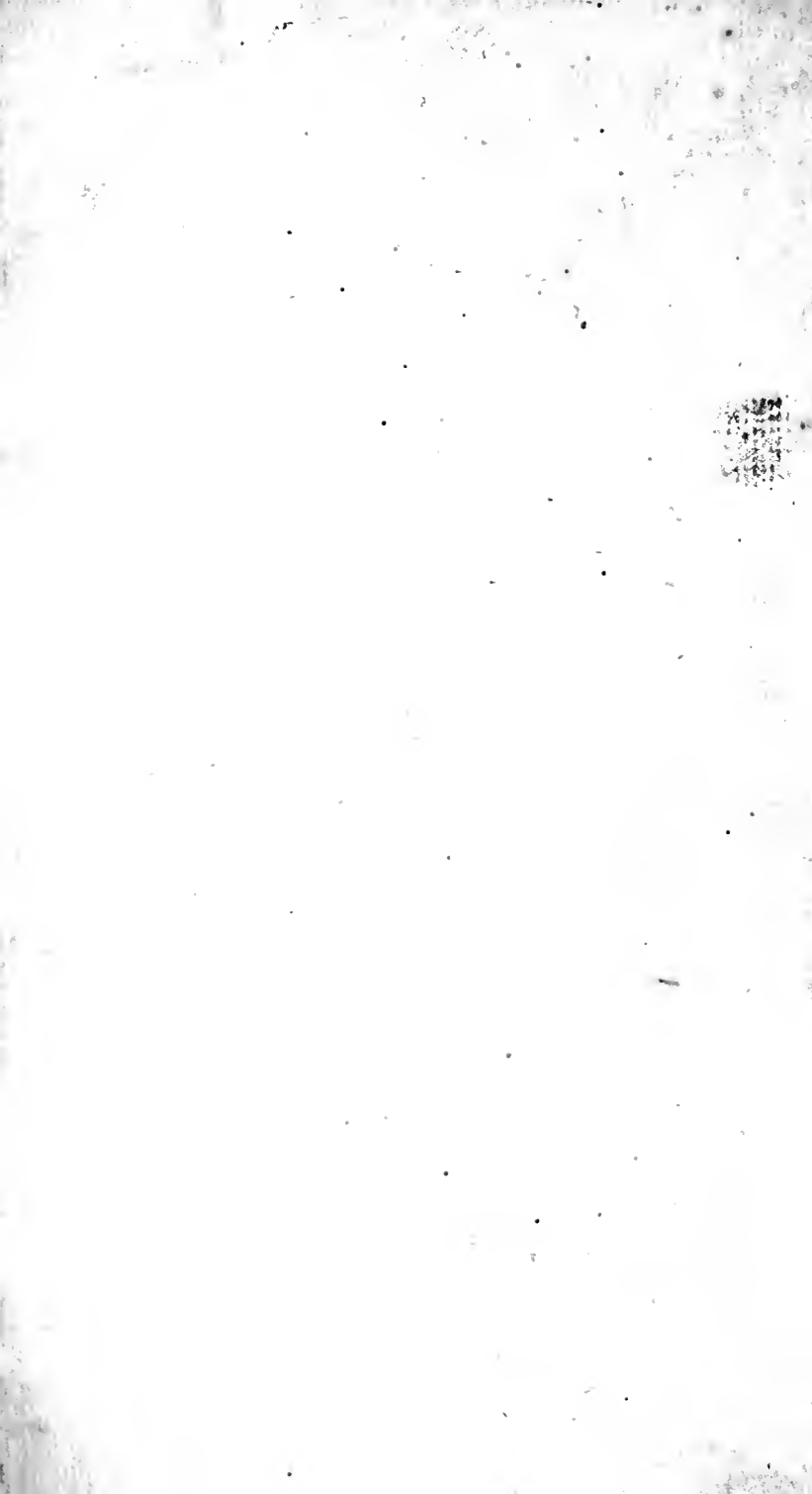




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I N T H R E E V O L U M E S.

N E V E R B E F O R E P R I N T E D.

V O L U M E I I I.

C O N T A I N I N G

Notes and Observations on the Epistle to
the GALATIANS.

E D I N B U R G H :

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M D C C L X X I I.



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E R R A T A.

Pag. 261. lin. 5. from the foot, for which read whereby

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Pag. 362. lin. 8. from the top, for purified read justified

NOTES and OBSERVATIONS

O N

The Epistle to the GALATIANS.

THE writing before us is an epistle directed by the Apostle Paul to the churches of Galatia. Those who know any thing of that kind of writing, will not expect the methodical exactness of an accurate treatise, much less the formality of a scholastic disputant. The writer who understands his business, will never indeed lose sight of the point he has in view, nor omit any thing that is necessary or proper for attaining his purpose: but, at the same time, he will lay the materials together in such an easy natural way, that every new thought shall appear to be suggested by what went before, until the whole plan be finished; each part throwing light upon another, and all of them making one consistent piece.

The epistle we are now entering upon will be found an absolute masterpiece in this way of writing, by all who understand it, and can enter into the writer's views. But to do this to purpose, one must be well acquainted, both with the character of the writer, and of those to whom he wrote, their mutual connections and relations, and what had formerly passed between them in their intercourse one with another.

The author is so well known, that it will be needless to spend words on his character; especially when the epistle itself presents us with as much as we have any occasion for. Besides his natural genius, which appears to have been one of the greatest, and the best education the world then afforded, he was peculiarly honoured by the supernatural instruction of him who is perfect in understanding, and by the personal appearance of the glorious Son of God, often repeated in the most friendly and familiar manner: he was endued with the most extraordinary measures of that divine Spirit, which leads into all truth; and received from Christ a special commission to carry the know-
ledge

ledge of his name to the Heathen nations, who had been for many ages without God and without hope in the world: in consequence whereof, he had brought the Galatians, to whom this epistle is addressed, to the knowledge of God, and of eternal life in his son Jesus Christ.

It will be of little moment to our present purpose, to know, that these Galatians were originally of the ancient Gauls, or to inquire how they came to settle in the Lesser Asia. It is sufficient to know, that they were Heathens, and involved in the grossest ignorance and idolatry, like their neighbouring nations, until the Apostle came among them, and taught them. His instructions, we find by what himself says, they received with great readiness and pleasure, and under his direction were formed into societies for worship; which, by a word long appropriated to these religious societies, are called *churches*; and *churches of Christ*, because of their special relation to him, on whom all their knowledge, and hopes of eternal life, are founded. This, it is easy to see, must have given him a peculiar interest in them as his spiritual children, and something

even more than a paternal tenderness for them, and authority over them, as one commissioned by God himself, and his blessed Son Jesus Christ, to whom they owed all they were, or possessed in a present world, and all they had to hope for in the world to come. And hence arises the very different manner of this epistle from that to the Romans; though, in both, the subjects are very nearly the same. He writes to the Romans more at large, and opens more distinctly the particular heads of that gospel he was intrusted with, as they were strangers to him, and he a stranger to them, and treats them with great softness and regard. But to the Galatians, he contents himself with short hints and allusions to what himself had taught them; and treats them with another sort of freedom, even the authority of a master, or rather of a careful father, anxious about his beloved children.

And there was great reason, as appears by the immediate occasion of his writing. The Jewish nation had been, from the days of their father Abraham, separated by God as his peculiar people, and witnesses for him to the rest of the world,

Abraham

Abraham received the sign of circumcision, as the seal of that righteousness which was by faith: and his posterity had a peculiar law given them in a very solemn manner for keeping up the memorial of that same righteousness, and preserving the knowledge of it from being corrupted by the imaginations and inventions of men. The observance of this law was made the tenure by which they held the possession of the land which God had given them; and which was secured to them ay and until the Messiah, the promised seed, should come. On this account they had got it strongly into their heads, that there was no way by which any others could obtain an interest in the blessing of Abraham, or eternal life, but by incorporating with their nation, by receiving this same circumcision, and submitting to the law of Moses.

Great numbers of them, however, overcome by the evidence of our Lord's miracles, and resurrection from the dead; with the glory that followed in his ascension to heaven, and sending the Holy Spirit according to his promise, came to believe, in so far as the evidence compelled them, that Jesus
was

was really the Christ, or promised Messiah. But not being thoroughly acquainted with the character and business of this same Messiah, nor with the true nature and intention of their own law, they still retained their national prejudice; and therefore maintained, that after all the Messiah had done, unless a man was circumcised after the manner of Moses, and thus submitted to the Jewish law, he could not be saved; and therefore, however the Gentiles might be admitted heirs of eternal life, yet, in order to this, there was still a necessity of their being incorporated with the Jewish nation, and submitting to the law of Moses. Much heat and contention did this perverse opinion occasion in the several churches: nor did the apostolical decision put an end to it wholly, until that nation was destroyed, their temple ruined, and the observation of the essentials of that law rendered impracticable. This we are certainly informed of, that they continued zealous for their law until Paul was made a prisoner; and their attachment to it was in a manner connived at by the apostles themselves, as appears from the advice that was given
to

to Paul for removing the prejudices which the Jews at Jerufalem had conceived against him, or rather for preventing the bad effects of their enormous zeal.

This preposterous zeal of theirs was accompanied, as false zeal usually is, with inveterate enmity against all opposers, and unwearied attempts to make profelytes. Some of these zealots had insinuated themselves into the good graces of the Galatian converts to Christianity. This could not be done but by depretiating either the Apostle or his doctrine. and, by what we find in this epistle, they spared neither the one nor the other: for, not contented with charging his doctrine with essential defects, and undertaking to teach a more perfect way, they directly attacked his character and apostolic authority: That as he was none of those whom Jesus in his lifetime had called to that office, he was either no apostle at all, or one of an inferior order, commissioned and sent out by those who were truly so: nay, they scrupled not to say, that the other apostles, being all of their mind, Paul himself was now better taught than formerly, and was as much for circumcision as they were;

were; which probably they might give some colour to by his causing Timothy to be circumcised when he took him for his companion. And little wonder it is, that such artful insinuations should make a very considerable impression on the perhaps honest, though weak minds, of those newly brought out of the gross darkness of Heathenism.

At what time this epistle was written, does not appear; only, that it was not long after the Galatians were either converted or visited by him. But this we may positively say, that the great warmth he shows was not owing, as some have imagined, to his being himself but newly converted: for we are sure, that it was written more than fourteen, or rather more than seventeen years after his conversion, as appears from the first verse of the second chapter, compared with the last verses of the first chapter. Some have been very positive, that it must have been written before the decision recorded Acts xv. mainly because he makes no particular mention of that decision in this epistle. But if it should be made appear, that the Galatians had not been converted, and that Paul was never
among

among them until some time after that meeting, that point would be effectually determined. We have a very particular account of his first journey into these countries along with Barnabas. But Galatia was none of the places where they published the gospel, nor have we any mention of it till some time after his journey with Barnabas to Jerusalem, and after they had separated; which is commonly reckoned to have been in the year 53. We find indeed, that he visited Galatia a second time; but whether before or after writing this epistle, we have no evidence, nor is it worth while to make guesses about it.

For preventing the prejudice which the churches must have sustained by such unnatural mixtures of the legal institutions with the gospel of Christ, the Apostle addresses himself with great, and truly divine skill, to vindicate his own character, to warn them of their danger; and the destructive tendency of those tenets they had too far encouraged, in the strongest manner; and, at the same time, to convince them of his tender and fatherly affection toward them, whom he regarded as his

own children. If any should ask, What is that to us now, when there are no such parties, nor any tenets favouring circumcision, or the observation of any Jewish rites or customs? it needs only to be considered, what it was that made them of such a dangerous tendency, viz. that the laying such weight on these observances misrepresented Christ and his salvation, as at best but imperfect; until it was eked out by other things; and thus, by building their faith and hope in God on these supplements to the gospel, drew off their dependence on Christ, the only foundation which God has laid. He must therefore be a very superficial observer, who does not find the Apostle's reasoning every way as strong, against every attempt to found our acceptance with God on our own obedience to any law whatsoever, except the obedience of faith to that great fundamental law, the commandment which God has given to believe in his blessed Son, and to love one another: for so the Apostle expressly tells us, That "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avail-
"eth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but
"faith, which worketh by love." What-
soever

soever is not of faith, which stands not on that foundation which faith builds on, is sin: for it is a transgression of the great fundamental commandment, the law of faith, and what our Lord himself has declared, John vi. 29. to be “the work of God.”

CHAPTER i. 1.—5.

1. *Paul an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), 2. And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: 3. Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father: 5. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

THERE is a remarkable peculiarity in Paul's manner of addressing his epistles, which is not to be found in those of the other apostles. James assumes no title but that of “a *servant* of God, and “of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Which word, in the original language, does not denote a hired, but a bond servant, one who was

absolutely his master's property, and had no right to dispose of himself. John, in his first epistle, mentions neither his name nor title, but enters, as it were, abruptly on his subject; and, in the other two, designs himself only, *The elder*, or *aged*; the title, it would seem, by which he was distinguished among those to whom he wrote. Jude assumes the designation of *a servant of the Lord*, only to distinguish himself from another of the same name, he styles himself likewise, *The brother of James*. Peter only joins the title of *Apostle* singly with that of *a servant of God*. And they needed no more, as their apostolic authority was beyond dispute. But Paul was none of those who received their commission before their Lord left this lower world; neither was he chosen by lot, as Matthias was; which made it in some measure needful to vouch his authority as an apostle, That he was so *by the will of God*. I need not observe the peculiar significancy of that word, as it imports something, not only greatly more than a divine permission, or even what is brought about in the course of ordinary providence; it is the same thing as the express appointment and authoritative order

der

der of that God whose apostle he was : and that office could not be undertaken without a commission from him who sent him.

But in the address of this epistle, there is something peculiarly singular, and wisely suited to the case of those to whom he wrote ; and particularly to obviate the malicious suggestions of their new teachers, by which they attempted to destroy, or at least to weaken, his apostolical authority. Christ had left the world several years before Paul had ceased to persecute those who acknowledged him ; and from this they might very plausibly infer, that whatever ministerial powers he was invested with, must have been, as we say, at second hand, and conveyed to him by those whom the Lord himself had appointed his apostles, and witnesses of his resurrection. Two things appear necessary by Peter's speech, Acts i. 15. &c. to qualify any one for that office: *1st*, That he had attended Jesus from the beginning ; and, *2dly*, That he had seen him ascend up into heaven after his resurrection : and as Paul had neither of these advantages, it might have been objected, that he could not be an apostle

postle commissioned by Christ personally; but at most was only a sort of minister or deputy of the true apostles.

In the address of his epistle, he directly obviates these exceptions in their fullest strength. He asserts his apostleship by assuming the title; and, at the same time, refuses any dependence whatever upon any of mankind, apostles, or others. He had not, he says, his commission from men, as one sent by them to preach the gospel; nay, nor so much as by their interposition or ministry, even supposing they had acted by divine order, as when he and Barnabas were directed to be separated unto the work to which Christ had called them. And this he instructs with great evidence, by the account he gives of himself in this and the following chapters.

But that he was really an apostle, and had as good a title to that character as any of the rest, he proves, by this sure evidence, That he had his commission and powers directly and immediately from *Jesus Christ, and from God the Father, who raised him from the dead.* Those who know and consider the union and essential connection between the only true God and
Jesus

Jesus Christ, whom he sent, will need no further proof of his being constituted an apostle by God the Father, than that he was so by Jesus Christ. But we are further assured, that all power in heaven and earth is committed into the hand of Christ, and he is given in a special manner to be the head over all things to his church. So that whatever the Father does there, is done by this his beloved Son, to whom it is given to have life in himself, even as himself has it.

We do not find our Apostle any where in this epistle directly telling the Galatians how or when he was constituted an apostle by Jesus Christ. This, we have reason to think, they had been informed of while he was among them, and that he refers to it in what he here says of God raising him from the dead. And if he saw Jesus after his resurrection and ascension, when he was set down on the right hand of the majesty on high, glorified with that glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, he was every way as well qualified to be an apostle and a witness for him as any of them, and had good reason to say, “ he
“ was

“ was not a whit behind the very chiefest
 “ of them ;” nay, and that he had a very
 peculiar pre-eminence, as he had seen him
 in his glory. And thus he did see him on
 his way to Damascus, and thereafter when
 he was sent away from Jerufalem, and ex-
 pressly commissioned by him to preach
 the gospel to the Gentiles, as we find him
 declaring, Acts xxii. 17. *et. seqq.* To which
 ministry Barnabas and he were afterward
 solemnly separated by order of the Holy
 Spirit.

That the Galatians might have no room
 to imagine, as their new teachers were
 ready to suggest to them, that Paul was
 singular in what he wrote to them, he
 very judiciously joins with himself, vers. 2.
 the *brethren who were with him* as of the
 same sentiments. Did we know, as no
 doubt they did, where he was, and who
 were with him there when he wrote this
 epistle, we might be better able to judge of
 the weight their concurrence was likely to
 have with them. The word *brethren* is
 very comprehensive. It is a title which
 belongs to all who believe in Jesus Christ ;
 and may well be constructed to intimate

to them, that the whole church where he then was, were of one mind in these things.

The epistle is directed, not to the church, but the *churches of Galatia*. The country which went under that name was of no great extent; by which it would seem, either that the Apostle had no notion of national churches, or that they were not then united in that manner. But what is of more moment to be observed is, that though they were corrupted to a great degree, not only in circumstantial points, but even in those which were most fundamental; even such as he calls *another gospel*, and which could not be admitted without falling from grace, and making Christ uselefs; he still addresses them as *churches*, calls them *brethren*, a term yet more tender and affectionate; when thoughtlefs zealots would have lifted up a standard of division, and raised the cry, “Come out from among them.”

Hence we may observe, that it is not falling into error by mistake or seduction, but incorrigible obstinacy therein, in opposition to divine evidence laid before them, that extinguishes the Christian character.

So far from this spirit was our holy Apostle, that we find him expressing his salutation in the very same terms he uses to the purest churches, and those where he had nothing to blame; but, on the contrary, whom he gives the highest commendations to: *Grace to you, and peace from God the Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord.* Whether we consider this as a solemn prayer for them, or rather as an apostolical benediction, it carries in it the highest good that can enter into the heart of man to desire. *Grace*, in the first and most natural meaning of the word, denotes free unmerited favour, entertained and manifested by a superior to one greatly below him, who could have no sort of pretensions to it: and the higher and more exalted station the superior stands in, and the lower and viler the party is to whom the favour is shown, the greater the grace. In this view, the divine grace must, like its author, be absolutely infinite. The Apostle has given us the nearest prospect we can take of it: “Where sin abounds, “grace superabounds;” and goes greatly beyond it. But the favour or grace of God is not like that of man, which often
 proves

proves barren and fruitless. It carries in it all the good the creature is capable of receiving; and every gift bears the name of the great original, and is called a *favour*, or *grace*; and when *peace* is joined with *grace*, they carry in their import every thing that can make the creature happy, and give the highest satisfaction, pleasure, and joy; as we find the oracle given by the Lord to this same Apostle on a very pressing occasion, states it, 2 Cor. xii. 9. “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is perfected in weakness.”

Such is the grace and peace the Apostle here sets before the Galatians; for it is that which comes *from God the Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord*. He traces it to its original: For “all things are of God,” 2 Cor. v. 18. In him who is love, all grace takes its rise; but it cannot reach sinners, such as all Adam’s children are, but through Jesus Christ. Where-ever he is overlooked, the view must be incomplete, and the medium of conveying it lost; for the great foundation on which only it stands, and by which we can have any assurance of it, or benefit by it, will

be lost to us. In Christ, and in him alone, the love of God is manifested and commended to us; and just so far as we know him, and believe the testimony the Father has given concerning him, so far, and no farther, we know and believe the love that God hath to us; and just so far as we know and believe the love of God to us, will our hearts be formed into the same image. For the Apostle assures us, that “we love God, because he first loved us,” 1 John iv. 19.

This sure foundation of the Christian faith and hope in God the Apostle sets forth, vers. 4. very shortly indeed, but very fully: and the whole he comprehends in two general views: *He gave himself for our sins*; and he gave himself for this important purpose, *that he might deliver us from a present evil world.*

No body, sure, will need to be told, that the particle rendered *for* in our translation, does not bear the same meaning in these two propositions, which yet express the same thing, only in different views; viz. Christ gave himself for *us*; and, Christ gave himself for our *sins*. The first sets him forth as the ransom, the price or means of our redemption

demption and deliverance from the power of death; and in this view he is very justly said to have purchased for himself a peculiar people, who are no more their own, being bought with a price; redeemed, not with silver or gold, or such corruptible things, but with the precious blood of the Son of God. And the right is indisputably good, as raising the dead man is very nearly the same with creating the man who is thus raised. Again, when he is said to have given himself for our *sins*, this expression sets him forth directly under the notion of a sacrifice appointed for the putting away of sin, which subjected all mankind to death, and holds them under it, until it be destroyed. That the death or dissolution of the body is the effect of sin, is generally acknowledged. But by the view this same Apostle gives of it, Eph. ii. 1. 2. 3. sin itself is really the death of the soul, which is the principal and most noble part of the man. It separates, and thereby cuts off the soul from God, the father of spirits, and the only fountain of life, the very substance of the spiritual world; and thus renders it utterly incapable of living as pure spirits do, with respect

spect either to the business and employment, or to the enjoyments and gratifications of the spiritual life. It is easy to see how both these expressions, viz. Christ giving himself for us, and giving himself for our sins, concur in furnishing us with a complete representation of the Christian state, as all the parts of it, both privileges and duties, arise as naturally and necessarily out of this new creation, as the original duties did out of the first.

For, in the *first* place, it is evident, That all who are thus redeemed from sin and death by Jesus Christ, must be his absolute property, whom he has a just and perfect right to dispose of, and employ in what manner his perfect wisdom sees fit and proper. He is their sovereign Lord, as we see the Apostle calls him, vers. 3.; nor is there any room left them to dispute or put in remonstrances or exceptions to any of his orders. Perfect submission to his supreme authority is all that is left for them. The least alteration, either by adding or diminishing in the order he has established, is so far renouncing his authority, and setting up our own wisdom, which

which is too generally regulated by our ill-governed wills, in opposition to his.

What the Apostle here adds, of our Lord's further intention, in giving himself for our sins, completes the view of the Christian's state, very properly called *a state of grace*; which the Apostle calls the grace wherein believers stand; which we find him always opposing to the state of those who are under law; and particularly the Jews, who were under that of Moses, Rom. vi. 14. This completing view of grace the Apostle expresses by Christ's *delivering* his people *from this present evil world*. Literally, it is taking them out of it. The word the Apostle uses here is that by which the different states of mankind, before and after our Lord's coming in the flesh, are denoted. So the Apostle calls the time of Christ's kingdom, *the world to come*, Heb. ii. 5.; where he uses a different word. Hence, some have thought, that the Apostle had the Jewish state under the Mosaic law in his eye; and that he means to tell those who wanted so much to be under that dispensation, that when Christ gave himself for sin, there was an end put to that dispensation,

fation, and that it was his design to take his people out of that state, and bring them into that which in those times was called *the world to come*.

That this was one part of our Lord's design in giving himself, every Christian will readily allow, and that it very well answers the Apostle's views in this epistle. But besides that, however the institutions of the Mosaic law, on which the Jewish state was founded, are called weak and unprofitable, and really were so; on which account they were removed to make way for a better constitution and church state, established on better promises; yet it neither was, nor ever was called, *evil in itself*; but became so only by the misapplication and abuse of it. And though it should be allowed, that the Old-Testament state might be called evil, those whom the Apostle was writing to were Gentiles, who never had any concern with the Jewish state; and therefore could never, with any propriety of speech, be said to be delivered from, or taken out of, a world which they never were in.

When we consider further, that the word here rendered *world*, is often and almost
always

always used in the same sense with another, which uniformly signifies the present world, the whole frame of nature, as mankind stand connected with it, in opposition to that world which is spiritual and eternal, except where it is distinguished by particular circumstances; the most natural interpretation of what the Apostle says here, will be that which he gives us in this same epistle; when he says, “ he “ was crucified to the world, and the “ world was crucified to him.” Thus he was effectually taken out of it. The course of it, after which the men of the world, the natural children of Adam, walk, Eph. ii. 3. had no more influence on him. He, and all true Christians, are crucified with Christ; have from him and in him a new life; are begotten and born again into a new world, the spiritual and eternal one; and, by his Spirit dwelling in them, learn to live as spirits do, on that fullness of God which dwells in him. Christ is all to them; they need no more; and to him belongs all the glory, and to him they heartily and willingly give it all: as the Apostle does, vers. 5. *To him be the glory for ever and ever.*

Of all the duties of worship which men owe their Creator, Redeemer, and constant Benefactor, that of giving him the glory due unto his name, as the Psalmist expresses it, is the most natural, and, at the same time, the most comprehensive. It is that which is most worthy of God, and most becoming the creature; it makes a necessary ingredient in all the duties of religion, and is the very essence of praise and thanksgiving; it mixes even with all the actions of common life; and where-ever it is wanting, there must be something amiss; that is, some degree of sin in the most innocent, and even the best actions. The Apostle's rule is a full proof of this: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. Giving God the glory of his name, supposes the knowledge of it, or, which is the same thing, the knowledge of God as he is manifested and discovered to us: and that is only done by such works and ways of his as are brought under our observation. Praises and thanksgivings, the only way by which we directly give glory to him, always suppose something we praise, and give him thanks

thanks for. And to give him the glory due unto his name, must carry in it a full conviction and acknowledgement, that he really is such a God as he has shown himself to be in all his works and ways; that is, as creator, preserver, and governor, of the world; but especially as he has manifested himself in Jesus Christ, and all the riches of his sovereign grace and merciful kindness to mankind; with the impressions which the believing views of them necessarily make on the heart, filling it with the warmest gratitude and love. These are the sacrifices which God has chosen; and which accordingly we find him, Psa. 1. preferring to all the most costly offerings under the Old-Testament dispensation.

CHAP. i. 6. — 10.

6. *I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: 7. Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received,*

received, let him be accursed. 10. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

IN these verses the Apostle enters on the main subject of his epistle, intended to recover those Galatians, whom, by his preaching among them, he had converted from Heathen ignorance and idolatry, to the faith of Jesus Christ, and the knowledge of the true God in and through him. He had been taking a view of the astonishing condescension and grace of God to a perishing sinful world, demonstrated in the strongest manner, by putting away sin, by the sacrifice of his Son, *that he might deliver them from this present evil world*, that is, from the power of Satan, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and a comfortable and honourable standing in the grace and favour of the living God. Warmed, as a heart like his must have been, with these affecting views, he could not miss stating the case with a more than ordinary degree of warmth, which yet he moderates with great tenderness and caution.

The

The Galatians were indeed deeply guilty, but those who had seduced them were greatly more so. Against these last therefore he points the highest indignation; while he only wonders how the others could be so soon prevailed with to make a change so much to their detriment and loss.

Verf. 6. *I marvel, &c.*

No wise man will wonder at any thing but what is very extraordinary, and surprises, not only with the novelty, but the uncommonness and unaccountableness of the event. And surely such a man as Paul, who knew so much of human nature, and had such an extensive knowledge of the world, would not *marvel* at any thing without very great reason. What this was, he states very fairly, though in few words, verf. 6. It was, that these Galatians *were so soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.* So our translators render his words, plainly enough; but interpreters are greatly divided about what is the true sense of the words which he uses. Could it be determined with certainty whom the Apostle means by *him* that

that called them, the other differences would be easily adjusted.

Some interpreters of great note have imagined, that the Apostle means himself, as by his ministry they were called, and brought into the grace of Jesus Christ; and that the matter of his complaint was, that they were, by their new teachers, drawn off from that love and respect they had shown to him and his doctrine, when he was among them. And they think themselves pretty strongly supported by what he says, chap. iv. 12. *et seqq.* But it is hard to believe, that such a man as Paul, who would not allow any thing done by him of all his labours to be owing to himself, but to the Spirit and grace of God in him; that such a man should introduce himself into such a solemn scene as that which he here presents to the Galatians. What he says of himself any where through this epistle, is evidently designed to support his character against the false teachers, who waited to sink his credit, that they might the more easily destroy what he had taught them.

But if we reflect what the calling is which he here speaks of, we will find,
that

that it is something of so high a nature, that it never is, any where in the sacred record, nor indeed can be, attributed to any mere man whatsoever. It is, by the description the Apostle gives of it, such a calling as could bring those who were called out of the Gentile world, where they were lying dead in trespasses and sins, under the influence of that malignant spirit which works effectually in the children of disobedience; and instate them, or, in the same Apostle's phrase, give them a standing in the grace and favour of God, and a share in all the happy fruits and effects of it. This, it is evident, is what none but God has either any right or power to do. He indeed in ordinary cases doth make use of means and ministers; but their only business is, to hold forth the word of life, or God's call; but the excellency of the power is of God, 1 Cor. iii. 5. and 2 Cor. iv. 7.

It must therefore be allowed, that they come nearer the truth who make Christ himself the caller he speaks of, and thus render the words, *I marvel, that ye are so soon removing from Christ, who hath called you.* Those who understand the genius
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of the language in which the Apostle wrote, will readily see, that there is not the least violence done to his words by this construction. It is true indeed, what is objected, that throughout the scripture-record, the calling of finners is represented as the peculiar work of God: but it is as true, that whatever the Father does, the Son does also; and that all power in heaven and in earth is given into his hand; insomuch that in the whole business of bringing finners of mankind into his kingdom, the Father doth nothing but by the Son. All the fullness of grace and glory is lodged in his hand, to raise the dead, and quicken whom he will.

Upon the whole, it appears to be of no moment, whether we take God absolutely considered, or Christ, to be the caller whom the Apostle means. Only the last seems to be most favoured by what he says of the false teachers; that their great crime lay in drawing off their disciples from Christ, to build on some other foundation; and seems to be greatly favoured by the state the Apostle gives of the case, viz. That they were removed from him that called them *unto another gospel*. This
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plainly says, that the term from which they removed was the gospel which Paul preached. It would be a very gross mistake, if any should think, what Paul in this epistle calls the gospel, was only that particular point, of Christians being freed from the yoke of the Jewish law, which they never were under. The gospel which he preached was the gospel of Christ; and called so, not only, or principally, because it was committed by him to his apostles to be published throughout the world, but because he was the subject of it, as we find this Apostle himself defining it, the gospel of God, or good news he has sent into the world, concerning his Son Jesus Christ, Rom. i. 1. 2. 3. And he tells us how he managed it, 1 Cor. iii. 10. Speaking of Christians as a building, he says, he laid the foundation so as no man might lay another, which is Christ Jesus. On this foundation, therefore, he had pitched the Galatians; and to be removed from his gospel, was really the same thing as to be removed from Christ. And the word he uses seems designed to answer this view; or, which is the same thing, their standing in the grace of God: for no man can

stand there, but by standing, or being built up in Christ. Removing is too weak to express the import of it. It is taking any thing from one situation or place, and putting it in another, by some agent or other. The case exactly of these false teachers, who made it their business to shake them out of that place the gospel of Christ had put them in, their standing in Christ, and to set them upon the law. Paul's gospel was, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* They said not so: For, *unless a man be circumcised after the manner of Moses, and keep his law, he cannot be saved.*

But at the same time that the Apostle exposes the mad project their new teachers were upon, he treats the churches of Galatia with great tenderness and caution. He does not say, as our translators do, that they were actually removed, or had already left their standing in grace; but that they were removing; as we find him stating their case, chap. iv. 20.: that they were in such an unsettled way, as made him stand in doubt of them. They were but new converts, and might easily be shaken by the bold pretensions of those
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who they had some reason to think should have understood the way of salvation better than themselves. As it was on these the blame lay, the Apostle does not spare them; but throughout the whole epistle, and particularly in the verses following, deals very roundly with them, and with such a severity, as nothing could warrant but the cause he had vindicated, and the Holy Spirit, which directed him.

There is some difference among translators about the 7th verse. Many who seem to understand the original language best, think our translation somewhat injurious to the Apostle, and not a just rendering of the words he uses. They think it is not right to make the Apostle say, that the new teaching was another gospel, and with the same breath, that it was not another; which can admit of no meaning, but that what he called *another*, was either the same, or was no gospel at all. This last is indeed in some sense true, but hardly consistent with the view the Apostle gives of it, and the truth of the case. They did not reject the truth of the gospel of Christ, but perverted it by a foreign mixture of such things as marred,

if not destroyed at once, the simplicity and beauty, the power and efficacy, of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is alledged further, that if the Apostle had designed to say what our translation does, he would have kept the same word in both propositions as they do; but which, in the latter, he exchanges for another, of a very different signification, and which is commonly used to different purposes. Upon the whole, they judge, that *αλλο*, in the 7th verse, relates not only to another gospel, but the whole of what he had said of their being removing into it, which he says is nothing else, *but that there were some who troubled them, &c.*

The difference is of no great moment. What concerns us more is, to consider the account he gives of those new teachers they had got among them; that they were troubling them, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. The words are too weak for conveying the emphasis of those the Apostle uses. The word rendered *troubling* strongly expresses the disturbance which these people made in the churches wherever they came; and which the bringing in of new doctrines, differing from the gospel of Christ, will always do. The
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least effect, which yet is no small evil, is, disquieting the minds even of honest Christians with doubts and difficulties, which they may be but ill able to overcome. When debates and disputes rise, parties are formed, Christian love greatly weakened, and party-zeal degenerates into something very near enmity and hatred; divisions and schisms become unavoidable, and the body of Christ is torn in pieces; and, which is worse, the members tear and devour one another, as the Apostle expresses it, chap. v. 15.; and it is well if they do not destroy one another. The wise man's observation about strife and contention has been often fatally verified. "The beginning of it is like the breaking in of water;" so small a matter, that it seems hardly worth minding; but by degrees gathers such strength, as makes the damage it does absolutely irreparable.

What the Apostle adds, as the occasion of these disturbances in the Galatian churches, viz. that these false teachers *would* pervert the gospel of Christ, in the translation is much too faint. The word the Apostle uses, which our translators render *would*, strongly expresses a fixed determined state of the will; that
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the unhappy men were so resolutely bent on what the Apostle calls *perverting the gospel of Christ*, that they exerted the utmost of their powers to accomplish what they so earnestly wished. A pitiful view this gives us of the weakness of human nature, with all the boasted powers some would persuade us it is invested with; easily drawn into mistake and error, and obstinately bigotted to the very worst of them; so that all the reason and authority in the universe cannot, not to say reclaim, but so much as moderate, their conduct.

And what was it these unhappy men were so heartily engaged in? Why, truly, what no man who knows what he is about, can so much as think of without horror, *perverting the gospel of Christ*. The Apostle's word is very significant. It is to change the gospel into something which it was not, until they took it into their hands. That is such a dreadful thing, that no man in his wits will attempt directly. But these seducers were not the only persons who persuaded themselves, and attempted to persuade others, that the gospel of Christ is not what he made it, but something else, which themselves
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have invented, and called by that name. The different forms into which what they call the *gospel* has been modelled, are so numerous, that a list of them could hardly be made in one volume; some of them we meet with in the after part of this epistle.

That which the Apostle has here in his view, uniting the observation of the law of Moses with the faith of Christ, and making them both equally necessary, will be found the most plausible, and what most may be said in the defence of. And yet we find the Apostle boldly pronouncing a curse on the defenders of it. And lest any should suspect that his zeal for what he knew certainly to be truth, had carried him too far vers. 8. he repeats it again vers. 9. The terms are strong, and need no commentary. The best that can be made would but weaken them. *If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed. As I said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other doctrine to you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* And it is impossible to pitch upon any higher authority for such alterations.

Before

Before we go any farther, it may be proper to say something of the nature of the curse which the Apostle denounces here. And there are three remarkable instances by which we may form a judgement about it, without any danger of being mistaken, viz. the original curse pronounced on mankind in our first father, and the ground for his sake; the curse annexed to the Mosaic law, and particular cases under that dispensation, where certain persons or things were devoted, or laid under the curse; and the curse which our blessed Redeemer kindly took upon himself. In all these cases, the effect of the curse was no less than the utter destruction of the subject on which it once rested. When it fell on persons, death was the consequence, and that makes an end of the man. That is the case of all mankind. But when life was extinguished, the law was fulfilled; for the curse had done its business. The law has dominion over a man so long as he liveth; but when he is dead, he is no more a subject, and it has nothing to say to him; and the creator may, when he pleases, restore him to a new life. But as that is as much an
act

act of pure sovereign grace, as the first creation was, he may withhold it where he pleases; and in that case the man is bound for ever under that death under which the curse bound him.

The case of Jesus may be imagined an exception from this general rule: for he had no sin, and of course could not be cut off from God, in which the spiritual death lies. It is true he had no sin, and had a perfect right to life by the law, in the strictest tenor of it; and thence had power, such as never another man had, to lay down his life, and to take it up again. Death neither had nor could have any power over him; nor was it in the power of any man to take his life from him. But he could lay it down, as he did on the cross; a kind of death which God, in the prospect of this grand event, had pronounced a curse upon. And as he submitted to the destruction of all that life which he derived from Adam; so when, by his office of priesthood, he had taken upon himself the sins of all who come to him in that character, in order to put them away, he appears to have tasted pretty deeply in the spiritual death, when he cried out, "My God

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“ my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?”

This by the way accounts perfectly for his agony in the garden, and his repeated earnest prayer, that “ if it was possible “ that cup might pass from him ;” which affords a full answer to the reproach cast upon him by a sort of men who know no more of him but the name, viz. that he did not show half the firmness and resolution that many of those did who suffered for his sake. He knew perfectly the pleasure and happiness of the spiritual life, and the way of living on God ; the consequences too of being separated from him : no wonder the dreadful prospect put him into the greatest agony, however short the time might be of its continuance. They who suffered for his sake, were so far from any such prospect, that they found themselves perfectly secured against it ; and the worst they had to fear was, the loss of what they had already renounced, a perishing life, and the equally perishing gratifications and enjoyments of it, and some short bodily torment, which should introduce them into “ the “ joy of their Lord.”

Attempts have been made to dwindle
away

away the import of this curse, into a church-censure which went under that name. And the rather, that the account he gives of those against whom he denounces it, appears to extend very far, and takes in numbers whom they are very loath to condemn. It does indeed extend very far; for they are not only such, in his account, who teach or preach any thing *contrary to* the gospel of Christ, which he had preached to them, and they had received; but such as teach any thing *besides* it, for that is his word; that is to say, who should pass any thing upon their hearers or readers for gospel, which is not really the gospel of Christ. And what numbers of men, besides those whom the Apostle had in his eye, will fall under this condemnation! Nor will it mend the matter, that the Apostle means no more than excommunication, or cutting them off from the communion of the faithful; since no man may be thus cut off, but for such conduct as God and his blessed Son have denounced eternal damnation against, even the curse in its utmost extent.

If any should take it into their head to ask the same question about Paul that

was put to his master, By what authority he did those things, since none but the sovereign of the universe has either authority to denounce, or power to inflict, such a curse? the answer is easy: He did it by the same authority by which he proclaimed and published the gospel; that is, by his authority who hath the keys of hell and of death; and he did no more than his master had done before, when he gave his apostles authority, to go and preach the gospel to every creature, with this sanction, "He that believeth, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned."

By this very warm declaration of his sentiments, he effectually obviates what we find by chap. v. 11. the false teachers had attempted to persuade the Galatians of, viz. that Paul himself was a promoter of circumcision; which he tells them, chap. vi. 12. they insisted on for no other reason, but to get favour from the unbelieving Jews, that they might avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. This is the true key to what he says, vers. 10.; *For do I now persuade men, or God?* &c. the meaning of which, as it stands in our translation,

translation, it is not easy to apprehend, or to perceive how the Apostle brings it in here. The word he uses does indeed properly signify *persuade*; and where-ever we meet with it, it always denotes some kind of persuasion, or that the person who attempts it carries the point he aims at. What that was in his case, himself points us to, by the particle *now*, with which he introduces it; and which plainly enough refers, not only to what he was saying then, but to the whole of his conduct in publishing the gospel of Christ. On this he puts the question concerning the point he had in view. Our translators have given us the true sense of it, Acts xii. 20. where we meet with the same word, which, if literally translated, as they do here, would be, “Those of Tyre and Sidon *persuaded* Blastus the King’s chamberlain;” which would have left the thing altogether uncertain, as indeed it is in the text before us; and therefore they very judiciously rendered it by what they persuaded him to, namely, “That they made Blastus their friend;” which was the point they aimed at.

Thus the Apostle’s question is plain,
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and home to the purpose. What is, and what can be my intention? what do or can I propose by the whole of my conduct? Is it to please God, and secure his friendship; or to curry favour with men? And what he adds in the last part of the verse, sufficiently determines the sense of the question, and at the same time gives the only consistent answer that can be made to it: *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of God.* The reason is plain from what our Lord himself said, Matth. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters," &c. The choice in theory, one would think, should not be hard to make. There can be no comparison, much less any competition, between God, the creator, sovereign, and judge, and the whole world of mankind, though they were all united in one body. But when it comes to the practice, God on one side, and the world on the other, lamentable experience witnesses what a weight the latter bears in the decision.

11. *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. 12. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past, in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14. And profited in the Jews religion, above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16. To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Heathen: immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17. Neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem, to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22. And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ: 23. But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24. And they glorified God in me.*

THE Apostle had asserted, in his address of the epistle, that he was neither sent and commissioned by men, nor had received his commission to the office

office of an Apostle from men at second hand, but directly and immediately from God, and his ever-blessed Son. This was a point of great moment, as the credit and authority of that gospel which he preached, in a great measure depended on it; and which accordingly he sets himself, in the remaining part of this and in the following chapter, to support by undeniable facts. By which it appears, with great evidence, that it was impossible he could have it any other way, but by direct and immediate revelation. And he brings it in according to his natural and easy manner, by which he makes one thing to introduce another, as if he was only pursuing the same thought. He had strongly asserted, that he had never made it his business to please men, but, as became a faithful servant, to execute his master's orders as he had received them; not daring, as some did, to serve their own purposes by the gospel of Christ; see 2 Cor. ii. 17. "We are not as many which corrupt the word of God." The word literally signifies, acting like taverners.

He begins, vers. 11. with laying down the proposition he meant to prove, in very plain
plain

plain and positive terms, and in such a way as should leave no room, either for the Galatians, or their seducers, to pretend ignorance, or make any hesitation or doubt about it, as a thing they were not sufficiently apprised of, and which is very well rendered, by *certifying* them. His certification consists of two parts, or one assertion confirmed by two particulars. The general assertion is, That the gospel which he delivered to them was not after man; and the proof of it is, That he did not receive it from men; neither was taught it any other way but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

What the Apostle says of his gospel, that it was *not after man*, may be constructed to refer either to the matter of which it consisted, or the manner in which the knowledge of it was conveyed to him. In the first view it is as much as if he had said, that what he taught neither was, nor could be, discovered by man; for this plain reason, that the whole of the facts on which it stands, and the hopes which it discovers, are of such a nature as it was impossible for any human creature to have invented, being such as no eye e-

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ver saw, nor ear heard, nor did they ever enter into the heart of man to conceive.

These are all the ways which man has to come to the knowledge of any thing. He can perceive nothing but what falls within the compass of his senses. No man can inform another of what has never fallen within his own observation; nor is it possible for him to conceive of any thing which lies altogether beyond his reach. The Apostle's reasoning is strong and conclusive, 1 Cor. ii. 11. "What man knoweth the things of a man," his inward sentiments and purposes especially, "but the spirit of man that is in him?" How absurd then must it be, to pretend to know the things of God, his mind and purposes, unless they be revealed by his Spirit?

The gospel of Christ is not after man in another view, viz. It is not at all concerted on the plan and measures of human wisdom. It was arrant folly in the eyes of the wise and learned Greeks, and a stumbling-block to the Jews. Nor need we go so far for evidence, when we have enough of it among those who have the highest reputation for wisdom and learning,

learning, among those who claim the name of Christians, and yet cannot digest the gospel of Christ in its native simplicity, until they have new-modelled it according to their several tastes.

It should, one would think, require no great penetration, to be assured, that the gospel, as Christ and his apostles have stated it, cannot possibly owe its rise to human invention. But it is the other view, which relates to the manner in which he came to the knowledge of it, which he seems especially to have in his eye; that he did not receive it as men do their knowledge, by one another, and being instructed and taught, as all human knowledge of facts, and even the arts and sciences, are for the most part. And if this was really the case, there was no other way of coming to the knowledge of it but by revelation.

That he was not, nor could be taught of man, he proves, vers. 12. 13. & 14. with great evidence, by the history of his life, both before he began to preach the gospel, and after. In the former part of his life, he was so far from receiving any bias in favour of Christianity, that the whole course

of his education immersed him in the strongest prejudices against it. He was born of Jewish parents, (an *Hebrew of the Hebrews*, as he designs himself in another place); and these it would seem of no mean rank; for he was sent from Tarsus to Jerusalem, and studied under the doctor of greatest reputation, being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He did not lose his time there; for he advanced in the knowledge of his religion above most of his equals, and formed his conduct upon it. He entered himself into the sect of the Pharisees, the strictest of any in their profession; and as their distinguishing character was a great zeal for the law, and especially the traditions pretended to be handed down from their fathers, and even Moses himself, surely Paul was not like to learn the gospel of Christ there, or even to contract any favourable notions of that way. So far from it, that, along with his knowledge of their law, he imbibed the strongest prejudices in its favour, and outdid, not only the bulk of the nation, but even the Pharisees themselves, in his zeal for their traditions; which he carried to the most enormous height, by persecuting and
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laying waste the church of God; the history of which is given us so fully, and confirmed by himself in the Acts of the Apostles, that it is needless to insist on it here.

One can hardly pass the account the Apostle here gives of himself, without reflecting on the astonishing weakness of human nature, even with all the advantages one can be possessed of, or acquire. Never man possessed greater natural abilities, and no man in that age had better opportunities for improving them. He had Moses and the prophets, the great treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and spent his early youth in the study of them; and yet was carried off from the great design and whole intention of them, by his attachment to what was called *the traditions of their fathers*.

We should have been quite at a loss about these same traditions, had it not been for what the Evangelists have recorded, and our Lord himself has said about them. They were very exact in small matters, and added a number of trifling observations, which the law never required, and in the mean time neglected the weightier matters; nay, which was

was yet worse, they made the law of God itself void, and set it aside, even in some of the plainest points, by these traditions of theirs. But what was worst of all, by a pretended religious zeal for what they took to be the letter of the law, they lost the spirit, and what was the very design of the whole, to point out and direct men to Christ. This was the unhappy state of this very great man. His zeal for what he mistook for the law, spent itself against what both the law and the prophets attested, and was designed to lead men to, viz. Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation and eternal life through him. Instead of that warmth of love to God and man, which is the root and fountain of all true zeal, that excellent thing was deformed into a furious party-rage, while the deluded bigot thought he was doing God good service, and was executing the just vengeance found written in his word against the blasphemers of his law. And happy had it been for mankind, had the black mark he has set upon his own conduct, been made a warning to others who came after him, and have followed the same steps.

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Such was this extraordinary man in the first part of his life; extraordinary every way. He was carried out to extraordinary opposition to Christ and his gospel by his unbounded zeal for what he took to be the law of Moses; he was designed for extraordinary work, to carry the gospel of this same Jesus to the Heathen nations; and he was converted and commissioned in a most extraordinary manner. He does not enter into the particulars of his conversion, as those he wrote to, he knew, were no strangers to them. But the short account he gives of it, vers. 15. & 16. though it appears to stand here only as an introduction to what he was going to say in prosecution of his argument, is yet very instructive to us, and tends not a little to strengthen his reasoning, with a solemnity which must have great weight with all who have any thing of a regard for God.

He begins with God's care about him as early as his coming into the world, as it was he who *separated him from his mother's womb*. This very naturally leads a reader into the same way of thinking with the Psalmist, Psal. xxii. 9. 10.; and seems to be the genuine meaning of the Apostle's words,

words, and as agreeable to his present purpose as what some critics would have us to understand by it, viz. his being separated to the office of an apostle. This last indeed agrees well enough with the context; but it will be very hard to say what occasion there was for mentioning his mother's womb, when it was so many years after his birth that he was thus separated from the profane community, nay, that he appeared one of the worst of them, until it pleased the same God whose providential care had brought him into the world, *to reveal his Son in him.*

This phrase may admit of two constructions, so as to denote, either his own conversion, or his being called to and qualified for the office of an apostle; for this revelation of Christ in him might have been designed, either for himself, and his own benefit, or for the behoof of the Heathen nations to whom he was sent: and what he introduces it with, *his being called by the grace of God*, may be with equal propriety applied to both; as the state of mankind is such, that, in the course of common justice, they have nothing to expect from the creator but the natural wages of sin. Whatever favour, or even re-
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spite and forbearance, they meet with from him, must go to the account of free and unmerited, and therefore absolutely sovereign grace, such as he might have denied them, not only without any injustice done them, but with all the reason in the world.

If we understand this calling and revealing his Son in him, of his first conversion, never was there a higher instance of perfectly sovereign grace, whether we consider the demerits of the person, or the way it pleased the sovereign to take with him. In the first view, Paul gives such an account of himself, in the foregoing verses, as would have engaged any one, endued with but a moderate proportion of modern zeal, to mark him out for everlasting vengeance, and even to expect some signal token of it in this world. But God, who is rich in mercy, had other views; and even when he was in the height of his wickedness, and breathing out threatenings against the followers of Jesus, Jesus himself appears to him in his glory, rebukes his blind rage, and at once subdues his haughty spirit into the most

humble subjection: *Lord*, said he, *what wilt thou have me to do?*

Thus God revealed his Son *to* him; but at the same time he revealed his Son *in* him. Thus we find this same Apostle describing the Christian state, Col. i. 27. as the effect of God's making known the mystery of his grace to the Gentiles, by which they come to be joined to the Lord, so as to be "one spirit with him." Our Lord gives the state of it, John xv. 4. 5. and xvii. 23. This is what makes the Christian: And the Apostle determines positively, Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; nor can any reap saving advantage from Christ, unless he be in them. And if we take our measures by this Apostle, Gal. ii. 20. it is not so properly the Christian that lives, as it is Christ that liveth in him. He is the Christian's life; and it is by his Spirit they subsist in him; one spirit, one life, one mind, and one way of living.

But however necessary this calling, and this revealing of Christ, may be, and certainly is, to make a right Christian; yet it is the calling him to be an apostle, and revealing Christ in him, as a chosen vessel,

to hold him forth to others, that Paul has here more especially in his eye, 2 Cor. iv. 7.: for the design of it, he tells us, was, *that he might preach him among the Heathen.* And, in this view, there are two things which merit particular consideration, viz. revealing Christ in him, and his commision to preach him to the Gentiles.

When Peter, in answer to his Master's question, confessed him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God," Matth. xvi. 16. Jesus told him, that "flesh and blood had not revealed this to him, but his Father who is in heaven." This is so palpably true, that however high men have carried their pretensions toward the knowledge of the being and character of a Deity, none ever pretended to make this discovery. It would never have entered into any one's head, that God should have a Son; or, if he should, that this same Son, which even common sense teaches us should be at least of the same nature, should be manifested in the likeness of sinful flesh, and become the Saviour of the world. This fact, with the system of grace built upon it, is one of those things, the very existence of which, among such

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beings as men are well known to be, carries the irrefragable evidence of a supernatural original. Some imperfect fragments of it have been in the world ever since there were any men in it; and it would have been strange if there had not, on the supposition of an original divine revelation; but the whole consistent system was totally lost throughout the whole Gentile world. It subsisted indeed perfect in the Jewish books; but in effect only there, and in some few who formed their religion upon the divine revelation recorded in these books. But the learned and reputed wise masters among the Jews had in effect explained it away, and made it void by their traditions; insomuch that when Christ came into the world, they were so far from receiving him, while yet they professed to be waiting for his appearance, that they condemned him as a blasphemer, for saying those very things which their Messiah or Christ must have said whenever he came into the world.

Paul himself was as much involved in the national prejudices as any of them, when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him. The appearance of Jesus to
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him, in the light of his glory, and thus supporting his pretensions, was enough to convince him, that he was indeed the very person he gave himself out to be. But how a rational man should at once have had all his fixed sentiments unhinged and changed, his deeply-rooted prejudices removed, and, what is greatly more, clear, comprehensive, and distinct views, of an infinitely comprehensive system directly opposite; a system which has no foundation at all in our reasoning powers, but is even contrary to all the measures which the wisdom of the world has in all ages fixed on, and is to this day pertinaciously insisted on by numbers who are accounted the wise and learned; and (which adds greatly to the wonder) that all this should have been effected almost instantaneously, who can forbear putting the question that Nicodemus put on a similar occasion, "How can these things be?" There is only one answer, but it is a complete one, viz. What is impossible with man, is easy with God. And they must have very low notions indeed of divine power, who can reckon it either impossible, or even difficult, for him who inspired man at his formation

formation with reason and understanding, to convey what measures of knowledge, and in what manner, he pleases. Paul himself is one indisputable evidence; and the fishermen of Galilee, on the day of Pentecost, furnish many more; nay, as most of those who were converted, even from the grossest Heathen ignorance, were instantaneously enabled to speak with tongues they had never been taught, and to declare fluently and distinctly the wonderful works of God, how amazing was this! But it was the Spirit of God which gave them utterance; and that leaves nothing to wonder at, but the divine condescension bestowing such gifts on men.

But, might the Jewish teachers say, (and it seems they did say it), how does it appear that this Paul, who had been preaching to them, had his gospel, and his commission of apostleship, thus directly and immediately from God? The knowledge of Christ was then in a manner a common thing; might he not have been taught it himself, as he taught others? And as, by his own account, Ananias was sent to
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him, why might he not have been instructed by him?

It is true, many were commissioned by our Lord himself, no fewer than seventy at one time; but Paul was none of them. It is likely enough too, that many were sent out by the apostles: but neither was he any of those; for he saw none of them, until three years after he had been preaching the gospel at Damascus and in Arabia, the very same gospel which he preached to the Galatians. Then he says, vers. 18. & 19. *he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode fifteen days with him; but saw none other of the apostles, save James, whom he calls the Lord's brother, to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee, and the same who was called the son of Alpheus, and whose brother the Apostle Jude was.* It seems the rest of the apostles were not then at Jerusalem, but employed in propagating the gospel in other places, and, according to some ancient writers, in many and some very remote countries. But that could not be so early, as we find Cornelius and his friends were the first Gentiles who were brought into the church of Christ; nay, that Peter, (which seems very

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ry strange), notwithstanding the very plain Old-Testament promises, would not have been prevailed with to go to Cornelius, unless he had been expressly commanded of God.

By the Apostle's confirming this account he gives of himself, with the solemnity of at least something equivalent to an oath, vers. 20. it may be certainly concluded, that he had some very momentous purpose to answer by it. It is evident, that he could not have the gospel which he preached at Damascus and Arabia from any of the apostles, as he had then seen none of them. Neither could he have an apostolic commission from Peter and James: for besides that their number was full, by the election of Matthias, Paul was not qualified according to the established rule: for so far was he from "having accompanied with Jesus from the beginning," that he had never accompanied him at all; but even after his death and resurrection, had been a most violent persecutor of his church. At any rate, they could not give him a commission to go to the Gentiles, when themselves were not clear about the matter till some years after.

after. And least of all could they authorize him in what was peculiarly his gospel, exempting the Gentile converts from the law of Moses, when that was a disputed point at least fourteen years after?

As for Ananias, it could not be pretended, that he gave him any powers to act as an apostle, when himself was none. Saul was indeed directed to go forward to Damascus, where it should be told him what he was to do. But it was not told him, that he should receive these instructions, either from Ananias, or any other man. Nor did Ananias himself receive any instructions to give him, but was only ordered to go and restore him his sight, and to baptize him, in this view, That he was a chosen vessel, to hold forth the immense treasure of the gospel of Christ. As for the rest, Ananias knew, that Jesus had appeared to him on the way: and it may well be presumed, that he understood his business better than to interfere without special orders, where such a teacher had been beforehand with him; who, he certainly knew, was well able to perfect what he had in such a miraculous manner begun.

But however that might be, it was impossible for one in Saul's circumstances to acquire the necessary knowledge in so little time, by any human instruction whatsoever. For no sooner was he brought into the Christian community, than he set about preaching Christ in the synagogue, to the amazement of all who heard him, as we read, Acts ix. 20. 21. The same account he gives of himself here, vers. 16. *Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood*; as much as to say, he did not deliberate a moment, either to consult his own ease and conveniency, or to advise with others. He said to Jesus, when he convinced him of his folly, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And when he was told what he was to do, he fell about it without either demur or delay. This is so plainly his meaning, that it seems quite needless to dispute about what he should mean by *flesh and blood*, as that expression will be found to comprehend all the means of worldly wisdom, and the methods which men take to determine their conduct in cases where they have so much at stake as the Apostle had. No man in the Jewish nation had a fairer prospect

prospect than Paul. But, as he says, Phil. iii. 7. “what things were gain to him; “those he counted loss for Christ:” A case very nearly resembling that of Moses; “who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than be “called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

We have no where any account of Paul’s preaching, either at Damascus or in Arabia; but that “he mightily convinced the “Jews;” or rather strongly proved to them, “that Jesus was the Christ.” That was the capital point then in dispute; and so comprehensive, that they who understood it, and knew the character of Christ, and the business on which he came into the world, found in it a complete system of religion. Only, by his way of speaking in this epistle, of the invariable sameness of the gospel he preached, and that the Son of God was revealed in him, with this express design, that he should preach him among the Heathen, it seems pretty evident, that he received his first commission at the time of his conversion, and immediately set about the execution of it, especially among the Arabians; which might be an additional reason of the severe per-

secution intended against him at Damascus, where he was so narrowly watched, that there was no way of saving his life, but by letting him down by the wall in a basket.

When he escaped to Jerusalem, he run the same risk there; and even a worse; for we find, that the disciples there were all afraid of him, and would not believe that he was a disciple, until Barnabas was at pains to inform them better. And when the Jews there, and particularly the Jews from Greece, could not resist the force of his reasonings, they went about to kill him; which when the brethren knew, they conveyed him away, first to Cesarea, and thence he went to Tarsus, his native city. And this is what he tells us here, vers. 21. of his going into *the regions of Syria and Cilicia*.

But it must be remembered, that there was another and higher reason for this journey than this prudential caution of the brethren. For at this time must have happened what the Apostle tells the Jews, in his speech to them, Acts xxii. 18.—21. where his master ordered him to depart quickly from Jerusalem, “because they
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“ would not receive his testimony;” but especially that he was to be employed at a great distance “ among the Gentiles.” It is true, he was not sent publicly, and with the knowledge of the whole church, until some time after his return from Tarsus, to Antioch in Syria. But on the intimation he had then given him, it is not at all likely, that he who had been so very zealous, even at the peril of his life, for supporting the truth “ as it is in Jesus,” would be wanting to it now after receiving such fresh encouragement. Though Galatia was one of the countries of Lesser Asia, as well as Cilicia; yet, as there were several countries lying between them, we have no warrant to think, as some have done, that the Apostle either preached or planted churches there at that time, nor until Barnabas brought him back to Antioch in Syria; whence both of them were, by express divine appointment, separated for this work. And as there is no mention of Barnabas, except their going together to Jerusalem, it seems pretty certain, that they two were separated before either of them set a foot in that country.

We need not stand on what he says,
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vers. 22. that he *was not personally known to the churches of Judea which were in Christ*. They could have no acquaintance with him while he was persecuting them; their business then was, to keep as much as possible out of his way; and after his conversion, he was never among any of them, but at Jerusalem. They knew him only by report and hearsay; *that he who formerly was the persecutor, was now a very zealous preacher of Christ*. And the effect of it deserves our regard: *They glorified God in him*. Such was then the warmth of the Christians love to Christ, that nothing which concerned him was indifferent to them. And so strongly were they persuaded, that all things were of God, that they looked beyond the instruments, however eminent their gifts and success were; and to God they gave the glory of all: and very justly; for "all things are of
 " God, who hath reconciled us to himself
 " by Jesus Christ, and committed to this
 " Apostle, and his associates, the ministry of reconciliation," to pray and beseech a thoughtless world to be reconciled to God; which is the same thing as if
 God

God was doing it himself by his blessed Son in person, 2 Cor. v. 18. *et seqq.*

The term by which the Apostle expresses the subject of his preaching, in the close of vers. 23. has occasioned no small contention among the learned part of the Christian world. He calls it *the faith*; and it seems that was the term then commonly used. As it is allowed by all, that it is the same with *belief*, the meanest day-labourer knows, as well as the most learned divine, that it is commonly used to express what they believe, and the actual believing of it; or, as the schools speak, the act of believing, and its object; and can easily distinguish when the one or the other is to be understood by that word. And one cannot help saying, that the learned labours of those who have made it their business to explain it, have contributed more to darken a plain subject, and perplex common understandings, than to clear the important subject, which every man knows better than the most learned can define it.

No man can believe or not believe what and when he pleases. He must perceive the thing to be true, either by his own
 observation,

observation, or the testimony of others. Never was there any testimony which deserved half so much regard as that does which God has given us in the record we have in our hands. The facts recorded there are of two kinds; what God has done, and what he has promised to do. By the first, his eternal power and god-head are set before us in the only way we can come to the knowledge of him; that is, by such works and ways with his creatures as we can form some notion of. By the second, we learn what we have to expect from him. And from both taken together, we may be enabled to form such apprehensions of the divine character, as may shew us what measures of regard and duty we owe him. This is the Christian faith; and the belief of these facts is what makes a Christian. And believed they cannot be, without producing such measures of love to him, and confidence in him, as answer to the measures of our faith: and love is the fulfilling of the whole law; the whole of our obedience to his law being only the native effect and actings of love.

1. *Then, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem, with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*
2. *And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain.*
3. *But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:*
4. *And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.*
5. *To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*
6. *But of these, who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person) for they who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me.*
7. *But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;*
8. *(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles).*
9. *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the Heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*
10. *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

THE Apostle here continues the account he had begun to give of himself in the foregoing chapter; and with

the same views too, viz. to satisfy the Galatians, that he had not the gospel he preached from men, but by direct revelation; that he had been steady and uniform in the profession of every point of it; and particularly in that which the new teachers had brought into dispute; and was supported in it by Peter himself, whose authority they pretended, and all the rest of the apostles and elders of the church of Jerusalem, solemnly convened on this very question.

I said, solemnly convened, because so they were, by the account the Apostle gives of them. But especially that it seems to be the very same journey which Barnabas and he took to Jerusalem, together with other brethren sent from the church of Antioch; as we had occasion to observe in the entry on this epistle. It is true, there was no mention of Titus by name; but neither have we the names of any other brethren who went along with them. He might well enough have been supposed to have been one of them, had not he told us here, that he *took* Titus with him; which seems to say, that it was by his choice that he went. And it
would

would seem, that he took him on a particular view, and to answer the purpose which we find him afterwards adduced for. Which, by the way, carries in it something more than a presumption, that this journey could not be prior to his first journey, along with Barnabas, into the Lesser Asia. Nor do we find any of the Gentiles, as Titus certainly was, converted to Christianity before that time; except Cornelius and his friends, whom Peter admitted, and by doing so opened the kingdom of heaven among the Gentiles. But the prosecution of that great design was left to Paul, as their apostle.

What he adds here, vers. 2. of his going up *by revelation*, has been made an argument to prove, that it must have been some other journey that he speaks of in this place; as we are expressly told, Acts xv. that he and Barnabas were sent upon this question. But it concludes nothing, since there can be no inconsistency between the two. Besides, neither does the Apostle say, whether the revelation was made to himself personally, or to the church of Antioch. It will readily be allowed to have been a very proper measure, which

common prudence might have directed them to. But it was not the custom of those times; to enter upon any measure of moment, without asking and receiving the direction of the Spirit; which answered the same purpose with that inquiring of the Lord which we find so often mentioned in the Old Testament. It seems, nevertheless, that the Apostle meant to say, that the revelation he speaks of was made to himself; and that he was thereby directed by his master, to go and support what he had said in his contention with the Judaizing teachers at Antioch, and assert the freedom of the Christian churches from that yoke of bondage which neither the Jews, then in being, nor their fathers, were able to bear.

But after all, it is a matter of mere chronological nicety, as it concerns us very little, when we are sure of the facts, to know the precise time when they happened. What in a special manner belongs to us, is, to consider the facts which happened on this occasion, and how they answer the Apostle's present purpose. We shall have occasion afterwards to see, that the business of circumcision, and what was necessarily

necessarily connected with it, was no such circumstantial affair as superficial observers might imagine it; and that it was not for nothing that great Apostle was so wary on this point.

Before we can go any further, it will be proper to observe, that there were two distinct questions in agitation at that time: Whether the Christian natural Jews were still bound to observe the ritual part of the law given by Moses? and, Whether the Gentile converts were likewise bound to be circumcised, and observe the same rules and manner of worship? For as to the moral part of that law, and the duties enjoined by it, there never was any dispute. The whole of the Mosaic law, as it was given to that nation, when they were separated from all the other people of the earth, stood, as appears by the preface to it, upon their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and their being put in possession of the land of Canaan, by the free gift and immediate hand of Jehovah, their God; and obedience to it was the condition on which they possessed that land. This was so peculiar to them, that no other nation or people had, or could have, any concern in it.

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The natural Jews were indulged in their zeal for this law, probably as long as they continued to possess the land; and accordingly great care was taken to avoid offending them, as appears by the decision of the grand dispute, Acts xv. in what is commonly called the *council at Jerusalem*; and especially by Paul's circumcising Timothy. But he and his fellow-apostles being well apprised, that all the ritual part of that law was typical and figurative, a sensible representation of spiritual and heavenly things, as they are set in a clear light in the gospel of Christ, opposed with all their might the construction the carnal Jews made of it, by putting eternal life upon the observance of it, directly contrary to the grace of the gospel, and the spiritual worship under the ministry of the Great High Priest over the house of God. In this view, the outward circumcision became the concision, Phil. iii. 2. and the true circumcision was that of the heart.

But the other set of duties, such as men owe to God and to one another, enjoined likewise by the law of Moses, are of another nature, and stand upon a more durable

rable and unchangeable foundation. They are founded originally in the very law of creation; and when sin entered, and mankind were reduced by it to the most desperate condition, a set of new duties were founded, and the old greatly strengthened, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, held forth to a perishing world in the promised seed of the woman.

From this we may be able distinctly to perceive the meaning of the word *law*, as the Apostle uses it in this, and indeed in all his other epistles. What he had immediately and directly to do with, was the ritual part, commonly called *the ceremonial law*, in which the Gentile Christians had no concern. But as this stood so closely connected with the moral part, and the whole was abused beyond its plain intention, (which never was, to give right to eternal life by obedience to it, and doing as it was there written), the apostles found themselves obliged to oppose the whole, when taken in this false and wrong construction, and on the same grounds to set aside every law which men might frame to themselves for answering the same purposes, of recommending them to
God,

God, and giving a title to eternal life. I call this sort of laws the imaginations of men: for as God never gave any law to his creatures; but what was founded in previous grace, and what he had freely given them, and done for them; so all the laws he ever gave to mankind from the time that sin entered, injoining what they call moral duties, were closely united with the memorials and exhibitions of grace, either in the figurative and typical Old-Testament sacrifices, or in the real New-Testament sacrifice, and the services depending on them. To put afunder what God has thus inseparably joined, is evidently to set aside the law of God, and to make a new one to ourselves.

By this we may be enabled to form a distinct view of that gospel which Paul preached among the Gentiles, and which, he says, *he communicated to those of Jerusalem* at that meeting. And we will find it exactly such as himself describes it, 1 Cor. xv. 3. *et seqq.* That "Christ died for our sins, and rose again, according to the scriptures;" and that through him is proclaimed remission of sins. So that all who

who believe in him are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses, Acts xiii. 38. 39. In defence of this, he found himself obliged, with all his might, to oppose every thing that might be set up in competition with it; and of course to maintain, that the converts from Heathenism were so far from being bound to subject themselves to the law of Moses, that even that law could not avail those who were born under it, without having recourse to the grace of God in Christ; which was indeed the very spirit of that law, and the end to which it was designed to lead them.

There are two circumstances of this conversation he gives us, viz. That he communicated his gospel to such as were of *reputation*; and, as our translators render the word he uses, that he did it *privately* even to them. The persons to whom, he says, he gave this account of himself and his ministry, are described by a word which, in its lowest sense, imports, that they were men of the highest credit and reputation in the church; but it imports further, that they were really such as they were reputed to be. This character of

the men contributed greatly to the Apostle's views: for when his doctrine was approved, as we find it was, by men of the most infallible judgement, and highest reputation in the church, no man could charge him with singularity, or teaching a gospel of his own invention. But we should be greatly mistaken, if we construct the word which our translators render *privately*, as of the same import with *secretly*, or in a concealed underhand-manner. The Apostle's word will not warrant any such meaning. It says indeed, that he communicated his gospel to these men of character apart, or separately from the other members of that church: and who could be so absurd as to imagine, that the many thousand believers who were then at Jerusalem, were all convened in one place, when the decision was given in favour of Barnabas and Paul, on the question so warmly disputed at Antioch? Only, as they found it necessary to warn the Gentiles against the practice of the two things which were so common among them, viz. fornication, and eating things offered to idols; so, in tenderness to the Jewish converts, who were
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very zealous for their law, which they heard daily read in their synagogues, they saw it necessary to injoin abstinence from things strangled, and from blood.

When the Apostle gives it as the reason of this piece of his conduct, *lest by any means he should run, or had run, in vain*, it is certainly not meant to infer, that the success of his preaching among the Gentiles depended on the approbation or authority of men. He himself explains it, chap. iv. 9. 10. 11. The Galatians, at least some considerable number of them, had gone a great way toward Judaism: “They observed days, and months, and times, and years.” So that he was “afraid of them, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain.” He saw the tendency of these observances so well, and how certainly the making these things necessary would draw them away from Christ, and that believing dependence on the grace of God in him which makes one a Christian, that, should this doctrine prevail, all his labour and pains would be lost; and those who believed in Christ, would be reduced to the same case with the unbelieving Jews, to seek for

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their justification by the works of the law; and the conclusion is certain, that they who seek to be justified by law, any law whatsoever, are fallen from grace. No wonder, then, that he exerted himself with the greatest earnestness, and spared no pains, to ward off such a fatal blow.

There was one great point gained in favour of the Apostle, by bringing Titus along with him, and it was a decisive one. Titus was well known to have been a Greek, that is, of Heathen extraction: and therefore, had that venerable assembly been, as the false teachers pretended the apostles were, of their opinion, they must have ordered him to be circumcised. But they did not, as we read, vers. 3.; for he was not laid under any such necessity. And surely circumcision could not be more necessary for any other Gentile convert. And thus, it evidently appeared, that whatever these supporters of Judaism gave out, they had no such command from the apostles; and were, by this indisputable evidence, convicted of the most notoriously base prevarication, which most deservedly should have ruined their credit, so as no
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regard could be had to any assertion of theirs.

There is some doubt how the Apostle brings in what he says concerning *false brethren* in the 4th verse. Our translators connect it with what he had been saying about Titus, that this was the design of his not being circumcised, to discountenance and discourage them. The thing might be true; and very probably this was his design in bringing him with him to that meeting. But one who reads the Apostle's words, and considers attentively the genius of the language in which he wrote, will hardly avoid thinking, that, had this been his intention, he would have prefixed this clause to the former verse. As the words stand introduced with the disjunctive particle *et*, which our translators either omit, or render by *and*, without any parallel in either sacred or profane writings, it would rather seem, that he was bringing in a different subject, and something which should answer the *neither* in the foregoing verse. And his words will, without any violence, bear this sense, that neither did he, even for the smallest space of time, give place
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to the false brethren who intended, in an irregular and clandestine manner, to spy out the liberty which they had in Christ. Literally, the words might run thus in our language: *But by false brethren, who intruded themselves, &c.* And then he adds, that he showed not the least regard to them.

What kind of men these false brethren were; whether Jewish emissaries, who only pretended to be Christians, in order to get into the secrets of that party, which they might imagine were such as they did not chuse to make open profession of; or those bigots to the law of Moses, mentioned Acts xv. who, though they believed that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, or the Christ, yet not being sufficiently instructed in what was included in that character, insisted, and taught, that, notwithstanding all that he had done, or engaged to do, “if one was not circumcised after the manner of Moses, he could not be saved.” It is indeed a matter of little moment, which of these two the men were who disputed this point so hotly, as the last were in reality as much enemies to the cross of Christ as the former, and as
effectually

effectually renounced the grace held forth in him. But yet they might be honest, and sincere in their zeal, though it was not according to knowledge.

But none of these, as it follows, vers. 5. had any effect on the firm spirit of our Apostle. He stood his ground, and would not make the least concession. He knew himself supported by the best authority, that of Jesus himself, from whom he had received his instructions.

If we compare the account Paul here gives of the issue of this meeting, with the account the Evangelist Luke gives of that Acts xv. we will find them precisely the same. In both there was much disputing by the Judaizers, who certainly were not true brethren, on one side, and Barnabas and Paul on the other; and we must remember, that the last was, on all occasions, the chief speaker, Acts xiv. 12. In both, Paul declared the gospel preached by him among the Gentiles, and the testimony given of God's approbation by the miracles and wonders wrought among them; and in both the issue is the same, a general approbation of his conduct. But before he comes to that, he inserts
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what might be a full answer to what the seducers had advanced against him, viz. that he knew nothing of the gospel, but what he had learned from the other apostles, or their ministers. He had now an opportunity, for the first time, to compare their measure of knowledge, and understanding, in the mysteries of the gospel, with his own; and found, that the best approved among them knew no more than himself did: *For in conference, says he, vers. 6. they added nothing at all to me.*

As his words stand in our translation, he may seem to speak diminutively, and even slightly, of these great men; which, we may be very sure, was far from his intention. *Those who seemed to be somewhat*, twice repeated, may admit of a very bad construction, as if they had not been really what they seemed to be. But the word he uses will admit of no such meaning. It is the same which, vers. 2. is rendered, *those who were of reputation*; and, which we observed there, does not import barely the high opinion of men, and the esteem they held them in, but their real worth and merit. But as in conference they added nothing to him, it was the

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the same thing to him, whatever their real worth might be, or however worthless he himself might be. As *God is no respecter of persons*, he may employ whom he pleases, and can fit and qualify them for the work he calls them to; and certainly will do it, where-ever he calls any one; and especially when he calls him in such a very miraculous manner as he did Paul.

But there was still something more in the issue of that meeting. For so far was he from learning any thing from them, that they gave him a most honourable testimony, and that upon the surest and most sufficient evidence. It was *James, Cephas, and John*, (who, it seems, were the only apostles then present), who gave this testimony. I need not observe, that Cephas is the same person with Peter; and by that name he was best known among the Hebrews. And here again our translators make Paul speak in the same doubtful manner. Of these sure he would never have said in our language, that they *seemed* to be pillars; but as he does in his own, that they really were pillars, and approved ones too, as on them, under

their great master, the grand building, the Christian church, rested, Eph. ii. 20. These same pillars *gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship*, vers. 9. communion and partnership. No body will need to ask in what, when we find it immediately added, that they should *go to the uncircumcision, and the other to the circumcision*; which is not so to be understood as if they were either limited by their commission from Jesus, or limited themselves, so as they might not, as occasions offered, all of them act as apostles, either to Jews or Gentiles, as we find Paul did in every place where he preached the gospel; but that Paul and Barnabas were, by their commission, sent to the Gentiles. And accordingly Paul designs himself, *the apostle of the Gentiles*, and glories in that office, Rom. xi. 13. All the apostles had the same powers, and acted on the same unlimited commission, to go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven, Mark xvi. 15. Matth. xxviii. 19.

This conclusion was not made, either at random, or from any particular bias in favour of the two new apostles. For, besides that they were endued with extraordinary measures

measures of the Holy Spirit, and in all matters of moment at least acted under his peculiar influence and direction, they had the fullest evidence that could be given, of as good a title to the apostolical character as Peter himself; which no body every attempted to call in question: *He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, wrought, precisely in the same manner, and with the same efficacy, in Paul to the apostleship of the Gentiles,* as in vers. 8.

The Apostle does not say who it was who wrought in Peter and him; nor was it at all needful. It was, without all question, God who wrought in them both; for all things are of him, 2 Cor. v. 18. And as needless to ask, whether he means the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. For the Father does nothing about the creature, and especially mankind, but by the Son. By him he made the worlds; by him he upholds all things there; and by him he governs, and will at last judge, the world. Neither is there any thing done by the Father and Son; but by the Holy Spirit, who is therefore promiscuously called the Spirit of God and of

M 2

Christ.

Christ. Whatever is done by the Son, is done, at the same time, by the Father, for he and the Father are one; and whatsoever is done by the Holy Spirit, is, for the same reason, said to be done by both. Thus we find the astonishing relation between God and believers, or right Christians, expressed indifferently, by God's dwelling in them as his temple, and Christ and his Spirit dwelling and abiding in them. God dwells in them in and by Christ; and Christ abides and lives in them by his Spirit: "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

This same Spirit, and the mighty power of God, working in Peter and Paul, appears, by what he says here, to have been the great evidence of their divine commission and ordination to the apostolic office; and must comprehend all that was necessary for fitting them for it, and evidencing their divine commission to those they were sent to.

To qualify them for the office, they must have a thorough knowledge of the business they were employed in, and courage and prudence for managing it to the best advantage. What their business was,
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we cannot learn more certainly than from Paul himself. In general it was, to declare the testimony of God, 1 Cor. ii. 1.; and the whole of his counsel, Acts, xx. 27. This, it is easy to see, is what requires the utmost exactness. If there be any thing added or omitted, nay and if every part of it be not declared in the same connection and order in which he has laid it, it is no longer God's testimony, but an invention of our own. More particularly, it is the testimony which God hath given concerning his blessed Son: and thus it was Christ crucified, and his unsearchable riches, that Paul preached among the Gentiles, 1 Cor. i. 21. So this Apostle begins, Acts ix. 20.; and so he continued his determined purpose, to know nothing among those he preached to, but "Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2. This was new doctrine to the world in general, a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the learned Greeks. All the learning, wisdom, and power, then in the world, was against it; and employed with the greatest address. How then could Paul, a stranger and bigotted enemy to Christ, in two or three days, and without any ordinary means,

means, acquire such a perfect knowledge of him, as to preach him with great success, but by the direct instruction of his master, and that Spirit which “searches all things, even the deep things of God,” and leads into all truth? And how could he bear up against all opposition, so as to bear the utmost contempt and reproach, nay and the severest persecution on this account, but by Christ strengthening and supporting him by his almighty power? The very rulers of the Jews, obstinately bigotted as they were in their unbelief, seeing the boldness of Peter and John, whom they knew to have been unlearned and ignorant men, easily perceived that they had been with Jesus, John iv. 13.

But there are still two evidences more, which Paul had of his apostolic authority; in common with the rest of the apostles, viz. the mighty works which were given him to do, and the great success of his ministry. Much fruitless disputing has been about the nature and use of miracles. I enter not into the dispute. But Nicodemus’s conclusion will certainly be allowed a good one, that our Lord was “a teacher sent of God;” for this reason,
that

that “no man could do such works, unless “ God was with him,” John iii. Our Lord himself reasons in the same manner, John x. 38. & xv. 24.; and in almost all his discourses, That if he had not done among them such works as no other man did, they would not have been so much to blame for not acknowledging his divine commission; but as he had, in almost numberless instances, they had no cloak for their unbelief: and these we find the Apostle adducing as the testimony of God given to the apostles, Heb. ii. 4. “ God “ also bearing them witness, both with “ signs and wonders, and with divers mi- “ racles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.”

But the finishing part of the evidence, and which may very justly be accounted the greatest miracle of all, was the wonderful success of his ministry, the proper evidence of God’s working very powerfully in him; that he was not afraid to say, “ that he was not behind the very “ chiefest apostles;” especially when the rules he laid down to himself, and punctually followed, are duly considered: for he not only renounced all the arts of craft and cunning, too commonly practised by
such

such as want to make a party, but even the allowable address of human wisdom, and the powers of eloquence. And he gives this reason for it, that the faith of his hearers should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God; and, in the room of all, substitutes the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 1 Cor. ii. 3. 4. 5.

There have been, in all the ages of Christianity, a number of men, who, reckoning themselves greatly wiser than their neighbours, made it their business, instead of declaring the testimony of God, to reduce the gospel of Christ to a merely rational system, exactly suited to the natural state of the human powers, the measure of a sort of moral government; and they suppose, that when that is once fairly revealed, and notified, the great Creator and gracious Redeemer have no more to do with them, until they come to stand before his judgement-seat, to be rewarded or punished, according as their behaviour has been good or bad, wise or foolish: and accordingly, much learned labour and critical skill have been employed to remove the grace of God, which Paul so
 much

much insisted on, and the influence of his Spirit, and power, out of their way; and to persuade the world, that the demonstration of the Spirit, and the power of God, on which Paul would have the faith of Christians to stand, was no more but the rational evidence arising from the miracles which the apostles and first preachers wrought by the gift of the Spirit, and the power of God. But surely Paul meant something more, when he said, “ Paul
 “ might plant, and Apollos water; but
 “ that it was God who gave the increase,”
 1 Cor. iii. 6.; and when he talks so positively of God’s quickening those who were dead in sin; nay, makes faith itself, or mens believing the testimony of God, his own gift. Our Lord too certainly meant more, when he said, that “ without him” even his chosen disciples “ could do nothing;” and Paul, when he said, “ he
 “ could do all things through Christ
 “ strengthening him.” These, with many other such expressions, must certainly have had some other meaning, than that God and Christ, after revealing this same instrument of moral government, did no-

thing more, but left every man to do for himself as he best could.

When we add to this, the promise of the Spirit, so often repeated, not only on some chosen apostles and evangelists, but upon all flesh, even servants and hand-maids, *i. e.* male and female slaves; and, in general, the assurance our Lord gives, that his heavenly Father will give this same Spirit to all that ask him, be who they will, or what they will, without excepting any, Luke xi. 13.; and the purposes for which he is given, John xiv. & xvi. to supply Christ's bodily absence with advantage, "to lead into all truth," and "bring all things to their remembrance;" and, in a word, to take of Christ's things, (and all that the Father hath is his), and shew them to them: he who duly considers these, and such other accounts we have in the divine record, will not hesitate to think, that this same demonstration of the Spirit and power of God, leads to that life and power which is the distinguishing characteristic of the word of God, Jer. xxiii. 28. 29.; and that this was the mighty power which wrought effectually in the apostles.

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We need not stand on what the Apostle says Peter, James, and John, singly insisted upon, vers. 10. viz. That he and his associates *should be mindful of the poor*, (an admonition which he did not need), unless it be to observe how much this duty is insisted on, commanded, and commended, in the divine record, and how little minded in common practice. It is one of those things which men have learned to call *imperfect rights*, because there are no human laws to enforce it; and therefore is no further minded than those laws oblige them to contribute their proportion. But in truth the poor have as good a right to relief as the great proprietor of all things can give them.

It would likewise have been needless to observe the order in which the Apostle here ranks these *pillars* of the primitive church, were it not for the insolent pretensions of the men who, without any shadow of reason, except what themselves have forged, pretend to be the successors of Peter. The Apostle here ranks James before him; and James possessed the place of president in what themselves call a general council. Peter himself was so far from usurping the title of Universal

Bishop, that we find him confining his charge to the circumcision, and resigning all the rest of the world to Paul. But the latter has been so happy as never to have had any so far injurious to his true character, as to profess themselves his successors upon any such authority; though he was in no respect inferior to the other. Peter indeed made use of the keys of the kingdom given him by his master, to open the gate to the Gentiles; but Paul had the honour of gathering them in.

CHAP. ii. 11. — 21.

11. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed: 12. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? 15. We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16. knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ;*

Christ;

Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. 17. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. 18. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 20. I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and 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. 21. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

WE have, in this part of the epistle, a very remarkable piece of history, which, had it turned on the other side, would have been trumpeted about as a decisive proof of Peter's absolute sovereignty, not only over the lay part, and inferior clergy, as they call them, but over the apostles themselves. As it stands, it presents us with a striking evidence of Peter's weakness, and Paul's great integrity, courage, and resolution, on this particular occasion. He did not, as I am afraid most would have done, out of pretended modesty, and regard to the character of so great an apostle, hush over the thing in silence;

lence; nor did he (as many do) say nothing in the party's presence, but rate him soundly when out of his hearing: No; he *withstood the great apostle to his face*, and in such a manner, too, as could hardly miss to carry conviction to him, that he was really *to be blamed*.

The time when this happened cannot be certainly known, nor is it of any moment, when the fact is certain. Paul and Barnabas were both at Antioch before they went up to and after they returned from the meeting at Jerusalem. Before the meeting, the disputes about the necessity of circumcision were very hot. Had Peter come at that time, very probably the journey might have been prevented; at least it must have been taken notice of then. But he appears there as much a stranger to the question as any of the rest. It is most probable, therefore, that it happened during the time that Paul continued at Antioch, before he set out on his second journey, when Barnabas and he parted from one another.

But however that may be, Peter conversed with the Gentile Christians there precisely on the same terms as if they had been
 been

been natural born Jews. But when some came from Jerufalem, where all the Chriftian converts were ftill, and many years after continued to be, very zealous for the law of Mofes, Peter, upon the very plausible motive of avoiding the offence he was jealous thefe ftangers might take at that fort of freedom, withdrew himfelf, and would no more eat with the Gentiles. His example, as bad ones commonly do, had very bad effects. The Jews, and even Barnabas himfelf, feparated themfelves along with him; though they well knew there was no manner of ground for fo doing, but humouring a fet of obftinately miftaken people.

The leaft evil that was in this was, that *they walked not uprightly*, and with that plain fincerity the gofpel of Chrift requires. They difsembled, or, in the true fenfe of the Apoftle's word, they played the hypocrite, affecting to appear what really they were not. But this, which in them was only affected on that occafion, brought in yet a greater evil: it led thefe miftaken zealots to think, that Peter and Barnabas, with the reft, were really of the fame mind with themfelves; which muft
of

of course have hardened and confirmed them in their error, and thus encouraged a party, which occasioned great confusions in the churches, as it was doing in the churches of Galatia when this epistle was written.

In this light it is evident the Apostle considered that part of Peter's conduct. It was not barely eating or not eating, but the principles from which these different practices proceeded, that he had in view, as appears from what he said on that occasion. The Jewish converts, at bottom, could ill bear that the nations should be brought upon a level with them. They could not get it refused, "that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life." But then they held, that, in order to reap any benefit from it, they must receive the law of Moses. The noble stand Paul made on this occasion against this pernicious principle, was enough to put the whispers the Galatians had been deluded with out of countenance: that, so far from giving any encouragement to it, either by his preaching or practice, he had, from the commencement of his apostleship, steadily and resolutely defended the liberty of the
Gentile

Gentile churches; and that, when he had, as on this occasion he certainly had, the strongest temptations to have been silent on that head.

But what he said to Peter, the terms in which he rebuked him, and the reasons with which he supports his rebuke, sets this yet in a stronger light; and was, at the same time, most proper to recover those of the Galatians who were drawn into the snare, and to support and strengthen the hands of those who stood. He lays the foundation of it in a supposition, which he well knew Peter neither would nor could deny, viz. *that he lived as the Gentiles do*, though he was a natural Jew, and had all the advantages the law could give; so that nothing could be more absurd, than for him to put the Gentiles under a necessity of living as the Jews do.

No body will imagine that he meant to say, that Peter lived in the same manner the Gentiles did in their natural state, while they were without Christ, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world, as himself describes their unhappy state, Eph. ii. 3. They were the Christian Gentiles, such

of them as had believed in Christ, he means; strangers indeed to the Jewish law, and expecting no manner of advantage by it; but far from being in a hopeless condition, as they were before they believed in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea, and in him amen. In him they had all, and greatly more than the most perfect observers of Moses's law had to expect by their most punctual obedience.

Thus we find himself explaining his meaning, vers. 18.; where it appears, that he did Peter no injury when he said, he lived as the Gentiles did; and said no more than himself was very ready to acknowledge, and had acknowledged in the most open and avowed manner. The great point, which all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are most deeply concerned in, was then, and ever will be, How a sinner can be secured in the pardon of sin, and acquire such a right to eternal life, as that he may appear with confidence before the great Sovereign Judge. The Jews, in the unhappy state the bulk of that nation was in, from the time they had
had

had lost the right knowledge of the law given to their fathers by Moses, and the promise made to their father Abraham; had nothing left them but the bare letter; where there was no promise of any thing but the bare pardon of sin; no security against relapses, nor any assurance of any happiness beyond the grave; which betrayed the sect of the Sadducees, the most learned among them in the letter of the law, into that Atheistical notion, that death and the grave made a final end of the man. For that was the uniform tenor of their law, leaving no room nor allowance for repentance, amendment, or any of those other salvos men have invented, to sooth themselves into foolish and groundless hopes of, they know not what: “ For it is written, Cursed is every one
 “ who continueth not in all things writ-
 “ ten in the book of the law to do them.”

And such is the nature of that curse, that it never leaves the unhappy subject on which it once rests, until it be absolutely destroyed. This appears abundantly from what we have recorded in the Old-Testament history: and yet more from this, that this same curse of the law, is the con-

stitution and righteous sentence of the great sovereign of heaven and earth, and which can no more fail of its effect than the God of truth can lie. He can raise the dead sinner, slain by the curse of his law; but he has precluded himself from saving him from death. As then it is a certain, and universally acknowledged truth, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, it would have been a plain truth, though it had never been taken notice of before Paul said it, "That
 " by the deeds of the law no flesh living
 " can be justified: but indeed the Psalmist had said it very long before him, Psal. cxliii. 2. "Enter not into judgement
 " with thy servant; for in thy sight no
 " flesh living can be justified."

There is hardly a word in the Bible, (as indeed there is none of greater importance to mankind), which has occasioned more jangling and dispute than the word *justify*; and yet hardly can any thing be plainer than the thing meant by it. Were the text just now quoted from the Psalmist duly considered, I am pretty sure it would determine the whole affair. It is an appeal from a judgement-seat to a throne

throne of grace; from a court of justice, where strict law is the rule, to a court of grace, where law has no place, but free sovereign grace and merciful kindness is the only measure: thither the man who stands condemned in law, must have his recourse, or perish. The mercy and goodness of the divine nature may give some faint glimmerings of hope; but nothing can give any tolerable confidence, but an express declaration of the sovereign, and an express grant of pardon and eternal life, upon the convicted criminal's appeal to a throne of grace. Justifying implies more than bare pardon. It supposes a judicial procedure; according to which none can be justified, but such as have a right to live, and some righteousness to plead upon. "Had there been a law given that could have given life," the Apostle says, "righteousness might have been had by a perfect conformity to that law." But he takes it for granted, that there was no such law; for the law of God, in whatever view we take it, condemns and curses the sinner: but the greatest sinner ever was may acquire a perfect right, by the free pardon and grant of life.

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Such a gift and grant of pardon, and eternal life, we have held forth in the gospel of Christ, proclaimed to the Gentile world in the testimony God has given concerning his Son, whom he has sent to be the Saviour of the world; where there is nothing, nor in this state of things can there be any thing necessary, but to believe the promise and grant as it stands in Jesus Christ, and to trust in the faithfulness of the great surety-priest, who stands obliged, by his office, to convey the blessing, by giving eternal life to all that come to him. By the faith or belief of this testimony which God has given concerning his Son, and which the Apostle calls the faith of Jesus Christ, the Gentiles had as full and as perfect a right to the promised life, as God could give: and when the Jews had made all that could be made of their law, they must either perish, or have recourse to the very same grant of grace by which the Gentiles had their right to pardon and eternal life.

Thus we see how the Jews and how the Gentiles lived; and how the former, with all the distinguishing privileges they boasted of, while they despised the poor uncircumcised

uncircumcised Gentiles, were yet in never a whit better circumstances than they; for they were still finners, and more directly bound under the curse, until they took the same course the Gentiles did, for relief in Christ Jesus. How absurd, then, and foolish, must it have been, to attempt bringing the Gentiles into that situation under the law, which they found themselves obliged to forsake, as unprofitable, and unable to perform what they thoughtlessly expected from it.

What the Apostle adds in vers. 17. has been somewhat differently understood. The words sound very like the objection against the doctrine of grace, Rom. vi. 1. and may, in that sense, be consistent enough with the Apostle's views, and the context. It has been, in all ages, the manner of those who oppose the doctrine of grace, and free justification, as the Apostle was stating it, to assume the air of great concern for holiness of life, and practical godliness, which, they think, cannot be sufficiently secured, but on the plan of what they call moral government, and the sanction of rewards and punishments. The Apostle shows at large, Rom. vi. & vii.

vii. that the highest sovereignty of grace is so far from encouraging any to continue in sin, that it makes it impossible they should: and he says here, that would be to make *Christ the minister of sin*; which he rejects, as every one who knows him will, with abhorrence, and the utmost detestation.

As the Apostle had a fair and full view of the whole system of grace, as it stands in Christ Jesus, continually before him, it cannot be doubted, that he had this well-known calumny under his eye; and forms his discourse with such perfect caution, as to guard the truth of the gospel at all points, so as one needs no more but a fair view of it, to answer all exceptions that can be made against any part of it. Yet when one considers how the words before us stand connected, it would seem he had a more particular intention. He had been representing the absurdity of that enormous zeal the Judaizers were shewing for the law of Moses; that after all they did, or could do, they continued still to be sinners; and were so far from being justified by the law, that they were bound by it under the curse. From this unhappy state he

he had shown there was no relief, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, receiving the free gift in him. But, might the Judaizers say, and it is likely they did say it, what if those who have believed in Christ, and *are justified by faith, are still found sinners?* And, no doubt, they thought, that neglecting, or not observing the law of Moses in all points, which they foolishly imagined was to continue for ever, was certainly the greatest sin that could be committed. He answers shortly and strongly, as his manner was in such cases, by putting a question which determines the case at once, *Is Christ the minister of sin?* as it is plain he would be, if believing in him either led them into any sin, or gave the least handle to continue in it. He rejects the motion with abhorrence, *God forbid;* and all that know any thing of Christ, will join him cordially.

It is of little moment to us, whether these words are a continuation of what he said to Peter in presence of the church at Antioch, or addressed to the Galatians, on occasion of that warm and convincing speech. But that they were said with a peculiar eye to the present question about

the law, seems pretty evident from the reason he gives in the following verses: for so we see he introduces what he there says of his being *dead to the law*. It cannot be doubted, that what he says, vers. 18. he had *destroyed*, was imposing the Mosaic or Jewish law on the Gentile Christians. And thus his reasoning will issue in this, That Christ was so far from being the minister of sin, or leaving his disciples sinners, that if he, or any one, should attempt to rear up that now ruinous and useless building, as the Judaizing teachers were attempting to do, they offered the greatest indignity to Christ which any creature can offer; and thus *make themselves transgressors*, indeed of the most insolent and daring kind: for they say, that God's gift of grace can answer no purpose, and that Christ cannot save or justify a sinner, unless that law which he came to set aside, by fulfilling all the purposes of it, be brought in again to finish the work which, he tells his heavenly Father, he had himself finished, John xvii. 4.

The Apostle assures the Galatians, that he never had, nor would have, any hand in such a mad project, nor would any man

man else, who knows what he is doing. Nay, further, he says plainly enough, that he could not. And what he says of himself, holds true with all right Christians: for as he was, so are they, *dead to the law*; and death, we know, puts an end to all connections and obligations. Those who read this, and the other epistles of this apostle where the same subject is treated, can have no doubt, but that it is the Judaical law, as given by Moses, he here speaks of. But here the patrons of moral government find themselves at a loss, as a great part, and, one may say, the principal and fundamental part of it, consists of such precepts as are strictly moral; or, what I suppose they mean by that term, binding all mankind at all times, and in all places; the same which is very properly called the law of creation, and founded in that relation; or, in plain terms, their being obliged to their creator for their being, and all the enjoyments of life. If the Christian is dead to these commands, their whole fabrick falls at once. They therefore attempt to split the law into the ritual or ceremonial, and the moral; which accordingly they call

the ceremonial and moral laws; and earnestly plead, that it is only the first which the Apostle here speaks of, and which he says he is *dead to*. And those on the other side have given them great advantage, by taking up the same distinction and arbitrary terms, and maintaining, that what they call the moral part of Moses's law, continues binding on all mankind, as it was given to the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai.

But those who consider the Jewish law attentively, and the very peculiar circumstances which preceded the giving of that law, with the state of that nation after it, and compare it with the state of those who lived before that time, and of the other nations who were contemporary, and especially since the coming of Christ, find themselves obliged to conclude, that, excepting that single nation, and those who were incorporated with them, no other whatever had any concern in that law, in whole or in part, as it was given at Sinai. Yet were they not without law. They were all under the law of creation from the time they had their being. They were, moreover, from the publication of the first
promise,

promise, under what the Apostle calls *the law of faith*, the same that Christians are under in all respects, except the circumstantial difference between faith in Christ to come, and in Christ already come. But neither of these were enforced with that terrible sanction, “Curfed is every one” that continueth not in all things written “in the law to do them,” as the Sinaic law was: so that, as the Apostle says; those who lived before that time could not sin after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who had such a law given him. Nor did there need any such: for that one transgression bound all mankind under death by the righteous sentence of the great sovereign judge, which admits of no repeal, nor of any relief, but by his grant of grace, who raises the dead, and can give a new and perfect life to whom he pleases. But, in the nature of the thing, it is plain, none can be thus raised and quickened, until they be dead first.

The Apostle, in some of his other epistles, describes that death from which believers in Christ are quickened, and raised up, as consisting *in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. with some other such expressions.

sions. Whence occasion has been taken to conclude, that all that is said about the old man being crucified with Christ, crucifying the flesh, with the lusts and affections of it, are no more but bold metaphors and figures of speech, which they tell us the eastern people were very fond of; and mean no more but the sinner's forsaking his evil courses, reforming his life, and thus becoming a new man. To make their plan consistent, they must make God's grant of pardon and eternal life, which Christ is said to convey to them by his quickening Spirit, to be likewise figurative and metaphorical; and to mean no more, but lengthening out this perishing life the children of Adam are in some sort possessed of, until, by a gradual progress in virtue, they raise themselves to the highest perfection and dignity the human nature is capable of. And some have carried it very far this way; but how consistently with the accounts God himself, by his blessed Son and his apostles, hath given us of these things, those who will give themselves the trouble of reading them, will easily judge. It will not surely be refused, that such as was the life which
our

our first father lost, such, at least, believers in Christ are raised up to; that there is a spiritual and eternal world, of which this gross perishing one is but an imperfect image; that, of course, there must be a sort of life, and way of living, suitable to that world, as the life we have from Adam fits us for living in this world; and that God himself is the very substance of that world, on whom all the happy inhabitants subsist.

If these things be so, (and they must be so as certainly as that there is a God), whenever any creature, made for living in this manner, comes to be separated and cut off from God, and of course shut out from all communication with the spiritual world, however alive to this present world, it must be really, and without any metaphor, dead, being deprived of that kind of life which can only make it capable of living as spirits do, and must do. And as we can be surer of nothing, than that sin thus makes a separation between the creator and the creature, it is truly, and without any figure, the death of the human spirit; and so much worse than what we call natural death, the death of the
body,

body, as it is infinitely worse to have our connection with the spiritual world, that is, with God, by whom only spirits can live, dissolved, than to have all our connections with the present world destroyed; which is all that we can mean by natural death, where not one atom of the body is destroyed, tho' the animal fabrick be dissolved; nor can such a spirit be reunited, or raised up to such an union with the great Father of spirits as shall communicate to them the spirit of life, which no mortal either can expect, or have the remotest hope of, but by what we have so often had occasion to glance at, viz. the gift of grace in Christ Jesus. "They who are joined to him are "one spirit;" and that carries in it one life, and one way of living with him; which must be carefully observed, because it is on this ground that we are so often told of being quickened together with Christ, and raised from the dead, in the virtue of his obedience unto the death, his great sacrifice and powerful intercession, to partake in his spirit and life. Hence the Christian's life is said to be "hid with God in him;" and, what carries it as far as words can be found to express it, Christ is said to be "their
"life,"

“ life,” and “ to live in them,” as we shall see by and by.

It may possibly be said, What is all this to the present purpose, where the Apostle says, that *through the law he was dead to the law*? Let the Apostle himself answer it. Let us first observe how the man is brought under death, and held under it. He had said it was by *the law*; and he thus describes the progress of it, 1 Cor. xv. 56. “ the sting of death;” that by which it kills the man, “ is sin.” And if we want to know how sin comes by this power, he tells us it is by the law: “ The strength of sin is the law.” It was that which armed it with its killing power; it drives and rivets the sting so, that it comes to be the very death of the sinner, as it puts an end to life in all the views we can take of it. And thence it follows of course, that so long as the sinner continues under the law, he must stand bound under death. And by what we have already observed, there is only one way in which a sinner can possibly escape, viz. that which the Apostle here mentions, by becoming dead to the law, as he says he was through the law itself.

Those who maintain, that nothing more than the ritual or ceremonial part of the law of Moses was abrogated, or rather fulfilled, by Christ, while the moral continues in full force, are forced to say, that the deliverance of the believer from this law, arises from its very nature, being altogether figurative and typical, a shadow or faint delineation of the good things that were to come; and when Christ, the substance of them all, came, the law, in this view, expired of course. But had this been the Apostle's intention, as no man ever knew better how to express himself properly, he must have said, The law was dead to him, and not he to the law. But neither could that have answered his views, nor what he had been saying but just before, that the law bound all who were under it, at the same time under the curse; which cannot be removed until it has brought the sinner to death, and put a full end to all that life we derive from Adam. It had done one principal part of this its office, when mankind were, in the virtue of the original curse, brought under the power of the spiritual death. And in this situation they are taken up by
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the merciful Saviour, and quickened by the conveyance of the Spirit of life; by the same power which first breathed or inspired the breath or spirit of life into the first man. But the animal or merely rational life, the only one Adam could convey, is still in being, and must be destroyed ere one can enter upon the full possession of spiritual and eternal life; for we are assured, that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven;” and we are only saved in hope, waiting for the redemption of the body. It is true, what the Apostle says, that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law; but he does not say, he has taken away the curse from the law, for then we should not have died. But this we shall meet with in its proper place. And thus the Apostle’s sentiments are clear and consistent: the law had slain him, Rom. vii. 11. and thus done its utmost against him; and had nothing further to say to him. Death cancels all obligations.

The whole of this affair we have laid down by this same apostle, Rom. vii. 1.—4. and which renders it the more proper to be taken notice of, he here takes it up precisely

ly in the same light. The law, he says, and he says it as a thing known to all, "The law hath dominion over a man as long as he lives." And because there was no case known in this world of one living after he was dead, he takes a well-known example; whereby it appears fully, that death dissolves the law's obligation, viz. the case of a wife at liberty upon her husband's death. On which he concludes, that all Christians are become "dead to the law, by the body of Christ;" the very same which he says here, that *he was crucified with Christ, and yet lived*; but lived in a very different manner from what he had done formerly, while the law held him under the dominion of sin and death, and to a very different end and purpose. As it is upon this one great point that the Apostle makes the whole of the Christian religion depend, it must merit the most diligent and serious consideration; and the rather, that it has been either overlooked, or explained amiss, by many who bear the title of *learned divines*.

We have seen how certainly the law brings all who are under it to death; that is, it certainly destroys all the life they ever

ver enjoyed; and one would naturally think, that there should be an end of the man. And so it most certainly would have been, had not the wisdom of God found a way of condemning and destroying sin, the sting of death, and yet saving the person of the sinner. This is generally allowed to have been done by the death of Christ; and the believer's interest in it, the Apostle expresses, by *being crucified with him*; the same thing which, on other occasions, he shows himself to have been above all things most intent upon, or rather to have been the only thing he minded. Christ crucified he preached; and it was in effect the only thing he minded in his preaching, 1 Cor. ii. 2. In his own particular case, "he counted all things but loss and dung, to know Christ, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conform to him in his death," Phil. iii. 8. 9.

I cannot think it needful, I am afraid it is very hurtful, to a Christian, to trouble himself with the perplexing disputes, and intricate subtilties, which have been so immensely multiplied on this subject. Our business is, to follow the light our Lord and his apostles have given us, as far as it leads

leads us, and to stop where that ceases; without interposing our *hows*, and *whys*, or our own conjectures about what should be proper to answer them. The light in which the death of Christ constantly and uniformly stands in the record, is, that of a sacrifice appointed and accepted of God; and all the expressions made use of to bring us to the right understanding of it, evidently either refer to this, or may be reduced to it. And were the nature, ends, and uses, of a sacrifice, rightly understood, no Christian in any circumstances could ever need more.

There is not, I think, any where in the New Testament any particular description of a sacrifice, except what can be gathered from the terms equivalent to it, by which the death of Christ is set forth; such as, a propitiation for sin,—putting it away,—a ransom for souls or lives,—a price to purchase a peculiar people,—giving himself to the death for them, that they might live,—and what the Apostle tells us, Heb. v. & vii. of the gifts and offerings of the high priest, the inferior ones being only his assistants and ministers. Nor indeed needed the New-Testament

ment writers say any thing upon a subject then so well known by the large accounts of every circumstance of it in the books of Moses, and at that time in daily practice. Nor need we any more than to apply these to our Great High Priest, and his sacrifices; observing only the specialties peculiar to the latter, as they are very particularly pointed out by the Apostle.

A sacrifice then was, and still is, the way God in his wisdom chose to condemn and to put away sin, and by which the pardon of sin was conveyed: “For without shedding of blood there is no remission.” And those who attend to it, will easily perceive how all these purposes were effectually answered. But it must be minded, in the first place, that no sacrifices might be offered in any case but such as God appointed; nor might any one offer his own sacrifice, but the high priest alone. But all this, however solemnly it might be conducted, could have given the sinner but very faint, or rather no hope, had it not been for the promise God had annexed to the appointed sacrifice offered according to his direction, that the sin should be forgiven: and therefore, according

ording as his faith or belief of the promise rose up to assurance, or sunk into doubting, such, of course, must his hope and comfort have been.

All this is so easily applied to our Great High Priest and his sacrifice, that it will be needless to enter into particulars; only we must consider attentively how sin was condemned and put away by this institution. As there was no room for any hope of pardon in any other way, the person who found himself guilty, must bring his sacrifice to the priest: he must confess his sin over the head of his sacrifice; and that could not be done without acknowledging that he had forfeited his life, and was a dead man according to the rule of strict justice, renouncing all pretensions to live in any other way, or by any other title, than that conveyed by the free promise. The priest, by his office, was bound to take the sinner's sacrifice off his hand, and his sin along with it, and to put it away by the sacrifice, so as the sinner had no more to do with it. If there was any error committed in the offering, it lay upon the priest, not on him.

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By this any one may see what it is to be *crucified with Christ*, and how naturally the consequences of it, which the Apostle lays down in his own case, must follow upon it. It is evident the sacrifice, whatever it was, which God had chosen, was substituted in the room of the sinner, and stood in that very place where he himself did before the substitution. I dare not call it his *law-room*, though many great and good men have; because it is not by deeds of law, whether performed by ourselves or another, that any flesh living can be justified. The whole affair is a constitution of free sovereign grace, conveying not only pardon, but eternal life, in such a way as became him, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, viz. by making the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. And this leads to another view of the same person, who is the Great High Priest over the house of God, and which we find much insisted on, viz. that *he is given to be head over all things to his church*, and every particular member of it; of whom the first Adam was a figure, and who accordingly received from his Father all that life, spiritual and eternal life, lodged in

his hand, (himself calls it the grant of the kingdom); but upon terms incomparably harder than the first man's; even no less than perfect obedience unto the death, and the making his soul a sacrifice for sin. He accordingly finished the work, and was made perfect through sufferings; and by this acquired a perfect right to all the fullness of perfect life, that the grant should come free, without any the least burden, to every soul who will receive it from his hand, and be content to hold it merely by his right, the righteousness of God.

As these are only two different views of one and the same thing, so it is evident, that both of them hold forth a very near relation and union subsisting between Christ, and those who flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, and shelter themselves under his sacrifice, which cannot be done without a very feeling acknowledgement of the forfeiture, and the perfect justice of it, renouncing and giving up their life, in terms of law, whenever it shall please the sovereign judge to order execution, which our Lord calls, "denying one's self, taking up his cross, and following him." Thus, and thus only, they can have communion or fellow-
ship

ship with him in his sufferings, and be made conformable unto him in his death. This cannot be done but by doing as he did, when he gave up the life he had from Adam, submitted to the righteous sentence, magnified the law, and made it honourable, by acknowledging the perfect justice of the lawgiver in the strongest manner; and thus joining him in his death, by believing what he did for them, and following his example in dying, and being buried with him. Their old man, the child of Adam, is crucified and put to death with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin: “for he that is dead is freed from sin,” nor has the law any further hold of him.

But they are not left there; this Apostle tells us, Rom. vi. 5. “that if we are planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be planted likewise in a conformity to him in his resurrection.” So here, after his being *crucified with Christ*, he says, notwithstanding his dying with Christ, *he yet lived*. And two ways he describes this life: 1st, in the nature and tendency of it, it was living to God; and, 2^{dly},

by the peculiar principle of it, it *was not he who lived, but Christ lived in him.* All this, say the wise men of the world, is no more but metaphor, a strong way of expressing a common thing; and can mean no more than right reason assuming its proper province, or, at most, reason enlightened by revealed facts, and these particularly which relate to Jesus Christ, directing and influencing the man into a dutiful regard to God, the creator and sovereign of the universe. And all beyond this, say they, is mere cant, and unintelligible jargon; and therefore branded with the cant name of *mysticism*, which means, no body knows what.

There is perhaps more truth in the first part of this, than the asserters of it are aware of. The religion of Jesus, as he and his apostles have laid it, and freed from the interpolations of men, is really the most rational thing which ever appeared in the world; and indeed the only complete system which we are to this day in possession of. But for the rest, we must believe, that the Apostle understood the affair; and knew as well how to describe it properly as any who have come after

after him. That living to God is the end, the very effence of religion; and that the best account that can be given of the Christian life, is, that it is not so properly they who live, as Christ that lives in them.

We have already seen how those who were under the law, and bound by its curse, could not live to God in any sense; they could live by the world, and live to the purposes of the world: and our Lord, and his apostles after him, say very plainly, that they lived for the devil, for they did his works; and lived by the devil, for he it is, the Apostle says, who works effectually in the children of disobedience, and leads them captive at his will. But they cannot receive, nor so much as know, the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned. To live to God, then, is the same thing as to live by him, and to live for him, as his servants, and properly to be employed as he pleases; his bond servants, being no more their own, but bought with a price, no less a price than the invaluable blood of the Son of God.

But how shall they who were to all intents and purposes dead to God, and all the concerns of the spiritual world, live to
 God?

God? Surely they must be made alive first; and that cannot be done but by an act of free soveraign grace, pardoning past offences. But that could do no more but continue them in the possession of the life which they had; and that was but the life of flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. Eternal life, the life which spirits live, is all lodged in Christ; and "he who hath the Son, hath life; and he who hath not the Son, hath not life." Through him, then, it must be conveyed. The trial made in the first, and only perfect mere man, gives sufficient evidence, that such a valuable possession cannot be trusted in any inferior hand; and if ever we come to know what life is, we shall find, that it cannot be lodged in any hand, but one who has the Spirit and power of God at his disposal. Such is the blessed Jesus; and thus he gives his Spirit, dividing his several gifts according as he will. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and if his Spirit be in them, he himself is there also. If they live by the Spirit, he lives in them in the plainest and most proper sense, and without any figure or metaphor

taphor at all. It was not Paul who lived, but Christ lived in him, in the strictest and most proper sense; and more so than the wisest of us, in our present state, are capable of apprehending.

I was saying, to live to God is to devote ourselves to him, and his work and service. And if any should put the question the Jews put to our Lord, John vi. 28. "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" we have his answer to it who certainly best understood it, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This is the only way that man can do any thing for God; and all that the best believers do, or can do, is but giving him the glory due unto his name, and acknowledging his grace. And this is the singular specialty of his service, that all the profit of their labour redounds to themselves. Their master needs none, and can receive none. The Apostle understood his master's direction: *The life he lived in the flesh was, he says, by the faith of the Son of God:* and where this is wanting, all that can be done without it, is but affronting God in the basest manner; for what the Apostle says is evident

vident in the nature of the thing: "He that believes not his testimony, or record, concerning his Son, makes him a liar," and treats him as such.

Whoever has so far considered this testimony, as to know any thing of Christ, cannot miss to find in him the highest evidence God could give of his love to the world; and that he has stated it in such a manner, that no one person has more or less reason than another to believe it. All who hear it, are called, are commanded, to believe in him whom he hath sent; and all have equal encouragement and assurance of success in this way, insomuch that, strictly and properly, faith is no more but the application of the general declarations in the testimony to one's self. Thus we see the Apostle took it; and sets an example to us. He does not pretend any particular revelation of the love of God, and his ever-blessed Son, to himself more than to others; nor did he need any; and therefore pleases himself with a conclusion, arising so naturally and necessarily from the truth as it is in Jesus; and concludes with the strongest confidence of faith, *who loved me, and gave himself for me.* And the
Apostle

Apostle has taught us, in the instance of Abraham, Rom. iv. 20. that the stronger one's faith, and the less wavering and doubting, the greater is the glory the believer gives to God. The whole gospel speaks the same language that Christ did to Jairus in a very desperate-like case, *Fear not; only believe.* And it would be much to our advantage, that we put to ourselves the question Jesus put to Peter, when, to all human sense and reason, he was inevitably to be swallowed up in the raging sea. Our Lord had, at his own request, bid him come to him, walking on the water: but though he ventured boldly, and set out fair, he was afraid, and begun to sink: *O thou of little faith, said his master, wherefore didst thou doubt?* He could find no reason; and less, if possible, will any one find in this case, who takes in the whole truth as it is in Jesus.

I know not how it hath happened, that many, even serious people, not only do in fact, but have even been taught, to soothe themselves in the want of this assurance of faith; as if it were their unhappiness, but not their sin. But surely they must be egregiously mistaken who make

such a conclusion: for nothing can be more certain, than that so much as there is of abatement of the most perfect confidence of faith, so much there is of unbelief, Rom. v. 20.: and I hope no body will say that is no sin. It is true, there may be faith where there is much doubting; nay, one may say, there can be no doubting where there is not some faith: but weak faith cannot fail to make a weak Christian. And if the Apostle John's account of the rise and progress of the love of God in the heart of man, (which, by the way, is really writing the law of God there), may be credited, just so far as the love of God to us is known and believed, so far will this law of love be planted and rooted in the heart; for "we love him, because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. So very ill-grounded, and indeed very foolish, is the cant which has been echoed from mouth to mouth ever since the Apostle's days, that preaching faith in Christ, and the free sovereign grace of God in him, is prejudicial to the practice of holiness, and tends to soothe people in a course of sin. Surely the love of God

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is holiness, and perfect love is perfect holiness; for all the duties God has commanded are no other than the native exercises and actings of it, and what perfect love would perform though they had never been commanded.

But high as this apostle was exalted, and so nearly united to Christ, as to be one spirit, and to have one life with him, and thence of course to live by Christ living in him; yet he was still *in the flesh*; not as men naturally are, who cannot please God so long as they continue in that state; but he was in the *body*, and therefore absent from the Lord, as it is written, 2 Cor. v. 6. This veil of flesh hides the spiritual world from us; so that we must either depend on the report God has condescended to make of the state of that world, or be altogether ignorant of it. “We walk by faith, not by sight:” and thus the Apostle tells us, that the whole of his *living was by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him.*

By this expression, *the faith of the Son of God*, may be understood Christ’s personal faith, as it cannot be doubted that the man

Jesus, while he was on earth, lived in the faith of the Father's gift and promise, and thus stands on record for our imitation. Compare Pſal. cxvi. 10. as applied by the Apoſtle, 2 Cor. iv. 13.

And thus it leads us to the cauſe of the Chriſtian's life, that it is all owing to what the Redeemer did and ſuffered in the ſtrength of this his faith.

But though this be true, yet it ſeems rather to answer the Apoſtle's preſent views better, to underſtand the expreſſion of that faith which Chriſt is the object of: and thus the faith of Chriſt, and the faith of the goſpel, of which he is the great ſubject, will be the ſame. It is of no great moment which way we take it, as indeed they cannot be ſeparated. All Chriſt's obedience, even his death, which finiſhed it, could have been nothing to us, had it not been for the view the grant and promiſe of his heavenly Father ſet it in. It was this, and the faith or belief of this, that made it a ſacrifice, and fit to answer all the purpoſes of a ſacrifice for the ſins of the world. And, on the other hand, Chriſt is ſo much the very ſubſtance of the whole ſyſtem of grace, that without him we can make no
conſiſtent

consistent sense of it. And if we know him as he is set forth unto us in the testimony of God, we cannot miss to see, at the same time, the whole plan concerted in the perfection of wisdom.

I need not stand to observe here, how this same faith of Christ is at once the great regulator, and effectual supporter, of the Christian life, or living to God. Something has been said already, and we shall meet with it again, where the Apostle resolves the whole into faith, working by love. The whole is a system of grace; and where-ever that is understood, believed, and acquiesced in, it teaches effectually, in the first place, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and then to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in a present world, Tit. ii. 12. What pity is it that such grace should be frustrated, and received in vain? and yet frustrated it must be, where-ever the designs and purposes of it are not attained, either by not being believed at all, or so weakly and imperfectly as not to form the heart upon it, into thorough acknowledgements of gratitude and love. This is what the Apostle was so careful

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ful about; and could not bear to see rendered fruitless, by drawing these Galatians and others to place their confidence and hopes on the law of Moses, or whatever the busy fancies of men should set up in its stead. But this we shall likewise have occasion to meet with in its proper place; our business here is, to lay hold on every piece of instruction and caution, whether by way of example, or precept, that we be not drawn away, as these Galatians were in danger of being, and many have been since, by pretensions not half so specious as those of the Judaizers were; which yet the Apostle opposes with such vehemency and zeal. And surely he was no bigot, but had great good reason for opposing it; for if righteousness was to be had by law, then Christ died in vain. "He is the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe." But if that end could have been, or yet can be, answered by any other means, what shall we say? Was it like the wisdom of God, that he should not spare his own Son, the son of his love, but give him up to the death for the salvation of a perishing world,

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could the same purpose have been as well answered without him?

CHAP. iii. 1.—5.

1. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? 2. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? 4. Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. 5. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

WArmed, as the Apostle was, and he must have been very much so, on the fair view he had been taking of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, where it is hard to say, whether perfect wisdom, or goodness, appears most, but both together are closely united in that wonderful system which centres in Jesus Christ, he makes no scruple at giving the Galatians the title they deserved, and upbraiding them with their folly. Something may be said for those who never heard of Christ,
and

and knew nothing of that God who is love, the only true character of the great creator and sovereign of the universe; which yet is not to be discovered by creatures in our circumstances, but in Jesus Christ; such indeed merit the utmost exertion of pity and compassion. But for those who have had Jesus Christ, and him crucified, set before them, as he is in the gospel, the record which God has made concerning his Son; for them to set up any thing else, either in his stead, or to supplement his all-sufficiency; words cannot describe their folly, if it be done ignorantly; nor the perverseness, if on any other motive.

This was the unhappy case of these Galatians: Jesus Christ had been set forth, and the testimony of God, his counsels of grace, as they were laid in him, opened up to them; they had the knowledge of the truth, and, which is more, they had received it; and yet they had suffered themselves to be drawn in by a set of men who set up for teachers of the law, while yet they understood not what they said, nor whereof they affirmed, 1 Tim. i. 7. to be drawn in by them to believe, that notwithstanding of all that Christ had done,

done, and undertaken to do, they could not be saved, unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and kept his law.

Our translators, following the punctuation in some Greek copies, have made the Apostle say what is at least very hard to make good sense of, in a consistency with truth, That *Jesus was set before the eyes of the Galatians crucified among them.* We need not spend words to find a sense wherein this may hold true. It is certain he was crucified at Jerusalem, not in Galatia; neither does the Apostle say he was, in any sense whatsoever; but only that Christ crucified was plainly set before their eyes in that gospel which Paul preached to them. Nor is there any the least confusion in the words of the text, except what is occasioned by placing a comma where it was not wanted, by which *crucified* is joined with *among you*, when the Apostle evidently connects *among you* with *set forth*, and *crucified* with *Jesus Christ*. And thus literally his words express the plain fact as it was.

We have already seen the Apostle setting the whole affair of Christ, and him

crucified, in so clear a light, that it will be needless to say any thing further, but to take the whole, as the Apostle does, for very truth, and on which he founds his charge, and his after reasoning on the case before him. Only, from the peculiar stress the Apostle here, and every where in his writings, lays upon the *cross* of Christ, one cannot help observing, that the proper standing for taking a fair and full view of Christ is at his cross. Thence one is naturally led to look backward, to see who he was, and how he came there: A prospect which displays, in the strongest light, his and his heavenly Father's astonishing love and kindness to mankind. And when we look forward to his resurrection, and the glory that followed, the grounds of our faith and hope in him, and in God through him, are laid so deep and strong, that it is really astonishing how one can see him as he is set before us in the gospel, without the warmest sentiments of gratitude and love, and such thorough confidence in him, as the most perfect friendship, demonstrated by the strongest proofs and evidence, deserves and

and requires. Christianity is a religion of love.

This gives the key to what the Apostle had said of their *not obeying the truth*; and, as the world goes, it will be thought no improper question, What is that *truth* the Apostle speaks of? There are many little ones: for there are as many truths as there are facts; and men, even those who are called wise men or philosophers, have been so keen in the pursuit of them, that they have overlooked that which only deserves the name. When our Lord “witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate,” as it is expressed 1 Tim. vi. 13. he said, that he was born and came into the world to bear witness to *the truth*. Pilate asked him, *what is truth?* but had not patience to stay for an answer: nor needed he; for Christ had acknowledged himself to be the King of the Jews; the same he had often repeated and inculcated during the course of his public ministry. He gives the whole of it in few words, John xiv. 6. *I am the truth*. He joins with it indeed, *the way, and the life*; not as if they were different things, as the one holds forth the use of the truth, (as by him men come to the Father), and the other the tendency

and issue of it: for they who have him have life. And with great justice does he bear the title of *truth*; for whosoever knows him, knows all that is worth knowing. There are indeed numbers of detached pieces which do, or which some people persuade themselves do belong to religion, and in that view, have been rather more minded: but this we may say with confidence, that whatever is not necessarily connected with the truth as it is in Jesus, or which can be learned and practised without learning Christ, ought not, and may not, be received as the truth, or any part of it. Men will needs be dressing out the naked truth to their own fancy, or to recommend it to others, perhaps more ignorant, and of course more fanciful, than themselves: but the beauty and efficacy of the truth never appear in their full strength when the plain simplicity of all is any how defaced. The Apostle John's account of the testimony of God is short plain, and stands evident in Christ: "In him he gives eternal life." But so strangely has it been imbarressed by those who have taken upon themselves to explain it, that a Christian of ordinary capacity

capacity knows not what to make of it, but that it is something greatly above his reach, and which none but very learned men can understand. Whence it necessarily follows, that instead of taking the truth as it lies in Christ, plain and undisguised, they are led to take up with what this, or the other man, whom they are some how led into an esteem of, have said upon it. And thus, as the prophet says, “ they steal the word of the Lord “ one from another.”

We are next to consider what our translators render *obeying the truth*; and properly enough if it be taken in its full extent. Thus, to obey the truth, must imply believing it: and, in the next place, to be so thoroughly persuaded of the goodness as well as the reality of it, as to acquiesce and rest in it with that pleasure and delight which the assurance of important and beneficial truths certainly form the heart into: and both these the word the Apostle uses naturally signifies. But though there are a number of merely speculative little truths, which can answer no purpose by the most certain knowledge of them, but to amuse, and, as commonly happens, to
puff

puff up the vain mind, the truth of Christ is none of that kind. As it is of greatest moment, so it is of the most practical nature; so practical, that where-ever it is believed and received, it not only infers a conversation such as answers the gospel of Christ, and that takes in the whole duty of man, Phil. i. 27.; but where-ever it is believed, and the heart of the man reconciled to Jesus the truth, and perfectly pleased with him, Christ is in them, and they in him. He lives in them by his spirit; and the same mind is in them which was in him; the same sentiments and judgement of things, and of course the same state of affections and passions, the springs of all their actions; and thence the whole course of their conversation is formed upon that unexceptionable pattern and standard of human perfection. One may indeed say, he has faith, who has no works; but we have good authority to say, he is a vain man who says so, James ii. 20.; for the real belief of the truth cannot possibly subsist without working by love.

On this state of the Christian life, and particularly the influence of the Spirit of
Christ

Christ on the Christian life, the Apostle is very naturally led to put the question, vers. 2. on which he rests the whole of the cause, *This only I would know, &c.* And indeed it sets the folly of those who had given any ear to the seducers in so glaring a light, that he could impute it to nothing but fascination, or what has been called *witchcraft*: for nothing like a rational account could be made of such conduct. He supposes they *had received the Spirit*; for they could not be Christians, or believers in Christ, without it; and notwithstanding their unaccountable wavering, he still treats them as such. And happy had it been for the Christian world, if those who assumed the direction of ecclesiastical affairs in after times had followed the example the Apostle hath set them; and he knew perfectly, “that if
“any man have not the Spirit of Christ,
“he is none of his.”

It is really astonishing, that after all our Lord and his apostles have said upon this subject, there should any be found, even among those who profess themselves his disciples, who should have been at such pains to persuade the world, that nothing is meant by the word *Spirit* in this

this case, but the word of the gospel, in opposition to the letter of the Jewish law. It need not be refused, that the gospel may, and sometimes does, bear this sense in the New-Testament writings; for the same reason that our Lord says, John vi. 63. that the words he spake to his disciples, "were spirit and life;" because spirit and life were conveyed by them. And hence the Apostle calls this same gospel, the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8.

Our Lord tells Nicodemus, who was much at a loss to conceive how a man could be born again, John iii. that this gift and operation of the Spirit is one of those heavenly things which cannot be discovered by our imperfect perceptive powers, in our present state; and can be perceived only by his operations, effects, and fruits. But as these effects are as real, though of another kind, as those of material and sensible causes, the cause itself must be likewise as real, and the effects bear in them the nature of the cause which produceth them. Thus, in the regeneration, or new birth, our Lord speaks of, there is as really a new creature brought into the spiritual world, as in our common birth

birth there is one brought into this gross outward one. And they carry, in their very nature, the marks of their different originals: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6.

I have quoted these words of our Lord, because here we find the original of these two terms, which are so often used in the New-Testament writings, and which we find the Apostle using in the present argument; and, if I mistake not, we are here furnished with the right key for opening to us the true sense of these terms. No body pretends to doubt, that *flesh*, as it stands in our Lord's discourse, denotes the natural man, the mere child of Adam, and the fabric, constitution, and structure of that kind of creature, with all the perfections and powers necessary for fitting it for the station assigned it in this world, into which it is entered by the first, which we call the natural birth. And so far as these powers can go, so far, but no farther, may his actions and productions extend. They are all but the works of a being whose nature is *flesh*; and can never exceed the principle or cause from

which they proceed; and very properly take their denomination from it. And thus we find this term constantly applied to man in his natural state; and to the whole of what the mere child of Adam can do, without any higher principle. There is another we find as frequently made use of in the apostolic writings, and applied precisely in the same manner, *the old man*. The designation is taken from the state of a Christian born again, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works; for, by the Apostle's rule, Heb. viii. 13. when there is a *new* man, that fixes the title of *old* to what was before.

Man, in his natural state, is evidently made for a present world; the world which his first birth entered him into. There he finds the means of subsisting; and there he finds all the pleasures and enjoyments of life; and confined there, by his limited powers, and the righteous sentence of his creator and sovereign, he must be an utter stranger to the spiritual and eternal world, and the way in which spirits live there; except that he is capable of taking in a report of them, if it comes any how to his ears. This way of living

ving lies directly opposite to that kind of life which spirits live. Hence the old man is described as “ corrupt, through deceitful lusts,” Eph. iv. 22. From which, and such other expressions, occasion has been taken to represent these terms, *the old man*, and *the flesh*, as importing no more but that corruption which sin has brought upon the human nature; and which, they say, the inspired writers, by a bold figure, speak of as a body, and a real person: and many fine flourishes have been made upon it. But, after all, this corruption, whatever it is, can be no more but a quality, which cannot exist but in some subject; and what they call the lusts and affections of it, are really the natural cravings and appetites, the desires and affections, of the corrupt man. It seems, therefore, much too bold a figure to be made use of in a serious discourse; and for which, I believe, there is not a parallel to be found in any writer whatsoever.

But this is not all. We find the *old man* very expressly distinguished from his deeds, Col. iii. 9.; from his lusts, Eph. iv. 22.; and *the flesh*, from the lusts and affections of it, Gal. v. 16. 24. And when we are told,

Rom. vi. of our being crucified, dead, and buried, and rising again with Christ, into a new and endless life; shall we say, our natural corruption, this body of sin, is to be understood in all this; particularly when the Apostle said of himself, in such plain terms, that he *was crucified with Christ?* which cannot import less than renouncing and giving up the life he had from Adam, as what he had no more occasion for, being provided with one infinitely better, by Christ living in him, and he accordingly living by the faith of Christ. Surely he was the unhappiest of all mankind who ever pretended to relate a fact, if he really meant no more than that he had forsaken his old way of living, and betaken himself to a new course: and he must have been as bad a reasoner, as it is evident this conduces nothing to the purpose he then had in view.

I should not however have said so much here, had not this same misunderstanding of the words of the Spirit of God, been improved, to support that unhappy system of moral government which has been set up against the grace of the gospel. For if these expressions be dwindled
away

away into metaphor, the new birth, or being born of the Spirit, the new creature, the quickening the dead sinner, and the life our Lord promises to all that come to him, &c. must all pass for figure and metaphor too; and what the Apostle here says of the Galatians *receiving the Spirit*, means nothing but a mere change in their way of living, while the man, and his principle of life, and natural powers, continued precisely the same: and thus Christians are as effectually brought back to live by law, as the seducers attempted to bring the Galatians to live by the law of Moses.

But we have not so learned Christ, if so be we have heard and learned of him as the truth is in Jesus. If he did not either deceive or trifle with Nicodemus, there is a Spirit of which all who believe in him are born. And what is born of this Spirit is a real thing, *a new creature*; and by this birth is entered an inhabitant of the spiritual and eternal world, as really as any child of Adam is of this perishing one. The Galatians were at no loss to know what the Apostle meant, by their *receiving the Spirit*: they had no doubt been taught how the Spirit of God was
lost

lost to mankind by the entrance of sin; and how the same was restored in Christ Jesus, according to the promise often repeated concerning the latter times: they had felt the effect of it in themselves, as well as heard and seen the same gift conferred on the apostles, and other Christians; and had no occasion to ask him, as our modern disputants do, what he meant by it. They knew it was that Holy Spirit, by whom Christ had conveyed a new spiritual life, and light, into their dead souls, and dark minds; by which he conveyed his life, and lived in them. But what can be done with those who know no difference between faith and fancy, between what is spiritual and purely imaginary? The difference cannot be perceived, but by what the Apostle calls the spiritual discerning; and that cannot be attained but by being born of the Spirit. The God who made man what he is, can certainly, if he so pleases, either give new powers and faculties, which we have no notion of, or raise the old ones to what pitch of perfection he pleases. By what faculty; or perceptive power, did Elisha, and his servant when his eyes were opened,

ed, see the mountain covered with horses of fire, and chariots of fire, which neither the Syrian army, nor inhabitants of the city, perceived at all? or was there no such thing there? So Stephen saw Christ at the Father's right hand.

The Apostle's question answers itself: No body could pretend the Spirit was given, or that they *received it, by any works* that could be performed in obedience to the *law*. God himself gave an irrefragable evidence that it was not. For during the space of about four hundred years, at least from the death of Malachy until the time of Christ's appearance, no such thing was heard of among the strictest observers of that law; nor is there so much as a hint to be found in all the prophets but what referred to that time. It was a gift, a matter of free sovereign grace; and there could not be a greater affront offered to the giver, than to pretend to deserve it by their service; not to mention what the Apostle had said but just before, that no person whatsoever who was under the law, could possibly live to God. Indeed it was not so much as pretended, that the gift of the Spirit came,

came, or could come, by the law of Moses; and we may say the same of every other law which men have imagined, or can imagine, for themselves.

It must then be by what the Apostle calls *the hearing of faith*. This expression may be understood, either of what they heard, viz. the faith, or the word of the gospel; or of their actual hearing; and that is a word of very extensive import, and the very same with obeying the truth he had been just speaking of: "Faith comes
" by hearing, and hearing by the word of
" God." But neither the speaking nor hearing the word, will profit, unless it be mixed with faith in them that hear it. And the Apostle wisely makes use of an expression which strongly includes both, viz. *the hearing of faith*. The word of the gospel is the means by which the Spirit is conveyed, called therefore the *ministration of the Spirit*: but then, in order to the production of this great effect, it must be so heard as to be believed. And hence it is that we find, not only the gift of the Spirit, but all the effects and consequences of it, attributed promiscuously to the word of the gospel, and the faith of the hearer. And hence necessarily

necessarily follows a corollary, which, I am afraid, will be reckoned a paradox with many, viz. that no man can be a Christian in any degree, without being, in some degree, inspired. The Apostle has said it roundly, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9.

Nothing could more fully justify the title the Apostle had given them, nor set their folly in a stronger light, than the second question he puts to them, vers. 3. That they had *begun in the Spirit* is abundantly plain; for it was by his bringing them acquainted with the gospel of Christ that they were delivered from that horrible condition they were lying under in their Gentile state, without God, and without hope in the world. But by the hearing of faith, believing the testimony which God had given concerning his Son, they had received the promised Spirit, the earnest of the promised inheritance; and thus the inheritance was made as sure to them as it could be made, before they knew any thing at all of the law of Moses; which yet the bigotted zealots for that law wanted to persuade them, that they could not be saved with-

out. And thus, however they made a sort of acknowledgement of Christ, and of the necessity of what he had done, to open the way unto eternal life; yet according to them it was by the observance of that law that they must enter into it; the pattern which our modern advocates for their bastard holiness, exactly copy.

All this is abundantly plain; but how the Apostle comes to call the law, or the observance of it, *flesh*, needs some illustration. The Apostle, on another occasion, calls them carnal ordinances. They were all such as might be observed with the greatest exactness, by men who were strictly and properly *in the flesh*, mere natural men; and they could contribute nothing toward the change of their state: for they were weak and unprofitable; their sacrifices could not take away sin; nor all their washings and purifications cleanse from the defilement of it: the most they could do was, to sanctify to the purification of the flesh, and procure them access to a wordly sanctuary. The promise to, and the blessing of Abraham, as we shall see by and by, were continued and handed down through all the periods of the law; and whenever these ritual pre-
cepts

cepts were separated from the promise, and what they were figures of, the works of the law became as much works of the flesh, as fulfilling any of the other lusts of it; and which accordingly we find God expressing the utmost abhorrence and detestation of, on many occasions. What folly must it then have been, for those who had received Christ, the all-sufficient Saviour, and had him and his Spirit dwelling and abiding in them, and all the grace that is in Christ Jesus, for their support and provision, fitting them up into living temples, a habitation of God through the Spirit; for those who were thus provided in all-sufficiency, to turn to these weak and beggarly elements, which could never profit those who were exercised therein?

As the Apostle had a perfect knowledge of human nature, he knew well how to apply himself to it on every occasion; and frequently intermixes tender and affecting hints with his most solemn instructions, and sharpest rebukes, so as to move them more effectually. It does not appear what the Galatians had suffered by their embracing Christianity, as the Apostle had taught it; nor from what quarter their sufferings sprung; but

he says, verſ. 4. they *had ſuffered*, and *ſuffered many things*. It was needleſs to give them the particulars; they felt them, and knew them well: and moſt likely they came, either directly and immediately from the Jews, or at their inſtigation, as we find all his own did. They could not bear to have the Gentiles brought ſo near upon a level with themſelves, as the well-grounded hope of eternal life brought them; and even the believers among them, we find, fell very foul on Peter himſelf, for treating Cornelius and his friends on that footing before they were circumciſed, and were incorporated with them. But of all things the moſt irritating was, the contempt they thought their law, and the traditions of their fathers, were expoſed to, by putting the whole of ſalvation on Chriſt, and making faith in him more available than all that their law could do for them.

This conjecture is conſiderably ſtrengthened by what the Apoſtle ſays, chap. v. 11. that had he preached circumciſion, the offence of the croſs would have ceaſed; and, chap. vi. 12. that the true reaſon why the Judaizers were ſo zealous for circumciſion was, that they might avoid

void persecution. And this gives us one plain sense of what he says of their having suffered so many things *in vain*, or to no purpose; which might easily have been avoided, by complying at first with the Jewish zealots. But he appears by what he adds, *if it be yet in vain*, to have had a higher aim. They had not yet thoroughly yielded to their seducers; they were in such suspense, that it was hard to say where they would rest. If they stood firm in their submission and obedience to the truth, their sufferings were not in vain: they were suffering with Christ, and had the fairest, or rather the most assured prospect, of reigning with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12. But if they complied, they renounced their obedience to the truth; and by having recourse to the law, they in effect renounced Christ, and the grace of God in him, as he tells them roundly afterwards; and then their sufferings should be indeed *in vain*, and could answer no purpose at all. How skilfully, how gently, does he touch, and yet how soundly does he search the dangerous sore!

Having thus hinted what could not miss to engage their reflection on what they were

were about, he proceeds in the argument, which the query, vers. 4. is so far from interrupting, that it considerably forwards the effect of it. They had received the promise and gift of eternal life held forth in the gospel; they had received the Spirit of life, a good and valid earnest; and, by receiving this Spirit, they had received the very life of Christ, and were entered on living by him, and on that grace which is in him; and all this by the bare *bearing of faith*, not only without any help from the law, but when they were absolute strangers to it. He now directs their attention to those who ministered the Spirit to them. He speaks indeed as of one person, thus to turn their eyes upon himself, by whose ministry they had first believed: but he speaks as in the present time, not *ministered*, but *who ministereth* the Spirit, so as to take in all who were employed in the same work after him. One cannot pass this over without a reflection, What a solemn thing the work of the ministry is! The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit; and the business of those that preach it is, to minister or convey the Spirit, the Spirit of God, and his blessed Son. If
 this

this be not done, nothing is done at all. And “who is sufficient for these things?” But however Paul and his associates, nay all who succeed them, may by preaching the gospel be said in an inferior sense to minister the Spirit; yet the Apostle’s words very naturally point to a higher hand, viz. to him who has the fullness of the Spirit dwelling in him, and gives and with-holds it at pleasure; and it is honour enough to the greatest of the human kind to be employed under him. “Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but it is God who giveth the increase.” In the ordinary course both go together; but there is an immense difference between them. Ministers are co-workers with God, 2 Cor. vi. 1. but can do nothing without him; whereas he, when he pleases, can do every thing without them. However we understand it, the conclusion strongly follows, that, by the order established by the great Sovereign, it is only by the word of the gospel, and hearing of faith, that the Spirit, with all his gifts, is conveyed to any of mankind, whether Jew or Gentile.

The same he says of *miracles*. These were the interposals of divine power, by which

which God attested, and, as we say, sealed the commission he gave to his ministers and servants, whom he sent on special errands; and thus gave authority, and commanded respect, to the message they were sent to deliver. These were very frequent, and in a manner common, among Christians, while their faith was strong, and Christianity a new thing in the world. The principal and most extraordinary was, conferring the Holy Ghost by laying on the hands of the apostles, which appears to have been peculiar to the apostles, Acts viii. 14. *et seqq.* But the gifts of the Spirit were many and various; yet not at any one's choice or option, but as the holy Spirit divided them, according to his will. But as all these miracles and miraculous gifts were peculiar to believers in Christ, and all performed in his name, nor ever so much as attempted by any Jew, except once by the seven sons of Sceva, to their utter confusion, it was needless to draw the conclusion, the Galatians could not help doing it for themselves, viz. that when Christ answered every valuable purpose to those who received and believed on him, no deeds of law,

law, or legal observances, could make any addition or improvement; and therefore it must be the height of folly to burden one's self with them.

But however plausible this construction may seem, and however well it may answer the Apostle's intention; yet there is another, which appears to suit both that and the context better, which has been adopted by the most judicious interpreters; and with this advantage, that it is the plain literal translation of the Apostle's original. Those who know any thing of that language, must know, that the word our translators render *miracles*, properly signifies *mights*, or *powers*; and what they render simply *working*, is seldom or never made use of, but to import, *working inwardly*, and commonly working effectually in one. And thus the words will run: "He that ministers or conveys to you the Spirit, and worketh effectually in you all those powers you find yourselves, and observe others, endued with," &c. All power of every kind is of God, the same who gives his Spirit in what measure and degree he pleases. The

Apostle speaks of being "strengthened with" "all might by the Spirit in the inner man," Eph. iii. 16. and Col. i. 11. where he uses the same word; and says of himself, that "he could do all things through Christ" "strengthening him." These are greatly higher powers than any external miracles; the power by which these are wrought being but one of the lowest. And thus the Apostle's argument comes out strong and plain. It is an appeal to what they felt, or might feel, in themselves. And when all this was done by the mere *bearing of faith*, the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, the Apostle's conclusion comes out strong and convincing, viz. That it must be the greatest folly that can be imagined, to have recourse to the law for what was done so completely in Christ; and which the law, though really vested, as it never was, with the power of conveying life, could make no addition to. It was forsaking a station where there is absolute safety, for one where they are every moment in danger of a new forfeiture. And such is the station our wise patrons of a righteous moral government are so fond of.

CHAP. iii. 6. — 12.

6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* 7. *Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* 8. *And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.* 9. *So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.* 10. *For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* 11. *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* 12. *And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doth them, shall live in them.*

THE Apostle having, in a very decisive manner, set forth the excellency of faith in Christ, incomparably above what the warmest advocates for Judaism could pretend in behalf of the law, proceeds in a very masterly way, to illustrate and confirm what he had said by the example of Abraham, whom the Jews professed to reverence as their father, and whom God himself had honoured with the high title of *his friend*. And surely, if it could be shown, that the

believing Galatians were precisely in the same condition wherein Abraham was when he was so signally acknowledged of God, one would have thought that there needed no more to put an end for ever to the dispute then on foot. It is worth observing how skilfully he introduces the comparison: he slides into it in the simplest and most natural manner, as suggested to him by what he had been saying: *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.* The words are exactly those of Moses, so that no exception could be made on that side. And if we consider the case of Abraham, in every view that can be taken of it; the more exactly it is stated, the more clearly will the justness of the Apostle's reasoning appear.

The modern Jews, intending, as it would seem, to do honour to the memory of this father and founder of their nation, have forged a number of very silly stories concerning him, which it is not worth any one's while to repeat. We have his history given us pretty much at large, by Moses himself. Idolatry had made great advances, and very likely had its rise near a-

bout

about the place where his family had their residence; and by what Joshua says of them, Josh. xxiv. 2. they were deeply tainted with it. How far Abraham himself was infected, we cannot say; but we have not so much as a hint of any thing extraordinary about him, when God distinguished him by chusing him to be the father and head of a new people; but we may be very sure that he had nothing to merit such singular favours. He had not yet obtained the character of a righteous man until he believed God; and that could not be until God gave him something to believe. It is true, there was an original law founded in the benefit of creation; but that was broken, and had brought mankind under the curse. A remedy however was prepared, and revealed in the promise of the seed of the woman; with a law of gratitude, and of love grafted upon it, which no doubt many believed: for Noah was not the only person who became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. This promise God had renewed to Abraham at his first calling; and he certainly believed it, for he obeyed the command which was supported by it. But

no body was ever foolish enough to think, that his travelling from one country to another could make any part of his righteousness, any further than as it was a sign of his believing God, and the obedience of faith.

That promise was indeed very full, and comprehended all the promises that were made to him afterward. But it was in some sort conditional. If Abraham had not shewn both the truth and the strength of his faith, by forsaking all, and going out, not knowing whither he went, he had no reason to expect the blessing. The case of the Galatians was exactly similar to this: for neither could they have any benefit by the promise, unless they should believe and follow out the purposes of the promised blessing. If one who says he believes, does not live in the way the blessing is to be conveyed in, he really refuses what God hath said he will give: for what is believing, but the heart's acquiescing, and finding its pleasure in the blessing, and in the assurance which the promise of a faithful God gives of the actual conveyance of it?

But however strong Abraham's faith was, it was not accounted to him for righteousness,

teousness, until he believed the free absolute promise of God to give him a numerous offspring, who should possess the land of Canaan; and to give him Isaac, with whom he was to establish his covenant in all points; particularly, that “in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.” But this happened many hundred years before the law of Moses; and even a considerable time before circumcision was instituted; and consequently was prior to his offering up his son, when the Apostle James says “he was justified by his works;” which can mean no more, than that by this trial he showed himself to be not only a true, but a strong, believer: for Moses says expressly, that he was justified before that time; for he says, “he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

I cannot help being of opinion, that this text might have been easier and better understood, had less, or even nothing at all, been said about it; in which case, it is very likely, most people would have been satisfied with what lies very plain in the words, that on Abraham's believing the free sovereign grant God had made him,
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he was treated in all respects as a righteous person, or, in other words, justified from all things which were or could be charged against him to infer his condemnation. But as things now stand, it is necessary we should know what *righteousness* is; what the *imputing for righteousness* means; and what it was which is said to have been imputed to Abraham for that purpose.

Righteousness and *godliness* are two words, which, when attributed to man, are promiscuously used in the sacred writings to denote the whole of religion, and all the duties belonging to religion. The substance and matter of both is precisely the same. But *godliness* is an absolute term; whereas *righteousness* is relative, and respects judicial procedure in some court designed for the administration of justice. That which we are most concerned in, is the judgement given, or to be given, by the great Sovereign of heaven and earth. Righteousness, or justice, is one of his most essential attributes; and the measure or rule by which his judgement proceeds, is his own perfect wisdom. Hence we find his righteousness applied in a very
 extensive

extensive manner, not only to what we call justice, rewarding and punishing according to the merits or demerits of the party tried; but even to acts of mercy and grace, and whatever measures perfect wisdom chuses to follow; for wisdom and justice, where both are perfect, can never take different sides.

Righteousness, I mean the word, has, I believe, a double import: it has its name from *right*; and denotes, either one who does what is right, or one who has a right some privilege or other: and the Apostle John has taught us, that these two always go together, 1 John iii. 7. It must be so; for though we read of God's justifying the *ungodly* yet he is no where said to justify the *unrighteous*. But we are expressly enough told of two different kinds of righteousness, viz. the righteousness of God, and one's own righteousness, Rom. iv. 3. We read likewise of the righteousness of faith, or which is by faith, and the righteousness of the law, or which is by works of law: and these stand opposed and contrary one to the other. And whatever some learned men have thought fit to say against imputation,

we read oftener than once of "God's imputing righteousness without works."

Much noise has been made in all the ages of the world, and never more than in this age, about the *rule of right*; for such a rule it is agreed there must be, a standard by which mens works are to be adjusted. The wisest of the Heathen philosophers were greatly at a loss in this respect. They agreed pretty unanimously, that the mind of the Sovereign of the universe was the only just rule; but how to get at it, they were quite at a loss; and indeed could do no more but guess: for they knew nothing of the eternal fitness of things which our moderns make such a flourish about; while, in truth, they neither know, nor can know, any more about it, than their predecessors, except what they borrow from the revelation they have in their hands. This renders them absolutely inexcusable; for therein we have the righteousness God by faith revealed, with the utmost degree of evidence. All are concluded under sin; and it must be the highest pitch of insolence and folly to expect even so much as pardon, and much less eternal life, in any other way than by a sovereignly free grant
and

and gift from the supreme and only proprietor of life. And when he has been graciously pleased to make such a gift in his Son Jesus Christ, the only right thing a sinner can do, is, to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him; and thus to lay hold on eternal life, in a conversation such as becomes the gospel of Christ, under the direction of his Holy Spirit, which we have the fullest assurance God will give to those who ask him; especially when we find all attempts that can be made any other way are no less than direct acts of rebellion, and the highest insult that can be offered to God and his blessed Son; and the folly is but little inferior to the insolence, unless they could overcome omnipotence, and force eternal life out of the hand of the Almighty.

By this faint sketch of the order which the great Sovereign of the universe, and sole proprietor of life, has established, for conveying spiritual and eternal life to mankind dead in trespasses and sins, and which has been in force ever since sin entered into the world, any one may be able to form a tolerable judgement of the imputation which Moses and the Apostle

speak of. No body will doubt of its being the same with the imputation of righteousness this same Apostle speaks of in places exactly parallel to this: and that may be easily understood by what is often said in the Old Testament of the imputation of sin; which we find means the same thing as inflicting the deserved punishment; and consequently, not imputing, is the same as not punishing, or pardoning. See two places, instead of the many that might be mentioned, 2 Sam. xix. 19. and Psal. xxxii. 1. 2. Imputing righteousness then should be the same as treating the person, whether righteous or not, in the same manner as if he was completely righteous. No body will venture to say, that Abraham was such, but that the only claim he had to either the earthly or heavenly Canaan was the free gift of God; and it was a good one, and such as must have been sustained by the most righteous judge. His case was singular; but the rule is general. "By grace
 " we are saved, justified freely by his grace;
 " and in Christ all that believe are justified," &c.

These propositions lie so fair in the New Testament, that no body ever pretended to deny them. . But, many attempts have
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been made to explain them away into a consistency with certain plans of moral government; which, by some means or other, limit the sovereign proprietor so as he may not dispose of his own to whom he will, but only to such as are qualified in such a manner as they, in their wisdom, think fit they should be. I have no mind here to enter into the discussion of any of them but that which lies immediately before us. *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness*; whence, they say, it is very plain, that if he had not believed, he could not have been sustained a righteous person. And so far they say true: for had not the promise been believed, it must have been neglected, and no more minded than if it had never been; and the God of truth should have been treated as a common liar.

But do not both Moses and the apostles say very expressly, that Abraham's believing God was imputed, or reckoned, and so allowed, to him for righteousness. They say, he believed God; and our translators, and perhaps most of the rest, say, it was reckoned or imputed to him for righteousness. Were it allowed, that Abraham's

braham's personal faith, or that act of believing, was that which was reckoned or imputed to him, the question will be put, How came this about, and on what foundation did this reckoning stand? for it is certain, that he who is perfect in wisdom, will do nothing but on the highest reason; and therefore the wisest patrons of moral government chuse to say, that it was in consequence of the law of faith, and divine constitution, making faith, at lowest, the condition of the grant and promise, or the matter of the believer's righteousness, arising on his fulfilment of that law. Had man been so well provided in believing powers as to believe these same promises as they came to Abraham, and especially as they come to us now, and had such a law been given with the promise of life annexed to obedience to the precepts of it, something might have been said for this plan, faith would have been our very righteousness, and should have given a perfect right to the reward. But besides that those to whom the promises are made, are, every soul of them, dead in trespasses and sins; and not one of them
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can either perceive or believe the things of God, until they are by sovereign grace quickened and made alive; this was not neither could be, the case of Abraham; for the promises which Abraham believed, were absolutely free, without either conditions or limitations. They were God's declarations to him, of what he was positively determined to do. And if the Apostle did not mistake the matter, the case of Gentile believers was precisely the same with his.

From this consideration, and another of still greater weight, viz. that this plan puts the whole of a man's righteousness upon an act of his own, (for believing is as much his deed as any other duty), they find themselves obliged to conclude, that it was not the act of Abraham's faith, or his believing the promises then made to him, that was imputed, but the matter of his belief, or what he believed, viz. the free gift of Jesus, the promised seed, of pardon and eternal life in him, which may very properly be called his faith; and thus they bring in the righteousness of Christ, consisting in his perfect obedience unto the death, as that which was imputed to Abraham, and still

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is to every believer. And hardly any who claims the name of a Christian, refuses that this is what they call the meritorious cause of the sinner's justification, or being treated as a righteous person.

Certain it is, and, I think, will appear so to every man who considers the structure of Moses's words, that when he says, *it was imputed to him for righteousness*, the whole of the case, as he had stated it, must be taken in, and Abraham's believing is but the issue of God's absolute promise to him, and concludes the narrative. The consequence of the whole was, that this was reckoned to him for righteousness. The promise gave him as good a right and title to the blessings, as he could have had if they had been earned by the most perfect and painful obedience to any law that was, or could be, given. But, after all, perhaps the Apostle's word, which we render, *it was imputed*, may be more properly, and certainly more consistently with his principles and views, rendered impersonally, that is, if the verb is taken in the passive sense, as most interpreters do. Thus upon the whole of
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the case as it stood, the positive promise being given, and he believing the promise, there was a reckoning made in Abraham's favour, and a judgement given, that he was a righteous person. He had done right in believing this promise; and that promise gave him a perfect right to the promised blessing.

But after all, when one considers the import and meaning of the word *accounted*, as settled by common usage in that language, it seems very likely to me, that though the termination is like a passive, it is really one of those verbs which they call neutral; that is, such as denote the sensations, and internal actings, of a rational mind, which do not terminate on any external object, but on the mind or person himself. It will be readily allowed, that it denotes the careful and exact considering and weighing every particular, and thereby adjusting the sum-total, and making a judgement upon the whole. And it will be no hard matter to find who makes the computation in this case; the same, to be sure, who justified Abraham, or, which is the same thing, found and declared him a righteous person; not in

a strict law sense, but what was as good as law, the mind and will of the only Sovereign. Thus we are provided with a nominative to the verb *accounted*, which has a greatly better title to stand there. Abraham believed God; and *he*, viz. God, who is perfectly just, even when he justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus, on the whole of the case, gave it in his favour, that he was a righteous man, and justified him accordingly. And on this view we find the Apostle reasoning, not only here, but in every place where he brings in Abraham's faith, and how matters stood with him in point of righteousness and justification, Rom. iv. A short question will determine the dispute: What was it that gave Abraham a right to the blessing?

Certain it is, that it was only by the free absolute promise that Abraham had any right to the blessing; and his believing could do no more than receive the promise, acquiesce in it, and determine him to hold entirely by that tenure. Hence we find the Apostle stating two different parties, viz. those who are *of faith*, and those who are *of works of law*, and what either of them have to expect from God's hand.

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He begins, vers. 7. with those *who are of faith*. I need not observe again, what is so obvious, that faith, or believing, always supposes a testimony or promise. These, in the present case, run into one; for all the facts which God testifies, are calculated entirely for illustrating and making the promise or grant credible, and confirming it so as to demand belief. They therefore who are of faith, are with equal propriety said to be of the promise: and as that proceeds purely on free sovereign grace, they are with the same propriety said to be of grace, in opposition to works of every kind: I say, in opposition to works; for thus we find the Apostle states it, Rom. xi. 6.; the one holds entirely by grace, and the other by works.

The first thing he observes concerning those who are *of faith* is, that they are the *children of Abraham*. It is somewhat doubtful, whether the Apostle meant to say, that the Galatians knew this, or that he designed now to notify it to them, as the verb may be either in the present of the indicative or of the imperative mood, as they are commonly distinguished; and it is difficult to say which of them is most

probable; nor is it of any moment, as both equally answer his purpose.

It is of more moment, to be sure of what the Apostle means by their being *the children of Abraham*: and the way he introduces it may contribute something toward it: *Know, therefore.* Thus it stands as an inference from what he had been just saying. Our Lord gives some light to it in what he says to the Jews, John viii. 39. “If Abraham were your father, ye would do the works of Abraham.” It appears to have been an established rule, that those who formed themselves on any eminent person, and lived as he did, should be called his children, because they imitated and copied after him, as children do their fathers. And thus we find this same Apostle states it, Rom. iv. 11.—17. that Abraham was, to all intents and purposes, as much the father of all them that believe, as of his natural descendents; and that those who walk in his steps, and the faith on which he was found righteous, that justified, are every way as much his seed, to whom the promise of the blessing was made. We will find our Apostle, in the close of this chapter, putting this affair of

of the Gentiles being Abraham's seed on its proper bottom; to which we refer what might have been said further on this subject. Our business is, to follow the Apostle, and take things as he has laid them to our hand, as he best knew how to prosecute the purpose he had in view.

Among the many exceptions the Jewish zealots made against the Apostle's doctrine, the most plausible was the pretended novelty of it. They had been long accustomed to the law of Moses: it was given to their nation with very great solemnity; and they were quite in the right to regard it as the law of God. Had they kept it in the place the law-giver put it, they had been led thereby directly to Christ. But they had perverted it into a law, such as God never gave to mankind; a law which should give eternal life to those who obeyed, and did the things commanded there. But this was their very gross mistake; and he demonstrates from their own record, that his doctrine was so far from being new, that it was at least four hundred and thirty years older than their law; nay, that the very thing which they were so much enraged at, the justifying the Hea-
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then nations by the faith of Christ, was revealed to, and exemplified in, their father Abraham; and that on this very view, *the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith*, did so.

No body will blame the Apostle's attributing to the scriptures what none but an intelligent being, and one too whose understanding was perfect, could do. His business was, to convict the gainfayers by their own record; and if he could shew, that the same gospel was delivered to Abraham, and that he was justified or sustained as one who had righteousness on this prospect, it must have appeared with great evidence, that this was the way which the great Author of the record had established. And here it will be proper to observe, that though Abraham stands there as the most eminent, and whose history is most particularly recorded; yet he was not the first to whom the revelation was made, and who were, as the Apostle says of Noah, *made heirs of the righteousness which is by faith*. So far from it, that from Adam, who first received the promise, down to Moses, there was no other way of at-
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taining a right to the blessing of pardon and life, and of course no other righteousness, but by believing the free gift, and regulating their conduct in a suitableness to it; that is, in all the duties of gratitude and love to their gracious Creator and Redeemer.

That the nations of the Gentiles, that is, all the world, excepting only the comparatively small nation of the Jews, were to have a right given them to eternal life, in the same manner Abraham had, he proves from their own record, viz. that in Abraham, that is, as the record explains it, *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. The original promise of the seed of the woman, repeated and renewed as it was to Noah, had lain as it were in common among his posterity, until it was fixed in the family of Abraham, and limited to Isaac and his descendants. One would not have thought, that it could ever have entered any Christian's head, that this blessing could mean any thing else but (what only deserves the name of a blessing) that eternal life, conveyed by and in Jesus Christ, the promised seed. But it has been explained away
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into no blessing at all by a very learned commentator. He had read of Jacob's blessing his grandsons, and that he said, *In thee shall Israel bless, &c.* Gen. xlviii. 20. But he should have observed, that this was not the blessing, but the consequence of it; and at most was but an expression of mens faint wishes, and nothing at all to the blessing of God, secured to Abraham through faith in the promised seed, and to all who should be found in the same way of believing, as the Apostle infers, vers. 9. *So then they that are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

Blessing is a very common word in every one's mouth, but I am afraid few have a distinct notion of the import of it. Men are said to bless God; they bless one another; and the Apostle reckons it out of doubt, that the less is blessed of the greater: And God is said to bless men. When men, parents for instance, bless their children, in ordinary cases, they can do no more than wish happiness to them, or pray God to bless them; while they have but very confused notions of that blessedness they wish or pray for, and their blessing is little more than an expression of their love and tender affection, that they would
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make them quite happy, if it was in their power, and they knew how to effect it. Mens blessing God can go no further than an expression of the delight and pleasure which the fullness and all-sufficiency of God gives them. But God's blessing man is another thing in all respects, excepting only the rise and spring from whence his blessing proceeds; that favour and loving-kindness of God who is love, and of which the most sincere and tender affection found among men is but a faint shadow. His blessing never stops in words or wishes. When he blessed Abraham, he made him as blessed and as happy as man can be in this present world. Our kind creator has not left us to form our notions of such an important matter on what we affect most, and our hearts are most set upon. Besides the many instructions given by our blessed Lord and his apostles, "to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," without which there can be no blessedness, he has put the case of Abraham on record. He was made a great man in the world's account, and had great riches given him. But these were only accessories. The blessing lay in the promised seed; and upon

the belief of this he was reckoned and treated as a righteous person; and in that inheritance to which he had a right given him by the promise, his blessedness lay. He looked for a better country, and God was not ashamed to be called his God, and the God of his fellow-believers, because he had prepared for them a city, Heb. xi. 14. 15. 16. And they who are of faith, and believe God as he did, must of course be blessed with him.

Such was the case of Abraham, and such is the blessing of all his genuine children who walk in his steps, as the Galatians did when they were attacked by the Judaizing teachers, who would needs have them to submit to their law. And what were they to gain by it? The Apostle sets the folly of it in a very strong light, vers. 10. *For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.* But might they not say, "It is written, that the man that doth them, shall live in them." It is so: and could there be a man found, who continueth in all things written in the law to do them, he might have something to say; but such a man never was, and, we may be
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very sure; never will be found, among the mere children of Adam; “for no man li-
 veth, and sinneth not;” and God has shut up all under sin, that he might have mercy on all; so that none could ever be saved, but by free sovereign mercy and grace: for the law is express, *Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.*

But might not one say of the whole nation of the Jews in this view, as the disciples said to their master in another case, “Who then could be saved?” for they were all under the law as given by Moses. There was even in that law a provision made for the forgiveness of sin, so far as it went. Thus we find it often repeated, that on their offering a sacrifice after the divine appointment, their sin should be forgiven them. Whence, it is likely, the ignorant Jews, who did not see into the spirit of their law, might flatter themselves with the prospect of eternal life by the law. But what was promised there was mere forgiveness of the sins for which they had offered the sacrifice: and that could be no further than putting them in the same case they were in, and restoring

them to the possession of the same life they had before they transgressed, with the privileges belonging to it; but did not, and could not, remove the original curse by which they, and all mankind, were bound under death; from which they could not be relieved, but by raising them from the dead, and the grant of a new life by the promised seed, as it was made to their father Abraham, and which was continued down through all the times of the law; and in virtue of which the believers among them lived. Hence it is that we find the Apostle making a distinction between simply being *under the law*, as all the natural Jews were, and being *of the works of the law*; that is, living or attempting to live by fulfilling the commands and precepts of it; whereas their business was, and indeed they were equally bound, by their law, to take in the promise, and to live by the faith and belief of the free gift made there.

That this was really the case, and that those of the Israelitish or Jewish nation who had the prospect, and well-grounded hopes of eternal life, had it not at all by any works of law, he says, vers. 11.

is *evident*, by what he lays down as a fundamental principle, and which he had a good right to suppose indisputable, because it stood on record in those writings which they received as the oracles of the living God, by his prophet Habakkuk, ii. 4.

Our translators, and many before them, render both the prophet and Apostle's words, *The just shall live by faith*. The proposition carries in it a great truth, that the just or righteous man lives by faith; so the Apostle had said, the life which he then lived in the flesh, was by the faith of the Son of God. But as the natural import of it supposes the man to be already righteous or just who thus lives, without saying either how he came to be so, or wherein his righteousness lies, an unwary reader may be led into a very dangerous mistake, viz. that one must be a just and a righteous man before he presumes to live by faith; and which indeed there is no way of guarding effectually against it, but by making the expression equivalent to this, Whatever righteousness a man may be, or imagine himself to be, possessed of, the only way he can live, *i. e.* have eternal life, is *by faith*.

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But even this leaves a point doubtful, which, we may be very sure, the Apostle never meant to do; viz. that there might be some other way of one's being righteous than by faith, or believing God as Abraham did. The plain literal sense of the words, as they stand, both in the prophet and in the Apostle, is, that *he who is righteous by faith, shall live*. This rendering, and this only, answers the Apostle's argument. He proposes to prove, that no man can be justified by the law; and proves this by the divine oracle, which allowed or sustained the righteousness which came by faith, or believing, as that only which did or could give a sinner any title or right to life; and accordingly reckons his point fully proved, by asserting, vers. 12. what could not be denied, that *the law is not of faith, &c.* I suppose it out of dispute, that justifying in the sight of God, and sustaining a person righteous, are, in all respects, the same thing, unless a distinction is made, by supposing *justifying* to be the sentence given by the sovereign judge, and *righteousness* the foundation on which the sentence stands, which comes

comes to the same point. God gives a perfect right to life, by his promise and grant in Christ Jesus; the believer trusts the faithful promiser, on the proofs he has given of his fixed and unalterable purpose of making it good, and his faith and hope are fixed on God. Thus he receives and rests on the promise, and surely the promiser must sustain the plea; and the greatest sinner that ever was on earth may, and ought, to draw near to a throne of grace, with boldness and confidence; or, as the same Apostle expresses it, “with full assurance of faith. The least doubt is an affront to the promiser, and his blessed Son, who has undertaken to make it good.

CHAP. iii. 13. — 18.

13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: 14. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. 16. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which*

is Christ. 17. *And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.* 18. *For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*

I Had occasion to observe, from the account the Apostle gives of Abraham, and those who were his children by faith, that from the first promise made upon the entrance of sin, and the revelation of the constitution of grace, there was established one uniform order, in which, and in which only, any of the sinners of mankind could be sustained as righteous; or, which is the same thing, have a right to eternal life, in the righteous judgement of God. But by what he had said of the curse, under which the law bound all the transgressors of it in any the least point, it might have been deemed impossible that any one could be saved. The import of the curse was death; and that puts an end to life: thence it must be concluded, as we find the appointment runs, that all men must die. And in this sentence the Gentiles, though they had

no positive law inferring it, were as deeply concerned as the Jews. So that to every created understanding, the total destruction of the human race must have appeared absolutely inevitable.

But what is impossible with man, and appears so to every creature, is quite easy with God. The interposal of the promised seed solves all difficulties; and the Apostle gives it in one short sentence, 1 Cor. xv. 21. "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead;" the same which he here sets before us, *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law*. And never did the weakness and perverseness of human wisdom appear in a stronger light, than in the almost numberless questions and controversies that have been raised on this important subject, on which all the hopes of mankind, for time and eternity, must be founded. We are indeed directed "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" but we must be sure first, that what we contend for is this same faith, and not our own interpolations and additions to it. The faith in this grand article is so fully, and so plainly, deliver-

ed in the record we have of it, that no sober Christian needs to give himself any trouble about what learned men have said upon it; which one may say with confidence has contributed greatly more to involve and darken, than to give any further light into the truth as it is in Jesus.

The Apostle informs us here, that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law; and also tells us how he did it, viz. by *being made a curse for us*; or, literally, he bought us up out of, or from under, the curse of the law. The original curse struck at all the life which Adam had; and especially that which he conveys to us. That doom is fixed and irreverfible; and we find it fo. in fact. When Christ then is said to redeem, or buy up, his people from under the curse of the law, it cannot be understood to mean, that he designed by it, either to save them from dying, or to restore them to that paradisiacal life which the curse destroyed; but that he delivers them out of that state of death which the curse had brought them into; and which is done, by putting them in possession of an incomparably higher and better life, conveyed by the
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free sovereign gift and grant of the only proprietor of it.

“ But it became him, by whom, and
 “ for whom, all things are, in bringing ma-
 “ ny sons unto glory, to make the Captain
 “ of their salvation, their Redeemer, per-
 “ fect through sufferings.” Sin must be
 condemned and destroyed; and that can-
 not be done but by the destruction of the
 sinner. Death does that effectually. But
 it was necessary, that either the sinner
 should be held under death, or that sin
 should be condemned in a more solemn
 manner. This was shadowed first in the
 Old-Testament sacrifices, and the grant of
 forgiveness annexed to them. But when the
 ever-blessed Son of God condescended to
 take upon himself the character of a priest-
 intercessor, and offered himself a sacrifice for
 sin, laid down his life, gave it a ransom
 for the lives and souls of sinners, or, to
 say all in one word, was made a curse for
 them, it became a just and a righteous
 thing with God to forgive the sinner, and
 to raise him up to everlasting life. The
 grant was cleared of the burden that lay
 upon it, and carries a full and perfect

right to life to every man who will consent to hold it by this new tenure.

These are plain things; and will yet be more so, if we carry along what our Lord told his disciples, of the Father appointing or making a grant of the kingdom to him; and compare what he says to his Father, John xvii. of his finishing the work which was given him to do, with the account the Apostle John gives of the testimony of God concerning his Son, 1 John v. 11. But these we do not stand on here: what I mention them for is, to settle the grand point, "That all things are of God," and take their rise in his eternal counsels, and unchangeable purposes. And if we will take our Lord's word for it, and the joint testimony of all his apostles, the whole proceeded from, and was designed to prove and commend the astonishing love of God, and his ever-blessed Son, his perfect image in all respects, and especially that of his love; such love as proves him to be essential love: "God so loved the world," John iii. 16.; "God commendeth his love to us," Rom. v. 8.; "Herein is love," 1 John iv. 10. And the proof of all is no other than this,
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viz. God's sending his Son to be the Saviour of the world, and giving him up to the death a sacrifice, and ransom, or price of redemption, for sinners, as prisoners, slaves, and captives, are redeemed: yea, our Lord carries it so far as to say, that the Father loves him for this very reason, that he laid down his life. I need not stand to observe how he is said to have been "delivered by the determinate counsel of God, and that the cup that was put into his hand was given him by his Father," &c.

The strongest expression of all is that in the text, that *he redeemed*, or bought up his people, *from under the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them*; which has occasioned a number of speculations from the different apprehensions men have formed to themselves of the nature of the curse, and some, I might say many of them, not very honourable, either to the Father or the Son. It appears past controversy, that the Redeemer put himself in the very place where the redeemed stood, and took upon him that very curse which they were bound under; that we are sure was death, the destruction of the life they had

had

had from Adam; and that was what the Redeemer, the true head of mankind in relation to the spiritual and eternal world, did, in their name and behalf, resign and give up on the cross. The *curse* is a relative term, founded in the sanction of the law: but it does not follow, that the effect of it is any evidence, either of wrath or vengeance, but on sin, which he has given the fullest assurance he will absolutely destroy out of his world: and so far from being an evidence of wrath to the person of the sinner, who will enter into the death of Christ, and homologate for himself what he did in their name, that it is the highest evidence that can be imagined of the most perfect love and kindness. The man Jesus was indeed left to himself on that occasion; and no wonder, that he who enjoyed all the pleasures a human life is capable of receiving, should be troubled to a great degree on the prospect of what he was to suffer. But he knew well, that however he was left for a season to fight it out, and avenge the murder of his brethren on the murderer, he knew for certain, that his heavenly Father loved him on that very account, and for what he had thus left
him

him to do. By his office, indeed, the sins of all who were to have the benefit of his sacrifice were laid upon him; but no otherwise than the Old-Testament sins were laid on the priest who offered, viz. that he was bound to put them away in the manner which God had appointed. So that there is not the least colour for the many harsh and presumptuous things which have been boldly thrown out against God, and the Son of his love, in whom he was always well-pleased, and never better than when he cried out on the cross, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

By these short hints, if pursued with any tolerable attention, it will easily appear, how the ever-blessed Son of God, being made a curse, and suffering, the just for the unjust, came to be the ransom or price by which they are bought out from under the curse of the law. The curse of the law is the curse of God; and there is no escaping from under it, but by his order and release. Thus we have on record a constitution of pure grace, but which cannot subsist but in Christ; an order or decree in which Father, Son, and Spirit, concur,

concur, whereby the eternal Word, uniting with man in the person of Jesus, was constituted a priest-intercessor to take upon him the sins of his people, and to put them away by the sacrifice of himself; and if we believe the Psalmist, and the Apostle after him, Heb. vii. 21. the grant of priesthood, with all the privileges belonging to it, and among others conveying the blessing mentioned Acts iii. 26. was confirmed by a very solemn oath. This transaction has of late had the title given it of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son. I have nothing to say against it but the difficulty of conceiving a covenant or mutual agreement on terms and conditions between the Father and Son, who are one: and indeed I cannot help looking upon it as an indecency to make them transact, propose, and agree, as men do when they are driving a bargain. Our Lord's view of a grant or deed of conveyance appears to be better warranted, and more becoming the majesty of the great and sole proprietor of life and blessedness; compare John v. 26. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself," with what

is written, John v. 21. “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth whom he will, so also does the Son;” which connects with what the Apostle John says of God’s testimony or record, viz. that he has made a grant, or deed of gift, of eternal life in favour of mankind, and that this life is in his Son. Whence it follows of course, “that he who hath the Son, hath life; and he who hath not the Son, hath not life.”

The proof the Apostle brings of Christ being made a curse, viz. his dying upon a cross, has been thought by some too weak to sustain such a weight as he lays upon it. It is no more, say they, but an arbitrary constitution, which has nothing in the nature of the thing to support it, as there is nothing in this kind of death more than another, which can bring a curse on him who suffers it. It is indeed an arbitrary constitution; but it was made by him who has an undoubted right to make what constitution he pleases, and is no more accountable for making this, than for his making what we call nature to be what it is. God said, and has left it on record, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on*

a tree; and when Jesus was found in that situation, there can be no fuller evidence of his having been made a curse.

The Apostle says, he was made a curse *for us*; that is, for the Apostle himself, and the believing Galatians he was writing to: and as there was nothing either in him or them to distinguish them from the rest of mankind but their faith, or, as the Apostle Peter defines it, *believing in God through Christ*, the proposition holds true of all believers, of whatsoever age or nation; and all have the same reason to say, he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

It merits our attention, how the Apostle connects the blessing of Abraham coming upon the Gentiles, with Christ's bearing the curse, vers. 14. The lowest construction his words, as they stand, can bear, carries in it this great fundamental truth, That it is only in and through the cross of Christ, and the great sacrifice he made of himself there, that any of Adam's race can receive any blessing from the hand of God; but at the same time that it cuts off all other dependencies, we are well assured, that there is nothing lost by
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it: for the very design of his taking the curse upon himself was, *that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles.*

The blessing of Abraham may be understood, either of Abraham's personal blessing; or of that which all nations were to have by his seed. It comes all to the same thing. In either way, the blessing is the same, and conveyed in the same manner. It was the gift of righteousness which he had when he believed God, and that is but another word for the gift of eternal life; unless we chuse to say, that the promise conveyed the right, and Abraham, by believing, received the blessing, and appropriated it to himself, as he had great good reason to value it above all his other possessions. But as that promise was not confined to himself only, but extended to all nations; all to whom the promise comes have as good reason to believe it, and to appropriate the blessing to themselves, as he had. They who thus believe, in doing so must have the same right, and of course the same reason, to reckon it their own, and to improve it to all the ends and purposes it is designed to answer; that is, all that is necessary for the support of the spiritual

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life,

life, and carrying it on to its full perfection, in the glory, honour, and immortality of the world to come. The blessing was promised *in the seed*; that *seed* was now come in the person of Jesus Christ: in him therefore the blessing must be lodged, as he has the fullness of life, all that ever God designed for mankind, in his hand, and that by the best right that can be; in him therefore we may assure ourselves of finding it.

There is something of the same ambiguity in the connection and dependence of receiving the promise of the Spirit, with or upon what he had said of the blessing of Abraham. For whether it be conceived as a further and more particular account of the blessing, or as the immediate consequence and effect of the blessing, it is, upon the matter, the same thing to the believer. The gift of the Spirit is an essential part of the blessing, and the earnest and security for the whole. There the promised life begins; and by the same Spirit, they who receive this unspeakable gift, are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto perfect and complete salvation.

I need not stand to observe, what is so obvious, that *receiving the promise of the Spirit*, is the same thing as receiving the Spirit which was promised. Thus Abraham, and all the patriarchs who lived by the faith of the promises, Heb. xi. are said to have died in faith, not having received the promises, because they did not live to see them fulfilled. The Apostle had observed but a little before, that the Galatians had received the Spirit; and I need not repeat what I had occasion to observe there of the nature of this fundamental blessing; only, as there is no mention of it in Abraham's history, it may be doubted how the Apostle brings it in here as the promised Spirit. I observed before, that as this is an essential part of Abraham's blessing, and was actually come upon the Gentile Galatians in fulfilment of the promise made to him, the mention of it is brought in with great propriety. But as he had said, that the blessing came upon the Gentiles in Christ, it was very proper to bring in the promise of the Spirit, which was expressly limited to the times of the Messiah, or the Christ the anointed's appearance, and was indeed the grand characteristic

racteristic of these times; by which it was proved beyond all reasonable doubt, that Jesus was indeed he. And as they had in Christ received the blessing of Abraham in the same manner he did, by pure faith, without any works of law whatsoever, only believing the testimony of God concerning his Son, it must have been the most absurd thing that can well be imagined, to go to a law they never had any concern with, and which could do nothing to those who were under it, but bind them under the curse; which Christ had taken upon himself, and bought out their liberty at a very costly price, even his own most precious blood.

Thus far the Apostle had insisted on the example of Abraham, the father of believers, and a pattern of righteousness; how he came by, and how he received the promise and grant which conveyed the blessing. But as it was a point of great importance, and which it was absolutely necessary that the hearts of Christians should be firmly established in; he goes on to prove, that this was the only way by which any sinner could come by either a right to the blessing, or the possession of it, even when the law

law of Moses was in its utmost strength and vigour. He begins with Abraham; not as if he was the first heir of the righteousness which is by faith, but as before his time there was no law given which could mislead men from their dependence on the free promise, and the seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head, which the Apostle John explains well, by "destroying the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8.; that is, sin and death; and the Apostle to the Hebrews, by "destroying himself and his work together."

He begins, vers. 15. by laying down a case well known among men; and as universally acknowledged, viz. that even a *man's covenant*, as our translators render the Apostle's word, or *testament*, as it is in the margin, *if it be once confirmed, no man taketh upon him to disannul, or add thereto.* This, surely, will hold with far greater strength against any kind of change in a divine constitution, whatever name may be given to the promise, such as was made to Abraham, and which the Apostle has here under his consideration; and which he accordingly applies, to prove, that the law could not in the least derogate from or make any alteration in it. But though
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the reasoning in general is allowed to be plain and conclusive, yet there have been very warm disputes about the word he uses, whether *covenant* or *testament* be the right translation; and where there can be no difference about that, still the meaning of the word affords another subject of dispute.

The main dispute on the first head is about the rendering of the word *διαθήκη*, whether it signifies a *covenant*, or *testament*; very different things indeed, and it must be of no small moment to know certainly which of them he intended. It is agreed on all hands, that there is another word, *συνθήκη*, which, in the original language, is always used to signify a covenant or mutual agreement, and which we never find used by the sacred writers to express what they mean by this; which must be allowed to be at least a strong presumption, that they designed something by this word different from what all the world mean by a covenant. But the patrons of moral government being well aware, that if the blessing, or eternal life, is conveyed any way but by law or covenant, their plan cannot stand; for all
the

the right we can have will appear owing to free sovereign grace, and the mere good pleasure of the granter. They therefore insist stiffly, that where-ever this word is used in the New Testament, it must mean a *covenant*, not so much as excepting Heb. ix. 16. But the usage of the language will not support them; as the word is never used in their sense, unless perhaps by some comical writer who wanted to play with words. But they find in what they call the Hellenistic Greek, what they think puts the matter out of doubt: for the Seventy, as they are commonly called, always translate the Hebrew *BERITH*, not by *συνθήκη*, but *διαθήκη*, and the New-Testament writers do the same; and that *BERITH* is the Hebrew word for a covenant, they think, appears evidently from the many instances wherein it is used in this sense.

That the two words *CARAT BERITH* are always used to express that transaction which we call making a covenant, is true. But that *BERITH*, standing by itself, signifies a covenant, and particularly where God's *BERITH* is spoken of, will not be easily proved, unless we could say, they *cut* a covenant. The Greeks had not got the

Hebrew phrase among them, as the Latins some how had; and therefore were forced to say, as we do, making or entering into a *Συνθήκη*. And were that phrase of cutting off *BERITH* well understood, it would lead us into a very just and proper view of all these transactions, which we call making a covenant; and the reason too why a sacrifice was either actually offered, or supposed, when men entered into mutual engagements with one another. I only observe, that the Son of God himself is, oftener than once, called by this name, and promised to the Gentiles as a *BERITH* for them. But the discussion would, I cannot say carry us out of our way, but would need more room than I can allow it here.

But there are others, nothing inferior to these learned men, who look upon this whole plan of moral government, and even this lowest form of it, viz. a covenant or mutual agreement, on terms and conditions of whatever kind, or however performed by men, as utterly inconsistent with the system of grace set forth in the divine record; where God is represented governing mankind, as their creator, and thence
 their

their absolute proprietor and sovereign. And as none of them can ever requite him for the benefits they have received, none of them, not the most innocent and perfect of them, can have any pretensions to expect any further benefit, unless he shall be pleased to give them a promise to found on. But a world of sinners, such as all mankind are, it is glaringly evident, are so far from having any ground to entertain such hopes, that they have all the reason in the world against it; so that nothing but an absolutely free and sovereign grant of grace can give them so much as any hope of pardon; and what mad presumption would it have been, to flatter themselves with the hopes of a resurrection, and eternal life too, after their bodies are mouldered down into their original dust?

Thus the case appears evidently to stand in the eye of common sense, and untaught or unbiassed reason. But when such a grant is made, and the promise, and even the oath, of the God of truth, interposed, and all things laid ready as they are in Jesus Christ; the same common sense will say, that it is the most monstrous thing a reasonable creature can be

guilty of, not to believe him: and that was all that Abraham did, and all that either Jew or Gentile can do, for obtaining the full advantage of the grant and promise; for he who promised is faithful, and his power almighty.

On this foundation they find themselves forced to think, that the New-Testament writers made choice of this word for better and higher reasons, than that the Greek translators had expressed by it what they took to be the meaning of the Hebrew phrase. They themselves knew, that it was the only word in the Greek tongue that could express it any thing near its very emphatic import. They knew that Jesus Christ was the true *BERITH*; and cutting him off, when he was made a curse for his people, was the true and only foundation on which the promise of the blessing stands. They knew, that the proper meaning of the word they chose was, a grant; or, as we say, an instrument by which one makes a conveyance of his goods and property by testament or otherwise: and they had their great Master's authority for thus expressing the conveyance he makes of the kingdom he
received

received from the Father to his disciples and followers. We may add, what they certainly also knew, that this term is never used but to express the deed of one single person, and which is firm and valid without the concurrence of any other. On all which considerations, it is very evident the Apostle could not be guilty of such an abuse of words, as to chuse this, if he meant to have us believe he was speaking of what we call a *covenant* between God and any of mankind.

But the Apostle himself puts it out of doubt by the transaction to which he applies it, viz. the case of Abraham, vers. 16.; and which he advances as God's *διαθήκη*, in opposition to man's in the foregoing verse. He mentions no law given to him, by the fulfilment of which he might acquire a right to the blessing, nor any conditional grant which should suspend his right until the terms were performed; but that the promise was spoken literally, or said to Abraham and his seed. And he says no more than Moses had taught him: for he takes the facts exactly as he found them laid in his history. The promise is made free and absolute, before he so much as believed:

believed : and how could he believe, until he knew what he had to believe, and what reason he had to do so? But this is not only his case; but in all those where God is said to make a covenant, (excepting only that at Sinai, for which there is an obvious reason), particularly the only two other cases parallel to this, viz. his covenant, as we render it, with Noah and David, we will find nothing but promises, or positive declarations, of what God was firmly and unalterably determined to do. These were indeed properly διαθήκαι; but very improperly, or rather in no sense at all, can they be what in our language we call covenants. One needs no more to be fully assured of this, but to read these transactions as they stand on record, without the commentaries which men have made on them. But it must be a very plain text indeed, which a skilful critic, who has a turn to serve, cannot skrew into a consistency with his own sentiments, at least to seem to say nothing against them.

It is but a poor criticism which has been attempted to throw a slur on the Apostle's reasoning, or, if we may call it, his critical remark on the promise made to Abraham

braham and his seed, that he does not say *seeds*, as of many, but *his seed*, pointing to one, viz. That seed is a collective, and naturally signifies plurally. Perhaps, had they understood the language Moses wrote in as well as Paul did, they would have found the remark fit for nothing, but to be laughed at. The word rendered *seed* may be plural as well as *child*; nor would it be improper, even in our language, to speak of the several seeds he had by Sarah, by Hagar, and by Keturah,

A plain man reading the Apostle's words, when he tells us, that this one seed, to whom the promise was made, is Christ, would very naturally think it was the same Christ who had redeemed his people from the curse of the law, and in whom the blessing of Abraham came upon the Gentiles; and would find no difficulty in believing, that to him the promise of the blessing was originally and primarily made, and comes only in and through him to those who believe. He would readily be further confirmed in this when he found, that it is in him, and in him alone, that all nations were to be blessed.

And

And what the Apostle says, vers. 17. that this same promise, which he calls a *διαθήκη*, very properly a grant, or deed of conveyance, was confirmed of God in, or rather to Christ, and rests the unalterableness of it on this, like that of the Psalmist, *God has spoken,—he will not lie unto David.* And what the Apostle adds in the close of the chapter, that it is only by their interest in, and relation to Christ, that they become truly Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise, might put him out of all doubt of his having hit the Apostle's intention.

But there is nothing of ingenuity or learning in this construction, and there is nothing of a covenant between God and mankind; and if Christ personal, as he suffered and died, is the seed to whom the Apostle says the promise is made, none but he can have any benefit by it. But as the church of Christ is frequently called his body, and every particular Christian a member of him the head; on which account the church, in this view, the whole body of believers united as they are with him, is called expressly Christ, 1 Cor. xii.

12. On this distinction between Christ personal and Christ mystical, a name they have given the whole body of Christians united under him their head, many learned men conclude positively, that it is in this last sense, and not the other common one, that the Apostle says, that one seed was Christ. And thus they very ingeniously make him say, that though Abraham had many children, the promise was only to his spiritual seed, such as are his children by faith: and of these there are not two seeds, one by the law, and another by the gospel; but, as he says, vers. 28. *they are all one in Christ*: which they think best answers his views in this place.

But besides what was already observed of the plain construction of the Apostle's words as they stand, he appears to have had another view, of at least as great moment, and which is either lost or greatly obscured in this construction; namely, that in the whole affair of redemption, from the beginning to the completement of it, Christ so stands between God and the body of Christians in the quality of mediator, or great priest-intercessor, that they can have no dealings with God, nor God

with them, and particularly that they can receive no blessing from God, but through his hands. By him he made the worlds in the first creation, and the government of it is upon his shoulders; all power in heaven and earth, and all judgement, are committed to him. How then can it be otherwise in the new creation? To him the grant and promise of the blessing was given: he performs the terms on which it proceeded, by his obedience to the death: the fullness of the blessing is lodged in his hand, with absolute powers to raise the dead, and to quicken whom he will: in one word, he stands at the head of mankind in relation to the spiritual and eternal world, in all respects but the event, as the first man, who the Apostle says was his figure, did with respect to this earthly perishing one. "He has the words of eternal life;" and in his right only it is to be had, and held by faith in him; that work of God, by which only the righteousness of God can be had.

Could we make out distinctly, and with certainty, the right meaning of the Apostle's words vers. 17. which stands thus in our translation, *The covenant confirmed before of*
God

God in Christ, the point would be fully cleared. We have said enough before of the covenant. The Apostle puts it beyond dispute, that it was the promise made to Abraham, and his one seed, who, he says, was Christ. On this he founds what he says here, *These promises were confirmed*. The word expresses the strongest security, as comprehending every thing necessary to give the fullest force and authority. And it could not be otherwise, when God was the ratifier, whose single word gives all the firmness that can be imagined: for our Lord has told us, that “heaven
“and earth may pass away; but the least
“jot or tittle of his word cannot, until
“the whole be fulfilled,” Matth. v. 18. But there was still a greater solemnity, indeed the greatest that can be imagined, which we find the Apostle applying to this very purpose, Heb. vi. 17. 18. that he confirmed it by an oath, as we find it, Gen. xxii. 16. The same Apostle makes use of another word, Heb. viii. 6. speaking of that *διαθήκη*, of which Christ, the Great Priest, is the mediator and surety, *that it was established on better promises*. But the word he uses is peculiarly significant, viz. that the bet-

ter promises he speaks of were put into such an authoritative form, as to have all the force of a law, so as the grant might be pleaded, and must be sustained in the highest court before the great judge.

The place the Apostle assigns to Christ in this solemn ratification is somewhat doubtful, as the sense of the particle is by which he expresses it, which may be rendered either *in*, as our translators do, or *to him*. The last is rather the most natural, and seems to be greatly favoured by what he had just said of the promises being made to him as the one seed; and thus sets forth to us that solemn transaction we have so often had recourse to; as indeed it is what one may call the key to the system of grace; namely, the Father's appointing the kingdom to his beloved Son, Luke xxii. 29. And thus the deed is completely finished; the right and property is, and from the time (if we may call it time) that the grant was made, has been in his hands; nay, and the blessing itself, eternal life, in the utmost extent of it. And thus our translators sense of the particle *et* comes in, and unites with the other, *the promises are confirmed in Christ*, i. e. as the
Apostle

Apostle says, "they are in him yea, and in
"him amen."

And hence the justness and strength of the Apostle's reasoning appears with great evidence. The law could not reduce or disannul an unalterable deed, ratified in such an express and solemn manner, as left no power in heaven or earth the least permission to alter any the least point of it. And thus his conclusion comes out fully proved, that as God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise, the law could not put it on any other footing. His words are strong to the purpose. The word he uses does not signify simple giving, that may be done in a conditional way, which might put it on the same bottom with a law, with promises annexed to the duties enjoined. But the word signifies giving freely, and of mere love and favour; which leaves nothing to the person in whose favour the gift is made, but to receive it with gratitude and thankfulness. And thus it stood then, after the law was given; and thus it stands still, and will stand to the end of the world, after all the attempts have been made, to substitute a law or covenant of man's devising in its room.

CHAP. iii. 19. — 29.

19. *Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. 20. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one. 21. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed. 24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27. For as many of you as have been baptized unto Christ, have put on Christ. 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

THE Apostle having, in the foregoing verses, given a fair and distinct state of that divine constitution which commonly goes under the name of *the covenant*

venant of grace, as prior to, and independent on, the law of Moses, and entirely different in its nature and tendency from that and all other laws which have been set up for answering the ends of it, to give a right and title to eternal life, and the full possession of it in due time; and, at the same time, shewn it to be so perfect, that it neither needed, nor could admit of any supplement or assistance whatsoever; and as he was perfect master of his subject, and had the whole system before him, he could easily foresee every difficulty, and every exception that could be made. There was one very obvious one: If the system of grace, as it was laid in Christ, and the grant and deed of gift made to him, was so complete, to what purpose was the law given? This he answers very distinctly, and particularly; and thence takes occasion to give us a view of the Jewish and Gentile churches, which contributes greatly to the design of his writing, which was, to establish the Galatians in the belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, and caution them against the Judaizing zealots, who were labouring with all the art and cunning they were
 masters

masters of, to bring them to submit to the law of Moses.

Before we enter upon this part of the Apostle's discourse, it will be of some use to make a remark or two on the issue the Apostle brings the state he had given of what he calls *διαθήκη* to. In the preceding discourse, I observed how earnestly numbers of commentators contend for the covenant-sense of that word, and that it never carries any other sense in the New Testament; nay, and that this is the true and genuine sense of the word. I forgot to take notice of their great argument, taken from the Jewish covenant, which, they say, none can deny was evidently such; and yet, where-ever it is spoken of, it is called *διαθήκη*. What occurs to me, on the best judgement I can make of that transaction, is, that it was no covenant at all, but fulfilling the promise made to Abraham, of giving Canaan to them for a possession, and a very wise system of laws given them, founded in that free gift, and therefore is truly and properly called a grant or deed of gift. And the law given in consequence of their possession, keeps its own name in the New as well as the Old Testament

Testament. But the most bulky and distinguishing part even of that law, the order of the tabernacle, and temple-worship, was no other than a sensible exhibition of the blessing of Abraham, even that capital blessing, the grant and promise of eternal life, in Christ the promised seed, which was the very spirit of that law. This was the order which the great creator established from the time that sin entered the world; and men were forced to see, that they must either live by the mere grace and free favour of their creator, or perish; and to this all subsequent divine interposals, the Mosaic especially, were subservient.

As by this constitution and order all the grace ever God designed for mankind, and particularly what comprehends all they are capable of receiving, and all they can ever have any need of, viz. the gift of eternal life, is lodged, treasured up, in Jesus Christ, and conveyed by him to them. The light in which the Apostle sets this conveyance in Heb. ix. 15. *et seqq.* has induced many of the best interpreters to pitch upon a testamentary disposition, as the only true meaning of the word constantly used throughout the

New Testament to exprefs this conveyance. It is certainly next to impoffible for an attentive reader to avoid believing, that he who wrote thefe words took it in this view. Our Lord, in his farewell-fpeech to his difciples, recorded by the Apoftle John, chap. xiv. xv. & xvi. fpeaks fo much through the whole fermon, and particularly chap. xiv. 27. in the ftain of one ordering legacies to the friends he is leaving, as naturally leads one into that notion: and when one confiders the nature and defign of the death he was going to fuffer, that it was a facrifice for their fin, a ranfom for their lives, the price of their redemption from the curfe of the law, the bondage of fin, and death itfelf, and the only mean by which the bleffing could be conveyed; it muft feem very odd to a man of plain underftanding, what fhould make men of fenfe and learning fo averfe to the moft endearing views of our God and Saviour. I will not take upon me to fay, but it is hard to avoid a fufpicion of fomething of the fame fpirit with that which did fo much mischief in the Apoftles days, viz. a prepofterous zeal for law and moral government; which none who know what fin is, durft think

of but with all the horrors of despair, were they not soothed with the views of a throne of grace, which they seem so loth to owe their all to.

On these views it will be easy to perceive the reason of the question the Apostle puts, vers. 19. and the justness of what he gives in answer to it. That poor thoughtless people had so far lost sight of the promises made to the fathers, except that lowest one of the gift of Canaan, that they knew no other use of the law, but to make out a sort of a title to life by their obedience. He gives a very different account of that transaction: *It was added*, he says, *because of transgressions*; or *on account*, as the particle may be rendered, i. e. *for the sake, of transgressions*. It might be asked, For the transgressions of *what law* or rule? for himself gives it as a plain truth, That *where there is no law, there is no transgression*. And by the word he uses, *the law was added*, it appears there was something subsisting before that law which might have answered all the purposes of life without it, had it not been for transgressions. The native import of the word *transgression* is, going besides, or out of the way; which supposes such a way to be

some how or other lying before them. Those interpreters who make what they call the *moral law* the rule, and that the turning off from, or transgressing it, is what the Apostle means, find themselves much difficulted to make good sense of the Apostle's words. For besides what this same Apostle tells us, Rom. vii. 7. *et seqq.* the law was so far from mending the matter, that sin was rather irritated and strengthened by it; and all it could do was to discover sin, and slay the sinner. But if it even could do any thing, why was it limited to the time *that the seed should come*, who had the promised blessing to bestow? as he plainly says it was.

This, if I mistake not much, gives the true key to what he says of the law, that "it was added because of transgression." I need not observe, that it is the law of Moses he says was added; and that it is a system so exactly framed by perfect wisdom, and so closely compacted, one part to answer another, and forward the design of the whole, that however different the parts may appear, yet they cannot be separated or taken apart, without destroying the system. We must likewise carry along with

us the revelation of the system of grace in the first promise, the universal apostasy which brought on the deluge, the renovation of the promise of God's *BERITH* to Noah, who became heir to the righteousness of faith, the apostasy which soon took place among his descendents, and was like to become general, when God made a new grant of his *BERITH* to Abraham in the promise of the seed. By the time the Israelites were brought out of Egypt, the apostasy had prevailed almost universally; and that the knowledge of God and his *BERITH*, or eternal salvation in the promised seed, might not be entirely lost, that people were placed in the land of Canaan to be witnesses for him, and a law given them, bearing the most perfect representation that could be made of the state of mankind, as God had established it in the constitution of grace, or *law of faith*, as the Apostle calls it. The belief of the promise naturally, and I may say necessarily, inferred returns of gratitude and love. The transgressing this great law of love was strongly cautioned against in that part of the law which is called *moral*. Death was the penalty; the most

most serious repentance could not secure pardon. Recourse must be had to the sacrifice which God had appointed; and when that was wilfully neglected by any, that soul was to be destroyed without mercy. I need not spend words to show how all this was what the Apostle calls *a figure for the time then present*, Heb. ix. 9. and how well fitted for keeping up the knowledge of the way of life. But when the seed came, with the fullness of the blessing in his hand, there was no more occasion for figures and models. The way of life by faith in Jesus Christ, and the free sovereign gift of grace, was fairly laid open, and the whole counsel of God was notified to the world with the greatest plainness of speech.

What follows in this and in the next verse, which is visibly an inference from this, or rather the improvement of it to the purpose he intended to serve by it, has occasioned a great variety of conjectures about the true sense and meaning. The word he uses, *διαταγῆς*, is somewhat ambiguous, and may be constructed, either to refer to the giving of the law at Sinai, or to the internal frame and constitution of it, and the order established by it.

Most

Most interpreters take it in the first view, and find difficulties next to insuperable in almost every word. Our translators have made use of a word which is certainly too strong for the connection in which they have placed it. It was, say they, *ordained* by angels; which seems naturally to point us to them, not as ministers or servants, but either as the authors and contrivers of it, or at least those by whose authority that law was given. But as this is too gross for any one to surmise, it could not be the meaning of the translators, much less that of the Apostle.

The furthest, then, that any one can venture to say, is, that it was given by the *ministry* of angels. But the difficulty casts up, What ministry, or what part to assign them in that solemn transaction? Moses, it is evident, takes no notice of any creature employed there, but thunder and lightning, flaming fire and thick smoke. And when he tells us expressly, that JEHOVAH spake all these words, it would seem too daring boldness for such a puny being as the most learned man is, to take upon him to say, it was not JEHOVAH,

HOVAH, but an angel who personated him, who assumed his name, and spake these words. There is indeed a text, Pſal. civ. 4. where the Pſalmiſt is deſcribing the majeſty of God, which might very literally be tranſlated, “ Who maketh the “ winds his meſſengers, and flaming fire “ his ſervants.” But I do not find that any have applied this text to the preſent purpoſe. It muſt be obſerved, that the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, (who, I believe, was the ſame Paul who wrote this,) in deſcribing this awful ſcene, Heb. xii. 18. 19. ſpeaks indeed exactly as Moſes had done before him; but not one word of *angels*. Theſe he ſets before us in another ſort of company, verſ. 22. And after all that has been ſaid, or, I believe, can be ſaid, on this view, we muſt leave the words juſt as we found them.

The difficulties that ariſe about the *Mediator*, and giving the law *in his hand*, are almoſt, if not altogether, as inſurmountable. Some, conſidering that Jeſus Chriſt is the ſole mediator between God and man on the Chriſtian plan, or diſpenſation of grace; and that he is the only
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one in whose hands a matter of such moment could be trusted, have concluded, that he must be the mediator the Apostle means. But he was the mediator of another and more excellent dispensation, differing very widely from the legal one; and besides, even in that held another and more honourable station, as it may easily be proved, that it was he who appeared in all the glory described by Moses, and spoke all the words of that law. There is only one place, Heb. ii. 2. where angels are said to have spoken on that occasion. But the Apostle himself gives good ground to think, that *angels* there should be translated *messengers*; for he makes no mention of them, chap. i. where he recounts the different ways in which God had spoken unto the fathers.

On these, and such considerations, the greatest number fix upon Moses as the mediator: and he certainly bore that character in giving the law. He stood between God and the people; he received the law immediately from God, and delivered it to the people: but this was only an after part, which no angels had any concern in; and in the solemn part, God himself spoke, and Moses had no more concern in it than

any of the other Israelites present on that occasion.

But, after all, the word which our translators not improperly render *ordained*, directs us rather to the nature of that law, as it was framed by the all-wise author of it, than to the manner in which it was given. And in this view, the particle *διὰ*, which we render *by*, is of a very extensive signification, and may be applied to any person or thing which has any concern in the fact one is speaking upon. We are certainly informed, that the ministry of angels was much used under that dispensation, and such a respect had to them, and veneration paid them, that the Apostle found it necessary to caution the Colossians against it, Col. ii. 18. The Apostle likewise is at great pains to show how much they were inferior to Christ, Heb. i. 6.; and in particular he observes, Heb. ii. 5. that the subjects of Christ's kingdom, commonly called *the world*, or rather *the age to come*, was not put in subjection to angels; which more than implies, that the then age, or the Jewish constitution, was subjected to them.

As to what is said of a mediator; by
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the very frame of that law, as it was ordained and appointed of God, the high priest was constituted a mediator in the most proper sense of that word: *mediator* is one who stands between two parties, and by whom, whatever correspondence they have, is managed. Such was the place and office of the high priest; for the inferior ones were but his assistants, in many cases only his ministers; but in the most solemn part of his office, when he went into the holy of holies, made the atonement, and came out and blessed the people, he was quite alone. His office was essential in that constitution, and in his hand the law was without a figure ordered and lodged; as fully appears from the whole Old-Testament history, and is further confirmed in the New, particularly in the epistle to the Hebrews.

The Apostle's conclusion from this, vers. 20. is self-evident, viz. that *a mediator is not of one*; as it is plain, where there is a middle person, there must be at least two; and if we carry along with us, what the Apostle had fully proved, that God himself made the promise to Abraham and his seed, we need not be at a loss, either

about the meaning of what he adds, *that God is one*, or the strength of his reasoning; as this single circumstance proves an essential difference between the promise, and the law of Moses, that they could never be designed to answer one and the same purpose, of conveying either the right to, or the possession of, life.

That this was the import of the Apostle's reasoning, appears from the question he foresaw might be put upon it, and therefore puts it himself, in order to clear what he had said, and introduce what he had further to say on that subject, *vers. 21. Is the law then against the promise?* which no body would ever have thought of, if occasion had not been given, by stating the difference there was in their very nature, and, what we may call, their essential constitution and administration. This he rejects with an earnestness that such a supposition, so injurious to the perfectly wise author of both, deserved; *God forbid*; and shows, with great evidence, that though the *law* and the *promise* were so very different, they were by no means contrary to one another, being appointed and designed to answer

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swer very different purposes. The *promise* was designed to make a complete conveyance of righteousness and life: the *law* was not intended to convey either, but to be subservient to the promise; as it is in divers respects, and particularly by being so framed as to put those who were under it on the absolute necessity of either continuing under the curse, or having recourse to Christ, and the promise sealed and ratified in his death.

He acknowledges, indeed, what no body can refuse, that *had there been a law given which could have conveyed life, righteousness and justification should have been certainly had by that same law*; in which case the law and the promise should have been competitors; or rather, there could have been no room left for a free gift, as the blessing should have been a matter, not of grace, but of debt. And here it is to be observed, that the Apostle does not confine himself to the law of Moses; but, as if he had foreseen, (and the Spirit which directed his pen certainly did foresee), the insolent pretences that have been made to a law which could give, and from which men might certainly expect,
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even eternal life; he speaks with such assurance, that we may depend on it, that God never gave any such law, nor, we may say, could give any, when he had given life into the hands of his Son Jesus Christ, to be communicated and conveyed by him to all that come to him, or, in other words, believe on him; and that is the same as believing the testimony and record which God has made concerning his Son.

The word the Apostle makes use of, on the supposition he makes of a law giving life, strongly expresses the absurdity of it, and of any hopes or expectations of this kind. Was man in possession of such a life as wanted nothing but being lengthened out to eternity, possibly such a law might be given, if the creator so pleased, as might attain that end. But that is not the case: for to say nothing of the spiritual life, or, the way in which spirits live, (which all the children of Adam are as ignorant of as how angels live; and are as really dead to God, and the business and enjoyments of the spiritual world, as an inanimate body is to this; excepting only, that they are capable of

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hearing the report of these things, when made in the language they are accustomed to); to say nothing of this, the Apostle's word, in its proper sense, signifies to *quicken*, or to make alive; which evidently supposes the subject thus quickened to be dead. And I believe there is no man so devoid of common sense, as to imagine he shall never die; and it is but very little short of this, to imagine that one can restore himself to life by any thing he can do. It is true, there may be a promise of life annexed to any law the creator pleases, but then it is not the person's obedience to the law that quickens, any more than it was Naaman's dipping himself in Jordan that cured him of his leprosy. In both cases it is equally the exertion of that almighty power which only can raise the dead, in consequence of the promise; and comes as much by faith, as if there had been no law at all.

But however happily adjusted a law may be conceived to be, and however express the promise of life might be to the observers of it, whenever that fails, all hopes are of course at an end: nor is it possible for the transgressor to be reinstated,

reinstated, but by an act of grace in his favour; and even that, the sanction or curse of the law makes impossible in reason's eye, even as impossible as it is for God to lie. And thus the Apostle describes the state of mankind, Jews and Gentiles: for it deserves our observation, that he again changes his usual phrase; he does not say, the law *has concluded all under sin*, (that would have reached only those who were under it), but that the *scripture* had done it. The scripture, as any one may see who will peruse it, is merely a record of facts; but not such facts as are recorded in common histories: it is the history of God, a record of what he has done and said; or, which is nearly the same, of what men have done and said, on great variety of occasions, and of such circumstantial events as perfect wisdom saw fit to be recorded for setting forth and illustrating his true character, that by this means men might arrive at the right knowledge of him whom they are to worship, and of what they have either to hope or fear from his hand: and thus it will be found, that when the Apostle says *the scripture had concluded all under sin*,
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it is the same as if God himself had done it.

It would be next to an endless labour, to gather up the particulars belonging to this head; it will be sufficient to observe, that among the first things we meet with there, by the sentence given by the great sovereign on that occasion, which has been punctually executed on all mankind down to this day, and no doubt will be to the end of the world, all are bound under death, and sin is the sting by which it kills. One needs no more than read the history, to see how, as the world advanced in years, sin gathered strength; until the world came to that state which we find described, Psal. xiv. & liii.; repeated by the Apostle, Rom. iii. 10. *et seqq.* One would have thought, that such a state of things should have brought down such vengeance as fell upon the old world, or Sodom and Gomorrah: but God had other intentions; the world of mankind was thus bound under sin, that the promise, by the faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them who believe. Having had occasion to say so much of the *promise*, and particularly how it sometimes

signifies the promise, as it is the deed of the promiser, and sometimes the matter of it, or the blessing conveyed by it, we need say no more of it here; as indeed the promise of God, and the fulfilment of it, are in effect the same: which makes it of little moment in which of the two senses we take it, where it is not plainly determined by the context, as it is here, to be the blessing given by promise to Abraham, and to his seed.

We have the same to say of *faith*, which in common use signifies both the act of believing, and what one believes; which are as inseparably connected. This sometimes occasions an ambiguity which may be of some moment. There is something of this in the words before us. The faith of Jesus Christ may denote, either his personal faith, or, that which is to be believed concerning him; and this produces another doubt, Whether the Apostle designs this, or one's actual believing it. If we take it in the first sense, for the personal faith of Jesus himself, that assured confidence he had in his heavenly Father for making good the gift he had made him of the kingdom; in the strength of which

which he endured the cross, despising at once the shame and pain of it; and thereby destroyed death, and him that had the power of it: in this way we are carried up to the rise and spring of the promise, and the way how the blessing is conveyed and secured to the faith of the believer; a view which ought never to be overlooked, as it is at once the pattern and foundation on which the Christian's faith is built.

Thus indeed the promise is, in all respects, by the faith of Jesus Christ: but that phrase most commonly denotes what we have set before us to be believed in, the testimony or record which God has made concerning him; which yet is so far from excluding Christ's personal faith, that it is an essential part of the testimony, without which, neither the promise, nor the promised blessing, could ever have existed. And thus the Apostle's meaning will come out to be, That the promise is held forth and conveyed to mankind in the gospel, to be believed and trusted to; and the blessing is thereby conveyed, and thus the promise made good, to all who believe; and which cannot be

received in any other manner, or by any other means. That no promise can be received, but by believing the promiser, will not be denied, or even doubted of; and as God's saying and doing is the same thing, he who believes the promise can have no doubt about receiving the blessing, and reckoning upon it as his own; though he cannot tell how God quickens a dead sinner, how he conveys the Spirit of life, nor how that Spirit supports, maintains, and carries on, the business of eternal life, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," as the Apostle emphatically expresses it, to make them bear the image of the heavenly man, as they had done that of the earthly. I need not observe, that *δοσιν* signifies a free gift, not a reward for doing.

In the 23d and following verses, the Apostle shews the state of the Jews before faith came, and the wise and kind purposes the law answered to them under that period. I believe hardly any body doubts that it is the time in which the law continued in full force the Apostle designs; and that was until Christ came, as we find himself explaining it, chap. iv. 4.

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Whether, by *faith coming*, he means the light the promise was set in by the appearance of him who had the blessing in his hand, ready for all that would come to him, and receive it from his hand, or their actual believing, is not worth disputing; for this good reason, that the revelation of Jesus Christ answers no purpose to any person, until it is known and believed: and he seems to take it sometimes in one of these senses, and sometimes in the other. When he speaks of the faith which should afterward be revealed, it seems plain, that he means the revelation of Christ in the flesh; and downward, when he speaks of faith being come, it is as plain he means actual believing, as we shall see by and by.

Before faith came, they were kept under the law, so our translators render the Apostle's words. But *kept* is too weak a word to answer that which he uses. Properly, it signifies being guarded, as kings and princes are by their life-guards and attendants, or towns and castles by their garrisons. It is the same word the Apostle Peter uses for the security and safety of those who are the heirs of the eternal

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nal inheritance, that *they are kept by the mighty power of God*, 1 Pet. i. 5. In general, it signifies safe and sure custody; and then is sometimes used to signify confinement, as prisoners are confined: and this way he seems to carry it, by what he adds of their being *shut up*; so confined, that they were not at liberty to go whither they would; no way being left open but that one of faith, which was to be revealed in due time.

It may be worth while to consider how the law of Moses kept those who were under it thus closely confined and guarded, so as to answer all the purposes of what we call a *pedagogue*, adopting the Greek word into our language, literally, a *guide*, or *leader of children*, for a *schoolmaster*, as we render it, is not quite so significant, to lead them to Christ. Thus the law instructed them first in the knowledge of sin, by setting duty, the commandments of God, fairly before them; it likewise revealed the issue and wages of sin, and by its sanction and curse bound them under death. It gave indeed a glimpse of pardon and forgiveness in the appropriated sacrifices, and the promise

mise of forgiveness annexed to them. But this went no further than exemption from present punishment, and could not exempt them from that death which passes upon all men. It gave no hope, not the least hint of a resurrection or future life. “It was impossible that the blood of bulls
“and goats, or the sprinkling and washings
“directed there, could take away sin:” and so long as that continues, death, its inseparable attendant, must come along with it. So that they must either flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the promise, or perish for ever.

But, may one say, was not the promise, in being from the beginning of the world, on the faith of which the patriarchs before Abraham lived; and after it was renewed to Abraham, and the blessing lodged in his seed, was it not the same faith with that which was preached by Christ and his apostles; only with this difference, that before, faith was pitched on Christ to come in due time, and since, on the same Christ as already come? How then could the Apostle say, that *the faith was to be revealed afterward?* as if it never

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ver had been revealed before. All this is true; and yet what the Apostle says is very proper for expressing what he was laying before those for whom he wrote. The *promise*, the *seed Christ*, and the *blessing*, were all in being, and revealed and published to the world, and particularly to the Jewish nation; but there was a veil or covering over them, see 2 Cor. xii. 13.—18. like that which separated the most holy place in the tabernacle and temple, until it was rent at the death of Christ. The Apostle's word properly signifies, removing the veil or covering which kept them from being fairly seen. But when God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, made the light of his glory to shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ, then the promise and the blessing, life and immortality, were set in a fair and open light; 2 Tim. i. 10. where the Apostle's word is not as our translators render it *brought to light*, but new light thrown on life and immortality, as is evidently done in the gospel; particularly in the death and resurrection of Christ, and the glory that followed.

When the end, then, which the law of Moses was designed for, came to be answered,

swered, and those who were under its direction and leading were brought to Christ, which the Apostle expresses by faith being come, there was no more need of the pedagogue, being now greatly better provided. I need not observe again, that when he speaks of faith's being come, he has not only the manifestation of Christ in the gospel in his eye, but likewise the receiving and believing it. It is obvious, that he here changes his expression again; and instead of *we*, which he had used until he had brought the Jews he speaks of to Christ, he makes use of *ye*, addressing himself to the whole churches of Galatia, made up of both believing Jews and Gentiles. He had joined them before as equally children of Abraham, and heirs of the promise. Now he tells them how they came to be so, and gives them another, and infinitely higher title, indeed the very highest a creature can possibly attain, *Ye are all, both Jews and Gentiles, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

Though this translation is as exactly literal as can be, there is yet something of ambiguity in the expression which I think is not in the original. The doubt is,

whether the words, *in Christ*, are to be joined with *faith*, which immediately precedes, or with *being the children of God*. On an overly view, it may be thought nearly the same sense which way we take it: for when the title of *children of God* is said to be by faith in Jesus Christ, Christ is kept as much in his proper place as the testimony of God concerning him puts him in. But, if I am not mistaken, the Apostle designs something further; namely, to say, that their sonship was not so much by believing, as by the consequence and fruit of it, viz. their being in Christ. He says indeed very plainly, that they were the children of God by faith; but it was only in Christ that they were so. The phrase $\epsilon\nu \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omega$ is never, so far as I remember, joined with $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$, when believing in Christ is designed; but $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ or $\epsilon\nu\tau\iota \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$. And thus he explains it in the following verse, where he gives the reason of what he says in this, That *as many as were baptized into Christ*, as all believers on him were, *had put on Christ*; which certainly must import their union with him, by which they become Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise.

This expression we find brought in by our Lord himself, John xv. 5. where, under

der the similitude of a vine and the branches, he asserts a mutual in-being, believers in him, and he in them. And John xvii. 21. he carries it as high as it can go; by the Father's being in him, and he in them, they become one in them, and are as nearly united to God as a creature can be. He had set forth this oneness, John vi. 51. by the nearest union known among men, viz. that between the food, and the body which is nourished by it, setting forth himself as the true bread which came down from heaven; and which not only supports, but gives life where it was not, to all who receive it. Thence it became the common title of a believer, *a man in Christ*. The apostles, after him, pitch on the nearest and closest unions known among men, to illustrate the nearness and intimacy of this union, viz. the husband and wife, the head and the body; which all contribute something to give us some notion of what is indeed incomprehensible in our present state. This Apostle gives us the nearest, 1 Cor. vi. 16. 17. *He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit*; and thence of course one life, one mind, the same sentiments and affections, and therefore

the same way of living: there must likewise be the same relations, for all Christians are the children of God in him; the same possessions and inheritance, and the same right and title to hold it by.

The Apostle, vers. 27. gives a very significant description of this same union under a well-known image or similitude: *They who are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ*; they who are baptized into Christ, are baptized into his death, and made conform, and planted into the likeness of it. They are all this same Apostle's expressions, and he gives another yet stronger description, if possible, in his own case, viz. that *he was crucified with Christ*. And in consequence of this, he that believes in Christ, puts off the old man with his deeds, *i. e.* the child of Adam, with all his relations, connections, and dependencies: he puts on Christ, as men do garments for covering nakedness, for defence against the inclemencies of the air, and even for ornament. The expression bespeaks the Christian so covered, and, we may say, inclosed in him, that in a right Christian there is nothing to be seen but Christ; their whole constitution, I mean that

that which makes them Christians; and consequently every thing that is good and amiable, either in their temper or conduct, and whatever their attainments and enjoyments are, or what well-grounded hopes and expectations they have, all are owing to Christ, and to him belongs all the glory and honour of them.

By these hints, if rightly pursued, it will appear, that this, and such other scripture-expressions, are not mere metaphors, such as are used by orators and other polite writers merely for ornamenting and enlivening their discourses, but have really more of analogy than metaphor in them; the only way by which any conceptions can be formed of unseen things, which cannot be brought directly under our observation. The author of them knew perfectly the whole of the subject, and what were the fittest images to represent it; and therefore could not fall into those mistakes which human metaphors, and imagery, are often in danger of betraying insensibly their readers and hearers into very dangerous errors.

From this, the closest of all connections
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of every individual Christian with Christ, necessarily arises a very close connection and union among themselves; which the Apostle strongly asserts, vers. 28. of which he gives us a very beautiful representation, Rom. xii. 4. 5. "As the body is one, and
 " hath many members; so we being many,
 " are one body in Christ, and every one
 " members one of another." It has been often observed, that all mankind come into the world in a state of perfect equality; and were what the Apostle said to the Athenians of the true God well understood, viz. that "in him we live, and move, and
 " have our beings," the natural connection of mankind with one another would appear so strong, that one could hardly help wondering, how the little different interests and distinctions among men should ever have been able to break it, as we see actually done. Nor indeed can this breach ever be made up, but by the removal of these make-bates, and establishing mankind on their original bottom. This we see done effectually in Christ, by being made conform unto him in his death; and thus becoming dead to a present world, and united into one body in Christ, who

is all in all to them, and in whom they are perfectly complete; so complete, that they can do all things through Christ strengthening them. There of course all wordly distinctions vanish, which cannot be better expressed than in his own words: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus:" not only one life, for indeed that is the case of all mankind however little it is minded, but one spirit influencing their whole conduct.

On this view he gives the finishing evidence of what he had said before, that all who believe in Christ, Gentiles, as well as natural Jews, are the children of Abraham. They might have been justly enough called and reckoned so; because they believed God as he did: but here is a nearer and more sensible relation, by this their union with Christ, Abraham's one seed; they are strictly and properly his seed, and thence as really heirs of the promise, as himself was.

CHAP. iv. I. — 7.

1. *Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant though he be lord of all; 2. But is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father. 3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, 5. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

IT was a matter of great moment to these Galatians, and all in their situation, to know well what it was that their new teachers were so earnest to draw them in to. The Apostle was deeply concerned about them; he knew the danger: and that they might not run blindfold into the snare, he had told them the true intent and purpose of the law; that it did not, nor was ever designed to answer, any other purpose, but to lead those who were under it to Christ. When that was done, there was no further occasion for it: nor
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could it answer any purpose, I mean the law of Moses as it was given to the Jewish nation; that it could answer no purpose but bad ones, which he had more than hinted in his former discourse, and by and by designed to assert in the strongest terms. He now proceeds to show, in what situation he and his countrymen were while they continued under it.

He had said, and proved, that they were held in close custody, confined, as it were, under a guard, that they could not exceed the bounds set them; a state rather more disagreeable to mankind than open servitude. But that same confinement was greatly for their interest: it was designed to continue but for a time *until the seed should come*, by whom all who would accept of that favour were to be translated into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This very naturally led him to another image, vers. 1. & 2. by which he represents their condition, viz. that of *an heir* in his *childhood* and minority. However large the estate may be which he is heir to, yet until the time come that the father has set for his entering upon the disposal and management of it, *he differs nothing from a*

servant, as our translators modestly render it: but the Apostle's word denotes a *bond-servant*, or what we call a *slave*. The slave was secured in food and clothing, such as his master saw fit to allot him: And the richest heir has no more, except what is necessary for his education; and even that he has not at his own option, but what his *tutors* and curators, those whom the management of the inheritance is committed to, are pleased to chuse for him.

Such, he says, was the condition of all who were held under the law: they were in a state of infancy or nonage; and they were held *in bondage*, with what was equivalent to the drudgery of that state, learning the rudiments or *elements* of what they understood nothing of; but which yet were to be of use to them in their riper age. I need not add any thing to what I had occasion to observe on the former chapter. What we have here laid before us concerns the employment, or task rather, which they who were put under the guardianship of the law had imposed on them: and if we understand it right, we will need no further evidence
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of their being what the Apostle calls them, little *children*, in a state of nonage, as we call it.

Our translation makes but a very dark account of what they were in bondage under. *The elements of the world*, the Apostle's word, does indeed signify the materials of which any thing is made, before they are put into their due form and order; but it signifies likewise what we call the rudiments or ground-work, the elements or fundamental principles of any art or science; and which are commonly taught to make way for the more perfect knowledge of that art or science. And such they must have been: for they were designed to lead to Christ, and that high station in him which the child thus kept in bondage was designed for. And such we find all the institutions and ordinances of the law were; wisely framed into a compacted system for answering this purpose; and so necessary, that without some good acquaintance with these, it is hardly possible, I might say altogether impossible, to attain a right understanding of the gospel of Christ, as might easily be shown almost in every instance. The

whole of the New-Testament language is founded on Old-Testament usages; particularly what relates to the fundamental doctrine of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ for the putting away sin. The whole ritual institutions were subservient to this purpose; and there is hardly one circumstance that is not alluded to in some part or other of the apostolical writings.

Thus far all is plain and easy. The only difficulty is, how the Apostle comes to call these divine institutions elements or rudiments of *the world*, when they answered the spiritual purpose of preparing and leading forward the student to the knowledge of Christ and his salvation; his high office as Saviour, and his spiritual kingdom. We need seek no further for the reason of this title. These spiritual and heavenly things were figured, or we might say, imaged, by sensible and material things. God showed Moses in the mount a pattern of the tabernacle, and all its furniture contrived by himself, that is, by perfect wisdom; and gave him a charge to make all things exactly according to it. All the materials were earthly; the priests were men of the world;

world; it stood, the Apostle says, Heb. ix. 10. *in meats and drinks, and divers washings;—the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean:* A worldly sanctuary, a worldly ministry, and a worldly service. A shadow indeed, and a sort of figure of good things, very burdensome, Acts xv. 10. and very unprofitable: “for it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin,” nor could all their washings cleanse from its defilement. The utmost effect of them was, “to sanctify to the purification of the flesh,” and put them in a capacity of approaching the worldly sanctuary, and drawing near to the material exhibition of the glory of God in the light of fire and cloud, as in the wilderness, and the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.

Had the unhappy Jewish nation learned these rudiments to any purpose, they would have felt and groaned under their bondage; and (as those who understood them did) have looked and longed for the promised Redeemer, who was to bring in everlasting righteousness, to deliver them from all their enemies, and effectually save them from the capital enemy, the devil and his works,

works, sin and death. This great event the Apostle describes with an apparently laboured exactness, where every word has a peculiar weight, and every circumstance leads to the conclusion he has in view, viz. to demonstrate the absurdity and folly of returning to that state of bondage, from which the blessed Son of God came to redeem and deliver them. But there was something in the case of the Galatians yet more monstrously absurd, to attempt this after they were delivered and brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It must therefore be worth while to consider, with the utmost attention, how he lays it: for he was none of those who multiplied words merely to amuse his readers.

We need not stand upon what he says, vers. 4. of the time when this great event was brought about. *The fullness of time* is evidently the same with the time appointed by the Father for the expiring of the child's minority, and entering him upon the right of sonship, and enjoyment of the inheritance. And were we able to gather up every circumstance of that time; how the Messiah or the Christ was promised, and how he was prophesied of; what circumstances

stances the world was then in; and particularly how the knowledge of the true God was entirely lost in the Heathen world, and very near being so among the Jews themselves, who, our Lord says, had made the law of God of no effect by their traditions; we would see plainly how wisely this particular point of time was pitched on for the coming of the Redeemer.

When the appointed time *was come*, the promise came; and it came in a very extraordinary manner: *God sent forth his Son*. The tradition of a Son of God being sent one way or other into the world, was certainly very ancient, and must have been very general, as we find it current in all ages, in one shape or other. But when the knowledge of the true God was lost, the tradition of course degenerated into fable. The Jews had it preserved in their record; but it does not appear they had any further notion of it, than that he should be a descendent of David, whom God would treat as his Son, in some such manner as he did Solomon. This their mistake was grown to a great height at the time Christ appeared among them.

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They expected nothing higher in their Messiah, whom they likewise called the *Son* of God, than that he should be a great worldly king, and should erect an universal empire, and subdue all nations under them. When our Lord put the question to them, How he could be the Son of David, when David himself, and under the direction of the divine Spirit too, calls him his Lord? they knew not what to answer, as they had no notion of any such person as could have any claim to so high a title. It is not, I believe, refused by any who believe there ever was such a person as Jesus, that he existed long before he appeared personally among men. And those who believe the New-Testament record, must believe that he was before any creature; because "all things were made by him, and without him there was not any thing made that was made." But whether the Eternal Word derived the title of *Son*, from some, to us altogether inconceivable, eternal generation; or from the place he holds in the universe as the immediate Creator, Supporter, Governor, and Judge, and particularly in relation to mankind, as their Deliverer and Saviour; has been, and still

still is doubted, and will not be easily determined with certainty, as he bore that character in the eternal counsels of God, and all things were created by him, and for him.

But however that may be, it is certain, that this sonship runs very high; so far above the angels, the highest order of creatures, that they are commanded to worship him, and acknowledge him as their Lord; and carries his character so far into Deity, that it will be hard to find any ground of distinction. Nay, if we believe that saying of our Lord, (and there can be no doubt of its truth), that “whatever the Father does, the Son doth likewise,” it will be impossible to find any vestige of inferiority, unless we catch at what the man Jesus says of himself while he was one of us on earth. Such a person sent forth of God, must infer some extraordinary commission to be executed; which however high and difficult, we may be well assured, cannot miscarry in a hand who has almighty power to employ at pleasure. And he needed a degree of power greatly above that of man, or indeed of any creature. He had men to buy

out from the bondage they were under to the law. He had not only to bring them into God's family, and give them the name and rights of children, but to make them really so; to quicken the dead, and to give eternal life.

The Apostle takes notice only of two preparatory circumstances; but they are such as include all the rest: *He was made of a woman, and made under the law.* So our translators render his words; and not amiss, if they did not sound rather too passively, and thus be in danger of leading ignorant readers to imagine that the Son had no hand in this marvellous dispensation, but acted entirely in obedience to his Father's will, and the orders he received from him. Such orders himself says he had; but they were such as himself, being one with the Father, had concerted in the eternal decree. The word the Apostle uses, which our translators render *made*, can infer no such consequences. It is applied both to persons and events, and denotes their becoming what they are, however that is done. When applied to persons, it not only denotes their being born, by which they became men, but all the changes they

they undergo, either in their persons, circumstances, or temper. Every one's observation will afford instances enough. In the present case, the same word denotes his being born of a woman, and becoming subjected to the law mankind were under, and which was the necessary consequence of his birth.

He was made or born *of a woman*; the same thing which the Evangelist John expresses, by "the Word being made *flesh*," or becoming flesh; a word strongly marking the human nature as it subsists in the natural children of Adam, and very frequently made use of in this sense. One would think this needed not be thought such an incredible thing as some pretend. It is indeed a miracle of divine condescension; and the strongest and most undoubted evidence of what the angels proclaimed when he came into the world, "Peace and good will toward man." Our Lord and his apostles carry it, I cannot say higher, but in rather more endearing terms, God so loved the world;—he commendeth his love to us, &c. And had there been no more, than the most high God, whom the heavens and heaven of heavens cannot contain, condescending to dwell with

men upon earth; and that by making so near an approach as to unite himself to such low and ill-deserving creatures; even this would have been such a pledge of gracious and kind purposes, as should at once have raised our hopes, and drawn out the strongest expressions of gratitude and love; and might have passed for the highest evidence of the most perfect love, had it not been for what followed, and what the Son of God was sent to do, and actually accomplished in the flesh. This indeed is very wonderful: but that the creator could, if he so pleased, unite himself to a creature, and unite the creature to himself, in what degree of nearness he pleased, has nothing near so wonderful in it, I might say so incredible, as, what we all profess to believe in creation, viz. giving being to the whole universe, when there was nothing either to work upon or to work by, and supporting every order of creatures in the stations he saw fit to place them in.

When the Apostle says, he was made of a woman, or became one of us of or by a woman, without any mention of a man, no body will need be told, that he
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refers to the whole of his miraculous conception, and birth, by which he was distinguished from all the common descendants of Adam; and thus was in his birth, as well as through the whole of his life, holy, harmless, and undefiled; perfectly separate from sinners: and a very little reflection will satisfy us, that he meant, by this expression, to carry us back to what was the origin and substance of all the promises God ever made to mankind, viz. That she whom Satan had deceived, should have a seed which should destroy him, and his works together. And thus he deduces the promise from the very beginning of the world, down to the time it was punctually performed in Jesus Christ; “in whom all the promises are yea, and in him amen;” the whole of the blessing being lodged in his hand.

What he adds here, of his being *made under the law*, which we observed was a necessary consequence of his being born among the Jews, and thereby becoming one of those who were under the law, in all the views that can be taken of it, this leaves no room for any question, what that law was; and yet there have been many disputes

putes about it; and how far, and in what respects, Christ was subject to it. These I have no mind to enter into: as it is plain, that it was the same law which the Apostle had been speaking of, the law which held him, and all his countrymen, in bondage, as children under age, and shut up into the faith of Christ, as it was revealed, and set in a fair light at the time he wrote; even that law from the bondage of which, and particularly its curse, Christ came to redeem them, and buy them up. This last circumstance hath determined some of the most judicious commentators to carry this higher, viz. to the original law given to Adam, and the sanction or curse annexed to it; and indeed to every transgression of the law of creation, that is, every sin whatsoever.

As to the law given to Adam, I mean the positive law about the forbidden fruit, it had a penalty annexed to it, and was fully executed in the true intent and meaning of it, which is certainly best gathered from the sentence given upon the transgressors, by the lawgiver himself. There we find the earth was cursed for the man's sake; but it is not said that he himself was cursed:

curfed: but the fentence concludes with binding him down to return to the duft from which he was taken. There were, befides this pofitive law, a fet of duties, naturally arifing from the benefit of being and life received from the creator's hand, very properly called *the law of creation*. If this be what our learned men mean by the *law of nature*, which fuch a noife is made about, they would meet with no oppofition; for it is founded in the natural relation between the creator and the creature. But then it muft be remembered, that this law was never left to ftand alone, but immediately on the entrance of fin, was incorporated with the promife of a better life, inftead of that which fin had deftroyed; and all the duties of it enforced, if not by ftronger, yet by more interefting, motives, which the Apoftle here lays to our hand. Thefe were all of them taken in; and the promife laid at the foundation, in the law of Mofes, in thefe remarkable words, by which it was introduced, "I am Jehovah, thy God;" which includes every thing.

Having had occafion to fay fo much on our blefled Lord's redeeming his people
from

from the *curse of the law*, by being made a *curse for them*, we may pass on to the consequences of our Lord's being thus brought under the law, and its curse, which, he says, was *to redeem* or buy up those who were in bondage to it. Only it may be worth observing, how the Apostle rises in his views: he lays before them, and brings on the light in which he wanted they should see it, by degrees, "like the morning light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day," Prov. iv. 18.: and it is indeed the path of the righteous. He begins with what might seem a remote prospect, viz. the promise and blessing of Abraham; he proceeds to their deliverance from the curse of the law, by Jesus Christ the seed to whom the promise was made; and here he carries it up to a deliverance from the law itself, as being of no more use to the Jews themselves, now that the end of it was attained. It was a comfortable view he gave both of Jews and Gentiles, as *heirs of the promise*; but now he carries it up to the fulfilment, they were *children and heirs of God in Christ*.

Thus we find, that the Son of God
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when he came into the world *to redeem those who were under the law*, the gracious design was not purely to free them from the bondage they were held under by it: Had they been left there, it is hard to say what their condition would have been. The buying them up from under the law was by no means designed to leave them to the dreadful consequences of a lawless liberty, which might have had worse consequences, if possible, than that bondage from which they were freed: it was, that they might be put into a state where their conduct was to be directed by another sort of law, which this same Apostle calls *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*: it was, that they might receive what could not be received by the law of Moses, *that they might receive the adoption of sons*.

He must be a very superficial reader who can pass this without observing the strength of the Apostle's expression, that all that is left to us for obtaining this sonship, is, to receive it as God gives it in his Son, as a free gift of sovereign grace. The voice of the gospel, as our Lord himself preached it, is, "All things are ready,

“come to the marriage,” Matth. xxii. 4.; or, as the Prophet Ifaiah proclaimed long before, “buy wine and milk without money, and without price,” Ifaiah lv. Nothing but come, and take what God has kindly prepared at fuch an immense expence, as the life and blood of his own beloved Son. And ftrange, very ftrange it is, (our Lord himfelf marvelled at it), that perifhing finners will not come to him that they may have life; that they may have it too in fuch an endearing way, by receiving the adoption of fons.

Adoption is a term very well known among men. It is taking a ftranger into one’s family, and inflating him in all the relations, rights, and privileges of a fon born of one’s own body. It never was, nor can be, difputed, that this is an act of mere grace and favour, whatever the merits and worth of the adopted perfon might be; and they may be fuch as may bring greater honour to the adopter than him who is adopted. But this is far from being the cafe of thofe who are made fons and children of God. So far from having any thing amiable about them, that of all the creatures of God, devils only excepted,

cepted, they are the basest and vilest, the most foolish and the most wretched, and the only creatures sunk into such perverseness, as to be enemies to that God unto whom they owe every thing. Surely if there is any mercy shown to such, it must be pure sovereign grace; and such love as is no where to be found but in him who is love, and can pitch his love on what object he pleases.

Whatever the circumstances of the adopter may be, it is the highest evidence any man can give of love to the person whom he thus brings into his family; but the higher the rank and dignity of the adopter, and the larger the inheritance, so much greater is the advantage the stranger makes by being thus connected with the family. This sets the adoption, and sonship which the Apostle here speaks of, in a light greatly above human conception in our present state. Were it no more than the love which God has shown in this astonishing favour, though we were to make no more by it, the privilege is inestimable: And the Apostle John refers us to this very thing, to take the measure both of the truth and

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reality,

reality, the intenseness and perfection of the love of God: 1 John iii. 1. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God:" and surely that is the highest honour, the most supereminent dignity a creature can possibly be invested with; and in comparison of which the highest dignities and honours on earth are mere baubles, such trifles as are not worthy to be named along with this.

But the God of truth does not put off those whom he allows the title of *sons* to, with bare names and titular honours. Whomsoever he honours with the title of *sons*, he makes really such. Men can give strangers all the rights and privileges, but cannot give them the hearts and spirits of children: whereas the Apostle assures us, vers. 6. that whoever have received this adoption, have at the same time *the Spirit of his Son*, his own well-beloved Son, *sent into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father*. Abba, every one knows, is the same with that which signifies *father* in Greek. That there must be some reason for the Apostle's using that Hebrew word, when describing the adopted son's address to his heavenly

Father,

Father, those who are acquainted with the usage of words among the Hebrews give us a good one. *Abbi*, my father, was a title of respect and honour; and commonly used in addressing such as were thought worthy of such reverence. But *Abba* was never made use of, unless to, or speaking of, one's natural father. And thus the Apostle tells us, that they who are adopted, and have the Spirit of the Son given them, address their great creator as their own father. And there is this special reason for it, that though adoption is a mere act of grace, it never goes alone; for all who share in the privilege are really and truly born of God. Thus our Lord told Nicodemus, "that they are "born of the Spirit," John iii. Thus the Evangelist John i. 13. "that they are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, "nor of the will of man, but of God." And to mention no more, the Apostle Peter says expressly, "they are made partakers of "the divine nature," 2 Peter i. 4.

Thus the Apostle has carried every believer in Christ as high as a creature can possibly go. They are all the children of God: and we need no more but a view
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of the provision made for the children of the family. And this the Apostle gives us, vers. 7. they are no more servants but children; *and if children, then heirs of God.* The Apostle makes the same conclusion, Rom. viii. 17. And it must be so: for we shall see by and by, that the inheritance is of such a nature that it cannot admit of a partition; so that all the children are joint heirs of the whole, one as well as another.

They are *heirs of God.* How can this be? say the wise men of the world. God cannot die, and how then can he have heirs? Not as men have, that we may be very sure of: but even in this view, if we remember what was said upon a testament, and how the conveyance of the inheritance is made by Jesus Christ, the original and natural heir, Heb. i. 2. this can be no objection, as it imports no more but the way the great proprietor of all has chosen and appointed.

But when the Apostle tells us, that all the children are heirs *of God*, it will be found, that he intends to direct us to the inheritance itself, wherein it lies, and whence the heirs are supplied with the
 sustenance,

sustenance, and all the comforts of life, so as neither the one nor the other shall ever fail. The whole creation cannot furnish out such a provision: nor is it any where to be found, but in the fullness and all-sufficiency of the eternal creator. Could we know how unembodied spirits live, we would see the thing. They cannot live on gross material food as we do: and yet they are no more self-sufficient, or capable of having life in themselves, than we are; and there is nothing beyond the creature to live on, but the same power of God which gave being. Thus they may, with great propriety, be said to live on God; with greatly more propriety than we can be said to live on our daily food. And thus we find the end of all that Christ did and suffered, was to bring his people to God; and when that was done, the work was finished.

But the way that pure spirits live, we can form no direct notion of; nor shall we ever be able to do it, until we are fitted for seeing face to face, and knowing even as we are known. And yet right Christians, the sons and children of God, live on him as really, though not so sensibly,

sibly, as they do. The Psalmist understood it right, Psal. xvi. 5. "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup." And thus we find all the Old as well as New Testament believers lived; as much in dependence and confidence on God, as the men of the world do on sensible supports. It is true, they walk by faith, not by sight: but when we consider the foundation which faith stands on, the one is as real and as sure as the other. Our Lord gives us a fine image of it in his easy familiar way, which falls every day under our observation. It is that of little children, who neither can nor care to do any thing for themselves; yet live quite easy, by a perfect confidence of faith in their parents; and never fail of competent provision, so far as their fathers abilities go.

But at the same time that we are never to lose sight of the free sovereign grace of God, and his astonishing love and kindness to man, we must be very careful to keep Jesus Christ as constantly in view; as without him, neither the one nor the other can be seen in their full strength and endearing beauty. The Apostle will not
suffer

suffer us to forget him : for when he has carried the Christian as high as a creature can be carried, to be a child, an heir of the inheritance, an heir of God, who is the very substance of the spiritual world, he tells us, it is *through Jesus Christ*. By him all the bars that stood between God and us were removed ; by him a sure foundation was laid for our faith and hope in God ; and by him a new and living way was opened into the holiest ; a way that infallibly leads to a throne of grace. In him all the fullness of grace sufficient for the very worst of sinners in the most desperate-like case that a creature can possibly be in, dwells ; and through this same Jesus all Christians “ have access to the “ Father by one Spirit ; ” the Spirit of the Son, given to all the children of God.

CHAP. iv. 8. — 18.

8. *Howbeit, then when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.* 9. *But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?* 10. *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.* 11. *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.* 12. *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am, as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.* 13. *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel unto you at the first.* 14. *And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.* 15. *Where is then the blessedness you spake of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* 16. *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* 17. *They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that you might affect them.* 18. *But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.*

THE Apostle having said what he thought proper for convincing the Galatians of the absurdity of the new doctrine which they were in such danger of being seduced by, and plainly demonstrated that the gospel of Christ had done what
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was absolutely impossible for the law to do, and indeed done all, by bringing them to Christ, and by him as near to God as any creature could be, proceeds now to apply the principles he had laid down to their particular case. But being aware, that the Gentiles who seem to have been the great majority of these churches, might say, they never were in bondage to the law of Moses, and that however the Jews might find themselves obliged to Christ for their deliverance from the bondage and curse of it; they could owe him nothing on that score, he tells them, that they were under a greatly worse bondage than they. The bondage of the Jews was but like that of a schoolmaster or governor; and all for their good, to lead them to that only way by which they could come to the possession of the inheritance. Whereas they *did not so much as know God*; and were held in bondage *or did service to those who by nature were no gods*, but had the name given them; and were put in the place of the only true God, by ignorant and mistaken men. They were without Christ, strangers to the promise, and therefore without hope, and without God in the world; and, to say all in

one word, dead in trespasses and sins: For thus he describes the Ephesian Gentiles, Eph. ii.; and though he is not so particular with regard to the Galatians, yet the general-charge comprehends the whole.

They *served* those which were no gods. The word the Apostle uses here is never applied to a hired servant, or any person but such as are bond-slaves, and absolutely their master's property. He does not say, they were formally slaves to those things which they served as gods; because many of them had no existence, but were the mere creatures of fancy; and such as had a real being, the sun, moon, and the fabric of the heavens, were incapable of *claiming* any service of them; and as little were they capable of doing them any good. But by the accounts we have of their services in the Old-Testament history, and other good authors, the bondage must have been terrible, that could drive them into such acts of barbarity, as we find were practised in what they called their *religious worship*. And so numberless were their washings, purifications as they called them, sacrifices, and other rites and ceremonies, in their wor-
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ship of their different imaginary gods, that their service was rather more burdensome under their superstition, than that of the Jews to the true God.

It cannot escape any one's observation, who has at all reflected on it, that there is a very remarkable similarity in the fundamentals of the Jewish, and Heathen worship, though the last was miserably corrupted by the superstitious additions made by men who had a turn to serve by them, as the Christian religion itself has been, in spite of the glaring light which shines forth in the record we have in our hands. Reason could never suggest, that their sacrifices and purifications were proper, much less necessary means for putting away sin. Their philosophers and wise men condemned them as much as they durst. But they kept their ground in spite of all that reason had to say against them; an argument the strongest that can be in such a case, that they must have been originally established by a very high, and even a divine authority. And such authority they were believed to have had, when men had lost the knowledge of their true author,

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Thence we may be in case to make a good account of what might seem strange in the charge the Apostle brings against the Gentiles, that *they desired again to be in bondage to what he calls weak and beggarly elements* or rudiments. It was the rites of the law of Moses they were tempted to submit to: these they had never been subject to; and therefore could not, in propriety of language it might be thought, be said to *return to them again*: But they had been long accustomed to a set of rites of the same kind, and held as much in bondage under them as the Jews were. So long as they knew no better, and were ignorant of the true God, and what they had either to hope or fear from him, something may be said for them: God winked at those times of ignorance: but now that they knew the truth, better things might be very justly expected of them. *They knew God, or rather were known of him.*

There is a great bustle made among some modern commentators about a thing they call a *Paronomasea*, where the same word, by the change of a letter or syllable, is repeated in different senses; a
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figure of speech which, they say, this Apostle was extremely fond of. I will not easily believe, that a man of his good sense, and directed as he was by the divine Spirit, would play with words, as affected rhetoricians do, to tickle the ears of their audience. Sure I am there is no such thing here; but a plain declaration of an important truth, in the fittest and most proper terms. When he had said, they *now knew God*, had he said no more they might have been heedless enough to overlook the way in which they came by that knowledge, and value themselves on the attainment, as our wise men do now; who tell us, that by the mere dint of their extraordinary penetration, and what they call the light of nature, they are able to discover, not only the being, but all the powers and perfections of God, with such exact certainty, that they can tell, with the utmost assurance, what becomes him, and what doth not, nay, what he may and must do, and what he may not.

The Apostle was of the same mind with his divine master, “that no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom he will manifest him.” He had
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manifested him to these Galatians, by that gospel which he sent them by Paul's hands. To him therefore belonged all the honour: for had he not distinguished them by that unmerited or rather sovereign grace, they had been still sunk in the same ignorance and idolatry in which so many nations were left, who yet in all manner of natural abilities, and all the improvement the learning of these times could give them, were greatly above what they could pretend to. For when the world, with all their wisdom, could not make out the knowledge of God, it pleased God, by a method which they reckoned foolishness, viz. the preaching of Christ and his cross, to give the most ignorant infinitely fairer and fuller views than ever philosopher could reach, with all his reasoning powers.

But it was not bare speculative knowledge the Apostle meant, either on God's side, or the Christians. In this view, God knows all men, and all things alike; for nothing can be hid from his all-comprehending understanding. But for this sort of knowledge, there is another word commonly used in the language the Apostle wrote in. The word he here uses carries such

such suitable affection as has a native tendency to produce its proper effects; and is but faintly expressed by *acknowledgement*, the word commonly used in our language. And thus, when the Apostle says of the believing Galatians, that they *knew God* the lowest meaning is, that they knew him so as to be convinced that he was really such a God as he had declared, and shown himself to be in Christ Jesus; and to own and acknowledge him accordingly; which cannot be done without a dutiful submission to him in all the dependence and confidence of love. This was enough to have founded a rebuke, even sharper than that which the Apostle gives them. But when he carries it up to their being distinguishingly *known of God*, this naturally would lead them on to all the evidences he had given of his peculiar love and favour in Christ Jesus; to all that he had done, and all that he had promised to do, for them, either on this side, or beyond the grave.

In this view they could not miss to find themselves provided, not only above their most extended wishes, but infinitely above what imagination itself could carry them:

“ For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
 “ nor hath it ever entered into the heart
 “ of man to conceive, what God hath pre-
 “ pared for them that love him ;” for such
 are provided in all the fullness of God.
 Thus his question comes with redoubled
 force, *How turn you again to these weak
 and beggarly elements, to which you de-
 sire again to be in bondage?* Every word
 has its weight. A bondage it certainly
 was; and that is a state, which no man
 will chuse but on absolute necessity. And
 there was no necessity in their case: so far
 from it, that they had every thing which
 creatures in their situation were capable
 of receiving. How absurd then must it
 have been, to turn back to what was at
 best but the rudiments, to what they
 they had now attained; and such too as
 could be of no manner of use to them?
 for they were *weak*, so weak that they
 could not at all profit those who bestowed
 all their labour on them, Heb. xiii. 9.;
 and so poor and *beggarly*, that they had
 nothing at all to give either one way or an-
 other: for after all the drudgery employed
 about them, the poor men were left no-
 thing better; and it had been well, if
 they had not been made worse, as the A-
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postle shows afterward they were to a very dangerous degree.

In this view of his reasoning, I think we may find room for a word he uses, and which our translators have seen fit to leave out as superfluous, viz. *ανωθεν*. This word is commonly used in the same sense with *παλιν*, to signify *again*; and did it admit of no other meaning, it would indeed be superfluous as it stands in this passage. But there is another well-known sense of the word, viz. *from above*, or *from any high place or station*, which perfectly suits the place he has set it in; and gives both additional strength and beauty to his question, as these Galatians could not descend to that base servitude, without coming down from the height God had raised them to.

The reason the Apostle gives for his apprehensions about them, vers. 11. and which he carries so far as to be afraid that *he had bestowed all the pains he had taken about them to no purpose*, deserves the very serious attention of every Christian. It was, vers. 10. *that they observed days and months, and times and years*. If they were the Jewish observances he has here in his eye, (for perhaps they retained some of their old Heathenish ones, which they

might think had no harm in them); but if they were the Jewish ones, as is most likely, for these were what the Apostle was most apprehensive about, they had certainly more to say for them than could ever be said for any other observances which have been since brought into the Christian church. They were once expressly appointed by God himself, the rightful proprietor of us, and of all our time and effects. And yet when the time was come which he had set for them to expire, and when the purposes he had appointed them for, were answered; instead of being acceptable services, they became a very hurtful nuisance; which the Apostle was apprehensive would undo all he had done, and make his labour in vain. When therefore the blessed Son of God condescended to be made a curse to redeem men from that bondage, it must, one would think, be a very criminal presumption in any man, or society of men, to bring those whom he has set free, into another bondage of their own contriving. Indeed, could they bless and sanctify their own inventions, as the Creator did the Sabbath at its first institution, something might be said for them; but as that is not in man's power, they must be

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at least as weak and beggarly as the Apostle says the other were; nor can they answer any purpose at all, but that very bad one, to divert men from the spirit and power of religion, and their dependence on the grace which is in Christ Jesus, to external and carnal ordinances and institutions; which never did nor ever can profit those who exercise themselves in them; at best, they are unprofitable and dangerous. It ought however to be adverted to, that it may not only be allowable, but extremely proper, to keep up the memory of remarkable providences, even by anniversary days of fasting or thanksgiving, provided these be not made parts of religion, or set on the same footing with divine ordinances.

But that the Galatians might not be induced by the great freedoms he had used with them, and particularly what he had said last, to imagine, that his paternal tenderness for them was either gone, or much abated, by the unworthy treatment they had given him in his absence, through the malicious insinuations of his enemies, he addresses them in a very affecting manner, *vers.* 12. & *seqq.*; and by putting them in mind of the great love they had formerly shown

shown

shown him, takes the surest way of regaining their affection, if there was any abatement of it; as it seems certain there was, at least among numbers of them, who had suffered themselves to be seduced by the assiduity and cunning of their new teachers.

He expresses much affection in his application to them. He addresses them with the endearing title of *brethren*; and that was the same as if he had told them, that whatever fears and jealousies his love to them suggested, he still regarded them as brethren, and thereby acknowledged them as real members of Christ's body, and children and heirs of God through him.

He likewise applies to them with great earnestness, *beseeking them to be as he was*. One who considers only the subject of the epistle, might be naturally enough led to think, he was beseeking them to be of the same mind with him in these points of faith, from which they were in danger of being drawn off. And this might have been acquiesced in as the true meaning of the terms he uses, were it not for what he adds to induce them to it, viz.

that

that he was as they were. Surely the Apostle was not of the same mind with them: it must therefore mean a conformity in brotherly love and affection. And these seem to have been the usual terms for expressing it: For thus we find Jehosaphat assuring Ahab of his cordial agreement with him, 1 Kings xxii. 4. "I am as thou art," &c.; and in this sense Paul could sincerely say, he was as they were.

What he adds, *that they had not injured him at all*, contributes further to confirm this meaning; as it appears designed to remove a jealousy they had too much ground for. They knew they had not treated him with that respect, which either his character as an apostle, or the kindness he had shown to them, deserved. To remove such apprehensions, he says, they had not injured him at all, and of course had no reason to dread his resentment. But then another difficulty arises, How Paul could say so? when they were upon the very point of concluding him, not only no true apostle, but moreover a teacher of erroneous and even damnable doctrine; as he must have been, had what the zealots for Moses's law alledged been

been true, viz. that without these observances no man could be saved. We need not have recourse to any unknown circumstances to account for this, nor even to the measures of Christian forgiveness, in which there never was a greater proficient. Himself gives us what may be abundantly sufficient for that purpose, 1 Cor. iv. 3. "He reckoned it a small thing to be judged of man's judgement;" so small that he never thought it worth bringing into an account of any kind. And he had reason: for besides the common privilege of every Christian, "that all things shall work together for good to them," he carried his commission from one who could well, and he was sure would, support him so effectually, that it should never be in the power of man to do him any real injury, nor mar the designed success of the gospel in his hand. He might with great truth say of the opposition made to him in these churches, what he elsewhere says of his bonds and sufferings for Christ, "that it contributed to the furtherance of the gospel:" for unto this we are indebted for this excellent epistle, which has been of so great use to Christians, and will continue

tinue to be so, as long as they have any occasion for such instruction.

Having thus introduced himself to the best advantage, he carries them back in the three following verses to a very interesting period, the time when he first brought them the good news of Christ, and eternal life in him. And news it was to them, such as they had never heard from all their philosophers, and such as were reputed the wisest of mankind: for the world by their wisdom were so far from knowing God, that as all other learning and knowledge increased, this decayed; until it pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, which they reckoned foolishness, to save those who then believed in Christ.

As he on all occasions took special care, in the abundance of his labours and success, to ascribe all the glory to the grace and free unmerited favour of God, and assumed nothing to himself, even when he was at the highest of what he calls his boasting, he here sets himself in a very mean light. He speaks of his weakness on that occasion, and of what he calls *a temptation in his flesh*, which has made

some interpreters imagine, that he then laboured under some bodily ailment. If it was so, it must be a very idle employment to guess at it, when himself has given us no hint to encourage the inquiry. Nor indeed need we look for any more in it than what we find him often acknowledging, that there was nothing in his outward appearance, either as to his person or address, that should recommend him; but rather the contrary; infomuch as it gave occasion to say, that *his bodily presence was contemptible*, 2 Cor. x. 10. which was so far from unfitting, that it made him the fitter instrument for almighty power to work by, and which himself was so sensible of, that he openly declared, that if he was to glory or boast in any thing, it should be in his infirmities, that the strength of Christ might be made manifest in him, 2 Cor. xii.

And perhaps we shall not be much mistaken, if we should conclude, that this was the very temptation which he says was in his flesh; the natural consequence of which was, to be despised and rejected, as one from whom nothing was to be expected. But, to the praise of the glory of
sovereign

sovereign grace, and the highest commendation that could be given the Galatians, they were so far from despising, that *they received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*. Perhaps we should come nearer the Apostle's intention, if we should take the word our translators render *angel*, in the sense it bears in common language, that they received him as *the messenger of God*, as indeed he was; and thus the whole period will run exactly parallel to that wherein he sets forth himself and his fellow-apostles and ministers of Christ, as *ambassadors for God, and addressing men, as though God himself did beseech them, praying them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God*, 2 Cor. v. 20. When therefore the Galatians received the Apostle as the messenger of God, addressing them in Christ's stead, they must, as he says, receive him as they would have done Jesus himself, had he appeared personally among them. Nay, what is more, in receiving him, they really received Christ; for his whole business was, to preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, and thus to engage their hearts to him: An excellent piece of instruction, both to preachers and hearers.

To the preacher, to speak as the messenger of God, declaring the testimony of God concerning his Son; and to the hearers, to hear as if Christ himself was present to receive their answer to his message. And so he certainly is, whether we mind him or not: for he said in express terms, Matt. xviii. 20. *Where-ever two or three are gathered together in my name*, he does not say, there I will be, in the way of a promise, but expresss affelevation, *there I am in the midst of them*.

When Philip preached Christ to the Samaritans, and many believed, the divine historian remarks, that there was great joy in that city. No doubt there was such joy among the believing Galatians: and by the words of our translation, vers. 15. the Apostle was upbraiding them with it, and a very bitter upbraiding it would have been, had these been his words, *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?* But most certainly they are not his words. It must be observed, that the word translated *blessedness* has quite a different meaning. It signifies the act of one blessing another; and his words, in the plain literal sense are, *What was then your blessing?*

blessing? It might naturally be constructed, of their blessing God and Christ for the wonderful grace and love manifested to them; and it is not to be thought they were wanting in this natural expression of their gratitude and love. But it is evident, that their *blessing*, the expression of their great love and affection, was tendered to the Apostle, *as the messenger of God to them*. And it appears to have been very great indeed; for he testifies for them, that *had it been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him*.

No body, I dare say, needs be told, what impressions the remembrance of such happy moments must have made upon every heart which was not quite hardened against all the tender feelings of humanity; and how much stronger they must have been on such as were softened by grace, and the knowledge and belief of the love of Christ, and his heavenly Father, who sent him to be the Saviour of the world. And now the question comes with redoubled force, *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* How tenderly does he touch the place he knew was very sore! He does

not

not say, they looked upon him as their enemy, but puts a question to them; and even that not in such strong terms as our translation does; which is rather a paraphrase than a translation. His question may be very literally rendered so as to express very strongly the impossibility of his being their enemy; and that certainly agrees best with the pains he had taken to assure them, that *he was as they were*, their cordial and sincere friend; so they once took him to be, and had expressed their sense of it in the warmest manner. He was the same person still, *ἀληθεύων*, *dealing truly* and uprightly with them; for that, and not telling the truth, is the proper meaning of the word. And thus the question will stand, Can I have become your enemy, while I am treating you in the integrity and uprightness of truth itself? It appears by what follows, that he had the false teachers in view, who had treated them in quite a different manner. As their professed intention was to draw them off from the truth as it is in Jesus, which Paul had taught them, so they made no scruple to employ the basest means, by false suggestions, to prejudice them against him,

him, and even to persuade them, that he was their most dangerous enemy. Thus he brings them in, vers. 17. in a seemingly abrupt manner, without saying who they were whom he was speaking of. But he needed not. The question he had put in the foregoing verse directed them sufficiently to the persons he meant, viz. those who had made it their business to alienate their minds from him, that they might have them all to themselves.

Our translation gives what the Apostle says of them by much too faintly: *they zealously affect you, but not well*; and perhaps there are no words to be found in our language, to express his meaning with the same strength and conciseness. The word *zeal*, as it is used in our language, though near the original in sound, and taken from it, yet does not come up to the full import of the verb; which not only signifies a very warm affection, but is applied not only to kind and beneficent affections, but the very contrary, emulation, envy, and even hatred itself; and one of the most common uses the verb is applied to, is, to express the most earnest application to gain one's favour, good will,

will, and love. And nearly in this sense the Apostle seems to have applied it to the Judaizers; who, as appears by the following verse, wanted by all means to engage the Galatians on their side.

It will readily be allowed, that it is so far from being a fault, that it is a very commendable character, to exert one's self, even with the greatest warmth of zeal, in all those good offices which can recommend him to others. And the Apostle would never have blamed those men for what himself, on all occasions, recommended with the greatest earnestness. The Apostle allows it in the very next verse, and pronounces it to be good to be thus affected to what is really good. But there may be a bad, as well as a good zeal, as the matter it is employed in, or the manner in which it is conducted, is either good or bad.

I know not on what consideration our translators have inserted the particle *but* into the first clause of the verse, where it is not; and have changed it in the second into another of a different signification. By the insertion, they have divided what stands a very short sentence into two; and
make

make the Apostle, implicitly at least, to approve the zealous affection of the false teachers, and to blame only their not managing it well: Whereas he condemns the whole of it, as there was nothing of it right or good, either in matter or manner. He in effect says, the zeal of these men about you is not good; and he proves it in the next clause by this, that it was all to gain their own very bad ends; and he tells very roundly, in the conclusion of the epistle, what these ends were, chap. vi. 12. 13.

There is a different reading in the second clause of the verse, which makes a considerable variation in the sense. This difference lies only in two letters, which might easily be mistaken by inattentive transcribers, viz. *v* & *n*. Interpreters and critics are divided, whether *ὑμᾶς you*, or *ἡμᾶς us*, is the authentic reading. Our translators, with many others, have chosen the first; and thus the words run, They would exclude you, that *you* might affect *them*. *Excluding* is a relative term; and the Apostle does not say from what. But that may be naturally enough supple-

mented from the context; and at the same time it will appear, how they gained their end by it. Could they have prevailed with the Galatians to be circumcised, the same blessings they gave to *Paul*, when he brought Christ and eternal life to them, would naturally fall upon *them* for making that necessary supplement to his doctrine. This however could not be done without so far renouncing, and thus being *excluded* from Christ. But this these blind guides did not regard.

This sets the attempt of these seducers in the most terrible light; but it is no more than what Paul himself had laid before them in this epistle. And very necessary it was, that the thoughtless men who were so ready to fall into the snare, might be apprised of their danger. But however this might be, the promoters of that system had sense enough to perceive, that Paul stood in their way; and so long as the Galatians retained their first affection to him, and revered him as the Apostle of Christ, and particularly his messenger to them, it would be impossible to carry the point they aimed at; and therefore
made

made their first attack upon him, as we had occasion to observe before on the Apostle's vindication, chap. i. & ii. And thus he might very pertinently say, that all the zeal they put on for the Galatians, was but an attempt to exclude *him*, and secure the affections of the Galatians to *themselves*. This is so much to the purpose the Apostle had in view, and comes in so naturally on what he had been saying of the very great affection the Galatians had shown to him, that some of the most judicious interpreters have been determined to chuse the second reading, *us* instead of *you*.

But, after all, whatever it might have been to the Galatians, it is of very little moment to us which of the two readings should stand in this text, unless it be to put us upon our guard against those who lie in wait to deceive, and to set a mark upon those who make no scruple to attack the characters of men as good, if not better than themselves, when they stand in their way; a practice generally disclaimed, but, alas! as generally practised. The Apostle's decision on the case before him is a good one, and will hold in every other case:

It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing, or in what is good; this takes in both men and things; and, leaving the Apostle's word, as he has placed it, undetermined to either, makes it altogether unnecessary to enter into the reasons which have induced some very learned men to think that Paul here, in a very elegant manner, sets *himself* before the Galatians as the *good man* toward whom they were to be zealously affected. But the Apostle, they should have observed, changes the phrase he had used, when speaking of persons; and instead of zealously affecting them, he says, it is good to be zealously affected *in good*; which takes in the whole subject their zeal is to be employed in. What he adds of being so *always, and not only when he was present with them*, has been thought to point directly to Paul's person, whom they had poured so many blessings on when present. But on comparing Phil. ii. 12. it will appear, that this expression is as applicable to the whole duties of Christianity, as to this or any other particular. The Apostle had no ends of his own to serve by bespeaking their affection; and as the case then stood, the

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the cause of Christ and his were the same; and though he was one very proper object of their zeal; yet was he neither the only, nor even the principal one. It is likewise to be observed, that he had but just in the preceding verse taxed the pretended zeal of their new teachers for their good; and pronounced it wrong, or not rightly and fairly managed, either as to matter or manner: on which it was very natural to give them a general direction for the right management of their own zeal, which should hold whether he was present or absent.

And happy were it for the Christian world, if this rule were punctually observed. In reading the history of the church, it will be hard to say, whether what has gone, and still goes, under the name of *zeal*, has done most good or hurt to true religion? When regularly conducted by the Apostle's rule, it is the fervour of love to God and man, the very best thing: but how readily does it degenerate into that which the Apostle blames in the Judaizers, *zeal for a party*; and that again into what the same Greek word is often used to denote, the *very bitterest enmity*; which naturally leads to what we find the Apostle

possible cautioning these Galatians against, chap. 5. vers. 15. *biting and devouring one another*; all which would be avoided were it confined to what is good, whether persons or things.

CHAP. iv. 19. — 31.

19. *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you.* 20. *I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.* 21. *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* 22. *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-maid, the other by a free-woman.* 23. *But he who was of the bond-woman, was born after the flesh: but he of the free-woman was by promise.* 24. *Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.* 25. *For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is, and is in bondage with her children.* 26. *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* 27. *For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.* 28. *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.* 29. *But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.* 30. *Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-*
woman

woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. 31. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.

THE Apostle being about returning to the main subject of this epistle, and having some very home things yet to say upon it, wisely prepares them for it: first, by recalling, as we have seen, to their remembrance the happy time when he first preached Christ to them, which he concludes with the most pathetic intimation of his very great love to them; and next by a very entertaining, as well as instructive, application of the history of Abraham's two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, to the case he was writing upon.

He finishes the very affecting view he was putting them in mind of, with one of the strongest expressions that could be made of his great concern for their welfare, and the ardency of his affection to them, vers. 18.; which one cannot let pass without observing the strong contrast between the Jewish zealots, and himself. *They* were very busy about them, and in all appearance affected with the greatest warmth of zeal for their salvation, but with no
better

better tendency, than to draw them off from Christ and his Apostle, and to bring them under that yoke of bondage which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear, and from which Christ had redeemed and made them free. *His* views again were just the reverse of theirs, even to bring them to Christ, and to maintain them in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, by carrying them on to that perfection set forth in him. And his earnest zeal for accomplishing this great object, is such as a tender and affectionate father feels for his little children, when he sees them in danger of perishing, or like the anguish of a woman in the pains of childbirth.

We need not stand on the address he makes to them as *little children*. It carries great tenderness of affection in it; but has nothing singular, as it was the ordinary title by which the Apostles addressed the young converts to Christianity. But when he styles them "*my* little children," his affection to them, and their duty to him, are both set in the most affecting light, and could hardly miss to strike such of them as listened to the new teachers, in a very sensible manner; especially on what he
adds,

adds, that as he had formerly begotten them in Christ by the gospel, 1 Cor. iv. 15. he was now put to the same pains anew, through their folly and thoughtfulness: for the word he uses does not so properly signify travailing in childbirth, *i. e.* the actual bringing forth children, as the pains and sorrows that attend it. Such were the feelings of this great apostle on this new emergency; the best pattern a gospel minister can form himself upon, as Christ is the great pattern for a Christian; his work is never done, nor his sollicitude and pains at an end, until *Christ is formed in those* under his care.

The expression is strong and bold: too bold the learned and wise men of the world have thought it; and much learned pains have been taken to bring it down to their standard. The Apostle himself tells us, that though he did not speak the wisdom of this world, nor of the men of this world, that yet he spake wisdom, and the wisdom of God too, 1 Cor. ii. 6. 7. Nor may it be doubted that he spoke, as the apostles first preached, Acts ii. 4. “as the
“ Spirit gave him utterance.” The lowest construction that the words, with all the help of figure and metaphor, can

be brought down to, is, their being formed into the image, and a thorough resemblance of Jesus Christ, the only proper standard of all perfection and worth; an excellency not to be attained by studying the morals of Epictetus, or Marcus Antoninus; nay, nor by copying out every virtue we can find in Jesus Christ himself, and forming ourselves upon them: For all this, even supposing it could be done, would amount to no more than a system of pure morality; and though it is impossible that any one can be a good Christian without morality, yet the most perfect mere moral virtue, (if such a thing could be on any other principles than the Christian), would never make a Christian; at most it could only be forming one's self *on Christ*, which could in no sense be called *forming Christ in them*.

They come somewhat nearer the Apostle's sense, who explain it, by the true doctrine of the gospel being firmly settled in their minds; (if by this they mean, the firm faith and belief of the testimony God has given, and the record he has made concerning his Son): for indeed where-ever that is found, the work the Apostle aims at is done.

done. But then it must be remembered, that however the gospel of Christ is the mean by which the thing is done, yet it does it not in a merely rational or moral way, (tho' indeed the Christian faith is the most rational thing in the world; just as rational as it is to believe, that the God of truth is not a liar or a cheat), but it doth it by the ministration of the Spirit. There are numberless instances of people very firmly of the Christian opinion, and who cannot be reckoned either infidels or unbelievers, and yet their belief hath hardly so much influence on their hearts and spirits, as the faith of devils hath on them. These indeed "believe, and tremble;" which is as far as the grounds of their belief can carry them. And the *dead faith*, as the Apostle James calls it, of these merely rational believers seldom goes further than to destroy these fears; while in all other respects it leaves them as much strangers to Christ, and the business on which he came into the world, as those who never heard of him.

We must therefore, of necessity, look further for the Apostle's meaning. Nor do we need to look far: he has it laid very fairly to our hands in this same epistle. They

who are Christians indeed, have put on Christ. He is in them, and by him God himself is in them, and dwells in them as his living temples. Being thus united to the great fountain of life, they live by him; nay more, it is not so properly they that live, as Christ that liveth in them. They who are thus joined to him are *one spirit* with him; and one spirit argues one life, one mind, and one way of living. As I had formerly occasion to discourse upon this very intimate and astonishing union, I need say nothing further here, but only remind you of what is written, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. “Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves: know you not your own selves, how that Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?” And 1 John iv. 9. “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, that he sent his only begotten Son, that we might *live by him*,” who is emphatically styled by him, John vi. 33. “the bread of God which came down from heaven, and gives life to the world.” This is what makes the Christian; and this only can do it: for Christ himself has assured us, “that unless we eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son
“ of

“ of God, we neither have nor can have
 “ any life in us.” And if our faith be not
 thus employed, and doth not answer this
 purpose, it is dead, and leaves the poor
 deluded man as dead as ever.

Such and so good was the Apostle's
 zeal for these Galatians. But they were
 behaving in such a manner as made him
 very doubtful about them; and occasion-
 ed all the pain he had endured when he
 was labouring for their conversion: for
 which cause, as we read, vers. 20. *he was*
very desirous to be present with them; and ve-
 ry likely would have been with them had it
 been in his power. What hindered him he
 does not say; and if they knew, as proba-
 bly they did, it was needless to mention it.
 But if he had come, he tells them he
 would have found it necessary *to change his*
voice to them. The word the Apostle uses
 does indeed properly signify the *voice*, by
 the different turns of which it may be
 suited to the subject it is designed to
 convey to the hearer. But it can hardly
 be thought, that Paul meant no more but
 changing the tone of his voice, unless
 there was likewise a change in the matter
 which he was to deliver; the phrase
 therefore

therefore imports, that he intended to deal more roundly with them than he had yet done, even in this epistle: and if I mistake not much, he executes his purpose very fully in the following chapter.

But before he enters upon that, he very wisely prepares them for it, by accommodating a well-known piece of Old-Testament history to their case, as allegories are in use to be applied: for it is to be observed, that the Apostle does not say, vers. 24. as our translators do, that *these things are an allegory*; but that they are *allegorised*, or applied as that sort of writing is designed to be, to point out something quite different from what the words in their plain ordinary meaning are known to express; such as are all those parts of Scripture which go by the name of *parables*. Our Lord made frequent use of them, and his are by far the most perfect; many of the same kind occur in the Old Testament, both in the historical and prophetic part of it.

But it has been said, That these, as well as the instructive fables we have from merely human writers, are made for the purpose, and no body expects historical truth

truth in them. But as this of Abraham's two wives and two sons is a piece of real history, it cannot, and ought not to be treated as allegory. Indeed it ought not: but should be treated according to its real nature, as a piece of very true and undoubted history, and of very great moment too. But if what the Apostle tells us of the history of old Israel be true, (and it would have been true whether he had told us or not), "that these things were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come," the improving these facts in parallel cases, for instruction and warning, is not making allegories or feigned stories of them, but putting them to their proper use. And those who are at pains to understand the two cases which are here compared and paralleled, will find them so exactly answering, that the Apostle had no manner of occasion to do any more than he has done; that is, to state them, and lay them so as to be seen together at one view.

The enemies of revelation, ignorant as as they chuse to be of all these things, and supposing that the Apostle was here making an argument of the case of Isaac and Ishmael, and their two mothers, merely

on the footing of his allegorical application of it, have lavished a great deal of profane wit on the imagined absurdity. Whereas it seems very plain, that the Apostle is not reasoning at all, but seriously warning the Galatians against the danger they seemed running into, of being found in the same unhappy case with Ishmael the son of the bond-woman, namely, *to be cast out of God's family*, and deprived of the inheritance: for there we find he lands his discourse, vers. 30. In this light I must profess myself quite at a loss to find out the reason of the great difficulties commentators profess to find in this discourse, and of the desperate methods bold critics have taken to correct the Apostle. The only real difficulty arises from three words in vers. 25. which we shall afterwards meet with in observing how the Apostle adjusts the parallel.

The Apostle introduces it in a manner that gives a pretty colourable reason to think, that the fact here referred to was, in the wisdom of God, designed and recorded on purpose, to be applied and improved as the Apostle does here, and as the prophet Isaiah, referred to vers. 27. had done before him. By the *law* here, no
body

body needs be told, that he means the whole five books of Moses, according to the division then (and I may say ever since) in use of the Old-Testament writings into the law and the prophets: *Ye who desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* Had not the application of the history been so obvious before he said any thing about it, much of the sharpness of the question would have been lost. They might have answered as the Ethiopian eunuch did Philip, how could we apply it, until we had it allegorized to us, as you have done?

It is indeed very obvious, and such as would readily occur to an attentive reader. The history is so well known, that we need not repeat here any more than the Apostle gives us; nor is it possible to say it better than he has done: *Abraham had two sons; one by a slave or bond-woman, and another by a free.* But this was not the only difference. The son of the bond-woman was conceived and born *after the flesh*, i. e. in the ordinary course as other children are, nor was there any one circumstance to distinguish him. This was not the case of Sarah the free-woman.

The Apostle says shortly, “ he was conceived and *born by promise.*” He says it in one word; but it is a very comprehensive one. He had said much about it in the foregoing part of the epistle; which be sure he needed not repeat particularly here. All this must be taken in, and indeed the whole history of Sarah’s barrenness, until there was no possibility of his having a child any how but by the immediate power of God; and there could have been no reason so much as to hope for that, if God had not promised it.

Such a promise Abraham had; and he had it often repeated to him. But it was not barely the promise of a son, but attended with all the blessings a man could receive from God: for in that promise this apostle tells us, he had the gospel preached to him. The case, as we have it left on record, appears to have been this. The prospect given our first parents, on the first entrance of sin, that the seed of the woman, who was first seduced, should bruise the serpent’s head, and thus destroy him and his works together, was in a manner lost, when the righteous sovereign destroyed man with the earth, and established his *covenant*,
that

(that is the original promise) with Noah. And it was the same covenant or promise that was established with Abraham, which the Apostle calls *the announcing the gospel to him*, “that in his seed all the families of “the earth should be blessed.”

But it was not for all his natural seed that the promise was intended, as the carnal Jews fondly imagined: and God gave timely and early intimation of this in the case of Abraham’s two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, to the former of whom the promise was expressly confined; and still more explicitly confirmed in the case of Jacob and Esau, as the Apostle shows at large, Rom. ix. And in the virtue of this entail, as we may call it, the children of Abraham’s faith, those, namely, who are united to the one seed Christ, and not his natural descendents, are the true children and heirs of the promise, whatever family or nation they originally belonged to.

I need not stand to observe what the Apostle had taken such pains to establish, in the preceding part of the epistle, viz. that all who were under the law of Moses, were under a most miserable bondage, under

the curse, and at best held in a condition liker slaves than children, until they were bought out from under it by Jesus Christ, and brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, in consequence of the original promise. So that, upon the whole, one may say, that the case could not have been better illustrated than by what we have recorded of the two mothers, and their children, allegorized or accommodated to the two covenants or grants, the promise given to Abraham, and the law from mount Sinai.

Some have taken the liberty to ridicule the Apostle for saying, *these two women were the two covenants*; and others who dare not venture on such gross abuse, yet have thought it an improper way of speaking. If the Apostle knew not how to express himself properly, certainly his master did. Let any one read the explication our Lord gave his disciples of his parables, particularly those of the sower, and of the tares of the field, and he will find the Apostle well warranted to use the same terms, when applying a piece of true history in the parabolical or allegorical manner.

He begins with *Hagar*, and makes her represent the *covenant* or law given at *Sinai*, vers. 24.; and gives the agreement or resemblance in two words, that both bring forth their children *to bondage*, a point the history fixes in the case of *Hagar*; and which he had fully proved of the law of *Moses* given at *Sinai*. In the following verse he gives the reason more fully, but in terms which have put masterly critics to very desperate shifts to make out the sense which they think the Apostle ought to have designed; not only transposing the particles *δε* & *γάρ*, but striking out what they think ought not to be there, merely because it does not comport with the sense they want to fasten on the Apostle. *Τό γάρ ἄγαρ* is the grand difficulty, and is by many given up as absolutely unintelligible. But had *Hagar* been a declinable word, and had the Apostle put it fairly in the genitive case, I dare say no body would have had any difficulty in fixing upon a very obvious sense, and exactly suiting the Apostle's intention; which, as appears by the particle *γάρ*, wherewith he introduces it, was to assign the reason of his saying, that *Sinai*, or the law from *Sinai*, was *Hagar*.

gar. Thus the words, τὸ γὰρ Ἄγαρ, will stand as a reference to her part in the history; and the whole verse will run as if the Apostle had said in our language, *As for Hagar;—Sinai is a mountain in Arabia: but it answers to, or stands in the same rank with, the present Jerusalem, in bondage with her children.*

In this construction the translation is quite literal, except that there is nothing to answer the particle *καὶ* in the last clause. But those who are but even moderately acquainted with the original language, must have observed the very extensive use of that particle; and that very frequently it serves no other purpose, but to connect and distinguish the different clauses of a sentence; which appears to be its only use here, and which therefore our translators have rendered *and*. And if we can but make out a good reason for making Sinai stand for the earthly Jerusalem, and both be represented by Hagar the bond-woman, we will need no more to justify the accommodation, as the Apostle has stated it. And this, one would think, should be no hard matter for any one who

can compare the case of Hagar and Ishmael, with the then state of Jerusalem.

It would answer very little purpose to attempt making out a connection between Hagar and mount Sinai, and between that mountain, and those on which Jerusalem stood, which several very learned men have amused themselves with. It is the *covenant* or *law* given at *Sinai* the Apostle pitches on as the ground of the accommodation he is making. To this law the Jewish nation, (commonly designed the children of Jerusalem), owed, we may say, their very being: It was this that made them what they were, a peculiar people distinguished from all the other nations in the world: and it was this law that brought and held them and their children in precisely such a state of bondage as Hagar and her son Ishmael were. And the Apostle evidently carries it no further: so that it seems but an idle amusement some have bestowed much labour in, to find the Arabians, the descendents of Ishmael, in a state of bondage.

There is some appearance of ambiguity in the last part of the verse, as it is not clear in the words, whether it is Sinai

or

or Jerufalem which the Apoftle means to fay are in bondage. But it is only an appearance, and may be certainly determined from the context; where Sinai, or rather the law given there, is the mother, bringing forth the early Jerufalem and her children, all involved in the fame bondage, by the fervile condition of that mother, and thus exactly answering the cafe of Hagar and her fon. Several other circumftances might be obferved wherein they agree: but as in parables and allegories every circumftance is not defigned to be applied particularly, but the fcope of the whole muft be attended to; fo it is in true hiftory when it is treated in that manner: To apply every minute circumftance is abufing and difgracing the whole.

The Apoftle having adjusted Hagar the bond-woman's part, proceeds, verf. 26. to the part of Sarah the free-woman, and her children. And as he had left the then Jerufalem in the ftate of the bond-woman, he directs us to another Jerufalem, the Jerufalem which is above, the fame we find described, Rev. xxi. 2. *et feqq.* the new and holy Jerufalem; and the fame which the Apoftle fays the believing Hebrews

brews were then come to, Heb. xii. 22. “mount Sion, the city of the living God, “the heavenly Jerufalem;” the fame with thefe *heavenlies*, or heavenly places, which thofe who are quickened and raifed up with with Chrift, are made to fit in, or inhabit together with, and in him, Eph. ii. 6. And I hope no Chriftian needs be told, that under thefe images is represented the ftate of the kingdom of Chrift, as manifested and managed by what we call *the gofpel*, the testimony of God concerning his Son, and the gift of eternal life. When Mofes was commanded to make the tabernacle, with all the furniture and utenfils belonging to it, he had a pattern fhewed him, with a very folemn charge to fee that he made all things exactly according to it. And there was great need of exactnefs: for it was defigned to be a fenfible representation of the heavenly fanctuary and true tabernacle, the figure of the good things to come; a fhadow the fubftance of which was Chrift.

That rigid fchoolmafter had it in commiffion to keep even the children and heirs under a very fevere bondage, until the feed fhould come who had the promifes. But

they must be egregiously mistaken who imagine, that Christ came to set up a new religion, entirely different from, and even contrary unto the Jewish, at least in many, and these the most material instances; a notion which many modern divines, and professed defenders of the Christian religion too, appear extremely fond of. But the measures of divine government, or, in other words, the constitution of grace revealed to our first fathers, Adam and Noah, and the promise and grant of grace made and confirmed by oath to Abraham, are unchangeable like their author; and could not be disannulled by the law of Moses given so many hundred years after, but were continued down in full force under it.

It is true, there was a bastard Judaism in fashion, when the Son of God came into the world, which stands in a direct opposition to the gospel; and which, by leaving out the promise, made the law a dead, and, which is worse, a killing letter. This brought the then Jerusalem into bondage, such as made it as absolutely necessary that they should be born again, as the Gentiles, who had nothing at all
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to trust to. The dispensation therefore of the Spirit is the life of the sinner; and the life which that Spirit conveys, is the only way by which he can be entered into the spiritual world, or, which is the same thing, brought to God; and the only title any sinner can have, is, the grant of sovereign grace in the free promise.

In this same divine constitution, this sovereign grant and promise, the church and kingdom of Christ, the spiritual and *heavenly Jerusalem*, is founded; and the Apostle says, *she is free*. There needs no words for the explanation of this, unless we should run out into an account of all the kinds of bondage and liberty which we can have any notion of. But we may see as much as we have occasion for, in the view the Apostle gives us of the eternal inheritance conveyed, and the possession of it secured, by a free and irrevocable deed of gift; and it is true to a proverb, that nothing can be freer than a gift. Had the grant come, clogged with terms and conditions to a set of creatures who could do nothing, it would have been the same thing as if they had been honestly told,

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they were to have nothing; and all the purpose that could have been answered, was, to deceive fools into a vain delusive hope, which they would never have entertained had they been so wise as to consider the extent of their own powers.

To be fully satisfied how justly the Apostle says, the Jerusalem from above is *the mother of us all*, some of our acutest critics observe, that the Apostle here joins himself with the Gentiles; which they confirm from the following verse; and conclude thence, that the little word *all* has crept in unwarrantably into the text, and ought to be struck out, because it takes in the Jews as well as Gentiles. Common sense and reason would say there was no great harm in this, and that it is so far from marring, that it greatly supports the views he was inculcating. It sets Jews and Gentiles both on a level, and implies that the Jews are not one jot advantaged by having the law of Moses: for when a right to the inheritance enters the question, they are forced to have recourse to the same grant and promise, which the Gentiles had as free access to as they; and on this he brings in the remarkable prophecy of Isaiah, chap. liv. vers. 1.

It has been alledged, and not without some good colour of reason, that our Apostle had this text in his eye, when he says, that what is recorded by Moses of Hagar and Sarah was allegorised, or treated in this manner by the prophet Isaiah. It must be acknowledged, that the very sound of the prophet's words naturally bring the case of these two women to our minds. It cannot be doubted, that it was the Gentile church he addresses as a barren woman, who had continued long in that condition, and yet was to have many more children than the Jews whose husband God had long declared himself to be, and whom that nation was very solemnly married to. And as he speaks of them as two women well known in his time, it is certain that there are not two recorded in history whom the prophet's description can suit in any degree so nearly as Sarah and Hagar; though it must be acknowledged on the other side, that there are some circumstances in the prophet, that cannot easily be applied to Sarah, particularly that of a woman forsaken of her husband, which she never was, though indeed

indeed as to the main thing, the bringing forth children, she was in the same case as if she had been forsaken, and had no husband, until the promise came, and Isaac was born, when, by the common course of nature, the thing was impossible.

But be that as it may, the prophet's account of the barren woman suits the Gentiles, and the state of Christ's kingdom among them, with the greatest exactness in every point. God called them as a woman forsaken, and a wife of youth. They were early espoused to him in the days of the fathers, Noah and his faithful descendants, and as really as the Jewish nation was afterward. They were long, very long forsaken, and left in the case of a *desolate* woman, who of course could produce no children, until the promise came, and they were called into the kingdom and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; and then the children of the Jewish nation were but an handful, in comparison of the Gentile Christians.

So far the Apostle had stated the comparison between the mothers, Hagar and Sarah on one side, and the Jewish and Christian churches on the other; and as

it was in this last class that the Galatians stood, viz. the children of the free woman, he proceeds, vers. 28. to compare the children; and having said enough of the bondage of the earthly Jerufalem and her children, he begins with the parallel between Isaac and the Gentile believers; particularly the Galatians, to whom he was writing, and compares them together as to their birth, and the consequences of it, namely, their station and right to the inheritance; all comprehended in their being *the children of the promise, as Isaac was.*

The lowest use we can make of this is to turn our attention to that part of scripture-history. Isaac was the child of the promise on two accounts; first, it was in the virtue of the promise that he was born; secondly, he was made the heir of the promises. I need not add any thing of his birth to what we just now observed of the state of the mother; and as the promise was made to Abraham and his seed, which was to be reckoned in Isaac, by the peremptory order of the promiser, his right to the promise, and all the blessings it contained, could not be disputed. The inheritance came by his birth.

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The Heathen nations had no pretensions to any natural relation to Abraham, and could not boast, as the Jews did, that they had him for their father. But as the original promise made to him carried in it a blessing to all the nations of the earth, every nation, yea, and every particular person, had a good title to put in for their share. Nay, when all nations, except the Jews, were left in the case of a forsaken desolate woman, there were great numbers of promises made and recorded in scripture, that the one seed, who is Christ, and who had all the promised blessings in his hand, was designed for them: *A light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as *the glory of his people Israel*. In virtue of these promises, they were begotten and born again; not as Adam's, and even Abraham's common descendents were in the course of natural generation, but born of the Spirit, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But nations and kingdoms never were, and there is no reason to expect they ever will be thus born. The kingdom and church of Christ is made up of particular persons, immediately and directly united to him their head, and that without any
other

other medium but his Spirit conveyed to them, and living in them, by the word of the gospel, the same gospel that was preached to Abraham, and by which he lived: and as they are thus born by the Spirit and power of God, in the fulfilment of that promise and grant of eternal life, *they are all born heirs of the eternal inheritance in Christ*; and by virtue of his right conveyed by his testament, they have a perfect right to the inheritance, and receive the kingdom which cannot be moved or shaken.

There is another resemblance mentioned by the Apostle of a different kind, vers. 29. *As he who was born after the flesh, persecuted him who was born after the Spirit, so is it now.* What the Jews, the natural descendents of Abraham, did to the Christians in the Apostle's time, is well known. *They persecuted them even unto the death.* But we read nothing of Ishmael persecuting Isaac in any other way, but that Sarah saw him mocking at the feast of Isaac's weaning; and we may well enough suppose, that this was what the Apostle calls by that name, when we find him mentioning, Heb. xi. 36. *cruel mockings*, among the

very cruel sufferings which the children of God endured from the men of the world. The severe punishment which fell upon the children who mocked Elisha, stands as a caution to all ages, that even bare mocking the children of God is not to be counted a slight thing, when it stands so high in God's reckoning.

The conclusion of that little history furnishes out (what it is likely the Apostle intended by applying it so particularly to the case of the followers of Moses and the disciples of Christ) a striking warning-piece to the Galatians who were so strongly tempted to join the former. And those who are acquainted with human nature will readily agree, that it was likely to make a stronger impression than all his reasonings besides. He does not apply it at all, but lays the event before them just as it stands, and in the very words it is recorded; but he introduces it in a manner that could hardly miss to engage their attention. What saith the scripture? *Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son.* They are the words of Sarah; but they have the sanction of God himself,

himself, and carry the highest authority. He does not chuse to say how near the destruction of Jerufalem and the temple was; which effectually cast out that unhappy nation from God's family, and made their worship and observation of Moses's law quite impossible; but wisely leaves it to the Galatians themselves to gather from that event, what a hazard they run who joined themselves to those who have such a denunciation standing against them, and carries the same import with that solemn warning in another case, *Come out of her, my people, lest you partake in her plagues.*

This consideration is greatly improved by what the Apostle adds as the conclusion of all. The argument is strong for getting out of that dangerous society; but it must be something worse than folly for those who were at liberty to run themselves into it. The Galatians were abundantly provided in Christ. They were children of the free woman, the children of God, and heirs of the inheritance. They could never better their condition by any change they could make; and by what they were tempted to make, they gave up what they had, and had nothing,

or something worse than nothing, in its room, as we find the Apostle strongly proving in the next chapter.

CHAP. V. I. — 6.

1. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not intangled again with the yoke of bondage.*
2. *Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*
3. *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*
4. *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*
5. *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*
6. *For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.*

WHether the words with which this chapter begins should be called an exhortation or a command, is but of little consequence; as it is evidently an apostolical injunction or charge, and that carries all the authority of him who sent forth the apostles, and therefore requires the most serious attention. And seeing, as appears by the connection, it is founded in the accommodation, (whether made by the prophet Isaiah, or by the Apostle himself,

self, is really a matter of no moment; for both had equal authority): but seeing the accommodation is made by those who had authority to do it; and as we are sure that the facts did not fall out by chance, but, as is plain from the history, under the special divine direction, there is good reason to think it was designed for this very purpose, and that the two mothers and their sons were an intended representation of the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem, the law of Moses, and the gospel of Christ. And therefore the Apostle had great reason to conclude, as he does, that all who believe in Jesus Christ are free, and surely that freedom was well worth preserving against all attacks that might be made upon it, from whatsoever quarter they might come.

It may not be refused, that the Apostle's immediate intention was to secure his converts against the snare laid for them by the false teachers, who wanted to bring them under the law of Moses. But as the liberty they were called into must have been the same which our Lord gives to his true disciples, John viii. 31. 32. the Apostle calls it *the liberty wherewith Christ had set them free*; and they must be free indeed whom the Son makes free; it must therefore extend ve-

ry wide, even as far as the whole immunities, rights, and privileges of the children of God do. Very different this from what goes under this name among the men of the world, and which they are so madly fond on, but when well looked into, is found little better than what the sacred historian mentions as the unhappiness of old Israel when there was no king, viz. liberty to do what was right in their own eyes, while, at the same time, they continue in the very worst kind of bondage without regret, and even with pleasure; bound under sin and death, slaves to the basest lusts and vilest pleasures, and shamefully captivated and carried along by the course of the world, and the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. It is not for nothing that the Apostle states the Christian's freedom and liberty in deliverance from the law and its cursing power; for there is the root of all our bondage. *The sting of death is sin; by that it kills; but the strength of sin, or what gives sin its dominion and killing power, is the law.* Whenever therefore one is delivered from the power of the law, and brought under the measures of grace, the strength of sin is gone,

gone, and it can no longer maintain its dominion, Rom. vi. 14.

The horrible nature of this bondage, and the horror it creates where-ever it is perceived and felt, the excellency of that liberty which Christ the Son of God gives, with that joy unspeakable and full of glory which attends it, and especially the prodigious price the purchase cost him, must be allowed motives strong enough to engage every man who has sense enough to know what he is about, to exert his utmost activity for obtaining it, and to stand firm in the possession of it, that he do not on any temptation, or for any price, let it slip: and that cannot be done without having done all to stand, Eph. vi. 13.; nor that without putting on the whole armour of God, as we are directed, vers. 14. *et seqq.* God himself has graciously provided complete armour: he has done more; he has made a full provision of grace in his blessed Son: he has not only permitted us to come, but has invited, nay, and commanded us, to come boldly, and assured us of finding what is abundantly sufficient for the weakest and most worthless of Adam's sinful race; e-
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nough to make the very weakest able to do all things, Phil. iv. 13. And can any thing be more absurd than to look for more, unless it be to look for it any where else?

But there is something greatly worse than absurdity and folly in those who are thus abundantly provided, when they turn aside to the law. There is something very solemn and peremptory in the certification the Apostle gives the Galatians, *v* 2. *et seqq.* *Behold, I Paul say unto you; I Paul, Christ's apostle and ambassador to you, (and what I say is the same as if Christ himself said so in his own proper person), That if you are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing:* The most dreadful denunciation that can possibly be made to creatures in our circumstances, creatures dead in trespasses and sins. Had we never had any further intimation of the mind of God, we must have concluded, that there was no way of being delivered but by the almighty power of God; nor any hope of that, but by absolutely free and unmerited mercy. But when he has opened such a door of hope as he has done, in sending his own beloved Son, with all the fullness of eternal life

life in his hand, to be the Saviour of the world, and to give this life to all that will come to him for it, with this express declaration, that there is no salvation in any other, and that it is only through him that we have any the least mercy to expect. If we are found in such circumstances as that Christ shall profit us nothing, we are, we must be, consigned to eternal perdition, without any possibility of relief.

But some may possibly think this a hard saying, Have none who are circumcised any benefit by Christ? What then should become of the Jews who believed in him? nay, and what should have become of Paul himself and his fellow-apostles, who no doubt were all circumcised? We need only observe, what every body who reads the epistle cannot miss to observe, that he is not here addressing the Jews who were circumcised before they believed in Christ, but the Gentiles who never were, and yet were admitted to all the privileges of believers, or the children of God by faith, without circumcision, or any other works of the law, or observances enjoined by it. To them he says, *If they are circumcised*

now, Christ should profit them nothing; and they would be in the same case as if he had not come at all, or done any thing to redeem them from the curse, not of the law of Moses, which they were never under, but of that original law which brought Adam and all his posterity under sin and death.

But still it may be said, Tho' it must be allowed that circumcision, and all other legal observances, were superfluous, and therefore useless to them; yet how comes circumcision particularly to have such a dreadful tendency? To this it might be answered, That circumcision, and the other ritual observances of the Jewish law, were figures for the time then present, and were never designed to continue longer than the promised seed should come; then they expired of course, and were no longer the ordinances of God. The outward circumcision became the concision, a mere mangling of the flesh; and the true circumcision was that of the heart, of the Spirit, and not of the letter. If those then who were not bound by the law of Moses, should submit to the external circumcision, it must have been at least a constructive denying

nying that Christ was come; and the more so, that it was the bondage of those who openly denied him.

But the Apostle gives another and a stronger reason, vers. 3. 4. *They who are circumcised, whoever they are, become debtors, that is, bound to fulfil the whole law.* This he says he *testifies to them again*; by which it appears, this was not the first time he had testified this: and though we could neither see how, nor why; yet the testimony of the Apostle must have been a sufficient evidence; for it was the testimony of him that sent him, the God of truth, and his blessed Son, the Amen, the faithful, and true witness; he could say with great truth what his master said before him, that the testimony he gave, and the words which he spake, were not his own, but his who sent him. But we are not left even with this great assurance; the very matter of the testimony proves the truth of it: for by the same authority which bound them to be circumcised, they were bound to every thing enjoined by it: it is the Apostle James's very plain reasoning in another case, James ii. 10. 11. It was accordingly the initiating ordinance by which

strangers were profelyted, or entered into the Jewish church, by which they were put in all respects in the very same condition as if they had been born Jews, and were as strictly bound to all the observances enjoined by the law.

By this state of the case we may easily perceive, that though the Apostle changes the expression in the next verse, he does not at all change the sentiment conveyed by both, which is precisely the same. He had said, *that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing*; and here *Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever are justified by the law*: For when they had brought themselves under the law, and bound themselves to do what was enjoined there, by that law they must be judged, and by it they must be justified, if ever they are so. But as no man liveth and sinneth not, he had told them before, that it was the same thing to be under the law, and under the curse: for where-ever the law finds a sinner, it as certainly binds him under death, as the lawgiver is unchangeably true.

But it may be, and has been said, over and over, How can this be, when the
Apostle

Apostle has told us in express terms, that Christ has redeemed at least all right believers from the curse of the law, being himself made a curse for them? And this some have carried so far as to say, that the law being fulfilled by the Redeemer in their room and stead, the law to them is divested of its penal function, and has lost its cursing power. There must certainly be some mistake in this matter on one side or other. That Christ has redeemed his people from the curse of the law, is beyond all doubt; that he fulfilled all righteousness, which could not be done but by fulfilling the whole law, is as certain: and I believe it will readily be allowed, that he did act in the character of head over all things to his church; for that is inseparable from the character of a redeemer and saviour: and, upon the whole, that whatever he did and suffered was not for himself, but for the benefit of those whom he represented; and that he put himself in their room, and took upon himself the burden of the curse which they were brought under by the law. Could it then be clearly perceived what that law was, the curse of which he took upon himself, and which he fulfilled, I
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more than suspect our disputes would be at an end. Nor would that be a matter of great difficulty, if men who believe, or profess to believe, that the writings we have in our hands are the word of God, could have contented themselves with what he has there seen fit to lay to our hands, without supplementing, out of their own heads, what they imagined was wanting there.

When man was first created out of the dust of the earth, he needed not have been told, that this fixed a relation between him and his creator, which inferred all the duties of gratitude and love, in their utmost extent and highest degree: and being created after the image of his creator, he did not need to have these specified particularly to him; they were written in his heart, inlaid in his very frame and constitution, and this is the only true and original law of nature. But it was not on these, or the observance of them, that the life and death of man was put, but on a positive precept, the breach of which brought all mankind under the curse, or, which is the same thing, bound them under death by the judgement given

ven on that first transgression. This particular law Christ neither did nor could fulfil: nor was it necessary; because man was never designed to be restored to that life which was forfeited by the transgression: but he submitted to the curse, and redeemed men from it, that they might be free to enter on that life which he was sent to give.

On this gift which God made to mankind of a redeemer and saviour, and eternal life in him, there arises a new relation. The original ones are greatly strengthened by new benefits, greatly beyond what arose from their first creation, and consequential duties founded in this frame and constitution of grace; and where the gift is received, they arise as naturally as the other did, and in the same manner. The law of love is written in the heart of every true believer in Christ, which might very properly be called *the law of grace*, as the other is *the law of creation*. And this is the law, the only law given by God for mankind; which has the promise of eternal life. The law of Moses, founded in the deliverance of that people from their bondage in Egypt, and the grant of the
earthly

earthly Canaan, was a sensible figure or image of it: it cursed the transgressors, and at the same time led them to the relief, in the promise of pardon, through the sacrifices which he had appointed. But that the use of these sacrifices and washings, and purifications joined with them, might not be mistaken, as it was by the later Jews, the pardon had no other effect, (and a bare pardon can have no other), but merely restoring them the life they had forfeited. They were still left under the original curse, until they were redeemed from it by a better sacrifice than these; which had not only the promise of pardon, but of eternal life annexed to it. This was conveyed down through all the periods of that law, in the promise made to Abraham, and the gospel preached to him, as the Apostle had told the Galatians, the same law of grace promulged in paradise upon the entrance of sin, which has been in force ever since, and will be, without variation, to the end of the world; framed not to curse, but to relieve from the curse; but which it is easy to see must greatly enhance the curse on the despisers of it, Heb. ii. 2. 3. Surely those who set up any
other,

other law, (and many have been set up), with the usual sanctions of rewards and punishments, set up a kingdom and moral government of their own, in a direct opposition to the kingdom of grace; and it must be a strange sort of blindness or infatuation that can keep men from perceiving the consequences.

The Apostle has set this matter before us in such a striking light, that none can pretend ignorance. He has not so much as left a colour for the common expedient too often practised, making one text or portion of scripture destroy another. His words are plain and positive, *That whosoever seeks to be justified by the law, Christ is become of none effect to them; they are fallen from grace.* The first part of this doom, as we have it rendered, is precisely the same with what he had said, v. 2. of those who were circumcised, *that Christ should profit them nothing.* The word he there uses expresses only the event; but that which he uses here charges it upon those who take this course; they by their own fact and deed have given up with Christ, and have no more to do with him than if they were dead to him, even as the

right Christian has given up with the law to have no more to do with it: for it is the same word; and in the nature of the thing it must be so. Law is the instrument and measure of moral government; in which there is not, nor indeed can be, any room for Christ: and for the same reason they who seek to be purified by the law, *are fallen from grace*; because Christ and grace go hand in hand; for in him alone it is that any sinner can be accepted of God, or share in any effects of his grace. The Apostle puts the case in a very clear and strong light, Rom. xi. 6. "If it is by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, it is no more of grace: otherwise works are no more works." Much learned pains has been taken by the patrons of moral government, and many expedients have been tried to bring them both into one consistent system. But after all their labour, it is no better than the iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image: they may be laid together, but can never incorporate; for whatever room one takes up, the other must be so far shut out. It was this very thing that ruined the Jewish nation: they had a zeal for God, and
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fought after righteousness; but they fought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. And thus “being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God;” and thus rejected Christ, who is the end of the law, for righteousness to all that believe, Rom. ix. 31. 32. and x. 2. 3. 4.; and strange, very strange it is, that men of sense and learning, who have this fatal example before them, should yet stumble at the same stumbling-stone, after all the pains our gracious God has taken to caution against it.

And that none might flatter themselves with such delusive hopes, the Apostle, vers. 5. & 6. makes such an account of the Christian hope, and the Christian life, as shows the absolute necessity of either renouncing our own righteousness, or giving up with Christ, as God has set him forth in his testimony, a propitiatory through faith in his blood, and consequently the end of the law for righteousness. Whosoever sets about making out a righteousness for themselves by the terms

of law, if they mind what they are about, will very soon find themselves condemned by it, I may safely say, on every turn. Imperfection of one kind or other cleaves so closely to their best performances, that they find themselves forced into one of two very silly shifts, and both of them, I am afraid, very common; either to bring down the law to the measure of their attainments, or to have recourse to Christ and his grace to patch up what they find wanting in their own obedience. The last is, I believe, very common among the professors of Christianity, who are strangers to its spirit. And for the other, we find what they call *sincerity* put in the place of that perfection the divine law requires; for this reason, which they persuade themselves is a good one, that God, as he is a righteous moral governor, can require no more than the subject can perform: for just so much as there is of grace or supernatural divine assistance, so much is taken off from the dignity and rewardableness of virtue and obedience.

Nothing can be imagined more directly opposite to the account the Apostle gives of Christianity, or the state of a believer

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in Christ, and a conversation such as becomes or answers his gospel. For, in the first place, he says, instead of attempting to make out a righteousness for themselves, *they wait for the hope of righteousness by faith*, or believing. He says further, that even this, which is the easiest-like thing that can well be conceived; yet even this, they do not propose to make good by any powers of their own. And he adds, that it is in the strength of this faith only that their obedience is carried on from the beginning to the end of it.

As to the first of these, their *waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith*. The words, as they stand in the original, may admit of different constructions, and have accordingly been differently constructed by interpreters who had different purposes to answer by them. It has accordingly been warmly disputed, whether the words, *by faith*, should be joined with *waiting* or *righteousness*; that is, whether the Apostle means to say, *that they waited by faith for the hope of righteousness*, or, *that they waited for the hope of that righteousness which is by faith*. It will not be disputed, that the Christian who lives by faith, and walks
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by faith, whatever promised blessings he has in view, he in like manner waits by faith. But one who considers the context and the Apostle's views with any attention, will easily perceive it is the righteousness which is by faith, in opposition to that which is by works of law, which he here intends. For, besides that he says, *they wait through the Spirit*, which certainly takes in faith, and therefore the latter needed not to have been mentioned at all, he had immediately before been setting forth every attempt to make out a righteousness by the law, as giving up Christ; really renouncing him as one they had nothing to do with, and of course were fallen from grace, and had nothing to expect by it; for this plain reason, that those who were in Christ renounced and gave up all pretensions to any right they either had, or ever could make out for themselves, and rested all their hopes in the gift of righteousness conveyed in the promise, where nothing could be of any use but believing.

The hope of this righteousness may likewise admit of different meanings; as it may either denote that hope which has this righteousness for its object, or the hope which
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the righteousness by faith gives; that is, the hope of obtaining the promised blessing. But in either of these views it would seem not very proper to say they *waited* for hope. The most natural construction will be to take hope here, as it is very frequently and very naturally put for the thing hoped for, the blessing conveyed by the promise, the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, has promised before the world began, and when there was none to receive it but his own eternal Son.

But however easy it may seem to those who are strangers to the difficulties which very naturally occur in the way of believing, to wait for the fulfilment of a promise made by a faithful God; yet the Apostle says, the right Christian does not attempt even that, but *through the Spirit*. The word *Spirit* is applied so differently in the apostolical writings, that there is hardly a text where it occurs, which has not occasioned a good deal of wrangling. It is very often, and perhaps most frequently, used in a personal sense, as we may call it, either for the Holy Spirit, or as a divine epithet, God is a Spirit; or for the spirit of a man, or these kind of beings we call *angels*,

angels, which are not immured in such gross bodies as ours : and sometimes, for what our Lord says is *born* of the spirit, as the Apostle calls *the new creature*, or *new man*; though seldom in this sense, except where it is opposed to *flesh*, or some equivalent term. The *gospel* of Christ likewise bears this title, or perhaps, more properly, the state of Christians under the gospel is called often *spirit* for special reasons; but rarely, if ever, is the gospel called *spirit*, but in opposition to the *law*, as a dead and killing letter. Our Lord likewise uses it, and his apostles after him, to denote what we call the temper and disposition of one's mind, good or bad.

It is hardly credible what use has been made, especially of the two last senses of the word, to explain away not only the operations and actings, but even the very being of the Holy Spirit. To enumerate the various attempts of this kind would require too much time; nor indeed could it be done to any purpose, without running over all the particular texts where he is mentioned. Our only concern is with that sense in which the Apostle uses the word *spirit* here and downward in this epistle; and that will not be hard to find, if we will be at pains

pains to carry along with us, what our Lord said of the Holy Spirit in his discourse to his disciples immediately before his death, which he promised to send as another comforter to them, when he should leave them to return to his Father. This will give us this infallible rule, that where-ever we find any of these things which that Spirit was sent to effect, attributed to the Spirit indefinitely, we may certainly conclude, that it is the same promised Spirit which is meant. In consequence of this, we find the Apostle, 1 Cor. xii. describing the different gifts of the Spirit, which he says *he distributes to every one as he will*. So far then as these gifts, or any of them, are found in any person, so far we must conclude, that such person hath received the Spirit. When therefore the Apostle says, that he and his fellow-believers in Christ *waited for the hope of righteousness*, that is, *eternal life, through the Spirit*, we are not at liberty to take up with any lower sense of that word.

Nor indeed will any lower sense answer the purpose which the Apostle says the Spirit he speaks of does. It cannot be our own spirits, in whatsoever light we

consider them, whether renewed or otherwise; for that is the man himself who waits. If it be said, that it is the gospel of Christ, and the light which that brings into the mind; the gospel is indeed the ministration and the minister of the Spirit; it is by it that the gift of the Spirit is made, notified, and conveyed; and by it, as the powerful creating word of God, the Spirit conveys life, and all the powers of life, to the dead sinner; supports, maintains, and carries it on to perfection; being indeed the principle and spring of all vital actions, that is, of all that are really and spiritually good: and when this Spirit is either withheld or withdrawn from the word of the gospel, it is really as dead a letter, and as weak and ineffectual, as the law itself; but the Christian, through the influence of this Spirit, is kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

On this plan the Apostle gives us a complete system of the Christian religion in one sentence, consisting only of two articles, and which he gives in two words, viz. *faith* and *love*: for thus, he says, that as things stand in Christ Jesus, these are all;

all; and nothing else can answer any purpose. He mentions indeed only *circumcision* and *uncircumcision*: but as he had said, that those who were circumcised stood bound to all the duties and observations enjoined by the law; all that man can do in obedience to any or all the commands of God are taken in under it. The exception the Apostle makes of *faith working by love*, as the only thing that can be of any use, confirms this construction as strongly as if he had said in express terms, that in Christ Jesus *nothing* can avail any man but that *faith which worketh by love*.

Here again we are led away by a set of teachers very near of kin to those the Apostle and his Galatians had to do with, from the *person of Christ*, and union with him in one Spirit, to the *word of the gospel*, and the state of those who live under it. Be it so: What will be the consequence? The gospel is the testimony which God hath given concerning his Son Jesus Christ; and therefore Christ in the gospel must be the same Christ who suffered at Jerusalem, and now sits on the right hand of the majesty on high, with all power and authority in heaven and earth. The gospel-

state, then, where-ever it is believed and acquiesced in, must be the same with what our Lord calls *being in*, and *abiding in himself*; and which he assures us is absolutely necessary; because without him, or separated and apart from him, we can (even the apostles themselves could) no more do any thing, than the branches can bring forth fruit, unless they abide in the vine.

Hence then arises the absolute necessity and use of *faith* in the Christian life; which, if it was but tolerably understood, the world would cease wondering why the ministers of Christ, instead of giving lectures of morality, and inculcating social duties, insist so much on faith or believing the testimony of God about his Son. It might be a sufficient apology for them, that the Apostle Paul set the example; for he determined to know nothing among the Corinthians but Jesus Christ, and him crucified: and he had great good reason; for *he is the way, the truth, and the life. So that no man can come unto the Father but by him.* And if there is any truth in him that can be depended on, no man can so much as know the Father, but such as he manifests him to. But he who hath seen him

him hath seen the Father; for he is the perfect image of the invisible God: and, which is more, the Father is in him, and he in the Father, in such a manner, that one cannot be seen without the other: and, which is yet more to us, by sending him to be the Saviour of the world, God has displayed his true character, and what we have either to hope or fear from the great creator and proprietor of the universe. As therefore it is only by the testimony and record which he has made concerning his Son that we can know any thing of him, the necessity of faith can never be too strongly inculcated: for if the testimony is not believed and acquiesced in, it can be of no more use to us than if it had never been given, unless it is to increase our condemnation: For thus we find it stated by the very truth itself: *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.*

But the necessity, and what is more, the incomparable worth and excellency of faith will further appear from its use, and the great purposes which it is designed to answer, and most certainly does answer, where-ever it is real and unfeigned; which,

which, in one word, is to produce universal holiness in heart and life: For the Apostle says, *it works*, and works *by love*; and love, we are well assured, is the fulfilling of the whole law. So much as there is love, so much holiness, and no more: and perfect love is perfect holiness; for he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God. And if we can perceive how faith works love, and works by it, we will perceive the whole mystery of Christianity, that hidden wisdom, which God hath ordained before the world for our glory.

When the Apostle says *faith works*, his intention, in this place, is not so much to distinguish it from what James calls a *dead faith*, which indeed is no faith at all, as to describe the true nature, and what may very properly be called the very essence of it; that it is an active principle, which cannot be idle so much as a moment, unless it is marred and hindered by some counterbalance, as he tells us downward, that *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*.

No body needs be told what believing is: but it will be very necessary to be told what it is we are to believe; and it will
readily

readily appear, that it is the testimony of God concerning his Son, and that reaches very wide. The capital fact attested is, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. But there are a multitude of facts connected with it, and which will be found to take in the whole sacred record from the beginning to the end of it; which all contribute to illustrate and establish the certainty of it, the place and station he holds, and the end and design of his coming into the world to save sinners of mankind; that he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and has all the fullness of life lodged in his hand; that whosoever has the Son hath life; and makes it as certain, on the other hand, that he who hath not the Son hath not life. From this necessary and inseparable connection between Jesus Christ and eternal life, arises an axiom of very great moment in the practice of Christianity, viz. that eternal life is as certainly given, and precisely in the same manner, as Jesus Christ is. And hence it necessarily follows, that as all who hear the gospel without any distinction whatever, are not only allowed and warranted, but called and commanded in the most peremptory

peremptory manner, to believe in him with the strongest assurances, that they shall not perish, but have everlasting life; what shall we say? what ground of doubting have we left; whether the gift of pardon and life in him is to be believed with the same assurance, and particular application to ourselves, while yet we neither have, nor can have, any of these qualifications which some people call *the conditions* or *terms of the promise*, or *the terms of grace*, which, by the way, is a direct contradiction in terms; for *if it is of works*, easy or difficult alters not the nature of the thing; if it be of works of any kind; it is no more of grace.

I should not have mentioned these things here; as they lie so fair in the testimony of God that no unprejudiced reader can possibly miss of them; but that it is in this view, and in this view only, that faith either works love, or works by it. No truth is more frequently inculcated in the divine record, than that as men, all mankind are naturally alienated from God, through the ignorance that is in them: so that they are enemies in their very minds, through wicked works; nay, as
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if *enemies* was too soft a word, the Apostle says, the carnal mind is *enmity* itself; and it is fostered and maintained by an evil conscience, the native effect of sin. This paints the God, who really is love, in the dreadful light of an avenging enemy, from whom the sinner has nothing to expect but everlasting destruction. One may be prevailed on to forgive an enemy, and even to love him for God's sake; but when God himself appears an enemy, what motive or ground can be found for engaging the love of a creature, who cannot love any thing but what he is quite pleased with? It is true, as God is perfectly good, he ought to be loved for himself, abstracting from every other consideration; but then he must be seen as he is in himself, and in his true character; and which cannot be seen any how, but where his true character is to be seen, and that is in these manifestations only which he has made of himself in Jesus Christ.

It would, I dare say, be superfluous labour to show how it is the peculiar province of faith, to perceive the glory of

God as he has made it shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ. The man that believes the testimony of God, that he has sent his own beloved Son to be the Saviour of the world, will certainly find it very hard to believe, at the same time, that he is the world's enemy. He that believes that he has given up this his beloved Son a sacrifice for putting away sin, and a ransom for the lives and souls of sinners, must find his conscience purged from dead works; so that instead of filling his soul with the terrors of the Almighty, it speaks the peace of God which passeth all understanding. But when faith perceives the grant of eternal life made to this same beloved Son of God, in behalf of perishing sinners, the terms of the grant fully performed by him, and all the fullness of life lodged in his hand, with the express order to give it to all without exception who will come and receive it at his hand, be they who they will, or what they will, how can such a believer miss knowing and believing the love of God to him, and resenting it with the warmest acknowledgements of gratitude
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and love? Thus the law of love is planted in the believer's heart; and as love is the fulfilling of the whole law, and all the commandments of God injoin no more than the native and genuine actings of love, there is no more commanded than what true genuine love would have done, whether it had been commanded or not. Thus the great promise of that new testament, of which Christ is the mediator, is fulfilled in the believer; the law of God is written in his heart, and as the Apostle John says of every one that believes, he hath truly and properly the witness or testimony in himself.

CHAP. v. 7.—26.

7. *Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?* 8. *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.* 9. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* 10. *I have confidence in you through the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgement, whosoever he be.* 11. *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.* 12. *I would they were even cut off which trouble you.* 13. *For, brethren, ye have been called into liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love*

serve one another. 14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. 17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness lasciviousness, 20. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I also have told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24. And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections, and lusts. 25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26. Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

THE Apostle having, in the foregoing part of this epistle, set the case he was warning these Galatians against in every light in which it could be viewed, and showed them how the change they were tempted to make was not

not only unprofitable and useless, but dangerous in the highest degree, nay, and absolutely destructive, not only of their peace and safety, but their very souls; he comes now to conclude with a consideration, which, it were much to be wished, every one would seriously weigh, when they find themselves in similar circumstances, that they may not be rashly drawn off from their obedience to the truth in any instance, as there never will be temptations wanting, so long as there are so many who lie in wait to deceive, and pervert the right way of the Lord.

He had reminded them of that cheerful readiness with which they received the knowledge of Christ from him, what blessings they then heaped upon him, and what warmth of love they showed in the whole of their behaviour toward him. He now puts them in mind of the effect his preaching, and their knowledge of the truth, had on them; and does it in a way which could hardly fail to engage them to compare the evidence they had of the truth, with what their new teachers had to advance for drawing them off from it;

You did run well; who hindered you, that

you should not obey the truth? I only observe on the translation, that the word the Apostle uses signifies only *the obedience of faith*; the heart's acquiescing and resting in the truth as it comes enforced by the testimony of God, and giving it that weight and influence on the believer's conduct, which such authority deserves.

In this course they set out fairly. The Apostle expresses it in the allusion we very frequently meet with in the New-Testament writings, this Apostle's especially: and the allusion is well chosen to represent the necessity of the utmost exertion of activity and diligence. The Apostle gives us a pattern of it in his own conduct, Phil. iii. 13. 14. "this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to these which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" in the same terms he exhorts the Hebrews, xii. 1. 2. And on account of the many difficulties and strong opposition Christians have to lay their account with, from the rulers of the darkness of this world without, and from the flesh with its affections and lusts within, it is likewise called

called *labouring, wrestling, fighting*. The Galatians had set out in this course; and the Apostle testifies they had *run well*; and that they could not do without keeping the prize and goal constantly in their eye, and keeping the straight course, without losing time by turning out of the way on any account. They had the truth of God for their guide; and so long as they kept by that, it was impossible they could miscarry: for there they had at once perfect light to see their way, and perfect power to stand against, and to overcome all difficulty and opposition; being there provided with the whole armour of God, and the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith.

Well then might the Apostle ask, *who hindered them* to persevere and go forward? The shield of faith, had it been used as it ought, would have quenched all the fiery darts of the devil; but when any one point of truth is suffered to slip, so much faith must lose of its strength; and so much clear advantage will the enemy gain. His agents had brought the sufficiency of the grace which is in Christ Jesus into doubt with them, and were a-
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bout persuading them to patch it up with their own works, circumcision and observance of the law of Moses, and to rest their hope of salvation on that; by which they should have been insensibly stolen off from the only foundation which God had laid, Christ and his grace, and thereby left to the will of their enemies. It was this unhappy suggestion that stopped and hindered them from pursuing the course they had so happily begun. But from whatsoever quarter it came, he assures them, *vers. 8: it came not from him who called them.*

By what he says, *vers. 11.* to vindicate himself from the gross imputation the seducers had loaded him with, *viz.* that he was himself as much for circumcision as they; which probably they supported by his circumcising Timothy, some have thought, that *by him that called them*, he meant himself; and wanted to clear himself from having any hand in bringing them into the snare which they were unhappily intangled in: and it might have passed, were it not, that the *calling* he here speaks of is of such a nature, as nothing but the Spirit and power of God could make effectual; and that

that accordingly we find it constantly attributed to him as his peculiar work. This gives his words another sort of authority than any thing coming from himself: for if it come not from God, at best it must be useless, and could answer no good purpose; so far from it, that it had, and all attempts of this kind must have, a very dangerous tendency. It lodges a very injurious imputation on his consummate wisdom, as if he had not provided his people in all the necessary means of salvation. It is worse, if any thing can be so; it is a sacrilegious usurpation of the incommunicable authority of the only law-giver and king, and making void the gospel of Christ with their patch-work institutions, as the Jewish doctors did the law of Moses by their traditions.

In this view, the Apostle very pertinently applies the well-known proverb, vers. 9. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* It may be applied either to particular persons or societies. A small error insensibly admitted into one's system of faith, often proves like a dead fly in the most precious ointment of the apothecary. Error, though seemingly small, either in doctrine or

practice, getting admittance into a church, is yet more dangerous, because its influence is like to be more extensive. In both these respects, it was a very seasonable caution to the Galatians, and will be so to all Christians, so long as the world stands. Those especially who assume to themselves a power of imposing in small matters, may very easily be drawn on to carry it further than even themselves first intended. It is not improbable, that these same seducers the Apostle treats with such severity, really thought there was no harm for Gentile Christians to admit circumcision, any more than the natural Jews; who, though they believed in Christ, yet continued very zealous for the legal observances, until the destruction of the temple made them impracticable.

What the Apostle adds, vers. 10. of his being well persuaded that the Galatians, on cool consideration, *would be of the same mind with him*, might pass for a masterpiece of that kind of address, which those who have the best knowledge of mankind justly reckon most effectual for soothing those they deal with into a compliance with their intentions; especially when

when he lays the whole blame of their unsettled state on those *who troubled them*, and very expressly consigns them to the divine vengeance; which those he writes to had no other way of avoiding being partners in, but by a steady and resolute adherence to the truth as they had received it. But besides that he, on all occasions, very peremptorily disclaimed the persuasive words of man's wisdom, and what the wisdom of the world suggested, he appears to have built his persuasion on a very different bottom; he *was persuaded in the Lord*. This might seem, in such a man as Paul, to indicate some particular revelation made to him concerning them. But there was no need of it in the present case. They had received the Lord Jesus, and his Spirit, and of course were taken under his direction and special care. However, therefore, the adversary might be permitted to trouble, and even to shake them, not so properly for their trial, as to make them feel that their strength did not lie in themselves, but in the grace which was in Christ Jesus; yet he was sure none should

be able to pluck them out of his hand; for

they were kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

There is something in the Apostle's denunciation of judgement on those who troubled and endeavoured to unsettle them, *whosoever they be*, which plainly enough refers to what he had said before: *Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* And this explains both the judgement he here speaks of, and the *cutting off*, vers. 12. which some interpreters refer to the sentence of excommunication, and being cut off from communion with the faithful in church-privileges. There is indeed something very awful in that sentence, as it carries in it a sort of temporary curse; but which is only conditional, and is taken off by sincere repentance. But the curse the Apostle speaks of, infers such a cutting off as should put it out of the power of these seducers, to give them any further trouble, which excommunication could not do. And when it is further considered, what we may be pretty sure of, that these bigotted Jews would never join in communion with the uncircumcised, when they

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would not so much as eat with them, such a sentence would have been of no use at all; besides the absurdity of casting out of their communion those who were never in it.

We need not stand on the Apostle's vindication of himself, vers. 11. It was very proper that he should assure them, that he had never given any countenance unto these men, whatever they pretended; and he does it by a very plain evidence. Had he preached circumcision, the offence given the Jews by the cross of Christ, or preaching the gospel, must have ceased. What made it so odious to them was the just apprehension, that it was calculated to set aside the whole temple-service, and would of course put an end to all the honours and distinctions they were possessed of, and reduce the high-priests and rulers, their scribes and doctors of the law, to a level with common men. For if these distinctions could have been secured to them, believing in Christ and his spiritual kingdom would have given them no trouble; and the circumcised Gentiles would have been received as proselytes, and incorporated into their nation. Accordingly they who thus submitted

submitted had no more trouble. But this was by no means the Apostle's case: he still suffered persecution from that people, and was the peculiar butt of their rage and malice; and thus they showed themselves to be the genuine children of the bond woman; for *he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.*

Throughout the epistle, the Apostle, in his resentment he had shown against the wicked attempts made by the false teachers, and especially in the concluding part, had shown at the same time the warmest zeal for the welfare and happiness of the churches of Galatia. In the following 13th verse, he gives his reason, and at the same time makes a transition to the duties of the Christian life, by a very necessary caution against the abuse of their liberty.

The reason he gives for his great earnestness and severity against the opposers is a good one: *The believing Galatians were called unto liberty.* The very same our Lord speaks of to the refractory Jews, *If the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed.* It was the glorious liberty of the sons of God; a liberty, which it cost the Son of God very dear to procure for an enslaved world, no less than
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his own precious blood. What madness there must it have been to entertain a thought of giving up any the least part of it. But they were called into this liberty, and entered upon it by the special order and gift of God: and surely too much severity can never be shown against such as set themselves against God, and attempt to disannul his orders, and rob his people of the most valuable gift they were capable of receiving from his hand.

But the best gifts a creature can receive may be abused; and in the hands of such a creature as man is, can hardly miss to be so. None of Adam's children can pretend to be half so well provided as he was in his primitive state, until they are found in Christ; in whom indeed they are complete. But the Apostle was by no means singular in what he said, Rom. vii. 18. *In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.* If we advert carefully to his expression, we will easily perceive, that it was not the corruption of human nature he meant, but nature itself, the human fabric and constitution: for it is in that which either good or evil dwells; the same which our Lord speaks of, *That which is born of the flesh*
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is flesh. This, as it is conveyed down from Adam by ordinary generation, is weak and feeble, and, what is worse, destitute of that spirit which only can make such a creature capable of living as spirits ought to do: And though sharing deeply in the sin and punishment of the first father of all; yet when it is born into this world, it can neither be said to be good or evil, until it begins to act; and our felt wants, and the objects around us, engage our attention, and draw out our affections and passions, or, which is the same thing, our appetites, cravings, and longings, which go under the general name of *lusts*, in our translation of the Bible. These are the lusts of the *flesh* and the *mind*, Eph. ii. 3. and these two take in the whole man; and it is through these same lusts that corruption comes into the world, 2 Pet. i. 4. The Apostle James gives us the whole process, James i. 13. 14. 15. The man is tempted when his lusts and cravings are drawn out by external objects. He is carried away, and his lusts conceive and bring forth sin, and that brings forth death. Thus every child of Adam continues

tinues dead, and with the worst kind of death, “dead in trespasses and sins.”

As man is born the furthest from a self-sufficient being of all that we have any knowledge of, the best account that can be made of him is absolute emptiness. He has every thing necessary for the support of life, and the enjoyment of it, to take in from without, and no faculties or powers to discern between good and evil; until he learns it by experience or instruction. No wonder then that he is often mistaken, and misled by outward appearances, to mistake evil for good, and good for evil; being at the same time so made, that use and custom easily and insensibly grow into a habit. But this, when once formed, is very hard to be got rid of: perfect wisdom has declared it as hard as *for the Ethiopian to change his skin, or the leopard his spots*. And there it is that the strength of natural corruption lies. Custom forms the taste; and what suits that, gives pleasure; what does not, gives pain more or less. And hence every man is provided with a standard by which good and evil is weighed, and all his cravings and pursuits are adjusted; but far from the truth.

By this one may easily see how every thing that favours the darling pursuit will be eagerly grasped at, and no pains will be spared to get rid of every thing that crosses it. The law of God, the standard of perfect wisdom, is the great obstacle, and no pains will be spared to bring it down to a consistency with our wishes. No engine has been found more successful, and more employed this way, than *Christian liberty*, ill understood; and thence very commonly carried quite beyond the bounds the great author of it designed. As he has stated it, nothing can be imagined a more rational mean, or near so likely to reconcile the heart to God, and plant the law of love there; that is, to lay a sure foundation for holiness in heart and life. But the flesh, the natural human fabric, corrupted as it is by lust and natural ignorance, knows not how to distinguish between liberty and licentiousness, and *turns the very grace of God into lasciviousness*, Jude, *v* 4. And thus the grace of God, which brings salvation, and this highest instance of it, which has it in its very nature to teach us to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously,*

righteously, and godly, is shamefully perverted and abused, to make poor thoughtless sinners careless and secure in the way to utter destruction.

What the Apostle directs to in opposition to this unhappy abuse, and as the genuine tendency of that liberty wherewith Christ makes his disciples and followers free, deserves our serious attention. It is *to serve one another in love*. Those who know any thing of what love is, will easily perceive that this is no more than extending our Lord's last command to his disciples, *to love one another*, into its proper and necessary consequences. The Apostle John, the beloved disciple, extends it far, *even to lay down our lives for the brethren*; and yet it is no more than Paul says, when he directs Christians to love one another, as Christ loved them. But love, where it is true and sincere, sticks at nothing that can any how serve those whom we love.

By the connection in which the Apostle places this precept, he directs us to the true source and spring of it, and indeed the only one that can answer the purpose. The relation which those who share in this liberty are entered into, it is the li-

berty of the sons of God. He is their Father, and they are all brethren in Christ; and of all brethren, they are most bound to love as brethren. All men are born brethren, the children of one man; and there is nothing in human nature to make them hate one another, until it be corrupted through lust, the love of a present world. That indeed makes not only separate, but opposite interests, and makes them appear as enemies to one another. It is true, all the children of God are heirs of one and the same inheritance; but so much of a different nature from worldly ones, that the number of co-heirs, instead of lessening, greatly increases their enjoyment. Their Father is their inheritance; and in the same proportion as the knowledge and love of God rises toward perfection, the love of the world diminishes, until it goes for nothing, and consequently nothing is left to fall out about, and the brethren dwell together in perfect unity.

It will be proper to observe too, that this same liberty carries in it a release, not only from the curse of the law, and the death which they were bound under; but likewise that basest of all bondage; slavery

slavery to foolish and hurtful lusts: the spirit of sons, the very Spirit and life of Christ dwells in them; and the love of God determines them effectually to all the labour of love; for all the law is fulfilled in one word, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self*, vers. 14. It must be so: for it necessarily infers our Lord's general rule, "That whatever we would that men should do to us, we should do the same to them;" and that as plainly implies the negative, that we should never do any thing to another which we would not have done to ourselves in the same circumstances. Rules so plain and express, that it has been found impossible to explain them away; though none but a right Christian, that is, one who has the love of God ruling in his heart, and consequently is dead to a present world, will ever chuse to practise. The word which we render *serviug one another*, has a much stronger meaning than what we affix to *serviug one*; it imports no less than *giving one's self a bond-servant*, so as to have no power left to dispose of ourselves, or our labour any other way, much less to have it at our option, whether to serve them

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or not. Our fovereign proprietor and Lord has bound us in the strongest terms to this service: and whatever might be pleaded for our independency, or being under no obligation to those he has bound us to serve, nay, and though they were our professed enemies, must go for nothing in this case; to him we are bound; and must obey.

Those who know no other fund of pleasure or happiness, but what can be picked up in a present world, will reckon these hard sayings, which they think nobody can bear; and many a shift is made to bring them down to our standard. But those who have overcome the world, are quite of a different opinion. The commandments of God are so far from being grievous, that they are the joy of their heart; for they know the lawgiver is wise and good; so good, that he gives no commands but what are necessary for their happiness; and so wise, that he can never be mistaken; and he forbids nothing but what has a tendency to their destruction. We cannot remit any thing of the law of love, without running in some degree into what the Apostle here warns against;

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biting and devouring one another. The word he uses properly signifies *eating up*, and seems to be taken from what God says, Psal. xiv. 4. of the wicked, “that they eat up his people as bread;” and the event of course was, that they were in the utmost danger of being *consumed one of another*; so significant is the expression, that it is become a common term in our language, denoting at once the injustice and baseness of taking the advantage, either of our neighbour’s ignorance or necessities, so as to trick and impose on them: they hurt their neighbours in temporal things, and destroy themselves eternally.

But how shall men, in their present circumstances, made for this world, and formed upon the customs and fashions of it, and of course, under the influence of their natural appetites and cravings, and, if we believe the Apostle, inflamed to them, and thence living in envy at least, if not as enemies, hateful to, and hating one another; how shall creatures in such circumstances be brought to love one another, so as to serve one another as they do themselves? It has been thought, could the affections and passions be once brought under

under the direction of the mind, the thing might be done, and reason would be able to over-balance all their irregular fallies, and cure all that corruption which is found in them, or occasioned by them; and thus they construct what the Apostle says, vers. 17. of the contrariety and opposition there is between the *flesh* and *spirit* *lusting against one another*. But the experience of the world shows beyond contradiction, how unequally matched the combatants are, and how almost universally the flesh prevails. And it cannot be otherwise: for all that reason can do, is by comparing and balancing the motives on both sides, and urging those which appear of greatest weight; it may recommend, but has neither power nor authority to make the sentence effectual, nor even light enough to give a convincing verdict; the principal motives lie out of its reach in the divine testimony, and faith only can bring them fairly into the field; so as to set them on a level with sense and feeling.

When the Apostle then directs Christians, v 16. to *walk in the Spirit*, it must be something more than that natural principle.

ple of reason which qualifies men for managing their worldly affairs, and can be no less than that new divine principle of life, which Christ, by the word of the gospel, conveys into the dead children of Adam in the new birth, whereby he lives in them, and they become new creatures, the children of the living God; and are qualified to live in love, as it becomes the brethren of Jesus Christ, *who loved them, and gave himself for them.* I need not say again, that this same *new creature*, can neither subsist, nor act, separated from Jesus Christ, in whom its spirit and life, with all its spiritual powers, are lodged; and thence continually supported and supplied. In this view it is easy to see, how the *spirit* and *flesh* must be contrary to one another; and all their appetites and cravings, and all the affections and passions, must be so likewise. The Apostle gives us a fair view of them, Rom. vii. as two different laws contending for the superiority, the one residing in his flesh, and the other in his mind; which we need not stay to illustrate.

Here then we have two agents, the *flesh*

and *spirit*, the same with the old and new man, the child of Adam, and the child of God. We have likewise a Spirit of a higher order, the Spirit of Christ conveying and supporting the life of the spirit: and though there is no mention of it here, we are told of another spirit, *that works in the children of disobedience*. Thus we are told of *living in the spirit*, and *walking in the spirit*. The *flesh* is said to work; but though the *spirit*, or new creature, is not idle, all its works are produced by that *Spirit* which dwells and abides in true believers: hence they are called *fruits of the Spirit*, and all the honour of them belongs to the giver of that *Spirit*, who worketh all their works in them. When therefore the *flesh lusteth against the spirit*, and *the spirit against the flesh*, the conflict is really between the *good* and *evil spirit*; and one needs not say on which side the victory will fall. The Apostle tells us, that the upshot of the struggle is, *that they do not the things that they would*, for so the original words run; and our translators had no reason, that I can see, for putting in *cannot*, which is not in the Greek text. They seem to have thought, that their mind was kept in such an equal

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poise between the two opposite principles, that whatever side their will fixed on by the one, they were crossed, and their resolutions made ineffectual by the other. But whatever truth there may be in that, it does not seem to be the mind of the Apostle in this place; on the contrary, he exhorts to *walk in the Spirit*, with this assurance, *that they should not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*; and however the *flesh* might be, as indeed it frequently is, so strong as to captivate and engage the will, and blind the understanding, yet it cannot make out a complete victory. The Spirit puts a stop to the progress; and though the flesh and mind be both on a side, faith, under the conduct and assistance of the Spirit, brings both into a due subjection.

From these hints it will not be hard to gather the true meaning of the Apostle's exhortation, to *walk in the Spirit*. He gives us a guide to it, vers. 25. and, at the same time, a strong reason for complying with it: *If, saith he, we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*. The Spirit is the principle of the new creature's life. The giving and uniting the Spirit of Christ with the *spirit* of man, constitutes

the new creature: he is the Spirit of truth, and leads into all truth, and is consequently the leading directing principle of all the actings of life; he is the Spirit of Christ, by which all grace is conveyed from that all-sufficient grace which is in him; and our Lord gives it as the end of his sending him, "that he should take of his, and shew it, convey it, to his disciples." *To live in the Spirit* then must be the same thing as to live in Christ, and that is the same thing as to have Christ living in us; for they are so closely connected, that they cannot be separated: And thus the exhortation runs into that which this same apostle gives on another occasion, *As ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk in him*; that is to say, seeing ye live on that grace which is in Christ Jesus, and can do nothing without him, i. e. without his Spirit, let it be your care to follow the leading of that Spirit, to live and walk by the faith of Jesus Christ, and a dutiful dependence on him.

We observed before, how the Apostle represents the *flesh* as an agent; and by the detail he here gives us of its *works*, we find they are really the works of the *man*, while he continues, as the Apostle
 Jude

Jude describes the mere child of Adam, *sensual, having not the Spirit*. As these works are but too well known, it will be needless to stand on defining them. Only it may be proper to observe how he ranks them, as himself had distinguished them on another occasion, *into the lusts of the flesh*, producing merely sensual works; and those of the *mind*, of a more spiritual kind. The first sinks the noble creature even below the brutes; and the other forms them into the very image of the devil. He begins and ends his catalogue with the first, the product of fleshly lust; sins committed through the strength of fleshly or bodily lust, the abuse of our natural constitution; which are so gross, that no body can miss to perceive them, but such as are absolutely hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. The lusts of the *mind*, viz. *wrath, strife, &c.* do not arise so much from any thing in the constitution disposing men thereto, as from their circumstances in the world, and interests, jarring and interfering with one another, and all springing from the love of a present world, and ignorance of any thing better to overbalance it.

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There are two, which it is hard to say whether they belong to the *flesh*, or the *mind*, or whether they ought not to stand in a class by themselves: and though many of the rest have been extenuated, and in some measure excused, yet these are the only two which have been disputed; they are *idolatry*, and what our translators render *witchcraft*. The first, all agree to condemn in general terms; and particularly the gross idolatry of the Heathen nations; but are greatly divided about what is, and what is not, justly designed by that name. I believe the Apostle's definition of it, Rom. i. 25. is the best, *worshipping and serving the creature more than the creator*; on which, I presume, it is that he calls covetousness *idolatry*. And there is a plain reason for it, viz. that the covetous man shows a greater regard to the world than he does to God; or, in other words, loves it better than God. And love, we know, is not only so necessary an ingredient in divine worship, that there can be no such thing as worship where it is wanting, but is itself the highest worship. On the same grounds we must say, that every sinner is an idolater: for no man will disobey God, when

when nothing is to be made by it; nor in any case, but where the soul is sunk into such an habitual neglect of him, as one will rather venture God's displeasure, and all that may follow upon it, than the loss of what he proposeth to make by the sin. In this light *covetousness* stands, which, though confined into narrow bounds in our language, yet the original word takes in all the irregular appetites or lustings which brings forth sin. This same unlawful lusting is a grosser and more inexcusable idolatry, than that of the most ignorant Heathens. What they worshipped, they took to be the true God; but the wilful sinner worships what he knows is but the basest of his creatures.

As for what our translators have rendered *witchcraft*, some have bestowed much learned labour to dwindle it away into the art of poisoning, or some piece of ignorant superstition; and to persuade the world, that there never was any such correspondence between the devil and deluded mortals as has gone commonly under the name of *witchcraft*. And the same arguments, if there was any strength in them,

them, would persuade us, that the numerous instances the evangelists give us of the possession of evil spirits, were no more than natural diseases, or the effects of distempered fancies. The word, as we find it used by Heathen writers, denotes such as used spells and incantations, and either did, or at least pretended to do, great things by them; such as, curing diseases, &c.; which, as they had no connection with natural causes, must have been done by invisible powers, demons, or devils. Such were their divinations and oracles, which it cannot be made appear were all mere cheats; and which could not subsist without either a direct or implicit compact with devils. And thus the two go fitly together; worshipping the world, and worshipping the devil, more than God blessed for evermore.

The order in which the Apostle lays these works of the *flesh*, merits our attention. By indulging these fleshly lusts in *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness*, the soul is so degraded and debased below the simple animal life, and so sunk in corruption, that it can relish
nothing

nothing, not to say of the pure spiritual pleasures to be found in the favour, friendship, and love of God, but such as human reason would recommend, viz. the intercourses of love and friendship among men. Hence they are insensibly plunged deeper and deeper in the love of a present world, and that, we are well informed, is *enmity against God*. The only tie which can unite and keep men together is broken; and while every one grasps what he can of the unsatisfying pleasures of a present world, the devilish symptoms necessarily break out, viz. *wrath, strife, seditions, and running into divisions and parties*; (for that is the true import of the word which we have formed out of the Greek, and call *heresies*); and the native effects of party-spirit, *envyings, murders, and lands in the most unnatural vices, drunkenness and revellings*; as if they wanted, of all things, to extinguish those glimmerings of reason our kind creator has been pleased to indulge us with, in order to receive the instructions he has favoured us with in his blessed Son, by whom he has condescended to speak to us in these last times. And surely there was great reason to expect that God's creatures,

who absolutely depended on him, would reverence his Son; especially when he came upon such a gracious errand as to be their Saviour.

I forgot to take notice of one species of idolatry, which has always been, (and never more than now), avowedly propagated by the men who are the patrons of what they call *natural religion*. It is dressing up a philosophical idol, such as never had a being, and putting it in the place of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And much pains has been taken to persuade us, that the Heathen *Jupiter* was the very same true God with *Jehovah*, whom the Jews did, and the Christians now do, worship; and that all the noise which has been made about their worshipping false gods is without any foundation. Indeed I believe it will not be very easy to find any essential difference between what they call *God*, and *Baal*, the grand idol of the nations of Canaan.

The *new creature*, that which is born of the Spirit, the *new man*, born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God, is not, cannot be idle: for *he is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good*

good works, which God hath prepared before all ages for them to walk in. But the Apostle knew better things than to make use of the same way of speaking which he had done in the other case. When he had laboured more abundantly than all the other apostles, he durst not assume the honour of the work: "It was not he, but the grace of God in him." So here, though it is very evident, that what he here mentions are really the qualities and actions of the renewed man, yet he calls them not *his works*, but *the fruits of that Spirit*, which the renewed man had received. Our Lord brought in this way of speaking, in the image he gives of the vine and branches; and it is a very proper one. The branches carry the fruit; but it is the sap conveyed from the root through the trunk of the vine to which all their fruitfulness is owing. The first we find of these fruits is *love*: and with great justice it is placed first; for all the rest are no more but the native consequences and actings of it. Thus we find this Apostle representing this substantial fruit, 1 Cor. xiii. throughout, where he has said every thing that is needful on the subject. Nor do I need to shew how they come to

be called *the fruits of the Spirit*, when they all flow from that grace which is in Christ Jesus; for it is by his Spirit that all this grace is conveyed to the believer.

One may justly wonder how it should ever have entered into the head of any one who had seen the Bible to separate morality, (as social duties especially are called), into a human science; and yet more, to send their pupils to the Heathen philosophers to learn it: and, most of all, how this should be made an essential part of education in Christian schools, when we are so solemnly taught, that the love of God is the only foundation on which morality can stand, and such a foundation as necessarily produces all the duties which belong to it in an incomparably more perfect manner; as much more perfect as the law of God, written in the heart, is more perfect than the dry precepts and trifling motives of philosophy, and the chicane of metaphysical reasoning, which may fill the head, but can never reach the heart, regulate the passions, and form the conduct of life; and, least of all, enable one to stand against the wiles of the devil. How-

its votaries, the Apostle may be presumed to have understood the human state and constitution rather better than they; for he had an infinitely better teacher, that Spirit which made ours, and endued them with all those perfections and powers which we thoughtlessly value ourselves upon, as if they were absolutely our own property.

We must not overlook the event and issue of these very different works of the *flesh*, and fruits of the *Spirit*, as the Apostle here states them. The first ought to be carefully considered by us; and the rather, that we find him expressly declaring, vers. 21. *that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* We need not stand to observe, what is allowed by every body, that the kingdom of God denotes the state of the children of God, and the inheritance which belongs unto them as such; the same with the kingdom of the Messiah, and very generally used in that sense in the days of our Lord and his apostles. It appears to have taken its rise from the prophet Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Dan. ii. 44. and accordingly made use of in the first publication of the gospel,

gospel, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*: Hence it is called the *gospel*, or *good news of the kingdom*: and our Lord comforts his disciples by this, that it is his Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom: and the Apostle to the Hebrews says plainly of all believers, that *they had received the kingdom which cannot be moved*. Nor will any body be at a loss to apprehend how the kingdom of Christ should be called theirs; who considers that intimate union which subsists between Christ and them, and that the constitution and whole management of his kingdom is for their benefit, and not his own, who needs it not; that they are set down with him upon his throne, and share with him in all the honours of his kingdom. It is the same with eternal life, which is but another word for the glory, honour, and immortality, which all who are in Christ possess in prospect and hope, and will be entered into the full possession of, when he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

This gives the foundation for distinguishing the kingdom as it subsists in a present world, from what it will be after the resurrection, when it shall stand pure
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and unfulfilled with the lustings of the flesh against the spirit, by the titles of *grace* and of *glory*; which yet must not be so understood, as if *grace* did not subsist and shine forth in the last as well as the first. That those who do such things cannot enter into either of them, the Apostle's authority is sufficient assurance: for it is no more but the declaration of the testimony of God, and that by his special direction and command; and to say the thing as it is, if what the prophets and apostles testify in God's name is received on any other ground but the testimony of God, it is not, cannot be reckoned *faith*. But in this case we have all the authority of reason, improved and enlightened as it is by the instruction God has graciously given us, that in every view we can take of these same works of the flesh, the conclusion will come out strong, *that they who do such things, cannot inherit the kingdom of God.*

On the other hand, those who bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, as these are of a nature directly contrary to the other, so they have a contrary issue. He does not say directly, that such as do these things shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;

heaven; but he says what is equivalent to it, and what moreover carries the strongest assurance that they shall not, nay, and that they cannot enter into condemnation; for he says, *there is no law against them.* It is the same case which this same apostle put, Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

What he adds there, "that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, had made them free from the law of sin and death," explains what he says here, vers. 18. *that those who are led by the Spirit, are not under the law.* They who are in Christ, are dead to the law, through the body of Christ, and raised up in him to a new station, and have a new principle of action; they are directed and led by the Spirit. And when it appears, by the fruits of the Spirit, that they are so, the law has nothing to say to them; they are, as we may say, out of its jurisdiction, and are under another government; where the measures of judgement, both in justifying and condemning, are altogether different: "He who believeth and is baptized, shall be

“ be saved; and he who believeth not, “ shall be damned.” The law had its course on Jesus Christ, and in him, on all who are made conformable unto him in his death, and has no more to say to them. They are left dead in the hands of their great creator, and are quickened by his sovereignly free grace: for surely nobody will pretend, that God was under any the least obligation to employ his creating power to raise any of the apostate race; and if he was bound to none, he may quicken whom he will; and none can complain of being injured, when he leaves them where they have chosen to be.

But this same sovereignty of grace, where-ever it is exerted, is so far from inferring the conclusion which some, who reckon themselves very wise, very ignorantly fasten upon it, viz. that it encourages men to continue in sin, and neglect the study of holiness; that it is absolutely impossible for those who have *tasted* of the grace of God in truth to draw any such conclusion from it. It is true, the external doctrine of grace may be, and has been, turned into wantonness; but that is only grace in the *theory*: but where-ever it is

received, and entertained in the heart, it teaches men effectually *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*. The Apostle gives the reason, Rom. vi. 2.—11. and the same truth he inculcates here, vers. 24. *they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the lusts and affections of it.* He does not say barely, they have crucified the affections and lusts, but the *flesh* itself, “in which no good thing can dwell,” the old man whose deeds these are: and most certainly they are the deeds of the man, the child of Adam; and in these he will employ himself until he is born again, and created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, by the Spirit of Christ *living and abiding in him*. It is by this *Spirit* he lives; and no consequence can be stronger than that which we have, vers. 25. *If we live in or by the Spirit, let us also walk in or by the Spirit*. I put it thus, because the Greek particle is used for both, and often rendered by our translators either *in* or *by*, as they judged the place and matter required.

After what has been said upon this subject, it might be justly deemed superfluous to take any notice of a set of men who make no difference between the spiritual, and the rational or sensual world.

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They seem to imagine, that man is such a perfect being, and endued with something so near self-sufficiency, that he has no need of the Spirit of Christ, or even of Christ himself; for he and his Spirit are but one. When the Apostle therefore says, *Christians, live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit*, they think he means no more by the Spirit but the rational soul, the spiritual part of the man; in the strength of which they seem to have no doubt but that they shall regulate all their affections with such exactness, that God himself must be pleased with them, and reward them more liberally, than Adam, in the utmost purity of his innocence, had any reason to expect. We know the Christian “can do all things, through Christ strengthening him.” But let these men seriously try what they can do without him, and they will soon find themselves so strongly bound under sin and death, that nothing but the hand of omnipotence can loose them; or in the Apostle’s words, *that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and that alone, can make them free from the law of sin and death*: they will feel, on the first serious attempt, what

they will not take the Apostle's word for, *that they are dead in trespasses and sins.*

As the grace of God in Christ Jesus is the fund, and only fund, out of which the children of God are, or can be, provided in the proper supply of all their wants, and relieved from their numerous weaknesses and infirmities, one may easily see, how the Christian *walks in the Spirit.* In general it is no more than exerting the proper actings of life, which we commonly call *living*, or *employing the vital spirit to its proper purposes*; as we may observe in our present life, which is indeed no more but a shadowy representation or image of that perfect and true life conveyed and maintained by the Spirit of Christ. And if we want a more particular view of it, we need only consider the promises of the Spirit, and the purposes which that unspeakable gift is designed to answer; and then it will appear, that in our present situation, where we cannot have access to walk by sight, *to walk in the Spirit* is the same thing as *to walk in the faith* of these declarations and promises; which faith the Apostle assures us, gives subsistence to things not seen, and clear evidence to things

things hoped for, and thus presents them with the same certainty as if we saw them with our eyes, Heb. xi. 1.

In this light there is nothing left us to value ourselves upon, or to boast and glory in. By the grace of God we are what we are; and it is his Spirit that works all our works in us. Whatsoever therefore exceeds Paul's estimation of all that he had done, expressed in these words, "yet not I, but the grace of God, or Christ in me," must be *vain-glory*, that is, valuing or boasting ourselves in what we have no title to. Our Lord speaks of honour that comes from men, and that which comes from God only. The first, however it is courted, valued, and even boasted of, can serve no other purposes but a present world; and in the opinion of one of the wisest of mere men, and who had tried it most thoroughly, is no more but vanity and vexation of spirit; and all the pains that is taken about it, is but labouring for the wind. It must be so in the sight of God, and all perfect spirits, who are always of his mind; something rather more silly upon the main, than what we laugh at our children for: nor can there be any honour worth minding but what comes from God only.

only. But there is something in this *vain-glory* yet greatly worfe: it is plainly robbing God, by intercepting and appropriating to ourselves the honour which belongs to him, and that grace which he hath treasured up in his blessed Son for the provision of his children, and that Spirit whose peculiar business it is to convey it to them. I but just observe, that our translators recede somewhat from the Apostle's injunction, as he has left it. They construct it as if it was directed only against the *desire* of *vain-glory*; but he says simply, *not vain-glorious*, directing his caution against the thing itself, wherever any degree of it is found.

The propriety, and even the necessity, of such a caution, appears further from what the Apostle joins with it; and which he connects so closely with it, that wherever this same *vain-glory* is found, *provoking one another*, and *envying one another* naturally follow. There is hardly any thing more *provoking*, than boasting of any advantage we have, or seem to have, over our neighbours; and, if there is any foundation for it, more ready to draw out *envy*. These are works of the *flesh*, which it
stands

stands always ready to produce on any the slightest temptation. But of all others the heart of the vain-glorious man is ready to rise against every competitor, and especially such as may be deemed to deserve better than he; nor is there any cure but humility and lowliness of mind.

CHAP. VI. I. — 10.

1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.
2. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.
3. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.
4. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
5. For every man shall bear his own burden.
6. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.
7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
8. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.
9. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
10. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

THE Apostle, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had given a general rule, which, could it be strictly adhered to,

to, would be abundantly sufficient to secure all the particular duties of the Christian life: it is, that Christians should *walk in the Spirit, as they live in the Spirit.* By that *Spirit* the law of God, as he has given it, is written on the heart, and thus they become a law to themselves: for the Apostle John assures us, “that he who is born of God, doth not commit sin;” for this good reason, “that the seed of God abides in him.” He is made for good works; and these are the only ones he finds his pleasure in. But the Apostle knew very well, that every man, even the best Christian, while abiding in these bodies of flesh, *has a law in his members, warring against the law which is in the mind,* and often carrying him captive. He knew likewise, that there was in every child of Adam a certain measure of vanity often founded in a notion of excellency, purely imaginary, which prompts them to claim a proportional share in the good opinion of those about them, the very thing he calls *vain-glory*; and which he knew was the occasion of all or most of the differences, especially of that *envy* which is the root of all evil. And could that be prevented, and men brought to a proper
measure

measure of tenderness and concern for one another's ease and quiet, or, which is the same thing, *to love one another as Christ has loved us*, they would no more be in danger of *biting and eating up one another*.

Of all things, they would be in the least danger of *rejoicing in evil*; and being pleased to get an ill tale to tell of their neighbours. The Apostle directs here to a very contrary course. *When a brother is overtaken in a fault*, it will not be sufficient to forbear insulting him, and rejoicing over him, which is so much the way of the world, but they must make it their business *to restore him*. The original word is very significant: it is to restore a dislocated member to its proper place and position. All Christians are members of the body of Christ, by their union to him their head, and consequently members one of another; and every member has its proper place and use in the body, as the Apostle elegantly represents it, Rom. xii. 4. 5. and 1 Cor. xii. 12. & seqq.

The injunction is directed to those who are *spiritual*, to such as are *born of the Spirit, who live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit; brethren in Christ, and are living members of his*

body. And indeed no body else will either have inclination or capacity for such a work: for it is a work of that kind, as cannot be managed without all the affection and tenderness of a brother. They are to restore such an one *in the spirit of meekness.* The first office of brotherly love is *faithfulness.* Not to suffer sin upon our brother, but by all means to rebuke him, was a precept of the law of Moses, Lev. xix. 17.; and what is very remarkable, the neglect of it is called *hating one's brother in his heart.* The hatred may not be so direct as to wish him ill, much less to do him ill: but it certainly argues a want of that due concern, and brotherly love which is always watchful for our brother's good, and much more against his suffering any damage which we can prevent; and sin unrepented of is without all doubt the greatest damage one can sustain. By no means may he be suffered to go on without being rebuked: not in the manner ignorant zealots rebuke, as lords over God's heritage, who treat every little difference, by the standard they have made for themselves, as an enormous crime; but in the spirit of meekness, that it may appear that

that pure love, and tender brotherly affection to the party, is the only motive.

The Apostle gives a good reason for this mild conduct; and if it is in the least reflected on, will most certainly be effectual. It is this, that no man can be sure that he will not some time or other fall into temptation, and even fall under it: *Consider thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* It is but the application of our Lord's rule, "to do as we would be done by in the same circumstances;" a short plain rule, perfectly just and equitable; and so extensive, that were it minded, every man would be in case to be a law unto himself.

But there is a principle deeply inlaid in the heart of every child of Adam, which puts a very great difference between himself and another; so great, that whenever the natural connections of blood or particular friendship wear out, the principle of humanity is well known to be a very slender tie. Strangers are such as we reckon we are not concerned to mind: and not only those Christian duties of mutual concern mentioned, vers. 1. but all the duties of humanity lie by neglected; and

the neglect is justified by that very common excuse, that it is impertinent officiousness to meddle in other people's affairs. However that may hold in worldly affairs among the men of the world, it can never be the case among Christians. The connection among them is too close to admit of any separate interests. And the Apostle lays it down as a general rule, which admits of no exception, *to bear one another's burdens*. The same which he extends further, and lays stronger, 1 Cor. x. 24. *Let no man seek his own: but every man another's wealth*. One needs not say how much this reaches beyond bare sympathizing with one another in our distresses and troubles. That is a very vain affection, if it does not engage us to exert our utmost efforts to relieve them. But the Christian's concern for his brethren in Christ is not terminated solely in their burdens and distresses. All their concerns are his, and he stands as much bound to promote their interests and welfare as his own.

But it is not only a duty arising from their near relation, but it is what they stand bound to by express commandment. *The law of Christ cannot be fulfilled without*

out it. There is no need of any laborious search to find out this law of Christ; *it is the law of love*. It is true, all God's laws are his; and he is, in the most proper sense, our lawgiver, as well as our king and judge. But what is most properly and peculiarly his law, is that which he commanded his disciples, and pressed on them by the love which he had shown them, *that they should love one another*; and which he gave as the badge by which his disciples should be known and distinguished from all the rest of mankind. On this foundation the Apostle John, who well understood it, carries it so far, as that we *ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*: and surely then we ought *to bear their burdens*, and concern ourselves in all their interests of every kind, and assist them to our utmost ability; for it is notoriously true, even though our Lord had never said it, that *the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment*.

The Apostle understood human nature perfectly in all the views it could be taken in; and particularly how apt men are to be pleased with themselves, and even value themselves greatly above what they deserve. He knew likewise, that none of
 Adam's

Adam's children had any thing to value themselves upon, unless they received it from the free sovereign grace of the creator; and that afforded them no matter of boasting or glorying at all. Abraham himself had nothing in the sight of God. It must then be a strange kind of delusion that can make such a creature *think himself to be something*. The Apostle's word seems as if it was made for the purpose. *He deceives* his own mind and understanding; the only faculty he has to keep him from being imposed on, or deceived by others.

What the Apostle adds here as the only possible way of getting out of this self-deception, is so much of a piece with the Apostle James's treatment of the man who said he had faith while he had not works, that it plainly appears, that Paul and he were precisely of the same mind, both with respect to justification by faith, and by works. How resolute Paul was in the point of justification by faith alone, without any works of law whatsoever, no body needs be told who reads his epistles; and even here, where he may be thought to be on another subject, he appears to have it directly in his eye: for though
love

love is indeed the fulfilling of the whole law, and he might have said so; yet that none might imagine he was directing them to a law of works, such as that of Moses, he tells them, it is the *law of Christ* he wanted them to *fulfil*, where the free sovereign grant of grace is laid at the foundation of all their obedience. But this is so far from making their obedience less necessary, that it is the only way to make it practicable, and at the same time furnishes the strongest and most effectual motives; in comparison of which, that which the Jewish law in the ten commandments was founded on, is but as a shadow to the substance.

To prevent then this dangerous self-deceit, the Apostle's direction becomes absolutely necessary, *that every man try and prove his own work*. Certain it is, he was once nothing; and if he now thinks himself to be something, the first question should be, how he came to be so? Man, who made thee to differ from another? is a question, if seriously considered, which will bring him down from the greatest height of self-conceit to his original level: and if he is indeed any thing, they must be the fruits of the Spirit that make him so; and these carry
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him to Christ, and the grace of God in him. But if these same fruits of the Spirit are not found in him, whatever his pretensions may be, his faith will be found as vain, as the Apostle James calls it: and if faith in Christ is not laid at the foundation, if we do not love God and our neighbour, because he loved us first, all the philosophical virtue one can be possessed of will not be fulfilling the law of Christ. The man is still nothing, or at best but a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, as the Apostle calls the most accomplished man who builds not on this foundation, whatever either himself or his neighbours may think of him.

It will be needless to observe, that when the Apostle directs every one to *prove his own work*, he does not mean that the bare trial, however just and impartial, should give him that matter of *joy* or boasting he speaks of. All the purpose that can answer is to prevent his deceiving himself. But if he shall be found *nothing*, or something worse, the use of this discovery is to put him into the right way of getting the foundations so firmly laid, that his work may stand the severest scrutiny.

tiny and trial: And the word the Apostle uses seems to imply as much; for it signifies such proving our own works, as may either find them, or make them approved; that is, such as they ought to be, so as to stand the impartial judgement of God.

The encouragement the Apostle gives, or the argument he makes use of to engage all who profess themselves Christians to this very necessary duty, needs to be very carefully considered, as the sound of the words separately might tempt one to look for the matter of their rejoicing, and even boasting *in themselves*, and not in *another*; which has been, in a direct opposition to the Apostle's constant doctrine and practice, improved, or rather abused, to exclude even Christ himself. It may not be refused, that what the Apostle puts the matter of their rejoicing or glorying upon, is the same which the Apostle Peter calls the *answer of a good conscience toward God*: for so this same Apostle says, 2 Cor. i. 12. *Our rejoicing*, the same word he uses here, *is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, —we have had our conversation in the world*:

But no such answer or testimony can be had from a good conscience, where the

law of Christ is not fulfilled; and that cannot be without taking in what the Apostle's conscience attested; not only *simplicity and godly sincerity*, but that his conversation was not directed by *fleshly or worldly wisdom, but by the grace of God*. But where that is the case, conscience attests all our works as fruits of the Spirit; and they that believe have the testimony in themselves, 1 John v. 10. and need not go abroad to beg any confirmation from the good opinion of others, or by comparing themselves with those about them.

On this view of the case, it must be the great business of every man to have fair views of the law of Christ, the only safe rule. Conscience can neither judge nor attest further than one knows; and indeed is nothing else but the internal consciousness of what one knows of the rule, and the conformity, or disconformity to it, in the course of his conduct. God has not left us at a loss. He has made a record of the whole progress of his grace and merciful kindness in his blessed Son, and the duties which arise upon it; particularly the great comprehensive one of faith working by love. But as, either through negligence or incapacity,

capacity, the benefit of it might be lost, he hath graciously appointed these important truths to be committed to faithful men, who should be able to teach others; an employment more than enough for the business of any one's life; so that nothing can be more just and equitable than the order the Apostle gives to the churches of Galatia, vers. 6. *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things.* This is the provision for ministers established throughout the New Testament. Our Lord himself begun it when he sent out his disciples to preach his gospel, and expressly forbid them to make any provision for themselves, on this well-known point of justice, that *the labourer is worthy of his hire*, Luke x. 7. On the same principle we find the Apostle reasoning, 1 Cor. ix. 9. — 14.; 1 Tim. v. 18. How then say some, that there are not, nor ought to be any such officers in the churches of Christ? But vain men will be wise.

What follows, vers. 7. 8. introduced with such solemnity, many commentators refer to what was enjoined in the foregoing verse; and as it is the command of Christ, the

king and head of the church, and is ingrossed among his laws, no doubt must not be left out. But the proverbial speech with which he introduces it, and what he says of *sowing to the flesh and to the Spirit*, appears evidently to extend further, and to comprehend the whole conduct and conversation. Nor is there any evidence of a particular reference to that duty more than to any other, except that it stands next to it in the context; but so does that follow vers. 5. to which it has no particular relation, but is inserted purely because the unhappy selfish spirit, and attachment to a present world, incline men to excuse themselves in the neglect of that duty. And perhaps the neglect of this ordinance of God for the support of a gospel-ministry, and substituting another method of provision in its room, has contributed more than any one thing to the corruptions which have in all ages disfigured and disgraced the Christian religion.

He had said, vers. 5. that *every man should bear his own burden*. An obvious truth, but of great importance. No body pretends to doubt of it; but this, like many other obvious truths, is very commonly overlooked, because it is so: and therefore
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the Apostle had great reason to rouse their attention, as he does, vers. 7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked.* It is he who makes every man's burden for him in the course of his providence; and he has wise purposes to answer by every burden he appoints, either in relation to the person himself, or to those about him. For it is by these that he prepares and lays to hand these good works he creates his people for, Eph. ii. 10. and gives them opportunities of bearing one another's burdens. And this makes the most momentous of all the obligations they lie under to *fulfil the law law of Christ*, and aggravates the consequences of the neglect, which thoughtless men are very ready to fall, and even run into. But we greatly deceive ourselves, if we imagine any consideration or motive whatsoever sufficient, either to warrant or excuse this neglect. It is God we have to do with. Him we cannot impose on, and he will not be *mocked*.

This stands supported by a truth so plain, that it has, I believe, in all ages, gone into a proverb, *Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.* We see it so in the natural, and the same reason holds in the spiritual world. Two things determine the nature
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of the harvest, viz. the quality of the soil, and the seed which is sown into it. The proverb on which the Apostle founds, seems to carry it mainly to the last. But as sowing supposes a soil of one kind or other, so it takes in the whole of that part of agriculture, not only sowing the seed, but preparing the ground, in the best manner the husbandman's skill can direct him. No body needs be told, that this present life is the seed-time, and the world to come the harvest or reaping time; and all agree, that according to the proper application of our diligence and industry in what we sow, such will be the crop when ripened into the harvest. Every seed has its own body, and accordingly will produce its like; and no body expects to reap wheat where he had sown thistles or hemlock. But even supposing what is sown to be of the best kind, if the ground is barren, or not rightly prepared; or supposing all the rest right, yet if there be not a proper quantity of seed, and care taken to destroy weeds, one can expect but a poor crop. These things are so plain, that every body can adjust the application.

It may admit of some doubt, whether the Apostle designs to represent *flesh* and *spirit* as the two different soils on which men work in this spiritual husbandry, or the different principles and views on which the labourers proceed, and the different kinds of seed which accordingly they are said to *sow*. The decision will depend on fixing the sense of the two terms, *flesh* and *spirit*; as it is in the different meanings affixed to these, that all the difference must lie. Those who by *flesh* mean the corruption of the human nature, and by *spirit* the renewing and healing it, abstracting from the nature or constitution of which these are supposed only different modes and qualities, can find no more in the Apostle's words, but *indulging the lusts of the flesh*, on the one hand; and on the other, *applying with diligence to mortifying the deeds of the body, and cultivating the powers of the mind*, for promoting that perfection for which they suppose man was originally designed.

But as we are assured, by an authority which may not be disputed, *that what is born of the flesh, is flesh*, or that the child of Adam, with all his natural perfections and powers, is made for a present world only; *and that*
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which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, that is, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and made for living as spirits ought to do, as members of the spiritual and eternal world; the Apostle's words cast up to us in a further and more comprehensive view. And these two stand represented by two different soils; of such different natures, that whatever culture and pains is bestowed on them, they always produce, according to their nature, good or bad fruit. Thus the child of Adam, notwithstanding all the labour and pains that can be taken on him, must end in death, and be reduced to that dust from which he was taken; and that is all that they who employ themselves on this perishable subject have to expect in return for all their pains and labour. They have nothing to *reap* but *corruption*. But this is not all: every step that is taken, or indeed can be taken, for the improvement of this untoward subject, produces only the more plentiful crop of corruption: for just so far as they who are *born of the flesh* are raised above the beasts that perish, so near will they be found to approach to the unhappy state and temper of devils, and secure to themselves

elves their dreadful share in the second death.

But those who *sow to the Spirit* are in a very different condition in all respects. They have another kind of soil to work on, a very different kind of seed; and the harvest accordingly is of a directly opposite kind: *For they who sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* I took it for granted, that what our Lord calls *Spirit*, is what the Apostle here designs, viz. *that which is born of the Spirit*, as opposed to what is *born of the flesh*. It is true, that the two different states of mankind, *under the law*, and *under the gospel*, are oftener than once denoted by these terms; and might with great propriety be so constructed in this place; as it was the Apostle's great design, to draw off the Galatians from that servile state, to the freedom and liberty of the sons of God, which was held forth to them in the gospel which Paul preached. But when all this is admitted, it makes no manner of alteration. The *law*, whatever it is that is meant by that word, if it is no more but *bare law*, is but one of these things that may easily fall within the reach of a

mere child of Adam; and obedience to its precepts, or keeping the *commandments*, as it is called, is really a great part of that labour and toil he bestows in *sowing to the flesh*; and such is the harvest. No deeds of law can deliver men from that corruption they are doomed to undergo: so far from it, that an attempt of this kind is, of all others, the most malignant work of the flesh; for it assumes the name and authority of God; and under that colour carries on the most daring rebellion against him, by grasping at eternal life, in a way which, he has declared, cannot succeed, unless they could make it out for themselves, in spite of his declared purpose to glorify the riches of his sovereign grace in his blessed Son.

And what is the gospel-state, when drawn out at full length in all the properties and privileges of it? Truly no more but what is comprehended in this one word *Spirit, born of the Spirit*; and the unfolding of it amounts to the very same thing, *a new creature begotten and born of God, by the immortal seed of the word of the gospel*; and maintained, supported, and carried on to perfection by the same means.

means. In the application of this same word of the gospel, consists the exercise and labour which the Apostle calls *sowing to the Spirit*. In this view, compared with our Lord's parable of the sower, this should be the same with the direction the Apostle gives, Col. iii. 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom." And where-ever this is received into a good and honest heart, it cannot miss to bring forth a plentiful harvest of everlasting life. It is the word of life, the manifestation of the Spirit of life, and therefore the proper food and nourishment of the new creature. But though both the soil and the seed be very good, it lies in a bad neighbourhood; the *flesh* and *Spirit* dwell together. This makes a continual attention, and diligent application, absolutely necessary. The prophet's direction for preparing the soil, Jer. iv. 3. "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns," must be seconded with assiduous watchfulness and care against the roots of bitterness springing up; *the flesh* *lusting against the Spirit*, and *the enemy* *always ready to steal in his tares*. But, after all, as in the natural husbandry the

richest foil, the best culture, and the choicest seed, cannot secure a plentiful crop without proper seasons, and the influence of the material heavens; (and these we cannot have at our wills, and if we had, we would not know how to chuse): so the success of the spiritual husbandry is still more dependent on the influences of the spiritual heavens; that is, on him who is the very substance of the spiritual world, and regulates at pleasure all the movements of it; but with this unspeakable advantage, that in the immensity of his goodness, he has opened and established a mean of communication which cannot be stopped or marred in its happy effects, in and through his beloved Son, in whom, we are assured, he is always well pleased; so that we may, with certainty, promise ourselves all that we can possibly need, to secure a harvest of life infinitely above our conceptions, and most sanguine hopes and wishes: for he has assured us, "he will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him."

The native, and I might say the necessary, consequence of this *sowing to the Spirit*, which may very properly be called
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the *spiritual husbandry*, is what the Apostle, vers. 9. calls *doing well*, and, vers. 10. *doing good*. *That which is born of the Spirit*, or the new man, is created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, or ordained, for his children to walk in. Thus things stand as they should do. The great creator and sovereign has provided, and daily, in the course of his providence, prepares and lays to our hands, the work he wants to be done; and in the new creation, or new birth, fits the creature for the work; and, to cut off all evasions and excuses, has lodged an all-sufficiency of grace in his blessed Son's hand; *grace to help in every time of need, that one may be able to do all things through Christ strengthening him*. This leaves no room to say, we cannot do this or that piece of work which is laid upon us. It is true, that in, and of ourselves "we can do nothing:" difficulties and discouragements arise on every side, which it is utterly impossible for man to overcome. But in Christ Jesus there is really no duty, no good work, either easier or harder than another. Without him we can do nothing; but his grace is sufficient

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cient in every case, and his strength is perfected in weakness; and what the Apostle says of himself, every Christian may say with the same assurance, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*: for Christ himself has told us, “that all things are possible to him that believeth.”

Accordingly we find, vers. 9. he does not so directly injoin *well-doing*, or employing ourselves in *doing what is good*; for that he supposes, as appears better in the original than in our translation, though even there it is plain enough. But the admonition runs to those who are employed in *doing well*, not to *weary* in that business. The Apostle's word signifies every kind of staggering or indisposition to any thing, from whatsoever cause it may proceed. And there are many, very many occasions of wearying, from weakness and corruption within, and temptations without: there is a strong combination of powerful enemies, *the devil, the world, and the flesh*, with which a daily and hourly fight is to be maintained. And a very unequal match it would be, were it not for the mighty power of
 God,

God, and the grace that is in Christ Jesus, There indeed we have a satisfying answer, how we shall keep from wearying, and even fainting, in this warfare; the only way to succeed, is an absolute diffidence in ourselves, and an entire confidence in Jesus Christ.

The Apostle lays a good foundation to build on, in the close of the verse: *In due time we shall reap, if we faint not.* He leaves no room to ask, what shall we reap? for he had told us in the foregoing verse, that it was eternal life. This is one of those texts which have been taken out of the connection wherein the author hath set it; and abused, to induce heedless men to expect eternal life by their own good works: for, say they, is it not plain, that he makes good works the seed which grows up into eternal life? Be it so. But what are these good works? The same, to be sure, with what God has commanded, or keeping the commandments of God, which the Apostle John comprehends in these few words, 1 John iii. 23. “This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another;” the same which our great master calls *the work of God,*

God, and his apostle, *faith working by love*; which, he says, is all that can answer any purpose, because it takes in all that God has commanded. We need not then dispute about the effect of keeping God's commandments, if we keep them as he has given them; and if we do not that, they are not his commandments we keep, but our own: "What God has joined together, no man may put asunder."

What the Apostle here says of the time of this harvest, *In due time ye shall reap*, needs to be carefully noticed; for what that is, we are utterly unable to determine. What our Lord said to his disciples, *it is not for you to know the times and seasons*, holds of all the first fruits of the Spirit, as well as of the full harvest. These, he says, *the Father has kept in his own hand*; for he alone knows what time is fit and proper for bestowing any promised gift. Many poor souls have smarted severely by encroaching on his prerogative. When they propose, in the warmth of their hearts, that in such a duty or ordinance they shall obtain the relief, and supply they want, and find themselves disappointed; (and disappointed they must be, if God's
time

time is not yet come); the temptation comes strong, that the promise of God fails; whereas it is only the promise they foolishly and undutifully made to themselves.

When our Lord directs his disciples to *love as brethren, and as he loved them*, the selfish hearts of men are ready to pick a limitation out of it, viz. that it need extend no further; and that it carries a tacit allowance not to love, if not to hate our enemies: and if we can get ourselves persuaded that they are likewise God's enemies, then it must be a duty to hate them with a perfect hatred. The Apostle, as his master had done before him, allows an especial love and beneficence to those whom he calls *the household of faith*; but our love must extend further, even *to do good to all*: and good reason, when our Lord has commanded expressly to love even our enemies, and by no means to neglect any office of love or friendship; *for while we were yet enemies, yea, enmity itself, even then Christ died for us.*

The epithet or title which the Apostle here gives to the Christian society deserves likewise our notice, viz. *the household of*

faith. The church of Christ is very frequently designed *the house of God*, and *the body of Christ*. Here it is set forth in a view which includes every member of the family, and the designation is taken from their way of living, very different indeed from the way of the world. The natural children of Adam have no other way of living but by sight and sense, which can extend no further than sensible objects. But the household of God lives and walks by *faith*, the belief of the testimony and promises of God concerning unseen, spiritual, and eternal things. Men may, with no great labour, perceive what is good and profitable to man in his present state; but cannot find proper motives, such as may be strong enough to determine the heart to the practice of them. Nothing but faith can work love, and nothing but love can form the heart into a fruitfulness unto the gospel of Christ.

CHAP. vi. 11.—18.

11. *Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.* 12. *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.* 13. *For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.* 14. *But 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.* 15. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.* 16. *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* 17. *From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.* 18. *Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

WE have here before us the conclusion of this epistle, and a very proper conclusion it is for such an epistle. He had made very warm intimations of his fatherly care and tender concern about them; and here adds, as no small evidence of it, that he had written this so large a letter to them *with his own hand*. It was an honour that very few, of the many churches he planted, had, to

receive a letter from him; such at least as were thought proper to remain on record for the use of the churches of Christ. But even among those which are thus preserved, this is the only one which we are told was written with his own hand. It is certain it was not his ordinary custom. But whether it was to give his rebukes and injunctions more weight with them by this singular condescension, or that his then circumstances did not admit a person to attend him whom he would chuse to employ in this manner, we have no occasion to give ourselves any trouble about: though it appears he was not alone; for he wrote with the concurrence of the brethren who were with him.

But there is one question which hardly ever fails to be put on such occasions; and which, notwithstanding, the Apostle takes little or no notice of throughout this long epistle: If those things the new teachers were so intent on, were really so unprofitable and hurtful, what could have moved them, not only to adhere to them so tenaciously, but to promote them with such zeal and earnestness? Here he lets them
into

into the secret of it: vers. 12. *They compelled the Galatians to be circumcised, and thereby made a fair shew in the flesh.* But the true motive of their whole conduct was, that they themselves *might avoid persecution on account of the cross of Christ.*

The word our translators make use of in describing the conduct of these false teachers, viz. that they *constrained* them to be circumcised, does not appear so proper to express the meaning of the original; which imports no more than the plain fact, that they made their being circumcised necessary in order to salvation. Nor had they any other compulsion in their power, than what weight this assertion had on the Gentile converts.

The character the Apostle gives of them carries something very instructive in it. They were such as *desired to make a fair shew in the flesh*; and as many as had this view, insisted on the necessity of circumcision. He had, chap. ii. 10. set the pleasing of men, and the pleasing God, in a direct opposition one to another. The former he renounced with great abhorrence; for this good reason, that *if he yet sought*

sought to please men, he could not be the servant of God. This has been in all ages the great snare in which multitudes have been caught. And it certainly requires a resolution more than merely human to stand firm against the course of the world. Among those who professed the worship of the true God, the Jews were both the most numerous, and the most powerful party. In effect, they had all the worldly power in their hands, and wanted not enough of zeal to employ it against all who differed from them, even to the severest persecution. The nearest way of avoiding the effects of it was, either to renounce Christianity altogether, or to bring it into a consistency with Judaism, the then prevailing religion. There needed no more but a flaming zeal for the doctrinal characteristics of that religion, which were indeed all that remained of it at that time, the substance being, as our Lord testifies, destroyed by their traditions. And has not Christianity itself been served much in the same manner? How great a part of the Christian world is to this day overrun with superstitious fopperies of man's invention? And even where these are despised

spised as they deserve, philosophical morality is set up in the place of gospel-holiness, and mens own righteousness in place of the righteousness of God, and the grace of God, on which only true and undefiled religion can subsist. As it was then, so it has continued ever since, the most zealous contenders for these are most remiss in the weightier matters of the law.

So the Apostle says it was then. The enormous zeal for the law of Moses was no more but a fair shew, to recommend themselves to those who had the power in their hands, and could screen them from the persecution which the honest professors of Christianity were exposed to on account of the cross of Christ. And that it was no more, he proves by an unquestionable evidence. Had they been sincere in their profession, their regard to the law would have engaged them to a thorough conformity to it in their practice: But that was not the case. *They did not keep the law*; but while they exerted such a flaming zeal for the external and circumstantial parts, they neglected the weightier and most substantial matters of the law, *judgement, mercy, and faith*; Matt. xxiii. 23.

What

What they aimed at was, to magnify their own importance, by the number of profelytes they had made; which the Apostle very justly calls *boasting*, or *glorying in their flesh*.

What the Apostle says of the *cross of Christ* being the great object of the Jewish malice against Christianity, and the reason of their persecuting the professors of it, which yet he makes the sole subject of his own boasting and *glorying*, vers. 14. needs to be carefully considered; as by comparing these two different lights, we may be able to make out some just notion of the true meaning of that term the *cross*, among those who best understood the genius and constitution of the Christian religion in those early and purest times, before the simplicity and beauty of it was defaced by the inventions of men.

And here we may be very sure, that by the *cross of Christ*, they did not mean the *material cross* upon which Christ suffered. It was certainly greatly below the Apostle's good sense, to say no more of him, to glory or boast in a piece of timber; nay, it was even below the Jews, however stupid they may be thought, to
point

point their resentment against it, so that one may justly wonder how it should ever have become an object of religious veneration. It was Christ crucified, and dying upon a cross, which was *a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks*; but which was indeed *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. i. 23. 24.

The malice and rage of the Jewish leaders seems to have been mainly, if not solely, founded in their unhappy mistake concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, promised and prophesied of by the prophets. As spiritual things cannot be brought under human conception, but by images and analogous representations, taken from the state of things in this sensible world; the pompous descriptions of the spiritual glory of that kingdom under these images, very naturally led them to promise themselves a worldly kingdom more extensive, and of course more glorious, than all that had been before it, extending unto the very utmost ends of the earth. And the prospect would be the more agreeable, that they were then held under the oppressive yoke of the Romans,

from which they expected their Messiah should save and deliver them, and give them the pleasure, (the greatest that worldly men can have), to bring their oppressors under the same bondage to them.

When therefore Jesus came as he did, with such a mean outward appearance, he was by no means a Messiah to their taste: and notwithstanding the astonishing miracles by which he attested his divine mission, they looked upon him as a deceiver of the people, and condemned him as a blasphemer, for saying what their expected Messiah must have said, whenever he came into the world. A suffering Messiah they had no notion of; and though he could not have been the Christ, if, according to Moses and the prophets, he had not suffered, before he entered into his glory, they ignorantly concluded, that when they had brought him to the cross, that there must be an end of his pretensions; and the more so, that, according to their notions of the law, he was a very notorious sinner, by transgressing those traditions which they held to be of equal authority with the laws given by Moses. But as he professed to be the King of the
Jews,

Jews, and plainly declared, that the design of his coming was to set up a kingdom that should never be moved, they thought there was a necessity of putting him to death, lest the Romans should be provoked to come and cut off the whole nation, as he who professed to be their king was, according to their notions of him, utterly incapable of defending them.

Thus the cross of Christ became a stumbling-block to the Jews; but more so, when he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead, and the glory that followed. When this same Jesus who submitted to be crucified ascended up into heaven, had all power and authority in heaven and in earth lodged in his hand, and instructed it by the highest exertion of power, even by sending the Holy Spirit, according to his promise, on his disciples and followers, and that in such a palpable manner, as left no room for doubt or dispute: And when they themselves were charged home by his apostles with the horrible crime of being the betrayers and murderers of the Son of God, it was no wonder that they were filled with the utmost an-

guish. They had no way for supporting themselves against the charge, but by suppressing the evidence of the facts which were so strong against them; and no way to accomplish that, but by either corrupting or destroying the witnesses. Both were tried, but to no purpose; and there the offence of the cross lay; which raised their rage and malice to such a pitch, that, had it been in their power, there should not have been so much as one left alive, who professed the name of Jesus.

But this was not all. There was another thing which appears to have touched them as nearly, viz. the nature of the *kingdom* which was introduced by the cross of Christ. They had long borne the character of *God's peculiar people*, and looked upon themselves as the sole proprietors of eternal life, so that none could have any access to it, but by joining himself to them, and submitting to their law. They could not bear to have the uncircumcised Gentiles put upon a level with themselves; in so much that when the kingdom of heaven was first opened to the Gentiles, in the case of Cornelius, even the believing Jews could hardly be persuaded that God had
granted

granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles.

They had indeed some colour for insisting on the law of Moses. The Apostle himself allows, that they had a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge; for it was all founded in their mistaking the nature and design of that law, which was designed as a pedagogue to lead them to Christ. But there was another thing which gave a keener edge to their zeal; the same which spirited up Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen at Ephesus. On the observances of that law all their wealth and honours depended: and if Christianity, the spiritual kingdom of Christ, should take place, there was an end not only to their hopes of a temporal kingdom, but in effect all the distinctions, honours, and worldly gains they enjoyed were lost at once; and the priests and Levites, the scribes and doctors of the law, were reduced to an equality with common men, whom they heartily despised. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that the cross of Christ should have been a matter of such offence to them, as we find it was then, and continues to be to this day; and

and that they should pronounce him who died on it accursed, as their law had pronounced every one to be who was hanged on a tree, or on timber of any kind.

But the Apostle saw the *cross of Christ*, and the curse he submitted to, in a very different view; and openly declares it to be, that only thing he would boast and *glory in*. And he had reason; had it been no more, than that his suffering on the cross was his entrance into his glory, a circumstance that will weigh much with every true lover of Jesus: so himself says to his disciples: "If you loved me, ye
 " would rejoice, because I go to my Fa-
 " ther." But there was more, greatly more: The cross of Christ sets forth the great high priest, "offering himself a sacri-
 " fice for the sins of the world;" and by that one sacrifice doing what all the sacrifices offered according to the law of Moses, could never do; a sacrifice which had not only the promise of pardon, but eternal life annexed to it. By the cross of Christ, the terms on which the grant and promise of that life which was made to him were completely fulfilled, and the grant comes to us free as grace itself, so that every soul,
 whe

who will, may come and take of the water of life freely. Upon the cross of Christ the resurrection of the body is set in the clearest light. There also a throne of grace is erected, to which the worst of sinners may come, not only with safety, but with the fullest assurance of success, that they shall “obtain mercy and grace to help in every time of need;” inasmuch that the least doubting or wavering is a shameful affront offered to the faithfulness both of God the promiser, and his ever-blessed Son. And, to say no more, by the cross of Christ, and his undertaking and suffering there, he has established such an union with every believer, as puts them, and their life and happiness, on the same bottom with his own: so himself puts it, “because I live, ye shall live also.” And so it must be: for the Christian’s life, with all that belongs to it, and the whole of that fund on which he subsists, does not lie in himself, or in what is called *inherent grace*, however liberally the gifts of grace may be conveyed, but in Christ, and that inexhaustible fund of life which is lodged in him; so that it is not so properly the man who lives and acts, as it is Christ, by his Spirit,

Spirit, who lives and acts in the man, and the glory of all belongs to him.

Upon this union is founded what the Apostle adds here *of the world being crucified to him, and he crucified to the world*. It is of no moment, whether what he says refer to the cross of Christ, or to Christ himself; for Christ and his cross cannot admit of separate considerations. Christ crucified cannot be conceived without taking in the cross on which he suffered and died; nor can we have any tolerable notion of the cross of Christ, without considering him, the person who died on it. What he presents us with here is, *the effect of the cross of Christ on himself*, and on all real Christians, who are all of them precisely in the same circumstances he was. When he says, *he was crucified to the world, and the world to him*, it evidently supposes, that he was formerly alive to the world, and the world alive to him. And it concerns us much to know what that life was, and wherein it consisted. And there are two ways by which I think we may come at it with certainty, namely, by considering the life the children of Adam live, before they are crucified with Christ, and the death

death which they die when they are so, and which puts an end to that life.

We need not spend many words on the first of these, as it is, without dispute, the life we derive from Adam in the course of ordinary generation; in the very nature of which, and its whole tendency, it appears we are alive to this world, and only to this world, and of course, that the world is alive to us, in every sense which it can be said to be alive; that is, exerting its full power and influence over us: that as the Apostle says of the belly and meats answering one another, *we are made for the world, and the world is made for us*; that is, we are made for living on a present world, and to find provision there, both for the sustenance of a present life, and the gratifications, joys, and pleasures of it; but have no organs for perceiving any thing that is unseen and spiritual, excepting only ears to hear the report of eternal and unseen things, as we do present things which never fell under our observation. As this way of living lies directly contrary to that which spirits ought to live, the friendship of the world must be enmity against God. In this connection with, and the love of

a present world, the very root, and what may very properly be called the essence of sin, lies. And hence occasion has been taken to surmise, and even positively conclude, that this natural corruption is that very thing which in the New-Testament writings is called *the flesh*, and *the old man*, which is said to be crucified with Christ; and all that is said of being crucified with Christ, and raised up, born again, and created in him to good works, are no more but bold metaphors, and strong figures of speech, and mean no more, but repentance and amendment of life. But it should be adverted to, that sins of every kind are only deeds of the old man, and the customs and manners, and consequently only modes of the man, the child of Adam, who is crucified with Christ, and whose life and very being is there put an end to, according to the threatening of the original law, and the sentence given upon it by the great law-giver.

As this was the death which the blessed Son of God submitted to on the cross, and the life he laid down there was that which he derived from the first Adam,

this

this must also be the life which they who are entered into his death, and made conform unto him in it, do renounce and give up with. This breaks at once all our connections with a present world, that it shall have no more to say to us, nor we any further concern with it. They who enter into the death of Christ, deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ; and their constant business, while they live in the flesh, is to mortify it, to crucify and put it to death; the only way in which sin can be destroyed. And thus gradually the *world becomes crucified to them, and they to the world*; the flesh, or that which is born of the flesh, with its lusts, passions, and affections, die together.

This has, and ever will appear, a very hard saying to worldly men, who know no other life but a present one, nor any other fund of enjoyment, but what is to be found here. And by what the Apostle says, vers. 15. it cannot be otherwise. I need not stand to observe, that *in Christ Jesus*, is the same as if he had said, As matters now stand in the system, or divine constitution of grace, and that is the

only system that will stand the test. Nor need we say any thing of his summing up all the unprofitable things which have been set up by men, under the two terms of *circumcision* and *uncircumcision*; for under these two are comprehended both Jews and Gentiles; that is, the whole world of mankind, with all the projects they have formed to recommend themselves to the favour of their several deities, of whom they knew no more than was conveyed by tradition of one kind or other. So that, upon the whole, there was nothing left to Paul, or any man else, to boast of, and to glory in, but the cross of Christ, and the grace which is inseparably connected with this great and complete sacrifice.

He had said before, that none of these things could profit any thing, *but faith which worketh by love*; which, we are well assured, answers the mind and will of God, as declared in the commands given to mankind. But these are no more but the exercise and actings of that life which is conveyed from that fullness of life which is in Christ. But the question might still be put, How the children of Adam, dead as they are in trespasses and
 sins,

sins, come by this life? Here he answers the question, and goes to the bottom of the mystery. The translation we have of his words is by much too weak to express his meaning. A *new creature* does indeed suppose a *new creation*. But this last is the proper sense of the word he uses, and by which he asserts the absolute necessity of a new creation, as the only way in which a child of Adam made for this world, can be made a child of God, and be renewed in the spirit of his mind, and fitted for living as becomes that high and honourable station.

It has been very positively asserted, that whatever may be the common import of the terms made use of to express the change that is made by the grace of God, such as, being *begotten* and *born again*, and *created* anew in Christ Jesus, by which old things are passed away, and all things become new, &c.; yet there is no addition of new faculties, but the old natural ones directed in a proper manner, and upon proper objects. Whatever is meant by that cant word, the assertion is certainly made at random. We are sure enough there are no new, external senses conferred in this
new

new creation. But these are not the perceptive faculties, but the organs by which the man exerts his percipient powers. It is the spirit in man which perceives, judges, and reasons. And who can say what these powers and faculties of the mind are? and how shall we judge what are original? and whether any new ones are superadded, in what unerring wisdom calls a *new creation*? The exertion of creating power falls not under our observation. The effects may be perceptible; but how they are produced, no man, and I think we may say no creature, can have the least conception of.

When our Lord gave eyes to the blind, and limbs to the maimed, when he healed all sorts of diseases with a word or a touch, surely this was as properly an exertion of creating power, as forming a man out of the dust of the earth. These were sensible effects, and fell under every one's observation. No body could doubt, that they had powers or faculties given them which they had not before. When a parcel of rude illiterate fishermen of Galilee, without any previous preparation or instruction, shewed such measures of wisdom and

and understanding as were no where else to be found in the world, and when they were heard discoursing intelligibly in all the different languages known throughout the whole world, what shall one say? If they were not endued with another kind of powers than these known among men, whether we call them new faculties, or the old ones raised greatly above the common level of mankind, it will come much to the same purpose, as this is all the notion we can have of any difference among spirits. But to confine ourselves to what is common to all Christians, were there any instance of a mere brute animal having a rational soul, such as man's, given it, would we not all say, there was in the most proper sense a new creation? But we are well assured, that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*; and we are equally sure, that this is not the lot of every man; and that naturally we are such, as the Apostle describes the natural or animal man, of whom he says, that *he cannot know the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned*. Surely the superadding of that Spirit, which cannot be done but by creating power; must be as much a new creature. And
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if this is not the case, we must pronounce the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, the most inaccurate and delusive books ever were written. And of all men, they who have the greatest regard to the great author, must be in the greatest danger; for they cannot help thinking, that he knew better than the wisest philosophers, what terms were the most proper to express his mind by.

And here one cannot miss observing, that as nothing can be of any use but a new creation, how vain and foolish every attempt must be to rear up a form of godliness on any other bottom but that of free sovereign grace. No man can create himself, nor can God ever be bound, otherwise than by his own free promise, to new-make any of his creatures. And it is little wonder, that they who build on any other foundation should find themselves so unfixed as they must be in their principles; and such determined enemies to the doctrine of perseverance. Indeed they have no foundation for faith in this point. But this I only notice by the way.

But whatever men may think who reckon themselves wise enough to adjust the
oracles

oracles of the living God by their own standard, the Apostle lays down the assertion as he had stated it, as the standard of Christianity, vers. 16.; a rule or authoritative canon, by which all the disciples of Christ, that is, all such as have any interest in, or any thing to expect from him, are bound to regulate their conduct. For thus we find he describes them; *such as walk according to this rule*; plainly such as have no confidence or hope in any thing whatsoever, but only in the grace of the new creation, and the happy state which they enter upon, who are born of the Spirit. It is of little moment, whether we conceive what follows as a declaration of what was their privilege, or an apostolical benediction. He conceives it in two words, *peace and mercy*, which will be found to comprehend every thing necessary to make out a complete provision for creatures in their circumstances. *Peace* was the legacy Christ left his disciples when he was leaving the world, John xiv. 27. where he calls it *his peace*; and left it to them, not as the men of the world do, who can only wish or pray for any spiritual blessing; but he left it to them as his property, and put their

possession of it upon the bottom with his own right to it, and therefore absolutely indefeasible.

It is evident it was not worldly peace he there meant; for he told them, with the same breath, that *in the world they should have tribulation; but he had overcome the world*, and its frowns or smiles were such insignificant things, as were not worth mentioning. It was *the peace of God which passeth all understanding*; such as can fill the soul with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, in spite of all that the world, and hell itself, can do against them.

But however impossible it is that this precious legacy can be broken in upon; yet there is so much weakness attending the faith of the best Christians, and proportionable failures in the exercise of love, as could not miss to mar their comfort and peace of mind, by the challenges which an honest conscience will be charging them with; and which indeed would be insupportable, were it not for the provision of *mercy* which the Apostle here joins with *peace*, as secured for them on the same bottom. The blood of Jesus is abundantly sufficient to purge the conscience

science from dead works, and answer all challenges, however justly made.

What the Apostle adds here of the *Israel of God*, we may not imagine they are any different persons from those who were walking according to the rule which he had laid down: for there is no other way by which any of Adam's children can contract a relation to God, but by being born again, and being created anew in Christ Jesus. But Israel, according to the flesh, had long maintained an exclusive property in God and his promises; and *Israel*, and *God's peculiar people*, were synonymous terms. But now, in Christ Jesus, believers, of whatsoever nation and kindred they were, had as much interest in God as the native Jews, and were truly and properly his Israel. But as there were many sincere believers in Christ who still continued very zealously affected to the law of Moses, through weakness and prejudice, there seems to be some good reason to think he uses this general term, that he might not be misconstrued, as excluding them from the blessings of mercy and peace, which are the common property of

all Christians, however weak, and in some points they may be mistaken.

The order which the Apostle gives, vers. 17. *that from that time no man should trouble him*, looks so like his resigning the care of all the churches which lay upon him, and which we find him reckoning among the burdens which distressed him, that it would go near to persuade one, that this epistle was written near about the time when he finished his course, and much later than that which is commonly fixed on; and the note of its being written from Rome, (which is not allowed to be authentic), seems much nearer the true date than any other that has been pitched on before he went thither.

Could we certainly say what these *marks of the Lord Jesus* were, which he says he *bore in his body*, and which he gives as the reason why *no man should trouble him*, we might come somewhat nearer. The word the Apostle uses signifies properly *those disgraceful marks which were put upon criminals*; and as he had suffered often scourgings, and even stonings, no doubt the marks of these would remain on his body. But if these were the marks he here speaks of,

of, he must have given the order many years before he was made a prisoner, and while yet the care of all the churches lay upon him. It would seem therefore, that the marks of reproach he speaks of were such as were put upon him when he was very near being offered up, as himself expresses his death. But indeed the whole of this disquisition is rather a matter of curiosity than of any great moment, on whichever side it may be determined.

The Apostle's concluding benediction, vers. 18. requires more of our attention, as we are sure it carries in it his best wishes for a people he had so warmly upon his heart. He begun his epistle with a salutation of grace and peace, two blessings which greatly suited their then present situation; and he concludes with the *grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*, the same, no doubt, which he was assured would be *sufficient* for himself, in the time of his greatest extremity. It is of little moment, whether by this grace we understand that free love and favour which he always bears in his heart to all that believe in his name, or all that fullness of grace that ever God meant to bestow upon

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on mankind, the very fullness and all-sufficiency of God himself: for the favour and love of Christ is not like that of men, but engages all his powers on their behalf, the whole almighty power of God; and this, no body can doubt, is abundantly sufficient for support and relief in the greatest weaknesses and dangers; in-somuch that we find the Apostle forming an express resolution, that so far from being discouraged by his infirmities, he would even boast and glory in them, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

This same grace is that inexhaustible fund which the great Father of the family in heaven and on earth has prepared and laid ready in Christ for his children to subsist on; and which, for their security, he has lodged in his blessed Son, where it could neither be lost nor forfeited. And indeed it was too precious a treasure to be trusted in the hand of any mere man. By this the Christian lives, and by this bread which came down from heaven he is nourished, comforted, and strengthened; so that when of himself he can do nothing, even *then he can do all things through Christ strengthening him.* But this is all of a spiritual nature,

nature, and can only be applied to, and received in the spirits of men: and thus we find the Apostle directs it, *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits*; and seals it with an Amen, which denotes at once the heartiest sincerity, and the most ardent desire of success.

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