

THE
GOSPEL
WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION;
OR THE
OBLIGATIONS THAT ALL MEN ARE UNDER
TO GOD,
TO SUBMIT TO AND BELIEVE ALL THINGS THAT HE
HATH REVEALED,
IN EVERY WAY THAT HE HATH MADE HIMSELF KNOWN,
ESPECIALLY IN HIS WORD;
IN OPPOSITION TO THOSE THAT HOLD THAT IT IS NOT
THE DUTY
OF UNCONVERTED MEN
TO REPENT, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.

BY THE
REV. ANDREW FULLER,
LATE OF KETTERING.

laying his hand on the Bible, he would say, "There is true philosophy. This is the wisdom that speaks to the heart. A bad life is the only grand objection to this Book."—Earl of Rochester.

NEW EDITION,
WITH A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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LIFE

OF

THE AUTHOR.

MR. ANDREW FULLER was born at Wicken, a small village in Cambridgeshire, on the 6th of February, 1754. His father, Robert Fuller, was a farmer, and, intending that his son should follow the same line of occupation, he conferred upon Andrew only the common rudiments of an English education.

Eminent as our author afterwards became for piety and usefulness, his youth was spent in vain and sinful pursuits; and the history of this period of his life furnishes a lamentable proof of the depravity of human nature, and strikingly illustrates the sovereign efficacy of divine grace. It was not till about his fourteenth year that he had any serious thoughts concerning futurity; and even then, so averse was he to forsake the foolish and delusive pleasures of sin, that, for some time longer, he endeavoured to stifle conviction, and to banish his fears, by "reiterated acts of wickedness." "Being of an athletic frame, and of a daring spirit," says he, "I was often engaged in such exercises and exploits as might have issued in death, if the good hand of God had not preserved me. I also frequently engaged in games of hazard, which, though not to any great amount, were very bewitching to me, and tended greatly to corrupt my mind. These, with various other evil courses, had so hardened my heart that I seldom thought of religion."

His parents were dissenters of the Calvinistic persuasion, and, of course, took him with them to their stated place of public worship; but the preaching which he attended, according to his own account, "was not adapted to awaken his conscience, the minister having seldom any thing to say, except to believers; and what believing was, he neither knew, nor cared to know."

Notwithstanding, however, of this aversion to every thing which was spiritual or holy, divine grace took hold of him ere he reached his sixteenth year. He felt he was a sinner; he ardently desired to be at peace with God; but so confused were his ideas of the doctrines of grace, and of the way of reconciliation through the Redeemer, that, for a considerable time, the exercises of his mind were painfully harassing. "I felt," says he, "an uncommon load upon my heart. The remembrance of my sins,—the breach of my vows, and the shocking termination of my former hopes and affections, all uniting together, formed a burden I knew not how to bear." Though he was convinced that he stood in need of such a Saviour as Christ, and of such a salvation as the gospel reveals, yet, he was not then aware that *every* sinner has a warrant to believe in the Lord Jesus, but supposed that there must be some qualification to entitle him to the blessings of salvation.

The work of grace, however, being begun in his soul, he was gradually led to perceive the futility of all human merit, and at length enabled, unreservedly, to cast himself, as a guilty sinner, on the Redeemer of the fallen. "I perceived," he adds, "something attracting in the Saviour,—and, as the eye of my mind was more fixed on him, my guilt and fears were gradually and insensibly removed. I now found rest for my troubled soul, and I reckon that I should have found it sooner, if I had not entertained the notion of my having no warrant to come to Christ without some previous qualification."

Having thus found "peace and joy in believing," Mr. Fuller, in April 1770, joined himself to a Baptist Church at Soham; believing, with that body of Christians, that the administration of the ordinance of baptism ought to be confined to adults. He then also formed an intimacy with Mr. Joseph Diver, who was baptised at the same time with himself; and, during the summer of that year, he appears to have been exceedingly happy, both in his connection with the church at Soham, and in the enjoyment of the friendship of Mr. Diver.

Disputes, however, soon arose among the members of that church, respecting the power of fallen man to obey God, and to keep himself from sin, which, after much contention, issued in the division of the congregation, and in the resignation of their pastor. Mr. Fuller was deeply afflicted at these disputes; yet he acknowledges that "they were ultimately the means of leading his mind into those views of divine truth which have since appeared in the principal part of his writings." The dissolution of the congregation at Soham now appeared to be inevitable. The majority of the members, however, still kept together, and, not being able to support another minister, the worship was conducted by Mr. Diver, who was one of the deacons. Mr. Fuller also assisted occasionally in conducting the exercises; and so well satisfied were his brethren with his piety and talents, that they strongly urged him to accept the pastoral office. For some time he declined the invitation; but, at length, in February 1775, he accepted the call, and was ordained minister of the Church at Soham, on the third day of May following. He continued for seven years, labouring in the gospel ministry, among this little flock; and, though his exertions for their spiritual benefit were not unattended with success, yet, he experienced many trials—from the lukewarmness of some, the dissatisfaction of others, and the little appearance of edification among the greater part of his hearers. During

this period, however, he found more leisure for study than he could have enjoyed in a less retired situation, and devoted part of his time to the composition of the substance of a treatise, which was published afterwards, under the title of "The Gospel worthy of all acceptance; or, the Obligations of Men cordially to believe whatever God makes known." The leading design of this performance was to prove that the Calvinistic doctrines, of the divine decrees, the covenant of works, man's natural inability, the necessity of a divine principle in order to believing, &c. were perfectly consistent with the indefinite calls of the gospel,—a doctrine which many rejected, who yet pretended that they were Calvinists, while, by their hypothesis, that the calls and invitations of the gospel were not to be addressed to sinners, they showed their ignorance at once of true Calvinism, and of the word of God.

In October, 1783, Mr. Fuller was removed from Soham to Kettering, where his ministerial labours, though not distinguished by any remarkable success, were very highly esteemed. At the invitation of his friends he also frequently preached in the neighbouring villages; and, notwithstanding the magnitude of his other engagements, he devoted a considerable portion of his time to the instruction of the young. The following, among others, is a striking instance, not only of his piety, but of his humility, and his earnest desire for the spiritual welfare of youth:—"I have been thinking of a plan," says he, in a letter to a friend, "for disseminating truth among our little lacemakers. A quantity of white wrapping paper is used in the sale of small parcels of lace thread; so, I will draw up a number of little hymns, the most impressive that I can either find or make, and get them printed on one side of the paper. Then, every child that comes for a small quantity of thread, will find it wrapped up in a paper, containing a short impressive hymn, addressed to its heart."

From the entrance to the close of his public life, in-

deed, Mr. Fuller devoted all the energies of his mind to the cause of evangelical religion. As a preacher he was always practical, but his practical exhortations were founded on evangelical principles. His expositions were clear, simple and natural; and his addresses to the conscience close, pungent, and often eminently pathetic.

Possessed of a deep and penetrating judgment, he displayed much originality, perspicuity, and simplicity, as an author. Although there is often a certain coarseness in his style, yet his reasoning is forcible; and the evangelical sentiments, and sterling piety, which characterise all his performances, cannot fail to make the works of so faithful a writer be long held in deserved estimation.

Though we cannot, in a brief sketch like the present, enumerate all the works of Mr. Fuller, yet we shall take notice of a few of those which are considered the most important. Among these is his celebrated work on the Socinian controversy, which was published in 1793, entitled "*The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems examined and compared, as to their moral tendency; in a Series of Letters, addressed to the Friends of vital and practical Religion.*" This able work, for which the religious world cannot but retain a lasting sense of their obligation to the author, gave so clear and scriptural a view of the Calvinistic doctrines, that the Socinians have never been able to meet the arguments which are employed in it, or to defend their own system on the principle which it adopts. Instead, therefore, of answering Mr. Fuller's reasonings, they had recourse to the meanest subtleties, hoping to obtain some advantage by controverting detached passages of Scripture. In reply to these artifices, our author published another work, in 1797, entitled "*Socinianism Indefensible, on the ground of its moral tendency; containing a reply to Dr. Toulmin and Mr. Kentish.*"

Mr. Fuller's attention was next turned to the Deis-

tical controversy, and, in 1800, he published a work under the following title; "The Gospel its own Witness; or, the Holy Nature and Divine Harmony of the Christian Religion, contrasted with the Immorality and Absurdity of Deism." In this performance he reviews the principles of deistical writers in general, in contrast with the doctrines of revealed religion; and, confining himself chiefly to the *internal* evidence which Christianity possesses, brings the opposite system to the test of its moral tendency. He also published "Letters to Mr. Vidler, on the Doctrine of Universal Salvation;" "Dialogues, Letters, and Essays, on various Subjects;" "Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend," &c. And, in addition to these works, which relate to controversial theology, his writings on doctrinal and practical religion are both numerous and interesting.

But it was from his connexion with the Baptist Missionary Society that Mr. Fuller derived most of his celebrity. From its formation, in 1792, till his death, Mr. Fuller, who was appointed Secretary, evinced the most indefatigable zeal, and assiduous attention, to whatever could promote its welfare. To his exertions, indeed, that Society was more indebted for its justly acquired popularity, than to those of any other man. He not only wrote in its defence, but often went from house to house, collecting private subscriptions to replenish its exhausted treasury; nay, nearly a fourth part of his time was spent in journeys, soliciting aid in its behalf. He visited Scotland five times, Ireland once, and London often, on the business of the mission; besides journeys into Lancashire, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Essex, the west of England, and Wales.

In short, the history of Mr. Fuller's life, for the fast twenty years, was so completely identified with that of the mission, that all its principal transactions must be referred to his agency. The mission to India was, in a great measure, his own production; he formed

and moulded it with exquisite skill, watched over and directed all its movements, and most disinterestedly laid himself out for its welfare, from its commencement to his death. While on a journey with a friend, he once remarked, "Friends talk to me about coadjutors and assistants, but, I know not how it is, I find a difficulty. Our undertaking to India really appeared to me, on its commencement, to be somewhat like a few men, who are deliberating about the importance of penetrating into a deep mine, which had never before been explored. We had no one to guide us; and, while we were thus deliberating, Carey, as it were, said, 'Well, I will go down, if you will hold the rope.' But, before he went down, he, as it seemed to me, took an oath from each of us, at the mouth of the pit, to this effect, that 'while we lived, we should never let go the rope.' You understand me. There was great responsibility attached to us who began the business; and so I find a difficulty."

After having, for several years, made collections, in various parts of Britain and Ireland, in behalf of the mission, an event occurred which involved both the Society and its Secretary in great trouble and perplexity. Two missionaries having arrived in India, in 1806, they were not allowed to join their brethren at Serampore, and, for the first time, the government seemed disposed to act towards them a hostile part. When the news arrived in England, Mr. Fuller, in the name of the Society, drew up a "Statement" of all the proceedings; and went to London, in June 1807, to watch over the interests of the institution. This storm soon died away; but others, of a similar kind, speedily followed; and the enemies of Christianity, both at home and abroad, laboured incessantly to awaken the fear of the government, and to get the mission rooted up. Through the exertions of Mr. Fuller, however, all their machinations were completely frustrated. Accompanied by two other ministers, he repaired to London, in 1813, and obtained an interview

with several noblemen, to solicit their influence in making some provision in the new charter of the East India Company, for the toleration of Christian missionaries. These applications were followed with petitions to Parliament, from the general body of dissenters; and both the government and the legislature did themselves the honour to become the patrons of Christianity in India.

In promoting the interests of the mission, Mr. Fuller had no idea of sparing himself; and, though his health was constantly impaired by the greatness of his exertions, yet he persevered in them to the very last. The following sentiments, delivered by him, in a sermon at Bedford, in 1801, show, that while he expected that these labours would one day cost him his life, he remained unmoved, and unabated in zeal for the cause which he had espoused:—"It is not impossible," said he, "that we may live to see things of which, at present, we have scarcely any conception; but whether we do or not, Jesus lives, and his kingdom must increase. And what if, while we are scaling the walls of the enemy, we should, a few of us, lose our lives? We must die some way, and can we desire to die in a better cause? Probably, many of the Israelites, who went up with Joshua to possess the land, perished in the attempt; yet this was no objection to a perseverance in the cause. In carrying the glad tidings of eternal life to Jews and Gentiles, Stephen and James, with many others, fell sacrifices at an early period; yet, no one was discouraged on this account, but rather stimulated to follow the example."

The remaining years of Mr. Fuller's life passed over without any material occurrence to interrupt his tranquillity, or to augment his justly acquired celebrity. In 1811 he was seized with inflammation in the lungs, attended with bilious fever, occasioned by colds, which he contracted during his numerous journeys. Notwithstanding his weakness, however, he endeavoured to go into Wales in 1812, but was able to preach very little. In a letter to a friend, he says, "I seem to be

near the end of my course, and hope, through grace, and grace only, to finish it with joy. I have no transports, but a steady hope of eternal life, on the ground of my Saviour's death. I feel some freedom in my application for mercy in his name. If I should die, I shall be able to say to the rising generation, 'God will surely visit you.' A work is begun that will not end until the world be subdued to the Saviour. We have done a little good, accompanied with much evil, the Lord grant that it may not be laid to our charge in that day!"

About the month of September, 1814, he went to Leicester, to assist at the ordination of Mr. Yates, who was preparing to join the baptist missionaries in India. On this occasion he appeared remarkably solemn, and preached and prayed like one standing on the verge of eternity. He was then very ill, but his chief wish was, "to finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." His indisposition continued through the winter; but, as the spring approached, his complaint was so far checked that he engaged to assist at the ordination of Mr. Mack over the baptist church at Clipstone. He accordingly, on the 20th of March, 1815, preached there a peculiarly solemn and impressive sermon. When he came down from the pulpit, one of his friends asked him how he felt himself; to which he replied, "I am very ill,—I am a dying man." And, on a second interview with the same person, he added, "All is over,—my work is nearly finished; I shall see you no more; the blessing of the Lord attend you. Farewell."

Having returned home, he appeared on the following Sabbath, the 2d of April, in his own pulpit, for the last time. The manner in which he conducted the exercises of that very solemn day, made a deep impression on the minds of his hearers, and they could not help forboding that he would be able to appear among them no more. The anxiety of his congrega-

tion and friends, to prolong, if possible, his valuable life, led them to use every means in their power for his recovery. But his disorder made such rapid progress, that it soon appeared that the time of his departure was at hand. Finding that his strength was rapidly diminishing, he dictated the following letter to Dr. Ryland, and subscribed it with his own hand:—

“ My dearest friend,

“ We have enjoyed much together, which I hope will prove an earnest of greater enjoyment in another world. We have also wrought together in the Lord’s vineyard, and he has given us to reap together in his vintage. I expect this is nearly over; but, I trust, we shall meet, and part no more. I have very little hope of recovery; but I am satisfied to drink of the cup which my heavenly Father giveth me to drink. Without experience, no one can conceive of the depression of my spirits; yet I have no despondency. I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. I am a poor guilty creature; but Christ is an almighty Saviour. I have preached and written much against the *abuse* of the doctrine of grace, but that doctrine is all my salvation and all my desire. I have no other hope than from salvation by mere sovereign efficacious grace, through the atonement of my Lord and Saviour. With this hope, I can go into eternity with composure. Come, Lord Jesus! come when thou wilt! Here I am; let him do with me as seemeth him good. If I should never see your face in the flesh, I could wish one last testimony of brotherly love, and of the truth of the gospel, to be expressed, by your coming over, and preaching my funeral sermon, if it can be, from Rom. viii. 10. I can dictate no more, but am,

Ever Yours,

ANDREW FULLER.

“ *Kettering, April 28, 1815.*”

On the afternoon of the same day on which he dictated this letter, he complained of great depression and sinking, saying that he must die. A friend replied, "I do not know of any person, Sir, who is in a more enviable situation than yourself; a good man on the verge of a blessed immortality." He humbly acquiesced, and hoped it was so; and then, lifting up his hands, exclaimed, "If I am saved, it must be by great sovereign grace,—by great sovereign grace."

With regard to the state of his mind, under his affliction, he enjoyed a considerable degree of calmness and resignation; but, during the last month, he became unable to converse, unless in detached sentences. At one time he said, "I feel satisfaction in the thought that my times are in the Lord's hands. I have been importuning the Lord, that whether I live it may be to him, or whether I die, it may be to him. Flesh and heart fail, but 'God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'" At another time, he expressed himself in the following manner:—"Into thy hands I commit my spirit, my family, and my charge: I have done a little for God but all that I have done needs forgiveness. I trust alone in sovereign grace and mercy. I could be glad to be favoured with some lively hopes before I depart hence. God, my supporter and my hope, I would say, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'

'God is my soul's eternal rock,
The strength of every saint.'

I am a poor sinner, but my hope is in the Saviour of sinners."

On the morning of Sabbath, the 7th of May, the day on which he died, he said to one of his daughters, "I wish I had strength to worship with you." Soon after, another daughter entering the room, as soon as he knew who it was, he said, "Come, Mary, come and help me." He was then raised up in bed, and, for the last half hour appeared to be engaged in prayer. His

children surrounded his bed, listening attentively, to catch, if possible, the last words of their dying parent; but nothing could be distinctly heard but the words, "Help me!" which words were repeated several times. Then, with his hands clasped, and his eyes fixed upwards, as in the attitude of prayer, he sunk back, sighed three times, and expired. Thus did this eminent saint and faithful minister of Christ enter into the joy of his Lord, in the sixty-second year of his age. His body was interred on Monday the 15th, in the burying ground adjoining the place of worship where he had preached for thirty-two years.

In person, Mr. Fuller was tall, stout, and muscular, and, being endowed with great mental, as well as corporeal strength, he was eminently formed for active and important services. His spirit was ardent and invincible, displaying an almost unequalled decision of character; and his judgment on most points, whether of a religious or temporal nature, was generally formed with such force and precision, that he seemed a stranger to hesitation, and seldom found occasion to review any of his resolutions. He was also speedy and ardent in action, "working while it is called to day," like one who seemed continually aware that "the night cometh when no man can work."

Possessed of an extensive knowledge of the inspired volume, his preaching and conversation were rendered peculiarly interesting. Though he could not endure any thing that had the appearance of lightness, especially in the pulpit, yet he could, on some occasions, convey a pointed reproof with perfect good humour. One Lord's day afternoon, perceiving some of his hearers to be drowsy, as soon as he had read his text, he struck his Bible three times against the side of the pulpit, calling out, "What! asleep already! I am often afraid I should *preach* you asleep, but the fault cannot be mine to day, for I have not yet begun!"

Originality was certainly one of his distinguishing characteristics. The following anecdote will illustrate, and partly account for this feature in his character. While travelling in the north, on one of his missionary tours, in the course of conversation, the name of Dr. Benjamin Franklin having been introduced, a friend of Mr. Fuller remarked, that he had a philosophical mind, or, that he was a philosopher from his youth, "well," said Mr. Fuller, what do you call a philosopher, or in what respect was he one?" "Oh!" said his friend, "he seems to have made rules for himself in childhood, which regulated him even in old age." On this, Mr. Fuller replied, "If this be any mark of a philosopher, you will make me one. My father (he continued) was a farmer, and, in my younger days, it was one great boast among the ploughmen, that they could plough a straight line across the furrows or ridges of a field. I thought I could do this as well as any of them. One day I saw such a line, which had just been drawn, and I thought, 'Now, I have it.' Accordingly, I laid hold of the plough, and, putting one of the horses into the furrow which had been made, I resolved to keep him walking in it, and thus secure a parallel line. By and-by, however, I observed that there were what might be called wriggles in this furrow; and when I came to *them*, they turned out to be *larger* in mine than in the original. On perceiving this, I threw the plough aside, and determined *never to be an imitator*."

Though Mr. Fuller's natural temper was neither churlish nor morose, yet it was not distinguished by gentleness, meekness, or affability. He could rarely be faithful without being severe; and, in giving reproof, he was often betrayed into intemperate zeal. Once, at a minister's meeting, he took occasion to correct an erroneous opinion, delivered by one of his brethren; and he laid on his censure so heavily, that Dr. Ryland called out vehemently, in his own pecu-

liar tone of voice, "Brother Fuller, brother Fuller! you can never admonish a mistaken friend, but you must take up a sledge-hammer and knock his brains out!"

"His failings, however," says Mr. Morris, "though they cast a shade over his brightest performances, and diminish the esteem that is otherwise due to the most splendid talents, did not affect the grand motives by which his general conduct was directed. His entire character was formed of *STERLING INTEGRITY*, ramified into all his actions. In principle, as well as in doctrine, he 'showed incorruptness,' and 'great sincerity. The severest suspicion could never reach him; his elevation on this part of the moral scale placed him far beyond the keenest eye of jealousy, and nearer to the throne of eternal justice than is common to the most distinguished mortals. His sense of honour and fidelity allowed of no resort to the schemes of interest, or the too common arts of dishonest temporising. No hopes, no fears, no considerations whatever, could cause him to deviate from what he judged to be the path of uprightness. Never was human integrity found more inflexible, or honesty more true to her intention. Unlike as he was, in many respects, to that 'disciple whom Jesus loved,' he bore a strong resemblance to that prince of apostles, who cut off the ear of Malchus." "He was probably," says Dr. Ryland, "the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to the Baptist denomination, and he will be highly esteemed for his able defence of the truth as it is in Jesus, and for his zeal for the propagation of the gospel, not only by his contemporaries of various religious persuasions, but by posterity, as long as the English language, and the history of the Baptist Mission to India shall endure."

The following inscription was placed on a tablet, erected to his memory, by his congregation at Kettering:—

In Memory of their revered and beloved Pastor,
THE REV. ANDREW FULLER,
the Church and Congregation have erected this Tablet.

His ardent piety,
the strength and soundness of his Judgment,
his intimate knowledge of the human heart,
and his profound acquaintance with the Scriptures,
eminently qualified him for the ministerial office,
which he sustained amongst them thirty-two years.

The force and originality of his genius,
aided by undaunted firmness,
raised him from obscurity,
to high distinction in the religious world.

By the wisdom of his plans,
and by his unwearied diligence in executing them,
he rendered the most important services to
the BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY,
of which he was the Secretary from its commencement,
and to the prosperity of which he devoted his life.

In addition to his other labours,
his writings are numerous and celebrated.

He died May 7th, 1815, aged 61.

PREFACE.

WHEN the following pages were first written, which was in the year 1781, I had no intention whatever publishing them to the world. I had formerly entertained different sentiments. For some few years however, I had begun to doubt whether all my principles on these subjects were scriptural. These doubts arose chiefly from thinking on some passages of scripture, particularly the latter part of the *second psalm* where wicked kings who *set themselves against the Lord and against his anointed*, are positively commanded *kiss the Son*. Also the preaching of John the Baptist Christ and his apostles, who, I found, addressed unconverted sinners in this manner, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Repent, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out!* And it appeared to me there must be a most unwarrantable force put upon the passages, to make them mean any other repentance and faith than what are connected with salvation.

Sometimes, also, on reading the lives and labours of such men as ELLIOT, BRAINERD, and several others who preached Christ with so much success to the American Indians, their work, like that of the apostle, seemed to be *all plain before them*. They appeared to me, in their addresses to those poor souls, to have no other shackles with which I felt myself incumbered. This sometimes led me to the throne of grace to implore instruction and resolution. I saw I wanted both the one to know what was truth, and the other to avow it.

I was for some time, however, deterred from disclosing my doubts. For near four years they occupied my mind, not without increasing. Being one day in company with a worthy minister, he suggested that he thought we generally had mistaken views concerning *unbelief*. *Unbelief*, said he, is *a calling in question the truth of what God hath said, be that what it may.* I admired his thought, which appeared to me to carry in it its own evidence. My thoughts began to swell pretty largely on this subject. I preached upon it, more than once. From hence my mind was naturally led to think on its opposite, *faith*, and to consider that as a *hearty credit of whatever God hath said, be that what it may.* From hence by an easy transition, my mind was led farther to suspect my former sentiments concerning *faith* not being the duty of unconverted sinners. It was natural to argue after this sort—If true *faith* is nothing more nor less than an hearty or cordial belief of what God says, surely it must be every one's duty where the gospel is published, to do that. Surely no man ought to question or treat with indifference any thing which Jehovah hath said!

I was aware that it was common to deny *the belief of the truth* to be saving *faith*, and to reckon him a SANDEMANIAN who asserted it. I thought I saw plainly that what was commonly meant by *the belief of the truth* was nothing more than a *cold assent to the doctrines of the gospel in general, unaccompanied with love to them, or a dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.* I had no doubt but that such a notion of the subject ought to be rejected. So far from thinking such a *cold assent* to be saving *faith*, it appeared to me, in some views, to be *criminal*. The assent, so far as it goes, is right; but the *coldness* of it is criminal, and even *detestable*. If Mr. SANDEMAN meant to call such a cold assent saving *faith*, or if the *faith* which he calls saving, be unaccompanied with a *dependence on Christ for salvation*, (which by the way I do not know, having never read any of his works.) I utterly disclaim his principles.

It appeared to me that we had taken carnal men too much upon their word, when they told us they believed the truth. I doubted not but that they might believe many things concerning Jesus Christ and his salvation; but they only amount to their simple existence, without taking in their *adhering qualities*. Yet, as I found the scriptures as fully revealed *what* they are, namely their *real excellency*, as *that they are at all*, I concluded they that did not believe the one as well as the other, disbelieved a great part of the *report* of the gospel; yea, the very essentials of it. That seemed to me to be essential to the gospel, without which it would not be the gospel. Now what constitutes the gospel is *good news*: but whatever faith a wicked man may have in it as a piece of *news*, he hath none in the *goodness* of it; he is therefore an unbeliever in the very *essence* of the gospel, or in that without which it would not be the gospel.

To this I may add, I think, another cause, which contributed to the same end. I had read and considered, as well as I could, Mr. JONATHAN EDWARDS'S *Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will*, with some other performances on the distinction of *natural and moral ability, and inability*. I always found great pleasure in this distinction, as it appeared to me to carry with it its own evidence, was clearly and fully contained in the scriptures, and calculated to disburden the Calvinistic system of a number of calumnies with which its enemies have loaded it, as well as to afford clear and honourable conceptions of the divine government.—Thinking on this, I have frequently been enquiring into the nature of that inability so plentifully ascribed in the scriptures to fallen men. I found this to be chiefly of the *moral* kind; a *voluntary*, and therefore *criminal and punishable* inability. Now, thought I, respecting faith, if that is not the duty of unconverted sinners, then their inability to come to Christ must be purely natural, or it must be an inability wherein they are *not voluntary*. But, upon examination, I found that

men's inability to that, and all other things truly and spiritually good, was of the voluntary kind—that they *will not* come to Christ that they may have life—*will not* hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely—*will not* seek after God—*desire not* the knowledge of his ways, &c. &c. From hence I concluded it criminal, and the contrary their duty.

At length I wrote my thoughts out, with a view to inform myself by endeavouring to place them in as explicit a light as I could, and to give myself an opportunity of conviction by lending the MS. to a few judicious friends, who, if they saw me wrong, would, I hoped, point out my mistakes. Accordingly I lent it to several ministers, and other persons, who were of different opinions relative to the subject. It is at the request of the greater part of these that it now appears in print. They apprehended the subject to be of importance, as it is not a mere speculative point, but involves in it a great deal of practical religion; and, I suppose, might think the present performance calculated at least to excite a spirit of impartial enquiry.

I have often had discouraging thoughts concerning publishing. Though I verily believe the cause in which I engage is, in the main, the cause of God and truth; yet I am not wholly insensible of my own insufficiency to plead it. From a consciousness also of the prejudices of my own mind, and an observation of the same in others, where received opinions are called in question, I have been often ready to indulge despair, and to resign all hope of the principles here offered to consideration, meeting with an impartial trial. I have likewise been ready sometimes to weep, from an expectation of hard thoughts, and perhaps hard words from several of those with whom I could rejoice to spend my days in cordial friendship. Indeed, every consideration, but that of a firm persuasion that the cause in which I engage is the cause of truth and righteousness, would induce me to desist.

I wish to avoid the spirit into which we are all very

prone to fall, when engaged in any controversy, and that is to magnify the importance of the subject beyond its due bounds; yet I seriously think the subject treated of in the following pages is of no small importance. It would be the language of dispassionate reflection, were I to say, I think it is no less than the same controversy for substance, that has in all ages, subsisted between God and a wicked world. God hath ever maintained these two principles, *All that is evil comes from the creature, and he shall have the blame of it; and all that is good comes from himself, and he will have the praise of it.* Both these principles are what the carnal heart will never grant him. Many seem willing to grant him *one*, though they are divided about which; some take one side, and some the other. Those commonly now called Arminians seem willing to grant him the first, to own that they are to blame for all the bad; but then they will as well have the honour of all the good. Others, that err as much on the opposite side, seem willing that God should have all the praise for the good; but then they are determined as well he shall have all the blame for the bad, for they will have none of it. It seems as if both had agreed in this, that either God should take both praise and blame, or they will. Now here lies God's grand controversy with them; maintaining that *to him belongs all the glory*, and to them *shame and confusion of face*. Here lies the spirit of true religion, heartily to yield this point to God; and here lies the turn of a great part of the present controversy.

I shall here premise a few things in general concerning the subject. Half the work would be done if we could come to a right statement of the question, and leave out every thing foreign to the purpose.

The disputes, then, in the first place, is not about *Election*, nor any of the *discriminating doctrines of grace*. They are allowed on both sides, and that none ever did or will believe in Christ, but such as are chosen of God from eternity; on which account, probably, it is

called *the faith of God's elect*.—The question does not turn upon *what are the causes of salvation?* but rather upon *what are the causes of damnation?* The excellent CHARNOCK expresses the whole of our sentiments on these subjects in a few words. ‘No man, says he, is an unbeliever but because he will be so, and every man is not an unbeliever, because the grace of God conquers some, changeth their wills, and bends them to Christ.*’ It might be safely affirmed, that if the doctrines of grace are in any danger, it is not from the principles here maintained, but from their opposites.

Nor is there any disputes about who are the proper objects of *encouragement*. We allow that no sort of hope is held out, in all the book of God, to any sinner, *as such considered*. It is to a sinner considered as *penitent*, that the gospel holds out its golden sceptre; and to him, and him only, that is convinced of sin, and of his lost condition through it, is the promise of salvation to be presented. When we speak of *invitations* to unregenerate sinners, we mean no more than that the wicked is invited to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, with the promise of abundant pardon *on such relinquishment*, and not before. If a prince admonish his rebellious subjects to return to their allegiance, with a promise of pardon on their submission, we call such an admonition an *invitation*; yet it is easy to see these are not invited to partake of pardon *as rebels*, but as *submitting rebels*.

Farther, the question is not, whether men are bound to do *any thing more than the law requires*; but whether the law of God does not require every man cordially to embrace whatever God reveals; or in other words, whether love to God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, does not *include* a hearty approbation, and cordial reception of whatever plan he shall, at any period of time, disclose.

Again, the question is not, whether men are required

* Vol. II. page 473. 2d Edit. Ser. on John vi. 64.

to believe *any more than the report of the gospel, or any thing that is not true*. That they are not is freely allowed; yea, for any man, whether good or bad to do so, would be presumption, and not faith. But the point is, whether they ought to believe that report *with all their hearts*, and whether, if they did so, this would not be saving faith.

Again, there is no dispute about the ability of fallen men to do things spiritually good. We have a far worse opinion of human nature, in its present state, than to suppose them capable of any thing of this sort. To what purpose then, it has been asked, is the dispute? Of what use is it to talk of what men ought to do, when you allow they cannot do it? We answer, very great. Men are unable, in their present state, to keep God's law; but it does not thence follow that it is of no use to vindicate its authority, and ascertain its extent. It is by this, God's prerogative is maintained, the sinner convinced of his sin, and the grace of the gospel appears in its forgiveness.

Besides, the *nature* of this inability renders a just statement of men's obligations peculiarly necessary. We maintain with the apostle, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them*; but then, we as well maintain, that his inability is no other than that of a man under the dominion of carelessness and prejudice, who, while he continues such, is unable to discern and embrace the truth. We grant that carnal men are unable, totally unable to do any thing acceptable to God; but then we maintain as well, that they are no otherwise unable than a man that is under the dominion of enmity to another is unable to love and please him. In this sense we maintain that *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*; but we are far from imagining that on this account *they are not BOUND to please God!* 'Tis easy, one should think, to see that this inability is so far from excusing men, that it is the most criminal thing in the world; and therefore their obligation to the contrary ought to be particularly

pointed out, if it might be to convince them of their sin.

The question is not, whether *we may hope to bring the carnal mind, while such, to do things spiritually good*; but whether we ought not, however that be, to endeavour to *convince them of their sin*. We hope to be believed when we say the design of all our preaching and writing is not to persuade sinners that they can believe in Christ of their own accord, we know they are too wicked for that. Our great end is rather to convince them of their INABILITY and UTTER DEPRAVITY; and this we believe cannot be done but by dwelling upon their great obligations. The way the apostle Paul was convinced of his inability and depravity was by a view of the *spirituality of the law*. The only way that we know of to convince any man of sin, is to show him *what he ought to be*, and compare that with *what he is*. We reckon faith in Christ one of those things required by the law of God of those where the gospel is preached, and we preach the obligation of men to it for the same ends with which others preach other branches of the law; namely, not with any hope that our carnal hearers, while such, will obey it; but with a view, if it please God to bless our endeavours, shewing them what they ought to be, to convince them of what they are, and so to bring them to pray in the spirit of *Ephraim, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned!*

We remember the fatal example of the Jews, which the apostle Paul holds up to our view. *The Gentiles*, says he, *who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. WHEREFORE? BECAUSE THEY SOUGHT IT NOT BY FAITH, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling stone.** This, even though we were not expressly told elsewhere, that in so doing they were *disobedient*,† we should think was their dreadful sin, as well

* Rom. ix. 30—32.

† 1 Pet. ii. 8.

as their fatal fall: and we dare not but charge all our hearers, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, to beware of stumbling upon the same stone, and of falling in the same awful way!

I hope I need not add, there is nothing *personal* in what is written. It is the *subject*, and that only, which I wish to have examined. Should any suggest that it is hardly liberal to animadvert on the writings of some who are incapable of answering; it is replied, had there been any other writers on the subject but those of that description, that part had been omitted. Besides, though authors are mortal, their publications are, in a sense, immortal. Did their works die with them, there would be no justice in remarks upon them after their death; but as they, and the principles they contain, live for the inspection of future ages, they ought to lie open to the examination of those ages. Perhaps too, it is the likeliest way to have the subject considered in a dispassionate manner. It is for the benefit of the living we ought to preach, and write, and do every thing we do. Now it is well known, most people can bear to have their principles examined in the person of another better than in their own persons. We are sure the passions of the dead will not be irritated; and if the judgments of the living be but informed, all is well. If we do but retain a christian spirit towards one another in this world, there is no fear of our falling out in the next.

I hope I have not taken any undue freedom with either the dead or the living; and as they are not *names*, but *things*, that we ought to attend to, I have generally omitted mentioning the names of those writers on whose works the animadversions are made. I say as Mr. BRINE said in one of his polemical performances, 'I hope to have such a guard upon myself in the following lines, as not to give occasion for any just censure of unfairness and disingenuity, and such freedom I wish any one to take with me.*' Let any one

* Mr. Johnson's mistakes noted, &c. p. 2.

who wishes to see truth predominant, examine; in a christian spirit, what is here presented to him. If he think I am mistaken, and be so disposed, let him point out my mistakes. Let him, however, not barely *call* them mistakes, but *prove* them so, by solid scriptural evidence. In that case, so far from doing me an injury, he will be justly intitled to every mark of honour and christian respect.

I ask nothing of the reader but a fair and candid perusal of what is offered, before judgment is given. This I have a right to demand, and this I have reason to expect from sincere and humble christians. These, conscious that they have not arrived to a perfection of knowledge, have their minds open to conviction; and, desirous to take all blame and shame to themselves, are willing to know the utmost of their obligation. As to others, who think they know enough already, and that every opposition to their sentiments must of course be *subversive of the faith*, these will probably be forward to pass sentence without condescending to give it a reading. Concerning these I only say, as such kind of sentences are no honour to a cause when given in its favour, so neither are they any dishonour when given on the contrary.

I may here just inform the reader, that in order to avoid a needless repetition of words, I have often used the terms *men* and *sinner*s, for *unregenerate men* and *unregenerate sinners*, who hear, or have opportunity to hear the gospel—also the terms *faith* and *true faith*, for *special faith*; and whenever I use the term *saving* as applied to faith, I do not mean that faith is the *cause* of salvation, but barely what accompanies it.

The piece itself is now committed to the blessing of God, and the manner of its execution to the readers candour.

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THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST

WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, &c.

PART FIRST.

Wherein the Subject is shewn to be *important, stated, defined, and explained.*

INTRODUCTION.

WHAT SHALL I DO TO BE SAVED? is certainly a question of vast importance to a fallen creature. All the concerns of this temporary life, compared with this, are less than nothing and vanity. The deliverance of our bodies from diseases and dangers frequently attracts our attention, and the salvation of States and Kingdoms often fills the world with admiration: these are great, if viewed by themselves; but, compared with the worth of a soul, there is less proportion than betwixt the drop of a bucket and the vast ocean. What is their loss, if lost, to that which is irretrievable and eternal? and of what importance is the news of their salvation to that which brings life and immortality to light?

As God, of his sovereign grace, hath blessed our world with the glorious gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ, so he hath spoken much in his word, as it might be supposed he would, of *the treatment which it should receive from the children of men.* A cordial

reception of this plan is called in scripture *receiving* Christ, *allowing* him, *believing* in him, &c., and the contrary *refusing*, *disallowing*, and *rejecting* him; and those who thus reject him, are, in so doing, said to *judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life*.^{*} These are things which the New Testament dwells much upon. Great stress is there laid upon the reception which the gospel should meet with. The same lips which commission the apostles to go, and *preach the gospel to every creature*, added, HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED. To as many as *received* him, power was given them that they should become the sons of God; but those that *received him not*, but *refused* him, and *rejected* his way of salvation, to them he became a stumbling stone, and a rock of offence, that they might stumble, and fall, and perish. Thus the gospel, according to the different *reception* it meets with, becomes a *savor of life unto life* to some, and of *death unto death* to others.[†]

Not only is salvation itself then a matter of great importance, but *the treatment which it deserves to receive from those who hear, or have opportunity to hear it proclaimed*. The many debates which have taken place concerning faith in Jesus Christ, are not so much to be wondered at, as the conduct of those who affect to run down the subject as if it was of no importance. Fixing bounds to the duty of men towards God in any case cannot be of trifling account. To enjoin that on them which God hath not enjoined, is to act without warrant, and would be cruelty to our own species, as it subjects them to a charge of abundance of guilt, of which God knows they have enough in the breach of what he *has* enjoined! On the other hand, to curtail the

^{*} John i. 12; iii. 16. Ps. cxviii. 22. Matt. xxi. 42. 1 Pet. ii. 7. Acts xiii. 46. [†] Mark xvi. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 8. 2 Cor. ii. 16.

obligations of men, is to invade JEHOVAH's prerogative, and subvert the rights of deity. This may well be supposed to incur his displeasure. This the Lord Jesus hath solemnly warned us against, saying, *whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, AND SHALL TEACH MEN SO, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.* The knowledge of sin, repentance for it, gratitude for pardoning grace, with many other things, are herein concerned. We have no way of *knowing what is sin*, but by enquiring what is duty? nor can we *repent* for it, for it is absurd to suppose we should repent for not having done that which we believe to be no duty. And where there is no knowledge of, nor repentance for sin, there can be no gratitude for its forgiveness. As these are things of great importance in the religious life, it becomes us to search very diligently that we may know the rule of our duty, or *what that good, perfect, and acceptable will of the Lord is.*

As *faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ* seems to contain the chief of that obedience which is due to the gospel, and as this is so much insisted upon in the New Testament, and has so much stress laid upon it, especially in our Lord's commission; to search into the obligations of mankind in that matter, is doubtless worth our earnest attention. To enquire whether this be incumbent on *every creature* where the gospel is preached, or whether it is not, is the design of the following pages. Should the first of these prove a scripture truth, it must be allowed to be of serious import. If those who break the *least* of God's commandments, AND TEACH MEN SO, incur the reproof of Christ, what must be thought of such a conduct, towards the *greatest*? If faith in Christ be a duty at all, it will hardly be supposed to be one of the least. The greatness of its object forbids that. And it deserves to be considered whether the apostle to the *Hebrews* did not entertain this idea when he

exclaimed, *how shall we escape if we neglect so GREAT salvation?* and the Lord Jesus himself, when he declared, HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED.

In order to come at a clear and distinct view of things, it may be proper that what is meant by faith should be particularly stated, defined, and explained. 'Tis needless, however, to stand long to enumerate the various senses in which the term is used. It is put for the virtue of integrity,* the power of working miracles,† the belief of the truth,§ and the truth believed:‡ sometimes for real faith,|| and sometimes for what is only partial and pretended;‡ sometimes, perhaps, for the principle,¶ and sometimes for the act as arising from the principle.** The same word, in numberless cases, being applied to kindred ideas, acquires a variety of meanings. Thus it has been with faith. It would be no difficult thing, however, to trace all these to one source, and to observe one general idea running through the whole.

The *two last* of these are what we have principally to do with. Concerning these, and the distinction betwixt the one and the other, much has been said in a controversial way. Perhaps when the scriptures speak of faith, they generally speak of it as including *both principle and act*, or of the act of faith as necessarily arising from its principle. Common sense teaches us to consider these together, as much as when speaking of a tree we include both root and branches. Indeed, all sorts of acts and exercises do necessarily rise from their principles. If we speak of *honesty*, we must speak of such an upright *conduct* as ariseth from an upright *principle* or *disposition*: and

* Deut. xxxii. 20. † 1 Cor. xiii. 2. § 2 Thes. ii. 13. ‡ Acts vi. 7. || Acts viii. 37. ‡ Acts viii. 13. John v. 46. ¶ Eph. ii. 8, ** Mark ix. 24.

in most cases that is not honesty where both are not included.

Without attending any further, then, to this, let us now enquire into the *definition* and explanation of that faith which accompanies salvation. And here it will be proper to consider that notion of the subject which has, or has seemed to have been entertained by many; namely, that it is *a believing our personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is what has been commonly called *assurance*, and sometimes '*possessing and appropriating Christ*.' This, the author of *The further Enquiry* thinks to be of the essence of faith; as he 'queries whether there be any act of special faith which hath not the nature of appropriation in it.'* If this can be proved a mistake, nearly the whole of his performance must be allowed to be answered, as this is the ground on which he sets out, and almost all that follows is built upon it. This is the same thing which others have expressed by the terms "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ is mine," &c. And others who would not be thought to maintain this as essential to faith, for the sake of thousands of real Christians, who they cannot but observe upon this principle to be, generally speaking, unbelievers, yet maintain what fully implies it. Though they will allow, for the comfort of such Christians, that assurance is not of the essence of faith, but that *a reliance on Christ alone for salvation*, is sufficient, yet in almost all other things, they speak as if they did not believe what at those times they say. It is common for such to call those *fears* which occupy the minds of people about their interest in Christ by the name of *unbelief*, and to reprove them for being guilty of that God-dishonouring sin, exhorting them to be *strong in faith* like *Abraham*, *giving glory to God*; when all that is meant is, that they should *firmly believe the goodness of their own state without*

* Page 13.

6 *Faith in Christ is not believing our Interest in Christ.*

doubting. Indeed, if this be faith, and this unbelief, the controversy is, or ought to be, at an end. Verily, none but real Christians have any warrant thus to believe; for it cannot be any man's duty to believe a lie.

But several things may be objected to this definition, some of which are as follow: 1. The scriptures always represent faith as terminating on something *without us*; namely, on Christ, and the truths concerning him; but this represents it as terminating principally on something *within us*, namely, the work of grace in our hearts; for to believe myself interested in Christ is the same thing as to believe myself a subject of special grace. And hence, as was said, it is common for those who entertain this notion of faith, to consider its opposite unbelief to be *a doubting whether we have ever been really converted*. But as it is the truth and excellencè of the *things to be interested in*, and not his *interest in them*, that the sinner is apt to disbelieve; so it is these, and not that, on which the faith of the believer primarily terminates. Perhaps what relates to personal interest may, in general, more properly be called *hope* than faith, and its opposite *fear* than unbelief.

2. This is a *mean and low* idea of faith. Barely to believe myself in a safe state, however desirable when grounded on evidence; yet is far inferior in its object to special faith. The grand object of that is, *what Christ is*, and not *the happy condition that I am in, as interested in him*. The latter, doubtless, affords great consolation to my soul, and the more I discern the excellence of Christ, the more ardent shall I be after an interest in him, and the more disconsolate while that continues a matter of doubt. This consolation, no doubt frequently accompanies faith; but yet it is not that wherein its chief glory consists. When Christ is said to be *precious* to them that believe, it

does not mean, I apprehend, that they that believe, believe their interest in him, and so he is precious to them only, or chiefly, on that account; but they that believe, enter into the *evil* of that on account of which he died, the generous *principles* and *ends* of his undertaking, the *amiableness* of his character and conduct, and his *suitableness*, *all-sufficiency*, and *willingness*, to answer the utmost wants and wishes of those who come unto God in his name. This kindles a holy flame of love to him, this renders him precious in their eyes, even though there may be at the same time a jealousy of themselves lest they should not be of those who truly come unto God by him.

3. The apostle Paul represents this as an *after privilege* bestowed upon believers, and not what constitutes them believers. *AFTER ye believed*, says he, *ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*.* Without particularly enquiring what is meant by being *sealed*, as that may admit of some dispute, it will be allowed, I think, on all hands, that includes a *sense of personal interest*. Now this is declared to be *after* they believed, and consequently something distinct from it. Sense of personal interest seems to be an *indulgence* with which some believers are much more favoured than others, and which is generally connected with a close walk with God.

4. That is called *faith*, and *great faith* in the New Testament, where a sense of special interest in Christ's favour could not exist. The *woman of Canaan* believed in the *all-sufficiency* of Christ to help her daughter; but we have no reason to think she had any sense of her interest in his favour. She did not apply to him, considering herself as a favourite, but was willing to be called a *dog*, and as a *dog* repeated her petition. It was during this her state of suspense, too, not

* Eph. i. 13.

8 Faith in Christ is not believing our Interest in Christ.

knowing what would be the issue, that Christ bore this testimony of her, *O woman, great is thy faith!* 'Tis true, she afterwards enjoyed a sense of interest in his favour, but that was not till he had added, *be it unto thee even as thou wilt!*† The faith of the centurion, which Christ so highly commended, saying, *I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel*, did not consist in believing himself, or his servant, to be specially interested in Christ's favour; but in a firm persuasion of his *all-sufficiency*, and a casting himself upon it. This he expressed in such a manner, in that most beautiful passage recorded by St. Matthew, that the Lord Jesus himself *marvelled*: Lord, says he, *I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doeth it.* As if he had said, "I, who am only a man, and a man under authority, have so much influence over my servants as to call or send them hither or thither according to my pleasure *without personally attending* them; how much more canst thou, who art God supreme, *above all authority*, call hence this affliction, which is but thy servant, *without personally attending* the afflicted! SPEAK BUT THE WORD ONLY, AND MY SERVANT SHALL BE HEALED!"§

5. Such a representation of faith is, in its tendency, the most *discouraging* to great numbers of sincere Christians, as well as *pernicious* to others. Nothing can be well more discouraging to modest sincere Christians, than making it of the essence of faith to believe our special interest in Christ's love. These being full of godly jealousy, are afraid of being mistaken; and dare not believe the goodness of their state without evidence. These are hereby deemed *unbeliev-*

† Matt. xv. 28. § Matt. viii. 5—10.

ers; and as they are taught to affix no other ideas to the terms "fearful and unbelieving" than those of *doubting* whether they be real Christians, and *fearing* they shall finally miscarry, it is natural for them, if they believe these things, to reckon themselves with the "abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers," &c., who are all together doomed to "have their portion in the lake."[†]* But this is not all. While modest and sincere Christians are excluded by thousands, self-confident hypocrites are built up in their most *unholy* faith. These are apt enough to boast of their being strong in faith, in proportion as they can work themselves up into a persuasion of the goodness of their state. No sort of internal evidence is necessary to support their claim, that would be *legal*; nor any sort of sensible communion with God necessary to their joy, that would be living by *sense*, and not by faith. A life of faith on the Son of God with them does not mean a life of habitual application to him, and sensible dependence upon him for all supplies; but a constant undisturbed persuasion, let things go on as they may with them, of their being interested in him; and the less spirituality the more faith, as if faith in Christ and fellowship with him, were opposite things. These things are certainly both discouraging to the sincere Christian, and pernicious to others. All who have thus represented things, may not have

† Rev. xxi. 8,

* 'A want of *assurance*, says the great CHARNOCK, is not 'unbelief. Drooping spirits may be believers; there is a manifest 'distinction made between *believing to eternal life*, and *knowing 'we have eternal life*, 1 John, v. 13. *These things have I 'written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, 'that ye may know that ye have eternal life.*—If the want of 'assurance were this unbelief, a child of God would be an unbeliever every time God is pleased to draw a cloud between heaven 'and the soul, and deny him the present tastes of the hidden manna. Unbelief is a sin, the want of assurance is not; to have it is 'not our duty, but God's dispensation; he hath obliged the believer 'to seek it, but not to possess it.'—Sermon on *unbelief*.

discerned their tendency; but such is their tendency, whether discerned or not.

But, not to attend any farther to what it is not, let us enquire what it is. Faith appears always to carry in it the idea of *accrediting some testimony where intuitive evidence cannot be obtained*. If that testimony be merely human, we call it human faith; if divine, divine faith. If the testimony be fabulous, then faith in it is false; if authentic, we call it true. If it relate to historical facts, it has been called historical faith; if to a divine power accompanying the primitive disciples, enabling them to work miracles, their faith in that promise we call the faith of miracles. If it relate only to certain circumstances of the gospel, and the bare existence of things, without taking in their nature and qualities, then 'tis partial faith; if to the essence, sum, and substance of the gospel, then 'tis what accompanies salvation. But in all these, faith is the credit of some testimony. True saving faith is no less so than any of the rest. Nothing deserves that name but what is founded on substantial evidence. When the apostle calls the Thessalonians *believers*, he assigns this as the reason, or as what constituted them such. *Our testimony among you was believed*.* Perhaps no better definition, then, can be given of true faith than that which is given by the Holy Ghost himself in 2 Thes. ii. 13. **THE BELIEF OF THE TRUTH.** The gospel is here, by way of eminence, called *the truth*. The apostle knew there was other truth in existence, as well as that, but the importance of that was such as to eclipse all the rest. That was it that represented God in his *true* character, and men in *theirs*—that told them the *truth* without falsehood or flattery, concerning the evil of sin, and its just demerit—that gave them a *true* account of their miseries and necessities, and as well exhibited the glorious

* Thes, i. 10.

realities of life and immortality to view. That was it which formed the subject matter of the apostles embassy, and in the reception of which he knew men's everlasting interests were concerned. That was it of which the Son of God himself came down to *bear witness*.† To acquiesce therein is to view things in measure as God views them, and as Christ viewed them when he offered himself a sacrifice for sin. Never was such *witness borne* to the excellence of God's law and character, to the evil and demerit of sin, and to the worth of the everlasting enjoyment of God as he then bore? To view things then as he viewed them, is to view them as *they are*, and that is the same thing as the apostle calls *the belief of the truth*. It deserves also to be particularly noticed that what is here called the belief of the truth, is peculiar to the *elect*, accompanies *sanctification of the spirit*, and terminates in *salvation*.

Probably this will at first sight be thought a very *low and defective* definition, and 'tis possible some may pronounce upon it with an air of positivity "this is no more than a man may have, and go to hell notwithstanding." But I apprehend this is much sooner said than proved. Perhaps it were much easier to prove that such have low and defective notions of believing the truth, than that a real belief of the truth is a low and defective definition of faith. Does God in his word represent the understanding and belief of the truth in such a light as this, or does he not? What does he mean in the forecited passages? What can he mean by representing those hearers only who are compared to the good ground, as hearing the word so as to *understand* it?* What could the Lord Jesus mean, when he said, *ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free?*† and what, when he prayed, *sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth?*‡

† John xviii. 37. * Matt. xiii. 23. ‡ John viii. 32. § John xvii. 17.

How low and defective soever this definition may seem, perhaps it may be found that every material idea which the scriptures give us of faith, is herein comprehended. However, to avoid obscurity, I shall attempt more fully to explain the terms. And *First*, It is not supposed but that there may be a *cold assent* to many of the general truths of christianity; so far as that a man may obtain the character of being orthodox, and may really think himself a believer, yea and may be able to defend those truths for which he is an advocate with clearness and energy; and yet be destitute of saving faith. I would not for a world encourage those deceived souls *who receive not the love of the truth*, while it is manifest a lie is in their right hand! By *beleief*, then, I understand, and I think the apostles understands, a *cordial reception* of the truth as it is in Jesus; or as the Holy Ghost elsewhere speaks, *a believing with all the heart*:† and perhaps it may prove, if closely examined, that nothing short of that, *properly and strictly speaking*, deserves the name of faith. Those who received not the *love* of the truth, notwithstanding the *profession* they made, are said in the next verse but one, *not to believe the truth at all*.|| To believe only the *shadow* of truth, without entering into the *spirit* of it, is little more than to believe nothing at all about it. The apostle Paul, notwithstanding his knowledge of, and zeal for, the law, while blind to its *spirituality*, reckons himself to have been *without* the law.¶ The same may be affirmed concerning mere *professing* zealots in christianity. They tell us they believe the truth, and doubtless think they do; but while they continue blind to its spiritual glory, which will appear by their knowledge having no tendency to transform them into the image of God, they ought to be considered in no other light than as *WITHOUT* the truth.

† Acts viii. 37. || 2 Thea. ii. 12. ¶ Rom. vii. 9.

Farther, by *truth* I do not mean, and I think the apostle does not mean, barely such general truths of the gospel, as that there was such a person as Jesus Christ—that he was born at Bethlehem—lived, and wrought miracles in Judea—was crucified, buried, and raised again from the dead—that he ascended to glory, and will judge the world at the last day.—That he is God and man, and bears the titles of king, priest, and prophet of his church.—That there is an eternal election, a particular redemption, an effectual vocation, a final perseverance, &c. &c. &c.—These, no doubt, are truths, and great truths, and what, it is allowed, may be believed where no saving faith is. But by *truth* I mean (and I think the apostle means the same) to include with the forementioned doctrines their *qualities* or *properties*, which make a great, and even an essential part of their truth. It is as true, and as much a part of the record God hath given of his Son, that he is *altogether lovely*, as that he exists at all.* The *beauty* of the divine character, the *evil* of sin, and the *excellence* of Christ, are truths independent of our belief of them. It is as true, and as plainly reported in the scriptures, that the gospel is intrinsically good, superlatively glorious, infinitely important, and, in one word, *worthy of all acceptance*, as that it has any existence at all. But to believe this is true saving faith.

It is in believing as it is in *doing*. There are some things of an external nature, laudable in themselves, which may be done, and yet the doers of them be destitute of real religion; so there are some things of that nature which may be believed, and yet the believers of them be destitute of saving faith. But as there are some things, such as loving God, and holiness, which cannot be done without the party being truly gracious; so there are some things which cannot

* Cant. v. 16.

be believed in reality without constituting the party a true believer. The scripture not only requires internal as well as external duties, but, if I may so say, exhibits internal as well as external truths. It not only affirms general truths, but describes their intrinsic nature and glory; and no person can properly be said to believe the gospel, unless he believe one as well as the other, because this only is believing it to be *what it is*. Some men think they are great friends to the doctrine of *election*, yea, almost the only friends it has left in the world, who yet never from their heart believed it would be a fair thing in God to choose *others*, and to *cast them off*. Such cannot be said to believe the *equity* of the doctrine, and they might almost as well have believed nothing at all about it. So many seem great advocates for the doctrine of *perseverance*, who yet never cordially admitted the idea of *persevering in grace and holiness*. Perseverance with such, as one said, is 'the tacking together a beginning and an end, and leaving the devil to fill up the middle. Such, instead of believing the truth, believe a lie, in supposing eternal bliss to be connected with such a kind of life. There is as great a discord between what they account truth and what really is so, as between the doctrine of lying still and the doctrine of going forward. Such a partial assent, it is allowed, there may be, without saving faith; but properly to believe a scripture doctrine is to believe it as the scripture represents it. It is not to admit this idea of it, and reject that; but to receive it as it is; and whoever thus receives the truth receives the love of it, for that being must not be human that believes an object lovely and yet does not love it.

The infinite *excellency* of God, the *Reasonableness* and *goodness* of his law, the exceeding *sinfulness* of sin in itself considered, men's *vile*, *dangerous*, and *lost*

condition, the *equity* of God in sending them to hell, the infinite *loveliness* of Christ and *excellence* of his way of salvation, the *beauty* of holiness, &c. &c., are truths, concerning which every wicked man is an infidel. These are truths which cannot be really credited without an answerable disposition of heart. Men in general, instead of believing them, believe the direct contrary of them all. Their heart is enmity against God, and therefore they cannot conceive of him as an *excellent*, *lovely* being: They judge the law of God, if it must take cognizance of their hearts, to be too rigorous; therefore not *reasonable* or just. They believe, if they were to obey it in its full extent, it would render them melancholy and miserable; therefore they cannot believe it to be *good*. Sin is what they believe to be in its own nature desirable, and adapted to make them happy. If they might but go on in it without being called to account, they would give a loose to their utmost desires; therefore they cannot believe it to be in its own nature so *exceeding* sinful. Perhaps men may believe that God hates sin; that, however, is more than some do, who imagine God to be *altogether such a one as themselves*;* but the question is, do they believe it is what *ought* to be so hated by him? Farther, they are full of self-admiration, and their ways, be they what they may, seem right in their own eyes; therefore they cannot believe themselves *vile*. They live generally in ease and security, and secretly cherish a hope that things will not be so bad at last as the scriptures and their preachers tell them; yes, the secret language of their hearts is, *I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart*.† How can such people be said to believe the *danger* of their condition? Again, they do not entirely despair of pleasing God by their works, or their knowledge, or something in themselves; therefore

* Ps. l. 21. † Deut. xxix. 19.

they do not believe themselves utterly lost. They think it would be a hard and cruel thing for God to send them to everlasting misery for so trifling faults as they have been guilty of, and they consider their being poor fallen creatures as what renders even these excusable; therefore they cannot be said to believe his *equity* in so doing. They see no form nor comeliness in Christ, nor beauty that they should desire him; therefore they cannot believe him to be *altogether lovely*. They never prayed heartily in their lives for an interest in his salvation, unless under the impressions of terror, with a mere view to escape misery; therefore they do not believe its *excellence*, and that it is *worthy of all acceptation*. Finally, they conceive of holiness as what would kill all happiness, yea, heaven itself would be to them a hell; therefore they cannot be said to believe its *beauty*. Holiness has no charms in their eyes.

The necessary connexion there is betwixt faith and practice induces me to think it impossible for a wicked man, while such, to believe the aforementioned truths. Persons may *profess* to believe many things which they do not, yea, may suppose themselves really to believe them; but if it indeed were as they say, it would shew itself by their actions. Men believe various things in the world to be odious, and others dangerous; that arsenic will poison them or fire burn them; and they act accordingly, they make it their constant endeavour to shun them. Moreover, they believe that an enjoyment of the profits, pleasures, and honours of this life, would certainly make them happy. These are things they believe *with all their heart*, and they act accordingly, they pursue them with all their might. They likewise *profess* to believe that very contrary thing the bible; which, if their profession were true, would be the same thing as to believe that of all things in the world nothing is so odious, nothing so dangerous as sin—that of all the

enjoyments ever possessed by any creature, nothing is so desirable, nothing so excellent, as the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, is it possible, in the nature of things, to suppose they can really believe these contraries? With equal propriety might we suppose a person capable of believing an object to be the chief good, and its opposite the most desirable! It is an awful fact, that men do pursue one of these kind of objects, and avoid the other: but human nature cannot pursue evil *as evil*, nor avoid good *as such*. Men must, therefore, as the scriptures intimate, believe *evil to be good* and *good evil*, previous to such practices.*

Were a company of intoxicated people to sit together in a house that was all in flames; and if, on the alarm of fire, they should coldly reply, "aye, we believe you," but continue to sit round their bowls, and take no measures to escape, could any one think that they really did believe the alarm? surely not. Just thus it is with wicked men. The fire of divine wrath is revealed from heaven against them. The solemn declarations and warnings of the bible give the alarm, and withal point to a way of escape, saying, *flee from the wrath to come!* Men reply, we believe these declarations, and the danger we are in," but yet live unconcerned, and take no measures in real earnest for their soul's escape. It must, therefore, be concluded that unbelief lurks at the bottom, and that they do not, in reality, credit the declarations of the bible.

* Note, by *good* and *evil* here is meant the same as *lovely* and *unlovely*. No doubt people may pursue what is, and what they know at the time to be *moral* evil, and as well avoid what they know to be *moral* good; otherwise no man would act against his conscience; but what is here asserted is, that whenever any man chooses moral evil, it is under the notion of its being a *good*, that is, something adapted to make him happy. And whenever he avoids moral good, it is under the notion of its being *evil*, that is, some thing adapted to make him miserable.

Our Lord reasons after this sort with the Jews. They strongly professed, and doubtless verily thought that they believed *Moses*. They gloried in being *Moses's* disciples; and yet the Lord, far from taking their word, argues the impossibility of their believing *Moses*, from the want of a correspondent practice. *Had ye believed Moses, says he, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.*†

As this definition surpasses what any wicked man ever experienced, so *it comprehends every material idea of that faith of which true believers are the subjects*. Does faith consist in discerning and believing the spiritual glory of religion—viewing the glorious blessings of the gospel as worthy of all acceptance—seeing a beauty in Christ that we should desire him—embracing him as precious—receiving the love of the truth, &c. &c.? What is all this but *believing the truth*? Is it not *true*, whether we believe it or no, that religion has a spiritual glory—that the blessings of the gospel are worthy of all acceptance—that Christ is precious—that truth is lovely, and therefore worthy of being received in the love of it? These are truths, independent of our belief of them. If we believe not, still he abideth what he is,§ and all spiritual enjoyments are what they are. Faith, therefore, only draws aside the veil, and views things, in some measure *as they are*; or, in other words, it is a sweet and solid persuasion of the mind that things are as God hath said they are; hence, receiving Christ's testimony is beautifully expressed by *a setting to our seal that God is true.*‡

I have said, I do not think the scripture idea of faith in Jesus Christ is what many people conceive it to be, namely, *a believing our own personal interest in the blessings of the gospel*. It is allowed there is such

† John v. 46, § 2 Tim. ii. 13. ‡ John iii. 33.

a thing, and that it may, when founded on evidence, be called faith; but it does not appear to be the leading idea which the scriptures give us of that important grace, or what is essential to it. However, be it so, that faith consists in knowing that *our redeemer liveth—crying abba father—laying hold on eternal life*—and claiming *interest* in a crown of righteousness; what is all this but *believing the truth*? If I believe myself to be a child of God, it is either a *truth* that I am what I believe myself to be, or it is not. If it is, then my being persuaded of it from scripture evidence is the belief of the truth, is faith. If it is not, my persuasion, however strong, is not faith, but delusion or presumption; is not the belief of the truth, but of a lie. Faith, then, is the belief of the truth, and the belief of the truth is every one's duty. Those who are born of God, and have evidence of it, it is their duty to examine and believe that evidence. Those who are not, it is their duty to believe they are not, and that dying in that condition they shall perish.

It has been objected to this way of defining faith, that “thus the devils believed, thus Simon Magus believed, and such a faith as this a man may carry to hell with him.” Considering that such writers take a belief of the truth to be no more than a *cold assent* to the general doctrines of christianity, it is no wonder they thus express themselves. Their mistake seems to lie in supposing a person may really believe all the truths of the gospel, and yet not love them. It is denied that the belief of devils, or of Simon Magus, could be termed the belief of the truth any otherwise than in a very partial sense. It being expressly said of them that they *believed*, no more proves that it is not to be understood in a mere partial sense, than it being expressly said of Judas that he *repented*, proves that he exercised any other than a partial repentance, a repentance merely for consequences. All that is assert-

ed of the devils is, that they believed there was one God—and that they knew Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God. As to Simon, he seems to have been prevailed upon by the wonderful power discovered in the working of miracles, to believe that he in whose name they were performed must be *divine*. He believed that Christ was, and some little of *what* he was, namely, that he was a being possessed of wonderful *power*; but the chief part of his real excellence, which is all revealed in, and forms the essence of the gospel, was no part of his belief.

Truth, in its full latitude, has, I think, with great propriety, been considered in three points of view; namely, in *existence*, *conception*, and *expression*.* It is with the two first of these we are here concerned. Now, truth in existence is *REALITY*, and if so, to believe the truth, which is here called *truth in conception*, is to *REALIZE* it, or to consider it as *REAL*, that is, to consider it *AS IT IS*; which has a real effect upon the heart and conduct: as real an effect as when one *beholds* some delightful object; *realizes* the pleasure of possessing it; *feels* ardent desire after it, and a fixed determination *to use all possible means* to obtain it. Or, as when a person standing on the precipice of a rock, *realizes* the danger of his situation; *feels* a tremour; *falls back*, and *tries to escape* the fatal verge. Now it appears to me, nothing short of this can *properly* be called the belief of the truth. However, suppose it should be otherwise; suppose a mere cold

* "TRUTH may be considered, *in existence and nature*, as "opposed to unexisting fiction. This is ontological, or physical "truth. TRUTH *in apprehension, or the conception of the* "mind: and that is when our perceptions exactly correspond with "the nature, properties, and relations of things. This is called "logical truth: its opposite is *error*, or a wrong conception of "the nature of things. TRUTH *in the heart*, or moral and "ethical truth, is styled *sincerity*: its opposite is *hypocrisy*." Mr. Ryland's Contemplations, Vol. III., pages 59, 60.

assent, as it is called, such as Simon Magus had, may properly be called believing the truth; this will not affect the *main question*, though it may affect the foregoing *definition*: for, whether the belief of the truth be saving faith or not, let it but be granted that this *realizing* of truth is such, and it will amount to the same thing. The question then will only stand thus, Is it the duty of every man who hears the solemn REALITIES of religion to consider them as REAL; that is, to consider them as THEY ARE, or is it not?

It has been said, probably with a view to oppose this representation of things, that 'the objects of faith are not bare axioms, or propositions—that the act of the believer does not terminate at an axiom, but at *the thing*; for axioms are not formed, but that by them knowledge may be had of *things*.' It may be difficult to determine whom, or what, this can oppose; for to believe a bare axiom or proposition *in distinction from the thing*, must be barely to believe that such and such letters make certain words, and such words put together have a certain meaning. But who, in all the world, would call this believing the *proposition*? To believe the proposition, is to believe *the thing*. Letters syllables, words, and propositions, certainly, are only means of conveyance; and these, as such, are not the objects of faith, but the *things conveyed*. Nevertheless, those things must have a conveyance, ere they can become proper objects of our faith. The *person, blood and righteousness of Christ*, for instance, are often said to be objects of faith; and so doubtless they are, as they are objects held forth to us by the language of scripture: but these objects could not meet our faith, unless something *were affirmed concerning them* in letters and syllables, or vocal sounds, or by some means or other of conveyance. So that to say, these are objects of faith, is to say the truth, but not the *whole truth*. The person, blood and righteousness of Christ, *testified in the word of God* as the way of a

sinner's acceptance, are, properly speaking, the objects of our faith, for without such testimony they could not be believed in.

The most plausible objection, perhaps, against the above definition is this: that the scripture speaks of saving faith as an *actual outgoing* of the soul towards the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation—a venturing upon him—a receiving of him—and trusting our eternal all in his hands: and this seems to be something more than a credit of the divine report, something different from a bare belief of the truth. “This, it has been said, meaning a belief of the truth, is not a sinner’s fleeing to, receiving of, and resting on Christ alone for salvation, which is true saving faith.” But it may be replied, he that really and from his heart believes what God hath said of the nature of sin, his own vile and lost condition, with the glory of Christ’s way of saving sinners, will necessarily flee to, receive, and rest upon him for salvation. Unless it can be supposed that a person may believe an object worthy of all acceptance, and yet will not accept it, this must be the case. Be it so then, that the actual outgoing of the soul to Christ for salvation in a way of *dependence* on him, is something distinct from the belief of the truth, it is distinct from it only as an inseparable effect is distinct from its cause. Distinguished, perhaps, they may be, but divided they cannot be. Such a dependence on Christ, or trust in him, is at least an immediate *effect* of believing what God says concerning him. Those that *know his name*, and believe his excellence, *will put their trust in him.* §

When the scripture calls such a trusting in Christ by the name of faith, it is, I apprehend, by way of metonymy, as when an effect is called by the name of its cause. So the act of relieving the needy is

* Motives to L. and U. Page 28. § Ps. ix. 10.

commonly called *charity*; but this is not charity, properly speaking; for I may give all my goods to feed the poor, and have no charity after all. It is rather an immediate *effect* thereof, than the thing itself; and effect, however, which, if there be ability and opportunity, certainly follows. Charity, strictly speaking, is a principle of love towards our fellow-creatures and christians; when, therefore, the act of relieving the needy is called by that name, it is easy to see that it is so called not properly, but metonymically; the effect being called by the name of its cause, or the act by that of its principle. So, where trusting in Christ is called faith, I apprehend it is to be understood in the same sense. It does not appear, strictly speaking, to be faith, but its immediate effect. It is an inseparable attendant on it, but seems to be distinct from it. The soul by faith views and realizes what God hath said of the evil of sin, his own lost condition, the loveliness and suitableness of the mediator, and his way of salvation; and then, *in consequence of this*, flees to him, and casts his eternal all upon him. Dr. GILL, on *Trusting in God*, allows it to be rather a *fruit* of faith than faith itself. His words are, "It is at least a fruit and effect of it, what follows upon it; for when the grace of faith is wrought in the soul, it shews itself by trust and confidence in God, even when it has not a full persuasion of interest in him; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*"† Job xiii. 15.

It is freely acknowledged, however, that it is in this large sense including not only the belief of the truth, but the actual outgoing of the soul towards Jesus Christ in a way of *dependence* upon him, that faith in him is generally to be taken in the New Testament.—And I never supposed the one could exist without the other, though I have supposed

† Body of Div. Vol. III. page 77.

them, strictly speaking, to be distinct, as cause and effect.

Indeed, some have thought this is more than need to be allowed. They apprehend that believing and trusting mean the self same thing. "It is evident that *trusting* and *believing* are used by the apostle as synonymous terms, (2 Tim. i. 12. Eph. i. 13.) meaning the same thing; and there is nothing abstruse or difficult to be understood in the expression; for what more common than to say of a person of known integrity and unblemished reputation, when any thing is declared or promised by him of which others doubt, *he is one that may be trusted—you may rely on his word*: meaning, you may believe what he says. And, respecting a person of an opposite character, men of prudence frequently express themselves thus, We have no *faith* in what he relates; he is not to be *trusted*; we cannot *confide* in him; we can have no *dependence* on what he says; we can place no *confidence* in him. The obvious meaning or design in using the above terms, is to express one simple fact, which is, *that such a man is not to be believed.*" §

This is a passage that certainly deserves attention, as it manifestly proves these terms to be far nearer allied than many may have apprehended. However, I wish it to be considered, whether the truth of the matter may not lie here: when the word *believe* relates to such reports or declarations wherein we have no immediate *interest* or *concern*, wherein it matters not to us particularly whether they be true or false, then to believe and trust are not used as words of the same meaning; but when it relates to such in which our *interest* is immediately involved, then they are used synonymously. If a man, with whom I have *no concern*,

§ Letter from the Association at Kettering, 1781. Page 10.

declare to me his ability to pay his creditors, and I believe him, that belief is not so properly called *trust* as if he stood indebted to me. Then for me to believe him would be to trust him. Yet even here the word seems used rather *metonymically*, the effect being called by the name of its cause. It is well known that *credit* (which is the same as belief) is put for *trust* in every concern of life. To give a man credit for a sum of money is to trust him, and to trust him is to give him credit. The reason for these modes of speaking is plain: it is supposed of the creditor that he *believes* the debtor to be a man of ability and probity, and in consequence of such belief trusts him. Now, if this observation be just, then be it observed, that the declarations of the gospel are not things of an indifferent nature. They are things in which all mankind are concerned, and in which their eternal interests are involved. No man can justly say of them, *it matters not to me whether they be well or ill founded, for, be they true or false, I shall be neither better nor worse*. To credit, therefore, in this case, is to trust. He that from his heart believes those declarations which relate to the loveliness, suitableness, ability and integrity of the Saviour (which imply his belief of those relating to his own vile and lost condition) does really trust in the Saviour under those representations. Hence, it is common for believing and trusting to be used synonymously, when spoken of in relation to spiritual things.

It has been objected to faith's being defined *the belief of the truth*, that such a belief is only a *natural act*. "It is, says one, no other than a *natural act*."* And again, "It is merely a *rational act*, excited by *rational evidence*."† It is allowed, that believing, simply considered, is a mere *natural act*; but be-

* Animad. on Letters on Theron and Aspasio, page 34.

† Mot. to L. and U., page 28.

believing *such things* as the gospel reveals, must be a spiritual act. So *thinking* and *loving* simply considered, are mere natural acts; but thinking a *good thought*, and loving *holiness*, are spiritual acts. And as to its being a *rational act, excited by rational evidence*, it is hoped it will be thought no reproach to true faith to be so represented. Certainly, if it be supported by evidence at all, it must be a rational act; and surely nothing deserves the name of faith but what is so supported. What can be more rational than that every sinner should think of himself *as he is*, and as *God hath said he is*? This would be to think very differently from what any wicked man does. Again, what can be more rational, as all hopes of acceptance with God in any other way are absolutely shut out, than for him to cast himself at Christ's feet for mercy, saying, *if he save me alive, I shall live; and if he kill me, I shall but die*? Surely, if every sinner were but in such a spirit as it *becomes* persons in his situation to be in, he would think, and reason, and act thus. He was a *wise* man who built his house upon a rock, and he a *fool* who built it upon the sand. To say that this is what no natural man *can* do, or ever will, till he see and feel his danger, is true, but nothing to the purpose. The reason why he cannot is the criminal blindness, unbelief, pride and enmity of his heart. If he thought of himself as he really is, and as God hath said he is, which would be only thinking soberly of himself, *AS HE OUGHT TO THINK*,§ he *could* and *would*. But as it is otherwise, hence ariseth the absolute necessity of the work of the Spirit. To view things *as they are*, though it be strictly a *rational act, and excited by rational evidence*, yet is more than can be produced by the mere dint of human reason in its present state. Nor is this at all mysterious, or beyond comprehension, for evidence, however rational and strong, hath no access to

a mind blinded with prejudice, bloated with pride, benumbed with carelessness, or poisoned with enmity against it. On this account it must be a work more than human to prepare the mind for the reception of evidence, to bring man to himself (I allude to the prodigal) and cause him to act even *rationally* in this matter.

It is not intended to reject by the lump, what some divines have said in distinguishing between *believing Christ*, and *believing in Christ*. They reply to the *Socinians*, who speak of him merely as a prophet, and of believing in him as nothing more than believing what he says to be true, "then we may be said to believe in *Paul* and *Peter* and all the inspired writers, since we believe their words to be true, as well as Christ's. *Believing in him*, therefore, contains more than barely believing what he says is true." There is something solid in this answer, and sufficient, I think, to refute the *Socinian* hypothesis, the design of which is, to exclude the idea of *trusting in him as the atoning priest*. Yet there appears to me to be something of mistake. It seems to suppose that a person may really *believe* Christ, and yet not *believe in* Christ; or, which is the same thing, not trust in him for salvation. This appears to me impossible. The one is necessarily connected with the other. What makes it so is the *matter* of Christ's declarations. He asserts himself an object fit and worthy to be trusted; *Ye believe in God*, saith he, *believe also in me*;* thus challenging our confidence. Whoever, therefore, believes *all* that Christ says, must believe him a *fit object of trust*; and he that from his heart believes his fitness as an object of trust, will trust in him. I may believe what *Paul*, *Peter*, and all the inspired writers, say is true, and yet not believe or trust in them: the reason is, they never say that they are fit objects of trust, but con-

* John xiv. 1.

stantly disclaim it. Had *Paul* said of himself, *ye believe in God, believe also in me*, thereby claiming our confidence for salvation; then, to have believed *Paul* in reality would necessarily have been attended with a trust in him. Christ did say so, therefore believing him from the heart will ever be attended with an hearty dependence upon him for salvation, which is the same thing as believing in him. A believing on Christ, and a *not believing* Christ, are represented as opposites in John iii. 36; also in 1 John v. 10.

This view of faith seems to be *plain*, and *easy* to be understood, and does not embarrass our minds with a number of words without ideas. Great and glorious as the matter contained in scripture is, protestants commonly maintain that it is set forth in *language* plain and intelligible—that the inspired writers made use of terms in common use in the affairs of life—adapted even to the understandings of the common people—and that they did not use these terms in any contrary sense, but in the same sense as they were used in the common affairs of life. If they had used them in a sense peculiar to themselves, then had they been unintelligible to their hearers. Then had the Jews been furnished with a sufficient answer to our Lord's reprehensive question, *Why do ye not understand my speech?*† Yea, then, must it have been a *miracle* for him or his apostles ever to be understood, or their writings, in any future ages. To apply this observation to the point in hand: It is well known that faith, in common speech, signifies the same as *credence*; *a credit of some report, declaration, or testimony, where intuitive evidence is not to be obtained*: and, if the report, or testimony, contain things, in the truth of which *we are concerned*, then it is common to call such a belief by the name of *trust*. Now, if true faith, as mentioned so frequently in the scriptures, be to be

† John v. 1.

§ Mark xvi. 16.

understood according to this easy obvious sense of the word, then the inspired writers acted in character; but if they included a meaning in the terms *faith*, *believe*, *believer*, &c., peculiar to themselves, then whence does it appear that they spake and wrote intelligibly?

To conceive of faith, as a cordial belief of the truth, seems likewise to render several *passages of scripture* plain and easy. For instance, *He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*† He that believeth that Jesus is the true Messiah, and such a Messiah as God hath revealed him to be, is born of God. Nothing is more natural than to understand our Lord's commission to his apostles in this way. § Go, said the risen redeemer, PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE! HETHAT BELIEVETH—stop reader; believeth what? What more natural than to understand it of the GOSPEL which, in the same breath, he had commissioned them to preach? This is only supposing the Lord Jesus to have acted in character; to have said what *became* one in his situation to say. Surely it became the Lord of the universe, who had *all power in heaven and in earth*, in sending his servants to proclaim a gospel which was the result of infinite wisdom and love, and of his own most astonishing sufferings, when speaking of the treatment it should meet with, to express himself in *strong language*. Surely it became him to annex a penalty to the rejection of so glorious a gospel, as well as a promise to its reception. It is no more than if he had said, "Here is my final determination: this is your message— whoever shall receive it, and submit to my authority, assure him from me, the best of blessings shall attend him: whoever shall reject it, let him see to it—damnation shall be his portion!" Agreeably to these instructions, the apostles went forth. Before

† 1 John v. 1.

§ Mark xvi. 16.

30 *Passages of Scripture supposed to make against it.*

that period, their Lord and Master had preached to the *Jews only*, saying, *repent ye, and believe the gospel.*† Now, as faithful witnesses for him, they *testify both to Jews and Greeks* the same thing, namely, *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*|| Thus they preach, *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and BELIEVE IN THINE HEART that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*¶ And thus they act—one of them being asked by a hopeful Ethiopian eunuch, *what hindereth me to be baptized?*—replies *if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.* As if he had said, “If you *enter into the spirit* of what you have read and heard, if you *realize* it, *cordially approve* it, and be *heartly* in the matter, you may.” The convert, with a heart full of love and joy, replies, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!* The evangelist, like one whose work was plain before him, immediately proceeds to baptize him.*

As to those *scriptures which are thought to contradict* this position, the only passages that I recollect to have heard or seen urged, are Isaiah liii. 1. and Romans i. 18. with such others where unregenerate persons are said to *believe*, as Simon Magus, Agrippa, &c. In the first of these passages, it is thought that *believing the report* is distinguished from having the *arm of the Lord revealed*, and it is frequently supposed that a person may do the former, and have nothing of the latter. It is allowed there is a difference between believing the report, and having the arm of the Lord revealed. The former is our act of obedience towards God, the latter is God’s act of almighty grace towards us, enabling us to do our duty; but that they are so distinct that a person may do the former, and have nothing of the latter, appears to want evidence. The text does not

† Mark i. 15. || Acts xx. 21. ¶ Rom. x. 9. * Acts viii.

express or imply any such thing. It is quoted twice in the new testament ; once by the evangelist John (ch. xii. 38.) where such a believing is affirmed to be what wicked men *could not do* (verse 39). It should seem therefore to be of a spiritual nature. Besides in verse 40, such believing is supposed to be of the same import with *seeing with their eyes, understanding with their heart, and being converted*. What is affirmed of the one is affirmed of the other, namely that they were under such a judicial blindness, and hardness of heart, that *they could not do them*. It is quoted also by the apostle *Paul*, (Rom. x. 16.) and is supposed by him to be of the same meaning as *obedience to the gospel*, which is nothing short of saving faith, for Christ is *the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him* †. This text, therefore, instead of overthrowing the position, considered in connection with the new testament exposition of it, serves to confirm it. In the next of these passages (namely in Rom. i. 18.) of heathen philosophers it is said, *they hold the truth in unrighteousness* : from whence it seems to be thought that a man may believe the whole truth of God, and yet live in unrighteousness, and consequently be destitute of saving faith. But it may be replied it can hardly be supposed, that these men believed the whole truth of God. All that is meant here by *truth* seems to be the existence, and at most the unity of God, together with a few mangled ideas of some of his perfections. These were things manifest to them by the works of creation ; (verses 19, 20.) and this was the whole of what the best of them attained. All this, no doubt may be believed, and the believers, notwithstanding, live in all unrighteousness.

As to those passages where persons are said to *believe*, as *Simon Magus*, and *Agrippa*, § who were yet in a state of unregeneracy, it is answered,

† Heb. v. 9.

§ Acts viii. 13. xxvi. 27.

1. Persons may believe many things in religion, of a general and external nature without entering into their intrinsic excellence, as hath been fully acknowledged ; and when they do this, may be said to believe, though it be in a very partial sense. Many of the chief rulers among the Jews are said to have *believed* on Christ, when no more is intended than a secret testimony of their consciences that he was the true Messiah, for they did not openly confess him, but loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* And probably none will care to affirm that *Simon Magus* or *Agrippa* went much farther, save in this, that they *acknowledged* their belief.

2. Persons may *profess* to believe many things, which yet, if it were thoroughly examined into, they do not believe in fact. It is common to denominate persons according to what they profess. The Jews were accounted Moses's disciples, and had no doubt but that they believed Moses. Yet when our Lord came thoroughly to try the affair, he plainly intimated that they did not; for, says he, *had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.*† And from this passage we may easily infer, that even *Agrippa's belief of the prophets* was but *almost* a belief, a mere superficial assent, for had he believed them *altogether*, if our Lord's reasoning be just, then had he been *altogether* a Christian. Yet, since he acknowledged the divine inspiration of the prophets, that was sufficient for the apostle to reason with him upon, respecting the truth of christianity.

The reader must now be left to judge, whether *the belief of the truth* be a *low* and *defective* definition of faith, or whether they who say "this is no more than a man may carry to hell with him," must not

* John xii. 43.

† John v. 46.

entertain *low* and *defective* notions of believing the truth. If what has been said be just, it should seem, little more need be added to determine whether true faith be the duty of men in general, or not. Surely it will not be disputed whether unerring truth ought to be believed, and that *fully, heartily*, and with the *utmost cordiality*. 'The least thing we can be obliged 'unto upon any declaration of God, says Mr. CHARNOCK, 'is the belief of it ; an assent to the truth, and consent to the goodness. The law of nature teaches us 'that every revelation of God is to be believed as 'true, and embraced as good. We are as much bound 'to believe God because of his truth, as to love him 'because of his goodness. What can be more 'reasonable than to turn to God, trust in him, accept 'of a righteousness from him, that we may be freed 'from guilt, and glorify his name ?' Sermon on John vi. 64.

Those who deny faith to be a duty, allow it to be the duty of all men to believe the gospel report, since it is expressly said *he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*§ But then, this they suppose natural men may do, and that believing the record God hath given concerning his Son comes far short of saving faith. But whence is this inferred ? Surely not from the passage itself. Not *believing God* so as to *make him a liar* does not there stand opposed to a mere *cold assent* to the truth, but to true saving faith. The words are, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself*, and consequently is a true believer. It follows, *he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* By this it should seem the scriptures know no medium

between true faith on the Son of God, and criminal unbelief, which is making God a liar, though no doubt there are degrees of infidelity as well as of immorality. An avowed deist may be *more* of an infidel than a mere professing christian, but infidels they both are, the one as well as the other ; and both unite in making God a liar, and both so living and dying will have their portions with *unbelievers!*

Probably the mistake is in a great degree owing to a partial consideration of what constitutes the *gospel report*. This most certainly is *whatever God hath reported concerning Christ or our salvation, be that what it may*. And this extends, as before said, not only to the ascertaining of general truths, but to the particular description of their intrinsic nature. There is no excellence, glory, or preciousness, in Christ, which is at any time discerned or believed by a christian, but is already reported in the sacred scriptures. There is no new revelation made to the soul of *things not contained in scripture*. The revelation made at the time of our first conversion, consists in the understanding being enlightened to see that which was already revealed and reported before. The word of God gives light,* the spirit of God gives discernment.† “ The heavenly
 “ influence of the spirit of God upon the souls of men,
 “ says Mr. BRINE, is not a conveyance of the know-
 “ ledge of any divine truths which men had not the
 “ means of discovering before, and which they were
 “ incapable of knowing to be such: but by this influence
 “ they are enabled to see the excellence of them, and
 “ to discern the goodness, wisdom, holiness, and
 “ faithfulness of God, *which are therein displayed* in the
 “ fullest manner. To imagine that God now affords
 “ such light as will enable us to make discoveries of
 “ truths not already revealed to us in his word, is real

- * Psalm cxix. 105.

† Eph. i. 18.

“ enthusiasm ; and has nothing to support it in the
 “ holy scriptures : on the contrary, such a wild con-
 “ ceit stands there awfully condemned.”§

Now as every intrinsic glory and excellency in Christ, which is at any time seen by an eye of faith is *reported*, can that be any thing short of saving faith, that really believes that report ! Can any but true believers see any beauty in Christ that they should desire him ? Can any thing short of true faith believe him to be *altogether lovely* ? And yet, how else can they be said to believe the report of the gospel ? As these are things expressly *recorded* of him, how can they believe the *record which God gives of his Son* ?

Finally, If it is denied to be men's duty to believe these *intrinsic excellencies* of religion, let it be proved that these are not a part of the *record which God hath given of his Son* : or if the belief of these is allowed to be their duty, then let it be pointed out what there is more in saving faith. If there is any thing therein which is not the duty of men in general, let it be particularly specified.

§ *The Christian Religion not destitute of Argument.* Page 44.

PART SECOND.

Containing ARGUMENTS to prove *Faith* in Christ the incumbent *Duty* of Men in general under the Sound of the Gospel.

THOUGH I have said, if the foregoing definition be just, little more need be added to prove the point ; yet I would not be understood as if that were the *sole ground* on which the subject rests. There is much more evidence deducible, I apprehend, from holy scripture, not only in concurrence with this, but independant of it: being equally valid whether the definition stand or fall. I shall comprise the chief of it which has occurred to me, under five or six propositions, and endeavour to state the arguments thence arising.

Prop. I. FAITH IN CHRIST IS COMMANDED IN THE SCRIPTURES TO UNCONVERTED SINNERS.—It is here taken for granted, that whatever God commands, is the duty of those to whom it is commanded. If then true faith were not the duty of unconverted sinners, we might expect never to find any injunctions of that nature directed to them in the holy scriptures. We might expect God would as soon command them to be angels as christians, if the latter is no more their duty than the former. But if, on the other hand, we should find him frequently calling upon persons of this character to believe in his Son, or to do that which amounts to the same thing, then it necessarily follows that this is their duty.

That this is to be found, appears evident both from the old and new testament. The *second psalm*

seems full to the purpose, particularly the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses. This psalm is most evidently a prophecy of the resurrection and exaltation of the Messiah, seeing it is that, and that only, to which it will *throughout* apply; and to this it is expressly and plentifully applied in the new testament. The Son here spoken of cannot apply to Solomon, or any mere creature, any more than, '*thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption,*' in the sixteenth psalm, can apply to David. Of him it is said, *The Lord hath said, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* But this is a dignity too great for an angel to possess, for unto which of the angels said he at any time, *thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?** much less then can we suppose it a dignity to which Solomon was equal. Besides none but the Messiah ever had the uttermost part of the earth promised him for his possession; and of no mere creature can it be said, *blessed are all they that put their trust in him.* From hence then I remark two things in reference to the question.

1. The kings and judges here commanded to kiss the Son are the same persons mentioned, verse 2. which we find in the new testament applied to 'Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles, and the people of Israel,'† who were most certainly *enemies to Christ, unregenerate sinners*; and such these rulers lived and died, for aught appears to the contrary.

2. *Kissing the Son* denotes a *spiritual act*, a being reconciled to, and embracing the Son of God, which doubtless is of the very essence of true saving faith. This is evident by its being added, *lest ye perish from the way*, implying that if they did kiss the Son, they should not perish from the way; also by its being added, *blessed are all they that put their trust in him,*

* Heb. i. 5.

† Acts iv. 29.

Now putting their trust in him and kissing him seem nearly a-kin, both have the promise of bliss annexed.

That passage also in the 6th chapter of *Jeremiah*, verse 16th, I apprehend is fully expressive of the same sentiment. *Thus says the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, we will not walk therein.—* Here be it observed,

1. The persons addressed are wicked, unregenerate sinners, such, of whom God himself bears witness, that *their ears were uncircumcised, and they could not hearken; for the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, and they had no delight in it*, verse 10. Yea, so hardened were they, that *they were not ashamed when they had committed abomination*, and so impudent, that they could not blush, verse 15. And such, for aught appears to the contrary, they continued; for when God bid them walk in the good way, their answer was, *we will not walk therein*. Accordingly he pours out his threatenings upon them in verse 19. *Hear, O earth, behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.*

2. These are commanded to *stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein*, and are told if they did, they should find rest for their souls. Our Lord appears plainly to have applied this good way to himself in the 11th chapter of *Matthew*, when he cried, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden—learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*. The prophet had bid them *walk in the good way, and they should find rest for their souls*; the Lord Jesus as good as said,

'I am that good way; come, and ye shall find that in me of which the prophet spake!' By the *ways* which they were bid to *stand in, and see*, and the *old paths* which they were bid to *ask for*, were probably meant the ordinances and commandments of God, many of which being ceremonial, pointed to the promised Messiah. Here then they were enjoined to *stand and see*; not barely to *attend* public ordinances, and *lie in the way* as some express themselves, for that they did already; but to use them as means, to find out the good way, the Lord Messiah, and to **WALK IN THAT GOOD WAY**, which can be nothing short of true faith in him, seeing it was promised that had they so done, they should have *found rest for their souls*.

In the new testament we find true saving faith enjoined upon unregenerate sinners, as plain as words can express it. I refer to John xii, 36. *While ye have the light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.* The persons to whom this was addressed were such, who though he had done so many miracles among them, yet believed not on him, verse, 37. Yea it seems they were given over to judicial blindness, and were finally lost, verse 40.—By the *light* they were commanded to believe in was undoubtedly meant himself. Indeed he explains it of himself in the 46th verse, saying, *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness*—And what kind of faith it was that they were called upon to exercise is very plain, for that on their believing they would not have *abode in darkness*, but would have been *the children of light*, which is a character never bestowed on any but true believers. §

I see no reason why that passage in John vi. 29. may not be ranked among these, *This is the work of*

§ See Luke xvi. 8. Eph. v. 8. 1 Thes. v 5.

God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. The meaning of the words is easily determined by their connexion. They contain an answer to a question. The persons who asked this question were such who followed Christ for loaves, who believed not, and who after this went back, and walked no more with him: see verses 26, 36, 66. Christ had been rebuking them for their mercenary principles in thus following him, and charging them, saying, *labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life,* verse 27. They reply, by asking, *what shall we do that we might work the works of God?* As if they had said, "What would you have us do? we have been very zealous for you in following you about wherever you have gone, and yet we do not, according to your doctrine, please God. You tell us to labour for that which endureth unto everlasting life; what then would you have us do? what ought we to do more in order to please God than we have done?" To this question our Lord answers, *This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*—which if it be a pertinent answer to the question asked (and no doubt but it is so)—is as if he had said, "this is what you must do if you think to please God—this is the first duty incumbent upon you in that great work of labouring for that which endureth unto everlasting life, and without which it will be impossible, with any other labour whatsoever, to please God."—Or as the *Assembly*, in their annotations, express it, "This is his *commandment* and will—it is that which God requireth of you, that you should believe in me"—If attendance on the means of grace be all that is required of unregenerate sinners, then I do not see what reason our Lord had to blame these people, at most, what reason he had to exhort them to what is *spiritually good*, such as labouring for the meat that should endure to everlasting life. They seemed to think as many do now, that attendance on the means

was all that was incumbent upon them, and therefore were offended with Christ for insisting upon any thing farther. His preaching up himself as the *bread of life* which they must labour for, and live upon, or die eternally, as many of their fathers did, though they lived upon manna from heaven in the wilderness, was what they could not bear. *This, say they, is an hard saying who can bear it?* verses 53, 60.

The answer that has been given to these words is, that "They contain a declaration, that believing in Christ for salvation is necessary to the enjoyment of eternal life, and that faith in him is an act acceptable and pleasing to God; but afford no proof that it is required of men in a state of unregeneracy. To declare to unregenerate persons the necessity of faith in order to salvation, which is what our blessed Lord here does, falls very far short of asserting it to be their present duty."* Perhaps it would puzzle a common reader to discern any such declaration of the necessity of faith in this passage, any otherwise than by implication, as it is duty and the foundation of all acceptable obedience, and so necessary. However by this it is acknowledged that the persons to whom the words were addressed, were *unregenerate*; and that the faith here spoken of is of the *special* kind, since no other is connected with salvation. But how is it that the passage should imply, that faith in him, is an act necessary, acceptable, and pleasing to God, and yet it was not their duty? They asked to know what was their duty, or what they should do in order to please God? For Christ in answer to tell them of a work that was necessary, a work that would be acceptable and pleasing to God, but which however was not their duty, nor indeed while unregenerate, what they had any thing to do with, is to answer them in a manner far

* Met. to L. and U. page 42.

from his usual pertinancy.—Besides if it were not their duty to do that which is acceptable and pleasing to God, and without which it was impossible to please him, then it was not their duty to please God at all, nor do any thing acceptable in his sight. In that case Christ's answer would have been somewhat of this nature, "You do the works of God? No, they are what you have nothing to do with—stay till you are unregenerated."—Once more, it seems difficult to conceive how any *work in us* can be either *necessary, acceptable, or pleasing to God*, unless that work be previously our duty. It cannot be the first, unless it be necessary men should do *what they are not obliged to do*; and it cannot be the last, unless God would be well pleased at *what he had never required at our hands*.

I suppose none will deny that all men are bound to honour God the Father as the law-giver and moral governor of the world. Now to honour the Father cannot amount to less than a holy hearty love to him, and adoration of him in all the manifestations by which he hath made himself known. But we are told, *It is the Father's will that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. This, then, cannot amount to less than a holy hearty love to him, and adoration of him, in all the manifestations by which he hath made himself known; and this evidently includes faith in him. This passage not only proves Christ's equality with the Father, but the obligations of mankind to believe in him. Men cannot be said to honour the Son as the Father requires to be honoured, while they reject him in all his offices and excellencies, and neglect his great salvation. What is it to honour a king but to bow to his sceptre, and cheerfully obey his laws?—What to honour an advocate but to commit our cause to him?—What to honour a physician but to trust our lives in his

hand?—and what to honour an infallible teacher but to place an implicit and unbounded confidence in all he says? These are characters in which Christ hath made himself known: to trust him therein is to honour him, and to distrust him is to dishonour him.

Wicked men are commanded to *SEEK the Lord while he may be found*; and that in the character of *the God of grace, promising mercy and abundant pardon* to them that seek him.* *Simon Magus*, was exhorted to *pray to the Lord for the pardon of sin*, which is a spiritual blessing† The contrary is represented as a heinous sin—*God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did SEEK God*;‡ which is as much as saying, if men had the understanding of men, it would teach them to seek God. It is said to be through the *PRIDE of their countenances that the wicked will NOT SEEK AFTER GOD*‡—Now, if men ought to seek the Lord, it might be asked whether they ought to seek him in the only way in which he can be found, or in any other? Spiritual blessings, all will allow, cannot be found but in the way of faith in Christ. It was *Simon's* duty to pray for the forgiveness of sin, in *whose name* did he ought to pray for it? Peter had just before boldly averred to the Jewish Rulers, that there was *no other name given under heaven, or among men whereby we must be saved*;|| is it supposable that he should here give up his doctrine, and counsel the sorcerer to pray for the forgiveness of his sin in some other way? surely not! For what are the Jews blamed by the apostle Paul, and to what is there awful miscarriage imputed? not their seeking after righteousness or acceptance with God, that was what they ought to do; but their not seeking it *by faith*, or as *Dr. GILL* on the passage expresses it,

* Is. lv. 6, 7. † Acts viii. 22. § Ps. liii. 2. ‡ Ps. x. 4. || Acts iv. 12.

"in a right way, by faith in Christ, without which it is impossible to please God" *Israel hath not attained to the law of righteousness, says the apostle. Wherefore? BECAUSE THEY SOUGHT IT NOT BY FAITH, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.* ¶ Ought they not to have sought it by faith? why, then, are they blamed because they did not? Did they right, and what they ought to do in stumbling at that stumbling-stone? why, then, are they, in so doing, said to be *disobedient*?†

To these might be added, such passages of scripture as command men to put their *TRUST* in the Lord, and blame them for the contrary practice. Though there be some difference, as before observed, between *faith*, *strictly speaking*, and *trust*, yet there is not so much difference, but that the one always is attended with the other. Yea, trusting includes believing, since no one can fully trust in another unless he believe his suitableness to help him. Now, that men, even while carnal, are commanded to put their trust in the Lord, and that in a *spiritual* way, is plain from the fourth Psalm, where they who *loved vanity and sought after lying*, are commanded to *offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put their trust in the Lord*. A trust connected with the sacrifices of righteousness must be a *spiritual* trust. And as men are commanded to put their trust in the Lord, so they are frequently dehorted from, and blamed for, trusting in any thing else. *Trust not in oppression, become not vain in robbery—Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity—They trust in vanity and speak lies.** Yea, the author of *The Farther Enquiry* seems here to unite in fixing blame upon such conduct. 'They plainly declare,' says he, 'that Christ is not 'all and in all to them, but that he comes in but at 'second hand, and their regard is more unto them-

¶ Rom. ix. 31, 32. † 1 Pet. ii. 8. * Job xv. 31. Ps. lxxii. 10.
Isaiah lix. 4.

'selves, and their dependence more upon ~~their~~ own doings, than upon the mighty one, on whom God hath laid our help.' Page 160. True, but what then? If, in so doing, they only *do as they ought*, why these charges?

If it is not men's duty to trust in the Lord for the salvation of their souls, in what is it their duty to trust—any thing or nothing? Certainly they ought not to trust in *themselves*, for *he that trusteth his own heart is a fool*†—nor in *other men*, for *cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm*§—nor in *God*, without the consideration of the Mediator, for that would be to trust in consuming fire. If, then, they ought not to trust in Christ, it should seem it is their duty to be mere neutrals in religion, and as to the Saviour, neither bless him at all, nor curse him at all, nor ever be concerned at all about the salvation of their souls.

An *objection* has been urged against this, however, which, if just, is certainly of great weight; namely, that they have no *warrant* so to do. It has been said, "Until a man, *through the law, is dead to the law*, he hath no *warrant* to receive Christ as a Saviour, or hope for salvation through him."‡—It is certainly impossible, in the nature of things, that any one should really trust in Christ till he is dead to the law, that is, till he ceaseth to trust in himself. It is impossible he, at the same time, should serve these two masters; but, surely, that does not prove that he ought not to leave the one and cleave to the other. Is it not every man's duty to be *dead to the law*? Surely, since man has broken the terms of the first covenant, it is not now his duty to expect life from it. God hath sufficiently declared to him, and his own conscience, if not dreadfully warped by pride and unbelief, would tell him, that nothing but death is now to

† Prov. xxviii. 26. § Jer. xvii. 5. ‡ Mot. to L. and U. pages 38, 39.

be expected from the first covenant. He ought, therefore, to cease from all hope whatever from that quarter, which is the same as being *dead to the law*.

It is allowed men have no *warrant* to expect salvation by Christ while they continue alive to the law, or, which is the same thing under an expectation of life *from something in themselves*; but when we say it is the duty of men to trust in Christ for salvation, we mean it is their duty TO CEASE TRUSTING IN EVERY THING ELSE, and to cast themselves on the Lord Jesus Christ as the only possible way of escape. Every man has a warrant so to trust in Christ. That declaration, *whosoever will, let him come*, is a sufficient one; and *him that cometh I will in no wise cast out*, is another as sufficient.

Surely it is every man's duty to think of himself as HE REALLY IS, and as GOD HATH SAID HE IS; and if so, then it is his duty to consider himself as utterly ruined, self-ruined, void of hope from every quarter, unless it be a God in Christ, absolutely at divine discretion. In this condition, like the Syrians, having heard from the scriptures that the King of Israel is a merciful King, it is his duty, as well as interest, to go, as with ropes on his head, and cast himself at his feet. Whether he will accept and save him is another question; that he ought to leave with him. The lip of truth, however, in that matter, has told us, *him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out*.—It is to no purpose to say here “This is the effect of *regeneration*.”* It is granted, and what then? Such is the error of men's minds, and enmity of their hearts, that they must undergo an entire *renovation* of soul before they can be set right. They *must* be born again, and as it were, *new made*. But this does not disprove, but imply, their obligation to BE right, previous to such renovation.

† Mot. to L. and U., page 39.

Once more, It seems to be taken for granted in the objection, that *receiving Christ as a Saviour* consists in *believing him to be my Saviour*; but this can by no means be allowed. That receiving Christ includes “a hearty *choice* of him as God’s appointed way of salvation,” and an earnest *desire* that he may be my salvation, is readily granted; but that it includes a *believing* him to be my Saviour is denied. That is a kind indulgence which follows upon receiving him, rather than what constitutes the thing itself. Receiving Christ, in the sense of scripture, stands opposed to *rejecting* him; so *he came to his own, but his own RECEIVED him not*, that is, they *refused*, and *rejected* him, *disallowed* him, and *set him at nought*.† But to *reject* Christ is not to call in question whether he is my Saviour rather than another’s, but to bar the gates of my heart against him; consequently, to *receive* Christ is not to believe him to be my Saviour rather than another’s, but to open every power of my soul that the King of Glory may come in!—To receive a *gift* is not to believe it to be my own; but to have my pride so far brought down as not to be above it; and if there be any thing in me that stands in the way, to give it up. To receive a *guest* is not to believe him to be my particular friend, though that he may be; but to open my doors to him, and make him heartily welcome. To receive an *instructor*, is not to believe him to be my instructor rather than another’s; but to embrace his instruction, and follow his counsel. For a town or city, after a long siege, to receive a *king*, is not to believe him to be their particular friend, though such he may be, and in the issue they may see it; but to lay down all arms of hostility, fling open their gates, and come under his government. So, to receive Christ includes a *desire* that he might be my own, a hearty *reconciliation* to him, a *willingness* to have him as God’s free gift, and to reject every

† Ps. cxviii. 22., Mark xii. 10., 1 Pet. ii. 4., and Acts iv. 11.

thing that stands in competition with him. It includes, for instance, a rejection of my own *wisdom*, and a willingness to have him for my prophet; of my own *righteousness*, and to have him for my atoning priest, to render me acceptable to God; and my own *will*, and have him for my owner and ruler. But as to believing him to be my own, that seems rather an indulgence, as before said, consequent on receiving him, than to be necessarily included in the act itself. Now if this be the case, surely any man has a *warrant* to receive Christ. One should think every man has a right to lay aside his pride, and be lowly enough to come to Christ that he may have life—to reject self-conceit, self-righteousness, self-will and every thing else that stands in competition with him—and to lay down all arms of hostility, and give full consent that this man should reign over him.

Prop. II. EVERY MAN IS BOUND CORDIALLY TO RECEIVE, AND HEARTILY TO APPROVE, WHATEVER GOD REVEALS.—I should think this proposition ought not to be disputed; for if men are not obliged to approve of what God reveals, then they may be right in disproving it, which to assert would be horrid, and unworthy of a refutation! Now *approbation* of the gospel, or of God's way of salvation is the distinguishing characteristic of true faith. 'Faith used commonly to be defined by an eminent divine, to be a **GOOD THOUGHT OF JESUS CHRIST.**' 'Acting faith, says Mr BRINE, is no other than **SUITABLE THOUGHTS OF CHRIST, AND A HEARTY CHOICE OF HIM AS GOD'S APPOINTED WAY OF SALVATION.**'† And this agrees with the definition I have given of it; for to think *well* and *suitably* of Christ, is to think *justly*, that is, to think and believe the *truth* concerning him, and act accordingly. Now, what of all this is any sinner excused

* See Dr. Owen on Justification, ch. ii. on the nature of faith, p. 125, 129, 138. † Johnson's Mistakes noted, &c. Page 34.

from? Is not he bound to think *suitably* of Christ and to *choose* him?—or is he at liberty to think *unjustly* concerning him, and to *prefer his idols before him*? or to *set up another way* of salvation than that which God hath appointed, in opposition to him? It is easy to conceive of mankind being so full of prejudice, and aversion to Christ, that *they cannot think well of him*; yea, and this aversion, being so deeply rooted in them, that nothing short of *almighty power* can bring them to be of a right spirit; but to imagine that they OUGHT NOT to think so much as A GOOD THOUGHT of him, but *are right* in judging him to have *no form nor comeliness nor beauty that they should desire him*, one should think must shock every sentiment of love and loyalty in an upright heart! I know very well this was once my condition, but it now appears to me to be that of which I have reason to be greatly ashamed. Instead of justifying myself in it, by maintaining that *it was not my duty at that time to think otherwise of him than I did*, I ought to take shame to myself, to *look upon him whom thus I pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first born.*

Cordially to approve of the gospel, is the same thing as to fall in with its grand designs. The grand designs of the gospel are to *glorify God, abase the sinner, and destroy his sin*. To fall in with these is to be heartily willing, that God should have all the glory, and I take all the blame and shame to myself, and that all my idols should be given up. It is more than a bare reluctantly yielding up these points rather than go to hell; it is so to fall in with them as not to abide any other way. If a way of salvation, for instance, could be devised wherein *all* the glory should not redound to God, wherein human pride should not be so greatly abased, and wherein some few *darling sins* at least should be

spared; one who approves of the gospel would reject it with abhorrence. Now this cordial approbation is either incumbent on men in general to whom the gospel is preached, or it is not. If it is, the cause is decided; if it is not, then they do right in disapproving of God's plan, or in other words, are right in not being willing that God should be glorified in the highest: their lusts crucified, and their pride abased.

When the apostle Paul so estimated Christ's excellence as to account all other things but *loss and dung* in comparison with him, § did he *over-estimate* him? Did he set too high a value upon him, and too low upon other things? Few, if any, it is hoped will affirm that.—Well, are others excusable then when they *undervalue* him? Ought not every sinner to account things to be *what they are*? But if any sinner were to do that, he would account all his own possessions, and acquisitions to be but *loss and dung*, compared with Christ's excellence—that is, he would be of the same spirit with the apostle Paul, and so be a true believer.

Faith in Jesus Christ, in the account of the apostle *Peter* seems to consist in *allowing* him that honour and excellence, of which he is in himself possessed, and which God in his word hath given him—(I refer to his 1st epistle, ch. 2. ver. 7.) in allowing him the first place in our affections, and the foundation place in our expectations. The apostle had just before said of him, that he was *disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious*. Then in the verse referred to he adds, *Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner*. As if he had said, 'Such of you as are

true believers, see things as they are, and think of Christ in measure *as God thinks* of him. You choose him that God chooses, and he that is *precious* in God's sight is *precious* in yours. You freely *allow* him that excellence and glory which is his due. If he crown you with crowns of immortal glory, you will in return, *cast them down before his throne*, as properly belonging to him rather than you—accordingly he shall prove to you a precious stone, a sure foundation, on which your salvation shall securely rest. But *unto them which be disobedient*, and scornfully reject God's appointed way of salvation, this very stone *which they disallow*, in spite of them, and to their utter confusion, *is made the head of the corner*.

And now, are not true *believers*, to whom Christ is *precious*, here opposed to unbelievers, who are *said to disallow* of him, and to be *disobedient* therein? And does not the apostle speak as if he knew no medium between being a true believer, and a *disobedient* unbeliever? Farther, what medium can there be in this case? Does not every one who has heard of Jesus Christ by the gospel report, either *allow* or *disallow* of him? and is it not impossible, in the nature of things, that he should do otherwise? If our Lord's doctrine be true, there is no such thing as a state of *neutrality* in real religion. Every man is either for him, or against him. Not to *allow* here, is to *disallow*. It is then every one's duty either to *allow* of Christ, or it is not. If it is, this is the same thing as its being his duty to believe in him with a saving faith, for those who are here supposed to *allow* of Christ, are said to *believe* in him; and to them, it is added, *he is precious*. If it is not, then there is nothing wrong, but right in men's *disallowing* of him, *stumbling at the stumbling-stone, stumbling at the word*, although in so doing they are expressly said to be *disobedient*.

It is easy, one should think, for an attentive mind to see, that such an *approbation* of Christ, and his way of salvation, is no more than is included in that *law* which requires all men to LOVE GOD, WITH ALL THEIR HEART, SOUL, MIND, AND STRENGTH. Surely to love God must be to love him *in every manifestation, by which he shall at any period make himself known.* The same law that obliged *Adam* in innocence to love God in all his natural and moral perfections, as manifested in the works of unintelligent and intelligent creation, obliged *Moses*, and *all Israel* to love him in all his glorious displays of himself in his wonderful works of providence, of which they were witness. And again the same law that obliged them to love him in those discoveries of himself, obliges us to love him in other discoveries by which he has since more gloriously made himself known, namely, *as saving sinners through the death of his Son.*

To suppose that the law obliges man to love God as manifesting himself in the works of creation and providence, but not in the work of redemption, is to suppose that in the highest, and most glorious display of himself, he deserves no love, no praise, no approbation ! Those very excellencies, the display of which render him lovely in all his other works, such as wisdom, holiness, justice, and so on, shine here with a tenfold lustre. To be obliged to love these excellencies when their appearance is as the glimmering star, but not when it is as the blazing sun, is very extraordinary.

As these things cannot be separated in point of obligation, so neither can they in *fact*. He that loves God for any excellency, as manifested in one way, must, of necessity, love him for that excellency, let it be manifested in what way it will; and the brighter the display, the stronger will be his

love. This is verified in the *holy angels*, who when first created, loved God only for the displays of himself in the creation of the natural and moral world. They saw him lay the foundation of the earth, and all in concert shouted for joy. Afterwards they saw his excellencies discovered in his works of *providence*, in governing the world which he had made. Now they see more of his moral perfections, of his holiness, justice, and sovereignty, and *now their love increases*. Seated on his holy throne they compass him about.—On every occurrence of providence that displays his glory, one cries to another, saying, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD OF HOSTS, THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY* Bye and bye they saw him discovered in a way more glorious still. The everlasting God appears in human nature, wrapped in a swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger—The great design, not entirely unknown before, is now to them more fully unfolded—*Now their love rises higher still*. Thither they bend their way—With joy one of the company hails the amazed shepherds—With joy too great to be contained, the rest arrive, and burst forth into a song, GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST; thus they sang, GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TO MEN !†

Now whence did all this arise? whence but from *supreme love to God*? Whence is it but from this that the mysteries of redeeming love have ever since employed their chief attention? To what other principle can we impute it that these glorious truths are what above all things *they desire to look into*? § Supreme love to God would naturally lead any intelligent being to approve and admire the way of salvation by Christ. If he had a soul, or ten thousand souls to save, he would be sure if he might, to venture his all there; and if he needed no salvation for himself,

* Isa. vi. † Luke ii. 8—14. § 1 Pet. i. 12.

yet, like the angels, he would wish for an eternity to explore its wonders !—Hence it was, with the greatest propriety, that our Lord told the Jews, *I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not.*† As if he should say, 'Whatever love you pretend to God and his law, 'tis all pretence ; for it is impossible for any being to love God, and not embrace the greatest friend of God that ever existed ; to love his law, and not be ravished with a plan that above all things tends to magnify, and make it honourable.'

I will here subjoin some thoughts of the kind from two excellent writers, MAC LAURIN, and Dr. BELLAMY. The former expresses himself thus ; 'The affections included in *divine love* are founded 'on those truths, for which there is the greatest 'evidence in the world. Every thing in the world, 'that proves the being of God, proves that his 'creatures should love him with all their hearts. 'The evidence for these things is in *itself* very 'strong, and level to every capacity. Where it does 'not beget conviction, it is not owing to the 'weakness of men's capacities; but the strength of 'their prejudices, and prepossessions.'—'What- 'ever proves that reasonable creatures are obliged to 'love God and his law, proves that sinners are 'obliged to suitable hatred of sin, and self-abasement 'for it. A sinner cannot have due prevalent love 'to God and hatred of sin, without prevalent *desire 'of obtaining deliverance from sin, and the enjoyment 'of God.* A suitable desire of so important ends 'cannot be without proportionable desire of the '*necessary means.* If a sinner, therefore, who hears 'the gospel, have these suitable affections of love to 'God, and hatred of sin, to which he is obliged by 'the laws of natural religion, *these things cannot be*

† John v. 42, 43.

' separated from a real complacency in that redemption
 ' and grace which are proposed in revealed religion.—
 ' This does not suppose that natural religion can
 ' discover, or prove the peculiar things of the
 ' gospel to be true ; but when they are discovered,
 ' it proves them to be infinitely desirable. A book
 ' of laws that are enforced with awful sanctions
 ' cannot prove that the sovereign has passed an act
 ' of grace, or indemnity in favour of transgressors.
 ' But it proves that such favour is to them the most
 ' desirable, and the most necessary thing in the
 ' world. It proves that the way of saving us from
 ' sin, which the gospel reveals, is infinitely suitable
 ' to the honour of God, to the dignity of his law,
 ' and to the exigencies of the consciences of sinners.'
Essay on Grace, Page 342.

The latter, with still greater energy, if possible,
 expresses himself as follows :—' If any man has a
 ' taste for moral excellency, a heart to account
 ' God glorious for being what he is ; he cannot but
 ' see the moral excellency of the law, and love it,
 ' and conform to it ; because it is the image of
 ' God : and so he cannot but see the moral ex-
 ' cellency of the gospel, and believe it, and love it,
 ' and comply with it ; for it is also the image of
 ' God. He that can see the moral beauty of the
 ' original, cannot but see the moral beauty of the
 ' image drawn to life. He, therefore, that despises
 ' the gospel, and is an enemy to the law, even he is at
 ' enmity against God himself. Rom. viii. 7. Ignorance
 ' of the glory of God, and enmity against him, make
 ' men ignorant of the glory of the law, and of the gospel,
 ' and enemies to both. Did men know and love him
 ' that begat, they would love that which is begotten of him.
 ' 1 John v. 1. *He that is of God, heareth God's words ;*
 ' *ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*
 John viii. 47.—*True Religion delineated, Page 332.*

Prop. III. THE GOSPEL, THOUGH IT BE NO LAW, BUT A MESSAGE OF PURE GRACE, YET VIRTUALLY REQUIRES SUCH AN OBEDIENCE TO IT, WHICH INCLUDES SAVING FAITH.—By the gospel VIRTUALLY REQUIRING OBEDIENCE is meant, that by reason of the dignity of its author, with the excellence and importance of its subject matter, men are required to yield submission to it, and that with all their heart. I suppose it might be taken for granted, that the gospel possesses *some degree* of virtual authority; as it is generally acknowledged, that by reason of the dignity of its author, and importance of its subject matter, it deserves the *audience and attention* of all mankind. The law of God requires so much on its behalf. The only question is *how far that authority reaches?* and how far men are laid under obligation by it. If living faith is not the duty of men in general, then it must be supposed that the gospel contains no such authority as to oblige them to it, and that a bare attendance on it, with a cold assent to its general doctrines, is all that is required. On the other hand, if living faith is the duty of men in general, then we may expect to find the gospel possessed of so much virtual authority as to require it; or in other words, that such is the excellent nature of the gospel, that the law of God, which is the law of reason and equity, requires thus much on its behalf. Whether or no this be the case, let it be impartially examined.

Two things may be considered in proof that it is so.—1. *The nature of the gospel.*—It is an *embassy*—an embassy from our rightful owner and ruler, against whom we have unreasonably rebelled—an embassy from one at whose pleasure we lie, and who could destroy us all in a moment—an embassy dictated by sovereign grace, and formed by infinite

wisdom—an embassy of peace, publishing a way wherein God can and will make peace with sinners on terms infinitely honourable to himself, and advantageous to them. See 2 Cor. v. 18, to the end. Now it is of the nature of an embassy of such a kind, even amongst men, to require more than a bare audience, more than an *attention*, yea more than a *belief* that it came from him whom it professes to come from.—It requires that those in rebellion should give it a *cordial reception*, immediately lay down all arms of hostility, and entirely submit to mercy. It requires that they cordially acquiesce in all its designs, and intreat to be in the number of those that shall be reclaimed by it. All this, or what amounts to as much, I apprehend is included in that forecited passage, *Be ye reconciled unto God*.

That a cordial reception of God's embassy, and a hearty reconciliation to him, are incumbent on every sinner, one should think, needs no proof. It appears to carry its own evidence with it. For if it is not their duty to give the gospel a *cordial reception*, or to receive it in the love of it, then *carelessness*, and *indifference* towards it are no sins. If not to lay down all arms of hostility, and submit to mercy, then they are right in *maintaining a war with God*! So also, if it is not their duty to *acquiesce* in the grand designs of the gospel, then it is right that they should maintain *opposition* against those designs—and if not to be reconciled to God, then they are right in being unreconciled! 'When the apostle beseecheth us, says Dr. Owen, to be reconciled unto God, I would know whether it be not a part of our duty to yield obedience to the apostle's exhortation? If not, his exhortation is frivolous, and vain.' *Display of Armin.* chap. x.——Yet if, on the other hand, it be allowed that these things are every one's duty, this is the same thing as allowing saving faith to be

their duty. For he that gives the gospel a *cordial reception*, or receives the love of the truth shall be saved.* And to lay down all arms of hostility is the same thing as submission to the righteousness of God, which certainly is saving faith.† To acquiesce in the grand designs of the gospel, is to be heartily willing that God should be glorified, man abased, satan confounded, and sin destroyed. These are certainly the grand ends, or designs of the gospel, and he that so heartily acquiesces as to unite, if I may so speak, with God therein, is no doubt the subject of true saving faith. Nor can reconciliation to God include any thing less, seeing it is opposed to a state of enmity and unregeneracy. §

2. *Those who acquiesce in the way of salvation in this spiritual manner, are represented in their so doing, as exercising OBEDIENCE*—They are described as obeying the gospel, obeying the truth, and obeying Christ. ‡ The end of the Christian ministry is said to be for obedience to the faith among all nations. || This accords with the idea of an embassy of peace to a company of rebels. Submission in such a case, is properly an act of obedience. And that this obedience is spiritual, and so of the same import with true saving faith, is evident, since those who are obedient to the faith are said to be the called of Jesus Christ, and have the promise of eternal salvation. ¶

Now it is generally supposed, that nothing deserves the name of obedience, but what is a conformity to some duty. If, therefore, faith were not their duty previous to believing, that believing could not with propriety be termed obedience.—Should it be said that faith in Jesus Christ for salvation is properly an act of obedience, because when a person believes, or puts forth the first act of faith, he is in a

* 2 Thes. ii. 10. † Rom. x. 3. § Col. i. 21. ‡ Rom. x. 16. vi. 17. ¶ Rom. i. 5. ¶ Rom. i. 6. Heb. v. 9.

regenerate state, and being such, it is then his duty—It might be replied, then they only are capable of disobeying the gospel who are in a state of regeneracy; for there can be no disobedience where there is no obligation. But those who disobey the gospel are not regenerate, but unregenerate persons, for they are *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,** which the regenerate are not. And the apostle Peter asks very solemnly, *what shall be the end of them who obey not the gospel of God?†* which no doubt refers to the unregenerate.

The passage of scripture on which the former part of this argument is founded, (namely, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.) has been thought totally inapplicable to the subject, because 'it is supposed to be *an address to the Church at Corinth*, who were considered by the apostles as believers; and, therefore, it is thought, must mean a being reconciled to *providence*, or to the *discipline* and *ordinances* of Christ, or something of that nature, and so can have nothing to do with unregenerate sinners.' Now, let this matter be fairly and fully considered. It appears to me that the passage is not to be considered as an *immediate* address to the Church at Corinth, beseeching them then to be reconciled to God. Take the whole connexion together, and it may appear to be no immediate address to them in any sense, but A REHEARSAL OF THE APOSTLE'S OWN AND HIS BRETHREN'S CONDUCT IN THE MINISTRY, IN VINDICATION OF HIMSELF AND THEM FROM THE INSINUATIONS OF CERTAIN FALSE TEACHERS. These teachers had crept in among the Corinthians, and by flattering their pride, had established their own reputation at the expense of the apostles. It appears, by Paul's answers, they had insinuated, among other things, "that the apostle and his companions were either a set of *crafty* men, who, by their *soft, canting*,

* 2 Thee. i. 8, 9.

† 1 Pet. iv. 17.

and *beseeching* style, ingratiated themselves into people's esteem, thus *catching them*, as it were, *with guile*; (ch. i. 12, and xii. 16.) or at best a company of poor contemptible enthusiasts, very probably *beside themselves*—(ch. v. 13.) That they came in a *weak* silly manner, *entreating* and *beseeching* people to this and that—(ch. xi. 21.) That they were a company of *wandering*, *indigent*, *insignificant* men; *afflicted*; *necessitous*, and *distressed* people—(chap. vi. 4.) People that made no account of themselves, and therefore should be made no account of by men of such wisdom and learning as were the Corinthians—(see ch. xi. especially verses 7, 19, 20, 21.) That as to Paul himself, however, he might make a blustering noise in his *letters*, and *write* like one of great *weight* and *authority*; yet bring him to hand and he was nothing;—*his bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible.* ch. x. 10.

Paul, in behalf of himself and his brethren, enters on a vindication, by *rehearsing what had been their conduct*. He allows that they did *entreat* and *beseech* in their preaching; but it was not owing to any *weakness*, much less to *craft* or *guile*, but in conformity to the example of Christ, (ch. x. 1.) and in compassion to the souls of men. 'We see, as if he should say, the wrath of God hanging over a guilty world—we see the general judgment, the period when it will burst upon them, drawing near—(see this 5th chap. ver. 10.) *knowing; therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.* Yes, we grant we *persuade men, but we are made manifest to God.* The intentions of our hearts are naked to God, and one should think they cannot be hidden from you, (ver. 11.) 'We do not speak this for the sake of commending ourselves, but to furnish you with an answer to those who have reproached us; whose whole boast consists in mere empty outside appearances; in pedigree,

‘riches, and eloquence, in the form of a man’s person, or the sound of his speech, instead of the integrity of his *heart*, (ver. 12.)—Whatever we are, whether mad or sober, that we will not now determine; but thus much we will say, it is love to God, and love to you, that makes us what we are, (ver. 13.) *Yes, the love of Christ constraineth us.* If he loved sinners, (and us among the rest) so as to *die* for them, even when they were under the sentence of *death*; and this he did, for his dying for them *in fact*, is a proof that they were all dead in *demerit*; surely we may love them so as to *preach* to them with all our souls, and that without being reckoned to be *beside ourselves*. Surely it highly becomes us, like Aaron, to run as with fire in our censors, and stand between the living and the dead!’ (ver. 14.)*

‘In thus devoting ourselves wholly to the love of God and souls, we answer the end of Christ’s death, which was, that those for whom he died *should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again*, (ver. 15.)—Wherefore let your teachers *glory in appearance* as they will, we, for our parts, are determined to *know no man after the flesh*. It matters nothing to us whether a man be Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. Yea, though Christ himself was of the Jews, and we for a

* Should any object, ‘that if the apostle is vindicating the propriety of his preaching to sinners from the consideration of Christ’s dying for them, then, if he was bound to preach to all men, Christ must have died for all men; and so universal redemption must be admitted.’ It is replied, the apostle’s design is not to speak about the extent of either Christ’s death or his own preaching, but barely the condition of those for whom Christ died, and to whom he preached; they were *dead*. His argument is, ‘If Christ had love enough to die for sinners when dead, surely we may have love enough even while they are in the same condition, to preach to them, and that with earnestness, without being reckoned *beside ourselves*.’

' time rejoiced in our carnal relation to him ; yet now
' do we value ourselves no longer upon that score,
' (ver. 16.)—Circumcision or uncircumcision with us
' avails nothing—we wish to forget every thing but
' Christ—to be dead to, and buried from, all other
' things ; and to rise us into a new moral world. This
' is the spirit of real religion ; and do you, and your
' teachers, and all of us take notice, that without this
' there is no real christianity.' ver. 17.

' Our ministry then is of God, and we are not im-
' postors. And as we act in character, and not as
' *beside ourselves*, in our zeal for God and souls ; so
' also in the *manner of exercising it*, viz. in *beseeching*
' and *persuading* men. We are reconciled unto God by
' Christ ourselves, and have an embassy entrusted in
' our hands to others. This our ministry is a *ministry*
' *of reconciliation*, an *embassy of peace*, (ver. 18.) It is
' declarative of the gracious counsels of God to that
' end, (ver. 19.) Herein the eternal justly-offended
' God stoops so low as to *beseech* poor rebels to be
' reconciled to him, though he never did any thing to
' incur their resentment ! Herein Christ the mediator
' unites with him in commissioning us as his ambassa-
' dors to go forth, and *in his stead* beseech men to be
' reconciled, (ver. 21.) Urging also his having been
' made a sacrifice to obtain salvation for all those who
' shall be so reconciled. (ver. 21.) So then, not only
' doth God beseech, and Christ beseech, but it hath
' been *our manner* also, as *workers together* with them, to
' *beseech* that ye receive not this gospel of *grace*, this
' embassy of peace, *in vain* ; (ch. vi. 1.) A little
' while and it will be recalled. Soon, and if ye be
' not reconciled ye shall remain at eternal variance !'
(ver. 2.)

' This, continues the apostle to the Corinthians, this
' hath been the subject of our preaching, and these the

' motives that have induced us, which your false
 ' teachers have wickedly imputed to *guile* or *weakness*.
 ' This hath been our spirit, to beseech with *meekness*
 ' and *gentleness*, giving no offence, that the ministry be not
 ' blamed, (ver, 3.) But they have turned that which
 ' was our excellence to our disadvantage. Had we
 ' come with the vain bombast of these pretenders, and
 ' and given ourselves airs like them ; then it seems we
 ' had been highly esteemed by you. But we sought
 ' not to approve ourselves to men, but to God ; and
 ' that in circumstances and by means, very different
 ' from their's. In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities,
 ' in distresses ;—by pureness, by knowledge, by long-
 ' suffering, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned ; and
 ' these are things surely which ought to endear us
 ' unto you, rather than give you a low opinion of us.'
 —(See ver. 4, to 12.)

If the apostle is to be considered as immediately
 addressing the Corinthian *ministers* in this 6th chap-
 ter, as it has been understood, beseeching them *then*
 not to receive the grace of God in vain, he would
 have said in ver. 4, *in all things approving yourselves,*
 and not ourselves. By this it appears plain, as
 indeed it does from the connexion throughout, that
 the whole is a *rehearsal* of what was their manner of
 preaching. And if so, then this way of preaching
 to unconverted sinners is justifiable from apostolic
 example.

Probably there are two things that have contributed
 to cause this passage to be misunderstood.—one is the
 supplement *you*, which the translators have put three
 times over in the 20th verse of the 5th chapter, when it
 might have been better without them ; or if it must
 have been supplied, the word *men*, as it is in the text
 of ch. v. 11, might have better conveyed the apostle's
 idea. The other is the *dividing* the 5th and 6th

chapters. These are divided in the midst of the argument, as will appear to any attentive person, which frequently tends to mislead the reader.*

PROP. IV. THE WANT OF FAITH IN CHRIST IS AScribed IN THE SCRIPTURES TO MEN'S DEPRAVITY, AND IS ITSELF THERE REPRESENTED AS A HEINOUS SIN.—It is here taken for granted, that whatever is not a sinner's duty, the omission of it cannot be charged on him as a crime, nor imputed to any depravity in him. If then true faith in Christ is not incumbent on sinners in general, we might expect never to hear the want of it charged on them as a fault, any more than not being *elected*, or *redeemed*, which are acts in all respects peculiar to God, and therefore not their duty. Yes, if so, we must expect to find men's incapacity to believe in Christ purely of a *natural* kind, and to have no more of *moral evil* in it than there is in the incapacity of a lame man to walk, a blind man to

* With these thoughts agree those of Dr. GUISE. 'It is to be observed, says he, that in the two middle clauses of this verse, (the 20th of the 5th chapter) the pronoun *you* is not in the Greek, nor is it found for several verses in the preceding context; and as the apostle had said, verse 11, *Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men*, we may naturally suppose that he refers to *men* whom, as he there said, they *persuaded*; and so we may supply the words wanting to fill up the original, thus, *As though God did beseech men by us, we pray them, in Christ's stead, saying be ye reconciled to God.* Or else, as the apostle had in the verse immediately before this, spoke of God's reconciling *the world*, inclusive of *Gentiles*, to himself, the words wanting in the *Greek* may very properly and easily be supplied thus, *As though God did beseech the world by us, we pray them, in Christ's stead, saying, be ye reconciled to God.* It seems to me, that the apostle was not here so directly addressing himself to the *Corinthians*, according to their then present character, who were supposed to be already actually reconciled to God, as giving them an account of the general tenor of his ministry, according to what he preached to them when he first came among them, as he likewise did to all others, in their state of unregeneracy, wherever he came, saying to them, *Be ye reconciled to God.*'—Paraphrase on the Place; note.

see, or an idiot to understand : no more than in the incapacity of an infant to believe as a man, or of a man to understand as an angel.—But if on the other hand, we should find the want of true saving faith charged on men as their sin—if in the scriptures no bar should be found to believing in, or coming to, Christ, but what lies in the depravity of a man's own heart—if ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion to God, should be the causes to which the want of faith is imputed ; then it cannot be fairly contended whether the contrary is their duty. Whether this is indeed the case, let the following things determine.

IGNORANCE was that in the woman of Samaria to which our Lord imputed her not asking and receiving living water * And the same thing is assigned as the reason only, why the Jews did not submit to the righteousness of God, which seems to be the same thing as saving faith.† Moreover the God of this world is said to BLIND the minds of them that BELIEVE NOT, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, should shine unto them.‡ Here we find ignorance represented as an obstruction to the glorious gospel of Christ shining into the heart of a sinner ; and by the apostle's describing them as those that believe not, it is plain he meant to speak of this blindness as an obstruction to their believing ; nearly in the same manner as his Lord had spoken before him, when he compared those who heard the word but understood it not to a highway side, on which seed was sown, which the fowls of the air devoured. So, says he, the devil cometh, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.‡ We know this blindness of mind is not such an obstruction but what is overcome by the grace of God in the elect, as is gloriously represented in the verses following ; but that being

* John iv. 10. † Rom. x. 3. § 2 Cor. iv. 4.

‡ Matt. xiii. 19. Luke viii. 12.

removed in the elect, does not disprove, but imply, that it is a remaining obstruction to the rest.—And that this blindness is of a *criminal* nature is evident, for none, I should think, will imagine *the God of this world* to busy himself in *innocent* affairs.

If men, even though they were as holy as Adam in innocence, would nevertheless be blind to the glory of the gospel, then the God of this world could not be said to be blind to them, seeing there would be nothing left for him to do. The employment of satan in this case must be very curious at least. To blind those people's minds who never, in any state, were capable of discernment, is much the same as to labour to put out the eyes of him that never saw, or to hoodwink a man that was born blind.

THE PRIDE of their countenances is that on account of which men *will not seek after God.* || *How can ye believe,* said Christ to the Jews, *who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?** And that this is meant of saving faith is evident, since a mere cold assent to Christ's being the Messiah may and can be where men receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only. It was so with some of the chief rulers among the Jews, who assented in their consciences to his being the Messiah, but yet did not confess him, for 'tis said *they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*† But to the faith here spoken of, such a disposition is represented as an absolute bar; which both proves it to be true saving faith, and the *pride* of men's hearts to be a bar to it.

DISHONESTY OF HEART is that on account of which men receive not the word of God, so as to bring forth fruit. This is fully implied in the parable of the sower

|| Ps. x. 4,

* John v. 44.

† John xii. 43.

recorded in the 8th chap. of Luke. The reason why those represented by the good ground received the word and brought forth fruit rather than the other, was, they had *good, and honest hearts*; plainly intimating that the reason why the others did not so receive it, was, that they had *not* good and honest hearts. Indeed, it would be no difficult thing to prove, that such is the nature, and subject matter of God's word, that he must have a dishonest heart who does not receive it in the love of it. To instance only in two or three things respecting God's holy law, and glorious gospel, which includes a great part of the word of God. Does this divine word hold forth the *rights of deity, and the obligations of men*? an honest heart must receive this, because it is only giving God the glory *due* to his name. That must be a dishonest heart that is not willing God should have his due. Does it represent *man as having forfeited all claim on God's favour*? an honest heart will never lay claim to what is not his own. Hence it may be, those who *climb up some other way* than by Christ, are called *thieves and robbers*, as aiming to take what is not their own. Does it hold forth such a *way of salvation as provides for the honours of deity*? this is sure to be embraced by every honest man, because such could not bear to be saved at the expence of righteousness. To desire to receive favours themselves in any other way than an honest way, indicates a dishonest heart.

It appears plain then, the reason why God's word is not received in the love of it, and fruit brought forth as by the good ground, is that men are not the subjects of honest hearts. They may be honest in their dealings with men, but honest to God they cannot be, while they do not cordially embrace his word. The same truth is represented by the spouse in her address to her beloved, *The upright love thee.*† As if she had said, 'such is the glorious character of my beloved,

† Song i. 4.

that every honest man must love him.' He that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, and his way of salvation, cannot be honest to God, cannot be willing he should have his due.—We know indeed who must *now* give men honest hearts, as we know who must be the author of every thing in them that is truly good ; but that makes nothing to the argument. However far men are from it, and whatever divine agency it may require to produce it, it is hoped none will deny but that every one ought to be an honest man ; honest to God as well as men, and if so, then the contrary is their sin, and that which rises from it cannot be innocent.

The AVERSION of men's hearts to Christ is likewise assigned as a reason why they do not believe in him. This is strongly expressed in that complaint of our Lord in John v. 40. *Ye WILL NOT come unto me that ye might have life.* It must be observed that if coming to Christ for life be not men's duty, then they are in a path of duty in keeping away. But surely it can never be thought our Lord would have complained of them, and even talked of *Moses accusing them*, for not doing what they were not obliged to do ! Surely an omission wherein they were blameless, would never have been charged upon them as a WILL NOT.

Mr. *Hussey*, indeed, understands the words of barely owning Christ to be the Messiah, which he says would have saved them as a nation from temporal ruin, and *death* ; or as he in another place expresses it, ' from having their brains dashed out by the battering rams of *Titus*,' the Roman general. § But it ought to be observed, that the *life* which they would not come to him for, is the same which they thought they had in the scriptures, and that was eternal life. The two verses read thus, *Search the scriptures, for in them ye*

think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.—And ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. The scope is plainly this, 'These very scriptures in which ye think ye have eternal life, testify of me as the only way to that life; but such is the pride and aversion of your hearts, that ye will not come to me for it.' In confirmation of this, many able expositors might be produced; but I will only subjoin a note from Dr. GILL.

'Ye will not come unto me—which is to be understood not of a corporeal coming to him, for many of the Jews did come unto him in this sense. Nor is a bare coming to hear Christ preached, or an attendance on, and submission to, his ordinances, such a coming to him as is here designed; for with these eternal life is not connected. Bodily exercise profiteth not in this way; but a spiritual coming to Christ, or coming to him by faith is here meant, in which sense the phrase is frequently used in this gospel, especially in the next chapter, verses 35, 37, 44, 45, 65. And those who come aright to Christ, come to him as the alone, able, suitable and sufficient saviour, and in themselves as sinners and ready to perish; and as such, they are received by him with a welcome: but these men did not see themselves as such, nor did they see any need they had of coming to Christ, for they thought they had eternal life elsewhere: and such were their ignorance of themselves and Christ; and such their prejudices against him; and such the depravity, perverseness, and stubbornness of their wills, that they had no inclination, desire, and will to come to Christ, any more than power; which is an argument against, and not for the free will of man, unless it be to that which is evil. And this perverseness of their wills to come to Christ, when revealed in the external ministry of the word, was

'the word, was **BLAME WORTHY** in them, since this 'was not owing to any decree in God, but to the ' **CORRUPTION AND VITIORITY OF NATURE**, WHICH ' **BEING BLAME WORTHY IN THEM**, THAT WHICH ' **FOLLOWS UPON** MUST BE SO TOO; and it was the 'greater aggravation of their sin that they had the 'scriptures, which testified of Christ, and pointed at 'him as the way of life, and yet would not come to 'him for it. *That ye might have life*, that is, 'eternal life, as is expressed in the foregoing 'verse, and is so read here in *Beza's* old copy, in the *Syriac, Arabic, and Persic* versions.' Epos. on the place.

It is true, we expressly read elsewhere, that *no man can come unto Christ except the Father draw him*;* but there is nothing inconsistent in this. The *cannot* itself consists in a *will not*, or in other words, in the want of a *heart* to come to Christ, with a settled *aversion* to him. The inability of men to come to Christ is, doubtless, by this expression, represented as being *total*, which we never deny; but that is no proof of its being *innocent*, which is the point in question. It being expressly said *no man can come*, no more proves that there is any other bar beside what lies in the wickedness of the heart, than its being expressly said of Joseph's brethren, *they could not speak peaceably to him*, proves that they had any other bar than their own pride and revenge. It is expressly said of some that they *have eyes full of adultery, and cannot cease from sin*;† but none, I should think, supposes them to have been under any other necessity of sinning than what consisted in the strength of their propensities. So it is expressly said, *the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*, and that *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*;‡ but are they under any other inability than what lies in the badness of their

* John vi. 44.

† 2 Pet. ii. 14.

§ Rom. viii. 7, 8.

own hearts? or are they free from all obligation to be *subject to God's law*, and to *please him* on that account? Is God indeed such a hard master that if a man were of ever such a right spirit, yet it would be all in vain? 'It is *carnality*,' says Dr. GILL, 'that sets the soul against, and diverts it from, Christ, the way of life.' Expos. on Rom. viii. 6. 'It is *indwelling sin*,' says Dr. OWEN, 'that both disableth men unto, and hinders them from believing, and *that alone*. Blindness of mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made blind by sin, and cannot see his excellencies; obstinate, and will not lay hold of his righteousness; senseless, and take no notice of their eternal concerns.' *Indwelling Sin*, chap. 16.

Farther, **A VOLUNTARY and JUDICIAL BLINDNESS, OBSTINACY, and HARDNESS OF HEART**, are represented as the bar to conversion.† But if that which is produced in conversion were what they were never in any state, nor in any sense possessed of, nor obliged to, how is it that any depravity in them should be bar to it? If there be no difference in point of duty between *conversion* and *election*, as some have suggested, then it is equally absurd for the apostle to say, *Their eyes have they closed, lest they should see, and be converted*, as it would be to say, *Their eyes have they closed, lest they should be elected!*

Again, those who embrace the gospel, and submitted to the government of the Messiah, and were baptized with the baptism of John, are said, in Luke vii. 29, in so doing, to have *justified God*; their conduct was an acknowledgment of the justice of the divine law, and the wisdom and love of the gospel. Those, on the other hand, who did not thus submit, are said, in the

† Acts xxviii. 27.

next verse, to have rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized. But no Christian, I suppose, however, no Baptist, thinks it was their sin not to be baptized while they continued enemies to Christ; and probably very few, if any, serious pædobaptists would think it the duty of *adults* to be baptized in Christ's name while they continued enemies to him. How, then, can this passage be understood, but by supposing that they *ought* to have repented of their sin, embraced the gospel of the Messiah, and so submitted to his ordinances? and that not with a mere outside repentance, or cold assent to the truth; for a profession of more than these was required to baptism, even such a repentance as should *bring forth fruits*; and surely it was not their duty to profess what they had not.

Finally, UNBELIEF is expressly declared to be a sin, of which *the Spirit of Truth has to convince the world.* But unbelief could not be a sin, if faith were not a duty. And that unbelief here means more than barely an open disowning him to be the Messiah, if not certain; is at least highly probable. The Spirit's work is not barely to convince the world of their *open* infidelity, and to bring them to yield a cold assent to the gospel; this may be brought about without his special agency; but rather to convince them of their wicked *opposition of heart* to the way of salvation, and to bring them cordially to acquiesce in it. If it barely intend a conviction of his Messiahship, then that part of the Spirit's work is now unnecessary in the Christian world; but if otherwise, then there is as great a need of his work now to convince those of their unbelief who are born in a Christian land as ever; yea, in some sense *greater*. It seems to be a greater work to convince *them* of that sin than others who are professed heathens. Their infidelity and opposition to Christ

* John xvi. 8, 9.

being more hid, and out of view, it is very difficult to make them believe that they are enemies to Christ, *and would not be saved in his way if they could.* So far, then, as one case can be said to be harder than another where the agent is omnipotent, these may be affirmed to be the most difficult cases, and most to stand in need of the spirit of truth to convince them of their sin. See the judicious CHARNOCK's excellent sermon on *Unbelief the greatest sin*, from the above passage. Vol. II. of his works.

Prop. V. GOD HAS THREATENED AND INFLICTED THE MOST AWFUL PUNISHMENTS ON MEN FOR THEIR NOT BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is here taken for granted that nothing can be the cause of God's inflicting punishment but sin. If, then, true faith be not the duty of men in general, and the want of it is not their sin, we may certainly conclude we shall never anywhere in scripture find that assigned as a reason of their punishment. But if, on the contrary, we should find that not believing in Jesus Christ is assigned as a reason of God's inflicting punishment, then may we with certainty conclude that it is their sin, and the contrary their duty.

To begin with the commission which our Lord gave to his apostles (Mark xvi. 16.) wherein are those remarkable words, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT, SHALL BE DAMNED!* The spirit of this passage has before been attempted, in a short comment, to be represented. (See page 29.) To this I may add, here we see a want of faith connected with damnation, which looks *very much* as if it were something more than a mere description of *who should be damned.* The only argument that I recollect against this sense of the passage is to the following purport, that 'as it is not inferrible from that declaration that the faith of believers

Punishments threatened and inflicted for not believing. 75

' is the procuring cause of their salvation ; so it is not
' to be inferred from thence that the want of that *special*
' faith in unbelievers is the procuring cause of their
' damnation. That declaration contains in it the
' descriptive characters of those who are saved, and
' of those who are damned ; but it assigns not special
' faith to be the procuring cause of the salvation of the
' former, nor the want of it to be the procuring cause
' of the damnation of the latter.'†

But if this mode of reasoning were admitted, should not we find it very difficult to prove any thing being evil from the threatenings of God against it ? A multitude of plain texts of scripture, wherein sin, as any common reader would suppose, is threatened with punishment, might in this manner be made to hold their peace. Yea, it might in time be rendered doubtful whether *sin itself* is the procuring cause of men's damnation. In Psalm xxxvii. 18—20. we are told, *The Lord knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever, but the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs. They shall consume, into smoke shall they consume away.* But it might be said, as the uprightness of the upright is not the procuring cause of his enjoying an inheritance for ever ; so neither will this prove the wickedness of the wicked, or the enmity of the Lord's enemies, are the procuring causes of their being consumed. Again, in Psalm cxlvii. 6. we read, *The Lord lifteth up the meek : he casteth the wicked down to the ground.* But it might be said, as the meekness of the former is not the procuring cause of his being lifted up ; so it cannot be from hence inferred that the wickedness of the latter is the procuring cause of his being cast down. Again, in Psalm cxlv. 20. we read, *The Lord pre-*

† Mot. to L. and U. page 31, 32.

serveth all that love him; but the wicked will he destroy. But it might be said, as the love of the one is not the procuring cause of his preservation, so it cannot be proved from hence that the wickedness of the other is the procuring cause of his destruction—that these declarations contain only the *descriptive characters* of those who are saved, and of those who perish !

Might not almost all the threatenings in the book of God be thus made to say nothing? for the mode in which they are delivered is the same with the above passage. For instance, *What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty with coals of juniper.—He that sheweth no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy.—Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.—Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.—Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble.—Bring hither those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me.—The fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death!—But none of these awful threatenings declare that the respective crimes which are mentioned are the *procuring causes* of the evils denounced. Though it is said concerning the *false tongue*, that *sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper, shall be given him*; yet it does not say that these shall be given him *because of his falsehood*, and so on of the rest. And thus they may be only *descriptive characters* of those who shall be damned,*

Punishments threatened and inflicted for not believing. 77

and all these characters for ought these denunciations prove, may be blameless !

The foregoing passages are offered for consideration instead of numbers more that might be easily produced, to shew the tendency of the above reasoning. The truth is, though eternal life be the *gift of God*; yet eternal death is the proper *wages* of sin. So it is apprehended, though faith is not represented in the above passage, as a procuring cause of salvation, yet it does not thence follow but that unbelief is of damnation. As it is usual in the scriptures to describe those that shall be saved, by something which is pleasing to God, and by which they are meetened for glory; so it is as usual to describe those that shall be lost by something which is displeasing to God, and by which they are fitted for destruction.

The next passage I wish to have considered is in John iii. 18. *He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* Here two things are observable: first, that the faith spoken of in the former part of the verse must be special faith; seeing its subjects are exempted from condemnation. Second, that the want of that faith is represented as a formal *cause* of a sinner's being condemned. The passage which was last considered was thought to prove nothing, because though it declared that *he that believed not should be damned*; yet it did not assign the want of faith as the *procuring cause* of that damnation. But that cannot be pleaded here. Here it is expressly said, *such are condemned BECAUSE they have not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

The design of the evangelist here, I apprehend, is

not to represent them as barely under the sentence of the law *for their other sins*, they not having believed in Christ; though that, no doubt, is a great and awful truth. He that has never fled to him for refuge, the wrath of God most certainly abideth on him for all his *other crimes*. But the design here was to assure them, that, added to all these, they lay under the tremendous charge of neglecting, and so rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, the life and light of men; and that this was so far from being a trifling offence, it was the finishing piece to all their other offences, and what was sufficient of itself to condemn them. This appears from two things: *first*, from the *encomium* given to Christ in the passage, *THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD*, as aggravating the rejection of him. *Secondly*, from the *following verse*, which expressly determines the meaning of the verse foregoing. *This is THE CONDEMNATION, that light is come into the world; and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Again, the treatment which those who reject the government of Christ shall receive at his hand, is a proof of what *he thinks* of their conduct. *But those mine enemies*, said he, *that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me*, Luke xix. 27. But if Christ, as wearing his mediatorial crown, had not a right to their unreserved submission and hearty obedience, he had no right to be angry, much less to punish them as his enemies, for not being willing that he should reign over them. He had no right to reign over them, at least not over their *hearts*, if they were not obliged to obey *from their hearts*. Every man ought to be Christ's friend, or else his enemy; or else to stand neuter, and be neither. To suppose the first, is to grant all we plead for; to suppose the second, is too horrid to need a refutation: if then neither of these will satisfy, it must fall upon the third—it must

be their duty neither to love him nor hate him, obey him nor resist him, to bless him at all, nor curse him at all; but to remain in a state of absolute neutrality. It falls out, however, equally unhappy for this supposition as for the last, it proves to be an impossibility. *He that is not with me, says Christ, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.**

Another passage I wish to have well considered, is in 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12. There the coming of anti-christ is said to be *with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* From hence we remark two things; first, that faith is here represented as *a receiving the love of the truth*; and that it is true saving faith here spoken of, is certain, it being added, *they might be saved.* This plainly intimates that they would have been saved had they so received the truth. Secondly, that their *not receiving the love of the truth*, or which is the same thing, not believing with such a faith as that to which salvation is promised, is here assigned as a cause of their being given up of God, and carried away with all deceivableness of unrighteousness—of God's sending them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, and be damned. How this can be accounted for but by allowing that they ought to have received the love of the truth, is difficult to say; and yet if this is allowed, it is the same thing as allowing saving faith to have been their duty.

Prop. VI. SEEING OTHER GRACES, OR SPIRITUAL DISPOSITIONS, WITH WHICH SALVATION IS CONNECTED, ARE REPRESENTED AS THE DUTIES OF MEN IN GENE-

* Matt. xii. 30.

RAL, THERE IS NO REASON WHY FAITH SHOULD NOT BE THE SAME.—If the former part of this proposition can be proved, I suppose the latter will not be disputed; for though these controversies have in general been carried on under the names of *repentance* and *faith*; yet they, in fact, have always extended to every thing truly and spiritually good. I query if an instance can be found of a person who allows of carnal men being obliged to do things spiritually good, who yet denies it to be their duty to believe in Christ. However, if such an instance can be found it is certainly very rare. In general those who deny one spiritual disposition being the sinner's duty, deny all; and go upon this principle, 'that none can be obliged to act spiritually but spiritual men.' If a person could be brought to acknowledge one of these dispositions to be incumbent on carnal men, probably he would soon be brought to acknowledge others. As this then seems to be at the bottom of the controversy, and is a subject of very great importance, the whole of God's authority over the *hearts* of men being herein concerned, it must be allowed to deserve a particular consideration.

Before we proceed any farther, it may not be amiss to determine the meaning of *spiritual acts* and *spiritual dispositions*. The scripture appears to me by the term *spiritual*, when applied to the dispositions of the mind, to mean TRULY HOLY, as opposed to CARNAL. So the law of God is said to be *spiritual*, though we are *carnal*;† and so spiritual mindedness is opposed to carnal mindedness.‡ 'Tis allowed, these terms sometimes change their meaning. They are made use of to distinguish things heavenly from things earthly; as when the apostle says, *If we have sown unto you SPIRITUAL things, it is a great thing if we shall reap your CARNAL things*?§ In this use of the terms,

† Rom. vii. 14.

‡ Rom. viii. 6.

§ 1 Cor. ix. 11.

the idea of virtue on the one hand, or criminality on the other, must be left out, they not being applied to the dispositions of the mind. So also spiritual is sometimes opposed to *natural*, as when the bodies of dying Adam, and the risen Redeemer are contrasted, as also the bodies of saints when buried and when raised. § But whenever applied to the *dispositions of the mind*, spiritual stands opposed to *carnal*, and that in the *criminal* sense of the word. It appears to me, that the scripture knows nothing of *natural holiness*, as distinguished from *spiritual holiness*—that it knows of but one kind of *real* holiness, and that is a conformity to the holy law of God—that such a conformity is *spirituality*, and its opposite, *carnality*. See Jer. xxxi. 33. compared with Rom. viii. 7.

If this, however plain it may appear to me, should not be universally allowed, I may go upon a more undisputed ground. The criterion by which I shall all along judge of what are *spiritual dispositions*, will be *their having the promise of spiritual blessings*. Whatever has the promise of eternal glory, or of any blessing of special grace, that will be taken for granted to be a spiritual disposition; and this it is hoped, will not be denied. Whether these dispositions be incumbent on carnal men, let us now enquire.

1. *The law of God is expressly said to be SPIRITUAL*; and that in the same sense as the hearts of believers, sanctified by the grace of God are said to be spiritual, namely, in opposition to *carnal*. || ‘The law may be said to be *spiritual*, says Dr. GILL, because it comes from the spirit of God, and reaches to the spirit of man; it requires truth in the inward parts; SPIRITUAL SERVICE AND OBEDIENCE; a serving of it with our minds; a worshipping of God in spirit and

' truth ; a loving of him with all our hearts and souls, as well as a performance of all the outward acts of religion and duty ; and because it cannot be truly obeyed and conformed to, without the assistance of the Spirit of God.' Expos. on Rom. vii. 14.— ' Duties not discharged in a *spiritual* manner, says Mr. BRINE, are unacceptable to God, for without faith it is impossible to please him.'—If then, carnal men are not obliged to do any thing spiritually good, they are not under the law, nor bound to please God at all, or do what is acceptable in his sight.

2. When our Lord declared to the woman of Samaria, *God is a spirit and they that worship him, must worship him, in spirit and in truth*,† it is observable, he does not argue for spiritual worship being exercised towards God from *the state of men*, whether carnal or spiritual ; but from *the nature of God*. This, therefore, holds good, let men be in what state they may. God is as much a spiritual being, and so requires spiritual worship, or which is the same thing, *the whole heart* in worship, as much when addressed by a wicked flatterer, as when adored by the holiest saint.

3. If no spiritual disposition or action is incumbent on carnal men, then they are not obliged to any thing *really good in the sight of God*; and so men by nature are not only destitute of all real good, but in being so are not at all to blame—they have no ground to reflect upon themselves for it, nor any thing to fear as the consequence ! Whatever that is to which salvation is promised, that is a spiritual disposition.—But salvation is promised to whatever is *really good*, even in the *smallest degree*. Such who shall only give a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ, *because he belongs to him*, shall receive a dis-

† John iv. 24.

ciple's reward. § Yea a blessing is pronounced upon those who shall *not be offended in him.* ‡—Therefore the lowest degree of real good is a spiritual disposition or action. And so it follows, if no spiritual dispositions be incumbent on carnal men, no real good is incumbent upon them ; no not in the smallest degree. They ought not to love a disciple of Christ, or do him any one good office *because he belongs to him*; nor are they bound *not to be offended in Christ*; that is, they do nothing contrary to what they ought to do in taking offence at him.

There is a set of principles which have got into the christian world by *stealth*, principles which great numbers imbibe, and act upon, but which scarce any one dares openly to maintain. The reason is manifest; they will not bear to be put into plain words. Let them be but fairly stated, and those that hold them, if they have any feeling, will be shocked at the thought of them. No man of wisdom and piety, one should think, would dare to *affirm that men are not bound to be perfectly holy*; and yet how common is it for the same persons, who would be shocked at such a proposition, to give proof that they secretly maintain it. So, ask almost any person of a serious character, 'do you believe the *spirituality of the law*?' He would answer, no doubt, in the affirmative; and yet at the same time, he shall give the most plain and evident proofs, that in fact he believes very little about it.—This description of principles is far from being the least dangerous, or discovering the least of satan's policy. Were they but openly, and in words avowed, they would be written against; yea, many worthy characters who hold them, would see their nature, and retract them.

Let any upright thinking man, who may have

different views of these subjects, 'only try and answer to himself a few such questions as these: is *any* INTERNAL religion now required of men towards God, or is it not? Are they obliged to worship God with their *bodies only*, and is it right that their *hearts should be far from him*? If it is not, and men are bound to worship God with their hearts, then wherein doth this differ from worshipping God *in spirit and in truth*? And wherein do these dispositions differ from those which are *spiritually good*?—Here let him pause—let him reflect, in the fear of God, upon the ground on which he stands—let him seriously think whether it will bear him through. If he think it will, let us go farther, and try.

Let the following PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE be impartially examined. *How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof—behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Wisdom crieth at the Gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom, and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be of right things. Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice Gold. Hearken unto me, O ye children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death.* Seek ye the Lord while he may be*

* Prov. i. 22, 23, 7. viii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36.

found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to FEAR the Lord thy God, to walk in ALL his ways, and to LOVE him, and to SERVE the Lord thy God with ALL THINE HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL? Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiff necked.† Rend your HEARTS, and not your garments; turn ye to the Lord your God.§ REPENT, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.† REPENT ye, therefore, and be CONVERTED, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.||

Several of these scriptures, it is true, have had different interpretations put upon them; but let the impartial reader judge, whether they have not been tortured out of their senses, and forced to say what they never meant. It seems easy, from the above passages, to infer, 1. That the persons to whom these calls and commands were addressed, were carnal, unconverted men; as appears by their characters of fools—scorners—haters of knowledge—wicked—unrighteous—uncircumcised in heart—impenitent. 2. That the things which they were called to do, were things *spiritually good*. This appears partly from the names by which the things themselves are called; namely, such *understanding* as originates in the fear of the Lord—*returning to the Lord*, *fearing, loving, and serving God, with all the heart, and with all the soul*—*circumcision of the heart*—*repentance and conversion*—and partly from the blessings of salvation being promised to them. These are expressed by the terms *blessedness*—*life*—*favour of the Lord*—*mercy*—*abundant pardon*—and the *blotting out of sin*. From the

* Is. lv. 7. † Deut. x. 12, 16. § Joel ii. 13. ‡ Matt. iii. 2.
|| Acts iii. 19.

whole, it is evident that the same spiritually good dispositions which are *bestowed* by the gospel, are *required* by the law, and are incumbent on men in general.

Dr. OWEN proves the same thing from several of the forecited passages. The *Arminians*, against whom he is writing, denied that repentance, faith, and other spiritual exercises, could be the *gift of God*, because they were *duties which God required of us*. The Doctor, far from denying these to be DUTIES, allows them to be such, and undertakes to prove the consistency of the same thing, in different respects, being men's duty, and God's gift; or, which is the same thing, required by the law, and bestowed by the gospel. Thus he reasons:—'There is not one of those plain texts of scripture, not one of those innumerable and invincible arguments whereby the effectual working of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner, his powerful translating us from death to life, from the state of sin and bondage, to the liberty of the sons of God, is set forth, which doth not overthrow this prodigious error. I will content myself with instancing in some few of them, which are directly opposite to it, even in terms.'

'First, In Deut. x. 16. The Lord commandeth the Israelites to *circumcise the foreskin of their hearts*, and *to be no more stiff necked*. So that the circumcising of their hearts was a part of their *obedience*. It was their *duty* so to do, in obedience to God's demands: and yet, in chap. xxx. 6, he affirmeth that *he will circumcise their hearts*, that they might love the Lord their God with all their hearts. So that it seems the same thing, in divers respects, may be *God's ACT in us*, and *our DUTY towards him*.'

'Second, Ezek. xviii. 31. *Make you a new heart, and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

‘The making of a new heart and a new spirit is here required, under a promise of a reward of life, and a great threatening of eternal death; so that, so to do must needs be a part of their duty and obedience; and yet, chap. xxxvi. 26, he affirmeth that *he will do this very thing that here he requireth of them; A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh; and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, &c.* In how many places, also, are we commanded to *fear the Lord*, which, when we do, I hope none will deny it to be a performance of our duty: and yet, Jer. xxxii. 40, God promiseth that *he will put his fear in our hearts, that we shall not depart from him.*’

‘Third, Those two against which they lay particular exceptions, *faith* and *repentance*, are also expressly attributed to the free donation of God.—*He granteth unto the Gentiles repentance unto life*, Acts xi. 18. And of *faith*, directly, *It is the gift of God*, Ep. ii. 8. To which assertion of the Holy Spirit, I shall rather fasten my belief than to the *Arminians*, affirming that it is no gift of God, because it is of ourselves: and yet, this hindereth not but that it may be stiled *our most holy faith*, Jude 20. Let them that will, deny that any thing can properly be *ours* which God bestoweth upon us; the prophet accounted them not inconsistent, when he averred, that God worketh all our works in us, Isa. xxvi. 12. They are our works, though of his working. The apostle laboured, though *it was not he, but the grace of God that was in him*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. He *worketh in us to will, and to do, of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. And yet the performance of our duty may consist in those acts of our wills, and those good deeds whereof he is the author: so that, according to St. Austin’s counsel, we will still pray that he “would BESTOW what he

'COMMANDETH US to have.'"—*Display of Arminianism*, chap. x.

If this will not suffice, let us consider more particularly several of those graces or heavenly virtues with which salvation is connected, and see whether the scripture does not make these the duty of men in general. For instance—

Is it a spiritual act to LOVE GOD, AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? this is commanded to men in general. Love, as it respects God for its object, is either feigned or real; the former cannot be the duty of any man, unless it be his duty to be a hypocrite. The latter consists in either a gratitude for the bestowment of favours, or in a hearty approbation of, and holy complacency in him, for his own native excellency; such as his holiness, justice, sovereignty, faithfulness, &c. The *first* of these is the duty of every one who is a sharer of those favours, and that according to the nature and degree of what he shares. The *last*, which is, perhaps, the purest, noblest kind of love that can be exercised, is incumbent on every one who has the natural use of his faculties, and the means of knowing those excellencies; which every intelligent creature has in a greater or less degree. Those who have access to the holy scriptures have the means plentifully of knowing what God is, and nothing but a shameful disinclination and wicked aversion hides his glory from their minds. As to those who have never heard of the scriptures, they have the works of creation and providence, by which they might learn, if they were rightly disposed, so much of the divine character as to know him to be a most amiable, lovely being. The apostle tells us, *That which may be known of God is manifest to them, for God hath shewed it unto them.**

* Rom. i. 19.

If nothing but a love of *gratit. de* is due from carnal men to God, then God does not deserve to be loved for his own excellency! His holiness, justice, sovereignty, and faithfulness, are not what ought to render him lovely in their eyes! Surely the contrary must be evident, not only from the thing itself, which is its own evidence, but from the concurrent language of holy writ. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength! If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha!*†

Men, by sin, have lost all just ideas of the beauty of God's character, and so have sunk into a total disregard of him; are become dead to all sense of moral excellence; yea, and it is to come to this, that now they think themselves not *obliged* to love him. Blinded through the love of sin to all the real excellencies of his nature, they cannot think themselves bound to love a Being of his character. All this is shocking:—but should the friends of God join with them in it, and say 'true, you *cannot* love him, you have no *principle* to excite you to such a thing, therefore we allow you to be free:' this would be shocking beyond expression!

Is it a spiritual act to FEAR God? this also is required of all men. Fear, as it respects God for its object, is either a dread of the misery which God has threatened for sin, so the wicked, and slothful servant feared him;|| and so hypocrites and devils have feared him in all ages; or a tenderness of spirit, hating evil, and dreading to offend, and dishonour his holy name: so the godly have always feared him. If the first only of these be the duty of carnal men, then the honour and glory of God's holy name ought to have no impres-

† Matt. xxii. 37. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. || Luke xix. 21.

sion on their minds; nor ought they to hate evil, nor refrain from it because it is a stain and dishonour to his blessed character, and breach of his authority; but barely because of the mischief that it brings upon themselves! An assertion this, which one would hope, no true lover of God would dare to maintain! This would make God's law require such a fear only as hypocrites and devils possess—a fear wherein there can be no real virtue, nor piety towards God, unless we suppose the devils have virtue and piety in them!

In proof of the contrary, if proof be wanting, let the following passages be impartially considered. *O that there were such an HEART in them, that they would FEAR me, and keep all my commandments always! FEAR before him, all the earth. Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him THAT OUGHT TO BE FEARED. Who would not FEAR thee, O king of nations? FEAR thou God. FEAR GOD, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. Gather the people together, men, women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and FEAR the Lord your God: and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to FEAR the Lord your God. Serve the Lord with FEAR, and rejoice with trembling. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,—saying FEAR GOD, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth! Who shall not FEAR thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.†—* And as the fear of the Lord is the duty of all men,

Deut. v. 29. 1 Chron. xvi. 30. Ps. lxxvi. 11. Jer. x. 7.
 Eccl. v. 7. xii. 13. Deut. xxxi. 12, 13. Ps. ii. 11.
 Rev. xiv. 6, 7. xv. 4.

so the want of it is represented as their dreadful sin. When men's depravity is described, nothing need be brought as a greater proof of it, than their having NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES !||

IS PRAISE, or an HOLY ADORATION OF GOD a spiritual exercise ? this also is every one's duty. Of praise it may be said the same as of love, of which it is the joyful expression, it is either *feigned* or *real*; either in mere words, or with the heart. The former cannot be the duty of men, unless it be their duty to be hypocrites; and if so, then the latter must. This consists in either thanking God for mercies received, or adoring him for his infinite excellencies. Both these were the common employment of the sweet singer of Israel. Often he *praised the Lord who heard his cries and became his salvation*; and as often resolved to this effect, *I will praise the Lord, according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.** The last five Psalms are full of these holy adorations. They each begin and end with a HALLELUJAH, and speak the writer to have reached almost the suburbs of the heavenly world. Now, though none amongst men but saints, ever *have* thus praised the Lord, or ever will; yet it is that in which every one *ought* to bear a part. All creation ought to unite in this; and all creation in some sort, will unite in it, except devils and wicked men. *Every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, said the divine, saying blessing, honour, glory, and power be unto him, that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!†* Whatever may be said against its being the duty of carnal men to praise him for the bestowment of spiritual blessings; surely they ought to praise

|| Rom. iii. 18. * Ps. cxviii. 21. vii. 17. † Rev. v. 13.

and adore him for his own infinite excellencies; and this is the most noble and spiritual kind of praise of any that is offered to God.

The language of the *holy scriptures* on this subject is, *Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength—Give unto the Lord the glory DUE unto his name. Bring an offering, and come before him—worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands—kings of the earth, and all people, princes, and all judges of the earth—Both young men, and maidens, old men, and children—let them praise the name of the Lord, FOR HIS NAME ALONE IS EXCELLENT—his glory is above the earth, and heavens. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee!*†

IS REPENTANCE, OR A GODLY SORROW FOR SIN a spiritual exercise? this also is every one's duty. Repentance is either on account of the *consequences* attending sin, so *Judas* repented: or on account of the heinous nature of sin, so the godly in all ages have repented. The former has nothing of that ingenuous grief that ariseth from love to God, and a holy self-loathing for having offended and dishonoured him; the latter has. If the first only be the duty of sinners, then it is not their duty to love God, nor be grieved for having offended and dishonoured him; nor to be angry with themselves for having so treated him! But surely the latter is their duty, however far they are from it! Surely for this the concurrent voice of revelation and right reason is heard. The language of the *former* is, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

† 1 Chron. xvi. 28, 29. Ps. cxlviii, 11, 12, 13. lxvii. 3.

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. § The hardness of heart which our Lord found in the Jews, and which is the opposite of repentance, grieved him, which it would not, had it not been their sin—and a *hard and impenitent heart treasures up wrath against the day of wrath*; but impenitence could be no sin, if penitence were not a duty. †

As to the language of *right reason*, surely nothing can be more reasonable than for him that committeth sin to be sorry for it, and that with all his heart and soul; not merely on account of consequences, but for its being so contrary to what it ought to be; so offensive and dishonorable to the ever blessed God. For us to allow God no other repentance as his due than a repentance for consequences, is certainly to put him off with what we should scorn to be put off with ourselves. If we are offended by a fellow-creature, we think it but right, and reasonable, that he should be sorry for the *evil* of his conduct; and not merely because having incurred our displeasure, that puts him to an inconvenience. Nay, we do not use to make any thing of such a repentance: we should call it a *gallows repentance*: *Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, saith THE LORD OF HOSTS? If I be a father, where is mine honour? and if a master, where is my fear?**—Once more,

Is the exercise of HUMILITY a spiritual exercise? this also is every one's duty. Humility is that state of the mind, wherein, in some sense or other, it is *brought down*, or *lies low*. It is variously applied in scripture, and in common speech. It sometimes

§ Matt. iii. 2. Acts iii. 19. Ja. iv. 8, 9, 10. † Mark iii. 5.
Rom. ii. 5. * Mal. i. 6, 8.

signifies no more than a being brought into circumstances of shame and disgrace, because that is supposed to be what mortifies and *brings down* the mind. So, when a woman is disgracefully forced, she is frequently said in scripture to be *humbled*. Sometimes it signifies that involuntary *shame* that arises from conscious guilt: so Saul humbled himself to David, when it was impossible for him to defend his cause. Sometimes a mixture of *fear* unites with this kind of shame, which tends to bring down the mind. So Ahab, when he was reprov'd and threatened, *humbled himself before the Lord*; partly because his wickedness admitted no defence; and partly because he trembled, and felt himself appalled at the threatenings of him who, he knew, was stronger than he.

That humility in fallen men, with which salvation is connected, consists in *a spirit brought down to our condition*, whether it respects our temporal or spiritual concerns. If the former, it is a spirit brought down to that state of poverty, affliction, or whatever adversity, to which God has brought us. This spirit was exemplified in David, and its opposite in Saul. The *one*, when in danger of losing his crown and life, by the unnatural rebellion of his own son, thus expressed himself: *Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him!*† The *other*, when told that the Lord had rejected him from being king, instead of justifying God, and humbling himself before him, immediately commenced war with him; tried all he could to kill David, the Lord's anointed, and so to overthrow the divine counsel. When sinners *are* humbled, it is *forced*

† 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26,

work. They lie low, but as a spring, no longer than the pressing hand of providence is upon them. As soon as that is removed, they instantly spring up again into their own position. So it was repeatedly with Pharaoh. *But* saints love and chuse to lie low. They have even judged trials themselves to be best for them, and have been willing to bear them, and that merely for the sake of that lowliness of spirit which has accompanied them. So Jeremiah, personating his country, prayed, *O Lord, correct me!* § and so the church, in extreme affliction, judged it good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth; and that because of the effect that attended it, *He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope!** If this kind of humility be not the duty of men in general, then it is not their sin to have a murmuring spirit, under the humbling providence of God; but they are right in not having a frame of heart answerable to their lot!

If it respect our *spiritual* concerns, that is, our state as creatures, and vile sinners before God; then it consists in a spirit brought down to that condition; in a willingness in all our dealings with God for salvation, to consider ourselves as such, and to act accordingly. Pride makes men scorn to go to Christ, as ignorant, to be instructed, as naked, to be clothed in another's righteousness, or as guilty, to implore a free forgiveness. If they pray at all, they had rather transfer the idea of guilt to some other profligate wretch; to that publican; and consider themselves as upon terms with the Almighty. But humility is a lowliness of spirit, suited to our low, degraded, and wretched condition. I speak of humility as to its own nature, or way of working. It is true, no man in this world hath fully such a thought of himself, as his

§ Jer. x. 24.

* Lam. iii. 27, 28, 29.

case and circumstances require; but this is owing to humility being so very small in degree, and there being so much remaining pride in us all. So far as humility goes, it works in this way: So it was with the publican, when he durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, and cried, *God be merciful to me, a sinner!* and so with the woman of Canaan, when she was contented to be treated by Christ as a *dog*, and as a *dog*, made her petition. If this is not the duty of men in general, then it is not their duty to think of themselves as they really are, and as God hath said they are.

If a man were but to view himself as he *really* is, he would find two grand reasons for humility: the one, his littleness as a creature, and the other, his odiousness as a sinner. In the first view, he would shrink into nothing, as it were, before the eternal **ALL**; but in the last, he would think himself infinitely worse than nothing! The most poisonous serpent, or loathsome toad, would be inconceivably less odious in his sight, than he must know himself to be in the sight of God. He would appear to himself a most ugly, vile, filthy creature; utterly unfit for the society of holy beings; yea, utterly unworthy to breathe God's air or tread upon his earth! He would think it a wonder that the very creation of God did not rise up against him, and send him quick to hell! He would impute it to the mere mercy of God that they were withheld, by his making a covenant for him with the very stones and beasts of the field! And all this would fill his heart with holy gratitude. Yea, and when he had gone thus far, he would be far from *thinking much* of his humility. It would seem no more for him to think thus himself, than for a thief or a murderer, to think himself odious to mankind. Now, all this is men's duty, unless it can be proved that they ought not to think of themselves as *they are*, and as *God hath said they are*.

To think thus, is only to *think soberly of themselves*, which, if an apostle had never said it, reason and conscience might have told us, is no more than *every man OUGHT to think*.†

The *last* proposition has been the longer dwelt upon, because of the variety of the subjects contained in it, and because it seems to lie at the bottom of the controversy. It is hoped that what has been said will make it manifest, that *spiritual dispositions, to the subjects of which God hath promised salvation, though none but saints are, or ever will be, possessed of them, are nevertheless the duty of all mankind*; and if these be their duty, let the reasons be given why *faith* should not be the same.

I shall conclude this *part* with SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE EXTENT OF THE RULE OF HUMAN CONDUCT. It has been thought by many, that we have certainly been too superficial in our enquiries into this great standard of right and wrong, which he who knows, has declared to be *exceeding broad*! It is not to be wondered at that the ungodly part of mankind should deny the *spirituality* of the law, and so endeavour to diminish their obligations. It is no easy thing for vile man to be reconciled to God. So blinded is he by prejudice, pride, and a dishonest heart; so infinitely distant from what he ought to be, that he is like a debtor, who, having no mind to pay his debt, has the audacity to deny it. But what can be the reason of *good men* having such contracted views? let it be closely and candidly considered, whether *one cause* of many mistakes in this matter be not a *partial consideration of the sources of human obligation*.

Our obligations to God, as hath been hinted before,

† Rom. xiii. 8.

appear to rise from *two* grand springs; the one is, *what God doth for us*, or the numerous bounties of his hand; the other is, *what God is in himself*, or the infinite excellence of his nature. The *first* is binding on all those, and only those, on whom his gifts are bestowed, and that in proportion to the value and circumstances of those gifts. Carnal men are under obligations to love God for his innumerable bounties to them as the God of nature and providence; and the circumstance of these bounties being given them amidst their rebellion against him, ought to heighten their love. Good men are under exceeding higher obligations for his peculiar gifts to them, as the God of all grace. Carnal men are not bound to love God for his *special distinguishing love to them*, seeing there is no evidence of his having any such love towards them; but godly men are. They owe an amazing debt of gratitude! It becomes them frequently to think, and ask, *what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits!*

Now this being the case, many seem to have concluded that no manner of love and obedience is due to God from carnal men, except a tribute of praise for the common mercies of life. But it should be remembered, that this is but *one* source of men's obligation. Another grand spring of it is what God is in himself, and this is binding on every intelligent being. By what God is in himself, is not meant any hidden or unrevealed excellencies in him. If there are any such, we cannot know them in the present state, and therefore are not obliged, for any thing of this kind, to love him. But by this is meant, those glorious attributes of holiness, justice, sovereignty, faithfulness, &c. which any one who is not criminally blind, may, yea must read in his word and works.

' God is to be loved, says Dr. GILL, for himself; because of his own nature, and the perfections of it,

‘ which render him amiable and lovely, and worthy
 ‘ of our strongest love and affection; as these are displayed in the works of creation and providence, and
 ‘ especially of grace, redemption, and salvation; to
 ‘ all which the psalmist has respect when he says, *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name, nature and*
 ‘ *perfections, in all the earth!* Psalm viii. 1. As God
 ‘ is great in himself, and greatly to be praised! great,
 ‘ and greatly to be feared; so, great, and greatly to
 ‘ be loved for what he is in himself. And this is the
 ‘ purest, and most perfect love of a creature towards
 ‘ God; for if we love him only for his goodness to us,
 ‘ it is loving ourselves rather than him, at least a
 ‘ loving of him for ourselves, and so a loving ourselves
 ‘ more than him.’ Body of Div. vol. III. ch. 9.—
 The prophet *Zechariah* was not only taken with his
 goodness as the liberal benefactor, but likewise with
 his bounty as the infinitely amiable God. *How great,* says he, *is his goodness, and how great is his*
BEAUTY!†

As this is a subject of great importance in itself, as well as to the matter in hand, it seems necessary that it should be well established. Though this part comes in under the name of *general* observations; yet, if we can but come at the truth here, and enter into the spirit of it, it may afford us *particular* advantages.

And first, To shew the *reasonableness* of supreme love to God for his own excellencies, and the great evil of the contrary, suppose these excellencies for once, existing somewhere, without taking into consideration the *particular* subject in whom they are found.
 TRUTH—RIGHTEOUSNESS—CONDESCENSION—PURITY—

† Zech. ix. 17.

Further, If God ought not to be loved for his own excellence, as well as for what he has done for us, then *sin ought not to be hated for its own odiousness, as well as for what it has brought upon us.* Sin can have no innate odiousness but in exact proportion to God's loveliness, seeing it is that from whence the evil of sin arises. If then God has nothing in himself considered, that deserves to be loved, sin has nothing in itself considered, that deserves to be hated. In this case the modern *Socinian* hypothesis must be admitted, namely, that 'moral evil were no evil if there were no natural evil'—that is, that sin has no other innate evil in it than its tendency to hurt the creature.

And here it is easy to see through that way of answering to these subjects, which, if I mistake not, some have adopted. To talk, say they, of what God is in himself, and what he is to us, is distinguishing upon matters where no distinction ought to be made; for whatever excellency I love in God, that excellency is engaged in my favour. To pretend therefore to view these things abstractly, is to be more nice than wise; and to talk of loving God for his own excellence in distinction from what he hath done for us, is to talk without meaning.— Might it not with equal propriety be said, in the language of modern *Socinianism*, that for *Calvanists* to talk of the evil nature of sin in itself considered, as well as of its tendency to bring evil upon the creature, is distinguishing upon matters where no distinction ought to be made; for whatever is dishonourable to God is hurtful to us? To pretend, therefore, to view these things abstractly, is to be more nice than wise; and to talk of repenting for sin as sin against God, as well as that which brings evil

upon us, is to talk without meaning.—Let those who think and speak of love to God in this manner, duly reflect upon the tendency of their reasonings; and let them seriously consider upon what ground they can maintain the innate evil of sin, against the *Socinians*, but upon that of the innate loveliness of the divine character.

Again, If God ought not to be loved for the excellence of his nature as well as for the gifts of his grace, then *all that love and admiration which christians have ever had towards him, on account of THE WAY IN WHICH HIS SALVATION WAS EFFECTED, is needless and groundless.* It is common for christians not only to rejoice that they are saved from sin and misery, but to admire at all this being done *in a way honourable to the cause of truth and righteousness.* It is common for them to admire the character and conduct of the giver, as well as the gift itself. But if *that* is a matter that is not to be taken into consideration in our love to God, then it seems it is, and ought to be, indifferent to us whether he did it in an honourable or dishonourable way. If so be we do but get it, we ought to care nothing about the manner in which it was obtained.

It has been before noticed of *holy angels*, how they love the Lord Jesus Christ, and are charmed with his way of salvation. His voluntary undertaking, and gloriously effecting, so astonishing a work, constitutes a part of the loveliness of his character, and renders him lovely in their eyes. They loved and adored him in every stage of his humiliation, and hymned his way to the celestial abodes! But if there is no love to be exercised but that of gratitude for the bestowment of favour, why all this ado? *They* had no immediate share in his salvation—they did not need it. It was for no part of *their species* that he died, *for he took not on him the nature of angels, but*

the seed of Abraham. What then? with hearts untainted by envy, they joyfully congratulate the shepherds: To you, say they, is born, *this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, Christ the Lord!* Yes, peace on EARTH and good will to MEN, are joyful sounds in their as well as our ears, so long as they bring with them GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.—Should it be said, their bliss is augmented by the redemption of men, which therefore was to them a favour; it is granted, but this additional bliss is in a way of *beholding God's native excellencies* as discovered in that amazing affair. The salvation of the church by the blood of Christ; serves to them as a mirror, by which they discern *the manifold wisdom of God.* §

It has been common to suppose that *devils* are bound still to love and obey the ever adorable Jehovah—that they owe the same debt of obedience as if they had never fallen, seeing their change makes no change in the excellent nature and rightful authority of God—and consequently that *they have sinned from the beginning,* † yea, and that their sin, in steadfastly hating and opposing him, is very great. But if there were no other source of obligation than the bestowment of favour, it should seem they are very nearly blameless for all that they have done from the time of their *first apostacy.* From that time they have been cut off from all the enjoyments of divine favour. Not a ray of mercy, nor gleam of hope, from that day to this, has ever visited their dismal cell! Yea, and to this excuse they could add their *utter inability* to love God. They might truly say, ‘we cannot love him; we cannot abide him, nor any that pertain to him.—We hate his government, we hate his gospel, and cannot but hate them.—His very *goodness* to men makes our hearts boil in eternal enmity against both him and them.

§ Eph. iii. 10.

† John viii. 44.

If then favour be the only source of obligation; and moral inability will excuse from it, they are now very nearly, if not altogether, free from the yoke of God's authority, and are very little, if at all, bound to love him; and consequently, their sin must, in proportion, at most, be very trifling; for where there is no obligation, there can be no transgression. The only favours that can be pretended to bind them, are, their *former* happiness, and their present *small degree of misery*, compared with what they shall endure after the day of judgment. And as to the former, that lasted but a very little time, and is now gone for ever; and the latter, light as it may seem, is worse than the worst with which mortals are acquainted. But be it so, this can at most be only a small degree of favour, compared with what the most miserable men in this world enjoy; consequently their obligations to God are very small to what ours are; and so at most they are very little to blame for all their continued rebellion.

It is hoped, these things, if duly considered, will make it appear that God ought to be loved for his own sake, as well as for what he does for the children of men, and that in every manifestation by which he shall make himself known. And if so, then be it observed, though unregenerate men are not obliged to love Christ for having died for them in particular, seeing they have no evidence of such a thing; yet they are obliged to love him for what he is, and that with all their hearts. Christ is possessed of such excellencies, as must render him altogether lovely to every intelligent being who is what he ought to be. Men are obliged to love him for having died at all, seeing it was a glorious act in him, be it for whom it may. If they were in such a spirit as they ought to be, it would be natural for them to think and reason in some such manner as this—'It was an exceeding glorious undertaking for such a character as the Son of God to have any thing to do with a race of rebels against him and

his Father. And though he acted in a sovereign way, as, indeed, it is but right he should, in saving whom he would, he is, nevertheless, a glorious character. We have forfeited all claim, for our parts, and lie at his mercy. If he save us alive, we live; if not, we justly perish. Be it as it may, he deserves to be loved by us, and all intelligent beings.

Moreover, men are obliged to love Christ, not only for having died, but for having died for some of the human race, and for aught they know, for them. The preference given to our species above the fallen angels, requires our wonder, and deserves our gratitude. They are doomed to a state of entire and perpetual despair, without the least hope or possibility of escape in any sense whatever. Thus it is not with any of the sons of men, while in this world. If special mercy is designed for some of the human race, and no man alive knows but that he may be one of that number; and if the declaration of mercy is indefinite, to all who are willing to be saved in God's way, then no man alive can say there is no hope, no possibility of my being saved. There is a hope, and in some sense, a possibility of his salvation; for, granting that it is impossible for him to return to God without special grace; yet it is possible he may be one of those whom God hath determined to make willing in the day of his power.

The experience of Christians might be appealed to, whether they have not, at some period of their lives, perhaps when their understandings were first enlightened, had some such thoughts as these:—‘I fear I shall never enjoy his salvation—shall never see his face with comfort. But whether I do or not, whether I be saved among his elect, or perish with the rest, he is just, he is lovely. His excellence is such, I cannot but love him. The work he has effected for

sinful men is glorious, and renders him worthy of my best affections. I should be a monster not to love him! O, that I may but be found in him! I am resolved to live and die imploring an interest in him. Yes, I am determined to venture my all upon him—who can tell? if I perish, I perish!

This way of speaking of love to God, Christ; and divine things, namely, as for their own excellence, however some may represent it as an abstract metaphysical subtilty, tending to perplex plain, sincere Christians, will be found, if fairly examined, adapted more than a little to their encouragement. Are there not many of that character, who dare not say they love the Lord Jesus Christ, because he died for them in particular; for of that they are afraid they have no evidence. They seldom experience the effusions of joyful gratitude for distinguishing love to them, because they go from day to day in painful apprehensions that they may have no part nor lot in that matter. If, therefore, they are taught to conceive of no other kind of love but this, they must, generally speaking, conclude themselves to be void of love. But were it put to them, whether they did not approve of Christ, and his way of saving sinners, whatever might be their state as to interest in him—whether they did not love, that God should be just what he is, and Christ just what he is, and abhor themselves for being no more like him—whether any other way of salvation than that which glorifies God, humbles the sinner, and destroys his sin, would suit them? Here, methinks, they would find no such difficulty to answer.—Now, must it not be very encouraging to such, to be told that this their love is not only of the right kind, but is ‘the purest and most perfect love,’ as Dr. GILL says, ‘that a creature can exercise towards God.’ Such may be told, from the best authority, that they need not fear being denied a share in what they so cordially approve. It is the delight of

the all-compassionate Saviour to say, **BE IT UNTO THEE EVEN AS THOU WILT!**

This most pure and perfect love is incumbent on all mankind. All mankind, were they of such a spirit as they ought to be, would feel themselves thus affected towards the Law-giver and the Saviour. Yes, verily, the native excellence of God and Jesus Christ is such, that he that is not taken with it must be an abandoned creature! This excellence is often represented in scripture as a great source of human obligation. *God is a SPIRIT, and they that worship him must worship him IN SPIRIT and in truth. Be ye HOLY, for I am HOLY. Who shall not FEAR thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art HOLY? Give unto the Lord the glory DUE to his NAME. If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema Maranatha!** *He that despised Moses's Law died without mercy—of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the SON OF GOD! If the word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so GREAT SALVATION!†* *Scripture, did I say? Surely it never ought to have been questioned, even though God had never told it us, whether loveliness ought to be loved, beauty admired, purity imitated, just authority feared and obeyed, sin lamented, truth embraced, and a vile sinner lie humble before God!*

“O, ye cold hearted, frozen formalists!
On such a theme, 'tis impious to be calm;
Passion is reason—transport, temper here!”

Night Thoughts, Night 4.

* This passage (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) is a most awful, and yet just, description of the final state of those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ.

† John iv. 24. Lev. xi. 44. Rev. xv. 4. 1 Chron. xvi. 29.
1 Cor. xvi. 22. Heb. x. 28, 29; ii. 2, 3.

PART THIRD.

WHEREIN ARE SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

THERE has been occasion to notice some objections in the foregoing parts, but the principal of them are reserved for this. Those which I have seen are most of them drawn either from the inability of innocent Adam to believe in Christ as a saviour, or from the supposed inconsistency of this principle with that of the divine decrees, or something of that nature. —Concerning which a few things may be observed in general :—

First, That these objections originated with ARMINIUS, or his followers, and have been answered long ago by the Calvinists in their writings against

Christ. This awful denunciation is not levelled against sinners barely, as *positively hating* Christ; but as under the *negative idea of not loving him*.

The sentence, however awful, is perfectly *equitable*. Paul felt its equity when he spake it. He felt methinks, as a soldier would feel towards the best of Princes or the noblest of commanders. If, after David's return from killing Goliath, when the women of Israel were praising him in their songs, any of the sons of Belial had spoken of him in the language of detraction; it would have been natural for one of a patriotic spirit, deeply impressed with an idea of the young hero's worth, thus to have expressed himself; 'He that loveth not the son of Jesse, let him be banished the tribes of Israel. Of such a kind were the feelings of our apostle. He had served under his Lord and master for many years, and now being strongly impressed with an idea of his infinite loveliness, he thus breaks forth. *He that loveth not THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema Maranatha!* He that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ must be an enemy to God and all real good, an enemy to mankind, and to his own soul; and such an one deserves surely to be anathematized from God, and excommunicated from all his happy dominions!

them. This has been confessed by those that urge them, though they deem those answers of the *Calvinists* insufficient.* *Secondly*, Objections drawn from these sources against a principle which, it must be allowed, seems to have a great share of the perceptive part of scripture, according to its natural unbiassed meaning, in its favour, are very precarious. Suppose that by reason of our darkness we could not ascertain with precision the nature and extent of our first parents principles and abilities; is that to be wondered at? It is certain we can know but very little about a life of innocence; our disordered souls are incapable of forming just ideas of so glorious a state. For us therefore to attempt to determine the nature and extent of his principles and abilities, is in many cases to walk in a path where we have little else to guide us but our own conjecture. There are but *two* ways by which we can judge in those matters; the one is from the *character of the Creator* and the other from *scripture testimony*. From the *former* we may be sure of the *perfect purity* of Adam, as coming out of his hands who is purity itself; but what can be determined from hence of his incapacity to believe in Christ, had he been in circumstances which required it? As to the latter, I do not remember to have seen any thing of this sort produced, of any account, unless it be 1 Cor. xv. 47. *The first man is of the earth, earthy*—which Mr. JOHNSON produced to prove the earthiness of Adam's mind and principles; but this Mr. BRINE sufficiently refutes, proving that this divine proposition barely respected Adam's BODY: † and thus Dr. GILL expounds it.

As to its supposed *inconsistency with the doctrine of God's decrees*, many who firmly believe those decrees can see no inconsistency in it. It seems all harmo-

* See *Arminian principles of a late writer refuted.*, page 6.

† See *Mistakes noted and rectified*, page 18—23.

nious to them. But suppose it did not, suppose we could not discern the consistency between these principles; there are other principles as well as these wherein we should be glad to obtain more satisfaction of this sort, though we have undeniable evidence of their being truths. Undoubtedly all truths are harmonious with each other; but their harmony is not always discerned in this imperfect state.—If I find two doctrines affirmed or implied in the scriptures, and these two doctrines seem to me to clash with each other; I ought not to embrace the one and reject the other because of their inconsistency; for on the same ground another person might embrace that which I reject, and reject that which I embrace, and have equal SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY for his faith as I have for mine. The truth is, there are but two ways for me to take in this case: the one is to reject them *both* and the *bible* with them, for their inconsistency; or else embrace them both, concluding that as they are both revealed in the scriptures, they are both true, and both consistent, and that 'tis owing to the darkness of my understanding that they do not appear so to me. Surely this is what we ought to do, Who can doubt whether it becomes us to receive God's declarations, and if we cannot discern their consistency as we could wish, wait and pray for more light?

Let us ' his written will obey,
And wait the great decisive day!

Had we but more of that about which we contend, it would teach us more of a spirit of self-diffidence. *Abraham*, that pattern of faith, might have cavilled with the Almighty about the *inconsistency* of his promise with his precept. He had commanded him to go and offer up his son, his only son of promise, Isaac. Abraham might have replied, ' what command me to

offer up Isaac? Didst thou not promise *that my seed should be as the stars of heaven?* that the MESSIAH, in whom all nations of the earth are to be blessed, should descend from me? and that IN ISAAC *should my seed be called?* This thy command of sacrificing him while a youth must be *inconsistent* with thy decrees and promises. Therefore I must of necessity put some other sense upon the command than what it seems to have, and so not sacrifice my son.' But nothing of all this occupies the breast of the Father of the faithful. He left God to reconcile his promises and precepts—fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform—he stretched his obedient arm to give the fatal stroke, nor had he recalled it, had not heaven interposed!

These general observations however are not brought with a view to avoid a more particular attention to the subjects in hand, but rather as preparatory to it. Let each of the following subjects have a close and impartial consideration; viz. Adam's incapacity—divine decrees—particular redemption—the covenant of works—the work of the spirit—the necessity of a divine principle in order to believing, with some other lesser things.

I. CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THAT DIVINE PRINCIPLE WHICH ADAM POSSESSED.

This objection has been stated in the following manner: 'The holy principle connatural to Adam, and 'concreated with him was not suited to live unto God 'through a mediator; that kind of life was above the 'extent of his powers, though perfect; and therefore 'as he in a state of integrity had not a capacity of 'living unto God agreeably to the nature of the 'new covenant, it is apprehended that his posterity,

‘ while under the *first* covenant, are not commanded
 ‘ to live unto God in that sort, or in other words to live
 ‘ by faith on God through a mediator.*

If I understand the sense of this objection, it amounts to this; because an innocent creature, who stands in no need of a mediator, cannot while such approach to God in that manner; therefore, when he is become guilty and does stand in need of a mediator, it is not then his duty to come to God through him. If we were to reason thus in human affairs it would be thought very extraordinary. A subject while he preserves his loyalty to his prince cannot, nor need he approach the throne through a mediator; therefore it is not his duty to do so when he has so revolted as to render the throne inaccessible without one !

Had *Cain* lived before the fall, God had never been offended at his bringing an offering without an *expiatory sacrifice*; but after that dire event, and the revelation of the woman's seed, such a conduct was an insult upon the threatening of the lawgiver, as well as a contempt of the promised seed. Cain did as *ill* therefore in neglecting him as Abel *did well* in believing in him. It was as much as saying, God did not mean what he said, when, by guarding the tree of life, and instituting sacrifices, he had declared himself inaccessible but through a mediator. Yea, it was as much as saying, there was no such great evil in sin, but that God might very well be approached without a mediator. Indeed he not only thought God might be thus approached, but had formed high expectations of the applauses he was to receive, as appears by his being so *wroth and fallen in countenance* at his disappointment. These two cases of *Cain* and *Abel* seem especially designed of God to express at the outset of the world his

* Mot. to L. and U. page 50, 51.

determination to all future ages. Being resolved never to speak or be spoken to, in any way of friendship, by any of the fallen race of Adam, but through the mediation of his Son; he took occasion in these two first-born sons of man to testify what he approved and what he detested.

It ought to be observed that there are *two* kinds of incapacity that may attend a principle as to its outgoings on various objects; *essential* and *circumstantial*. (I know not by what terms better to express the difference.) The first lies in the *nature* of the principle; so a principle of carnality is incapable of savoring spiritual things, and a mere principle of common honesty in things of this life, though not opposed to spiritual things, would yet be utterly inadequate to the discernment of their real excellence. The last lies in a variety of circumstances that may attend the person, together with the state of those objects with which the principle is conversant—so an innocent being is incapable of repentance for sin, of any kind, legal or evangelical. So Adam, while innocent, though possessed of love to God and man in an high degree, was yet incapable of discovering that love by sighing for the abominations of the land, or pitying and relieving the miserable. The reason was, there were no abominations in the land to sigh for, nor miserable beings for him to pity. But no one imagines that because Adam was not capable of sighing for the abominations of the land, therefore his descendants ought not; or that because he could not pity the miserable, therefore they are not bound to do so. Adam could have done all this had he been in circumstances which required it. Why then should that circumstantial incapacity of Adam to repentance and faith, be brought as an argument against the present duty of his descendants? If such a mode of reasoning prove any thing it will prove *too much*; it will prove that

no sort of repentance is the duty of fallen men, not legal any more than evangelical, and that a *common historical faith in the gospel* is what they are not obliged to, for Adam was as much incapable of these as of any other.—

‘ That Adam, says Dr. GILL, in a state of innocence had a power of believing in Christ, and did believe in him as the second person of the Trinity, as the Son of God, cannot well be denied, since with the other two persons, he was his creator and preserver. AND HIS NOT BELIEVING IN HIM AS THE MEDIATOR, SAVIOUR, AND REDEEMER, DID NOT ARISE FROM ANY DEFECT OF POWER IN HIM, BUT FROM THE STATE, CONDITION, AND SITUATION IN WHICH HE WAS, AND FROM THE NATURE OF THE REVELATION MADE UNTO HIM; for no doubt Adam had a power to believe every word of God, any revelation that was or might be made unto him.’ *

Dr. OWEN, in his *Display of Arminianism*,† complains of the attempts of the Arminians to ‘draw down our first parents, even from the instant of their forming, into the same condition wherein we are engaged by reason of corrupted nature.’ He mentions several of their maxims and sentiments, and among others, two of their sayings, the one, of the *Remonstrants* in their apology, and the other, of the six Arminian collocutors at the *Hague*,. ‘The will of man,’ say the former, ‘had never any spiritual endowments.’ ‘In the spiritual death of sin,’ say the latter, ‘there are no spiritual gifts properly wanting in will, because they were never there.’ ‘The sum is,’ adds the Doctor, ironically speaking their language, ‘man was created with a nature, not only weak and imperfect, unable by its native strength and endowments to attain that *supernatural*

* Cause of God and Truth, Part III. ch. iii. § 6. † Ch. viii.

end for ' which he was made, and which he was commanded to seek, but depraved also with a love and ' desire of things repugnant to the will of God, by ' reason of an inbred inclination to sinning. It doth ' not properly belong to this place to shew how they ' extenuate those gifts also with which they cannot ' deny but that he was endued, and also deny those ' which he had; as *a power to believe in Christ*, or to ' assent unto any truth that God should reveal ' unto him: and yet they grant this privilege unto ' every one of his posterity, in that depraved condition ' of nature, whereinto by sin he cast himself and us. ' We have all now,' they tell us, ' a power of believing ' in Christ, that is, Adam, by his fall, obtained a ' supernatural endowment, far more excellent than ' any he had before !'

It is freely allowed that the principle in innocent Adam differed in many circumstances from that in believers. The production of the one was a *necessary* act in God, the other *sovereign*. If he would create Adam, his nature required that he should create him *holy*; but he is under no necessity of nature to produce an holy principle in a lapsed creature. The one was left to the choice of its subject to keep it in being; so is not the other. The one was exercised in contemplating and adoring God in all his glorious perfections, as displayed in the works of creation and providence; the other contemplates and adores him not only in these characters, but as the God of sovereign saving grace. But as these differences lie not in the nature of the principle, but are merely circumstantial, they make nothing in circumscribing present duty.

In proof that the principle of Adam in innocence, and that in believers, notwithstanding these differences are *essentially*, or for *substance* the same, let the following things be considered:

1. *They are both formed after the same rule, and that rule is the holy law of God.*—Observe particularly, (1.) The spirit and conduct of Adam in innocence were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the moral law of God. This, I suppose, needs no proof. (2.) The spirit and conduct of Jesus Christ, so far as he was the model after which we are formed, were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the same divine law. If this need proof, it will receive it from John iv. 34., with Psalm xl. 8. The former tells us what was the spirit of Jesus Christ, it was *to do the will of his Father*; the latter shews us what that will was—it was the fulfilment of the *divine law*. Christ went *to the end of the law* for righteousness, but it does not appear that he went any farther. The superiority of his obedience to that of Adam's, while innocent, laid not in his *doing more than the law required*, but in the *dignity of his person*. Being God over all, it was infinite condescension for him to become man, and be made under the law. Its author hereby became its subject, and thus it was magnified, and made honourable! Hence, also, it is that his obedience is properly *meritorious*. (3.) The spirit and conduct of Christians, so far as they are formed after the image of Christ, must be the same. It is not any new law, but the same divine law, that is *written on their hearts* in regeneration, as was written on Adam's heart in his state of innocence; see Jer. xxxi. 33. And the ultimate state of holiness to which they shall arrive in Heaven will be no more than an entire conformity to that rule, and that model. *The spirits of just men will be MADE PERFECT—and we shall be LIKE HIM.**

If, then, the spirit and conduct of Adam in innocence were nothing more nor less than an entire conformity to the moral law of God—if the spirit and con-

* Heb. xii. 23. 1 John iii. 2.

duct of Jesus Christ so far as he was our example, were nothing more nor less than a perfect conformity to the same divine law—and if believers are formed after the same rule, and are made partakers of the same spirit as that of which Christ partook, then how does it appear that their principles should be essentially different?

2. *The TERMS by which our conversion to God is expressed, imply a similarity between the principles lost by sin, and those produced by grace.*—We are then said to RETURN to God:† but how this could be it is difficult to conceive, if the state into which we are brought at conversion essentially differs from that which we were in previous to our departure from God. The RETURNING prodigal represents not a backslider's return, but that of a sinner at his first conversion. This is evident from the occasion of the parable, which was, Christ's having called profane publicans and sinners, and by so doing, offended the scribes and pharisees. The former of these are represented by the prodigal, and the latter by the elder son. Now of him it is said, *when he came to himself*, he said, I will arise, &c. by which it appears he had for a time been *beside himself*, and that no sooner did he return to his *spiritual senses* but he returned to his father.

Again, we read of the *WASHING of regeneration*,* which seems to be a restoring of the soul to purity, from which it had degenerated; hence, as explanatory of this, the same divine work is in the same verse called the *RENEWING of the Holy Ghost*. The remark that has been made on this passage is, that 'this renovation is spoken of the *mind*, and not of a *principle in the mind*.'† But let it be calmly considered whether this distinction be not calculated rather to bewilder than instruct. It is allowed that the mind is said

† Isa. lv. 7.

* Tit. iii. 5.

† Mot. to L. and U., page 22

to be renewed, and *is* renewed in regeneration; but then it might be asked, is it renewed in a *natural* or in a *moral* sense? If the former, that is, if our minds are renewed simply *as minds*, then it should seem we have by sin deprived ourselves of human nature, and that regeneration consists in restoring our natural faculties. If the latter, then by it is meant the *disposition* of our minds, or as the scripture speaks, *the SPIRIT of our minds*;† which, doubtless, is the case, and so it comes to the same thing as the *principle in our minds*. What difference is there between a mind being restored to a right state and condition, and a right state and condition being restored to the mind?

That the life we enjoy through Christ is in *many respects* different from that which was promised in the covenant of works, may, for aught that appears to the contrary, be allowed, without supposing our principles essentially different. It is certain, we shall contemplate and enjoy God in a different character, and as exercising his attributes in a different way than what could have been, had man continued in innocency. And, no doubt, the bliss will be far more glorious than that which was lost in Adam. Christ came not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly. But this circumstantial difference in the object enjoyed makes nothing in proving his and our *principles* to be different in their *nature*. The joy of angels is greatly increased by man's redemption, but it does not thence follow, that their *principles* are different from what they were prior to the revelation of that event. A life of joy in heaven is far more glorious than a life of communion with God on earth; yet the principles of saints on earth and ~~saints in~~ ^{saints in} heaven are not therefore of a different nature. 'The

† Eph. iv. 23.

201. *Adam's incapacity to believe considered.*

'advantages,' says Dr. RIDGELY, 'which Christ came into the world to procure for his people, which are promised to them in the second covenant, are for substance the same with those which man would have enjoyed had he not fallen. When I say *for substance the same*, it is supposed that there are some *circumstances* of glory in which that salvation that was purchased by Christ differs from that happiness which Adam would have been possessed of had he persisted in his integrity.' §

The only question to which the whole ought to be reduced is this: WHETHER SUPREME LOVE TO GOD WOULD NOT NECESSARILY LEAD A FALLEN CREATURE, WHO HAS THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO HIM, TO EMBRACE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND HIS WAY OF SALVATION? It should seem, if our Lord's reasoning to the Jews be just, it would. *I know you*, saith he, *that you have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not.* || As if he should say, 'If you had any love to my Father, or his government, that would necessarily lead you to embrace me, and the way of salvation by me; for I am come into the world in his cause, and to glorify his name; but you have no love to him, and your not receiving me is a proof of it.' The Jews might have replied upon the contrary hypothesis, 'That is no proof of our not having the *love of God* in us; for be it so that you are the Messiah, the friend of God, and that yours is the only way of salvation; that principle which would enable us to embrace you, and your doctrine, must be something superior in its nature to mere *love to God*. How, therefore, can you *bring this* to prove that we have not the love of God in us? We may have that, and yet not be capable of receiving you, seeing that is a spiritual act.'

It cannot be denied that *holy angels* are capable of understanding, approving, and admiring the way of salvation by Jesus Christ; and it is hoped it will not be denied that the holy principle of Adam in innocence was, in this respect, equal to theirs. His being *of the earth, earthy*, as to his body, no more proves his inferiority in this respect, than it proves the inferiority of our Lord, who, before his resurrection, was possessed of a natural and not a spiritual body. The glorious truths of the gospel are *things which the angels desire to look into*.^{*} They are full of *love to God*, and this leads them to love that saviour, and that way of salvation, that brings so much glory to his all-glorious name! Yes, it will be said, but they cannot love the Lord Jesus Christ *as their saviour*, because they stand in no need of him in that character. True, but they love him as *a saviour*, though not as *their saviour*; and give a being that wants a saviour but a bible, and their principles, and it seems impossible that he should scruple a moment about casting his eternal all, if he might, on this saviour, and longing with his whole soul after this salvation.

It cannot be denied that the same principle, in different circumstances, and as concerned with different objects, will operate in different ways. A principle of love and loyalty to my prince, for instance, that excites me to cheerful obedience in a state of friendship, will excite me, if I am but possessed of it, to repentance, humiliation, and submission, after an unreasonable revolt. Yes, it would excite me to long after a reconciliation, and if there were any hint of a plan of reconciliation being on foot, it would naturally excite me to enquire after it, and long for an interest in it. And, supposing the terms should be something to this pur-

^{*} 1 Pet. i. 12.

pose, 1. The prince shall have it proclaimed throughout his rebellious dominions that his government has been altogether pure, equal, and benevolent, that his subjects had no provocation or excuse whatever to plead for their revolt—and *all the people shall say, Amen!* 2. That as he was wholly in the right, and they wholly in the wrong, they shall have all the shame and blame of the revolt, and its consequences, and he will have the sole honour of the peace, as being founded entirely on a free act of grace which they never deserved. 3. That whoever is pardoned shall lay down his arms, submit to mercy, and return to his allegiance. Were terms to this purpose, I say, held out, it would be natural for me, if I felt real love to my offended prince, to approve of them with all my heart; for this, I should say, is no more than what ought to be. He is right, and I am wrong. I should never think of reasoning in this manner. It was not my duty to repent, and return to my prince before I revolted, and, therefore, it cannot be so now! No, far from it; I should freely own, I have revolted without any provocation; it is right, therefore, that I should say *amen* to that proclamation which declares him and his throne to be guiltless, and all the blame and shame to redound on me! It is right he should have all the glory of the reconciliation, for to me belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face! It is right, yea, and what I long for, to go and submit to mercy, and return to my allegiance!

It is easy to apply this to the revolt of sinners from the government of God, which is *holy, just, and good*. And why should it be thought a thing incredible that the same principle that delights in God while in a state of friendship, would long after a reconciliation, when that friendship is broken? Yea, and be ready to embrace every hint of a plan of JEHOVAH'S

giving out, tending to that end, and earnestly plead to be interested in it? Can a being who *loves God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength*, and his neighbour as himself, forbear loving and admiring the plan of redemption, with its all-glorious author? Is it possible for a being to love God, and yet not love the greatest friend of God that ever existed? To love God, and yet reject or neglect the most glorious plan for bringing honour to him that ever was devised? If this is possible, surely we never need in future to think any thing impossible.

The reason why the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ, then, is not in general embraced in a spiritual manner, is not because *supreme love to God would not excite to it*, but, as Christ told the Jews, because men in general **HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN THEM**. And hence arises the necessity of the work of the Spirit. We need not only the gospel to be held forth to us, in the manner above, but an almighty power to accompany it, that our rebellious spirits may be so brought into subjection, as to embrace it.

II. CONCERNING THE DECREES OF GOD.

Since it is allowed on all hands, that the blessings of grace, and faith among the rest, are all sovereign and free gifts of God through Christ—are what he dispenses according to his own purpose and grace, given to his elect in Christ Jesus before the world began—since it is allowed that God never determined to bestow special grace upon the non-elect; it has, from these considerations, been thought a very great absurdity, and what imputes mockery to the Holy One, and has been represented as a thing impossible, that God should require men to believe in Christ. It has been suggested, that this makes it men's sin, and the ground of their punishment, that they have

not that which God never designed to give them—that they might equally be blamed for not being *elected* or *redeemed*, as for not having faith in Christ, since the latter is equally a spiritual blessing as the former.*

It is hoped this objection will be allowed to be stated in its full force, though it is not in the express words of any writer; and probably at first sight it will seem to be very formidable; but it may possibly appear less so when a little examined. In general it might be remarked of this objection, the same as of the former, it is of *Arminian extraction*, and has been answered long ago by the Calvinists, in their controversies with the Arminians.† But waving this, let the following things be considered.

First, If it prove any thing, it will prove *too much*; for instance, it will prove that it is not the duty of the non-elect, at all to seek after the salvation of their souls, or once to care, or ever be concerned about it; for the natural language of the objection is, how can it be their duty to seek after, or be concerned about that which God has never designed for them? And if so, it will be difficult to clear the doctrines of election and decrees from the charge of their leading to licentiousness.

Farther, it would prove that it is not the duty of all men to seek after a comfortable subsistence in things of this life, for themselves and their families. The portion of men in this life is as much the subject of God's decrees, as is that of the next. God must then have decreed concerning some men, that they shall be exposed to poverty and misery throughout their lives—and how, says the objection, can it be their duty to

* See *Farther Enquiry*, pages 16, 17. also 130, 131.

† See Dr. OWEN's *Death of Death*, book IV. ch. 1.

seek after that which God has decreed they shall never have? If God's having decreed not to bestow eternal bliss on some, exempt them from all duty in seeking it, why should not his having decreed not to bestow a comfortable subsistence in things of this life on others, exempt them from all duty in seeking that? But common sense checks the presumption here; why does not religious sense check it elsewhere?

It has generally been maintained by *Calvinists*, that it is men's duty to seek after many things, which yet it appears in the end, God has never designed to give them; and to endeavour to avoid many things, which yet it appears in the end, he has determined to bring upon them. And herein their views of things, it must be said, seem to accord with scripture representations. The destruction of *Pharaoh* was determined of God to be at the time, place, and manner in which it actually came to pass; and yet, who will say that he ought not to have taken the counsel of Moses, and let the people go? and that it was not his sin to follow them into the sea in order to destroy them?* The Lord had long before determined to give *Sihon* king of the Amorites to destruction, and his country to Israel for a possession; and yet, surely it was his duty to have accepted the message of peace which was sent him, and his sin to make war with Israel, by which his destruction was brought about.† If the days of man are determined, and his bounds appointed that he cannot pass them, then it was determined that *that* generation who went out of Egypt should die in the wilderness; and yet, who will deny that it was their duty to have persevered in their pursuit of Canaan, and their sin to turn back in their hearts to the fleshpots of Egypt? It was the determination of God that *Ahab* should fall in his expedition against Ramoth Gilead; and yet, who will say it was

* Ex. ix. 13, 16. † Gen. xv. 16. Dent. ii. 26, 32.

not his duty to have taken the prophet's counsel, and forbore going up against that city?§ The destruction of *Jerusalem* by the Chaldeans was determined, and for years preceding, foretold;† and yet, the prophet frequently counselled them to turn from their evil ways that they might avoid it; he particularly entreated king *Zedekiah* to follow his counsel, and save the city and himself from ruin—and surely it was his duty to have obeyed the command of the Lord!‡

In short, the objection directs its force against the express language and meaning of holy scripture, in things concerning another world as well as this. We read of some who were given over to strong delusions, to believe a lie and be damned, and one reason assigned for this awful punishment is, *because they received not the love of the truth that they might be SAVED.*|| But, says the objection, how could it be their sin not to receive the love of the truth that they might be saved, when salvation was never designed for them? This is to arraign the Spirit of God himself; let him arise and plead his own cause!

The truth is, the decrees of God were never designed for, nor can they be made any rule of, human action. The *commands* of God are the sole rule of this. God's secret will belongs to himself, and is the rule of his conduct to us; but his revealed will belongs to us, and is the rule of our conduct to him. 'God's word,' says Mr. BRINE, 'and not his secret purposes, is the rule of our conduct.*' 'We must exactly distinguish,' says Dr. OWEN, 'betwixt man's duty and God's purpose, there being no connection between them. The purpose and decree of God is not the rule of our duty; neither is the performance of our

§ 1 Kings xxii. 20. xv. 17. † Isai. xxxix. 7. ‡ Jer. xxxviii, 20.
 || 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11. * *Certain Efficacy*, page 151.

‘ duty, in doing what we are commanded, any declaration of what is God’s purpose to do, or his decree that it should be done. Especially is this to be seen and considered in the duty of the ministers of the gospel; in the dispensing of the word, in exhortations, invitations, precepts, and threatenings committed unto them: all which are perpetual declaratives of our duty; and do manifest the approbation of the thing exhorted and invited to, with the truth of the connection between one thing and another; but not of the counsel or purpose of God, in respect of individual persons, in the ministry of the word. A minister is not to make enquiry after, nor to trouble himself about, those secrets of the eternal mind of God, viz. whom he purposeth to save, and whom he hath sent Christ to die for in particular: it is enough for them to search his revealed will; and thence take their directions, from whence they have their commissions. Wherefore there is no conclusion from the universal precepts of the word, concerning the things, unto God’s purpose in himself concerning persons: they command and invite all to repent and believe; but they know not in particular on whom God will bestow repentance unto salvation, nor in whom he will effect the work of faith and power.’*

The apostle PAUL, in the same chapter wherein he had been largely treating on the doctrine of *election*, and of the rejection of the Jews, imputes their awful failure not to the divine decrees, but to their rejection of Christ.—*Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness—WHEREFORE?* he does not say because they were not *elected*, but because they sought it not by faith: for they stumbled at that stumbling stone. § Though election is the cause of salvation, non-election is not the cause of damnation.

* *Death of Death*, book IV. ch. 1. § Rom. ix 31, 32.

No sooner do we get to determining the bounds of duty by the divine decrees, but we instantly find ourselves sailing amidst dangerous rocks. The decrees of God, and that of election in particular, are deep and glorious subjects, and of great use when applied to right purposes. These are principally two viz. to teach those that are saved what *cause* to attribute their salvation to, and those that are yet carnal what *source* salvation must arise from if ever they obtain it. In this manner, and to these purposes it ought, I apprehend, to be preached both to saints and sinners. But when these glorious truths are applied, or rather misapplied, to weaken the obligations of men, excuse them in their sin, or authorize their inattention to the great concerns of their souls salvation, nothing can be more dangerous. Making the decrees of God rules of action, is almost an infinite source of real antinomianism, among carnal professors, at this day, throughout the religious world! This is the cause, and these are the people, through whom the doctrines of sovereign grace suffer as they do!

What if it should surpass our capacity to harmonize and reconcile some of these profound subjects; is that to be wondered at? While they stand as facts on sacred record, we ought not to give them up. If we cannot reconcile them, let us stay till we can; only take heed that we do not abuse them. Surely we might trust the judge of all the earth to do right. There is no doubt but his conduct will appear right another day; it should be our chief concern that ours be so too!—However, though these subjects may not be fully comprehensible, yet a few general observations may possibly afford some degree of satisfaction to a sincere and humble mind.

Be it observed, then, concerning evil, that no divine decree in the least diminishes the blame of

sinners in committing iniquity. If God hath decreed in any instance that a certain event shall take place, (suppose the death of Christ,) which implies criminality in those by whom it is brought about; it is only decreeing to give those persons up to their own hearts lusts, to what they would have done, if there had been opportunity, and they had not been prevented, though no such decree had ever existed. So also, if God has decreed to bring calamity or ruin upon any person or persons, *Pharaoh*, or *Sihon*, for instance; it is upon an eternal foresight of their sin, which would have brought that calamity and ruin upon them, though no such foresight or decree had ever been.

To the same purpose it might be observed, concerning good, that no divine decree in the least diminishes the obligations of men, in respect to the performance of duty. In *temporal things*, when God decrees to bestow on any person a spirit of diligence, care, or generosity, (these are the *gifts of God*,*) it is a decreeing to enable that person to do his duty, and what would have been his duty if that decree in his favour had never existed. In the mean while, others are left to their own spirits, which is a spirit of slothfulness, carelessness, covetousness, or something bad, which terminates in ruin. Yet here, God's having decreed not to bestow these good dispositions on such persons, does not hinder but that the contrary evils are their sin.—So it is in *spiritual things*; if God has decreed to bestow faith, love, and holiness on some of the children of men, and not on others, it is the same thing as decreeing to do that for some, which shall effectually enable them to perform their duty, and what would have been their duty had no such decree existed in their favour. Others, the mean while, are left in that state into which they have involved themselves, and

* See Eccl. v. 19. vi. 1, 2.

in which they still chuse to continue, and that is without all heart or inclination to attend to their duty; and so they continue sinfully to reject God's way of salvation, with its great author and object.

The depravity of men is such, that let God's commands be ever so reasonable, and his blessings ever so desirable, they will be sure to reject and despise them: but is it not strange and awful, that because such almighty grace is necessary to bring them to a *right spirit*, therefore they will plead off, and deny their being obliged to be of a right spirit prior to the exertion of that grace?

As to that part of the objection which charges us with making it mens sin, and a ground of their punishment, *that they have not what God never designed to give them*: and that they might equally be blamed *for not being elected, or redeemed*, as for not having faith in Christ; since the latter is as much a spiritual blessing as are the former. To this it is replied, faith, and every other spiritual blessing, considered *as blessings*, do not come under the notion of duties; but faith, and every other spiritual disposition, considered *as dispositions*, do; and it is mens sin that they have them not. Dr. OWEN has fully proved, in a passage already quoted, that the same things *in different respects may be God's gifts, and men's obedience*. In the former sense, duty has no concern, unless it be to desire and intreat a share in them; in the latter it has. Election, redemption, and faith, are all *blessings*, but are not all *dispositions*, herein they differ; the former are God's acts without us, but the latter is our act as by him enabled.

And here let the impartial and attentive reader judge whether this is not a sufficient answer to that strange way that some have of representing this subject. You make it, say they, the duty of men to

regenerate themselves—to give themselves special grace—to create in themselves divine principles—and to make themselves new creatures. We answer, we make nothing the duty of men but that in which they are *voluntary*. Whatever a person is or *does*, in respect to spiritual dispositions and exercises, when he is regenerated, we think it is no more than what he ought to have been and done prior to that period, as well as at the time. Does he *become a new creature*? that is, does he cease to hate God and his government, Christ and his gospel, and commence loving them? Does he lament and abhor his sin, and love holiness? Does he cease to trust in himself, and wholly venture his soul in the hands of the Lord Jesus? This, and whatever else is spiritually good, appears to us to have been his duty before God wrought this change in him, as well as at the time, and that his want of a disposedness to these things was a criminal defect.—But the term *regeneration* is not used to express any thing we *are* or *do*, but *what God does for us*. It is not used to express our *being of a right spirit*; if it were, we should say it was every mans' duty; but God's sovereign and almighty work of *making us so*. It is not mens sins that *God does not create in them a right spirit*, and yet surely they ought to be *of a right spirit*. To make this matter still more plain and evident, if possible, let it be considered that *God's not giving* that holiness to fallen men which his law requires, and which they have lost, be that what it may, is not their sin; but yet all must allow it is their sin that they *have it not*: otherwise the want of holiness is not a criminal defect, and it is abusing mankind to call them *sinners*. We do not say it is the duty of men *to give themselves special grace*: all we affirm is, that it is their duty to *be* that which nothing but special grace can make them; and he that will deny this, must deny that a bad man ought to be a good one.

III. CONCERNING PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

It has been thought a great absurdity to suppose that God can have made it the duty of any man to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul, or that he can have promised salvation to him on his so believing, when all the while his salvation was not the end for which he died.—In *answer* to this it is allowed, that if it were essential to true saving faith to claim personal interest in Christ's death, this objection would be unanswerable: but if it consists rather in a hearty belief and approbation of the truth as it is in Jesus, and of Jesus, as held forth in the word of truth; then it appears to be of no force at all. Surely it cannot but be right for a man, whether he have a special interest in Christ's death or not, to receive whatever God declares in the love of it—to approve things that are excellent—to allow from his very heart the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices and excellencies—to desire an interest in him—and to resolve no longer to trust in his own sufficiency, which is but trusting in a lie, but to cast his soul upon Christ for mercy, determined either to be saved by him or to perish at his feet.

It is apprehended that the act of trusting in Christ does not, in its own nature, necessarily imply that the party should *know* his particular interest in his death at the time; or that he should *have* such an interest at all, in order to make it his duty. It is certain, from the nature of things that the *former* cannot be enjoyed; unless a person may be sure of his interest in Christ while he is an unbeliever. Every person, at the time of his first coming to Christ, knows of no particular interest he has in him, nor of any other qualification he is possessed of, unless it be that he is a vile lost sinner.

It appears equally evident, that there is no necessity, in the nature of the thing, for the party to *have* any particular interest in Christ's death, in order to make trusting in him his duty. It is certain, that trust is, in many cases, warrantable and incumbent on a bare *possibility*; and indeed in every case where all other possible means of escape are cut off. It is right for a man who is condemned for high treason, not to deny his guilt and so trust in a falsehood; but to confess the truth, and cast himself on the mercy of his prince, and trust wholly to his clemency. Should he find no mercy at last, this would not alter the case. He has done right in trusting as he has, seeing there was no other possible way of escape. Suppose the *four lepers*, recorded in the 7th chapter of the second book of Kings, to have fallen into the hands of the Syrian army, and to have been slain by them; no body could have blamed them for trusting in them, seeing, as they justly reasoned, all hope was cut off from every other quarter. On the contrary, they would have been blame-worthy if they had done otherwise. *Why sit we here, said they, until we die? If we enter into the city, the famine is there, and we shall die; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore, come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.*

There is no fear of Christ ever destroying any that thus venture upon him; but if there were, if he only saved *some* who applied for mercy, that would be a sufficient ground for all others to apply too, as not knowing but that they might be the objects of his favour. Now if it would be right to venture, even in such a case as that, surely his having promised that *whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out*, cannot make it otherwise.

If it would be right to lay themselves at his mercy, even when they might very probably never enjoy it, to trust him upon a bare possibility, and though as *Job* said, they might be slain in the issue; it cannot be otherwise, on account of God's having graciously promised salvation to all that so trust in him.

Let a sinner who does not believe in Christ take this objection, and see whether he could vindicate himself with it. 'I am not sure that Christ died for me in particular; therefore I am not obliged to approve of his salvation.—No, I am not obliged to be willing that God should have all the glory of the good, and I take all the blame of the bad to myself.—I am not obliged to be willing to lie low before him, and to sacrifice my lusts to his glory. Again, I am not sure that Christ died to obtain eternal salvation for me; therefore I do not think myself obliged to apply to him for it, or to trouble myself about it.—Would any body call this just reasoning? Or if they would in this affair, would they in any other? Surely not!

But this being another objection of *Arminian* extraction, we shall find plenty of answers to it in the writings of the *Calvinists* against them. Three or four quotations shall suffice. *ELISHA COLLES*, treating on *particular redemption*, brings in an objection of the *Arminians* in these words—Obj. 'But if some only are redeemed, and those but few in comparison: then all ground of believing is taken away from the most of men.' To which among other things he answers, 'That Christ did not die for all, hinders none from believing, any more than that many of those he died for are not saved, or that because one only can win the prize hinders others for running.'—'He that will know his own particular redemption

' before he will believe; begins at the wrong end
 ' of his work; and is very unlikely to come that
 ' way to the knowledge of it. The first act of
 ' faith is *not* that Christ died for *all*; or for *you* in
 ' particular: the one is not true; the other not
 ' certain to you, nor can be until after you have
 ' believed. He that would live, must submit to
 ' mercy, with "peradventure he will save me
 ' alive." Any man that owns himself a sinner
 ' hath as fair a ground for his faith as any in
 ' the world that hath not yet believed: nor may
 ' any person, upon any account, exclude himself
 ' from redemption, unless by his obstinate and resolved
 ' continuance in unbelief he hath marked out himself.

He adds, "There are reasons enow, and of
 ' greatest weight, to induce men to believe without
 ' laying general redemption for the ground of their
 ' faith: as, that "faithful saving, and worthy
 ' of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the
 ' world to save sinners;" and such are you—
 ' That he gave his life a ransom for many; and
 ' you may be of that number, as well as any other
 '—That to believe on his Son is the will and com-
 ' mandment of the everlasting God, whom we ought
 ' to obey though so it were that salvation were
 ' not concerned in it—Those many faithful promi-
 ' ses assuring salvation to them that believe—and
 ' lastly, the remediless danger of unbelief. And
 ' if such considerations will not prevail upon you to
 ' believe; the notions of general redemption, toge-
 ' ther with the general successfulness of it, will never
 ' do it.*

Dr. RIDGELY reasons with the Arminians upon
 the same subject, and to the same purpose. He
 represents them as *objecting* against particular re-

* Treatise on God's Sovereignty, on Redemption.

demption the same thing which others object against faith in Christ being the duty of men in general; namely their being *inconsistent* with each other. 'There is another absurd consequence, *says the Doctor* charged upon the doctrine of special redemption; namely, that it is *inconsistent* with our being exhorted and encouraged to repent ~~and~~ believe for the remission of sins, or to the saving of the soul, as scripture gives all men a warrant to do. And since all are commanded to exercise these graces, and to expect salvation as connected therewith, the doctrine of particular redemption, as a late writer (Dr. WHITBY) insinuates, puts us under the necessity of believing a lie.'

In answer to this formidable objection, among other things he says, 'We must distinguish between God's commanding all that sit under the sound of the gospel to believe in Christ; and his giving them ground to expect salvation *before* they believe in him. Faith and repentance may be asserted to be duties incumbent on all, and demanded of them, when at the same time it don't follow that all are given to expect salvation upon the bare declaration that they are so. Accordingly, the commandment and encouragement is to be considered in this order; first as it respects our obligation to believe, and then as it respects our hope of salvation.'

The judicious WITSIUS speaks much to the same effect. 'This call, *says he*, contains the command of faith, by which all men, without exception, to whom God vouchsafes the same, are enjoined to believe in Christ, in that way and manner which is revealed in the gospel: *Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the*

'earth. Now the method of believing is this: (1.)
 'That a person do heartily acknowledge all men, with-
 'out exception, and himself among the rest, to be
 'liable to condemnation because of sin: and then that
 'he embrace the principle truths of the gospel; name-
 'ly, that there is no salvation but in Christ, nor any
 'communion with Christ but by a true and lively
 'faith: moreover, that he do not neglect so great
 'salvation, but renouncing all earthly enjoyments,
 'and rejecting every false remedy for his sins, he only
 'desire the righteousness of Christ, receive him as
 'his saviour, give himself up wholly to him, not doubt-
 'ing, but, so doing, he shall find rest for his soul.
 'All, and every one in particular, therefore, to
 'whom the gospel is preached, are not commanded
 'immediately to believe that *Christ died for them*;
 'for that is a falsehood. But they are commanded
 'to proceed in that method, which I have now de-
 'scribed; and not to take comfort to themselves
 'from the death of Christ before, having acknow-
 'ledged their own misery, and renounced every thing
 'but Jesus, they have committed themselves sincerely
 'to him.*

To these I will add one more quotation from
 the great OWEN. 'The preachers of the gospel,'
 says the Doctor, 'in their particular congregations,
 'being utterly unacquainted with the purpose, and
 'secret counsel of God, being also forbidden to
 'pry or search into it, Deut. xxix. 29. may—
 'justifiably call upon every man to believe, with
 'assurance of salvation to every one, in particular
 'upon his so doing; knowing, and being fully
 'persuaded of this, that there is enough, in the
 'death of Christ to save every one that shall so
 'do: leaving the purpose and counsel of God, on
 'whom he will bestow faith, and for whom is

* Decon. of Cav. vol. II. book III. ch. v. § 20. f
 N.3

'particular Christ died, (even as they are commanded,) to himself.'——'When God calleth upon men to believe, he doth not in the first place call upon men to believe that Christ died for them; but that *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, but only of *Jesus Christ*, through whom salvation is preached.'†

Can any one forbear remarking here, that these very respectable writers, whose names are deservedly had in veneration in all the churches, never thought of solving this difficulty by denying the fact? This is a refinement of modern times. They allowed repentance and faith to be incumbent on men in general, and this they thought to be consistent with particular redemption. Whatever the *last* of these great men (Dr. OWEN) might say concerning the difference between the principle of innocent Adam, and that in believers, it is plain he never meant to have that inference drawn from it, *that it is not the duty of unregenerate sinners to believe in Christ*. That is an inference, which if he himself may be believed, he would have disavowed. If any question this, let them but impartially read his 16th ch. *On the power of indwelling sin*;—and the 10th. ch. of his *Display of Arminianism*; especially the 1st ch. of the 4th book of his *Death of Death in the Death of Christ*; but most of all his *Exposition on the cxxxth Psalm*, from page 240 to 251. "Exhortations to believing"—and again from page 266 to 272. "Exhortations to believing enforced"—in which he represents the criminality of unbelief in the most pungent and forcible manner that is possible.—Some passages out of these I have transcribed, but so much, and so fully hath he written on the subject; that one cannot do him justice by two or three quotations.

† *Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, book iv. ch. i.

A great outcry has been raised of late respecting a *new scheme*, which some ministers have adopted, and many insinuations thrown out as if they had forsaken *the good old way*. It is wonderful indeed, to think how some things of modern date can lay claim to antiquity. The truth is, they have only returned to the good old way which all the servants of Christ walked in from age to age, till within the present century.

IV. CONCERNING MEN'S BEING UNDER THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

Pretty much has been said upon this subject, in relation to this controversy;† yet I must acknowledge, I feel myself at a loss in forming an exact judgment wherein the force of the objection lies, as it is no where, that I recollect formed into a regular argument. If I understand it, three things are supposed: 1. That none but believers are under the law, as it is simply a rule of life, nor ought to be. 2. That unbelievers are under it, as a covenant of life and death, and ought to be so. 3. That faith in Christ, not being included in the covenant of works made with Adam, which all unbelievers are under, it cannot be their duty.

That there is a real difference between the law, simply as a law, and the same law as wearing the form of a covenant—that believers and they only, are under it in the first sense, and unbelievers in the last—and that faith in Christ was not formally contained in the covenant of works, are principles freely allowed. But, it is apprehended, that though unbelievers are under the law as a covenant, yet that is what in some sense they ought not to be. And though the law of God, as given to Adam, did not formally require faith in Christ, yet,

† Mot. to L. and U. page 37—42.

it required such a disposition of mind, as, if its subject were in a fallen state, and a mediator were revealed, would cordially embrace him. Of this, it is hoped, proof sufficient has been given, in answer to the first objection.

Let it be considered, whether a being under the law, simply as a law, and also as it is a covenant, do not each contain *two* things. To be under the law, *simply as a law*, seems to include, 1. A being under the prevalence of such a disposition of mind as to obey God's law out of love to it; but yet, seeing we cannot produce such an obedience as the law requires, to have no expectation of life as arising from that quarter. 2. A being freed from the condemning power of the law, which it has over us on account of transgression. The latter is graciously connected with the former. *Sin*, says the apostle to the Romans, *shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace.*† The one is properly a disposition of ours, which the Holy Spirit works in us; the other is a gracious act of God concerning us. Now, the first of these, I apprehend, is the duty of men in general; but the last is not; that is a gracious act in which their duty has no concern, any otherwise than to seek and pray for it. It is their duty to be of such a disposition, and when they are under the influence of that, they may humbly claim an interest in the blessing connected with it.

So also, to be under the law, *as a covenant*, seems to include two things, which are direct opposites to the above. 1. A being under the prevalence of such a disposition as to do what we do with a view, some way or other, to be accepted of God on that account. This the apostle expresses by that phrase, *a being of the works of the law.* 2. A being under the sentence

† *Rom. vi. 14*

of condemnation on account of sin. This is what the apostle meant when he added concerning those who were of the works of the law, *they are under the curse.*†

Now, in the latter respect, it is allowed that duty has no immediate concern, any otherwise than that men ought to believe from their hearts that it is so, and with their hearts approve of the equity of the sentence. But so far as it consists in being under the prevalence of a disposition which excites us to do what we do with a view; some way or other, to be accepted of God on that account; so far it may be affirmed to be what no man ought to be. It is solely owing to ignorance, unbelief, pride, and presumption, that any sinner thinks of being accepted on account of any thing in him. Though none but believers are dead to the law, yet it is what every sinner *ought to be*, and *would be*, if he believed what the law says. It is madness for him to be otherwise. While man was innocent, it was his duty to perform perfect obedience, and to expect acceptance with God by it. Since he is fallen, having forfeited all right to the promises of the covenant by breaking its conditions, he ought not now to expect acceptance with God in virtue of any thing in himself, or done by himself. To obey is still every man's duty, and ever will be; but unless they were the subjects of a perfect obedience, to obey to those *ends* which Adam did, namely with a view to be justified by this obedience, would be now their sin.

Upon the whole, then, *two things* seem evident—
1. That though men in general are under a covenant of works, yet it is, in some respects, their sin that they are so. It is their sin and folly, when they have broken the conditions, vainly to expect the reward.

† Gal. iii. x.

And if so, then whatever arguments are built upon the supposition of its not being their duty to be *dead to the law*, which I think all that I have seen are, cannot be of any force.—2. That the difference between the law, as a rule of life, and as a covenant, does not lie in *the things required*, but in the *ends to which* they are required. The one simply declares what is duty; the other adds to this declaration the promises and threatenings of life and death that shall follow obedience or disobedience to it. The first is a mere rule, ascertaining what obedience men ought to yield; the last is the same rule, with the particular rewards that shall accompany that obedience, and the penalties that shall follow a default, annexed; including also, man's acceptance of these conditions. And if so, then that supposition that 'faith and all evangelical graces are required' by the law, simply as a law, but cannot be the duty of those that are under it as a covenant, is void of foundation. If the difference between the law, as a rule of life, and as a covenant, doth not lie in *the things required*, then the latter form being superadded, cannot make any difference in the extent of its demands. It is not supposed that the law, as given to Adam, required these things *formally*, but it did *radically*. Whatever is now formally required of men, even of good men, was radically required by the law of innocence. Even obedience to *positive* instructions was thus required by the covenant of works. That covenant, every one knows, did not require Adam to be *baptized*, nor yet to celebrate the *Lord's supper*; but it required in him A DISPOSITION TO OBEY WHATEVER GOD DID THEN, OR SHOULD AT ANY OTHER PERIOD, MAKE KNOWN TO BE HIS WILL. It required the *disposition*, though not the exercise of it in such a *particular mode*; and this is meant by these things being required *radically*. The same may be said of

evangelical graces. The law required a disposition, which, if under fallen circumstances, and the revelation of a saviour, would operate the same way that evangelical graces now operate.

Possibly a little attention to the foregoing observations might remove those seeming absurdities, to which some of these sentiments have been reduced. It has been represented, for instance, as a thing impossible, that 'that which requires working for life, as the covenant of works does, should enjoin believing unto salvation, and life,'—and that '*obey, and live,*' are the command and promise of that covenant: not *believe and be saved.*'* This may seem plausible; but the truth is, neither *life* nor *salvation* are promised by the covenant of works to a *fallen* creature. Not *life*, for though that covenant promised life to man, upon condition of his obedience, yet since his fall it has no life to bestow. The law, therefore, in any form, does not say *obey and live* to a fallen creature; unless it be in a way of conviction, as Christ did to the young man in the gospel, answering him in his own way; and then its meaning is—If you can produce a perfect righteousness, I will see to it that you shall live. But, properly speaking, the law does not give the fallen creature any expectation of life; nor is it ever the design of the lawgiver to require fallen men to go about working with a view to live.—Neither does any body suppose that *salvation* is a promise which belongs to the covenant of works. If the law is spiritual, and requires spiritual dispositions, as it is hoped has been already proved; then it says to those where Christ is preached, *believe*; but it is the gospel that adds the promise of salvation. So it says *love, fear, obey, &c.* and to a real compliance with all or any of these, salvation is graciously promised; not, however, by the law, but by the gospel.

* Met. to L. and U., pages 43, 46.

Surely, there is nothing of contradiction in the law saying to an innocent creature, *obey*, while as a covenant it adds, *and live*; and the same divine law saying to a fallen creature to whom Christ is preached, *believe*, while the gospel adds, *whosoever believeth shall be saved*.

When the covenant of works was broken, the law of God reverted back to its original form, retaining only its power to command, and to punish the transgressor. God no longer considered himself in covenant with man, and men ought no longer to obey it as a covenant of life and death; but simply as a rule of life, without expecting any proper reward for their obedience, seeing they cannot produce such an one as the law demands. Yet so far as they have gone, or continue to go, contrary to this rule, they are justly liable to all the consequences. Those, especially, who reject God's way of salvation by Christ, and thereby appeal, as it were, to the covenant of works for justification, must abide those consequences in their full extent.

V. OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I do not recollect to have ever seen any objection drawn from the subject *in print*; yet objections of this sort have been made, and a pretty deal of the kind seems to exist in the minds of many people. When we talk of faith, and other spiritual exercises being the duty of men, it seems to them as if we meant to derogate from the honour of the Spirit's work; and to take that out of his hand which scripture and experience ascribe to him, and give it to the creature. If this is indeed the tendency of our principles, let them be discarded. Whatever tends to depreciate the person or work of the SACRED THREE, let it be abandoned! Before that is done, however, let the subject be fairly tried. Three

or four observations are offered to the consideration of the impartial reader.

1. The whole force of this objection turns on the solution of this question, DO WE NEED THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO ENABLE US TO DO OUR DUTY? If we do, then there can be no possible force in it. This is denied on the one hand by the *Arminians*, who on this ground deny the necessity of the Spirit's work, and maintain the sufficiency of the creature's power. Such and such things *cannot be ascribed to God* say they; *because they are commanded to us, and are our duty.* The same thing is denied on the other hand by some who affect to be the greatest *enemies to Arminians*, who on this ground deny their obligations. Such and such things say they, *cannot be our duty, because they are God's work.* Thus, those who seem at the greatest distance agree in this; they both deny the consistency of the same thing being incumbent upon us, and yet divine agency necessary to its being effected. This, however, is not the only thing wherein they agree, nor the only case wherein opposite extremes have been known to meet. But if we need the Spirit of God to ENABLE US TO DO OUR DUTY, then both these modes of reasoning must fall to the ground.

It is no wonder this should be denied by those who are so full of *self-sufficiency* as to imagine they can reconcile themselves to God; but that those who profess such a regard for the honour of the Holy Spirit, should unite with them, and arrogate to themselves a self-sufficiency to do their duty, is very strange. They would do well to consider the acknowledgments and petitions of the godly in former ages, which are very numerous. They own their insufficiency *to think any thing as of themselves,** or *to pray AS THEY OUGHT* without the *Spirit helping*

* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

their infirmities.† It was not their manner to deny God's precepts, or explain them away; but to acknowledge them, and turn them into petitions. Thus did the royal psalmist—*Thou hast commanded us, says he, to keep thy precepts diligently.* Here he owns his obligations; but feeling his insufficiency, immediately turns it into prayer, adding, *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*§ It might be well, too, for such to consider what they themselves mean in their near approaches to God, when they pray *to be kept from evil.* Surely it is their duty to keep from evil; and yet by their prayers it should seem *they need the Spirit of God to enable them to perform that duty.* Yes, will some say, but we do not deny our obligations as christians, nor our need of the Spirit to enable us to do our duty, it is *unregenerate persons* we speak about.—Indeed? and do you really think that you have so much evil in your heart that you need the Spirit of God to enable you to do your duty, but that wicked men have not? Make such and such things incumbent on them, and we set aside the work of the Spirit; because they are so good they do not need the Spirit of God to enable them to do their duty; but make the same things incumbent upon a good man, and the Spirit is not at all dishonoured, because he is so bad as to need divine influence to perform his! Besides, if this be the case, then the whole law of God may be fulfilled by a fallen creature, (for that is certainly our duty) and that without the Spirit of God, and so the carnal mind may become *subject to the law of God*, and the work of the Spirit in writing that law upon the heart becomes unnecessary.

2. If the inability of men to do things spiritually good, though it be *criminal*, is nevertheless *real* and *total*; then there is the same need for the work of

† Rom. viii. 26.

§ Ps. cxix: 4, 5.

the Spirit as if it was not criminal. This, it ought to be remembered, we constantly affirm. We suppose, though men's inability lies wholly in their criminal disinclinations and vile dispositions, yet those dispositions having an *entire dominion* over them, they are as really unable to do good, while this is the case as if their incapacity was simply natural. A man, while he continues under the dominion of aversion to another, is as incapable of doing him a *kind action*, as if he were literally bound in chains. We believe that such is the wicked aversion of every man's heart by nature, to come to Christ, that *no man can come unto him, except the Father draw him*. Though nothing but our badness renders divine influence necessary, yet *that* being what it is, is abundantly sufficient. 'The bare and outward declaration of the word of God,' says CALVIN, 'ought to HAVE LARGELY SUFFICED to make it to be believed, if our own blindness and stubbornness did not withstand it. But our mind hath such an inclination to vanity, that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God; and such a dulness, that it is always blind and cannot see the light thereof. Therefore there is nothing available done by the word without the enlightening of the Holy Ghost.'*

3. So far is this kind of incapacity from requiring a less degree of power to remove it than the other, that perhaps it will be found to require a greater. It has been usual with *Calvinists* to say, 'It requires a greater exertion of divine power to turn the heart of a sinner, than it did to create him'—yea, some have said greater than to create a world. And the reason they assign, is, that in creation, though there is nothing to work upon, yet there is nothing to oppose; but in this case there is not only an equal want of any thing

* Institutions, book III. ch. 2. § 33.

to work upon, but every thing to oppose. Hence not only is faith represented as the *gift of God*, and as being of the operation of God; but we read OF THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER TO USWARD WHO BELIEVE, ACCORDING TO THE WORKING OF HIS MIGHTY POWER.†

4. Let it be considered whether the denial of faith, and all spiritual dispositions, being the duty of sinners, does not tend rather to undermine the necessity of the Spirit's work, than to prove it. It has been a usual way with all our Calvinistic divines, to prove the necessity of the Spirit's work from the consideration of men's utter depravity, and aversion to spiritual things. For instance, that on account of the blindness of their minds to the beauty of Christ and the gospel, they need the enlightening of the Holy Ghost;—on account of their aversion to God and spiritual things, they need an almighty power to conquer their wills;—and on account of the depravity of their hearts, and pollution of their spirits, they need *a new heart to be given them, and a new spirit to be put within them*. In one word, on account of their being entirely under the dominion of sin, *they must be born again*, and be as it were *new made*.—But if men's inability to things spiritually good be simply natural—if Adam himself in innocence was neither able nor obliged to do any thing spiritually good, nor any of his posterity while unregenerate; then it cannot be their depravity that renders the work of the Spirit necessary. And so all these arguments that have been usually drawn from that source, must be laid aside: yea, though they have done great execution against the Arminian cause, yet now must they all be betrayed, and at once given up into the hands of the common enemy.

† Eph. i. 19.

If the necessity of the Spirit's work can be maintained at all upon this ground, it cannot be on account of the thing itself, but barely in respect of what is connected with it. It may be necessary for me, in order that I may know and enjoy God, and escape eternal misery, for the Spirit of God to work a disposition in my heart to which I was not previously obliged; but one should think it cannot be necessary on account of the thing itself, any more than it was necessary for me to have a teacher to instruct me in what I am under no obligation to learn, or a helper to enable me to do what I am not at all bound to perform. The idea of a prior obligation to those things which are wrought in us in regeneration, appears plainly therefore to strengthen the evidence for the necessity of the Spirit's work, rather than weaken it.

VI. OF THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE PRINCIPLE IN ORDER TO BELIEVING.

It has been often objected to this effect, 'It is impossible to believe in Christ without having a principle of faith created in the heart. Now as it is God's work to create that principle, till that work is effected, it cannot be any man's duty to believe in Christ.'—That is, it cannot be the duty of any man to have, or exercise, a principle which he has not.

That no man can do a good action without a good principle, is readily granted. As well might an evil tree bring forth good fruit. But that this affords any excuse to sinful men in the neglect of good is denied. Without a holy principle or disposition previously wrought, human depraved nature is utterly unable to do any thing really good; but will any affirm, that before that principle is wrought, real good is what no man is obliged to perform?

Though 'no unsanctified heart,' says Mr. BRINE, will ever pray to God for grace and holiness; yet 'this is men's dreadful sin, and it justly exposes them unto direful vengeance.'

If the mode of reasoning used in the objection be just, any man, be his practices as vile as they may, may excuse himself from blame; and all real good whatever may be denied to be the duty of an unprincipled mind. No true love to God whatever, can be his duty; for though you should tell him he ought to love God, seeing God's law expressly requires it;—he might reply, but I have no principle of love to God, and it is well known to be *God's* work to create such a principle, and that this is absolutely necessary to my exercising it; therefore till that work is effected, it cannot be my duty to love God.

Rebuke a man for his having no *fear of God* before his eyes, no *holiness* in his heart or life, nor any thing that deserves the name of *obedience to God*; he may tell you, and tell you the truth too, that he cannot exercise any of these without a holy principle; and he may add, as it is *God's* work to create that principle, it cannot be my duty, till possessed of it, to exercise any of these virtues. And thus God's yoke is effectually thrown off, and the unprincipled monster comforted and vindicated in his so doing.

Yea, upon this mode of reasoning, all obligation to uprightness among men, must entirely cease in a person devoid of an honest principle. One might defy any man upon this ground, effectually to answer an arrant villain, who, when rebuked, should reply, I have no principle of honesty in me; and it is impossible for me to act honestly without an honest principle. It is impossible I should exercise a principle which I have not. What would you have me

do? Can I create a principle of honesty in myself? or is it my duty to do so?—It is possible some people might be apt to summon such an objector to the bar of common sense, and to answer him in some such manner as this: ‘*Create a principle of honesty in yourself?—you villain!—whether it is your duty to create it or no, you certainly ought to have it, and you are a monster in human shape for being without it.*’ —But he that maintains it to be no man’s duty to have and exercise a principle which he has not, could not thus reply. He must be silent, or else depart from his favorite notion.

Is it not strange that plain things should become so obscure? The most absurd notions may be asserted, and seem plausible, under the covert of a few unmeaning terms; when the same things, if stripped of that covering, would appear ridiculous at first sight. Who ever imagined, till this controversy was started, that the want of a good principle was any excuse for the want of a good action? It has been usual for mankind to judge just the reverse. AN UNPRINCIPLED MIND, is a mind which scripture and common sense agree to execrate.

The truth appears to be this: the law of God requires that, of which man, through sin, is totally destitute; and which, if ever he have it, must be wrought in him by the Spirit of God; namely, AN HOLY PRINCIPLE, OR DISPOSITION OF MIND, DISPOSING THE SOUL TO DO EVERY THING, AND EMBRACE EVERY THING THAT GOD REVEALS. If the law is *spiritual*, ‘and,’ as Dr. GILL says, ‘requires *spiritual obedience*,’ it cannot require less than this; and this it is supposed, would be for substance the same thing as a principle of faith. Men being destitute of this right disposition, are so far from being thereby excused, that it is itself their great sin, and the spring head of all their other sins.

It is *the sin of their nature*; from whence all the sins of their life proceed. Men ought to be *holy*—ought to *love God with all their heart*—ought cordially to *believe* and *embrace* whatever he reveals—and ought to *have a principle or disposition so to do*. Their not having this prevailing bias of mind so disposing them, is a *moral defect*; and when that bias is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, it is only producing that in us of which we ought to have been the subjects before, as well as at the time. ‘There is nothing in us,’ says Dr. OWEN, by the way of *habit or act*, from the beginning of our faith, to the consummation thereof, that is not *required of us* in the gospel.*

Should it be said, though the want of a good principle be no excuse for the want of a good action in general, yet it is so here, because the principle which Adam lost, and which the law requires, essentially differs from that which is necessary to believe in Christ; so that if men were now of such a spirit as they ought to be, still they would be unable to believe. —It is replied, this is allowing that the objection has no weight but upon the supposition of that being true which as yet is a point in dispute. But this is begging the question; taking that for granted which ought to be proved. It is hoped this, in the answer to the first objection, has been sufficiently disproved; but however that be, it is contrary to all right reasoning to draw conclusions from disputed premises.

Some other lesser objections have been made, but which, I believe, are allowed by the most judicious to have little or no weight in them; such as *men having no power to believe*, and faith being *the gift of God*. As to the *former*, men want power to do this no more than they want power to do every thing

* Display of Armianism, ch. 10.

else that is really good, even so much as to *think a good thought*. But if this be not the duty of men, then the Almighty had no reason to complain as he did, when he looked down upon the children of men, that none of them *did good*, no, not one.* Moreover, I wish what has or may be said on the subject of *natural and moral inability*, to be taken as an answer to this objection. As to the *latter*, I beg leave to refer the reader to what Dr. OWEN has said on this subject, in a passage already quoted, (pages 86, 87,) wherein he has fully proved the consistency of the same thing, in different respects, being *God's gift* and *man's duty*. Indeed, enough has been said in answer to the *Arminians*, with whom this objection originated, though in another form, to shew it to be of no force whatever.† To this I shall only add, if nothing that is the *gift of God* can be the *duty of men*, then it is not their duty to have a heart rightly to use the good things of this life, and they are not to blame for the contrary; for this is as expressly said to be *the gift of God*, as faith in Christ.§

I shall now add a few *general reflections* upon the whole, which may be considered as not only deducible from what has been said, but as affording additional evidence to the point in hand.—If the foregoing principles be just, then,

1. *The law of God, or the rule of man's obligation, is what the scriptures affirm to be, EXCEEDING BROAD.* But if men are under no obligation to do any thing spiritually good; if they ought not to love God for his own infinite excellency, to fear offending him from a tender concern for his glorious character, to mourn ingenuously for having disobeyed and dishonoured him, to worship him in spirit and in

* Ps. lxxx. 3. † See Dr. Owen's Display of Arminianism, ch. 10. and Dr. Ridgley's Bod. Div. vol. I. p. 445. § Eccl. v. 19.

truth, to receive his truth in love, and heartily approve of whatever he reveals; I say, if they ought not to do any of these things, then, for aught appears, the law of God is *exceeding narrow*. It can extend very little farther, in respect to unregenerate sinners, than that they should behave honestly and decently in the world, regularly in their families, and make their appearance once in the week at the worship of God. If it oblige them to *pray*, to be sure it must be only for *temporal* blessings, though we read of *Simon*, the sorcerer, whom *Peter* knew to be an unregenerate man, being expressly enjoined to pray for the *forgiveness of sin*, which is a spiritual blessing. It seems to extend very little farther than to mere *negative holiness*, according to this hypothesis; as that men ought not to think, desire, or act in an unholy manner; but *positive good* appears to be in a great measure left out. Nothing of that nature must be incumbent on them, except WHAT MAY BE DONE WITH A HEART DESTITUTE OF ALL REAL LOVE TO GOD, AND FULL OF AVERSION TO HIM. And indeed, in some places, for a minister to make any thing more than this incumbent on his hearers in general, would be thought to be bordering upon the verges of dangerous heresy!

2. *Then the depravity of man is very great.* The contrary supposition, as well as this, represents man as utterly *unable* to do any thing spiritually good; but then it makes that inability to be no part of his depravity, but altogether innocent in its nature. It represents, when it speaks consistent with itself, the want of all spiritual dispositions in men to be only a *natural* and *innocent* defect; not at all owing to any depravity in their nature, for that *Adam* himself was equally destitute of them as they are. Hence, some have said, that *Adam*, in innocence, was only a *natural man*; alluding, I suppose, to 1 Cor. ii. 14. *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, &c.!*

But, if what has been said in the foregoing pages be true, then that inability that men in general have to things spiritually good lies in a *voluntary ignorance* of them, and a *criminal disinclination*, yea, a *positive aversion* to them. This extends the idea even to amazement, of the hideous lengths of human depravity! The *infidelity* of the world, according to this representation of things, is very great, and very criminal. Even those who may pretend to believe the gospel, and be staunch advocates for its doctrines, but yet do not cordially embrace Christ, and his way of salvation, are hereby proved to be infidels at heart: and is not it our work, as ministers of the gospel, after our Lord's example, to detect their infidelity, and whatever pity we may feel to their souls, denounce against it the awful threatenings of damnation?*

Now, since he who knows what is in man, constantly draws his picture in such black and ugly colours, this seems, at least, a presumptive argument in favour of the foregoing principles.—And since both sides, who have engaged in these debates, profess to rejoice in laying low the fallen creature, man, and unite in acknowledging his depravity truly inconceivable; it is hoped that when the *tendency* of these principles is duly considered, this will facilitate their being embraced.

3. *Then the grace of God in our salvation must be FREE, must be GREAT indeed!* The contrary hypothesis represents God in regeneration as producing principles or dispositions in a person which he never in any state had or ought to have had before. This, it is granted, may in some sense be said to be an act of grace, as being a *free gift*; but is it any part of *salvation* grace? Is there any *mercy* in it? If there is, it

* See John v. 46; Mark xvi. 16.

is only in respect of *consequences*, being that whereby we escape eternal ruin; but as to the *thing itself*, there appears to be no more mercy in it than in giving a sum of money to a person to enable him to pay what he never before owed, nor would have owed at all had he not been possessed of that gift. It is expressly said to be *given us IN BEHALF OF CHRIST to believe in him*;^{*} but if the gift of faith *itself* be not an act of mercy, it is not one of those blessings which Christ died to obtain.

Which of these two representations *most tends* to magnify the great grace of God, is left to the judgment of the impartial reader. For God to ennoble a creature, especially a fallen creature, with new additional principles and powers, whereby he may escape eternal misery, is allowed to be grace; but for him, in producing principles, to supply a criminal defect, a defect the criminality whereof was pointed against his own nature, government, and goodness, surely this is grace indeed! It would have been grace, supposing *Lot*, when Sodom was destroyed, had been a cripple, and as such *naturally* incapable of fleeing for his life, for the angel of God to have borne him away; but it was *much more* grace, when he was *sinfully* lingering after Sodom, to take him by the hand, and set him without the city. It may well be said of this act, *The Lord being MERCIFUL to him, brought him forth, and set him without the city!* Genesis xix. 16.

God, when he created man, blessed him with all that his heart could desire, and much more than ever he could have asked or thought for himself. The only return he asked was, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength.* Obedience to this was not less his felicity.

^{*} Phil. i. 29.

than his duty. But man revolts, and by his conduct replies, 'No; thou hast no right to my love, or if thou hast, thou shalt have no share in it. I see nothing in thee worthy of my affections—I will set them on the most foolish trifles, I will fix them on the most sordid lusts rather than on thee. I neither believe thy word, nor regard thy authority; desire thy favour, nor dread thy displeasure, so much as to deny myself for thy sake!'

Justice calls for the destruction of the rebel, but mercy interposes and reveals a *mediator*, and declares in effect, that whosoever among the rebellious race of men shall but sincerely and penitently say I have sinned, acknowledge his guilt, and cordially approve and embrace him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The declaration is indefinite. No one is excluded from applying, and whoever does rightly apply has the promise of eternal salvation. Yea, Jehovah condescends to counsel them as it regards their own interest, as well as his honour, to return. The Mediator himself admonishes the sons of men to receive him. Yes, *he crieth as in the high places of the streets, O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart! Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared with it. I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me! Riches and honour are with me, yea durable riches and righteousness! I was set up from everlasting—while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world—then was I by him as one brought up with him: I was daily HIS delight. Now, therefore, hearken unto me, O ye children; for blessed are they*

that keep my ways. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me, love death! His servants also cry on his behalf. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* These have further orders to expostulate with men in the most tender manner, and even to beseech them, in their Lord's stead, to be reconciled to God!—But man treats it all with contempt or neglect, and replies, 'no; there is no hope: I have loved strangers, and after them I will go! Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways!'

Jehovah, the eternal-Father, girds himself with patience, and condescends to reason also with these rebels concerning his Son the mediator.—He holds forth his infinite excellency and worthiness of being embraced, assuring mankind that however, *they* may disallow of him, he is *chosen of HIM and precious—*vea that he is *altogether lovely!* But man replies, 'I see no form, nor comeliness in him, nor beauty that I should desire him.' God holds up his utility; saying, *Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, -a precious corner stone; he that believeth shall not be confounded.* Man, though he must rest his soul upon something, yet will not chuse, but refuse him for a foundation. The pearl of price must be the stone refused! God asserts his Son's authority, and exhorts men but to consult their own interest; saying, *I have set my king upon my holy hill—be wise now therefore—kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.* Men reply, 'no; we will not have this man to reign over us—who is the Lord, that we should obey him?'—God

presents him as the all-sufficient *remedy*; lifts him up as the only sacrifice for sin, as the brazen serpent on the pole; and says *Look unto him, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth. Behold the Lamb of God!* But men reply, 'no; we will not come unto him that we may have life.'—Finally, God proclaims him as the only, the infallible *teacher* that can guide sinners in the way of peace, *This is my beloved Son: HEAR HIM! Hear and your souls shall live!* Adding, with holy indignation in his countenance, *whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him!* But men still reply, 'no; as for the word that he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto him.—Let him charm, we will give no ear; let him call, we will give no answer. Who is the Lord that we should obey him? We know not the Lord neither will we obey his voice!'

Ah! now what must be done? Will Jehovah relinquish his authority, or give up the objects of his sovereign and eternal love? Shall the blessed Redeemer be deprived of the travail of his soul? Shall his honour be degraded, and hell triumph at heaven's disappointment?—No!—Now will I arise saith God! I will not ask their leave! *I WILL have mercy on whom I will have mercy! I WILL put my law in their hearts, and write it in their inward parts—and I WILL be their God, and THEY SHALL be my people! Their lofty looks SHALL be brought down, and their haughty hearts abased! They SHALL be willing* saith he to his Son *in the day of thy power!* Yes, saith Christ, *All that the Father hath given to me SHALL come to me!* This, O this, is GRACE indeed! Well did the apostle call that GREAT LOVE that quickened us when we were dead in trespasses and sins! Well might he represent God as RICH IN MERCY in so doing! Yea, well might he add in a parenthesis, as express-

ing the utmost effusion of his soul BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED.*

Now since that representation of things that most magnifies the *grace of God*, bids fair, in the opinion of both sides who have engaged in this debate, for being the truth, this also seems a presumptive argument in favour of the foregoing principles.

Should it be objected that the former part of this representation describes God as *tantalizing* or *mocking* his fallen creatures, holding out a mediator to them, when he knows before hand what will be the issue, nay, that they cannot embrace him, unless he give them an heart so to do.—It is replied,

First, If this *cannot* be nothing else but a *will not*, or such an inability as lies in the depravity of the heart; then there is no more mockery in so doing, than if a prince should proclaim in the presence of a number of rebels, that he will forgive all such of them as will humble themselves before him, and ask his pardon; though he knows there are many amongst them so proud and obstinate that they *cannot* find in their hearts to comply.

Secondly, If *God* knows they cannot return to him, they do not seem sensibly to know it *themselves*. Men in general think they are much better than they are. It is common for them to blame *Adam* for their misery, and to think they are *hardly* dealt with—that God takes advantage of his being stronger than they, and so in a manner imposes *silence* upon them. But that if they were but *fairly* dealt with, they should return, and be well enough off in the end. Hence, in order to mani-

* Eph. ii. 4, 5, 8.

fest what they are, ' God determined actually to try
' them, and has been trying them in various periods of
' time, and in a variety of circumstances, ever since
' the fall of man: not in any hope they will return of
' themselves, but to manifest the contrary—well
' knowing the issue would be such as to confirm the
' doctrine of grace, evidence the depravity and moral
' inability of man, glorifying God's justice in the 'con-
' demnation of reprieved, but ungrateful rebels; and
' evince THE SOVEREIGN FREEDNESS OF HIS GRACE
' IN THE SALVATION OF HIS ELECT. God tries the
' heathen world, not in hope they will find him with-
' out a revelation; but to show the need of it: tries
' sinners under the gospel, not in hope they will con-
' vert without special grace; but to show how their
' bad hearts will be sure to refuse his salvation, unless
' made willing by efficacious grace. All tends to show
' his justice in punishing, and his right to act
' sovereignly in shewing mercy.†

' It is God's command,' says Dr. GOODWIN, 'that
' we should believe, and lay hold upon Jesus Christ,
' and cast ourselves upon him for salvation; therefore
' it is our duty, and we are to labour to attain this,
' and to labour after it in truth, and in the spiritualness
' of it not so much to show what we are able to do, but
' what we ought to do, and what our duty is to do.—
' God requires men's endeavours to this very purpose,
' that men may see their inability, which is a great
' lesson that furthers faith. Nature will, and doth
' think it can believe and repent till it makes a trial,
' and as we used to put conceited persons upon
' services to show them their folly, and their weakness
' upon trial, so God deals with us.†

† See a Sermon, (from whence this passage is taken,) by Mr.
RYLAND, jun. entitled *God's experiment of probation of intelli-*
gent agents, page 18. † Works, vol. IV. book IV.

Thirdly, It might, with equal propriety, be objected to the conduct of *Moses to Sihon*, king of the Amorites, that he only *taunted* and *mocked* him when he sent a message of peace to him,* purposing to pass through his land in quietness; seeing it was predetermined of God that the Amorites at this time should be destroyed, their sin being now ripe. And the same might be said of all the messages that were sent to *Pharaoh*, seeing God had devoted him to destruction. From these instances, it is evident that even a *proposal of peace* is not at all inconsistent with a predetermination to destruction; nor was there any thing of the nature of *mockery* in either of the above cases; because they were under no other than a *moral* inability to have complied, and the determination was founded on a foresight of their wicked conduct, of which their non-compliance with these messages of peace was no inconsiderable part.

Fourthly, *Then there is free and full encouragement for any poor sinner to come off from all his self-confidence, and venture his soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.*—If faith in Christ is to be considered not as a duty incumbent upon all; but merely as a privilege, to which none have any right but those who are regenerate, then no one can lawfully and warrantably venture his soul upon Christ until he can first prove himself to be regenerated. Though it be granted, that in order of nature he is regenerated before he believes, yet that is not sufficient; that is only granting that he must have a good disposition before he can do a good action: but in order to render such an act warrantable he must not only be regenerate prior to believing, but must know himself to be such; otherwise his venture upon Christ may be, for

* Deut. ii. 26, 30.

aught he knows, yea, it certainly must be, an act of *presumption*; seeing he does what he does not know at the same time to be his duty, nor that he hath any *warrant* for so doing. But to set a poor sinner this task, is to put him upon a natural impossibility. It is putting him to prove himself possessed of gracious principles before those principles have ever discovered themselves by gracious acts, than which it would not be more absurd and impossible for a man to prove himself the subject of an honest principle before he has ever so much as *purposed* or *desired* to act in an honest way. This is to require *inherent qualifications*, in order to warrant our coming to Christ, than which nothing can be more discouraging and perplexing to a poor distressed sinner.

Never a true Christian yet made his first application to Christ, viewing himself as a regenerate saint, but as a vile, wicked sinner. Such a one knows nothing, and perhaps thinks nothing about his being the subject of gracious principles; or if he does think about it, he cannot perceive it. It must follow, then, upon this hypothesis, that every believer in the world, in his first application to Christ, and venture upon him, commits an act of *presumption*; seeing he does that which, at the same time, he does not *know* to be his duty, or *perceive* himself to have any warrant for. But if, on the other hand, it be the duty of every man to believe in Christ, then every man hath a warrant, I do not say to hope for salvation *without* a renunciation of sin and self; but renouncing these, so to trust in him for the salvation of his soul.*

Fifth, and lastly, *Then calls, warnings, invitations, expostulations, threatenings, and exhortations, even to*

* See, on this subject, Mr. R. Hall's *Help to Zion's Travellers*, pages 116—119.

the unregenerate, are perfectly consistent. If we could not entirely reconcile such addresses with the doctrines of free grace; yet, seeing they were so constantly used by Christ and his apostles, and so often blessed to the salvation of souls, we might very well reckon ourselves warranted in the use of them. But if we can obtain satisfactory ideas on these subjects, they are certainly well worth our attention.

It is not intended here to vindicate all the language that has been addressed to unconverted sinners, nor all the principles of those whose practice it has been to address them. Doubtless there have been extremes in these as in all other things, and many who have used them may have been very wide of the truth as to sentiments on other subjects; but a sober use of such means is, nevertheless, to be retained.

When we address sinners in the general, perhaps some regard ought to be paid to the *order* of things. Though it be the duty of every man to be perfectly holy, yet it would be very strange for any one of us thus to address another, 'be perfectly holy, now, this moment.' The order of things rather requires that we endeavour to convict him of his unholiness, and of its evil nature; before we exhort him to the contrary; and then, when we do exhort him to perfect holiness, it should be by directing him to those means which tend towards perfection. Were I to address a company of unconverted sinners, as I might suppose them to be, I should think it my duty first to labour to convince them of the evil of their sin; with the awfulness and equity of their condemnation—then to point them to the saviour, and exhort them to cast their souls at his feet for mercy—to pray to God for an interest in his salvation—to go like the four lepers to the Syrian camp, 'If he save us alive we shall live; and if he kill us, we can but die.'

In many *special* addresses, regard should be had to *times* and circumstances, which often determine their propriety, and add thereto a peculiar energy.—A funeral is a season in which people in general, and relations in particular, ought to be warned of their eternal concerns, and exhorted to consider of their latter end.—If we have been *eye-witnesses* to any particular wickedness, we then have a double advantage in calling the authors thereof to repentance. It was with special propriety that Peter addressed his audience, to whose sin, in crucifying Christ, he had been an eye-witness,—after having painted it in its own colours, saying, *Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.**—So, also, if we see men *pursuing carnal things*, then is it a proper time to check them, and exhort them to the pursuit of spiritual things. That was a word spoken in due season which our Lord addressed to them that followed him for loaves, *Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.†*—So, when *opportunities are enjoyed that are hastening away*, it is a proper occasion to address sinners in an awakening manner, to embrace the present moment. Thus our Lord addressed the unbelieving Jews, *While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.‡* Once more, if we see men inclining to *vain curiosity*, rather than solid wisdom, it is proper to check that disposition, and exhort them to attend to things that respect their soul's eternal welfare. Thus Christ addressed himself to such a vain, curious enquirer, who asked him, saying, *Lord, are there few that shall be saved?* Jesus replied, not by gratifying his curiosity, but by referring him to what more immediately concerned him. *Strive*, says he, *to enter in at the strait gate!* q. d. 'Let there be many or few that shall be saved, be it your

* Acts iii. 19.

† John vi. 27.

‡ John xii. 36.

concern to be saved for *one!*†—These are means that ought to be used; and that frequently, both in and out of the pulpit. We have the Lord's example, together with the apostles'; and while we follow these, we cannot err. I write not these things with a view to dictate to any of my brethren, of whom I had rather learn; but barely in vindication of myself.

The ministers of the gospel, upon these principles, may be said to have their work *plain before them*; but if coming to Christ be merely a privilege, to which none have a right but the regenerate, then, unless they knew men's hearts by some other method than by their fruits, their work of directing souls must be exceedingly perplexing. It has been often said of several of the apostolic addresses, such as that of Peter in the second chapter of the Acts, and of Paul to the Jailer, that they were addressed to *sensible* sinners; and that when we see persons under concern about their eternal state, like them we may then venture to exhort them to repentance and faith in Christ. To this it might be replied, this was not *always* the case. We have no evidence that those were sensible sinners whom Peter addressed in the third chapter of the Acts, nor many of those to whom our Lord addressed his exhortations before cited. But waving this, it is allowed that the apparent concern of mind in those persons afforded great *encouragement* to Peter and Paul, in their addresses; but if that were the *ground* on which the propriety of their exhortations rested, and they went upon the principles here opposed; then it must be supposed they had a solid foundation to believe these persons had a good work begun before they addressed them; and those who thus, as they suppose, follow their example, ought to have the same foundation for such a conclusion, before they make any such

† Luke xiii. 24.

addresses. But is a person's barely appearing under concern, while we are preaching to him, a sufficient warrant for us to conclude that a good work of grace is begun in him? Surely no one will pretend to that! It is easy to see that if we are to stay till we have evidence of that, before we exhort them to repentance and faith, we must stay till they have repented and believed, and given some good *proof*, too, that their repentance and faith are genuine, for till then we have no warrant to conclude any man regenerated; and so our directions will always come too late.

Many a worthy minister, whose principles have been unfriendly to addressing sinners, has felt himself sadly perplexed with his shackles in the presence of a numerous auditory. Sometimes, the generous feelings of his soul have been cruelly suppressed through fear of falling into inconsistencies; at other times, however, the goodness of his heart has prevailed against the badness of his system; he has forgot his creed, burst his bonds, and (O, unpardonable crime!) addressed himself to the consciences of his carnal auditors. For this, some of his critical hearers have censured him, as legal and inconsistent; but God hath blessed it to the salvation of souls!

Perhaps a great number of prejudices have arisen against this practice, from a becoming jealousy, shall I call it, for the doctrines of free and all-sufficient grace. Great and precious, no doubt, are these doctrines, and whatever tends to eclipse or obscure their glory, ought to be suspected, if not abandoned. It ought to be confessed, too, that too many of those who have dealt in addresses to unregenerate sinners, have sadly neglected the very spirit and glory of the gospel. In such addresses, perhaps it has been too common, likewise, to go aside from the scriptural intent of them, and to dabble in Arminianism. If, instead of telling

sinners their duty, in order to convince them of sin and so bring them to Christ, we give them a diminutive idea of their own depravity, and bloat them up with a notion of self-sufficiency; then do we deceive the souls of men! So, also, if instead of using exhortations to sinners, merely that we may use the means which God hath appointed, we give them to suppose that any work that is truly good, is, in whole or in part to be effected by or ascribed to themselves, then do we dishonour the Spirit of God! On these accounts, it is likely some worthy persons have taken a dislike to the practice itself of addressing sinners by way of exhortation. Alas, into what endless extremes are we perpetually liable to be transported! The excesses and defects of this sort no more prove addresses in themselves unlawful, than the scandalous wickedness of some daring Antinomians proves it unlawful to preach the doctrines of grace. It has been as common for persons of that character to avow those doctrines, and use them as a cloak to their licentiousness, as for Arminians to abuse exhortations to sinners. Blessed are the people that walk in the narrow way of truth and righteousness!

Whatever has a tendency to build up a sinner upon a covenant of works, ought to be, at all events avoided. Of such a tendency is that preaching that leaves out the great doctrines of the gospel, which point to the only way of a sinner's escape, and introduces, instead of it, a mere system of heathen morality. Of the same tendency, perhaps, is that preaching that merely censures gross enormities, and leaves the corruption of the heart untouched; or which presses men to the performance of good works in a general way, without directing them first to faith in Christ, without which it is impossible to please God. We ought rather to exhort, and so solemnly charge them first to *come off from a covenant of works*, to cease resting on themselves and t

build all their hopes of acceptance with God on the mediator; than to do things which may be done *under that covenant*; and all from selfish principles; or other things, good in themselves, but which cannot be done without this being laid as a foundation. To inveigh against particular sins, and admonish men to external duties, may, on some considerations, be a good work, and productive of great good to society; but for a minister of the gospel to attend *merely* or *mainly* to this, may, on other considerations, prove injurious to the souls of men. Men in general will understand a preacher in his directions as pointing them to what concerns another world, and not merely as teaching them how to behave themselves in this. They will reckon that if they take but the preacher's advice, all must be well with them. To point them, therefore, to an *insufficient* remedy, is, in this case, worse perhaps than to point them to no remedy. Our *main* concern with men as *ministers of the gospel*, does not appear to be to regulate their outward conduct: our *principal business* is rather to strike at the root, to detect wicked principles; to prove, from the badness of their conduct, the vileness of their nature; and endeavour from hence to impress them with a sense of their utter undone condition, and absolute need of Christ. Then, and thus it appears to be our duty to exhort them to come to him as the only door of hope for lost sinners, and rely upon his mediation. If this is but brought about, their outward conduct, to the good of society, will be reformed; and what is of infinitely more account, their souls eternally saved!

If a man were the subject of some dangerous disease, and that disease kept breaking out frequently in different parts of his body; it would be but pitiful conduct in a physician to direct all

his attention to the healing of those eruptions. He ought rather honestly to tell the man that these eruptions are but so many indications of the dangerous disease that reigns within, and that unless that be cured, apply what he will to the repelling of these, he is a lost man. So we should even make use of the sins of men's lives to convince them of the desperate badness of their hearts, and our main attention should be directed to that end.

Since the above was written, I accidentally cast my eyes on a passage in Dr. OWEN, full to the same purpose. Speaking of the *mortification of particular sins*, 'Let men know it is their duty,' says the Doctor, 'but in its proper place; I take not men from mortification, but put them upon conversion. He that shall call a man from mending a hole in the wall of his house, to quench a fire that is consuming the whole building, is not his enemy. Poor soul! it is not thy sore finger, but thy haptic fever that thou art to apply thyself to the consideration of. Thou settest thyself against a particular sin, and dost not consider that thou art nothing but sin.'

'Let me add this,' continues the Doctor, 'to them who are preachers of the word, or intend through the good hand of God that employment. It is their duty to plead with men about their sins, to lay loads on particular sins; but always remember that it be done with that which is the proper end of the law and gospel: that is, that they make use of the sin they speak against, to the discovery of the state and condition wherein the sinner is; otherwise haply they may work men to formality and hypocrisy, but little of the true end of preaching the gospel will be brought

‘ about. It will not avail to beat a man off from
 ‘ his drunkenness into a sober formality. A skilful
 ‘ master of the assemblies lays his axe at the root,
 ‘ drives still at the heart. To inveigh against par-
 ‘ ticular sins of ignorant unregenerate persons, such
 ‘ as the land is full of, is a good work: but yet,
 ‘ though it may be done with great efficacy, vi-
 ‘ gour, and success, if this be all the effect of it,
 ‘ that they are set upon the most sedulous endea-
 ‘ vours of mortifying their sins preached down, all
 ‘ that is done is but like the beating of an enemy
 ‘ in an open field and driving him into an impreg-
 ‘ nable castle, not to be prevailed against. Get you
 ‘ at any time a sinner at the advantage, on the
 ‘ account of any one sin whatever; have you any
 ‘ thing to take hold of him by, bring it to his
 ‘ state and condition, drive it up to the head, and there
 ‘ deal with him: to break men of particular sins,
 ‘ and not to break their hearts, is to deprive our-
 ‘ selves of advantages of dealing with them.* To
 all this, I venture to add, by the bye, those persons
 must have very different ideas from these of Dr.
 OWEN, who represent John the Baptist, Christ, and
 his apostles, in all their admonitions to unregenerate
 sinners, as aiming at nothing higher than an out-
 ward reformation.

I have said it is our duty as ministers, *first to endeavour to convince men of their state by nature, and then to exhort them to come to Christ.* I would not be understood by this as if I thought they were not to be exhorted to this till they are *actually so convinced*; it is sufficient to warrant such an exhortation that we first *lay before them* their real state; and *endeavour* to convince them of it. It is true it has been thought by some worthy persons, who

* *Mortification of sin*, ch. vii.

are very far from being enemies to addressing sinners, that nevertheless, positively calling such to come to Christ is unwarrantable. They think they should first preach conviction to them, and endeavour to make them sensible of their vile and lost condition, and then address them in some such manner as this, 'If you perceive yourselves thus vile and lost, then come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will have mercy upon you.' Let this matter be closely considered. It is acknowledged as before said, that we ought first to preach conviction to sinners; and farther, that nothing ought to be held to them, by way of *hope* or *encouragement*, but under the supposition of their being convinced of their vile and lost condition, and returning to God but as the main idea of coming to Christ seems to be an act of submission, this ought to be enforced whether they are sensible or insensible; whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Suppose a person to be making a speech to a company of rebels, who lie at the mercy of an injured but conquering sovereign; he ought first to dwell upon the evil nature of rebellion, and thus endeavour to convince them of the evil of that wherein they have been engaged—to convince them that they actually lie at the discretion of this their abusing prince, and then to conjure them by all the regard that is due to equity and their own welfare, to lay down all arms of hostility, and go and *submit to his mercy*. If the question were, 'may we hope for pardon?' there the answer ought to be yes, *if you submit*: but if the question is, 'ought we to *submit*?' there the answer will admit of no *if's* in the case.

It appears very evident, that a great number of mistakes on the subject of addressing sinners have been owing to people's thinking and speaking of *moral inability* under those terms and representation

which relate to *natural inability*. Publications on this subject, abound in representing the supposed absurdity of calls, commands, and invitations to unregenerate sinners, by the absurdity of calling the blind to look, the deaf to hear, and the dead to rise.*

It is allowed that God in his word, does represent men's ignorance by blindness, their stubbornness by deafness, and their total inactivity for God by a being dead. But these modes of speaking, it must be remembered, are *figurative*; and there is a great difference between natural and moral blindness, deafness, and death, in point of blame-worthiness, and the propriety of admonitions to their subjects. But by these terms being constantly and *inattentively* made use of, people, yea, some preachers are gradually and insensibly led to think that men, deaf to God's calls, and dead in sin, are therein no more blameable than those who are naturally deaf and dead. Hence it is common for them to make use of such comparisons for a state of nature that express merely a pitiable and not a blameable condition.

But those who thus declaim, ought to consider that we suppose there is a real and important difference between natural and moral inability. The former, we maintain, absolutely excuses its subject from obligation or blame, in proportion as it prevails, and renders all admonitions absurd. Those who are literally blind will never be blamed for not reading their bibles, the deaf for not hearing the gospel, nor the dead for not serving the Lord; and it would be ridiculous to urge these things upon them. But thus it is not in respect to the latter; that is voluntary and criminal. So far is it from excusing from

* Farther Enquiry, page 101.

blame, it is the thing itself wherein blame consists; and therefore is far from setting aside reasonings and expostulations, it is the very thing which renders them necessary.

The BLINDNESS of carnal men to spiritual things is constantly represented as a *voluntary criminal blindness*. Men DO NOT LIKE to retain God in their knowledge—are WILLINGLY ignorant—They REFUSE to know me saith the Lord. The language of every one of their hearts is, *Depart from me, for I DESIRE not the knowledge of thy ways.** In these controversies, that passage of the apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. ii. 14. has been frequently brought, it should seem, not merely to prove that the natural man *cannot* receive the things of the Spirit of God, but as well that he *ought not*. That he *cannot* is freely allowed, and amounts to no more than that a man under the dominion of prejudice and the love of sin, *cannot* embrace those things which set themselves to destroy every idol of his heart—cannot do what he ought to do—or as the same apostle elsewhere expresses it, CANNOT PLEASE GOD.† But that he *ought not* is quite another thing; nor does the passage at all countenance any such notion, but the reverse. In the natural man's not receiving the things of the Spirit of God, they appear *foolishness* to him. This proves his blindness to be sinful. Surely a plan devised by infinite wisdom could never appear *foolishness* to any intelligent being who is what he ought to be. If the inability of the natural man to discern the things of the Spirit of God were innocent, it must be of the same kind with that of which every creature is the subject in not comprehending the nature of God. This is an innocent inability. Neither Adam in innocence, nor angels in heaven, were either able or

* Rom. i. 28. 2 Pet. iii. 5. Jer. ix. 6. Job xli. 14.

† Rom. viii. 8.

obliged to know the almighty to perfection. But then, that which surpasseth their capacity, as finite beings, does not appear *foolishness* to them; no! rather they themselves appear as fools in their own eyes—with holy wonder, standing on the brink of this unfathomable ocean, they cry, O THE DEPTH!

Spiritual DEAFNESS is constantly set forth as a thing not only sinful but very wicked. That dulness of hearing, which is represented as the bar to the conversion of some, was a judicial dulness, and consisted in a spirit of abominable aversion to Christ and his gospel. § Men in their being deaf to the joyful sound, are likened to the *deaf adder* that STOPPETH HER EAR, AND WILL NOT HEARKEN to the voice of the charmer, *charm he never so wisely.* †

That men in being spiritually DEAD are criminal, one should think needs no other proof than that though they are *dead*, yet it is IN TRESPASSES AND SINS. || What is it to be *dead* in sin but to be *sinfully* dead? What, but to be utterly void of all desire after God, and heart to act for him? And is there nothing criminal in that? Is it not a part, yea the very essence of human depravity, to be dead to all sense of the holy beauty of God's character; and to all desire after spiritual enjoyments and employments? Is not many a godly parent, to the grief of his soul, forced to read this awful truth in the spirit and conduct of a wicked child? Should such a child attempt to justify himself by saying, 'My father says I am *dead* in vice, lost to every sentiment of generosity, lost to all sense of piety, honour, and virtue; and that I cannot take any pleasure in his ways;—how then can I be to

§ Acts xxviii. 27. † Ps. lviii. 4. 5. || Eph. ii. 1.

blame?' Would it not seem a strange mode of defence?—*Carnal mindedness* constitutes the essence of spiritual *death*;* which, instead of excusing mankind, is the very sin of their nature, and that for which they all stand guilty before God.—Few people, I hope, have the effrontery to say concerning that degree of *deadness*, which remains in good people, that there is no harm in that; or in other words, that we have no reason to reflect upon ourselves for being slothful, and careless about God, and void of a heart to act for him: and if such a spirit is criminal where it only partially prevails, it is strange if its entire prevalence should make it innocent.

From the want of connecting the idea of criminality with that of inability, has risen the chief part of that vast fund of wit, such as it is, which has been exercised in exposing to ridicule the practice of free addresses to unconverted sinners. The conduct of such ministers has frequently been compared to that of a man that should *call to the dead to come forth*; and their speaking of the duty of men, though dead in sin, to love and serve the Lord, has often been laughed at as equally absurd as to talk of motion without life. These things, to people who attend more to the sound of words than the sense of them, may appear very plausible; but strip them of their slender covering, and this motion without life will be found to be only OBLIGATION WITHOUT INCLINATION; and this, if it must be called an absurdity, is such an one as all the world maintain except in matters of religion. To suppose either a partial or a total want of inclination to free any one from obligation, or to render persuasion unnecessary, would in any other case, be reckoned absurdity

* Rom. viii. 6.

with a witness! If men's inability be a criminal one, and consist in nothing else but a voluntary ignorance of, and total aversion to, the nature of God and spiritual things; calls, commands, threatenings, invitations, &c., are so far from being absurdities, that it would be a great absurdity to refuse the use of them; as great as to lay aside the means in order to effect the end! We never think it absurd to say to one whose eyes are full of adultery, and *therefore* cannot cease from sin, 'cease to do evil; learn to do well!' God himself said, '*Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee;*'—yet immediately adds, '*Behold their ear is uncircumcised, and THEY CANNOT HEARKEN: behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach, and THEY HAVE NO DELIGHT IN IT.*'* To this might be added, that the very language which we have so often heard and seen ridiculed as if it were the first-born of absurdities, LOOK YE BLIND, and HEAR YE DEAF, is no other than the language of God himself! Isaiah xlii. 18.

It has been said, it is true, that 'precepts, prohibitions, and promises, agree not with the covenant of grace.† If the meaning be that these are not made use of by God, as the God of grace, in his work upon the souls of men (and unless this be the meaning, it is nothing to the purpose) then surely nothing need be a greater mistake. Inspired, yea new testament preachers, the Lord Jesus himself not excepted, abound with these very means to carnal auditors. Of this it is hoped sufficient proof has been already given. Nor were they merely used, but succeeded to the conversion of many thousands; and that in a short space of time, as in the cases of John the baptist, and the apostle Peter

* Jer. vi. 8, 10.

†Further Enquiry, page 124, 135.

The errand of the former was not barely to reform the manners of the Jewish people, and bring about a national reform, as hath been suggested; but to **TURN THE HEARTS of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just—to make ready a people prepared of the Lord.**†—By preaching repentance and baptism, to bring both old and young, who before had been disobedient, to agree in embracing the Lord Messiah, and submitting to his ordinances. Thus he made ready a people by preparing materials wherewith to erect gospel churches. Now the means which John used were of this kind, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* nor were they without effect—great numbers *were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins!*§—so also in the case of Peter, he called to his carnal audience, *Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out!* and it was followed with great and good effects!‡

Nor hath God left off to work by these means still: I believe it will be found that in almost all the remarkable seasons of conversion that we have ever known or heard of, these are the means, that have been generally used. If we look at the great works which God hath wrought by LUTHER, CALVIN, LATIMER, KNOX, BUNYAN, ELLIOT, EDWARDS, BRAINERD, TENNENT, WHITEFIELD, and numberless others of our reformation champions; we shall find they all went forth in the use of these weapons. Yes, these worthies of later ages, who turned many to righteousness, and whose names will shine in the page of impartial history, like stars in the firmament, for ever; in this faith may be said to have wrought righteousness, quenched the violence of fire, and put to flight the powers of antichristian aliens.

† Luko i. 17. § Matt. iii. 2. Mark v. 1. ‡ Acts iii. 19. iv. 4.

It has been remarked concerning the above addresses of *Peter* and others, that 'in all these admonitions we may observe they respected such sins as the admonishers were witness to, and could distinctly point out;—that they called for practical repentance, such as the people were capable of performing; and that the design was only to bring them to a submissive adherence to the preaching of the gospel.*—That they were witnesses to these sins is allowed, and that this circumstance afforded them a peculiar advantage, has been already granted; but if such addresses to unregenerate sinners be in themselves absurd, it is not our being eye-witnesses to the crimes can render them otherwise. But these exhortations only called for practical repentance, such as the people were capable of performing, and the apostle's design was only to bring them to a submissive adherence to the preaching of the gospel.' Practical repentance, it is allowed, was what they were called to, none else is real; but not practical, in opposition to mental and spiritual, for it was such a repentance and conversion as should be connected with the forgiveness of their sin. And this proves, likewise, that it was not such a repentance as they were capable of performing without the special grace of God. To say that the apostle's design was only to bring them to such a submissive adherence to the preaching of the gospel, as might consist with reigning enmity in their hearts, against it, is to make him preach with a poor low end! Surely he had learned his Lord's commission better than that, which was that they should, not merely reform but convert men—that they should so teach them as to MAKE THEM THE DISCIPLES of Christ, as the words in the commission signify. This was Paul's end in preaching, for he spake unto the

* Mr. Johnson's *Evangelical Truths vindicated*, page 85.

Gentiles THAT THEY MIGHT BE SANED;|| and surely *Peter's* end could be no less than the spiritual and eternal salvation of the souls he preached to! Besides, we are sure that greater ends were actually answered, and by these very means too, than barely to bring them to an outward submission. A GREAT NUMBER OF THEM BELIEVED.† But God would hardly have wrought such a work by means not adapted to it, nor designed for it!

Once more, Such addresses to unconverted sinners have been farther objected to, and that seriously, and with some degree of severity. It has been said, for instance, that 'what good men say sometimes in expostulating with sinners upon this subject, contradicts their own experience. If they duly attend to that, they would never suggest that any considerations whatever are sufficient to excite and encourage corrupt nature to desire holiness, communion with God, and the enjoyment of him. If that is possible, then the flesh may be prevailed upon to cease *lusting against the spirit*, and to unite with it in its spiritual actings. But alas! the coldness, formality, and wanderings of mind in prayer to God, even in the best, are a sad evidence of the mistake of all such suggestions. If good men were more cautious to express themselves agreeably to what they discern in themselves, we should have fewer of such kind of addresses to sinners than we have, through a want of that caution.—If the carnal mind may be wrought up hereunto by any sort of motives and considerations, I am sure it will be impossible to distinguish between regeneracy and unregeneracy. It is no more possible, by any means whatever, to cause the flesh to choose, adhere unto, and delight in God, than it is to draw the spirit into

'hostile acts against him. The reason is clear; 'no principle of operation can ever be prevailed 'with to act contrary to its nature; and, therefore no unsanctified heart will ever pray to God 'for grace and holiness. This is men's *dreadful* 'sin, and justly exposes them unto *direful* vengeance.'§

To this it might be replied—

1. If *not* praying for grace and holiness be men's *dreadful sin*, then sure it is their *duty* to pray for them, and it is our duty, having endeavoured to convince them of the *necessity* of grace and holiness, and of the *dreadfulness* of their sin in neglecting to pray to God for them, to exhort them so to do.

2. It is allowed that the *flesh* will never be prevailed upon to choose, adhere unto, and delight in God; nor do we ever expect it will. Nay, it might have been added, omnipotence itself cannot make it. It is also allowed that no 'unsanctified heart will ever pray to God for grace and holiness,' while under the entire prevalence of carnality: but then we suppose that while we do our work of addressing the consciences of men, and pointing out to them what they ought to be and do, God may, by that, do his work of convincing them of sin, and so in the end bring them to a compliance.

If a person's being absolutely void of a principle or disposition to any thing, be a good reason why he should never be exhorted to do that thing; then it is absurd to say to an arrant rogue 'be honest, and do justly;' or to a malicious rebel, 'go, humble yourself, and submit to your prince.' Such persons have no *principle* inclining or enabling them to do such things;

and unless they have, they will never do them in reality! It is as impossible for a principle of dishonesty to be induced by any sort of motives to love justice, or for a principle of malicious rebellion to love loyalty, as it is for a principle of carnality to be persuaded to act spiritually. The reason is clear, as we have seen, 'no principle of operation can ever be prevailed with to act contrary to its nature.' What then? If the *principle* cannot be persuaded, the *person* may, if God set in with it, and be brought to be of another principle or disposition of mind. And, seeing Christ and his apostles appear to have used these means in their addresses to their carnal auditors, who we cannot suppose made use of such means as were not adapted to answer the end designed; it becomes us, surely, instead of raising objections from metaphysical subtilties, to follow their example, lest we be reproved for aiming to be wise above what is written.

Should it be said a *privation* differs from a *negation*: the former is the absence of something which ought not to be absent, such are *honesty* and *loyalty*; the latter is the mere absence of something which there is no obligation, or reason why it should be present; of this kind are *spiritual dispositions*.—It is replied, this is tacitly allowing that the objection would have no force but upon the supposition of that being true which is a point in dispute; but this is begging the question. Indeed, this matter has been too often already taken for granted when it ought to have been proved; and will be found, it is probable, to be much sooner said than proved. It is very common for those who thus object, to speak of the state of men by nature as being DEAD TO SPIRITUAL THINGS; but death is a *privative*, and not a mere *negative* idea. Besides, how can it be men's 'dreadful sin, and what justly exposes them to 'direful vengeance, not to pray to God for grace and

'holiness,' if a disposition so to pray be not their duty, and the want of it only a *negation*? Surely, it is not so *dreadful* a sin to be destitute of that which they are under no obligation to have!

3. If the inability of unregenerate sinners to comply with calls to spiritual things prove that they ought not to be expostulated with at all, then, for the same reason, good men ought not to be expostulated with; or at most but a *very little*, since 'the best are subject to abundance of *coldness*, *formality*, and *wanderings of mind*,' that is, abundance of inability to things spiritually good. If a *total* inability make it necessary to lay expostulations totally aside, then a *partial* inability will prove that they ought to be laid, in part, aside. And so in proportion as we see *coldness* and *formality* prevail in a christian, we are to cease exhorting and expostulating with him!

'The misrepresentation,' says a judicious writer of the present age, 'principally arises from there being no distinction made betwixt a *natural* and a *moral* inability to do the will of God. A distinction of more consequence to the right understanding of the divine dispensations towards fallen man, than many seem to be aware of. Were the inability of man to do the will of God a *natural* inability, or the same kind of inability a man has to walk when he has a broken leg, or to attend to business when he is delirious in a fever; nothing can be conceived of more absurd, or more cruel, than it would be to call upon him to do the will of God, and to threaten him with punishment if he did not. Nor doth it appear that in this case any *end* could be answered by such calls and threatenings, any more than as though they were addressed to a *stock* or a *stone*. But if the inability of man be only a *moral* inability, an inability

‘ of the *will*, a *criminal*, and a punishable inability,
 ‘ then what can be more properly and suitably ad-
 ‘ dressed to him than the calls and invitations, the
 ‘ promises and the threatenings of the word of God?
 ‘ These are means which every one knows are, in
 ‘ their own nature, adapted to remove a moral *indis-*
 ‘ *position* of the mind, just as much as the prescrip-
 ‘ tions of a physician, or the operations of a surgeon,
 ‘ are suited to remove any natural disorder of the
 ‘ body.——

‘ No divine, I believe, ever meant to say that man
 ‘ is *locked up in a house*,* and fast bound there, so that
 ‘ he cannot come out, *if he would*: but rather, that he
 ‘ is so attached to the house (to keep to the simile),
 ‘ and so fond of his companions there, that there is no
 ‘ *moral possibility* of *persuading* him to come out, even
 ‘ though you tell him that immediate destruction hangs
 ‘ over him. Or, to drop the simile, that he is so
 ‘ *alienated* from the life of God, so *averse* to that which
 ‘ is spiritual and holy, so *infatuated* by sin, that he *will*
 ‘ *not* come to Christ that he might have life. That he
 ‘ is, in short, *spiritually dead*, dead to divine things,
 ‘ dead in trespasses and sins, and that no one but
 ‘ God himself can effectually persuade him to escape
 ‘ for his life.

‘ But there is all this while no *natural inability* in
 ‘ man to do the will of God: he has all the members of
 ‘ the body at his command, and all the faculties of the
 ‘ soul. The grand defect is in the *will*. What he
 ‘ wants is a *heart* or *disposition* to do the will of God.
 ‘ And it is, therefore, with the utmost propriety that
 ‘ sinners are exhorted to beg of God to create in them

* This was a *simile*, that the author's opponent made use of, in order to ridicule the Calvinistic system. It had been well, if no Calvinists had ever given any occasion for it.

‘a clean heart, and to renew in them a right spirit. And till they have this, it is as impossible, in a moral sense, that they should do the will of God, as though they laboured under a natural incapacity of doing it. But yet, reasonings, expostulations, promises, and threatenings, it is very evident, are highly proper in the one case, though they would be absurd and cruel in the other.’*

As this distinction of *natural* and *moral ability* and *inability* is of great importance in this as well as other controversies, a few additional observations on this subject shall conclude the whole.

By *natural ability* is meant ‘THE ENJOYMENT OF RATIONAL FACULTIES, BODILY POWERS, AND EXTERNAL ADVANTAGES. Infants and idiots are under a natural incapacity of knowledge; and every one of weak mental powers, though he should be neither infant nor idiot, yet, in proportion to that weakness, is the subject of a natural inability. The same may be said of a defect of *bodily powers*: to be blind, or deaf, or sick, or lame, is to be naturally unable to see, hear, act, &c. A want of *opportunity*, or *external advantages*, likewise constitutes the same thing. A man, for instance, in the perfect possession of all his faculties, may be cast upon an island where there may be no Bible, nor any of the means of grace, to be obtained. In that case he will be equally under a natural incapacity of reading and hearing God’s word, as if he were blind and deaf. So that part of the heathen world who never heard of the gospel are under a natural inability of believing it.

By a *moral ability* to do good is meant, A DISPOSITION TO USE OUR NATURAL ABILITY TO RIGHT PUR-

* Mr C. Evans’s Address to the serious and candid professors of Christianity, page 11—13.

POSES. It consists in *a heart* to know God, *a heart* to love him, and *a heart* to devote all the powers of our souls and members of our bodies to be instruments of righteousness to serve him, and *a heart* to improve every opportunity that offers to glorify his name. Every wicked man is destitute of this, and so is under the dominion of a moral inability. He hath no heart to know God, to love him, or to serve him; no heart to devote his body, soul, or opportunities, to his glory.

Natural ability may, in the style of scripture, be called *the power of the hand*,† and *moral ability*, *the power of the heart*. The former is not of itself sufficient for the performance of good. If a man have ever so much power of this sort to do good, yet if he have no disposition that way, it is to no purpose. Many a rich man has it *in the power of his hand* to do great good to the poor; but not having it *in the power of his heart*, the poor are never the better. So many a one enjoys great religious opportunities and advantages; but being under the dominion of a wicked careless disposition, they are of no use to him. He hath *a price in his hand to get wisdom*, it is true; but it is *a price in the hand of a fool*, seeing *he hath NO HEART TO IT*.* Hence arises the necessity of the Spirit's work *upon the heart*; and that upon men of the greatest *natural powers*, as well as upon those of the smallest; these, notwithstanding their great parts and powers, being as far off from a right spirit, and frequently farther than the other. Hence also the work of the Spirit is represented by putting God's law into men's *hearts*, and writing it in their *inward parts*—by giving them *a new heart*—*a new spirit*—*a right spirit*—*a heart of flesh*—*a heart to know God*, &c †

† Prov. iii. 27.

* Prov. xvii. 16.

† Jer. xxxi. 33. Ez. xxxvi. 26. Ps. li. 10. Jer. xxiv. 7

Natural inability, so far as it prevails, excuses from all obligation and blame. It may be, and often is an effect of sin; but it is not sin itself. Though it is an effect of sin for a man to be blind, and may be the effect of *some particular sin* of which he has been guilty; yet it is not *sin itself*; nor is it that of which any man can be made to repent. He may repent of that which brought it upon him, but cannot repent of the thing itself. In respect to things morally good, whatever a person would do, but cannot, on account of some natural impediment, nobody thinks him to blame for that; even the judge of all the earth will acquit him, and in such a case accept the will for the deed.— But moral inability is so far from excusing men from blame, that it is the thing itself wherein blame consists. Whatever good thing a person could do, as not being hindered by any natural impediment, but will not; or, as we sometimes express it, cannot find in his heart to do it, that is what all the world agree in saying he ought to have done, and is to blame for the contrary. No man in the world, in his right senses, ever thought of excusing another in an unreasonable hatred *towards him*, merely because his propensities that way were so strong that he could not overcome them. And why should we think of excusing ourselves in our unreasonable and abominable enmity to God? If the testimony of an inspired apostle may be taken, it is because our minds are by nature wholly *carnal*, and *enmity against God*, that while we are in the flesh we cannot please God. §

It is of great importance that we consider our inability to good as being *sin itself*, and not barely a consequence of sin. Great numbers of people in the religious world, seem willing to own their inability, and that it is the *effect* of the fall; and so, by laying all the

blame on Adam, sit down very comfortably. They will own they are poor fallen creatures, and can do nothing, and thus content themselves without considering that their very inability is their sin; or it may be, are convinced of a few of their actual sins, but forget this, which is the source of all, the very **SIN OF THEIR NATURE**. Thus, that which ought to be matter of humiliation and self-abhorrence, becomes matter of excuse; and instead of furnishing grounds for conviction, proves a shield against it.

If the foregoing observations be true, then it is not a natural and moral inability that mankind are under to *do the will of God*. Strictly speaking, it is impossible for any one to be under a natural inability to please God; for no sooner does a person become naturally unable to perform any thing, but that thing ceases to be his duty. It is a moral inability, therefore, that we are under in respect to keeping the whole Law of God, which is our duty. And hence this is represented as the main grief and burden of the godly, for the removal of which their most earnest prayers have ascended to heaven in all ages.

This subject seems fully to be taught us in that summary which our Lord gives us of the moral law; *That thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength; and thy neighbour as thyself*. Now, when he commands us to love him with **ALL OUR HEART**, and with **ALL OUR STRENGTH**, he must have some meaning in those terms; and it should seem a meaning of considerable importance, seeing the *measure of our strength* is set down as *the rule of our obligation*. If *heart* and *strength* are here to be taken in the same sense, as when we read of our being *without heart* and *without strength*, then the meaning is, 'You shall love God with all the *heart* you have to love him, and with all the *strength* of disposition of which you

are possessed.' This is the same as saying, you shall love the Lord your God just as much as you please, and no more! In this case, there can be no such thing as sin in the world; for what is usually called sin all originates in the want of love to God, or the want of a heart to love him; but if we are commanded to love him only in proportion to the *heart we have to love him*, and the *strength of inclination* which we possess; then, those who have no heart to love God, as devils and wicked men, are perfectly innocent. If this be the meaning of the law, they fulfil it as much as the holiest angel in heaven; for they love him with *all the heart they have to love him*, and with all the *strength of inclination of which they are possessed*, though that happens to be none at all.

Does not common sense, as well as common honesty, here require the distinction of *natural and moral strength or ability*? Do they not unite to determine that *heart and strength* are here to be understood of the former and not of the latter? If by *strength* here we understand all the natural powers of our souls, members of our bodies, and opportunities that are put into our hands, then the difficulty is removed, the meaning is plain, and the passage proves natural strength to be the measure of obligation. The purport of it appears to be this: 'You have a soul, consisting of wonderful powers, and a body fearfully and wonderfully made, consisting of many active members, with many opportunities wherein you will have occasion to call them forth to exercise—let them all be devoted to the glory of God. Particularly, you have the powers of *perception* and *understanding*; let them be wholly employed in contemplating his character, or in what shall subserve his glory. You have the powers of *choice*; choose what he chooses, and refuse what he forbids—let your will be lost in his. You are the subject of *delight*—let it regale itself in his excellence; of *desire*, let it centre in him

as your portion; of *joy*, let it always be employed in his praise; of *sorrow*, let it open its flood-gates for offending him; of *zeal*, let it burn always in his service; of *hatred* and *revenge*, let them spend their shafts against that which is inimical to his honour. Never sacrifice any of your *senses* or *members* to iniquitous purposes, but devote them all to God. Squander away none of your precious *time*, but grasp at every opportunity to promote his glory.' When the pious psalmist called upon his *soul*, and ALL THAT WAS WITHIN HIM, to *bless and praise God's holy name*,* he discovered this law to be written upon his heart.

It does not at all tend to cry up human nature to say men have *natural power*, or are possessed of all the faculties necessary to love God and keep his whole law, *if their hearts were but rightly disposed*. It is not at all to be ascribed to the goodness of men that their natural powers are not lost by sin, any more than it is to be ascribed to the goodness of the devil, and of damned souls, that they have consciences, and other natural powers awake, even in hell itself. Mere natural power has no virtue in it, and so nothing praiseworthy; otherwise the devil would be very virtuous. Nor is it sufficient of itself to lead us to God, or to do any good thing, as before observed. The whole end, therefore, for which it is continued in intelligent beings, and for which we plead for it, is not in the least to set aside the necessity of the Spirit of God to enable us to do every good thing; but merely to continue them rational and accountable beings, subject to the divine law and government.

Some have treated this distinction as a new invention, but that only proves their own want of reading; others affect to treat it as a distinction without a difference, or as what amounts to nothing; alleging that if men

* Ps. ciii. 1.

are unable, they are, and it does not signify what kind of inability it is—that if their prejudices and propensities to evil are invincible they are excusable.—But if so, then it should seem God's government resembles what is sometimes said of some other governments, its burden is all thrown upon the middle sort of people. Those that are wholly good, such as holy angels, they can have nothing laid to their charge, they are blameless; and those that are wholly bad, such as devils and the worst of men, they can have nothing laid to their charge, for their prejudices and propensities to evil are invincible, they are dead in sin; all the blame therefore, must fall upon those that are neither wholly good, nor wholly bad. In that case the safest way for these people to get rid of their load too, is, if they cannot make themselves as good as angels, to make themselves as bad as devils.

But seriously, was the inability of *Joseph's* brethren, who *COULD NOT speak peaceably to him*, no more blameworthy than if they had been literally dumb? Does not common sense make a difference between the inability of a lazy fellow who cannot work because of his invincible propensity to idleness, and one that is unable through a heavy affliction? Or between one that cannot keep from abusing us through an unconquerable spirit of malevolence, and one that does the same thing through being deprived of reason? Our Lord said to the Jews, *How CAN ye BEING EVIL speak good things?* and Paul to the Romans, *They that are in the flesh CANNOT please God*, and Peter speaks of those who have *eyes full of adultery, and CANNOT cease from sin.** Query: were these speeches delivered with a view to excuse these people; or to blame them? The Lord admonished Judah, saying, *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee!* but immediately adds, *To whom shall I speak; and give warning, that they may hear?*

* Matt. xii. 34. Rom. viii. 5. 2 Pet. ii. 14.

Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they CANNOT hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a re-proach, and they have no delight in it. Query: was this inability, spoken of in the latter part of the passage, indeed brought as an excuse for their inattention, or as an aggravation of it? Does the Lord indeed correct himself for having given them warning, allowing it to be inconsistent, seeing he owns they COULD NOT HEARKEN? It is added in the next verse, *Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord*—what, full of the fury of the Lord on account of an innocent defect?†

For want of knowing better, some people have suspected this distinction to be friendly to Arminianism, a sort of fragment, as they suppose, of the old idol *free will*; whereas nothing is better calculated to destroy that system. It is abundantly improved for this purpose by President EDWARDS, In his “*Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will.*” A book which has been justly said to go farther towards settling the main points in controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians, than any thing that has been wrote: and which the late Mr. TOPLADY highly recommends to all who wish to see the Arminian sophistry totally unravelled and defeated.§ I may observe concerning this distinction, as Dr. Gill concerning the kindred distinction between the natural and moral freedom of the will, that it is of great service in this controversy,* and

† See Jer. vi. 8—10. § Toplady on Necessity, page 147, 148.

* The distinction between the *natural and moral* liberty of the will,” says Dr. GILL, “is OF GREAT SERVICE IN THIS (the Arminian) CONTROVERSY, though these two are artfully confounded together, and because the one is denied by us, it is concluded that the other is also; whereas we affirm, that the *natural* liberty of the will is essential to it, and always abides with it in every action, and in every state of life. A wicked man in the highest degree of servitude to sin, his will acts as freely in this state of bondage as Adam’s will did in obedience to God in a state of innocence; but the *moral* liberty of the will is not essential to it.

cannot but conclude that were it more generally and thoroughly understood it would prove fatal to Arminian and Pélagian principles.

It has been said, by way of objection, that we place the inability of man wholly in the *will*, whereas it ought to be extended to the understanding and affections, these being equally depraved as the other—or words to that effect. To this we reply,

1. If by placing the inability in the will, we are understood as excluding the other powers of the soul, we are misunderstood. We do not suppose men's inability to lie in their will in distinction from their understanding and affections; but in distinction from the want of natural powers. We mean to include, under the terms moral inability, all sinful blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and irregularity of the passions, as well as slothfulness, and rebellion in the will. In a word, all that depravity that diffuses itself throughout, and infects the whole soul, let it be in what power it may, that is it which we suppose constitutes man's inability to do the will of God.

2. If we have used the term *will*, and *inability of will* oftener than other terms, it is partly because the will is a leading power of the soul, and so we use a part for the whole;—and partly because whatever other powers are infected by sin, all is voluntary. If men's inability lies partly in blindness of mind, as we readily grant, still that blindness is voluntary; for *they refuse to know me saith the Lord*, and are *willingly ignorant*. So far, indeed, as ignorance may arise from a want of the means of knowledge, or natural ability to use them, so far we allow it is innocent; but that is not the case

though it adds to the glory and excellency of it; and therefore may, and may not be with it, without any violation to, or destruction of the *natural liberty* of the will.—Cause of Truth, p. 1. No. 5.

with the far greater part of that which prevails throughout the world. If it lies partly in their affections, those affections, are all voluntary, for we do not exercise love, hatred, joy, sorrow, anger, zeal, desire, revenge, or any other passion, against, but in concurrence with, our will.

The point then in question is, whether any man be the subject of any other inability to do the will of God than what lies in the depraved state of his soul, and whether, if he were so willing as he ought to be, and all his whole soul rightly disposed, he would feel any remaining inability to any thing spiritually good.

Once more, The apostle *Paul's* declaration has been thought to afford a strong argument against our manner of speaking, where he says, *When I would do good, evil is present with me—and again, To will is present; but how to perform that which is good, I find not.** By this it should seem as though his inability to that which is good did not lie in the want of a will, but in the want of power; not in the depravity of his heart, but in something distinct from it. To this it is replied

1. The best of men are sanctified but in *part*. Their understanding, will, and affections, are not *wholly* on the Lord's side: so far from it, that perhaps there is a great deal more ignorance than discernment in the most enlightened mind, more sloth and contrariety than fervour and conformity in the most holy will, and more carnality than spirituality in the most sanctified affections. Now if all our powers be sanctified but in part, then it cannot be said of us at any time that we are perfectly willing to be what we ought to be. Perfection is the object willed, or rather desired, by every real christian; but we never desire that object to a perfect degree. Nevertheless, considering the soul as speak-

* Rom. vii. 18—21.

ing according to that degree of sanctity which it does possess, or as the apostle elsewhere expresses it, *as after the inner man*, it is natural to speak in some such manner as this, *To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not*—as if he should say, ‘I feel a desire in a certain degree to be perfectly holy; but that degree is so small, compared with the remaining degrees of opposing carnality, that how to accomplish my desires I find not.’ There is no necessity for supposing that the apostle felt any other inability than what consisted in remaining blindness of mind, slothfulness and rebellion of will, and carnality of heart. These afforded opposition enough to render it impossible for him to be what, as sanctified, he longed to be though that impossibility was wholly of a moral, and therefore of a sinful nature.

2. We often find a willingness, and even resolution to do many things, but before those things can be put in execution, our resolutions fail, and so come to nothing. There are a thousand cases in a christian’s life wherein he feels determined to do otherwise than perhaps he has done heretofore; but alas, how common is it for these determinations to flag and fade and die ere they have long been put in practice! Hence we need God’s Spirit to work in us not only to will, but to do of his good pleasure: that is, we need him not only to enable us to form holy resolutions, but to keep up those resolutions till they are put in execution. It is impossible to suppose one of Paul’s character destitute of such resolutions. Greatness and goodness of heart were in him united. He had a heart that glowed with love to Christ, to holiness, and to the souls of men; a heart that was habitually devising new plans, and compassing great objects. It is natural to suppose when in his closet, pressed with the importance of things, his soul often felt determined to be more diligent and earnest in his work than ever he had been before, and to press towards the mark of personal

and perfect purity with redoubled ardour. Thus *to will was present*; but when he went forth to put these resolutions into execution, alas, *how to perform he found not!* He felt a body of sin like a heavy clog upon his spirit, baffling his purposes, damping his zeal, and causing him to go softly in the bitterness of his soul!

This accounts for the complaint of the apostle, without supposing any other inability than the evil propensity of his heart to spiritual declension. The purport of his language appears to be this, 'I feel at this hour, for instance, a determination to be more watchful, diligent, and constant; but alas, such is the evil propensity of my heart, ere this is performed for any considerable time, my resolutions will flag, and if not upheld by almighty grace, I shall sink into a spirit of wretched indifference.'

If it had been any other than a moral and a sinful inability, Paul would not have exclaimed against it in such bitter lamentation as he did at the close of the same chapter. *O, wretched man, that I am, saith he, who shall deliver me from THE BODY OF THIS DEATH!* To a holy mind a body of sin was a body of death, yea worse than death itself; seeing he longed for that in order to be freed from this. And what was this body of death, but his remaining blindness of mind, sluggishness and perverseness of will, carnality of affections, and hardness of heart? These hindered him in the pursuit of those things which, as sanctified, he longed to accomplish, and not any supposed want of natural power.

And now may the Holy Spirit of God lead both the writer and reader into all truth; and hasten the happy period when truth and righteousness shall reign in the earth.

FINIS.

