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THE
GOSPEL PLAN,
OR
A SYSTEMATICAL TREATISE
ON
The Leading Doctrines of Salvation.

INTENDED
TO ENCOURAGE SINNERS TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST, AND TO DIRECT
BELIEVERS HOW TO OBTAIN THE COMFORTS OF THE GOSPEL
AND TO MAKE PROGRESS IN A LIFE OF RELIGION.

“ For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not
be ashamed.” Rom. x. 11.

“ Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Col. i. 27.

BY WILLIAM C. DAVIS.

“ Perscrutare scripturas, et veritatem invenies.”

PRINTED FOR HOPKINS AND EARLE, PHILADELPHIA;
AND FARRAND, MALLORY AND CO. BOSTON

Fry and Kammerer, Printers.

1809.

District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

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D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the District of Pennsylvania

PREFACE.

I HAVE been frequently solicited to publish my views of the gospel plan of salvation; and have for several years withstood those solicitations. Ministers of the gospel with whom I was acquainted, as well as very many other men of pious character, who were acquainted with my manner of preaching, have urged me to comply with this request. I still declined, for reasons which, perhaps, ought yet to keep me back. I urged, as my excuse for not printing, what I thought were good reasons, viz. I was too young to become an author; my head was not gray; and what was the worst of all, I was afraid that, although I could preach, and I hoped to some advantage, yet my want of popularity, and the want of judgment in the important doctrines of the gospel, rendered it improper to commit my thoughts to the press; at least, until I would arrive to riper years. I thought the world had very good books to read already; and I was sure it had nonsense enough, and an over stock of books which are little here, or there, and no profit, except the price to the author and printer.

But since I left my beloved people in Olney, North-Carolina, the solicitations of some of my sincere friends there, who by my removal were deprived of the opportunity of my ministrations, became more urgent. Also, I now being in my forty-fifth year, my temples are beginning to be pitted with gray hairs; although, alas, I have to lament that my improvement is not equal to my years; and I enjoying a good state of health, and my circum-

stances not to be complained of, I am prevailed upon to write.

God knows the fate of my book. I cannot pretend to recommend it. Every person who will read it, and knows me, will know it to be my own, let it be good or bad. It is really a serious matter to write. When I preach a sermon, however important it is to preach, yet it is breath; the sound strikes upon the ear, and mostly dies away; but writing is ink and paper, and to stand, to do good or harm, perhaps for ages. I have, indeed, given the world my ingenuous views of the doctrines of the gospel. But whether God will accompany my labours with his blessing or not, or in what degree, I cannot tell. But three things comfort me. 1. I have the unspeakable happiness to know that my labours in the gospel have been greatly blessed. Hundreds have witnessed the power of God accompanying the simple truths of the gospel, even delivered by a weak instrument. He who was pleased to make numbers cry for mercy, and enable them to fly to Christ for mercy, and to rejoice in Christ having obtained mercy through my preaching, can also accompany the labours of my pen as well as that of my lips, to the direction and comfort of God's people, and the conversion of sinners. 2. I know I have written many most interesting truths that I have often preached with power and success. I am far from asserting that all I have said is perfectly correct; yet this I must say, that there are hundreds this day rejoicing in God, who have no other grounds for their salvation than some of the precious doctrines which this book has derived from the bible. 3. If I have said or done any thing wrong, it has been not with design to do wrong, but because I thought it right, let me have been ever so much mistaken; and I would rather hope for the best, even in the midst of imperfections, than despair of God's mercy and his blessing. If he should mark our faults, who could stand?

I particularly mention, that the repeated solicitations of the members of the church of Oney are among the special reasons for my publishing this book. I love them, and ever will; for they are my joy and my crown. I therefore earnestly request that they receive this book as particularly dedicated to them by their former pastor out of a real regard for their eternal interest. And I cannot but flatter myself that they will always feel happy in reading, at least, some of those precious truths from under my own hand, which I have so often delivered to them from the pulpit; and which God has blessed to the salvation of so many of their souls.

I also desire that the people of Bullock's Creek church, who have lately invited me, so unanimously, to be their stated pastor, and whose pastor I now am, when they read this book, may feel it as an earnest pledge of my best wishes for their souls' salvation. And while they have the opportunity of hearing me from sabbath to sabbath, they may also have me preaching to them at home as well as in the pulpit; and so by every means they may come to the knowledge of the only way of salvation through a crucified Saviour.

I can by no means omit to mention the church of Nazareth. I remember them yet. There I spent the four first years of my ministry, and was the first stated pastor they ever had. It is true I was young and a mere tyro in divinity; yet I hope, at least towards the close of my continuance there, I taught some of the simple doctrines of the cross of Christ. I desire these people, who still are dear to me as the first fruits of my labours, to consider this book when they read it, as subscribed by the hand of a faithful friend, who wishes them eternal happiness; and who, although absent, can tell them the things that belong to their everlasting peace, and who, perhaps, may speak to them in this book when he is dead.

May I not hope that the judicious part of the world

will look over my imperfections? for doubtless, they will discover many. Surely a man who feels his own imperfections (for there is no one without some) will excuse, or at least be indulgent, while he notes the imperfections of others. Doubtless I will need much indulgence. But I hope the obscurity of my character (I being but little known, except in the little circle of my acquaintance at home) will greatly screen me from danger.

I have something of a satirical turn; my reader, I hope, will excuse me if he finds more of it than he would wish. I always feel it less or more my duty to guard against it; but I find it much more difficult to keep it out of my book than out of the pulpit. I have also used my own natural style; which is very plain, and sometimes, perhaps, too rustic. I found I could do little or nothing unless I stepped and kept in my own shoes. I am a friend to improvement; but there is not much made by attempting to be what we are not.

My reader, perhaps, will find some things new; if so, I hope he will not condemn me before he is pretty sure I am wrong. Upon the whole I commit my book to God and the public, most cordially praying that it may be to the glory of God and the real benefit of my readers. Amen.

WM. C. DAVIS.

June 11, 1806.

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THE GOSPEL PLAN, &c.

BOOK I.

The gospel supposes that we are sinners and teaches us the nature of our sinful state.

CHAPTER I.

Man's sinful state.

THE Gospel, which is glad tidings of salvation to mankind, necessarily supposes them to be in a lost state. What we mean by a lost state is a state of guilt and sin. Guilt renders us liable to punishment, and the punishment to which we are liable is just, because we have transgressed a just and righteous law. In transgressing a righteous law we have done wrong; and the law in justice calls for punishment, in the infliction of which we are made to suffer. Not only so, but in doing wrong we become morally vile. Our hearts are alienated from God and inclined to that which is evil.

Now when any intelligent creature becomes thus guilty and vile, he is properly said to be lost; this is the woful state of every child of Adam. Therefore it follows that the gospel which was designed, and is calculated to deliver from guilt and sin, undoubtedly must teach us to believe that we are in a lost and ruined condition; and we must infer that if we have never been taught our depravity, if we have never been brought to feel our helpless condition in consequence of sin, we have never

had the very first impressions which the gospel is calculated to give, and if so, we cannot have any evidence that we have an interest in Christ. Peter's converts were cut to the heart, before they cried, "Men and brethren what shall we do?"

If there was no sin, there could be no gospel. No one can be saved before he is lost. The conduct of our blessed Saviour, in coming to seek and to save that which is lost, never could be vindicated unless those whom he came to seek were really in a lost state. And when Christ told the pharisees "that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," he evidently declares, that holy persons cannot be subjects of gospel grace; but that in his calls and invitations he only addresses those who have broken God's law, and are consequently in a lost condition.

There are three ways in which the gospel teaches us our sinful state.

1. The things which the gospel offers, not only show us that we are sinners, but also give us a very particular view of the circumstances of that unhappy state.

Pardon of sin is a particular benefit offered in the gospel. This evidently teaches us that we are guilty creatures. And when we consider the unspeakable value of that atonement, which is the ground of our pardon, we are taught the awfully heinous nature of our crimes. "If these things were done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?" If Jesus the Saviour, in the room of the guilty, suffered such unspeakable agony, if he who was in himself innocent, who was a divine person, felt such awful horrors and anguish, what would become of the poor finite creature who had broken the laws of God, if he had to suffer all this vengeance in his own person. Was it just in God thus to afflict his beloved Son? Surely his only begotten Son, if it was possible, would have been spared: "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from

“me,” but the will of the Lord must be done, his justice required it. “Awake O sword against the shepherd, “against the man that is my fellow saith the Lord.” Why? because he is guilty, and justice requires that he should suffer. But when we inquire how he became guilty, the prophet Isaiah gives us the answer, and solves the important difficulty: “He was wounded for “our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.”

Then what must we think of the guilt of our sins? When we find “Him to be made sin for us who knew no “sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God “in him,” and that “God spared not his own Son, but “delivered him up for us all;” we must indeed conclude that in the offers of pardon, the gospel teaches us that we are guilty, and that “our sins are of a deep dye and of a “crimson colour.”

Every true christian has this view of sin. I do not say he must have it always equally impressed upon his mind, but the death of Christ does show him the dreadful effects of breaking God’s law. I confess we feel many things of which we are ignorant as to the grounds of those feelings. We are sensible of the feelings, but we do not know sometimes the particular grounds from whence they proceed. Sometimes the true penitent is so impressed with a sense of his own wretchedness that he does not consider from whence his views arise. He is not disposed to act as an accurate philosopher, but his mind is entirely engrossed with its own unhappy state. He sees that he is a helpless sinner, and has at the same time some hope of pardon. But he is apt to think that Christ is angry with him, because he had to suffer so much for him; and therefore although the death of Christ gives him a striking sense of his deserts, yet because he does not view that death as the atonement for the very sins it gives him a view of, the poor creature is taken up with his own guilt, and through his shame and confusion

he can tell neither this nor that of the whole matter, but only cries "O wretched man that I am, what shall I do to be saved?" This was the case with the three thousand under the influence of Peter's sermon. Peter convinced them that Jesus of Nazareth had suffered, and that they were the instigation of his death. The jailer knew that Paul and Silas were imprisoned on account of the doctrines of the cross; and the miracles convinced him that the doctrines they taught were true. He was consequently filled with horror, as engaged in opposition to the cause of Christ. But not having a clear view of the glorious design of the cross, he cried through the confusion of his mind, "What shall I do to be saved?"

Hence it is evident that none but a comfortable believer can have a proper gospel sense of sin; and although a gospel sense of sin produces a high degree of humility and self-abhorrence, yet it is attended with a high degree of hope and comfort, founded on the true grounds of the gospel which takes away that fearful and slavish spirit which is no evidence of true religion, and enables the poor guilty creature to glory in the cross of Christ, and claim the inestimable privilege of pardon, through the atonement of his glorious surety. "That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done saith the Lord." What made the apostle Paul think himself the chief of sinners? Was it because there was no other, or no worse persecutor in the world than he? No, but he was viewing his own case, and the cases of others were not brought into view; and his particular salvation made him feel peculiarly interested in the death of Christ; and the death of Christ being his only hope, and his hope founded on that death, this made him exclaim, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to *save sinners, of whom I am*

“*chief.*” “The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to “Christ,” but it is “that we might be justified by faith.” Now even supposing that the apostle meant the moral law, and not the ceremonial law of the Jews (which is a very doubtful case) yet the moral law is to be viewed as satisfied and made honourable through Christ’s atonement, else the law could never bring us to Christ; for the law says nothing about Christ of itself, and therefore could never bring us to Christ, unless it is viewed in Christ. But when it is viewed in Christ, and its importance, justice and dignity discovered in his most inestimable atonement, then we discover both the dreadful nature of sin, and the glorious hope of the gospel. This breaks the heart and fills the mind, not with despair and melancholy, or incorrigible rebellion, which is the effect of a view of the law out of Christ; but with inexpressible anxiety to obtain deliverance from the awful effects of sin, through the merits of the glorious surety; “who bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” The terror of Adam before he received the promise of the seed of the woman, the quaking of Moses, and the horrors of the camp of Israel at Mount Sinai, and the awful anguish of devils and damned spirits in hell, teach us the inflexible nature of divine justice, and the awful effects of having broken the divine law. But when we have a right view of the cross, we can find no instance in all the economy of the great Governor of the universe in which there is a greater display of the glory and dignity of the law of God, and of the consequences of breaking it. But the guilty creature, while he is thus viewing the sufferings of Christ, not only sees the greatness of his guilt, but he gets this view of guilt by looking at the very atonement which was made for sin, for he cannot view the one without the other. If Christ had not suffered for our sake, his death could be no demonstration of our guilt; but when our sin was the cause of his

death, and he died as a surety in our place, while we view the greatness of our guilt, we must also view the greatness of our ransom. This makes the poor criminal instead of trembling in terror and despair, like devils under the terror of death and hell, fall down at the foot of the cross, and surrender to the gospel plan, and plead for mercy for Jesus' sake.

These things are not mere refined speculations, but truths which christians feel less or more from day to day, and which the bible speaks of, as the genuine effects of the gospel. Paul, who both felt and taught the gospel, gives us very clear views on this subject. You would do well to take notice of the beautiful manner in which he introduces the seventh chapter to the Romans, by the figure of a woman and her first and second husband, plainly showing that the law of itself ministers nothing but death; and in order to get clear of it we must be "dead to it," or it dead to us (which is the same thing) "by the body of Christ" (that is the sufferings of Christ which he endured when his body was nailed to the tree.) Then follow the penitent sensations of the poor captive of the gospel under his imperfections, until he through a sense of his wretchedness, in broken language "thanks God, for Christ's sake," plainly showing that Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; whether you speak of faith, love, holiness or repentance, Christ is there, or all is nothing. Hence it was that the apostle was determined "to know nothing" among the Corinthians "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Jesus Christ would do no good to a lost Corinthian unless he was crucified; but Christ on the cross is the remedy for a lost soul. Therefore "God forbid" says the apostle "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The scape goat (Lev. 16) was a beautiful type, holding forth the very doctrine I am now endeavouring to

establish. The highpriest was to lay his hand on the head of the goat, and there confess the sins of all the people; and then to send away the goat into the wilderness. In vain do sinners talk of repentance, unless they have their hand on the head of the goat; unless they repent and confess with their views fixed on the great atonement, they will feel nothing, they can feel nothing but what the devils in hell feel continually. Take away Christ, and there is nothing left but terror and despair.

“ My faith would lay her hand,
 “ On that dear head of thine;
 “ While like a penitent I stand,
 “ And there confess my sin.” DR. WATTS.

“ Thus while his death my sin displays,
 “ In all its blackest hue;
 “ Such is the mystery of grace,
 “ It seals my pardon too.
 “ With pleasing grief and mournful joy,
 “ My spirit now is fill’d;
 “ That I should such a life destroy,
 “ Yet live by him I kill’d.” NEWTON.

The prophet Zechariah, prophesying of the gospel day, saith, “ And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” A view of sin given by the gospel has a powerful effect upon the human heart. The prophet represents it as derived from Christ who was pierced for sin, and as really affecting as the death of a firstborn, and an only son; and he most elegantly describes it as if every one was individually engaged in his own case. “ And the land shall mourn every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain apart, and their wives

“apart.” It is reasonable to expect that families would be social, and so they are in common affairs of life, and in many cases of religion; and especially a husband and wife, which is the most social connexion under the sun. Religion also disposes all persons to sociality and friendship; but such is the interesting nature of a sinner’s own salvation, that when either son or daughter, husband or wife, gets a view of Christ crucified, and feels the solemn effects of the gospel on the heart, discovering the awful consequences of sin, and the only remedy through him “who was wounded for their transgressions, who was “bruised for their iniquities;” they immediately betake themselves apart, every branch of the family apart, and even the wife apart; every one for himself taken up and entirely engrossed in the concerns of the immortal soul.

Thus I hope, I have fully made it appear that the offers of pardon, founded on the atonement of Christ, give us a clear and affecting view of the greatness of our guilt, and the only profitable view that we can have, because it points us directly to the all-sufficient remedy. Our hopes and our fears are addressed at once, with every possible advantage, and every motive combines together to compel the soul to yield to the gospel.

CHAPTER II.

Man’s sinful state farther considered.

The grand effect of the gospel on a depraved sinner, is to make him holy. Salvation without this, could never be complete. In this the excellence of the gospel plan appears, that it not only entitles a guilty sinner to justification, but also completely prepares him for happiness in the eternal enjoyment of God, whose favour and friendship he obtains through the great atonement of the cross. Hence we find, that the gospel not only offers par-

don through the righteousness of the Redeemer, but also the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, to change the heart, and carry on a work of sanctification under the direction of infinite wisdom, until the soul is finally conformed to the divine will. Every offer made in the gospel, to the sinner, for the sanctification of his soul, shows that we are by nature in a state of pollution. The very idea of washing supposes filth; and the very idea of sanctification supposes the corruption of the heart. To have clear views on this subject we must consider the following things.

1. It is really true, that the gospel proposes sanctification. This is evident from the following passages.

“Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

“His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”

None can be said to be saved while they are under the reigning power of sin; holiness is therefore a grand part of salvation. Sanctification is necessary to make a sinner holy, and consequently, necessary to a sinner's salvation; but the gospel offers salvation to all who hear it, therefore we must conclude that the gospel offers sanctification, and the offer must suppose that the soul is defiled with sin.

2. The very terms which the scriptures make use of, holding forth the doctrine of sanctification, plainly imply the depravity and corruption of the human heart. When God proposes to “take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh,” we are certainly taught that our hearts are hard, stubborn and unfeeling. When Christ is said to “cleanse his church,” (Eph. 5.) it is because she is unclean by nature. When he is said to “present it without spot or wrinkle,” or any such thing, we are taught the leprosy of the heart in consequence of sin.

When he is said to make his church "holy and without blemish," we are surely taught our moral defilement. When it is promised that God will "put his laws in their mind, and write them in their heart," it must be inferred that our hearts have lost the moral image of God, and that we are entirely estranged from holiness.

How encouraging it must be to a poor sinner feeling his own depravity, and sensible of his daily shortcomings, to see that the very imperfections which he feels and mourns over from day to day, are pointed at and clearly held out to view by the precious offers and promises of the gospel, pointing him to Jesus as the only, and the sovereign remedy for all his complaints. When we attempt in our own strength to wash and make ourselves clean, we find by sad experience that tampering with our disease, we only make it fester the more, and spread the wider. We sometimes think that "Abana and Pharpar are better than all the waters of Israel." (2 Kings 5. 12.) But the precious offers of the gospel, not only teach us our unhappy leprosy, but also direct us "to go and wash in the river Jordan," and assures us we shall be clean. The great object of the gospel is holiness; and the great object of a true believer is holiness. Thus the gospel not only teaches us that we are depraved creatures, but the true believer who feels the effects of the gospel, feels the depravity of his heart.

When Christ in the offers of the gospel saith "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." (Ezek. 36. 25.) When we hear him praying for us, "sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth; and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth," (John 17. 17, 19.) we are certainly taught two solemn lessons; we are first taught that we are vile, and in an awful state of sin, and we are also directed to Christ the precious

“fountain which was opened for the washing away of
“sin and uncleanness.”

We observe in the last place that the gospel teaches us our lost condition, in the offers of light and understanding which are so frequently made in scripture to poor blinded sinners. “To open their eyes, and to turn
“them from darkness unto light.” (Isa. 42. Acts 26. 18.) Ignorance, blindness, darkness of the understanding, mistaken views of God, of his law, of ourselves, and of Christ, are all the ruinous consequences of the fall. If we were not ignorant we could not be taught. If we were not foolish, we could not lack wisdom; and because we find that Christ is “made of God, to us wisdom;” and because he “opens the dungeon,” and enlightens the understanding, we hereby learn our wretched blindness and folly.

We must “be taught of God,” else we will not accept of Christ, and consequently “die in our sins.” Hence we see that the offers of the gospel teach us our ignorance, as well as our pollution and guilt, and while we learn the deplorable lesson, we are directed to Christ, not only for pardon and sanctification, but also to enlighten our beclouded minds, that he as our great Prophet may make us wise unto salvation.

From what has been said, we must see that the gospel in its offers of salvation abundantly teaches our lost state, and very particularly points us to the unhappy circumstances of our depraved condition.

CHAPTER III.

Observations on particular texts which doctrinally teach us our lost state.

WE come now in the second place, to consider another way in which the gospel teaches us our lost state.

We are not only taught this important doctrine by all the offers of grace made to us in the bible, but many passages of scripture are employed for this identical purpose, and many lively and strong figures are made use of to show us our awfully undone state. Let me therefore call your serious attention to a few texts, out of many, which will make this matter plain before you.

The first account which we have of our lost state is in the third chapter of Genesis. What a doleful story it is! Poor unhappy Adam! a public representative of all his offspring has lost his original beauty, transgressed the will of his Maker, filled with guilt and shame, alienated from God, and plunged in ignorance, guilt and moral pollution!

Where is the son or daughter of Adam, who can read this melancholy account without feeling the need of a Saviour! Where is the man who can look over that ancient piece of sacred history, without smiting upon his breast, saying "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Although there is a promise of an Almighty Saviour, blended with the account; yet that is so far from alleviating the crimes of the sinner, that it is highly significant of the dismal nature of the fault.

But to proceed, "and God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. 6. 5.) "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them

“is gone back; they are altogether become filthy. There
 “is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psal. 53. 2, 3.)
 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” “That
 “every mouth may be stopped and all the world may
 “become guilty before God.” (Rom. 3.) “For all have
 “sinned and come short of the glory of God.” “For there
 “is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth
 “not.” (Eccl. 7. 20.) But I need not multiply scripture
 passages; these are sufficient to give us a general view
 of our awfully depraved condition. (Jer. 17. 9.)

The guilt of sin is strongly expressed by such passages as these. “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou
 “shalt surely die. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.
 “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things
 “written in the book of the law to do them.”

In vain do careless sinners trifle with these important truths. How pitiable it is to see a poor helpless wretch, assuming the high prerogative of deciding in his own case! What advantage can it possibly be to a guilty soul, to trifle with his own guilt, and to imagine that he can escape the tremendous justice of God Almighty? How many artful schemes are laid in order to escape the vengeance of Heaven. Some must be deists, and some plead for universal redemption; some trust to a poor broken skeleton of morality, and some to future repentance; some must deny that there is a hell or devil, and some the immortality of the soul. “But he who sits in
 “heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision.” Our guilt is evident from the bible, and there is not one soul delivered, or ever can possibly be but the believer in Christ; for that is the only exception. “He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of
 “God abideth on him.”

Again, what striking figures and expressions does the bible use to represent the moral pollution of a sinner. The loathsome and helpless state of a sinner is repre-

sented as a new born infant, neither washed nor swaddled, but cast out in the open field, all loathsome and polluted in its own blood. (Ezek. 16.) Sinners are compared to a den of unclean beasts, and a cage of unclean birds, to an open sepulchre, to rottenness and dead men's bones. Sinners are said to be altogether filthy, to be poisonous as asps, their mouths are said to be full of cursing and bitterness. (Rom. 3.) And God declares that sin is that abominable thing which he hateth. (Jer. 44. 4.) It is the great unhappiness of sinners that they love sin, and hence it is hard to realize its abominable nature. It is difficult to feel that loathsome which we love, but the special reason why sinners do not loath and abhor themselves is because they are possessed of a base temper in their own mind; but in the sight of a God of spotless perfection there is nothing so abominable as sin; and one of the very first effects of sanctification is for the sinner to loath his own heart. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Once more, the gospel clearly teaches us that we are lost in ignorance and folly. The gentiles and all who obey not the gospel are said to be ignorant of God. (1 Thess. 4. 5. 2 Thess. 1. 8.) Sinners "have their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is within them, because of the blindness of their hearts." (Eph. 4. 18.) "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hos. 4. 6.)

Ignorance is often the ground of folly, but sin is always the consequence of folly in matters of religion; hence in the scriptures, fools is a general character given to the wicked. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?" (Ps. 14.) Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. (Luke 12. 20. 1 Cor. 3. 18.) Fools "make a mock of sin. (Prov. 14. 9.) Professing them-

“selves to be wise they became fools. (Rom. 1. 22.)
 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a
 “good understanding have all those who keep his com-
 “mandments.” (Ps. 111. 10.) From all which things
 we clearly see that the gospel teaches us our lost state,
 not only by the encouraging overtures it contains, but
 also by positive doctrines laid before us, as in the texts
 and passages above quoted, and in many others which
 could be easily pointed to, were it necessary.

Let us make one or two reflections before I conclude
 this chapter. What a miserable state we are in by nature!
 and seeing it is the gospel that teaches it to us, and we
 have an opportunity of a wonderful deliverance, how
 happy would we be if we would lay hold of the glorious
 hope of the gospel. How wise mankind pretend to be;
 they can describe the various revolutions of the planets
 with the greatest accuracy; but alas, how many not only
 of the lower class, but even those of the greatest genius
 and profound erudition, have neither sense nor wisdom
 enough to accept of salvation when it is offered to them.
 When every thing seems to conspire to show them their
 misery, they will not be persuaded to lay it to heart.
 How wretched must that man be, who misses the salva-
 tion of his soul; but what a happy circumstance it is to
 be brought to see and feel our danger before it is too late.
 To be interested in Christ is a most unspeakable pri-
 vilege. But it is a privilege, although it is freely offered
 to all, yet none enjoy but those who sensible of their
 need, accept of Christ, freely as he is offered in the
 gospel.

CHAPTER IV.

The necessity of the divine Spirit effectually to convince us of our lost state.

IN the third and last place, the gospel teaches us our lost state effectually, when it is accompanied by the influences of the holy Spirit. It is promised to Christ in behalf of his people, "that they shall all be taught of "God." Christ promised to send the Spirit, the Comforter, to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; and when this promise is fulfilled, when the divine Spirit accompanies the word, it is astonishing what a powerful effect the gospel has on a poor lost sinner. Let him be who he may, no matter of what country, or what worldly circumstances; no matter what his notions or his hopes, or his arguments were before, the gospel opens his case to him; he can shut his eyes no longer; he is all attention, not as a curious spectator but a person whose very soul is deeply interested.

It has been often asked, what is the work of the Spirit, or how does the Spirit enlighten the understanding? But this question has never been answered. To say that it is by the word is saying nothing to the point, for the question is not what are the means, but what is that work, or influence which renders the word effectual. To say that it is divine illumination is only solving one difficulty by another. To say that it is a work of almighty power upon the heart, without light or motive, is darkening counsel by words without knowledge. To talk of God forcing the will, any other way than by argument, is palpable contradiction. The will is choice, and every constraint except that which arises from moral suasion, is entirely inapplicable to the will. But how the Spirit enlightens the understanding, (Eph. 1. 18.) so that the person so wrought upon is made to view the arguments of the

gospel, is what we cannot tell; and it is better to acknowledge ignorance than to talk nonsense.

But it is a notorious fact that the Spirit of God does influence the mind; and by his gracious power on the understanding, opening the eyes, as the apostle says, the divine doctrines of the gospel are let into the soul. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4. 6.) This appears farther evident from that precious promise which Christ gave to his disciples: (John 16. 8.) "And when he (the Comforter) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment."

The holy Spirit, who is here called the Comforter, is sent by the ascended Saviour, on the great business of applying the purchased blessings of the gospel. He is called the Comforter, or Advocate, (*παρακλητος*) not only because he gives comfort to his people, but because his great business with sinners is to apply to their hearts the most comfortable truths that can possibly be conceived of, even truths calculated to save their souls from everlasting misery. The gospel is a bundle of good news, or comfortable tidings. "Glory to God in the highest, peace and good will towards men." And when the Spirit performs his work, the sinner finds by experience that the gospel is glad tidings of great joy; and the Spirit, who opens his eyes to see it, is a Comforter indeed.

Our Saviour says, "and they shall be all taught of God. And none can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." He also tells his disciples, "that the Spirit of truth, whom he will send, proceedeth from the Father." It is evident therefore, that the Father teaches by the Spirit, and that none will come to Christ unless the Spirit draws him. The drawing of the Spirit is "with the cords of a man, and bands of love."

(Hosea 11. 4.) From all which we conclude that it is the work of the Spirit to enlighten the mind, and to bring the doctrines of the gospel home to the hearts of sinners; and we have many instances in the bible, and in the church, as well as many proofs on divine authority, to show that when the Spirit works with the word, the sinner is convinced of his lost state indeed.

It is a very happy circumstance, and tends much to establish our minds in the doctrines of the gospel, to find that the doctrines we are taught to believe are felt to be true, by our own experience and the experience of all around us. It is an old adage, experience makes even fools wise. The teaching of the Spirit is the only thing to make us feel the force of truth. Although in point of persuasion, preachers of the gospel have some disadvantages, arising chiefly from the incorrigibleness of their hearers; yet upon the whole we may say they have, as to the importance of their subjects, and the interesting nature of the truths they deliver to every soul who hears them, every possible advantage: yet nothing can be done without divine power. The motives of the gospel are truly awful and glorious: heaven on the one hand and hell on the other, every principle of self preservation addressed in the most striking manner; the doctrines well founded to command belief, simple and easy to be understood. The soul addressed is immortal, and every moment in danger of eternal damnation. Salvation freely offered and insured to the believer, by a God of unchangeable veracity; and eternal death, the consequence of unbelief, and nothing wanting but the consent of the will. But notwithstanding all these advantages, the greatest and most eloquent speaker may lay out his whole strength and exert himself to the uttermost, and direct the artillery of the bible to the very conscience of the sinner; alas! alas! without the divine power of God, the hardened wretch will perhaps, laugh when he

is done, or go away Gallio like, caring for none of those things.

This is not only the case among the lower classes of mankind, but even among the wise men of the earth. Nay, God seems to have a particular design to confound the wisdom of the world, hence we find that many men of noble talents, fine argumentative powers, with all the advantages of reading and study, have never learnt this little important lesson, which many a poor African slave has learnt long ago, that he is a lost sinner.

But when the divine Spirit brings home the doctrines of the gospel, the subject of his powerful influences begins immediately to cry, "what must I do to be saved?" The wicked world gazes, and imputes the whole perhaps to weakness. O ye wise men of the world, ye philosophers of the age, it must surely be great weakness for a sinner to be sensible that he has done wrong, and to be sorry for it. It must be surely mere effeminacy for a sinner to conclude that God is just, and that he consequently will condemn a sinner. For a lost sinner to give his heart to Jesus and fly to the only hope of the gospel, to quit his former ways of vanity and betake himself to religion, is the next thing to insanity, and especially if it happens to be a weak female, or a young stripling. But a man of your strength and solidity of judgment can live contented and happy from day to day, in the midst of ten thousand dangers. You have more sense than to think that you are a sinner, and if you are, you are not so simple as to repent. You do not know that you are accountable to the God that made you; and if you are, you are not so weak as to be afraid of him. The sufferings of Christ is no argument to a man of such strong reasoning powers as you; you have more sense than to accept of salvation from the hand of a crucified Saviour.

But for my own part, I would rather like David, be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the

tents of sin. Give me my lot with those poor weak despised ones, who taught by the Spirit of Christ, have just sense enough to know that they are lost sinners, and to look to Christ for salvation.

CHAPTER V.

Improvement.

FROM the view which we have taken, we find that the gospel does really teach us, and call us to consider our lost and undone condition. By attending to this subject, we have had a striking demonstration of the wretchedness of this condition, and how miserable we must be, unless we can be delivered from it. We also find that there is yet hope for a lost sinner, and we are pointed to the only sure foundation. Does not my honest reader almost feel a disposition to pause at every period and think, what an accumulation of baleful epithets constitute our character. Ignorant, polluted, guilty, hardened, unbelieving, wretched and helpless. Who could live contented in such a woful situation? Can *you*, my dear friend, whoever you are? Have you made your escape, by laying hold of the great surety, who hung upon the cross? Or are you still in your sins, and in danger of eternal death? If so are you not afraid? What! not afraid of death! not afraid of hell! not afraid of God! not afraid of inexorable justice and almighty power!

But if you are interested in Christ, your guilt is gone forever; and your sins and your iniquities will be remembered no more. Though you are helpless in yourself, your blessed surety is able to save to the uttermost. You were once darkness, but now are you light in the Lord. Your character assumes a different tone, light, life and righteousness. You are interested in Christ by faith, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Let me address three classes from the subject we have been treating; sinners, distressed souls, and comfortable believers.

1. Sinners. You have the first lesson of practical religion yet to learn. You are far from God, and far from heaven. You are fifteen, twenty, thirty or forty years of age, and you have not yet felt the very first impressions which the gospel is calculated to give. Had not God spared your lives, you would have been by this time in hell; and were you to die this moment you would open your eyes in a world of eternal horror and despair. Is it not time for you to consider that you are lost, and to lay to heart your deplorable condition? There is salvation offered you, but you see not your need of it. You drone away your life in carnal security. Be persuaded to think of your misery, while you have the offers of salvation.

I would also remind sinners, that the quickest, easiest and safest way to get religion, is to get a sense of sin from the cross of Christ; there is nothing in the law of God, but what is seen clearer when you bring it to the cross, than any where else. To look at the law any where else, will give you a slavish terror, and fill you with fruitless pain, unprofitable anguish, and hellish repentance; witness Judas, who had no view of Christ as the atonement for sin; witness also Felix, when he was convinced of his wickedness, he trembled indeed, but his heart was not changed. But to look upon a pierced Saviour, will give you a view of the law in all its dignity and glory; and beholding it in Christ, it will naturally lead you to him, and you will be shut up to the faith. This will break your heart indeed; for it is hard for a sinner to stand against the love of Christ.

2. I do believe some people are afraid they will get comfort too soon. They are like that "foolish son, Ephraim; for they stay "too long in the place of the breaking forth of "children." (Hos. 13. 13.) Long travail is neither good for

the mother nor the child. It is both painful and dangerous; and the greatest number of those pains are sure to be spurious, and many a poor child is still born in consequence of them. But if you must have pain, go to the garden of Eden, and hear an angry God speak, when Adam had broken the covenant; but take care lest you notice the seed of the woman, for that would lead you to the atonement, which would spoil all your pain and make you happy before you are ready. Mount Sinai is a dreadful place to get a view of the law; it made Moses himself to fear and quake; and it is awfully dangerous to approach too nigh, or stay too long. The devils in hell are a dreadful exhibition of divine justice. But where is the ransom? Must you go the whole round of pain and anguish, before you can apply to a crucified Saviour? O desponding soul, whoever you are, grant me one favour, and you will never rue it; come with me to Calvary, and stand awhile at the foot of the cross. You may venture nigh. It is your friend who is hanging here. This is not like Sinai. A guilty sinner may draw near. A vile rebel may gaze in welcome. Sinners and scoffers surrounded him, and he prayed for them. The thief hung by his side, and felt the power of his death. Do you want to see the law you have broken? Here it is in all its glory. Do you want to see justice, red and flaming? Look at the sufferer. Do you want to see your guilt? Look at your substitute. Do you want to see your ransom? "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Now where are the grounds of your doubts and fears? Do you see what a sinner you have been? Where do you read your crimes? In the wounds of your glorious surety. Is he not "wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities?" and is it not by his stripes you are healed? But you are ready to say, O, I am too unworthy. What! can you be unworthy of such a privilege as the cross of Christ gives you? That is as great a truth

as you ever spake in your life. But do you mean that your unworthiness is an objection against your receiving the benefit of the cross? Strange indeed! You cannot find that language in the death of Christ. What! unworthy to be redeemed! unworthy to be saved by grace! Did Jesus die for the righteous, or for sinners? You surely do not rightly consider the design of the death of Christ. It was to save that thief who was crucified with him, and no doubt some of those who wagged their heads in derision. "Father forgive them." It was to save Mary Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus, and you and me, and every soul who will believe in him.

"Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. He that believeth in me shall never perish but have everlasting life. Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."

Here I wish to leave every distressed soul; here let them stay until they learn to put their trust in Christ. I wish them not to turn to the right hand, or to the left, assured of this one truth, that true comfort can be found no where else but in the cross of the dear Redeemer.

In the third place: Let comfortable believers learn to put their whole trust in Christ. What a wonderful thing the gospel is. It probes the wound to the bottom, and applies the only remedy; it breaks the heart, and heals it. If you wish to be humble, study the gospel. If you wish to grow in sanctification, look to Jesus. If you want to be thankful, view your privileges. If you want to maintain your comfort, live upon the promises. If you want to conquer Satan, the gospel is the only weapon. In short learn every thing from the cross; do every thing by the cross; and trust every thing to the cross.

That cross has conquered Satan, it has conquered all the idols of the heathen, and it has conquered you. That cross is the foundation of Christ's kingdom; it is the

glory of his crown; it is the manifestation of all the divine perfections; it is the wonder of angels, the terror of devils, and the eternal salvation of lost sinners who believe in Christ.

Again, I would infer from what has been said, that it is a dangerous thing to tamper with the law of God. It is death to break it; and after it is broken, it is death to be careless about it. To try to keep it is death. To try to make atonement for our past transgressions is death. To repent of our sins, with a view to pacify justice, is death. The only way to escape is to be totally delivered from it, so as to be under no obligations to it, as a broken covenant, and never look back to it again. (Rom. 7. 6.) "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." (Gal. 3. 25. and 4. 9.) There is no possible way of obtaining this deliverance but by faith, by receiving the atonement of Christ, by which the law is completely fulfilled on our behalf. The law of God ought not to be used any way but in Christ; but in him we can learn the most important lessons from it. It teaches us our guilt and misery; it directs us to escape its vengeance; and having fled to the cross, we satisfy all its demands; and it becomes a glorious means of sanctification, an excellent rule of life. Thus being in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation; and we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. (Rom. 8. 1.)

May God grant that we may all be taught of God to know and consider our lost state, that we may lay hold of the gospel, that our souls may be saved through Jesus Christ our Lord.

BOOK II.

*The eternal counsel of God for the salvation of lost sinners.
The doctrine of election explained and vindicated.*

CHAPTER I.

The gospel plan from eternity.

KNOWN unto God are all his works from eternity. There can nothing take place in the whole universe that is unknown to him, whose knowledge is infinite. He who is unchangeable can never increase in knowledge, or alter in any of his plans or purposes, by any occurrence whatsoever, even in the minutest particle of matter, or the least thought or inclination of the mind. The little sparrow is under his inspection; and the very hairs of our head are all numbered. (Psal. 139. 16.) The great "I AM THAT I AM" is invariable and without shadow of turning.

The fall of Adam was no new thing to God; he perfectly knew it from eternity, and he was pleased to permit it, for his own glory. "He does as he pleases in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. There is none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?"

The plan of the gospel was laid in the infinite counsels of heaven, before ever the world was. There is not a single blessing bestowed upon a believer, but is in consequence of the eternal purpose of God. Not only did God purpose to save sinners, but he laid the whole plan on which they were to be saved, including every thing contained in the covenant of grace, the glorious

surety, the complete atonement, every particular person to be saved, and every thing to be done for him, and to him, and every means by which it was to be done, and every operation of divine grace to render those means effectual. I expect to make all this appear, before I conclude this part of my treatise. (Eph. 1. 1—14. 2 Thes. 2. 13, 14. 2 Tim. 1. 9, 10.) This view of the gospel gives us a grand idea of God. It manifests his boundless love, the infinite riches of his free grace, and his adorable sovereignty. It has a tendency to humble the sinner in the dust, and to touch every sense of gratitude in his heart. This doctrine is calculated to inspire us with a cheerful hope, and give a comfortable believer inexpressible sensations of joy. It is impossible to support the doctrine of free grace, but upon this footing. It is impossible to vindicate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints on any other plan. If the doctrine of election, which consists in God's eternal purpose to save sinners, be denied, it would be impossible to vindicate the wisdom of God in the gospel plan. The glory of God, the effects of the sufferings of Christ, the reward promised him by his father, and the whole kingdom of Christ, would depend on the will of the creature. The salvation of sinners would be entirely uncertain; and unless God would draw them, not one soul would come to Christ for salvation. He could not draw any without an unalterable and eternal purpose to do it; and consequently the whole preparation of the gospel would be in vain. Then where would be the wisdom of the gospel plan?

It would be in vain to plead the foreknowledge of God. For if he foreknew that any man would believe or come to Christ, he must also foreknow that he would draw him, otherwise he would certainly know a falsehood, or Christ was mistaken when he said, "no man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him."

So that to acknowledge God's foreknowledge is really giving up the point.

But when we yield our stubborn minds to God's sovereignty, and acknowledge the whole system of the gospel from first to last, to be according to the eternal counsel of his own will, it gives us a most amazing display of the divine glory, in all the perfections of the Deity; and the gospel becomes a most irrefragable foundation of the believer's hope and comfort. Who, that hopes he has an interest in Christ, can think of this doctrine without gratitude and pleasure? My soul feels itself on its darling theme, and flies faster than my pen can run. I fly in a moment back to eternity, I see Christ the second person of the Trinity, elected as my covenant head; my worthless name written in his book; and he engaging to redeem all whom his Father gave unto him. The price was his own blood, and the blessing is everlasting life. I see every thing well ordered and sure. I commit my soul into his hand, and have his promise for every thing I need. In this confidence, depending on my surety, for he is all my trust, I look with sovereign contempt on every thing that opposes my salvation. O what an honour it is to Christ for,

“A feeble saint to win the day,

“Tho' death and hell obstruct the way.”

I sincerely pity those who deny, or who are afraid of this important doctrine. But I must handle this awful and solemn doctrine of election with that calmness and gravity which becomes the dignity of the subject.

This doctrine has been exploded by many who profess the christian religion; not only by those churches who profess to do so by their creeds and confessions, but also by many of our own church. And by some means it has come to pass, that it has been considered as a kind of useless lumber; and both ministers and people have un-

happily felt a disposition to waive one of the most interesting doctrines in the bible.

God's unchangeable purpose to save is the only encouragement that a christian can have to hope for salvation; and on this also depends the encouragement of a sinner to wait on the means of grace. Were it not for this divine purpose, in vain would ministers preach and the people hear. What good would all the preaching in the world do, or all the means of grace whether public or private, unless God would render them effectual. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but God gives the increase." But how could any hope for a blessing, excepting God designs to give it; but if an unchangeable God designs to bless, it is an eternal design. Hence it appears that the doctrine of election is so far from being a dangerous and discouraging doctrine that it is truly the radical ground of all the encouragement, that either saint or sinner can have.

A minister must have great encouragement to preach, notwithstanding all his weaknesses, when he knows not how many of his hearers God is determined to save; and that the work is his, and the poor preacher nothing but the means; but take away the doctrine of election, and all is gone. The poor sinner is to be saved by grace, the preacher is unable to give it, and God has no design to do it, nor ever can have any, because he is unchangeable. In such circumstances as those, who could preach? or who could hear? But blessed be God, that he has provided some better things for us, and consequently we hope better things, and things which accompany salvation. "Lo I am with you to the end of the world;" not as an idle spectator, but with an unchangeable design to bless the gospel. Paul at Corinth felt this encouragement, "be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, for I have much people in this place."

No wonder Paul was so greatly encouraged, for he both felt and saw the happy effects of predestination.

When we talk of conditional election, conditional promises and conditional decrees, we jumble a bundle of words together which cannot be understood. A conditional promise has no obligation, because the obligation is suspended on the condition, and therefore can be no promise at all; but only a bare proposal. A conditional election or decree can have no purpose in it, because the design is likewise suspended on the condition; and therefore can be nothing but a mere permission. "He that believeth shall be saved" is neither a promise nor decree, for it expresses neither an obligation nor yet a design to save; for they are both held back by the condition; and therefore is nothing but a simple overture. When the sinner complies with the condition, by believing, then it becomes a promise, because a compliance with the condition involves an obligation; but still it is not a decree of election, but only a circumstance taken place in consequence of election; for you must consider that faith itself is a grace given of God; (2 Pet. 1. 1.) and the sinner never would have performed the condition had not God given it to him. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, &c." (Phil. 1. 29.) But God does nothing by chance, (Act. 15. 18.) but with an eternal unchangeable design. (2 Tim. 1. 9.) Therefore the offer is made, and the sinner believes and enjoys the promise, which is in due time fulfilled; and the sinner is saved; but not by a conditional promise or a conditional election, nor yet "according to his works; but according to God's own purpose and grace, which was given him in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Some say that God elects believers after they believe and are sanctified. I have sometimes wondered whether those divines really do think so; or whether they only say so, in order to get rid of an unanswerable difficulty,

to maintain a favourite point. If the latter, we need not wonder that we cannot convince them, for they are not the first who have opposed the very testimony of the bible and the soundest logical arguments, with down right nonsense and absurdity. But if they know better, we cannot have a very high opinion of their integrity and candour. But upon the whole, I wonder that serious men are not a little afraid to oppose their own sentiments to men inspired by the Spirit of God. Luke the beloved physician is of a very different opinion. (Acts 13. 48.) "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Saint Paul also differs widely from this sentiment. (Rom. 8. 29.) "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Here, election is evidently given as the first cause of both faith and sanctification. Our Saviour tells his disciples "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." What for? To be disciples, or to preach the gospel? It is true he did so; but that is not what he alludes to here, but "that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it you." (John 15. 16.) St. John, also gives his testimony, "We love him because he first loved us." Many such scriptures we could mention giving testimony on this subject, showing that faith, love, sanctification, and in short the whole of our salvation is in consequence of God's own unchangeable and eternal purpose. I confess I do feel myself happy, and it is enough to make any man thankful, to think that he received religion in consequence of God's free gift, according to the counsel of his own will. But if God chose me because I chose him, if after I believed in Christ he chose me in Christ, if after I was sanctified he chose me to obtain salvation through sanctification, whom would I thank, God or myself? I must surely thank him who gave me the benefit; but I believed

and was sanctified before God had any design to save me, and I must on this plan maintain my faith and sanctification, or he will immediately alter his purpose. I must at least divide my gratitude, and sing like the daughters of Israel, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." But who would venture to establish such absurdities? Nay, let me give glory to God only; for he is the "author and finisher of our faith, and eternal salvation." (Heb. 12. 2. and 5. 9.) And let me "rejoice, not because the devils are subject to me, but because my name is written in heaven."

CHAPTER II.

Election defined, reprobation considered and some objections answered.

THAT we may not be perplexed in our ideas on this subject, it is proper to take notice of the different kinds of election mentioned in the bible.

The scriptures reveal six different kinds of election, viz. of Christ, of angels, of nations or tribes, of countries and particular places, of particular persons for particular offices or purposes, and of particular persons unto salvation.

1. Christ, by the eternal counsel of heaven, was chosen and appointed as the Head and Representative in the covenant of redemption; to undertake in the room of the elect, to die for them, to satisfy divine justice on their behalf, and to carry on the whole work of redemption, as a Mediator, and finally to judge the world at the last day. (Isai. 42.) But of this more by and by.

2. The bible gives us but a short account of the angels, but we clearly see it revealed, that the angels

who stood were elected, and the rest were left to fall. “I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels.” (1 Tim. 5. 21.) It seems to be strongly intimated that the angels are in some peculiar manner established in Christ. The apostle Paul says of whom (Jesus Christ) the whole family in heaven and earth is named. (Eph. 3. 15. also chap. 1. 10.) and all the things in heaven and in earth were created by him, and for him. (Col. 1. 16—20.) And in chap. 2. 10. he is said to be the head of all principality and power.

3. The whole Jewish nation was chosen as God’s peculiar inheritance or people. Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, and many others were families chosen of God in preference to others.

4. The land of Canaan was selected out of all countries for the inheritance of the children of Israel. The inhabitants thereof were devoted to destruction and slavery for their wickedness; which was long before it took place intimated by the curse pronounced on Canaan, Ham’s youngest son. Mount Moria was chosen for the trial of Abraham, when he was called to offer his son Isaac. Jerusalem was chosen for the temple, and for God to place his name there, &c.

5. David was chosen to be king over Israel instead of Saul. Solomon was chosen to build the temple. Aaron was chosen to the priesthood. Pharaoh was chosen to show forth the power of God; Cyrus to deliver Israel out of captivity; the apostles to be witnesses for Christ, and to be employed as the first preachers of the gospel under the christian dispensation; and Paul to be the eminent apostle of the gentiles. All these different elections are acknowledged by all. And they all show that God conducts his affairs in all the dispensations of his providence, and in the peculiar dispensations of his grace, with eminent exactness, and brings every thing about in his admirable counsel, wisdom and power, according to his

own will, and eternal purpose. Can we suppose that he would leave the peculiar effects of the gospel on the souls of sinners, which is the grand object of the whole plan, in a loose, vague, and indigested state? and as I have showed already in such a state, as must of course defeat the whole plan, and not save a single soul, for want of a divine purpose; which would forever prevent his applying the gospel to any? However much we may differ from the opinions of others, conscious that this truth is clearly held forth in the bible, we must say,

6. In the sixth place, that God, according to his own will, chose or elected thousands and thousands of individuals among mankind from all eternity, to everlasting life. This is the particular election we are endeavouring to establish.

The bible holding forth this doctrine makes use of several words, such as elected, ordained, predestinated, appointed, called, given and written; but election and predestination, and especially the word election, is most in use among divines when this doctrine is spoken of.

What I mean by election is this, that God the glorious sovereign of heaven and earth, in his boundless love, wisdom and goodness, according to the determination of his own will from eternity, did purpose and determine to save a certain particular and defined number from eternal ruin, each individual known to him, and particularly chosen with this view from among the rest of mankind; even to bring them every one without the exception or loss of one individual through Christ by faith, and through sanctification of the Spirit and the word of truth, to eternal life and salvation. Every preparation made in the gospel, and every mean to be made use of, and every work performed by the Spirit in the beginning and process of the business, from first to last, are all included in this divine purpose. The rest of mankind are left to themselves. That is to say, God did not from eternity

purpose to save them, or any of them; and consequently he being unchangeable, he never will give them his grace to the saving of their souls; but being left to act according to their own evil inclination, they will go on in sin, reject Christ, and consequently be lost forever. This is what we commonly call reprobation. The scripture in speaking of the non-elect uses these phrases, reprobate, blinded, the world, children of thy flesh, thy seed viz. the serpent's, of your father the devil, children of the bond woman, hated, hardened vessels unto dishonour, vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, branches broken off, &c.

I suppose all the opposition that any man feels or ever has felt against the doctrine of election arises from these two things, first a self righteous heart, or disposition which the doctrine of election militates against more than any other doctrine in all the bible. You may tell a man ten thousand times, that he is to be saved by grace, and not by works, but such is his natural disposition to arrogate something to himself, that he will turn and twist grace and works into a thousand shapes, and blend them together until he hammers out a righteousness that will suit his own feelings; but if he meets the doctrine of election, he springs from it, as he would from a viper, or he wards off with the utmost caution; for such is its nature, that on the very first sight he clearly discovers, that if it gets one stroke at him, it will lay him in the dust. Its frontispiece is this, "not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." There is no evasion here, the poor proud wretch must either deny the fact, or fall down and worship God as the author and finisher of faith and salvation. The proud heart will not always yield, even to the testimony of the bible; yet he hates to contradict his Maker, for he acknowledges the bible to be the word of God, and no other shift remains but to deny that the doctrine is there contained.

Another reason why some deny this doctrine is because the doctrine of reprobation is necessarily con-

needed with it. They can bear with the thought of God's divine purpose to save, but they cannot bear the thought of his leaving any to perish. The man who feels this objection would rather have his salvation depending on his own choice, than run the risk of not being elected. He is deeply interested in the case, and wishes to have a hand in the issue. And it must be confessed that the case of the reprobate is awful, although it is just. But this objector does not consider that if it was left to himself, as he desires it should be, he would run on wilfully in sin like all the reprobates do, and never choose salvation at last, which would make his chance infinitely worse than to run the chance of election; for he would not only run headlong to destruction himself, but the whole human race would run with him. The objector himself acknowledges that it is the grace of God that converts a sinner, or inclines him to religion; but if God had no purpose to give that grace, how would the poor wretch get it? and if it was left to his own choice to turn or not, as he wishes it to be, when would he turn?

So we find upon the whole God's plan is the best, the safest and the most proper plan. And it is evident that the objection arises from an inveterate opposition to the sovereignty of God. "It is hard (dangerous and "hurtful) to kick against the pricks."

I will here just notice a few of the leading objections which are generally brought forward against the doctrine of election and say just a word or two to them here, reserving a more full refutation to a more proper place hereafter.

1. It is said it encourages sloth and inattention to religion. But how can this be, when they are chosen of God, to be redeemed from all iniquity, and to be purified, and made zealous of good works? And when the Spirit of Christ is to dwell in them, to animate them and quicken them in the things of religion. (Tit. 2. 14. Rom. 8. 9—11.)

2. It is objected that on this plan there is nothing left for the sinners to do. This is by no means true, only in point of merit; and as to the sinner doing any thing to merit salvation, it is so far from being an objection that it is one of the peculiar excellencies of election that it saves a sinner by grace without any merit of his own. And as to the sinner's doing his duty, God knew that he never would of himself, therefore he was determined to bring him to it by his free grace, so that the objection is really in favour of the doctrine of election. (Rom. 6. 14.)

3. It is objected that this doctrine makes preaching and all the means of grace useless; for the elect will be saved, and the non-elect will be lost at any rate. This objection is a very common one. It is in the mouth of every objector, let him be a wise man or a fool. And no wonder, for it is founded on ignorance, and is a grand falsehood; and no man can bring it forward until he first locks up what little sense and honesty his Maker has blessed him with. Election embraces preaching, preachers, and all the means of grace which God has appointed to accomplish his purposes of salvation according to his eternal design. If God had purposed to save without preaching, then preaching would be vain. But seeing God has ordained the gospel to be the wisdom of God and the power of God to save them that believe, I know not how any man, who has sense enough to see the difference betwixt light and darkness, can imagine that preaching, or any of the means of grace can be in vain in consequence of election. (1 Cor. 1. 18, 21, 24. 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.)

4. But the greatest objection of all is, that it is unjust; one it is said has as good a right to salvation as another, therefore it is not right for God to pick and cull, as they say, for he ought to use all alike. How specious this objection is! But the objector forgets that a sinner has no claim in justice for any favour, and that all are guilty. Can it possibly be unjust to save a sinner if it can be

done consistent with law? Or can it be unjust to punish a sinner who deserves to die? On what principle do those objectors discover the injustice of God's having mercy on whom he will have mercy, when he might have justly condemned all, had he seen fit? The bible at any rate says he does so, and surely no man will contradict the ways of God, or impeach him with injustice. If all mankind were righteous and had a just claim to the favour of heaven, then it would be unjust for God to make some happy, and some miserable. But when all have sinned and are justly liable to condemnation, he undoubtedly might have condemned all, had he seen fit. It cannot be unjust, consequently for him to condemn as many as he saw fit. If there is any injustice in it, it is in saving some and not condemning all; but this is not pretended by the objectors, neither could it be. Those whom he saves are saved by a complete atonement for their sins. Christ surely had a right to die for as many as he pleased. No one is obliged to be a surety. Christ could not be compelled to become a surety for any, let alone for all. But the objector must cavil because he did not engage for all; and rejects the idea of his voluntary suretyship for as many as he saw proper. I have often seen a peevish child throwing away a part of a piece of bread, because it could not get the whole, and I have also seen the honest parent correcting that child for its rebellion and stiffness.

I am sometimes tempted to think that those who object to the doctrine of election do it from a disposition in their hearts to cavil at the conduct of God. They do not like the plan; and they pretend, in showing this dissatisfaction to have a great regard for God's justice and goodness; when at the same time, they only set up their own will in opposition to the will of God; and as I observed before, in order to do it with some face, they have to deny that the doctrine is in the bible.

But if this doctrine is supported by the word of God, as I hope to prove, that man must have a stout heart as

well as a wicked one, or otherwise an ignorant head, who would dare to bring forward his objections and arguments against a doctrine of divine revelation, just as if he was disputing with a fallible creature like himself. God is not accountable to us. It is our duty seriously to inquire whether the bible supports this doctrine or not, and when we find that it does, we ought to lay down all our objections, as both vain and impious.

CHAPTER III.

Election proven from particular doctrines of the Gospel.

THE data, or radical ground of all the arguments to prove the doctrine of election must be taken from the bible. Election being the choice or determination of the divine will can only be made known to us by revelation. We can easily see from reason that God will punish a sinner. But whether he either can or will save a sinner, can only be known by revelation. Reason can say nothing about it, until some data are given by the bible, for us to build an argument upon. So that all our proofs and demonstrations as to the doctrine of election must be either directly or indirectly taken from the word of God. But when certain things are proven by the great authority of God's word, then our reason may be employed, if necessary, to every possible advantage, in demonstrating the doctrine couched in the things proven by divine authority. And if our reasonings do not swerve from the data given in the bible, and our conclusions are fairly drawn, the truth must certainly be found.

There are five ways in which the scripture proves the doctrine of election; I will state each of them in order, so that I hope the reader by taking a view of them, with candour and honesty, will see that this doctrine is firmly established by divine authority.

The bible proves certain things which when put together the infallible conclusion must be, that God from eternity hath elected some to everlasting life; for instance,

1. Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire. Matt. 25. 41.

2. Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, &c. Matt. 25. 34.

3. By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. It is given you in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, &c.

4. Not of works lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath foreordained that we should walk therein. Eph. 2. 8. Phil. 1. 29. Eph. 2. 9, 10.

5. I am the Lord, I change not. Mal. 3. 6.

6. With whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. James 1. 17.

7. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. Acts 15. 18.

8. According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Eph. 1. 11.

These texts prove, that only a part of mankind are saved; that those who are saved, are saved by grace; that God gives it, and that not accidentally but with an unchangeable purpose. Now, put these eight passages or texts together and think like a reasonable man, possessed with candour, and willing to know the truth, and you will see the doctrine of election deduced from them, as the only possible conclusion.

If you say all are saved, you contradict the first text. If you say none are saved, you contradict the second. Therefore you must say, only a part are saved. Now we are done with the two first texts; they have done their part in the argument. The next question is, how is that part saved? If you say, not by free grace, or not by the gift of God, you contradict the third text. If you still affirm that it is by works, you contradict the fourth. So you must conclude that it is God saves them, by giving

them faith and creating them in Christ Jesus unto good works. You will here take notice that there is no dispute in all this; we have not come yet to the disputed ground. But, by the by, you have acknowledged two grand pillars of the argument, namely, some sinners only are saved, and God himself saves them. Again, if you were to prove obstinate and say that God gives his grace by accident or chance, the seventh and eighth texts will contradict you. You are therefore compelled by your bible to acknowledge that God, with a divine purpose or design gives that grace (even faith itself) to every sinner who is saved, which is necessary to salvation. Now comes the concluding point; when did God take that design? If you suppose any given time whatsoever, it necessarily implies that God is changeable, that he now has a design he never had before. But this false notion of God's adopting new plans contradicts the fifth and sixth texts which I have laid down as the ground of my argument. So that you are obliged to go back to eternity to find God's purpose to save any sinner. So you must leap over one or more of those eight texts, and many others of the same nature, unless you draw the following conclusion, which is the only one possible to be drawn, to wit, the unchangeable God from eternity did design and purpose to give grace unto every sinner who shall be saved, freely without works or merit, in order to his salvation; and this is the very doctrine I am establishing.

Again, I must notice that although those who deny the doctrine of election do profess to hold also to the doctrine of free grace, yet in this they must inevitably contradict themselves. Any favour bestowed on a sinner is grace. But what we mean by a sinner's being saved by grace, and not by works, is, that God gives salvation to him, and the sinner does nothing to merit that salvation. Salvation consists in pardon and sanctification. Pardon is the gift of God, because God only can forgive sin. God forgives for the sake of Christ's righteousness. He

therefore must impute or give that righteousness, for the sinner has it not of himself, but because God gives it, it is grace. This righteousness is received by faith; but God gives faith also; and therefore, faith is also a grace. Sanctification is a work of the Spirit; the Spirit gives the holy dispositions of love, repentance and obedience; therefore sanctification is a grace. Now, when we say a sinner is saved by grace, we mean that God gives him faith, pardon, love, repentance and a disposition to obedience. But we have seen above that God gives nothing by chance, or without a purpose, and that he is unchangeable, and consequently eternal in his purposes; therefore when our opponents acknowledge that we are saved by grace, they acknowledge that God gives faith, pardon and sanctification; but their denying election implies that he gives without any purpose or design, or that his design is temporary and not eternal. Yet withal they acknowledge his unchangeability.

What is to hinder any person to see how inconsistent it is, to acknowledge the unchangeability of God, and yet assert that he gives complete salvation to a sinner without an eternal purpose to do so? It does not require much discernment to see that if God never purposed to save a sinner until he believes, that his purpose must be contingent, or occasioned by the sinner's believing. This must suppose faith not to be the gift of God, nor yet brought about by the divine agency; for if God gives faith, it requires an eternal purpose, as much as any thing else. But the scripture expressly says that God is the author of our faith, and that it is given on the behalf of Christ; and our opponents acknowledge that faith itself is in consequence of the Spirit of God enlightening our minds. But this requires a divine purpose. Now to say that this purpose is contingent, and yet to acknowledge God's unchangeability in all his purposes and plans is a most palpable absurdity.

But let us attend farther to what the bible says.

1. God gives conviction of sin. John 16. 8, 9.

2: God gives a discovery of Christ as our only righteousness. v. 8, 10.

3. God gives faith. Eph. 2. 8. 2 Pet. 1. 1. Phil. 1. 29.

4. God gives holiness in all its branches. John 16. 8, 11. Matt. 12. 20. Isa. 42. 3, 4. 1 John 4. 19. Zech. 12. 10—14. Ezek. 36. 26, 27.

5. In short, God gives every thing necessary for the salvation of the sinner, and grants constant supplies of grace, as the sinner needs, out of his fulness. John 15. 5. and 14. 19. and 1. 16.

These things which I have mentioned, are supported, not only by the scriptures which I have quoted, but by the current sentiment of the bible. Consequently as God is the giver, he must as we have above demonstrated have an eternal and unchangeable purpose to bestow every part of salvation, on every sinner who shall be saved.

Surely every candid man, who is willing to reason fairly, and admit of doctrines plainly held forth in the bible, will feel himself obliged to acknowledge the eternal purpose of God to save his people. It is in vain to evade the truth; the doctrines I have advanced are the leading doctrines of divinity, and are too well established to be denied; and when we admit them to be true, we must acknowledge the doctrine of election.

CHAPTER IV.

Positive proofs of Election.

LET us now consider those passages of sacred writ which positively assert the doctrine of election, and here I hope my reader will attend to the voice of God in his word, and suffer himself to be convinced; for how can

we expect a man to be convinced who will not give up to divine testimony.

1. 1 Thes. 1. 4. "Knowing brethren, beloved, your election of God." How could Paul the inspired apostle express himself in such strong language, if there is no such thing as election? Paul said he knew their election, because the gospel came unto them not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. But how could the powerful effects of the gospel prove the election of the Thessalonians, if they were not elected to be made the subjects of those powerful effects?

2. Eph. 1. 3, 4, 5, 6. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." And in verse 11. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And in chap. 3. he says that God created all things in Christ, to the intent that by the church he might make known to principalities and powers the manifold, or wonderful and unsearchable wisdom of God, "according (verse 11.) to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

3. In 2 Thes. 2. 13. we have another instance of Paul the inspired apostle positively asserting the election of the Thessalonians, "but we are bound to give thank always to God, for you brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning" (*απ αρχης* in

John 1. 1, 2. the same Greek word is used to signify eternity) "chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Here I must remark that salvation consists in pardon and sanctification. Justification gives us a title to heaven, and sanctification prepares us for glory; hence Paul, Rom. 8. 30. says "whom he justified them he also glorified," that is, prepares for and takes to glory. If therefore justification which is by faith or belief of the truth, and sanctification which is through the Spirit and the word, is what the scripture means by salvation, it is truly elegant, as well as demonstrative for the apostle to say that God chose the christians in Thessalonica from the beginning (or eternity) to obtain salvation by sanctification and faith, for God could not choose them to salvation any other way; for nothing else could be salvation. So that he not only affirms the doctrine of election, but also most beautifully explains the nature of salvation, which is the grand design of election, even sanctification and belief of the truth, given by the divine Spirit.

4. This same apostle in Rom. 8. 29. shows that this is the very idea he had of election. "Whom he did foreknow he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," &c. But of this more by and by, when we come to consider the next mode of scripture proof.

5. This is also the very notion that Peter had of election. 1 Pet. 1. 2. "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." An elect is one chosen out for some particular purpose. Paul says, the purpose is salvation as you have seen above, and explains that salvation to be the sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. Peter although he omits the word salvation, yet he beautifully mentions in what it consists, and he precisely agrees with his brother

Paul, making sanctification and justification through Christ the design of election. He also agrees with Paul's sentiment in Rom. 8. 29. making God's foreknowledge the foundation of election; and both assert the truth of the doctrine.

The opposers of election, in order to get rid of these plain texts, are driven to their shifts indeed. They have to acknowledge election, but they take the liberty to explain it away. They lay hold of the explanation which the apostles give of salvation, and say they are elected after they believe and are sanctified, for say they "it is "through sanctification and belief of the truth," &c. This explanation entirely takes away the beauty of those texts; for after the apostles have already told the foundation of election, even God's foreknowledge, this makes them introduce another, to wit, sanctification; then this elegant explanation of salvation is lost. Also on this hypothesis, I would ask, what is salvation? The angel told Mary, *to save*; or "he shall save his people from their sins," but to save from sin is sanctification; so that to make sanctification the cause of election, and to make salvation the effect of election, is to make the cause and effect the very same thing. The texts say that they were elected to salvation to be conformed to the image of Christ; but this explanation says that this salvation or conformity to the image of Christ is the ground or cause of election; and yet election, if the apostles are true, is the ground of salvation; salvation therefore must be, and must not be at the same time; it must be, in order to produce election; and it must not be, that election may have a chance to produce it. Such absurdities, become Wesley and Fletcher much better than Paul and Peter.

How absurd it is to make the effect the cause. The word of God evidently proves that faith and sanctification are the gifts and works of God. How then can they be the ground of his purpose. Election is a sovereign

act of God's will. How can sanctification which is a work of God, or faith which is a gift of God be the ground of God's choice? They may be the effect of God's will, as the apostles beautifully explain them to be; but the cause they could never be. The counsel of God's own will is the only cause of election that is ever mentioned in scripture.

6. The wise and ingenious apostle Paul, as if suspicious that some such absurd construction would be put on those scriptures, pointedly decides the whole dispute to his young son Timothy, (2 Tim. 1. 9.) a few months before he was beheaded at Rome. "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

7. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Who ordained them? Certainly none but God. To what did he ordain them? To eternal life. What is the first thing a sinner is directed unto, in order to eternal life? To believe. What was the effect of this ordination at this time? They believed. How came those particular ones to believe, and not any of the rest? Because they were ordained, and the rest were not. What was the consequence of their believing? Eternal life. Acts 13. 48.

8. Rom. 11. 5, 6, 7. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeketh for. But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

I shall have occasion to quote several other passages of scripture, in the course of my argumentation; I will

at present let what I have cited suffice as positive proofs of this doctrine. We may take many turns, and try to explain away the natural and evident sense of those texts which I have quoted; but nothing can be more evident if we do, than that we wish to establish a favourite point at the expense of truth; and that we are under the disagreeable necessity to remove those texts out of the way; and because we cannot expunge them, we must somehow make them say one thing and mean another, to keep them from contradicting us.

I grant it is not natural to wish to be wrong in our opinion, or to believe that to be true which we know to be false. Yet we may have an opposition to a thing and not wish it to be true, and an inclination to the contrary, and wish it to be true from some sinister motive. And when this is the case we catch at every argument that leans towards the favourite sentiment, and obstinately oppose every thing which is in favour of the opposite. Thus we often miss the truth, and hold to error for want of candour.

I would not wish to indulge an ungenerous idea of any man. But when a man will go so far, as to face down the express declarations of the divine oracles, and to indulge himself in perverting the natural sense of the bible, I must be pardoned if it is a fault to think him really uncandid. Surely if any man of sense, who is capable of seeing an argument when it is laid before him, who can believe a thing to be so when he finds sufficient reason or divine authority on which to found his belief, after he takes an honest review of what is evidently contained in those passages of God's word quoted in this chapter, and considers the grand and awful authority of the inspired apostles who saw the Lord Jesus Christ and were filled with the Holy Ghost, and yet denies the doctrine of election, he is and certainly must be what

very true

we call an original genius, and that in the highest sense of the words;

“Ac ne fortè roges quo me duce, quo lare tuter:

“Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,

“Quò me cunque rapit tempestas, deferor hospes.” HOR.

But I would counsel all such persons to put on a little more of the humble spirit of Christ, and join with him in his hour of rejoicing, and say with the cordial surrender of their will, “Father I thank thee, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Mat. 11. 25, 26. and Luke 10. 21.

CHAPTER V.

The beautiful chain and order of election, foreknowledge, &c.

WE come now in the third place to consider another way in which the bible proves the doctrine of election; namely, not only in roundly asserting the doctrine, but also by laying down the several steps, in a beautiful order, which God has pleased to take in bringing his divine purpose to effect.

I will confine myself in this inquiry principally to the grand account which we have recorded in the eighth chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Romans beginning with the 29th verse, “For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Here we are presented with a beautiful chain consist-

ing of five links. The first is, Foreknowledge. 2. Predes-
tination. 3. Calling. 4. Justification. 5. Glorification.

1. Foreknowledge. Knowledge is that by which we perceive things to be as they are or have been. Foreknowledge is that by which we perceive things as they will be hereafter.

All who deny the doctrine of election think this is what the apostle means by the word foreknowledge, in this and similar texts; to wit, God's perfectly perceiving what will be in future exactly as they will be. And many among common christians who hold to election think the same. I am not much disposed to cavil with them on this point, for certainly that idea is taken in. Our opposers have so little apprehension of danger in their opinion of God's foreknowledge, that they on all hands acknowledge it without any hesitation. But it is really a very impolitic step if they could avoid taking it. If I wished to deny election, I would certainly deny this also, if I could; and I am certain there is as much difficulty in proving God's foreknowledge as his election; for the one is expressed as plainly as the other, and both as plain as A. B. C. And I do wonder that when they have heart enough to deny the one, they do not deny the other also; for they may rest assured they will both stand or fall together.

If God foreknows that a man will be saved, he must of course foreknow that he will believe and repent; for he never did, nor ever could foreknow the one without the other; he knows that faith and repentance are his gifts, therefore he must foreknow that he would give them to this very man, before he could be saved, for the bible says he must be damned without them; but he could not give faith and repentance without a design or purpose to do so; and this purpose must be eternal, because God cannot change. So you see election, or an

eternal purpose, absolutely follows in consequence of God's foreknowledge, in matters of salvation.

There is a great difference between God's foreknowing things in which he has no immediate hand in bringing to pass, and his knowing that will be which depends on his own agency; it is beyond our skill to perceive how he knows the former, (perhaps from the principles of moral necessity) but we are sure as to the latter, that he cannot know a thing will be done that he has to do himself, unless he intends to do it; for without that it never would or could be done. The bible abundantly proves that God himself is the Author and Finisher of a man's salvation, as we have already proven, and it abundantly proves also, that God knows every man who will be saved; consequently every text in the bible, that proves this, proves also that he intends to save every man that he knows will be saved. The point must unavoidably be given up by our opponents here; they must really acknowledge election, or deny God's foreknowledge.

If you take the foreknowledge mentioned in this text, in this sense, even to include and necessarily imply a divine purpose, I will perfectly agree with you, for that is the identical meaning of the apostle. In Eph. 1. 5. Paul founds predestination on "the good pleasure of God's will;" so that the good pleasure of his will, and his foreknowledge is the same thing. Our blessed Saviour says, "even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." God's foreknowledge is generally called love or approbation. It is difficult to express our ideas on the subject; and it would be impossible for us always to speak accurately on such an exceeding nice subject; and although the scriptures evidently distinguish betwixt foreknowledge and predestination yet it is not easy to catch the two ideas, so as clearly to distinguish them; and when we come to a definition, the subject is so sublime

that our language can hardly get hold of it. We have to content ourselves at last with common phrases such as these: God chose out of love. Out of his mere good pleasure he elected some to everlasting life. He ordained us in his sovereign will. Because he saw fit. He hath determined to save us, &c. Each of these expressions are very agreeable to scripture, and very honouring to God, and perfectly consistent with the doctrine of free grace. And this is the common way in which christians express themselves when they speak on this most exalted subject. By these phrases: Out of love, Mere good pleasure, Sovereign will, Saw fit, they mean exactly what the apostles meant by foreknowledge; and by these words: Chose, Elected, Ordained, Determined, they mean predestination. But we scarcely ever hear them mention foreknowledge for this plain reason, their hearts cannot admit, that what they commonly understand by it, is or can be the ground of their salvation; what they understand by the foreknowledge of God, is just his perception of things future, like Peter when he said "Lord thou knowest all things." The heart of a christian let him be ever so poor, weak and disconsolate, cannot sink so low, as to introduce his glorious God and Father, as a mere spectator in the great matters of his salvation. No, the idea is too groveling; God must have the work to do, and a special purpose; and particularly he must give Him all the glory; therefore the word foreknowledge will not answer their purpose. He must say Love, Everlasting love, Good will, His own good pleasure, His eternal purpose, The counsels of eternity, Free grace, and a number of such sublime and exalted expressions; not knowing at the same time, that he is just explaining and feeling exactly what the apostle means by the word foreknowledge.

And even if this serious christian was one of the strictest of the methodist persuasion he will do the very

same. I have conversed with several of them, and have noticed with no little pleasure how the exercise and feelings of true religion would betray the unsuspecting man into a clear and thankful acknowledgment of the very spirit of the doctrine of election without suspecting it; ascribing all to free grace, and trusting to God for salvation. But if I would only introduce a dispute with him on the subject, he would alter his tone immediately, and nothing would be said by him, any thing like election, except the acknowledgment of God's foreknowledge; and then he would make no difference betwixt God's foreknowledge of the salvation of his dear people, and his foreknowledge of a sparrow, a worm, or a snail; although the inspired apostles made it the very ground of the whole plan of the gospel. This is certainly the consequence of a great absence of mind; but when I consider who I am conversing with, I do not expect logical accuracy, and it is so far from being disgusting, that it is often really entertaining. It is indeed enough to make a cheerful man smile, to see how easily the heart felt exercise of true religion can make a man's wise heart contradict his block-head.

The Greek word *εἰδέναι* signifies to perceive with the natural understanding or perception of the mind, and is used so in scripture; hence Peter says, *συ παντα οιδας* "thou knowest all things." (John 21. 17.) It also signifies to perceive with the natural eyes, as in verse 21. "Peter seeing him" &c. But the word *γινώσκω* although it is sometimes used in the same sense, yet it has a stronger meaning, and this word with the preposition *προς* is the word used to signify foreknowledge, and it implies a special connexion with, or relation to the object perceived. For instance, when I see or think of a rock, a tree, my neighbour's farm or family, my understanding only is employed, and my knowledge of them is merely speculative. But when I perceive or turn my attention

to my own property, or any thing with an intention to make it my own, I feel that my knowledge goes far beyond a mere speculation.

Now this is the kind of knowledge which is meant by the word *γινωσκω*; and this gives a most beautiful idea to what our Saviour said to the Jews, John 10. 14. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine."

Christ is here distinguishing his circumstances from the hireling. "The hireling (said he v. 12.) whose own the sheep are not (v. 13.) fleeth because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep." Then he notes the distinction betwixt the hireling who had no property in the sheep, and himself, the good Shepherd, by saying "I know (*γινωσκω*) my sheep and am known (*γινωσκομαι*) of mine." That is, I have a peculiar property by my own free choice in my sheep, and by my care of them through my influence on their hearts, I bring them freely to choose me as their shepherd. As a further demonstration of this matter he goes farther and says, (v. 15.) "As the Father knoweth me (*γινωσκει* as the Father hath chosen or set his mind on me to take care of the sheep whom he hath given me, v. 29.) even so know I the Father, (and as I freely acquiesce in my father's will.) And I lay down my life for the sheep, (I even lay down my life for my sheep. That is, in as much as my Father hath chosen and appointed me to this business, and as I have acquiesced in his will, I am so far from deserting my important charge when danger approaches (like the hireling) that I lay down my very life to ransom my sheep from danger.

Surely any person by attending to the passage, must be convinced that these are the very ideas which our Saviour gave; and it is impossible to read it without knowing, and feeling the sense of the word *γινωσκω*; and that sense of the word makes the passage so exceedingly

sublime, interesting and beautiful, it is almost impossible to read it without strong sensations in our hearts.

But how flat and insipid it makes this most sublime passage to make this word mean nothing but a mere natural knowledge; and it takes away not only the beauty, but also the force and sense of the passage. In that low insipid sense, the hireling would know the sheep as well as the shepherd; and Christ knows the devil and the goats as well as his sheep. And what argument could it be for Christ to lay down his life for his sheep, because the Father knew him and he knew the Father. But let *γινωσκω* mean perhaps choice, attachment or approbation, as I have explained above, and your mind will be struck with the beauty and force of the passage immediately.

In Eph. 1. 5. St. Paul evidently founds predestination on the good pleasure of the will of God. Therefore by comparing that with Rom. 8. 29. we see that the good pleasure of his will is the very same thing as foreknowledge, for they are both made the foundation of predestination.

In Rom. 11. 2—7. Paul makes the foreknowledge of God to be an active principle, and the very cause of the remnant of Israel being saved. V. 2. “God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.” Not whom he knew before would be saved, but whom it was his good pleasure to save; for he introduces Elias as complaining to God of the total declension of Israel, and God (v. 4.) answering “I have reserved seven thousand &c.” Here is evidently a purpose. Then he infers (v. 5.) “even so” then, or therefore, at this present time also there is a “remnant according to the election of grace.” Then he observes (v. 7.) that although as a nation Israel hath not obtained mercy yet the election hath obtained it, that is, the remnant which God foreknew, and had reserved according to a free and gracious election did obtain that grace to which God had appointed them; and the rest

whom God did not foreknow, were blinded. This makes foreknowledge to be the original cause of the salvation of the remnant of Israel, and consequently means the purpose or counsel of the will of God.

Again. Those who deny particular election to salvation, acknowledge that Christ was elected to suffer as a Saviour. But Peter says (Acts 2. 23.) that he was brought to those sufferings by the foreknowledge of God. Then, with what face can they deny that sinners are brought to salvation by God's foreknowledge, when Paul asserts the one, as roundly as Peter does the other?

Upon the whole, God's foreknowledge is the first link in the grand scheme of the gospel, and by comparing those texts together which I have done, we find that it means not what we commonly understand by knowing a thing before it comes to pass, but God actually choosing or fixing upon the objects of his love, with a gracious design to appoint them "to obtain salvation by Christ."

CHAPTER VI.

Predestination.

PREDESTINATION is the second link in the order of election. Predestination is the immediate effect of foreknowledge. It is the result of the counsel of the divine will. It embraces the end, or the particular design for which the choice is made. This is evident from the etymology of the word; for both the English word predestinate, and the Greek word *προωρισε* signify to set apart before hand for some particular end or purpose; and this is the view the apostle always took of it. "He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Having predestinated us to the adoption of children. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being

“predestinated, &c. that we should be to the praise of
“his glory.”

The apostle in this chain or order, particularly mentions the end in view in predestination, viz. to be conformed to the image of Christ. Holiness is the image of Christ. To be conformed to his image, is to be sanctified; and this end is obtained as the apostle Paul says, “by
“the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;” and as St. Peter says, “through sanctification of the
“Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of
“Jesus Christ.

How absurd are those sentiments which make faith and repentance, and holiness to precede election, when the order mentioned by the apostle evidently makes them all the consequence of it. It is truly astonishing what shifts a man will take to maintain his favourite sentiment. Those persons who espouse those sentiments find the doctrine of election too well established to be totally denied, and in order to stride over such positive proofs the best way they can, they will acknowledge an election lest they should be thought barefacedly to contradict the bible. But what kind of an election is it? Even this, that God elects a sinner to salvation after he believes, repents and turns to God. This is indeed a great compliment they pay to their Maker! But it is a far greater to the penitent sinner. But it is none at all to the apostle Paul. It compliments the Divine Being by giving him the honour to approve of the diligence of the sinner, and of becoming mild and very good in taking a notion to save him now, seeing he is likely to do pretty well, so that God will now be his friend, and even take him to heaven, provided he will do as well for the future, as he has done. But the sinner is complimented with the honour of being the cause of his own election; and also to cause the purpose of God towards him, to stand. But Paul is contradicted as one who deserves no credit,

and his beautiful order is turned exactly wrong end foremost.

Paul's plan or order is, first God's purpose or the counsel of his will, then the ways and means to bring it to pass, to wit, calling, justifying, and glorifying; but this plan is first the sinner adopting or taking a design to be saved, and attending to the calls of the gospel, in order to effect his purpose; then after he has made some proficiency, God takes a notion and chooses the sinner to salvation, &c. They also introduce the divine Being as choosing by sanctification and faith. This is truly a very logical way of choosing! Paul introduces the divine Sovereign as choosing by an act of his will, which is indeed, the common way in which rational beings choose. They make sinner's choice first, and God's choice subsequent to theirs! Paul makes God's choice first, and to originate before the foundation of the world, even from eternity (*απ' αρχης*); and the sinner's choice as a consequence of God's eternal purpose. They make the sinner's faith and repentance the motives of God's choice! Paul makes the motives all to originate in God himself, and calls it the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace; and herein he agrees with our Lord himself, who says "even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight;" and indeed what is it on this subject, in which they do not evidently contradict the apostle?

But if it is not agreed to let the bible decide which plan is best, and looks the most plausible; let us consider that God is unchangeable in all his purposes, and must have the whole scheme of salvation in one eternal view before him; and let us consider that the sinner is poor, dependent, and wicked in every imagination of his heart, and not disposed to think one good thought, if left to himself; and on these hypotheses which are given up on all hands, let us appeal to reason and common sense, whether Paul or his opponents are right. Surely Paul;

for he humbles the sinner, and exalts God, in the boundless riches of his grace, and represents the great Saviour as acting on a system constructed on the basis of infinite wisdom, and unchangeable perfection.

If I could catch my opponent in a serious and an honest hour, admitting him to be well acquainted with his own heart, and with the genuine exercises of true grace, I could almost submit the decision of the question to the dictates of his own conscience in the sight of God. I would ask, when God saves a sinner, yea when God began the salvation of your own soul, did he follow your plan, or Paul's? How can a serious man ever forget that God chose him because of any thing he had done or thought? Does not his own heart know, and feel how unworthily and thoughtlessly he lived until God met him with his divine power? Did not the divine energy rouse him, or he would not have been saved? And even to this very day is he not as weak as ever, only as he is assisted by divine grace? I am confident there is not a true christian on earth but must know these things to be true, let him profess what he will. Then why should he, or how can he deny the doctrine of election, which is the very cause of his salvation? For if an unchangeable God had not purposed to grant those divine impressions to him, he never would or could have received them.

I once in a familiar chat with a methodist preacher, asked him in a style usual to me, how he happened to get religion? He said, God gave it to me. Ay! said I, and when did he happen to take that notion? O! said he, he intended to do it from eternity. From eternity, said I? Yes, he replied, I believe if he had not designed from eternity to give me grace, I never would have got it. I then in a sprightly manner observed, that that was my very doctrine of election. Is it? said he. Yes. Do you expect to get to heaven? I hope so, said he. What makes you hope so, said I? He answered because God by his grace will help me on, according as he has promised.

And did God from eternity design not only to give you grace at first, but also to go on to give you grace until he takes you to heaven? Yes certainly, said he. Now said I, that is exactly my doctrine of perseverance; and you are as strong a calvinist as I am.

Would my reader believe that this man denied election the very next sentence he spoke? But nevertheless, if men will think and speak inconsistencies, God will still go on according to his own infinitely wise plan, in the exact order which he has prescribed in his divine and unchangeable counsel; which plan and order he has made known by the apostle in the passage now under consideration.

CHAPTER VII.

Effectual calling, Justification and Glorification.

WE now come to the third particular mentioned in order, viz. Calling, (v. 30.) “Moreover, whom he did “predestinate, them he also called.” This link in the chain, or order of election, embraces all the variety of means which God has appointed, and which are taken into view in this doctrine, in order to bring about the great end to which God has predestinated his people. Which evidently proves that there is a divine purpose to bring all to salvation, who ever will be made the happy subjects of the grace of the gospel; and that all those who are chosen of God will be brought to salvation at a proper time, and by proper means, all which are included in the eternal counsel of God.

There are two things hereby proven and made manifest: 1. That means are far from being unnecessary in consequence of this doctrine. That they are perfectly established by it; and that it would be impossible, on the plan of election, for God to bring to pass what he has purposed without them; and therefore the apostle in-

roduces the means in connexion with the influences of the Spirit to accompany them, in the third link of the chain. The word, *called*, includes both the outward and inward call; for it is abundantly evident from the bible that God calls his people both by the outward means (Rom. 10, 14—17.) and by the inward power of his Spirit; (1 Cor. 1. 24. John 16. 8—11.) and it ordinarily requires both to accomplish the end. 2. It is also evident that election does not infringe upon free agency, for the means which God has appointed are calculated to persuade sinners, not to force them; and even the influences of the Spirit are by no means compulsory, but persuasive; for the Spirit only brings the truths of the word home to the heart. However strong the argument is, and however morally impossible it may be for the sinner to withstand, yet it never can infringe on the liberty of the will. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”

Thus God in his infinite wisdom has concerted his plan in such a manner as not to encroach upon the natural liberty of his people, and yet by his divine illumination attending the means of grace, to secure the great end which he from eternity purposed to accomplish.

It is a common observation that God can work without means, or even against means. I acknowledge that God is not tied to means so to speak, unless he is pleased to tie himself; and I could wish that divines would use such expressions with caution. If God has purposed to save sinners by the means of the gospel he cannot save them without it, unless he breaks through his own design. This he never will do, nor can do, without changing; but God cannot change.

Consequently those who assert that election destroys the use of means, when it is the very thing that renders means necessary, evidently show either great weakness or great wickedness; and those who think the heathens

can be saved without the gospel have more charity than good sense. When we assert things, we should take care not to go contrary to the gospel plan, which is to save sinners through the use of the means; which is the third link in the order of election.

Therefore, when God is about to save a sinner, he effectually calls him by the gospel. The sinner believes, and is thereby interested in Christ, and consequently freely justified through his spotless righteousness. This is the fourth link in the apostle's chain, or gospel order.

"Whom he called, them he also justified." Justification is a grand prerequisite to holiness. It consists in the divine pardon and acceptance. The justified sinner is delivered from the curse of the law, and is by Christ entitled to all the benefits of the covenant of grace.

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Glory will follow as a necessary consequence.

Glory is the ultimate end of predestination. It is the image of Christ, and the last particular mentioned by the apostle. It consists in two things, holiness in heart and life, and eternal happiness and glory in heaven. Holiness is called glory in several places in the bible; "we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Holiness is God's glory, and when we sin we come short of glory, and debase ourselves. "Who hath called us to glory and virtue," i. e. holiness and christian fortitude in the things of religion. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." As holiness is glory, and as God by sanctification gives holiness, therefore God certainly glorifies those whom he sanctifies; that is to say, he gives them glory, or makes them glorious by enstamping his image upon them. Moreover, by sanctification he prepares them for glory. It would be impossible for God to glorify an unsanctified sinner.

Finally he takes them to heaven, and there he glorifies them forever. There they are completely holy, and honoured with his glorious presence, world without end.

We have now taken a particular view of that beautiful order stated by the apostle; and what is it? It is that line of procedure which God in his infinitely wise and unchangeable counsel for his own glory has prescribed to himself. The apostle seems greatly taken up in it; how he exults and triumphs. He challenges the universe and all the powers of hell, to separate the elect from God. Certainly we must yield to such evidence as this. Sometimes we may be mistaken in the meaning of words, but there can be no mistake when a whole plot or plan is laid before us in a most beautiful order, beginning at the original or moving principle, and proceeding regularly step by step, making one thing depend on another from first to last, and proceeding with incomparable wisdom; every step so necessary that not one of them can be spared without defeating the whole, and at the same time so well chosen that every part answers the purpose intended and insures the grand object, when the whole is taken together, with infallible certainty; this plan begins with the eternal purpose of God's own will, and ends in the eternal glory of poor lost sinners. How is it possible to mistake the evidence here? And is there no such thing as election after all? Was Paul deceived? Was it all just the sallies of his frantic brain? Does he intend to establish no such doctrine? Was he just trying what his own genius could do, by way of a learned experiment? Could all the wisdom of men and angels have contrived, or even thought of such a plan? If it is true, will it not completely save the very vilest sinner? If it is false, or even one link of it false, will it not defeat the whole gospel, and effectually overthrow every hope of the believer? Which of the parts in this gospel plan can be spared? Not his foreknowledge, whether it means a mere natural

knowledge, or a divine purpose. A sinner could not be saved, and God not know it. Certainly he must know every thing about the whole business. He must know his own purpose. And a purpose he must have, if he has grace to give, if he has the understanding to enlighten, if he has faith to give, and sins to pardon, the heart to change, the soul to sanctify, and enemies to conquer, &c. This must certainly require some purpose; and it must be unchangeable, and consequently an eternal purpose. God does not work blindly, without knowing any thing, or intending any thing. The saving of a lost sinner is too nice, critical and important, to be done by a blind deity who has no plan to work by, or purpose to work at all. We consequently find God's foreknowledge cannot be spared and the sinner saved. Can predestination be spared? By no means. Predestination is the very resolution of the divine will to save a sinner; and it calls up the great end to view, and lays the whole work before the divine mind. Can calling be spared? Not at all, for that includes the whole means, both public and private, to be made use of to bring about God's purpose; in order to bring to salvation the Spirit works by the word, so that neither the word nor the Spirit's power could possibly be dispensed with. Justification must take place, or the sinner would be damned at last; and sanctification must prepare the sinner for heaven. Take any one part away, and the sinner is undone; but with them all, O what a complete salvation, founded on infallible principles!

Reader, according to the notions of my opponents this is the doctrine which came from hell. It destroys the soul. It renders all the means of grace useless. It destroys love, holiness and every thing that is good, and does every thing that is bad. Let it come from where it will, the inspired apostle Paul was one of the means of bringing it. What sort of a hell was it, in which the doctrine of election originated? It must be a very wise hell,

a sovereign hell, a powerful hell and a good hell. For we never heard, or read of a wiser, more sovereign, more powerful or more merciful plan taking place in all the records of heaven. The abstracted plan of the creation was a comparative trifle to it. When I take a view of God creating the world by his power, I see nothing but what I expect a God could do; but when I see such a plan as this, to save a lost sinner, I am lost in astonishment in a moment. I pity a poor honest farmer who perhaps has never made doctrinal divinity much his study, when he is misled by others into a disbelief of this doctrine. But I confess it does stretch my charity considerably, to excuse a man of sense and study for denying a doctrine which can so easily be supported by divine authority from so many passages in the bible. Such a man may think as he pleases for me, and he must think as he pleases; but while he thinks as he does, I will have the happiness to have the inspired apostle on my side, to contradict his sentiments, and assert the glorious doctrine of election.

There is danger sometimes of proving too well; but such a most interesting doctrine as this, and so much exploded, can never be too well proven. Although I have already abundantly established this great truth, by the three modes of proof I have taken into view, yet I must now call my reader's attention to some other things mentioned in the bible, as another class of evidence, to establish this important point.

CHAPTER VIII.

Several texts considered, the substances of which plainly teach the doctrine of election.

THERE are many texts and passages in scripture proving certain things, which cannot be true unless the doctrine of election be true. I will mention a few of them.

Gen. 3. 15: "I will put enmity betwixt thee and the woman, and betwixt thy seed and her seed." This text proves three things; that the woman shall have seed, that the serpent shall have seed, and there shall be enmity betwixt them.

All agree that the woman's seed is Christ, and that some of the children of Adam are counted as his seed. "He shall see his seed, he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." These are called the seed: the children of Abraham, the children of promise, the children of God, and the children of the kingdom. But who are the serpent's seed? Not young serpents nor devils; but non-elected men. Christ calls those who shall finally be lost, represented by the tares; "the children of the wicked one;" and of the Jews who were blinded, and devoted to destruction, and who Paul, in the 11th chapter to the Romans, says, were not saved by the election; Christ says, "ye are of your father the devil;" and he calls them "serpents, a generation of vipers." Those who will be lost are consequently the seed of the serpent, and not of the woman; and those who will be saved are the seed of the woman united to Christ as his spiritual seed, and not the seed of the serpent.

Enmity is perhaps the greatest opposition that we have any idea of, and there is steady and uniform enmity held forth in scripture, subsisting betwixt the seed of

the serpent, and the seed of the woman, in every instance in which the two classes are introduced as the subject of history. And we find that God proceeded on the plan of election from the fall of Adam, and that the very first promulgation of the gospel contains, and was actually founded on this very doctrine.

When we attend to the history of the bible, giving an account of the divine procedure according to the gospel plan, we find that he uniformly proceeded on the very principles which he established in the hearing of Adam and Eve, when he gave that wonderful epitome of the gospel. If we find it so, must we not acknowledge that the gospel is founded on God's eternal purpose of election? Let us however examine some of the most remarkable passages.

We cannot read the account of Cain and Abel, without having the idea of the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent painted before us. It is evident that God took care of Abel, gave him faith, and he consequently gained acceptance with the Lord; while Cain was left to wander as a vagabond and an outcast from his presence. It is surely remarkable, and a corroborating testimony of the truth of the doctrine of election, that the two first children of Adam were marked as an instance of God's sovereignty, the one the seed of the woman, and the other the seed of the serpent.

Abel is called righteous, (Matt. 23. 35.) and he obtained witness by his excellent offering, that he was righteous; (Heb. 11. 4.) and St. John says that he lost his life because his works were righteous. (1 John 3. 12.) But Cain is ranked among the serpents and generation of vipers who were inveterate in their enmity against the prophets, and Christ and his apostles, and is mentioned as the first persecutor, who had shed his brother's blood, which cried for vengeance, with the blood of all the

prophets, against the devoted nation of the Jews. (Matt. 23. 33—35.)

Although Moses is very short in his history of this awful transaction, yet he does not omit to mark particularly how Cain walked in the steps of his father, the devil. "He rose up against his brother and slew him." The devil is a murderer from the beginning. "Where is thy brother Abel? and he said I know not." This was a grand falsehood. The devil is a liar, and the father of it. To this also St. John bears testimony. (1 John 3. 10—12.) In this the children of God are manifest, and the "child of the devil," the woman's seed and the serpent's seed. He goes on directing them to love one another, "not as Cain, (says he) who is of that wicked one," &c. who is of the serpent.

What awful enmity is in Cain, that child of the devil, against Abel, the seed of the woman. "I will put enmity betwixt thee and the woman, and betwixt thy seed and her seed."

All degrees of opposition or enmity arise from some difference in circumstances, and to this must be traced all degrees of enmity, in all opposite parties whatsoever. It is not natural for any man to have enmity against himself; his interest does not clash; he is not the subject of variant circumstances at one and the same time. But the circumstances of different persons may, and often do vary and clash, and very frequently produce enmity; and there are some different circumstances which never fail to produce opposition.

We find all over the world, that nothing has caused more opposition and enmity than the gospel, not so much in those who were truly religious, but in the wicked world against them and the gospel. The enmity is in the serpent against the woman, and in his seed against hers. The reason why the gospel has produced such awful enmity, spite, malice and bloodshed, is be-

cause nothing ever did, or ever can put such a great difference in circumstances betwixt different parties, as religion (I mean true religion) does betwixt those who are the subjects of it, and those who are not. One king may reign over one nation, and another over another; and a thousand different circumstances may subsist betwixt different persons which are of a worldly nature. But for one man to be an heir of heaven and another an heir of hell, for one to be a child of God and another a child of Satan, for one to be righteous and the other to be guilty, for one to be holy and to love holiness and hate sin and the other to be unholy and hate holiness and love sin, produces a difference as wide as can possibly be in this world; and infinitely more important and interesting than any worldly circumstances can be.

Hence it is, that although kings and emperors have waged war, and made great devastation to acquire dominion, or to revenge a petty insult, yet even those wars were not carried on with rancour and malice, against all ranks and degrees. They could fight, and fight hard too, in the field of battle, but not out of mere thirst for human blood. But see the bloody persecuting Jews and Romans, in the midst of havoc and slaughter, ready to devour every one they could lay their hands on, who would profess the name of Jesus. It is truly shocking to read of the awful enmity that has been in innumerable instances exhibited against Christ and his people.

Now what is all this but the serpent and the woman, Cain and Abel, the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman.

Nothing can be more different than holiness and sin, happiness and misery, salvation and damnation. This is what makes the difference betwixt angels and devils; good men and bad; the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

Pagans never fought about their religion. The heathen world cared not what god, or how many, any nation worshipped, or how they worshipped them. The devil had no spite against idol worship, and consequently there was no enmity betwixt one worshipper and another. This was the case as to every nation except the Jews, and they were the very butt of the malice of all around them; and God had to preserve them by his almighty power, or they would soon have been devoured. Although Satan could bear with every other kind of worship, yet he must bend his spite against the church of God; and his children must do so too, for the enmity is not only in the serpent, but also in his seed. And when Christ the promised seed of the woman came into the world to set up his kingdom on gospel principles, both Jews and gentiles were up in arms against him and his peaceable followers. Although they did no harm to any around them, yet they are chased from city to city, and from country to country.

Although the chief priests and the Cesars of Rome could suffer the worshippers of gods by hundreds to pay their adoration in peace; yet none must bow to the name of Jesus without being in danger of death. What better reason can be given for all this, than because there is enmity betwixt the serpent and the woman, and betwixt his seed and her seed. And can such facts as these take place without the doctrine of election.

Now God cannot be the immediate author of spite and malice; yet these are the exercises of that very enmity which subsists betwixt the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. But the question is, how did God put it there? as he really did; "I will put enmity betwixt thee and the woman," &c.

It is not doing justice to this important text to say, that God merely permits it. This would not only be flat and insipid, but it is not the true meaning. God is here

for the first time proclaiming the gospel, telling the serpent in the hearing of Adam and Eve, what he meant to do to save sinners; and he is pronouncing the curse upon the serpent. To speak of mere permission in such a case would be truly ridiculous, when the eternal salvation of the soul depended on it. It is certainly against the principles of free grace, as has been observed before, to introduce God as a mere spectator, where his own glory and the soul of a sinner are at stake. The important question therefore returns, to which I answer, that it was possible for God if he saw fit, in the plan of the gospel, to make the circumstances of the devil very different from the circumstances of Eve; and if he saw fit, he by giving a number of Adam's posterity to Christ, who in the scheme of the gospel was to be the seed of the woman, could make a wide difference between the remnant left in his sovereignty, as the seed of the serpent, and those chosen out to be Christ's spiritual seed. Not only so, but in reclaiming his chosen ones, it was necessary to give them faith; and in his sovereignty he could leave the others without faith; moreover he must change and sanctify the hearts of the one, and not of the other. These things God could do consistent with all his divine perfections; and what is the consequence? It is unavoidably this: Satan made an instrument of Eve, to induce Adam as a covenant head to break covenant with God, by which he reduced that happy family to a state of misery. But God says, Satan, I will make use of this very woman, weak as you found her to be, to bring forward another covenant head. I will give Adam and her, and a number of their posterity, to this glorious head, whom she shall bring forth as her seed, who shall be counted the seed whom he shall see as the travail of his soul. You shall be left in your cursed state; they shall be saved from it. I will unite them to Christ, and they shall come to him; but you and your seed shall be passed

by, and be left to perish. I will sanctify their souls by the seed of this woman, and bring them back to their first state of holiness again. But you and your seed shall forever be outcasts from my presence. He shall break your head, and thou shalt only bruise his heel. He and his shall only suffer a temporary and slight consequence of their fall; but you shall be completely ruined forever. If ever there was, or will be difference of circumstances calculated to beget opposition, these must be acknowledged to be so. And this is the only way in which God did put enmity betwixt the serpent and the woman, and betwixt his seed and her seed.

God by his sovereign will and good pleasure was pleased to pass by the fallen angels and choose men to be the objects of his boundless mercy; and by the same exercise of sovereignty, he was pleased to save but a part of the human race. And he was pleased to take such ways to manifest his mercy and sovereignty as he saw fit; therefore he saw fit to put a difference betwixt fallen angels and mankind, and betwixt those of mankind whom he was pleased to choose, and the rest of the race of Adam; and inasmuch as he was pleased to choose Adam and Eve, it was very necessary that he should in the prosecution of his divine plan make known his purpose immediately after the fall. Hence we find to our great astonishment, that the gospel was first proclaimed in the hearing of Adam and Eve, who were no doubt looking for a curse every moment. But instead of a curse upon them as they expected, they found to their great surprise, that the curse was levelled against the serpent, their grand enemy; and but a part of their race included in this curse; and that they and the chosen part of their race were still the objects of God's care and everlasting love; and the curse as to them was only pronounced upon their temporalities, the ground, their bodies, in temporary afflictions while they lived here, consisting in

hard laborious tillage, and sorrowful child-bearing. And that the woman whom the serpent beguiled, and on whom Adam laid the whole blame of his fall, the serpent found to be the ruin of his whole plan; and Adam found her to be the channel of his salvation.

Now I will submit it to the judgment of any man of candour, whether I have not given a scriptural explanation of this most important passage of holy writ; and let any man think whether the very first account which the world ever heard of the gospel plan, was not founded on the doctrine of election. I must conclude this chapter in the words of the inspired apostle on this very subject. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and "knowledge of God, for of him, and through him, and "to him are all things. To whom be glory forever, "Amen."* (Rom. 11. 33, 34, 35, 36.)

* I have thought strange that some divines have attempted to give the reason why God chose to save fallen men, and not fallen angels. God has given us no reason for it. He is not accountable to us; and we have no reason to believe that there ever was any reason for it, but only his own good will. Why did God choose Jacob and not Esau? we can give no reason, because there is none to give, unless we give the reason our Saviour gave in a similar case: "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Why should we suppose that God had any inducement in the one case more than the other? And the reasons they with so much humility give, seem to be no great compliment to the doctrine of free grace. "We did not fall so inexcusably as they; "our temptation was greater than theirs; they fell out of heaven, we "only out of paradise; when the angels fell they left vacant seats, men "were chosen to fill them up," &c. I can see no reason in all these things. God does not choose the best among men; and why should he choose man before angels, if angels were the worst, when his very design was to magnify the riches of his free grace? We had better be contented with God's sovereignty (and not feed our own vanity) until God is pleased to give us a better reason, if he has or could have a better one; and we for the present may rest assured, whenever we find the true reason, it will not feed our pride, or extenuate our faults; but rather glorify the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER IX.

Some other instances from texts proving the doctrine of election.

HAVING been so lengthy on the passages quoted in the last chapter, I shall briefly touch at a few more which speak of the choice of God in his divine sovereignty amongst mankind. Noah's family and the whole world is a remarkable circumstance. The calling of Abraham, the choice of Isaac before Ishmael, of Jacob before Esau, the distinction betwixt the children of Israel and the Egyptians, the Canaanites and Babylonians, and at last the gentiles being taken in, and the Jews cast off, are all among the peculiar instances given us in the bible, of God's sovereign dispensations of grace to whom, and in what manner he pleased. I will not wait to comment on any of these plans; but just observe, that to me it appears impossible to look seriously at every circumstance, that these things ever would, or could have been, without a special purpose of God toward his elect in the whole business from first to last.

The next thing which I shall notice is what is promised to Christ as a mediator. I believe no one disputes but that Christ was elected. (Isa. 42. 1.) "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," and also (1 Pet. 2. 6.) "Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect precious." These texts go to show that Jesus was elected or chosen as a mediator by his Father; and the design for which he was appointed was to save "his people from their sins;" and it is also evident from scripture that he was chosen from eternity; (Prov. 8. 23—31.) and we must take this idea from Rev. 13. 8. "The book of life of the lamb slain

“from the foundation of the world.” Moreover it is said (Eph. 1. 4.) that his people were chosen in him.

Now here are four things proven. First, Christ was elected; 2, from eternity; 3, to save his people; and 4, his people were chosen in him. I ask could these four things be true, if the doctrine I am defending be false? They certainly could not. But they are proven true by the bible. Therefore the bible, in proving this, proves the doctrine of election.

Again, The Father promised to Christ that his people should be willing in the day of his power. (Psal. 110. 3.) There are three things proven here, first, Christ had a people; 2, that he would exercise his power upon them, and 3, a promise that they should be made willing; which things cannot be true without election. Without election he could not as a Mediator have a people who needed to be made willing, nor would he as a Mediator have a right to exercise his power for them, neither could his Father promise that they should be willing. Every promise supposes a purpose; and God’s purposes are always eternal, as I have already proven. This text proves a divine promise; it must therefore prove a divine purpose of fulfilment, for we must not think that God is unfaithful. Therefore this text proves election.

Jesus Christ said “no man can come unto me except “the Father which has sent me draw him; and all that “the Father hath given to me, shall come to me, and “him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6. 37, 44.) There are three things proven here. First, Christ’s people were given to him by his Father; 2, that his Father would draw them, and they every one should come to him, and 3, that he will infallibly save them. These things are every one false unless the doctrine of election be true; for if it is false, Christ as a Saviour has no people given him by his Father; his Father never will draw one, for he can have no purpose

to do it; consequently they never will come, and they will of course die in their sins. This text therefore does infallibly prove this doctrine.

In the 40th of Isaiah, verses 10, 11, 12. you may see what the Father promised the Mediator. I will not quote the passages, but you may see that the following things were promised. 1. "He shall see his seed." This would be a natural impossibility, except the doctrine of election be admitted, for otherwise he would have no seed. Paul says, (Rom. 11. 8.) "that the children of the promise are counted for the seed." But if God had not promised him a seed, how could he promise that he should see it. But he had promised him a seed, and that he shall see it, and he unchangeably designs to fulfil it. 2. "He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" that is, the great design of his sufferings shall be completed. The design for which Christ suffered was to save many, (verse 11.) and God by promise secures to Christ the reward of his sufferings; which he could not do without a divine purpose. 3. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant "justify many." That is, by his divine skill in conducting the plan of redemption, he shall bring many sinners to a gospel knowledge of himself as the only atonement for sin, so that by faith laying hold of him, they shall be justified through his righteousness. This is a glorious promise indeed, wherein God secures to Christ his approbation of his atonement, and the justification of his seed through it; which he could not do, but on the plan of election.

Farther, I would take notice of certain promises mentioned in scripture, which are of a peculiar nature, and do prove the doctrine I am vindicating. In Titus 1. 2. we have this surprising introduction to that epistle. "In "hope of eternal salvation, which God who cannot lie "promised before the world began." Here is an eternal salvation promised before time began, and Paul laying

claim to it according to the faith of God's elect; Paul was surely right in laying hold of a promise made in eternity, by the faith of God's elect, for no other faith could possibly do it. Could my opponent lay hold of a promise that insured eternal salvation, made before the world began? he must admit the doctrine of election first. Paul also (2 Tim. 1. 9.) says that God saved us by grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began. Here I will ask three questions. 1. Can we be saved by grace given us, without any purpose to give grace? 2. Could we by grace given us in Christ Jesus? 3. Could we by grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began? Paul answers. No. It is by his purpose, and grace given us &c. Can my opponent come forward and rebut the opinion of Paul?

Matt. 8. 11, 12. "I say unto you that many shall come," "from the east and the west," from the rising to the setting of the sun, east and west of Jerusalem, the gentiles, "and shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom," the Jewish nation "shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." I will take the liberty to put a few questions here for inquiry.

1. Does Christ say so merely, or has he to bring it to pass?

2. Does he intend to convert many of the gentiles and take them to heaven? Certainly. "For many shall come from east and west."

3. What will become of the Jews, "the children of the kingdom?" does he intend to convert them also? No, but they "shall be cast out to perdition."

4. Is all this to be done without any purpose, design or choice? I am sure I never could draw such a conclusion.

In John 10. 14, 16, 28, 29. the following things are proven.

1. "Christ has sheep whom he knows, and they know him;" that is, when he in order to bring them to salvation makes himself known unto them; these of whom he now speaks are of the Jews.

2. He has other sheep, not of the Jews but of the gentiles.

3. He must bring them also, and unite in one both Jews and gentiles.

4. The Father gave them to him.

5. He laid down his life for them.

6. He gives them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither can any pluck them out of his or his Father's hand.

What a little, low idea we must have of the grand and important mission of Christ, the gift of his Father, and of his faithfulness to his Father's trust, which is laid before us in this passage of the evangelist, if we deny the doctrine of election. Unless that doctrine be true, some of the things here proven would be impossible. Christ could not have sheep yet to be brought; and he could not be under any obligations by promise to his Father to bring them; he could not lay down his life for them in particular, (verse 26.) he could not promise to give them eternal life; they could not be in neither his nor his Father's hand; and they might perish. Yea, as I have already shown, if he had not an unchangeable purpose to save them they must perish eternally.

This is the will of him that sent me, (says Christ, John 6. 39.) that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing. The moment you deny election, you also with it deny the truth of this text. For it would be impossible for Christ to be obligated to save, or that it should be the will of his Father that he should save all whom he had given him, unless he had actually given a certain number unto him for that purpose. "I have much people in this city. (Acts 18. 10.) It might with

equal propriety be translated, There are much (or many) people in this city belonging to me. It is Christ that speaks. His people belong to him by the gift of his Father, (John 17. 6.) and by the purchase of his death, (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.) Now I ask, 1. Had Christ any people in Corinth before the gospel was preached there? Yes many. 2. Were they his before they believed? Certainly. 3. What did he intend or purpose to do with them, and what was his design in sending Paul to preach to them? Undoubtedly to give them faith and salvation. (1 Cor. 3. 5, 6.) Does this prove election? If not, it proves nothing.

Our Saviour when he was upon earth rejoiced in his Father's sovereign will, because he hid the gospel from some, and revealed it to others. (Luke 10. 21.) Did Christ rejoice and thank his Father for nothing? Was he mistaken? Or was it God's will to do as Christ said he did. But it must be a grand and an unhappy mistake unless the doctrine of election be true; for this very thing is that very doctrine.

In this part of our argument we began with the gospel in the garden of Eden, and we have noted a variety of texts and circumstances as corroborating evidences of the truth of this doctrine. And now we will close this branch of our testimony with the close of the gospel at the day of judgment. That will be the grand and important revelation of all the glorious designs and purposes of God in the gospel. Our blessed Saviour has favoured us with a particular account of the issue of that day. He who has the whole business before him, and who is appointed by his Father to be the judge, has told us what will be the event of that day, (Matt. 25. 31, to the end.)

I will not repeat the whole passage, but only notice some particulars. We find that he still knows his sheep, and that he separates them from the goats. He will say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father; but to them on the left, Depart ye cursed. Here note,

that although Adam and Eve, and the woman's seed, were under the curse; yet the curse was pronounced on the serpent and his seed. Adam and Eve, and all the the children of promise, were really blessed in the seed of the woman. The gift of Christ, the seed of the woman, was really a blessing to them; even the fountain or sum of all the blessings of the gospel; and the promise blessed them with an account of what the blessing consisted in, and gave a blessed ground of confidence. And it is worthy of notice, that there was not a single thing pronounced upon Adam and Eve, but what remains to this day; and both men and women have to suffer them, even after they actually believe in Christ; and their interest in Christ by faith does not deliver them from it, although it does completely deliver them from the curse of the law. This shows that the ground's being cursed, and Adam's sorrow and toil, and Eve's travail in child-bearing, are only afflictive dispensations: even natural death itself, which believers to this day suffer, notwithstanding their interest in Christ and deliverance from the curse; and some of these things are felt very little, and some not at all, even by the seed of the serpent. Thousands of the wicked, who never will have an interest in Christ, labour very little and live in affluence and ease, and sometimes Christ's redeemed ones are their slaves; and there have been thousands of wicked young women who have died without ever suffering a single pang of child-bearing. These things certainly prove, that although the spiritual seed were under the curse, yet the things God pronounced were not the curse of the law.

But it was quite otherwise with the serpent: the curse did light directly upon him; and it is evident that his seed, who were the remnant of the race of Adam, were included, and their head, their very life, doomed to destruction. Therefore the sheep on the right hand are said to be blessed, and the goats on the left, to be cursed.

The sheep are said to be blessed of the Father. God the Father originally, according to the counsel of his own will, to the glory of his grace, gave the blessing in giving them to Christ, and in its being his will that Christ should lose nothing, but that he should raise them up at the last day. Surely he blessed them, yea, they should be blessed. They are called to inherit the kingdom, prepared from the foundation of the world. The kingdom prepared, since when? Before time began, before they were created, before they had an existence. This can never be true; but on the doctrine of election.

On the other hand, everlasting fire was not prepared for them; there never was any design to punish them. The seed of the woman, the cross of Christ, and the kingdom, was prepared for them from eternity; but hell was prepared for the devil and his angels—the serpent and his seed. I ask, how could these things be without any purpose in God? And if such was the purpose of God, it must be election. Must you not at least admit, that those texts which I have quoted, do prove certain things, which are enough to stagger the mind of any man who denies this doctrine. What a wonderful chain of events, from the fall to the day of judgment, all coinciding with each other from first to last.

Purpose, choice, election, sound from one end of the world to the other, in words, in facts, in texts, in causes, in effects, and in all circumstances. How is it possible to think of the plan of the gospel, the design of the gospel, the promises of the gospel, and especially to feel the effects of the gospel, without acknowledging the doctrine of election.

CHAPTER X.

Paul's opinion examined into, as a forcible argument for the doctrine of election.

I MUST now call your attention to another argument, to establish the doctrine of election. This is the last mode of argumentation which I have proposed to treat; and although it seems as if enough has been said, yet such is the importance of the doctrine, and so virulent is the opposition to it in many professing christians, and the subject so little handled, that I think it my duty to give it an ample discussion.

If we could once get to know what was the opinion of any of the sacred writers on this subject, considering that they were infallible in their sentiments, being inspired by the Holy Ghost, we would and ought to consider it as positive proof. Let us therefore inquire a little into this matter.

I will mention a few things relative to our Lord's mind on the subject. His praying not for the world, but for those whom God had given him out of the world, and for all those who would believe, through the gospel, is a very strong circumstance. His rejoicing in the will of his Father, hiding the gospel from some and revealing it to others, is another. His vindicating his divine mission, and showing the purpose for which he laid down his life, even for his sheep; his account of the final proceedings of the day of judgment; his parable of the tares, are all strong circumstances. His saying, "Many are called, but few chosen;" his teaching the impossibility of deceiving the elect, and shortening the days of distress at the destruction of Jerusalem, for the elect's sake; his uniform submission to the will of the Father, in his mediatorial work, and always acting under his direction, performing the work he

had given him to do, all go to show that he considered himself at the head of a covenanted party, whose salvation was intrusted to his care, and whom he purposed to bring to complete happiness.

Paul, Peter, John, Jude and Luke, who wrote a history of Christ, and the acts of the apostles, were all sacred writers of the new testament. In Luke's history of the acts of the apostles, we find he sometimes gives us his own sentiments in a historical manner, as to the way in which he judged things to be. As to his opinion on this disputed point, I will only quote one text, (Acts 13. 48.) "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." Here the beloved physician is evidently giving his own sentiment on the facts which occurred; and in finding that some believed and some did not, he gives us the reason of the difference, and the reason is so simple and decisive that we instantaneously judge him to be a predestinarian. This is worthy of notice indeed, that the evangelist Luke, who wrote the life of Christ, and to whom was intrusted the history of the acts of the apostles, should so evidently side with the doctrine of election.

Jude or Judas, the brother of James, in his short epistle, seems pretty evidently to side with this doctrine. He says that those who had crept into the churches were, before, of old, ordained to this condemnation; he ranks them with the fallen angels whom God had reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment, and to Cain who was cursed of God and cast out from his presence. No man can hold reprobation of some without holding election of others.

John (1 Epis. 2. 19.) speaking of apostates, says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." And in chapter 4. 19. he says, "We love him, because he first loved us;" which are certainly to the point in hand.

And John believed the doctrine of election; at least he thought the lady to whom he wrote was elected.

What does James think? (Acts 15. 18.) he says, in the council at Jerusalem, "Known unto God are all his works, "from the beginning of the world," and in his epistle (chap. 1. 17, 18.) that with God "is no variableness, "neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us, "with the word of truth." By putting these things together, we are disposed to conclude that the apostle James thought that it was God's work to beget by the word, that this work was known to him, and that he was unchangeable in his purpose to perform it, and consequently, he thought the doctrine of election was true.

Peter is very certain that God foreordained the sufferings of Christ; and he does not hesitate to call the christians to whom he wrote, elect, according to the foreknowledge of God. He also calls them a chosen generation, a peculiar people, and exhorts them to give diligence to make their calling and election sure. I think a man, who would say and do all this, must believe the doctrine of election; or he must say one thing and mean another. When a man's opinion is no argument, we have no difficulty to find what it is by what he says; but if we have no chance of disputing with him; if he is inspired and is consequently a rule for our faith, then we feel too much of a disposition to explain away every thing he says against us, rather than give up a favourite point. We have not boldness enough to contradict the apostles, but if they do not speak to please us we think nothing to explain till we take away their natural meaning; then we think we have gained our point while at the same time we have only shown our pride and folly.

But let me, in the last place, introduce St. Paul. He is the man who will let you know what opinion he is of; and he will make you think as he thinks or deny the feelings of common sense. The simple inquiry now is,

what Paul's opinion was; whether he was for or against election.

1. We find he asserts that God hath chosen his people, in Christ, before the foundation of the world; that they should be holy and without blame before him in love; that he hath predestinated them, unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself; according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace. That he hath saved and called with an holy calling, not according to works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus before the world began. (Eph. 1. 4, 5. 2 Tim. 1. 9.)-And especially in Rom. 8. 29. "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate," &c.

2. In the place last cited, we find Paul explaining the whole scheme from first to last, pointing out step by step the whole order of the divine procedure, from the first purpose of the divine will until the sinner is completely saved.

3. From the 31st verse to the close of the chapter, we find him exulting, standing on the basis of God's eternal purpose. He in a most sublime manner challenges the whole universe, with every thing existing, and every thing or circumstance that is, or ever will be, to separate God's elect from his unchangeable love in Christ Jesus our Lord. What can excel this passage of scripture? All the triumphs of the conquerors in Greece and Rome, when compared to it, dwindle into nothing in a moment. What does Paul make the ground of all this exultation? Nothing but the glorious purpose of God. According to the statement of the apostle, they are God's elect who cannot be charged or condemned, or separated from his love by any thing in heaven, earth or hell.

4. In the following chapters, we find the apostle going through a chain of argumentation, to establish the truth of election. We are not now inquiring whether his argu-

ments are good or not, but whether he really did argue in favour of election; whether this was the point he wished to establish.

The apostle seems to have in view the sovereignty of God, in saving only a remnant of the Jews, who had all the advantages of God's ordinances, and casting off the rest and taking in the gentiles in their place; and finally, the calling of the Jews in the latter day. This is election to all intents and purposes. So we find that election is the very subject of discussion.

5. He first expresses his sorrow for the unhappy fate of his people, chap. 9. 1—5. and speaks of the great opportunities they enjoyed. But his strong feelings of continual heaviness and sorrow, although he ardently wished and strove for their salvation, never altered the sentiment of his mind. He still argues, that although they were all the seed of Israel, yet they were not all Israel. Israel prevailed and got a blessing, but all his seed did not. And even when Abram was called, and God had established his covenant with him and his seed, yet Ishmael and all the sons of Keturah were excluded; and none but Isaac was taken in. He gave Isaac by promise, agreeably to the promise in the garden of Eden; so that the seed, the children of God, might be counted the children of the promise, to distinguish them from the children of the flesh, the seed of the serpent, ver. 6—9.

He returns again in his argument to Jacob, proceeding in a direct line of the seed from Abraham to him. Here he finds a grand act of sovereignty: Rebecca had twins; they strove together in the womb. "Why am I thus?" said Rebecca; and the Lord said "Two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels." The children were not yet born, having done neither good nor evil to induce God to choose either before the other; yet in this state God made known his choice, that his own purpose according to election might stand; not of works

but of him that calleth. Had it been of works, it would not have been of him that calleth, but of him that worketh. Election and works are direct opposites; but as the youngest gained it by election, he gained it by grace, or by promise. It was therefore said or promised to the youngest, that the eldest should serve him, that is, the youngest should have the preference. So that Jacob was of promise as well as Isaac. And when the blessing was bestowed, Jacob could plead no righteousness, for his father pronounced it on him in a mistake, by a wonderful fulfilment of God's promise to Rebecca, who took measures awfully hazardous at the very last moment. Had she not been a better woman than Isaac was a man, she could not have ventured on such a daring enterprise. But the promise, *the promise* was what insured success: "The elder shall serve the younger." As for Jacob, he, with as little faith, I suppose, as his father, went through the wonderful scene, wading through falsehood, deception, and lies; not by works of righteousness, obtained the blessing, by free grace. His father, both blind and blinded, blessed Jacob according to God's promise to Rebecca; Jacob, I say, (whom God loved) and thought he was blessing Esau, whom he loved for his venison, but whom God hated: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Mat. 1. 2, 3.) How awful the disappointment when Esau came. Isaac being finite might have changed, but God could not; therefore the purpose of God gained the important point. "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be "blessed," ver. 10—13. Does my reader see Paul's opinion about election, or is he still blind like poor old Isaac?

CHAPTER XI.

Paul's opinion of election and arguments farther examined into:

THE venerable apostle here answers some objections which he introduces against the doctrine he is establishing, which I shall notice by and by. Let us now proceed on his arguments.

At the 24th verse he argues, that God has not confined his choice to the Jewish nation, but that he has extended his grace to the gentiles also. He introduces some quotations from the prophet Isaiah to prove his point, ver. 25, 26. He then speaks of the remnant of Israel who should be saved; and that unless the Lord had left them a seed they would all be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. This he substantiates by quotations from the same prophet.

The apostle evidently introduces these passages to show, that God had chosen but a part both of Jews and gentiles to salvation. Ver. 27, 28, 29. The chapter closes with the awfully sovereign dispensation of God. The gentiles were made partakers of the gospel, and the Jews were cast off; being left to stumble at that stumbling stone. He then proceeds to point out the dreadful consequence of blindness, by which opposers of the gospel plan are led to reject the free offers of salvation, and turn to the law as the only hope of a lost sinner, by which they miss the only righteousness which could justify them. This leads him to an explanation of the nature of the gospel plan, and concludes the chapter, proving by Moses and Isaiah, the calling of the gentiles and the rejection of the Jews. (Chap. 10.)

Although, as the apostle has proved, God in his sovereign will has cast away the Jews as a nation, yet he

instances himself as an argument that he has still his chosen number; and he says that those whom God foreknew or chose never were cast away. As a proof of this he quotes the case of Elias complaining to the God of Israel that such a declension had taken place that he was left alone; but God informs him that although he had permitted the generality to fall away, yet he had seven thousand reserved unto himself, who by his grace had stemmed the torrent, and had never bowed the knee to Baal. So he argues at this very time when almost the whole nation is given up, yet there is a remnant to be saved according to the election of grace, that is, free election. (Chap. 11. 1—5.) He then very nicely shows that from the very idea of grace and works, election must be the ground work of the whole, for otherwise salvation must be by works, or we must jumble the two words together and make no difference betwixt being saved by works and by free grace. (verse 6.) Then he elegantly draws the conclusion of his argument. That although the people of Israel by all their attendance on rites and ordinances, which all lead to the only way of salvation, have not as a people obtained the happy end; yet the election, or the elect, by God's sovereign purpose toward them hath obtained it, and the rest in the dreadful counsels of God were given over to fatal blindness. (v. 7.) To prove this he quotes two passages from the old testament in the 8, 9, 10. verses.

Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. The object of election is not the destruction of the reprobate but the salvation of the chosen. They have fallen, to be sure, as a necessary consequence of their being not chosen; but God's purpose is to save the gentiles.

But for brevity's sake, I shall waive any farther observations on his arguments; only note that in the same masterly manner he shows the glorious purpose of God finally to bring in the whole nation of the Jews, so that

both Jew and gentile shall make one glorious church. And all Israel shall be saved, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.

Thus we see that the apostle not only evidently shows what side of the question he is on; but he has taken up the subject, and has given it a full, and most complete investigation, so that if any man will not give up to his authority as an apostle, but differ with him in sentiment, he will find his arguments unanswerable. He has handled the subject every way. He has explained the order of election, he has treated it as it related to the Jews, to the gentiles, and to both. He has argued from facts, from texts, from the nature of grace and salvation, and all in a most masterly manner. But I promised to notice his reply to some supposed objections to the doctrine. This is the sixth way in which he shows his opinion. Did the great apostle Paul really go so far as to answer objections against the doctrine of election? He certainly must believe it then, otherwise he would rather object himself, than answer objections.

Rom. 9. 14. "What shall we say? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." This might make my opponent blush. This is the very objection which we hear at this day: "It is unjust. It is not fair for God to give some a chance, and not others. God is no respecter of persons, &c." Whether Paul has answered this objection judiciously or not, is not now the inquiry. It is enough for my purpose that he has answered it somehow.

Again, he introduces another, (verse 19.) "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" This is also a very common objection. "This destroys all moral agency, and consequently the sinner is excusable. Why is he blamable for not believing, when he is not able?" The apostle answers both these objections by quotations from scripture, and some observations on them.

In answer to the first, he quotes a text in Exodus, 33 chap. 19 verse, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" &c. plainly proving that from the very nature of mercy, it must be bestowed without any merit; for it is the nature of obligation except by voluntary promise to destroy the very idea of mercy. Mercy must always be without claim or merit; and consequently must be optional with the donor. Where is the sinner, who has or can possibly have a claim upon his Maker? The claim of justice is punishment; and were it not that on the plan of the gospel, justice is satisfied, the objection would completely stand against the salvation of any. But seeing God in his infinite wisdom and goodness has opened a door of mercy on the principles of free grace, how is it possible for unrighteousness to be with God in bestowing free and unmerited grace on whom he pleased. The objection is surely fully answered. The force of the argument is this, "You object against my statement of election says the apostle; in so doing you object against the very idea of mercy; and you also cavil at God's own declaration to Moses, where he undoubtedly intended to show his sovereignty in bestowing his grace on whom he saw fit; for on that declaration it is evident that it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but wholly and solely of God that sheweth mercy;" and this might let every one know that to impute unrighteousness to God, as an objection to his bestowing free mercy according to his own choice, is to object against what he in his word declares he will do. He then very pertinently quotes the awful message of God by Moses to Pharaoh: "For this purpose have I raised thee up," &c. He therefore concludes that God bestowed his favours as he pleased, that he was determined in his eternal counsels to be merciful without constraint, to whom he would, and whom he would to harden. For God to harden a sinner's heart, is simply not to be mer-

ciful to him. God did purpose to show mercy to some, but not to Pharaoh, but to cut him off; and for this purpose he raised him to the throne of Egypt. (Exod. 9. 13—16.) But Paul's cavalier demonstrating a hidden disposition, not unlike Pharaoh's, "who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" replies in the very tone of the objectors in our day, against the plainest arguments drawn from God's declarations in his word, "why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" How can the sinner help it if he is not elected? If it is God's will not to show him mercy, whose fault is it?

The apostle evidently viewed this objection with horror and indignation. When I had finished my observation on Paul's answer of the first objection, I felt the force of the apostle's arguments, founded on the positive declaration of God himself to Moses, and when I came to this, I confess I felt as if the objector was leveling his artillery directly against God himself. I immediately took up my Greek testament to examine what manner of expression or what words Paul made use of in rebutting it. Perhaps it would be too simple and honest in me to tell how I felt when I read those words, "Μενῶν γε, ὃ ἄνθρωπε, σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος τῷ Θεῷ;" what an insignificant worm a man is, when he impiously objects against the will of his Maker! The inspired apostle evidently expresses himself in an interrupted manner; his sentences are short, broken, and full of energy. "Hut! tut! tut! O man! Who are you, replying against God!"

The apostle evidently views the objector as a man; a poor sinful man, yet replying against God, the great sovereign of the world. He considered the arguments he had brought forward as stated by and founded on the very word of God; consequently it was no wonder he gives such an abrupt reply.

O reader whoever you are, you must excuse the old venerable apostle, if he thinks it sufficient to rebut an

objection which is levelled against the sovereign will of God, by a quotation from the very word of God. For a man who can reply against the bible, need not be reasoned with. If you cannot control him by divine authority, you must "let the ignorant be ignorant still," and I would seriously advise all such objectors carefully to read 1 Cor. 14. 36, 37, 38.

Paul, however, contents himself in resolving the whole difficulty by God's sovereignty. But he does it most ingeniously by quoting the substance of Isaiah 29. 16. and Jer. 18. 1—6. which contain a striking figure of the clay in the hands of the potter; and asks two questions, "What if God willing to show his wrath," that is, willing or chose to exemplify the dreadful consequences of his inflexible justice, in the vessels of wrath, fitted by their own sin and obstinacy for destruction; or what if God willing, or chose, to exemplify "the riches of his glory" (i. e. his sovereignty) on the vessels of mercy which he "had afore (before, from eternity) appointed (predestinated) unto glory" have we any reason to object, or dispute his sovereign will? Certainly, no. We all have sinned and come short of his glory, and all deserved to be left as he left the devils to suffer eternal perdition, and if he chooses to save some, of his mere grace and mercy, it is not for rebels to direct him in his choice, but to adore rather than cavil at his sovereign counsels.

Now I am done examining the apostle's sentiments on election. I find he asserts the doctrine, he explains the order of it, he makes the elect to exult in it, he argues for it, and that his arguments are both scriptural and logical, and answers objections against it.

And can we, at last, conclude that he denies the doctrine? If there ever was any thing made plain since God created Adam this is, that Paul firmly believed that God from eternity did predestinate to salvation all those who will be saved.

CHAPTER XII.

The five scriptural arguments collected together and the conclusion drawn establishing the doctrine of election.

HAVING considered the various ways in which the holy bible establishes the doctrine of election, with at least some degree of accuracy and candor, I now proceed to bring the whole into a concise view, and draw the necessary conclusion. As I have taken an extensive view of the argument before, I hope the reader will excuse the laconic form of my sentences, as I only intend in this to draw the arguments together.

1. God will save some; not all. They will be saved not by works but by free grace. God will give that grace, not by chance, but with design. God is unchangeable. Hence I infallibly conclude, that God from eternity purposed to save by freely giving his grace to all who ever will be saved.

2. This is not only a logical conclusion drawn from gospel doctrines compared together, but I have quoted several positive proofs to confirm this sentiment; particularly the following: 1 Thes. 1. 4. Eph. 1. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11. chap. 3. 11. 2 Thes. 2. 13. Rom. 8. 29. 1 Pet. 1. 2. 2 Tim. 1. 9. Acts 13. 48. Rom. 11. 5, 6, 7. chap. 9. 32. Mat. 11. 25, 26. Luke 10. 21.

In these scriptures the doctrine of election is expressed as plainly as ever any thing is, or could possibly be expressed in the bible. Suffer me to give four examples.

Not disputed.

1. God created the heavens and the earth. Gen. 1. 1.

2. They crucified him betwixt two thieves. Luke 23. 33.

Disputed.

1. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.

2. Having predestinated us according to the good pleasure of his will. Eph. 1. 4, 5.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 3. He that believeth shall be saved. Mark 16. 16. | 3. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Acts 13. 48. |
| 4. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12. 14. | 4. Whom he did foreknow he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son. Rom. 8. 29. |

It is vain to multiply words. Any one of these truths are as clearly revealed as any other. And they are all as clearly revealed as either Hebrew, Greek or English can possibly do it. And although one class is disputed, and the other not, yet the ground of dispute does not lie in the texts, for there is no difference there; but it lies in God only knows what; for there is no other being in the universe can tell.

3. God has by the inspired apostle laid down the whole plan in an orderly scale, exhibiting the whole scheme from first to last: Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glory.

4. There are several doctrines taught in scripture, several promises made, several accounts given and things proven to be done, and foretold to be hereafter, which in their very nature and circumstances do prove election, because they could not otherwise take place.

5. Christ Jesus our Lord declares the sovereign purpose of his Father and perfectly acquiesces in his will; and in several instances speaks of the doctrine, and makes it the foundation on which his people will stand fast against both deception and persecution. Luke, Jude, John, James, and Peter all side with this doctrine. Paul we have taken particular notice of, because he professedly gives the subject a thorough discussion. We have found six reasons to conclude that he did believe the doctrine. He asserts it, he laid down the plan of it, he exulted in it, he argued for it, he quoted texts to prove it, and he answered objections against it.

This is what the scripture says about this most interesting doctrine of election. And if I would pretend to be a

good logician, a sound reasoner, and an accurate scripturarian, I must draw this conclusion from the whole; viz. that God did from eternity choose a number of the race of Adam to salvation; that to those he will give every necessary grace completely to save their souls, and to make them eternally happy in the enjoyment of himself forever.

There are several ways to prove many things by scripture. One would think that positive assertion would be the shortest and most unanswerable proof that could be given from the bible, and so it would if it did not depend so much upon the precarious meaning of words. And instances are not wanting in which the plainest texts have been controverted on this very ground. But there are some ways in which things are more incontrovertibly proven by the bible than by what we call positive proof. The bible has the advantage of every book, because the writers were inspired and their opinion must always be taken for the mind of God.

St. Paul in the 15th chap. of his first epistle to the Corinthians proves the resurrection by treating the subject more effectually than he, perhaps, could have done by roundly asserting it. This proof has these advantages, good arguments which prove the point independent of the apostle's own sentiment, and his own sentiment clearly seen in the arguments even if the arguments were not conclusive. In another case, Paul quotes a text of scripture "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." The apostle argues that this law proved that preachers of the gospel should be supported. I do not clearly see that his argument is conclusive; were he not inspired I might, perhaps, dispute the conclusiveness of it; but I never could hesitate as to his opinion. But when I think he is inspired, although I may not see the force of his argument, yet his opinion is the mind of God, and I immediately give up the point. Again, when the

bible roundly asserts that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; the word everlasting is controverted as to its meaning, yet it still proves that they will go away to punishment, but how long that punishment will last is the dispute. But when I read 1 Cor. 15. although the apostle does not say one word on this subject, yet he says that at the resurrection death will be destroyed, which will be the last enemy, then Christ will have concluded his mediatorial reign, and given up the kingdom to his Father, having put down all rule, all authority and power: Here the bible, by Paul's opinion of the close of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, to take place at the resurrection, from whence numbers will go away to punishment, gives the most incontrovertible proof of the eternal duration of the torments of hell.

Once more: The bible does not literally prove either the change of the sabbath, or the baptism of infants. Yet when I read of the disciples meeting on the first day of the week, and Paul's directing the churches to lift their contributions on that day, I have the apostle's mind and consequently the mind of God. Also, when I find the inspired apostle, when he is directing husbands and wives to continue together even though one should be an infidel; and making infant baptism the ground of his argument (1 Cor. 7. 14.) I immediately have the apostle's opinion. I cannot but conclude that Paul, even as a man of sense, must have more ingenuity and honesty in him, than to establish an argument on a falsehood. For the Corinthians knew, whether it was a rule among them to count the children federally holy, upon the account of the faith of the parent or parents. If not, the apostle would have committed himself in making it the ground of his argument. But he took it for granted, which is an evident proof that the Corinthians adopted infant baptism, by the authority of the apostle, who planted their church, and therefore, we must have the apostle's mind on the subject; and when I

consider that he was inspired, I have the mind of God who inspired him, and am bound to admit it as an irrefragable proof for the doctrine of infant baptism.

I hope my reader will pardon this lengthy digression. I have still my subject in my eye, and have taken this way to show, how many ways certain things may be proven by the bible, without what we call positive proof; and sometimes more decisive in an argument, and more satisfactory than a positive proof can possibly be, in consequence of the various meanings put on words, on which positive proof depends.

Every person must be sensible of the convincing effect of such kind of testimony; and I must conclude, that when Paul, the inspired apostle, enters upon, and goes through a lengthy discussion of the doctrine of election; and especially when he introduces scripture texts and facts to prove it; and more especially still, when he supposes and answers objections against it, he must think it true. There is no man in the world who has an ounce of candor, but must see that Paul, by so doing, does prove effectually, that such was his opinion. But Paul's opinion is the mind of God, for he was inspired, and therefore it must be decisive in the case in question.

What could any one think, if he heard one in the pulpit using the expressions and arguments which Paul did. If I were to argue from the case of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Pharaoh, &c. as he did, if I brought forward and answered objections against the doctrine, would he not take it for granted that I was a predestinarian. He might indeed think I was wrong, but he never could scruple my opinion. No doubt, when you have read what I have written in this book, however you may condemn my sentiment, or find fault with my manner and oppose my opinion, yet you cannot possibly miss knowing my sentiments on the doctrine of election. My arguments have convinced you of that, if nothing else. Pray, does not the

apostle convince you of the same thing? He has argued and treated the subject; he has shown his sentiment; he has introduced many texts and arguments in favour of it; he has answered objections against it; and if you deny that this doctrine is true, you have either to explain away the apostle's meaning, or you must acknowledge that you differ from him in sentiment.

It is very evident, that Paul had a very tender feeling for the Jewish nation, when he could willingly be crucified, as Christ was, for them, if it would have any tendency to reclaim them, and bring them to believe the gospel; and he had continual sorrow and heaviness on account of their obstinacy. Yet he had so much firmness, that the tender feelings of his heart could not, in the least degree, sway his judgment in this important point. His very heart's desire and prayer for Israel was that they should be saved: but still he held firmly to the doctrine of election. But my opponent, out of pity to the non-elect, will deny one of the most important truths in the bible, even the radical plan and purpose of the whole gospel, in order that all may have an equal chance; not considering, at the same time, that he by his plan, unhinges the whole business for the want of a divine purpose to save any. Any person might see, that on that plan, every one who would be saved must be saved by works and not by grace; and consequently none would or could be saved at all.

Paul knew that he was elected, not only a chosen vessel, to preach the gospel, but even separated from his mother's womb; and according to that divine purpose, called on his way to Damascus, not only to be the apostle of the gentiles, but also to be a christian: and he acknowledges, "by the grace of God, I am what I am;" and he gives himself as an instance of one of the remnant who were saved by the election of grace, (Rom. 11. 1.) and says, that the rest were blinded. (Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10.)

From all these things we must conclude, that Paul was in favour of election; and having evident proof of this, we have the mind of God, because the apostle was inspired: and not only so, but his arguments are indeed unanswerable. I hope I will ever feel it my duty, my honour, and my interest, to yield my sentiments to men inspired by the Holy Ghost. And inasmuch as the doctrine of election is so fully revealed in the word of God, so positively asserted and so fully and by so many various ways proven, we who are sinners and are entirely dependent on divine mercy, in whatever way God is pleased to bestow it, ought to resign, and say, with gratitude, "Thy will be done."

CHAPTER XIII.

Various objections answered. Reprobation defined.

WHAT is reprobation? My opponent says, it is God's making a man to be damned. Men opposed to the doctrine of election have habituated themselves to speak rashly; they consequently, by their own expressions, raise a phantom which they fight with virulence, when the doctrine of election says no such thing; consequently their principal arguments are beating the air; fighting where there is nothing opposing them.

The doctrine of election says, that God made all things with a divine purpose, and that this purpose was his own glory. If the creature deserved it God would glorify himself in the happiness of his creature; but if the creature would sin against him, he would glorify himself in punishing him justly for his crimes. And also, that when the creature had sinned, he chose, of his free and unmerited grace, to save as many as he saw fit, and to leave the rest to suffer the desert of their crimes.

God, foreseeing that man would fall from eternity, laid his infinite plan to glorify his sovereign mercy, in the redemption of as many as he chose, and to leave the rest, as he did the fallen angels, to glorify his inflexible justice. Who can say that this is unjust? Ought not God to punish a sinner? and if he chooses to save some of them, is it any harm for him to do so?

Therefore, reprobation is merely God's leaving some out of the number of those whom he chose to save, who are justly left to act for themselves, and to receive the just reward of their doings, whether it be good or bad. This is all that the doctrine of election ever did, or ever could do, as to the reprobate. But this is the direct reverse of making them to be damned; for it is just leaving them, without any purpose of mercy, to suffer for their crimes.

Now I ask, can any sinner suffer by election? If he is so happy as to be in the elect number, he is an infinite gainer: if not, he is no gainer, but he loses nothing. No man is lost because another is saved. Election is the very radical cause of saving thousands; but it never was, nor can possibly be, the cause of losing one. Election is not the cause of the non-elect's being lost, for they would have been lost, even had it never been. It is only the cause of the elect's being saved, and leaves the rest just as they were. It does not diminish in the least, from their power or privileges, but only does not purpose their salvation.

But my opponent says "If I am not elected, I must certainly be lost, if the doctrine of election be true." I grant it indeed; but why do you complain? You would be no more certainly lost with election than without it. If you are a non-elect, you are in the very situation in which you wish to be, and wish the whole world to be. The very doctrine you contend for, and violently reproach us for not acceding to, would inevitably fix the whole

race of Adam, in the very situation in which you now suppose yourself to be. For your doctrine of non-election is the very same, to all intents and purposes, as our doctrine of reprobation. Yet you think hard of election, because it reprobates some. "O fools, and slow of heart " to believe."

Will not a non-elect have as good a chance for salvation, in every respect whatsoever, as any man could have, even if the doctrine of election were not true? Election does not in the least degree infringe on the privileges or the power of a non-elect; it only leaves him in the very state in which he is by nature. If he wants to work, the law gives him every opportunity to try his best; if he wants to make an atonement for himself, the law asks him to do it, and will make him do it at last, whether he is willing or not. Election hinders none of these things. It does not make the sinner weaker than he would be without it; and if the non-elect would believe, election would not hinder him: and if he would believe he certainly would be saved according to the offer of the gospel, and election would not hinder the gospel to save him, only his faith would be his own and not grace or the gift of God; but election would say nothing either for or against him, for it has nothing to do with him any how.

And when the non-elect fails of keeping the law, and of faith, and of every part of salvation, election has no hand in it at all. And when he is damned for want of faith, of righteousness, or of good works, election has nothing to do in the business from first to last. The non-elect are to all intents and purposes, in the very same situation, as to the possibility of their salvation, as they would have been, if there never had been one chosen to salvation, only making allowance for the external offer of the gospel.

Then why does my opponent cry out against the doctrine of election, because it reprobates only a part of

mankind, when he, by his doctrine, reprobates the whole. "Thou art inexcusable O man whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost the same things."

My opponent truly puts on a romantic appearance here; when he supposes himself, or any other person, to be a non-elect, all is considered as lost, and he cries out in despair; but when his own doctrine places him and all mankind in the very same situation, he sits easy and has great hopes of salvation; when, at the same time, he denies that God has any design to save either him or any other person. Pray, why does he despair of salvation, when he supposes himself not elected; and yet hope for salvation, when he supposes none to be elected? Can he imagine God will save him, because he designs to save none? Surely, although I grant that my opponent may be a sensible man in many things, yet he, as a man of candor, must acknowledge he has missed a figure here; "*Nemo semper sapit.*"*

But my opponent, still fond of maintaining his point, argues that God proposes salvation on the condition of faith. If, therefore, the sinner improves his opportunity, and believes, then God will save him, according to his offer. All this is granted. The doctrine of election maintains this very system. But the question is, will any sinner believe of himself? Must not God by his word and Spirit persuade him to believe? And if you say he must repent and turn to God, I ask does not God give repentance, and dispose a sinner to turn to God? I have already proven that all those things are the gifts of God. If, therefore, God gives faith and repentance, is not the whole business dependent on God? God could not give faith or any other grace without an unchangeable purpose to do so. So that it comes to the same thing at last; and the apostle Paul is

* "No man is always wise." It is always a sign of wisdom to acknowledge an error; but fools will always stand out right or wrong.

right when he sums up the whole in a parenthesis (Eph. 2. 5.) "By grace ye are saved."

To make this matter plain, let us suppose two persons A. and B. We will suppose A. to be in the situation in which my opponent thinks all mankind to be, viz. a non-elect, or in a non-elected state. And B. to be one of the elect.

1. A. hears the gospel, enjoys the offers of salvation through Christ, and attends daily on the various means of grace; yet without any purpose in God to save him. Yet if he would believe and repent he would be saved. Now, A. must either believe of himself, or God must persuade him to believe, or give him faith which is the same thing, otherwise he must be damned. I ask, would he believe of himself? It is acknowledged, and I have already proven, that he could not; that is, he is so naturally wicked, that he never would believe in Christ, unless he was drawn to him by the Father (John 6. 44.) But according to the supposition, God has no purpose or design to draw him, for that would be election. Therefore it must follow, that he might attend on the means of grace, and hear the gospel, but he never would believe. God would never give him his Spirit to accompany the word with power; he never intended to do it, and he never will or can, because he is unchangeable. So that with all the opportunities A. enjoys he will be lost at last. Surely any person can see that this would be the case with the whole world, if election did not prevent it. It makes me really sorry to think of a person denying the very grounds of the salvation, even of his own soul!

2. B. by the supposition is one of the elect. But, however happy his circumstances are, he enjoys it all in consequence of election. Had it not been for God's own eternal purpose to save B. he would have been in the very same circumstances in which A. is supposed to be, and this would have been the case with the whole race of

Adam, were my opponent's doctrine true. It is not the gospel that saves a sinner, but God by means of the gospel. (1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.)

But, blessed be God, he has an unchangeable purpose to save B. who by nature is as wicked and as helpless as A. and indeed, perhaps, worse by practice. "It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

God not only foresaw that B. would believe, but he foreknew that he would believe; faith being God's own gift, he could not foresee that B. would believe, without determining to give him faith. The time, place, and means were all appointed. And before this time came, B. went on like A. careless and thoughtless, without faith, without repentance, or any other saving grace; and would have continued on till death, with A. only election prevented.

But now let us suppose the time to be come, when B. is to be brought in. Here I will not describe the whole process of B's. exercises, but only such particulars as will be necessary to my argument. In order to persuade B. to believe, the gospel is preached; A. and B. both hear it. But God by his Spirit accompanies it with power, not to A. but to B. the consequence is B. gets a sight of his lost state. He feels himself a sinner. He is made to cry "What shall I do to be saved?" Perhaps A. observes, stares, and wonders at the weakness and folly of B. as he may call it. But B. can get no rest until he gets a view of the gospel. At the appointed time he discovers the full and free offers of salvation through Christ. He is persuaded to believe. He consequently surrenders up his heart to Christ, and by faith, which God has thus given him, he is saved. All upon the plan of God, according to his own eternal purpose which he purposed in himself.

Thus you see that election does not destroy the use of means, or the free agency of the creature, or supersede the

necessity of faith, or any other grace; but, on the contrary, it establishes the whole and insures salvation to the lost sinner, according to the unchangeable perfections of God, and that without it, it would be impossible for one soul ever to be saved.

It must undoubtedly be a truth that a sinner must be saved either by works or by grace. But the bible denies salvation by works; therefore it is by grace. It is also evident that God must give the grace necessary for salvation. We also are obliged to acknowledge that God gives that grace by an eternal purpose, or else there must be a change in the divine mind; but it is impossible for God to change; therefore every soul who is saved is saved by an unchangeable decree of election.

Does my opponent acknowledge that God is unchangeable? How then can he deny the doctrine of election? Does he acknowledge free grace as the only gift of God in a sinner's salvation? And that God is unchangeable in his gifts and purposes? And can he deny election too? How inconsistent must this be!

It is thought by some that the doctrine of election is very difficult to understand, and very distressing to serious minds, and in short, that we have little or no business with it. I answer,

1. I can see no difficulty in understanding it. It is true we cannot know who are elected, and who are not; we cannot tell the number, neither is it necessary that we should. But the nature of election is as simple a thing as any doctrine in the bible. It is only God determining to save whom he will, and making his own choice amongst the guilty children of men, according to his sovereign will. There can be no difficulty here. And as to reconciling some difficulties as to the common calls of the gospel to the non-elect, we need not conceive ourselves under obligations to solve every question on that subject, in order to understand election.

Not only so, but for a subject to be hard to understand is no objection to the truth of it. There are many things both in divinity and in natural philosophy very difficult, and even impossible to understand, which nevertheless, are true; and our not being able to understand them is no reason why we should deny that they are true. Who understands the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, the resurrection from the dead, and the immortal state of futurity? Must we deny these things, when the bible declares them to be true? Who understands the union of the soul and body, the vegetation of plants, the power of the magnet, or even the common doctrine of cohesion, or attraction, or gravitation? These things are found to be true by experience and fact, but not by the capacities of our own understandings to comprehend the nature and reason of such cases. It is a fact that we meet with many things every day, which we can give no satisfactory reason for, yet we must acknowledge them true because they are facts. My little boy must have a knife or an ax to split his chip, because he knows by experiment that he cannot do it without a tool; and when he gets it split all his art cannot put it together again as it was before. My little son knows this is true; but sir Isaac Newton could not tell the reason why. So that want of understanding is no argument against the truth, attested either by facts or by sufficient authority.

2. I grant that serious minds are often hurt and sorely distressed in consequence of a wrong use of the doctrine of election. But we should never find fault with any thing because it is misused. However excellent this doctrine is in its nature and effect, yet it is not beyond the reach of abuse; and I confess there is no situation so unhappy as a state of despair; and when a person concludes that he is not elected he must have despairing thoughts of himself. But all such persons ought to consider that God in his word has characterized the elect by their effectual calling.

but he has given no possible way to know that any man this side of time is of the non-elect number, especially if he enjoys the gospel. So that all such distressing conclusions are mere conjecture; and it is unjust to blame election for what we bring on ourselves by our own ill-founded notions.

Not only so, but I have already shown that were it not for election, or a divine purpose to save, despair must be the inevitable consequence, and that not by mere conjecture but founded on the impossibility of salvation.

3. From all this it appears that if we are so simple as to think we have nothing to do with election, yet election has something to do with us; and it is well for any man that it has who will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought therefore, instead of cavilling with this doctrine, which is the very radical cause of our salvation, to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, as the bible directs us.

CHAPTER XIV.

Objections farther answered.

BUT to vindicate one of the most interesting doctrines, and to satisfy the minds of those who feel disaffected on this subject we shall attend to some other objections which are frequently offered against it.

It is objected that God is no respecter of persons.

This objection takes scripture ground, and claims the issue without considering the meaning of those scriptures. I grant that God is no respecter of persons; for he gives grace and salvation to Jew and gentile, to bond and free, to high and low, to rich and poor. He used to confine his gifts to the tribes of Israel, but now he extends the riches

of his gospel to the gentiles of every name and circumstance, but still in such a way as he himself sees fit.

In another sense God has respect to persons. He had respect to Abel and to his sacrifice, but to Cain and to his sacrifice he had not respect. He has respect to the lowly, but not the proud. At this day he has not respect to the Jews, but has to the gentiles; and thousands of instances stand forward to this day, and have in all ages of the world, which plainly show that God always had respect both to persons and nations. Both the common dispensations of God's providence, and of his grace and gospel are all bestowed in a thousand forms: some are rich and some are poor; some are sick and some are well; some are blessed with fine talents and opportunities, others left to bare common sense; and others again are mere idiots; some have the gospel statedly and powerfully, others are but seldom blessed with the glad tidings; and thousands never hear of the name of Jesus at all.

But God gives grace to whom he pleases, and when any believe in Christ they are accepted, let them be of what nation or circumstances they may. This is the sense in which we are to take all such texts, and consequently they can be no objection to the doctrine of election. My opponent himself agrees to free grace, and this objection militates as much against a partial bestowment of grace, as it does against the purpose to bestow it.

But it is still said, it is not fair for God to choose one and not another; let him give all an equal chance; the Judge of all the earth will do right, &c.

This is the argument that generally prevails with our adversaries; and I am disposed to think that every one who denies the doctrine of election grounds the most of his arguments radically on this objection. This is truly astonishing, for two reasons. There is nothing more easily demonstrated than the falsehood of this objection; and Paul on this very subject as we have already seen, by di-

vine inspiration has invalidated this identical objection seventeen hundred years ago, (Rom. 9. 14—18.)

1. How can it be unjust for God to leave some to perish when he in justice might have left all? Certainly if it is unjust in the Divine Sovereign to leave a part of mankind to suffer, it would have been more so to leave the whole; and it must consequently be unjust for him to leave all the devils to perish. There is no complaint about the case of the devils at all. God could no doubt save the devils as easy as man. Why not complain in their case? He left them; he has also left some of us. Pray is there more injustice in choosing one man and not another than in choosing men instead of devils? All had sinned, and were justly liable to punishment. Do any complain of injustice for fear they are not chosen? they have no more right to complain than Satan has. Satan sinned first, and I dare say he is angry because he was not chosen; for no doubt he thinks he had the first right to mercy when he first stood in need of it; and if wretchedness gives a claim in justice, doubtless Satan had it first.

Ah! but you say, give all an equal chance. Why pray, suppose God was willing to show his wrath, and had vessels of wrath at hand fitted to destruction, would justice contradict it? No, certainly justice would not, and could not; and when you do it you act an unjust and arrogant part; and no doubt but Satan himself is carping at God's procedure. Your argument proves too much and a great deal more than you want it to do. It proves that God gives and always did give an equal chance to all the world. Therefore the old world had an equal chance with Noah's posterity. Ham and Canaan had an equal chance with Shem and his posterity. The Canaanites, Philistines, Egyptians, Edomites, Moab and Ammon, Nebuchadnezzar, and all the nations round about had an equal chance with the posterity of Abraham the chosen people of God. The Jews who are now under the curse enjoy

equal privileges with the gentiles who are the church of Christ. China, Tartary, Arabia, Caffraria and the Hottentots enjoy equal advantages with Great Britain. The Creek Indians, the Chickasaws and Cherokees, with all the tawny tribes west of the Mississippi are on equal footing with the United States of America.

Are these things so? Have they ever been so? Why does not my objector bring forward his objection? Is God so partial as all this? Now you say, God must give all an equal chance. Pray, if it is unjust for God to save some and not others, is it not equally unjust for him to give the gospel to some and not others? Why this manifest inequality? Why did not God grant the glorious privileges of the Jews to the Egyptians? Was it not unjust to make such a difference? Why was there a difference betwixt Jews and gentiles? They ought to have been used alike. Is a Cherokee's soul as precious as mine? Certainly. Then why do I enjoy the gospel and he not? Now, these are facts you cannot deny; yet your objection militates as much against them, as it does against the doctrine of election.

2. With what face can any man bring forward this objection, when the inspired apostle has already answered it, when he was vindicating this very doctrine? Does it not argue a degree of obstinacy and fortitude? For a man to use me so, would be nothing, because I might be wrong; but to urge an objection again, after an inspired apostle has laid it aside, and even to make it a turning point, requires more boldness than any sinner ought to have. Look but one moment at Paul's answer to your objection; he quotes a sentence of God to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; and whom he will, he hardeneth." This language is indeed like God! How sublime! What authority, majesty and sovereignty is here! But my friend levels his whole objection against

it. He says it is unjust; it is not fair; he ought to give every one an equal chance. Suppose God, the glorious Sovereign, does as he tells Moses he will do, and as Paul, in answer to your objection, tells you he will do; pray, will it not invalidate your objection, and establish the doctrine of election in spite of it? Will you fetch it forward again, and impeach not only his word, but even his divine and sovereign procedure?

But my opponent persists, notwithstanding all that has been said in reply even by Paul himself. "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" If the sinner is not saved, whose fault is it? Why is he condemned when God would not have mercy upon him?

I will not say one word to this objection here, but only refer my reader to the 11th chapter to the Romans; also I have explained that sovereign answer which the apostle has given to this bold objection. I sincerely wish that cavilers at the doctrine of election would read Paul's masterly treatise on this subject. I think if it would not alter their sentiments, it would at least make them a little more modest, when they would find such a man as Paul, who being dead yet speaketh, to cope with. It is surely a serious matter, to bring forward objections against a doctrine which has its advocates among the inspired penmen, who have spoken too plainly not to be understood. And when the apostle of the gentiles has given the subject a thorough investigation, I think I am authorized to counsel my friends not to bring forward the objections again, which he has already answered. It shows too much disrespect to him who saw the Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus, and who was exalted to the third heaven. And it shows too much disrespect to the holy bible which contains his inspired answers to those objections.

But my objector proceeds and I must follow. The preaching of the gospel is useless. This objection is good against the objector but not against me. He who denies

that God has any design to bless the gospel, or to give faith or any grace to any one soul, has indeed no encouragement to preach: and if it was really true he might preach to eternity without any success. But if my doctrine is true I can preach courageously, even in the midst of apparent discouraging circumstances, for God intends to bless it; and when he begins to fulfil his design the stoutest heart must bow at a word. So Paul at Corinth. Did God encourage him on your plan? "Hold not thy peace Paul, for I never have had any particular design to bless one soul or change one heart in this place." What would be the use of Paul's preaching then? None, none absolutely. But consistent with my opinion, Paul was encouraged to stay eighteen months in that place. But what did encourage him? This and only this: Christ told him "I have much people in this place." They were every one idolaters at this time, yet they were Christ's. No wonder Paul could preach under such circumstances.

But you say preaching is of no use to the non-elect. I grant it: and what of it? Must I deny election or must I quit preaching because the non-elect get no good? You say they are all non-elect; if that was true indeed preaching would be vain. But can the gospel be of more benefit to your non-elect than mine? No certainly.

CHAPTER XV.

*The benefit of the gospel's being preached to the non-elect.
They are thereby rendered inexcusable.*

HERE a very important question turns up, partly as an objection to the doctrine of election: What benefit is it for the gospel to be preached to the non-elect? And how do they become inexcusable for not believing it?

I will endeavour to take a serious view of this subject, as I consider it a matter of great importance both to saints and sinners. And here I would premise, that it is useless and sometimes dangerous to attempt to pry too deep into the counsels of God; and often when we do so we demonstrate our folly and pride more than our sense and religion. However, I apprehend that it is not very difficult to see some good ends answered by the gospel's being preached even to the non-elect. There seems an inconsistency indeed in this at first sight, for we think, why should God offer salvation to a sinner when he has no design to give it to him? The objection is specious and seems to promise a refutation of the doctrine of election. But here I will make some general remarks.

1. It would be most unreasonable and indeed impious to expect that the wisest man in the world could fully understand all the mysteries of the gospel. Angels themselves look, but cannot fathom; much less we whose dwelling is in clay. (1 Pet. 1. 12.)

2. When any truth is proven by divine authority, it is lawful and commendable for us to take all measures to understand it, provided we do it modestly and with due respect to the authority of the bible; but it is impious and rebellious in us to employ our own ignorance in what we cannot understand, in opposition to the truths revealed:

3. The first question ought always to be, Does the bible say so? If it does, we may piously vindicate to the best of our ability, but always with an attachment to divine authority; but if we cannot see we must be silent.

4. God's directing the gospel to be preached promiscuously, militates as much against the doctrine of free grace as election. For when you vindicate his calling a sinner to come to Christ when he never gives him faith, I will vindicate his calling without any design to do it.

5. It also militates as much against God's foreknowledge as election; for if God knows the sinner will never believe, his conduct can no more be vindicated here than on the doctrine of election; for what is the difference in the end betwixt God's foreknowing that a thing will never be which depends on his own agency, and his not purposing to do it? Certainly there can be none.

6. Our opponents therefore gain nothing by advancing such objections. They pretend to hold to free grace as well as we; and they never pretend to deny God's foreknowledge; they never ask the first question, which is, Does the scripture prove it? but oppose their own ignorance to divine authority and think we must do so too; and they think we must explain every thing the bible says; but they ought to consider that calvinists have more modesty and more sense then to pretend to explain every thing. We sometimes can give unanswerable arguments when the bible makes matters plain; but when we are driven by their arrogance, to give a reason for every thing which the bible says a God of infinite perfection does or intends to do, we humbly satisfy ourselves with humble inquiry, and leave the event to infinite wisdom.

I have admitted my opponent to lay in a number of objections to my opinion, and I beg leave at this time to lay in some against his.

1. Is God unchangeable in all things; in all his plans, and purposes?

2. Does God give or do every thing which he does give or do, with design or not?

3. Does God save the sinner, or does the sinner save himself?

4. Does God give conviction, faith, pardon, repentance, sanctification, &c.?

5. Would the sinner do any thing that is good, unless God would incline him to it?

Answer these questions as the bible does, and then say whether God has an unchangeable design to save every sinner who is saved, or not. Again,

1. Does God intend to give conviction, faith, repentance, &c. to all, or only to some? If you say to all, you contradict the bible. (Luke 13. 3, 5. 2 Thes. 3. 2. Heb. 4. 2.) If you say to some, and not to all, you acknowledge election, and give up the point.

2. Can God know any thing which he himself has to bring to pass by his own agency, without a design to bring it to pass?

3. Can God know that any thing will be, without knowing also the things which will produce it? Or in other words, can he know the effect without the cause?

4. Is not a sinner's salvation effected by the free gift of God? Is not God's own purpose the original cause of that gift? If therefore, God knows a sinner's salvation, must he not also know his divine purpose to give it? Answer these questions consistent with your doctrine.

5. Do difficulties which we cannot resolve make a thing false, if the bible proves it to be true?

6. Does the bible say God did predestinate some; chose some before the world was; ordained some to eternal life; elected some according to his foreknowledge? does it say whom he predestinated, he called, justified and glorified? does it say the rest were blinded? does it say that God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth? does it say that

Christ thanked his Father for revealing the gospel to some, and hiding it from others? and many such things which I cannot now mention.

7. Does it say all this and yet not prove election?

8. Does the bible in one single sentence from one end to the other, say that God has not chosen, predestinated ordained or elected his people to salvation?

9. If there are some difficulties attending this doctrine which we cannot resolve, does that make it false?

Answer these scriptural positions consistent with your doctrine.

Once more: When you say that God elects a man after he believes, repents, or is converted, do you speak good sense? Do you not contradict the bible? Do you not contradict yourself? Paul made God's foreknowledge even his own will, the only ground of election; you make it faith, repentance and conversion. When you make faith, repentance and conversion, the ground of election, does faith, repentance and conversion come by free grace? If not, where is your doctrine of free grace? If so, who gives them? and whom does he choose to give them to? or does he give by random, without any choice? Can you make these things meet together, and steer clear of works on the one hand, and election on the other? Does the gospel do any good to salvation unless God gives his blessing? Does he bless it to all for salvation? Does he not bless it to whom he pleases? Can you answer these three questions, and steer clear of falsehood by contradicting both the bible and facts on the one hand, and election on the other? If you can you must be good at darkening counsel by words without knowledge.

In the last place, God's unchangeability consists in two simple things: he never drops a purpose, and he never takes a new one. He fulfils every purpose he has, and never has any more. But this may be comprised in one simple thing, (viz.) his mind never alters. There

may be successions of scenes and actions in the divine procedure, ad infinitum; but all must be in a perfect conformity to one solid plan, which can never alter. Consequently the plan of God will be the same without the least possible variation at the day of judgment, as it ever was from eternity. I am authorized by the bible to say that God's purpose at the day of judgment will be to bless, not merely believers, but Abel, Abraham, David, Paul, and so individually every one who will be blessed on that day. But this will not be a new plan, but the identical same plan, without the least degree of variation, which he had from eternity. Now can my opponent assert that the premises of this argument are false, or my conclusion unfair? And if he can acknowledge the truth of it, and yet deny that God from eternity purposed to bless that certain number individually, which shall be at his right hand at the last day, and no other, it will not, it cannot possibly be because he thinks so; but wholly and solely because he will obstinately speak against the light of his own conscience; or otherwise, he must be either ignorant or inattentive.

CHAPTER XVI.

The same subject continued.

LET us now return to the particular question. Does the gospel do any good to the non-elect? And are they inexcusable in not believing? This question I divide into two parts: the first respects the benefit of the gospel to the non-elect; the second, the inexcusableness of the non-elect in not believing. To the first I answer. That as to the salvation of their souls, the non-elect receive no benefit at all from the gospel. It may be true that the gospel restrains them from many sins which they would

otherwise commit; and consequently those of them who are privileged with the gospel may enjoy many advantages in this respect, inasmuch as they will not have so many sins to answer for, as they would have had. But I cannot conceive this to be any advantage in the main; for their awful sin in neglecting and despising the gospel, which they would not have been guilty of, were it not for their opportunities, will undoubtedly overbalance in point of malignity, and punishment, all the other sins they would or could possibly have committed. For it is evident from scripture, that it will be more tolerable for even Sodom and Gomorrah, than for them.

At a careless view of this awful truth, it seems at first sight shocking to those who are disposed to deny God's sovereignty, and who wish his goodness to sinners to hold all the perfections of the Deity in absolute subordination. But the opposers of the doctrine of election ought seriously to consider that this very circumstance is every whit as true on the doctrine of free grace, as on the doctrine of election. For I can as easily demonstrate the propriety of God's offering salvation to a non-elect, as I can his offering salvation to any man, and not giving him faith to receive it; or even to one, when he knows that he never will receive it. They ought also to remember that a thing may be true, although we do not understand how it is, and may not be able to demonstrate the propriety of it. And it never has yet been proven, either by reason or scripture that it would be unjust for God to do so. It is not an uncommon thing for persons to deny doctrines, because they cannot get over some difficulties which stand in the way; and by so doing they often plunge themselves into difficulties, tenfold worse on the other hand.

"Dum stulti vitant vitia, in contraria currunt."* HOR.

* While ignorant persons avoid one fault, they run incautiously into another.

There is nothing more plainly taught in the bible than the doctrine of free grace. Yet this difficulty stands against it; because God evidently does not give grace to all to whom he offers it; and because I cannot see the propriety of this, must I deny it, and say we are saved by works and not by grace? God could easily have softened Pharaoh's heart, but he did not. Did not the calls and warnings of Moses, and the gradual process of judgments miraculously coming upon him, tend to soften his heart? Did not God know that his proceedings toward Pharaoh would render him more and more inexcusable and aggravate his sin and punishment? Why then did he harden his heart? Had he softened his heart, he would have lost his divine purpose of showing his power; and the very design which God had in raising him up would have been completely frustrated. Yet Pharaoh was inexcusable. Now must I deny the whole of that part of the bible, because I cannot unravel the whole mystery? Or am I obliged to unravel the whole mystery because I acknowledge it true?

What right had the apostle Peter to criminate the Jews so highly for crucifying our Saviour; "Ye with wicked hands have crucified and slain," and yet with the same breath told them that he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God?

When the disciples asked our Saviour to expound to them the parable of the sower, he has this strange introduction. (Mark 4. 11, 12.) "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." St. John in chap. 12. 39, 40. says of the Jews, "Therefore they could not believe, because that

“ Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.”

Yet our Saviour highly criminales them for their blindness and hardness of heart in not believing him to be the true Messiah. And for their obstinacy devotes their whole nation to destruction. And Paul to the Romans (chap. 11. 7.) says that the whole was blinded except those whom the election obtained. Can my opponent unravel all these difficulties? Will he deny them if he cannot? Must I do it to answer his objections against the doctrine of election? How unreasonable are such demands! I acknowledge I cannot answer them; they are too hard for me; I cannot fathom them. But I know that an infinitely holy and wise God does right; and I know that he did and does these very things; the bible tells me so; and I do not wish to dispute his divine economy, because I cannot tell it all over and unravel every difficulty. But, physician heal thyself; answer the objections against your own doctrine of free grace, and then I will answer them against the doctrine of election. But I do not expect you to do it, for I am not so unreasonable; and if you attempt it, you can only be wise by seeing your folly. But I beg of my friend, not to allow himself to deny every thing he cannot see, let God’s word say what it may about it.

I answer again that the gospel does no real good to a non-elect, and yet it does the very same good to a non-elect as it does to any man who does not believe. And God is as just in condemning a non-elect as he can possibly be in condemning a man for not believing, to whom God does not freely give the grace of faith; for every non-elect who hears the gospel has as much power to believe on Christ as the reprobate Jews had, and as Pharaoh had to believe Moses.

But as to the common blessings of providence in this world the non-elect are made equal sharers with the people of God; and often indeed are allowed great portions of the honors and profits of this life, while many of God's dear chosen ones are destitute, afflicted, tormented. It appears pretty evident from scripture that all the blessings of life, all who are in the world, especially those who live under the gospel, enjoy in consequence of the grand plan of the gospel. God gives summer and winter, seed-time and harvest to the whole world by covenant; which covenant was made with Noah evidently for the sake of the church. God has rewarded wicked kings for services done for him in his great management of his kingdom; witness Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. God remembered his covenant with Abraham, and with David in the midst of times of rebellion and captivity. For the church's sake not only was Israel preserved through all dangers and trials, as a nation, among whom were thousands of the non-elect; but the heathens were spread abroad over the face of the earth to give an opportunity for the gentile church to take place; and the Jews are now preserved in their dispersed state for the sake of their happy posterity, who shall be brought in, in the fulness of time according to the promise of God to his church. The government is put upon Christ's shoulders; and the Father hath given all things into his hand; and he hath promised to make all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose. The apostle Paul says expressly that Christ was given to be Head over all things to his church.

On such scripture ground as this, we may venture to let our imaginations range a little, and take a view of the wonderful dispensations of God in the world for the sake of his elect. The non-elect, perhaps, are the principal supporters of the gospel. According to the scripture account not many wise, not many noble are called; but God hath

chosen the foolish, the weak, and the base things of the world. God's people are generally poor and needy; the men of the world are generally rich and affluent. The gospel with its ordinances, discipline, and government, volumes published for the propagation of truth, necessary support of ministers, who are generally among the poor, &c. requires not a small portion of property to support it; and it is to be supported by the special command of God. For this purpose he calls in the aid of the world to contribute to the maintenance of the church; and rewards them bountifully with the good things of this world to enable them to do so. Many ungodly parents have to feed and clothe an elect child, many wicked children to support an aged father; and many such cases might be mentioned which actually take place every day. No doubt the tribes of Indians, which have inhabited the wilds of America time out of mind, are continued to this day, and will be from time to time for the sake of a happy posterity which God has chosen, and given to his Son as his heritage among the heathen; whom he must also bring to his fold as the purchase of his precious blood. These are not groundless surmises. Read the 2d chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, and there you will find how Paul reminds them of their former heathenish state, for so many years, living in heathenism, until at length they were brought nigh by free grace, and as he says to the Romans ingrafted into the olive tree. How many thousands of such circumstances might we notice from scripture, history, and experience, showing that on the plan of the gospel God bestows an infinite variety of blessings on the non-elect for the sake of his own chosen people.

Every suspension of punishment must be for the gospel's sake. Health and prosperity of every degree and kind are in consequence of Christ's purchase for his people. The astonishing reformation in politics is confessedly in consequence of the gospel. Even deists themselves

have and do acknowledge that the christian religion is the best trick of government that ever was invented, and for that very reason have in hundreds of instances contributed largely to the support of the gospel. Thousands of the non-elect have enjoyed both civil, or national, and private advantages from this circumstance. Although it must be acknowledged, even with gratitude, that many of God's children have been and are still called of God to take part in civil government, yet it is truly worthy of notice that the burden generally has fallen to the lot of those who in heart were no great friends to the cross of Christ. It must be very laborious indeed to manage the affairs of state, to be conversant, as it were, with the whole world; to traverse sea and land, as envoys, plenipotentiaries, &c. to conduct armies by land and sea; and also to carry on the extensive business of navigation. I truly think the poor christian, who is comparatively but seldom called in the dispensations of providence to take an active part in these laborious scenes, may sit at home with his wife and children, and pay his taxes freely, and thank his kind Saviour for giving him so many great men to take the burden, in the discharge of such an important trust. But God rewards them, even if they are wicked, with the honours and profits of this world; and if they are true friends to the gospel he also rewards them with everlasting life and glory.

From the whole view which I have taken of the matter I must conclude that although the gospel is intended for the eternal salvation of the elect only, yet the non-elect enjoy innumerable advantages from it in this world, and consequently do partake of some of the benefits of the death of Christ. And no one on the doctrine of free grace, and scarcely on the doctrine of works, can say any thing contrary to what has been said if he will attend to the decisions of the bible.

CHAPTER XVII.

The non-elect are inexcusable.

I COME now to the second part of the question under consideration. Are the non-elect inexcusable for not believing? This is indeed a very important inquiry. God could never be justified in condemning any person for unbelief, if the sinner can, on just principles, be excused for not believing. This question does not embrace the state of the heathen; for the scripture does not in the least intimate that they are to be judged as unbelievers; for any one must see that they must have no natural power to believe on him of whom they have not heard, and that they could not hear without a preacher; and no one could preach to them unless he were sent. (Rom. 10. 14.) We are therefore to confine our ideas to those under the gospel.

I answer, they are certainly inexcusable, and do consequently stand justly liable to condemnation for the sin of unbelief. If our reason cannot fathom this mystery, yet let us revere divine authority. The Judge of all the earth will surely do right. John 3, 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."

This is certainly to the point, and is sufficient scripture authority to prove what I have said. But our blessed Saviour is pleased in his infinite condescension to point out the reasonableness, justice, and propriety of the case in the three following verses. "And this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither

“cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reprov-
 ed.” But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his
 “deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in
 “God.”

This is the just grounds of the condemnation of unbelievers, that the gospel which bringeth life and immortality to light, offering eternal salvation to lost sinners, has come into the world, and men, through the depravity of their hearts, loved sin, darkness, error and delusion, and chose to continue under all their gloomy prospects in iniquity rather than yield to and be directed by the light of the gospel; because their evil dispositions were such that they delighted in iniquity rather than the truth. For every one in a natural state, through his propensity to that which is evil, is possessed of a direct opposition to the gospel, and consequently will not come to a submission to the gospel. He will not admit convictions from the truth lest his conscience should reproach him or he be reprov- ed by the light of the word as an evildoer; and thus he will continue in his opposition to the gospel through the vicious propensity of his own heart. But on the other hand he who is disposed by divine grace to admit the truth and yield to conviction, comes to a sense of his lost and ruined state and gladly embraces the gospel and complies with the terms of salvation; so that the effect wrought in him producing such a powerful change both in heart and life, disposition and conduct is manifested to be wrought by or through the power of God accompanying the gospel; and the glorious consequence is, the lost sinner is delivered from condemnation and made obedient to the will of God.

I humbly conceive this will be acknowledged to be a correct scriptural paraphrase of the passage; and consequently the non-elect who are left to their own will are entirely inexcusable for rejecting the gospel, because the

text declares that they do it through a wicked temper, hating that which is good and loving that which is evil.

The only possible way that we can vindicate the divine procedure on the principles of free grace in the condemnation of the non-elect is by making them have a free choice in their own conduct. This the scriptures evidently do, as we have already seen above in making the cause of unbelief, the opposition of the heart to the gospel, and an inclination to evil. It is, indeed, a very unsatisfactory answer to the question to say that we have lost our power by the fall, and that God still has a right to command, although we, by our fault, have lost our power to obey. It is meant that we are naturally as well as morally unable to believe or to obey the gospel; it would be impossible to vindicate the honour of the divine government in exacting duties by law from rational creatures which they were naturally unable to perform. And it must be forever inconsistent to say that a moral governor still has a right to demand obedience in any one thing when the subject has no power to perform it. A man never possibly can be under the least obligations to do what he cannot do; and there is nothing in which rigorous austerity, cruel tyranny and arbitrary and unreasonable injustice could appear more evident than to require any such thing. Attempts to vindicate the calvinistic doctrines of the gospel on such unwarrantable principles have done much harm, and, indeed, instead of vindicating those doctrines it has exposed them to ridicule. When I am asked why am I condemned for not believing when I am not able to believe, if I answer because I have lost my power by my own fault, the question is consequently continued. But how can God justly require of me what I cannot do? If I answer his right cannot be disannulled by my lack of ability, we might go on and ask and answer such questions fifty times over, and never come any nearer

the point; for the question would always carry with it a refutation of the answer.

The truth is we never have lost our natural power to perform our duty. Our moral power, as it is called, or more properly our inclination or choice as to what is good we have lost; and here lies the whole mystery. We are really, fully and completely able to believe in Christ, but we are not disposed in our hearts to do it. Inasmuch therefore as the non-elect will not believe on Christ when he is freely offered unto them, when they are really able to do it and nothing to hinder them but their own evil disposition, they stand justly liable to condemnation and are entirely inexcusable. It is a matter of vast importance to have clear views of this matter, for it is on these principles only that we can vindicate the doctrine of free grace. In order to understand this point let us give it a fair hearing. I observe, therefore,

1. That the common acceptation of the words *can*, *cannot*, *able*, *unable*, *impossible*, &c. in this case, as well as many other words in other cases, not only render our meaning doubtful when we speak on the subject, but often cause us to mistake the meaning of the bible. Also the fixed sense of the word *will*, it never meaning any thing but choice or a disposition of the heart, not being sufficiently attended to, causes us to give up too much to the other words, which are very ambiguous and uncertain both in scripture and in common language, and so much so that the meaning is often to be ascertained by the sense of the passage. The words *can*, *cannot*, *power*, *ability*, &c. are never applicable to the temper or disposition of the mind but only to the natural strength or capacity either of the body or soul; and when they are applied to the disposition the style is hyperbolical, the expressions figurative, but the words have not their natural meaning. The word *will* always supposes power, but never means power, but the disposition to exert it. The word *power* means

natural capacity or strength when it has its natural sense, and sometimes it means authority, and sometimes the will or disposition of the mind, in which case it is used not in its proper sense but figuratively.

To make this matter more plain, let me instance a few particulars. When I say I will not go, I will not do this or that, you without any difficulty understand me to mean that I could if I would; and the reason is not the want of power but disposition. If power is lacking it is not natural for me to say I will not, but cannot. Again, when I say I cannot go, or I cannot do this or that, you immediately take into view my circumstances; if I am sick or if some natural obstacle is in my way, you understand me according to the natural meaning of the words; you admit that I would if I could; my will is not blamed but I lack strength. But if you cannot conceive any lack of natural capacity you immediately understand me to mean one of two things, either modestly denying to save an abrupt answer, or a strong declaration of my indisposition; I cannot, modestly couching a reason, rather than saying I will not, or a high intimation of the want of will. When a man makes an offer of marriage to a female who is the object of his choice, and asks her consent, were she to answer I will not, he might perhaps think her abrupt in her reply, but he would understand her exactly as she spoke, for the words will or will not are never doubtful; but if she says I cannot, the denial is either modest or strong; modest, covering a reason which is not expressed, and leaves room for the question why; which reason is not want of natural ability, but some motive which holds back the consent of the will; or it is a strong repulse, yet covering a reason, which reason is represented by the figure to be so strong as to leave little hope of the mind's being changed.

2. We will now consider in what sense we are to understand the scriptures when they use such phrases.

Our Saviour says to the Jews (John 5. 40.) "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Here the word *will* is used with a negative, not; ye will not; the sense is definitive and to be understood according to the invariable meaning of that phrase; and we must do violence to our own common sense of language if we construe the words out of their natural meaning. Our Lord means to impeach the Jews with wilfully rejecting him, and finds them guilty because their unbelief consisted in the want of disposition or positive unwillingness. * $\theta\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\epsilon\epsilon\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\nu$. Ye are not willing to come to me, &c. A similar expression is used in Matt. 23. 37. "How often was I willing to gather your children together, and ye were not willing: I would but ye would not." It is impossible to misunderstand such expressions; such phrases never have but one meaning, and that is conveyed by the natural sense of the words.

But there are other texts that literally give us the idea of a natural impossibility of using the words *cannot*, &c. the proper sense of which is only applicable to capacity or strength. We are not only under the necessity to put a different meaning to such phrases to reconcile them with the texts above cited, the sense of which cannot be altered; but we are sufficiently warranted to do so, both by scripture and common custom, even among the best writers and speakers; instances of which in common language we have already given.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The non-elect inexcusable.

NOR many days after Christ told the Jews that they would not come to him, he again tells them (John 6. 44, 65.) "No man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him, &c." Here the word *can*, with the negative *no* is used. In the literal sense of the two different texts, our blessed Saviour would directly contradict himself which plainly shows that the words *can not*, are to be understood in a figurative sense; which we have already noticed, is a very common case. For we have already seen that the other text cannot be understood differently from its natural or proper meaning. *Will not* never means, but always implies, power without a disposition to exercise it; but, *cannot* often loses its own natural and proper sense, and is taken to signify an opposition of heart or want of will. The two texts consequently mean the same thing; the first literally, the other figuratively. In the one, Christ tells the Jews that their hearts were averse to the gospel; in the other, he tells them that they would continue in that unhappy state of unwillingness except the Father would draw them; or in other words; no man will come to me except the Father persuade him. I can easily make the word *can* mean *will*, because it very frequently has that meaning; but I never can make the word *will* mean *can*, or rather *will not* mean *can not*, for it never has that meaning. The word draw in the text makes it evident that this is what our Saviour meant. It is indeed very improper to use the word draw to give the idea of infusing, or implanting new natural capacities or powers in the soul; but when we speak of winning over the mind, changing the disposition, or

gaining the consent, by motives and arguments, it is very natural. Christ's meaning is farther evident by the manner in which the Father draws: "Every man therefore "who hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto "me," viz. who are taught of God the doctrines of the gospel, so that the mind is suitably influenced, and drawn over to a cordial consent, and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. All which shows that the inability is a moral one, consisting in the perverse disposition of the heart, and is so far from excusing the unbeliever that it is the very thing which renders him guilty, and entirely inexcusable.

Farther (Rom. 8. 7.) "The carnal mind is enmity "against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be." The carnal mind means a sinful propensity or disposition; the apostle says it is opposed to the mind of God, and that it is not obedient to the divine law; for a man's mind can not be subject to the will of God and disposed to evil, at the same time.

When we say, we by nature have no will to that which is good we say the truth; and when we bring forward this text to prove it we find the doctrine established by the authority of the inspired apostle. But if we proceed to explain the doctrine we ought to be careful not to use ambiguous words, or we ought at least to give our phrases such a dress as not to give an idea contrary to the apostle's meaning. If we do the simple doctrine will be proven; but our explanation will not, because the apostle did not mean what we say. In this very way I have a thousand times proved, or rather attempted to prove, from scripture grand absurdities and nonsense. This is the fatal way to take sanctuary in darkness, to support a favorite point, and to strain the scriptures to mean what the divine writers never intended.

For instance, when I say that by nature we are inclined to evil; that our will is averse to that which is good; and

consequently we will be opposed to God and his law while ever we continue in our natural state; and that it is impossible in the nature of things for us to submit to the terms of the gospel while we continue uninfluenced by the motives of the gospel; and that in order to bring us to a compliance with the divine will it is absolutely necessary that a change take place in the temper or disposition of our hearts; which can only be effected by motives and arguments calculated to influence our mind, so as to bring us to a choice of Christ as our only salvation: When I advance this doctrine from this text I speak plainly; my words are simple, and attended with such circumstances as leave no ambiguity; my reader is at no loss; and when he looks at my text he finds a clear proof of what I have said, and he can rely upon my explanation. But if by the force of education, or for any other cause whatever, I venture to say "Our will can not choose any thing spiritually good until it be renewed by the Spirit of Christ," no man can understand what I say, or know certainly what I mean; and when this text is brought forward as a proof, it proves nothing, because you know not what I wish it to prove. The whole is ambiguous, and my sentiments are covered with darkness. Again, if I say "God hath endowed the will of man with natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil," my ideas are clear, and my reader does not mistake my meaning; and when I quote James 1. 14. and Deut. 30. 19. and John 5. 40. I prove every particle of my doctrine. But when I add "Man by his fall into a state of sin hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good," my reader stops short. He asks 1st does the writer contradict what he said before? Or, 2d what does he mean? He cannot answer the first question, because he cannot answer the second. And when I quote Rom. 5. 6, and 8. 7. I prove nothing definite; for those texts, like all other

such texts, are figurative, and consequently need the general scope to prove what they mean. Now if I mean a natural ability to will I contradict what I said before, and I introduce these texts to contradict the texts by which I proved my former doctrine. But the other texts are determinate in their meaning, but these are figurative, and consequently cannot contradict them but must agree with them; I therefore lose both my proofs and my doctrine. But if I only mean moral ability I might have saved both ink, paper, and a great deal of the trouble of my reader, and perhaps prevented a grand mistake by leaving out the word ability, and simply saying that man by his fall has wholly lost all disposition to any spiritual good; here my reader would not be perplexed, for there would be no darkness to perplex him. The definite and simple sense of the sentence would immediately give a plain idea. And when I quote Rom. 8. 7. and my reader takes a view of the scope of the passage, he finds my doctrine proven, and I speak in a perfect consistency both with the principles of fallen nature and moral agency. Farther, when I say "The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory," my accurate reader suspects me in a moment, not only for inaccuracy in language but also for error in judgment. And when, for proof, I quote Eph. 4. 13. and Jude 24. I have not a single sentence in the text to prove what I have advanced. When I say a man is immutably bound to one thing, you easily understand me; but when I say he is immutably free to one thing, let that thing be ever so good, you have no idea, and no wonder, for my language is not calculated to give you any.

I firmly believe that it is very proper to speak of sinners as dead in sin, and it is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of the bible. In the 2d chapter of the Eph. we have a most striking view of our lost, and ruined state. But we are to remember that such passages of scripture will

not justify us in saying that a sinner can no more believe than a dead man can act, or breathe, or perform the common business of life. This would be reducing the striking language of figure, which the bible uses, to its common meaning; and it would not only destroy the beauty of the scripture style, but it would introduce something awkward, not to say really false, and absurd in its place; and we could find no text to prove but many to contradict it.

Upon the whole I conclude, that nothing hinders a sinner from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ but a wicked heart; and that wickedness, as our blessed Saviour explains it, consists in hating the light and loving darkness. The non-elect are therefore inexcusable, because they will not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

CHAPTER XIX.

Moral inability inexcusable in its nature.

ALTHOUGH it is not very difficult to see the difference betwixt moral and natural inability, yet many are so little attentive to this subject that they have very confused ideas of it. They are also disposed to think, that to have a wicked disposition is not a matter of sufficient magnitude to be the great obstacle in the sinner's way. Having opened the way in the two former chapters for a serious view of this important matter, let us endeavour to understand it.

There is no difficulty in understanding natural ability; the words are plain and have their natural meaning. We can say natural abilities, strength, power, capacity, &c. and our ideas are not disturbed, and we simply mean that power or capacity either of body or mind, which we have by nature as vigorous, healthy, rational or intelligent

creatures. Hence you easily understand me as speaking of the exercise of my natural capacity when I say, I walk, I run, I write, I labour, I think, I understand, I judge, I remember, &c.; all such things are done by natural power. But the great difficulty is to know what is meant by moral power; and the difficulty arises considerably from our using the same words here as in the other case; the words power, ability, &c. are not natural in this case; and it is with some difficulty the mind is persuaded to take the figurative instead of the natural sense. When I say, I cannot fly, you understand me easily, you know that I have no wings; and even if I had a disposition I have not natural ability. But if I tell you I cannot accept of a gift which you offer me, my style is changed and you have to drop the natural sense, and understand me to say that I am not willing. I will give a number of examples by couples: the first showing natural inability, the second moral inability, by which you can easily see the nature of both and the difference betwixt them.

1. I cannot remove a mountain. 2. I cannot try to do it.

1. I cannot cause my shade-tree to grow. 2. I cannot chop it down.

1. I cannot cure my wife of the fever. 2. I cannot give her poison.

1. I cannot be your master. 2. I cannot be your slave.

1. I cannot put my hand through the key hole. 2. I cannot put it in the fire.

Again: I will give similar examples in religious matters, understood in the same manner.

1. I cannot keep from staggering when I walk, when I am intoxicated. 2. I cannot keep from drinking to excess.

1. I cannot bring a curse upon my neighbour. 2. I am so angry I cannot help but curse him.

1. I cannot bless myself. 2. I cannot pray to God to do it.

1. I cannot make atonement for my sins. 2. I cannot consent for Christ to do it for me.

1. A heathen says he cannot accept of salvation, he has no offer. 2. An infidel says I cannot accept of salvation, although I have the offer every day.

1. Jesus said Where I go, thither ye cannot come. 2. He said also, No man can come unto me, &c.

1. Thou canst not make one hair white or black. 2. I have married a wife and cannot come.

1. The father of the lunatic said to Christ If thou canst do any thing. 2. Jesus said to him, If thou canst believe.

These examples are sufficient to show the difference betwixt a natural and moral ability; and if the reader will only substitute the words will not, instead of cannot, in every second example; and wilt instead of canst in the last, he will have the plain sense of the whole matter. It is therefore evident that moral inability is nothing but the want of will or disposition of the mind.

Natural inability always arises from one of two things, either the want of natural power or want of opportunity. An idiot has not natural power to believe in consequence of the deranged state of his mind; a heathen has not, for want of opportunity; and neither is condemned for unbelief. But moral inability always arises from a want of disposition, and is always the very turning point on which the charge of unbelief is hinged. Were it not for this, the unbeliever would be excused. 'This our Lord undoubtedly asserts when he says of the Jews "If I had not done "among them the works which none other man did, they "had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated "both me and my Father." Also verse 22d, "If I had not "come and spoken unto them they had not had sin, but "now they have no cloak for their sin."

Here I am asked, Does the gospel lay before the non-elect motives and arguments sufficient to induce them to believe? I answer, it does. I do not say that the divine

power attends the gospel to the non-elect as it does to the elect, so that they are brought to a moral necessity to believe. But the gospel certainly lays enough of interesting truth before them to influence the mind of a reasonable man, who is in their situation as sinners. But the reason why they are not influenced by the truth is because they will not consider it or lay it to heart; their mind is engrossed with other things, and they are so wickedly disposed that they never will lay to heart the things of religion.

However difficult it may be to understand these things for the want of knowing what the Spirit's influences are on the soul in illuminating it; yet we must certainly conclude from scripture that those who hear the gospel will be found inexcusable at the day of judgment; and if so they must have had enough to induce them to believe had they improved it; and the fault must lie in their wilfully rejecting the offers of the gospel; see Matt. 11. 20—24. Luke 10. 10—16.

Christ never would have pronounced such woes upon Jerusalem, Chorazin and Bethsaida, if they had not been justly blameworthy in consequence of their wilfully rejecting the offers of the gospel, attended with such evidences of truth both by prophecies and miracles wrought among them. With what propriety could our blessed Saviour direct the disciples to shake off the very dust of their feet as a testimony against those cities which would not receive them, unless the gospel gave them such a privilege as rendered them highly criminal for not improving it. There are three things here to be considered. The gospel offers full and complete salvation to intelligent creatures on very easy terms.

1. The salvation offered in the gospel is every way suitable to the necessities of sinners; it is complete in every respect, righteousness, pardon and every necessary grace to sanctify the soul and make it fit for heaven.

2. This complete salvation is offered not to stocks or mere machines, but to creatures possessed of rational faculties capable of consulting their best interest, capable of believing reports on proper testimony, capable of examining doctrines, capable of making deductions from premises to prove facts, and receive facts for truths on evidence, capable to be influenced by motives, capable to feel arguments, capable to fear and capable to desire, in short, capable to make a full, free and voluntary choice in all their conduct, according to the rational influence of proper motives. Such is the sinner; and his being a sinner does not destroy his rational power.

3. The salvation of the gospel exactly suited to his case as a lost sinner is offered to him on very easy terms. The salvation of Christ is offered freely to be received without money or price; we are not in any sense whatsoever to purchase even the least blessing it contains; we are not to perform repentance, love, holiness, or any duty of religion in order to obtain it; but all these things are freely given and are so many parts of this wonderful salvation. We are only required to receive or accept, or to give our consent to Christ to save us by his own righteousness and Spirit.

And that we may, on rational principles as free agents, accept of Christ, the gospel furnishes us with arguments and teaches us doctrines to influence our choice; several of those doctrines we know and feel by experience to be true; others are attested by divine authority, by prophecies, by miracles, and by many witnesses. We are taught that we are sinners and need pardon and sanctification; we feel it an awful truth. We are taught that Christ died to save sinners; and this important truth is attended with the best testimony of any fact that ever was done in the world. The whole salvation purchased by the death of Christ is freely offered to the sinner just as he is; and the only thing

required is for the lost creature to be willing for Christ to save him.

It evidently appears from what I have said, that the gospel is really within the reach of a lost sinner. There is no man who enjoys the gospel can say consistent with truth, that he cannot be saved. He may say that he *will not* be saved, but *cannot*, while the sinner is on this side hell, can never be said consistent with the bible. He may say he cannot save himself, but while Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and offers salvation freely, every man who enjoys those offers can, ought and must be arraigned at the bar of God, and his own conscience as a guilty culprit, if he will not accept of the salvation which is offered to him in the gospel.

It appears from the above statement that the motives and arguments of the gospel are in their nature really sufficient to induce the non-elect to accept of Christ; and although they do not do it, the deficiency lies not in the number or nature of the motives, nor yet in full and complete opportunity by "line upon line, precept upon precept" to attend to them, but in their own corrupt and wicked temper of heart; and I do not see how it is possible to excuse a rational creature called by so many moving arguments, addressed to every power of the soul in a most interesting case, attended with all the energy of public oratory and eloquence, if at last he goes even to death in opposition to Christ and his salvation. Surely we must join with the apostle and say (Heb. 10. 26—29.) "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He who despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, he shall be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood

“of the covenant wherewith he (Christ) was sanctified
 “an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of
 “grace.”

Indeed I am so far from feeling any disposition to excuse an unbeliever that I often feel myself astonished above measure that every one who hears the gospel does not believe in Christ. A rational creature capable of thought and reflection, in danger of eternal damnation every moment, having the free offer of pardon and deliverance from insufferable pain and the enjoyment of eternal happiness and glory, and will not accept of it! Be astonished O ye heavens at this! It certainly will and ought to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for such.

Upon the whole we conclude that the non-elect who enjoy the free offer of salvation and nothing to hinder them from accepting it but their own wicked disposition must be inexcusable; and God will be justified when he speaketh and clear when he judgeth.

CHAPTER XX.

Improvement.

WE come now to make some improvement on what has been said. We have seen that the doctrine of election is established by the word of God. We have attended to the several ways in which the bible teaches us this doctrine, and how it answers in a most masterly manner the principal objections against it. This doctrine is represented in scripture as the foundation of the gospel, the particular grounds of the christian's comfort and joy, the pillar of the christian's hope of perseverance and glory. It insures all the blessings of the covenant of grace to believers. It insures to Christ, the glorious Mediator, the

reward of his sufferings and the glory of his kingdom. It insures constant protection to the church, and a sure defence against and a final conquest over all her enemies. It encourages ministers to preach the gospel and the people to attend on the word preached. It humbles the pride of man, strikes pointedly against self-righteousness and vainglory, and gives all the glory to God only, and displays the honour of all the divine perfections. It is the foundation of free grace here and complete glory hereafter, and is properly the christian's song both in time and throughout eternity. Happy are they who are chosen in Christ Jesus before the world was. It becomes every candidate for eternity to "give diligence to make his calling and election sure."

The sovereignty of God is peculiarly exhibited and awfully displayed in the doctrine of election; and when we feel a disposition to deny election we ought to be afraid lest it arises from an opposition in our hearts to God's sovereignty. We ought to ask ourselves whether we would acknowledge God's prerogative and unquestionable right to do as he pleases with his sinful creatures. It is certainly the most unreasonable thing in the world to say or to think that God could not justly condemn all, when all have sinned; and to say he must save all or none is very unreasonable. To say he must give all an equal chance is contrary to the bible, facts and reason. It is abominable nonsense to talk of free grace and yet constrain the will of the Giver or introduce the idea of something to be done by the sinner to make him fit to receive or worthy to partake. To control a Being infinitely wise, just and powerful in his purposes of goodness to rebels, either as to his gifts or the objects of his goodness or the number of those objects is an impious insult on the dignity of heaven; holy angels dare not do it. None but rebels say, "What dost thou?" A few serious reflections on these things would tend to convince cavillers at this

doctrine that secret enmity in their hearts against God's sovereignty lies at the bottom of all their arguments. I am not surprised when I find deists cavilling at the doctrines of the bible; but it is truly astonishing to find persons who profess to take the bible as the infallible rule and standard of their faith denying election, when they can read it there as plainly as they can read the letters of the alphabet. It is as evident from the bible that the whole scale of doctrines contained in it, and the whole procedure of divine Providence toward his church and people is founded on one grand original plan or purpose as that syllables, words and sentences are founded on the letters. These things I have attempted to prove and demonstrate in this treatise; and I hope I have done it to the satisfaction of some. There are but two difficulties attending the doctrine of election, and both arise in consequence of our limited capacities.

1. It seems reasonable to suppose that God must exist previous to his making choice or adopting the great plan of redemption; and if we admit but one moment we may with equal propriety admit fifty or five hundred. On the other hand, when the choice is made or the plan adopted there is something new taken place in the mind of the Deity, which introduces a change which is incompatible with the perfections of God. Many writers have showed much learning and genius and study on this subject; but with all they have only demonstrated that finite creatures cannot comprehend the infinite things of God. But inasmuch as the bible calls it an eternal purpose (Eph. 3. 11.) and before the world was or began, from the beginning, &c. we ought to silence our flights of fancy and curiosity and submit to divine authority with reverence and adoration.

2. The other difficulty respects the free agency of the creature; and no doubt there would be no difficulty here if we only had a proper knowledge of our own souls.

Philosophers have been as much perplexed about the nature and capacities of the human mind as about any other subject again. Indeed we know little about spirits. How the mind is affected by external objects, how a motive influences the heart, how one spirit affects or influences another, and even how the divine Spirit enlightens, persuades and renews are questions which have occupied the pens of many wise men and great philosophers to little or no purpose, but to show how little we know of our own selves. Hence no doubt it is that we cannot see why God permitted Adam to fall, when we think he could have easily prevented it; how he is not the author of sin, why he aggravates the sin of unbelievers by offering them salvation when he knows they will not accept of it, &c. Our weak capacities cannot comprehend these things. If we perfectly understood all the principles of moral agency and moral necessity probably there would be no mystery in these things. But such objections militate every whit as much against the fall of angels and of man, the crucifixion of Christ by Pilate and the chief priests, the Jews' rejection of the gospel, the heathens living hundreds and thousands of years without the gospel, &c. as against election, although the most of these are well known facts. If therefore such objections will overturn the truth of the doctrine of election, they will overturn, overturn, overturn indeed, until all the truths in the bible will be overturned. Therefore to bring forward such difficulties as objections against the doctrine of election, which we have proven to be a positive doctrine supported and vindicated by the word of God, is really nothing else but playing and sporting with the awful sovereignty of God, and the holy doctrines of the bible.

Until we can understand more perfectly the powers and affections of our own minds, it becomes us, as poor dependent creatures to sit submissively at the foot of divine wisdom and sovereignty, and credit the truth of

his divine word, even although we may not in every case and circumstance, be able to pry into the depth of what he reveals, rather than cavil (as if we were connoisseurs) at his infinite economy, and dispute his authority in what we do not understand. We should never allow ourselves to feel as if God was under obligations to please us, or ask our counsel. We are too young, too foolish and too wicked to please or counsel ourselves; and the very angels dare not ask the reason why, in all the counsels and works of God.

The doctrine of election is so well proven by scripture that we ought to believe it. It is such a sovereign doctrine that we ought to revere it. It is so desirable, we ought to be thankful for it. It is so pleasing we ought to love it. It is so unchangeable we ought to confide in it. Yea, God is so glorified in it, and the helpless sinner so completely saved by it, that we ought to esteem it, and use it as the sum and source of the doctrines of the bible; and make it the ground of all our joy and comfort. Take away this doctrine, and what have we remaining in all the bible? The crucifixion of Christ would be an unmeaning thing, a mere chaotic tragedy; the preaching of the gospel would be a mere play upon the fancy; the offers and promises of the gospel, would be a trick of deception, the hope of the christian be completely unhinged, and the divine influences of the Spirit, would be forever wanting. What an unmeaning thing would the whole bible be, without a plan? The Jews without this plan in view, thought Christ crucified, was very offensive; the wise Grecians thought it foolishness, but those who believed, thought and felt it to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

How astonishing it is, that that which is the very life and soul of the bible, without which it would be a dead letter, that without which the preaching of the gospel would be a mere sabbatical entertainment, without saving one soul, that which is the only true ground of free

grace, and consequently the only ground of a sinner's hope and salvation, should be neglected, denied, rejected, slighted, ridiculed, and contemned by sinners, whose eternal salvation entirely depends upon it. It is well for sinners that their denying, and even ridiculing and despising this glorious doctrine, has no tendency to make it void, and of none effect. God cannot deny himself, and be unfaithful to his purpose, although we should ungratefully disbelieve the doctrine of his word.

What wonderful mercy it would have been even for the offended Majesty of heaven to give the smallest intimation of his purpose of grace to lost sinners; but how thankful ought we to be, when God has given the full assurance of hope to every soul that believes on Christ, founded on his determinate counsel, and purpose of grace, which he purposed in Christ before the world began; and when he hath in pursuance of his own plan, given us great and precious promises, established not upon our own works, but on his own unchangeable will; which promises contain every necessary blessing, both to entitle us unto, and prepare us for immortal happiness, and glory; all purchased by the blood of Christ, the great Head of the covenant, who is the Surety for the salvation of his people; and in due time, according to the same purpose of grace, by the holy Spirit effectually applied, and the work carried on, conducted by infinite wisdom, until it is crowned in heaven. Good God! are such favours as these to be despised and ridiculed by such creatures as we are! Ought they not to be received with love and astonishment, and every possible feeling of praise and gratitude! Is it not enough to make our hearts bleed with pity and sorrow, and our eyes swim with tears, and even to fill our souls with a holy indignation, to hear it said out of disdain and contempt, that this doctrine came from hell? and that it is an artful device of Satan, calculated only to fetter and trepan and des-

troy immortal souls? The worst, and the best wish I can possibly have for such persons is that they may be made to feel their own nothingness in the sight of God and their dependence on free and unmerited grace, to such a degree that they will be glad to adopt the plan of the gospel, founded on God's own purpose of grace in Christ, to keep them from sinking into hell, and drawn off from their own rotten system of self-righteousness, and works. I wish them to learn to put their trust in the unchangeable purpose and promises of Christ by faith; lest when they die, they find themselves on a wrong foundation, and be made eternally to reap the consequences of trampling on the counsels of heaven, and spurning at the infinite purposes of God.

Christians ought to study the plan of the gospel more than they do; and in order to obtain right notions of it, they ought to study the doctrine of election more. It is impossible to have right views of free grace, without having right views of this doctrine. Free grace always begins and ends in God. He first purposed to give it, or no soul could ever have received it; and it is cultivated by his own hand, or we would soon make shipwreck of it all.

How soon would the best of us provoke him to destroy us, were it not that his love is an everlasting love. The dung of our sacrifices would be cast in our faces long ere now, were it not for the everlasting covenant established in Christ, and ratified and confirmed by his precious blood.

When the whole scene is closed, and the topstone of the great work of salvation is laid, when Christ the great Master Builder, shall once more say, *it is finished*, what will be the song of praise? Even what it ought to be now, while we are on the way to glory. The love which we shall sing will not be a temporary love, but everlasting. We will not say he loved us as long as we loved him, but "we loved him because he first loved us." The

grace we will sing will not be in consequence of our faithfulness to him; the salvation will not be ascribed to our diligence in improving the gospel; but "he hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works." O how the negative will sound from every harp, "not according to our works;" and O how the positive answer will sound from choir to choir, and from string to string, "but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

CHAPTER XXI.

Improvement continued.

IF I had a few more gray hairs on my head I would address a word or two to my brethren in the ministry.

I hope my fathers, my superiors in age, experience and abilities, will generously look over my petulance, with a forgiving temper, while I address a few things to my equals, or rather my juniors in the gospel, on a subject so infinitely important.

Dear brethren, to us although earthen vessels are committed the treasures of the gospel. When you take the bible in your hand, you have not only your authority, but your special directions how to preach the gospel of Christ. One of your special directions is, "do the work of an evangelist;" and you have the example of Paul to the Romans and Ephesians, especially to declare the whole counsel of God. You certainly will commit an unpardonable blunder in divinity, if you in the first place neglect to make your own election sure, and secondly, if you neglect to study the doctrine accurately, and thirdly, if you

neglect to preach it soundly and thoroughly to your people. Election is none of your extraneous particles, which collect in little scraps of sermons once or twice in a twelvemonth, and even then appearing as a stranger, imposing on the patience and good humour both of the speaker and the audience. No. I answer, with a religious and zealous indignation at the thought, election is the burden of the theme; the very first thought of the counsels of heaven to save a lost sinner; it is the foundation of the covenant of grace, of the death of Christ, of the glory of his church and kingdom, on which are built like a mighty bulwark, all the promises of the gospel, all the influences of the Spirit, the glory of God, and the salvation of every soul that shall ever inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is undoubtedly our duty, in preaching the gospel, to introduce the glorious doctrines of free grace, founded on God's own eternal purpose, as the very ground work of our doctrine; to persuade sinners to accept of free unmerited mercy, offered to them according to God's own purpose, which he purposed in himself; and believers to rest upon the promises of the gospel founded on eternal truth, containing rich blessings promised, not for any goodness in us, but because he in his infinite counsel determined to bestow them for the sake of the atonement of Christ. This would have a natural tendency to bring sinners to a sense of their ruined and helpless state; and it would lead them to Christ as their only help in time of need. It would also tend to give genuine comfort to all believers; it would make them rejoice because their names are written in heaven. It would tend to bring them into one body, and one spirit, even as they are called in one hope of their calling. They would then feel themselves having made their calling and election sure, as elect according to the foreknowledge of God. And the grand and glorious argument would be in all their expressions of gratitude,

Blessed with all spiritual blessings according as he hath chosen us in him, &c.

But alas! instead of this we seldom ever hear the doctrine of election either from the pulpit or the press. Are we afraid of it? We seem as if we had a disrelish for it as if it was a drug; something the bible could spare, that the church could do better without. It perplexes the mind; it breaks the peace and quiet of sinners; it is painful to the minds of persons under concern about religion. It has a tendency to drive distressed souls into despair. There are difficulties attending it hard to solve. It is hard to understand. It ought to be touched with a careful hand, and managed very prudently and with great caution. O my brethren, what a pity it is that any of us should indulge such thoughts and notions as these. Can we be afraid of election when it is the only thing that bringeth salvation? How absurd it would be for any to attempt to destroy this doctrine for fear he is not elected. If we could overturn this one fact it would make the devils shout glory in hell. By so doing we would make ourselves non-elect indeed. Grant election and I have some hope, and a glorious one too. But let me destroy it and I am left in final despair. I tell you, my dear friends, I am in earnest. When I plead for election I am pleading for my life, my soul and my all. I cannot give one tittle up; for the least particle of it is a radical fibre which does its part to supply my soul with salvation. Blessed be God, we cannot destroy it. The gates of hell cannot do it. Men may strut and devils may rage, but God's elect shall be saved. Surely there is no person who has made his election sure can possibly disrelish this doctrine. If any of us count it a drug, it is a sad sign that our hope has never been fixed upon it. How can that be a drug which is the moving spring of the whole gospel? Could the bible do without any plan? And would it be worth reading unless the plan was effectual? Could the plan be effectual with-

out a divine purpose to fulfil it? The church would be so far from doing better without it that it could do nothing at all. Her ministers would be like Baal's prophets; they might leap upon the altar and cry from morning till noon and from noon till evening, and cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood would gush out, but no heavenly fire would come down. I grant it often perplexes the mind, and so much the better; so does conviction; so does the gospel and Spirit of God; and it is a pity it should ever be otherwise until the mind submits, then it will be its only peace and comfort. It is the way with all true and useful doctrines that the proud rebellious minds of sinners under divine influences are perplexed until they submit to them cordially, then they become the source of consolation and comfort; and it is indeed a pity that sinners should live in peace when God speaks no peace unto them; and if the doctrine of election has a tendency to break a sinner's peace and quiet it ought to be preached to them a thousand times oftener than it is. If it is painful to serious minds it is so much the better, for there is danger of too much peace in such cases on a false footing. But if the doctrine of election gets a right hold of them they will find little rest for the sole of their foot till they fly to the ark; and until they do that I congratulate them under every pain they feel. And if it drives them to despair that is the very thing I would wish for. God grant that it may always have this effect. If this pride destroying doctrine was more preached than it is, and more thought on and studied, we should have ten despairing prodigals and consequently ten comfortable christians for one. I do not mean despairing of mercy but despairing of salvation by the deeds of the law. There is no danger of election driving a sinner to despair of mercy. It is the only sovereign antidote against it in all the bible. No sinner ever yet in this world despaired but on legal principles. This glorious doctrine points the sinner

to the impossibility of salvation by the law; and on the other hand presents the infinite treasures of free grace in Christ Jesus to the lost soul. How soon the poor soul cries "Lord save me or I perish."

Suppose the doctrine of election has difficulties, are we obliged to solve them? Must every caviller know every thing? and are we bound to make him wise whether we can or not? and because we cannot solve every difficulty in this doctrine, must we say nothing about it?

And to excuse ignorance this doctrine is pretended to be hard to understand. For my part I do not pretend to much depth, yet I never felt any difficulty in understanding it, at least as much of it as was necessary to answer every purpose. If we will only omit some difficulties respecting God's infinity, and admit on God's authority that he can have a plan equal with his own existence, also that he can and does execute that plan consistent with the liberty of moral agents, then the difficulty is all over. I used to oppose this doctrine, not sentimentally, but in my heart; not because I did not understand it, but because I hated it. I hated it, not because I thought it wrong, but because I knew it was right. I knew it was right, not because I knew I was taken in, but because I knew I deserved to be left out. I thought if salvation was suspended on something that I could do, and if God would only give me a few weeks or months to try my hand I could work wonders; but to be tied up to free grace was dreadful. There I was like a wild bull taken in a net. My proud heart wanted a chance to do something. I did not doubt of my salvation if I only could get a finger in it. I was in solid earnest, and my loins girt about ready for business. But alas! I must be saved by grace! This was the unsurmountable heart-break. What difficulties I had! I could propound them too with such a glare of reason. But I had to bend at last; yet it was because I was overcome by the power of free grace. I had either to bend or break.

Not that I understood the doctrine any better than I did before, but I had tried my best and did nothing, and had to give up like a poor fool that nothing but experience could teach, and cry "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and by that means I made my calling and election sure, and I ascertained and made sure to myself what was sure from eternity with God.

The doctrine of election does not hinder a man to be saved by works. Every man has every chance he could wish to try his skill and power to the utmost. It only tells us we cannot be saved by the deeds of the law, but only by free grace; but we are angry at it because it tells us the truth. Election is the glorious message sent down from heaven, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." If there was no election, or if God had chosen devils instead of men not one individual of the human race since the fall could be saved by the righteousness of the law, or rather by his own righteousness; for none could make atonement for past crimes. Therefore election shows that salvation is by free grace; and because salvation could not be by works it must be by grace or not at all; but grace could not be given without a giver, and that the proper person too; but the proper person could not give grace without an eternal design; he was under no obligation to give grace to any, and he did not choose to give it to all, but only to some. Hence election is the result of God's own will. It secures the salvation of the chosen, and the rest are not injured in the least; they have the covenant of works in full force and every chance to fulfil it which they could have had since the fall if there had never been any purpose of grace at all. As to those who are chosen, God from eternity purposed to show mercy to them, and consequently made full preparation by the death of Christ, &c. for their complete salvation, and as he is a God of

power and unchangeability he completely brings his purposes to effect by the means which he has appointed.

Now all this is easily understood. Many may say they do not like it, but none can say, consistent with truth, that they do not understand it without demonstrating that they are so perverse and stupid that they know not what God means when he said to Moses "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

I readily grant this doctrine ought to be touched with a careful hand; but let us not be so careful as not to touch it at all. And that must be too great a degree of prudence and caution which scarcely ever ventures to publish to sinners God's purpose to be gracious to their souls. I feel confident, my brethren, that the doctrine of election is too little studied, both by preachers and people; and it is my humble opinion that this is one of the leading causes why too many christians are so volatile in their sentiments, unsteady in their comfort, so beclouded in their views, and so far from a gospel assurance of their salvation. We ought to make the gospel plain and easy to sinners; and when we preach Christ crucified, sinners ought to behold him as the gift of God, and all the blessings of the gospel, as blessings bequeathed through Christ in the everlasting covenant of grace, well ordered in all things and sure.

The doctrine of election, my brethren, is the short way to heaven; it is the plainest and best way; it is the most comfortable way for a sinner to travel; it is the easiest found, and good entertainment the whole way, and crosses the river Jordan at a comfortable ford. Let us make it a point to direct our people in this way, and not give them wrong directions and marks which will tend to perplex and bewilder the mind. So we will do our duty as ministers of Christ, and greatly bless the churches under our care.

CHAPTER XXII.

Improvement farther continued.

I PROCEED in the last place to address my readers at large on this most interesting subject. I feel myself confident that it would be to the best interest of the churches and every individual, firmly to believe, understand, and submit to the doctrine of election. Suppose you were to find a person who would say "if I am elected I will be saved, if not I will be damned let me do what I will," must you deny this important doctrine because this man abuses it? How unreasonable this would be. On the same principles you might deny every truth in the gospel; for you cannot find one but what has been abused. And when you yield the point, what have you gained? Have you saved his soul? Have you changed his heart? Tell him that God has no particular purpose to save him or any other person; that he must act for himself, for all depends on his own exertions; what will be the effect? It will stir him up, you say, and induce him to try his best. But what will he do? Will he go to the law or the gospel? He cannot go to the gospel, but on the doctrine of free grace; and if he goes to the law it will damn him. Now what do you gain by denying the doctrine of election? Suppose you are the person yourself labouring under those difficulties. Do you want an excuse to live in sin? I would prostitute the truths of God as well as you, were I to deny them, to keep you from abusing them; for as fast as I would deny one you would pass on to another. Were I to tell you that election was not true, and that you must be saved, or not according as you would improve, you would say you could do nothing. So you would pass through the whole; and the conclusion would be you would go on in sin in spite of all the truths in the bible.

But are you concerned about your salvation? If so, you certainly wish to have an opportunity either to be saved, or to save yourself. But remember you cannot save yourself; and even if there was no election you could no more save yourself then than you can now; but it may be God will save you. Do you feel a sense of sin? Do you find salvation offered to you in the gospel? Do you feel your heart willing to submit to those offers, and to cast away every other dependence? Why then should you deny the doctrine of election? Your very heart is submitting to it; for it is on this doctrine only that free salvation is offered to you; and it is by free grace given to you, that you feel your heart inclined to receive the salvation which is freely offered. All must be a free gift, and the glorious Giver unchangeable in his purpose.

The more your mind is conversant about the doctrine of election, the more you will be drawn off from the doctrine of justification by works; for those two doctrines constantly hold opposite scales; as the one sinks the other rises. The more you lean towards legality, the less glory you will give to God, and the more you wish to arrogate to yourself. A legal spirit is a spirit of bondage; it always begets fear, and overwhelms the soul with difficulties on every hand. But when we can place our whole trust in God, in his gracious promises founded on his own eternal purpose which he purposed in himself, we have an immovable rock to trust to; and our confidence will truly be strong; for it will be in God only "who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." No christian can be comfortable without he enjoys a degree of assurance as to his future happiness. There are two things which the scriptures give us as the leading characteristics of a christian: the one is faith; the other is holiness. In the exercise of holiness we are led to

feelings and frames; by faith we are led to the promises of the gospel; the promises are founded on the doctrine of election; and by God's unchangeable faithfulness according to his divine purpose, the blessings of eternal life are made sure to the believer. Consequently those christians who make holiness the leading ground of their hope are seldom really comfortable. Their feelings and frames are very various and always imperfect; there is always something objectionable appears in their liveliest times; and in times of deadness they are always sad and suspicious. Hence it is that this sort of christians are full of changes. What they rejoice in at one time they condemn at another; and the hope which filled their hearts with gladness to-day is gone by to-morrow, and when gone is sure to be condemned as vague and hypocritical; doubts and glooms take place and continue until they are dispelled by the next lively frame. This is in consequence of the lack of a proper exercise of faith. But no person can exercise faith as he ought to do but on the proper grounds of faith. The proper ground of faith is election. I never can trust a man's word unless I have reason to believe that he purposes to do as he says. Therefore all doubting christians oppose the doctrine of election; and although they profess the doctrine as true, yet they do not feel it so; and consequently they lean to legality. And trusting too much to the exercises of their own hearts, and not to the promises of God, they are naturally led off from the doctrine of free grace to the practical things of religion. And instead of acknowledging with gratitude the influences of divine grace on their hearts, as the faithful performance of God's unchangeable promise to them, which would lead them to and strengthen them in the direct exercises of faith on Christ, they make these feelings the ground of their hope. This makes them work hard for little profit; and they never can and it would be a pity they ever should get solid comfort until they quit building on their attainments, without looking to the foundation.

But on the other hand, when the christian makes sure work of faith, cordially consenting to the gospel plan, which is an act of the mind choosing, and by choosing receiving Christ and his salvation, as a matter of free unmerited grace offered in the gospel; when in consequence of this covenant contract with Christ, held forth on Christ's part in the offers of the gospel and acknowledged on the sinner's part by the hearty consent of the will; in this case the christian goes on in a suitable exercise of dependence on the immutable promises of God, and hopes to receive salvation in full, and in due order, according to God's unchangeable purpose of grace. And standing on this ground he thankfully receives what ever grace, and in what ever degree God sees fit to bestow, believing that God does purpose to save his soul, and will bestow all necessary blessings according to his purpose which never had a beginning, and never can change or fall through. And every evidence of religion, such as holiness, repentance, hatred to sin, love to God and his people, and all his acts of obedience, flowing from those principles, he thankfully views not only as positive evidence by facts that he is in a state of grace, but also as blessings bestowed according to the same great plan and purpose of grace which God has purposed in himself.

When a christian thus goes upon the whole plan of the gospel, he not only honors God with his whole soul, but he cannot but enjoy the proper scriptural comforts of the gospel. Every christian goes upon this plan less or more; and he is right or wrong, comfortable or uncomfortable, exactly in proportion as he does or does not proceed upon it. But let me ask my readers, how it is possible for any person to be such a christian as I have described unless he proceeds on the doctrine of election? Must not this doctrine be his very life and support? Could he enjoy any solid comfort without it? Could God either give or promise to give him any thing without an eternal, unchangeable purpose? And if the christian does not depend

upon that purpose which God has expressed in his promises on what will he or can he depend? Certainly nothing but works. If he depends on works has he a scriptural dependence? Will he be comfortable? If he is comfortable will it be a true gospel comfort?

Therefore I think you must see the great advantage, yea, the great necessity of being well established in the doctrine of election. I exhort you my friends to study this glorious doctrine accurately; give your minds to it seriously; consider and feel it a most interesting subject; and if you find that it hurts your feelings and disturbs your minds, remember that it becomes you to give diligence to make your calling and election sure. It is your duty to yield your hearts to the gospel, to consider what that gospel is which encourages you to hope for salvation; whether it extends free grace to lost sinners; and whether the promises of salvation are established on the eternal truth and unchangeable faithfulness of God.

When you have opportunities to hear the subject discussed by your pastors, attend with seriousness and do not suffer your minds to be filled with prejudice either against the doctrine or against those who preach it faithfully. It is indeed a great unhappiness in the churches that when this doctrine is explained or vindicated in the pulpit, too many of our hearers are disposed to be angry and to set their hearts in direct opposition to it; they will not hear; they seem as if they could not bear to hear the doctrine of free unmerited grace, or election maintained or established even by the word of God. They shut their ears against the sound; they shut their eyes against the light; they harden their hearts against the truth: and hence it is that *works! works! works* forever is the song, the topic of the heart, the ground of hope and the cause of fear and doubts! I never was acquainted with a trembling, doubting, desponding christian yet, but I found that he was a poor drudge, a slave to the law, a mere dependent on his duties,

feelings and frames. On the other hand, I never saw a christian who was uniform and steady in his comforts, but who évidently showed that he drank out of the fountain of God's unchangeable purpose of free grace. He had his dependence on Christ and felt a confidence becoming the gospel, that God's purpose through grace according to the promises of the gospel, would be fulfilled; and consequently his hope of eternal salvation was strong. But you may wrestle and mourn, and fret month after month and year after year, you will never enjoy any comfortable degree of this hope until you make your election sure. You must not only acknowledge the doctrine, and even admit your minister to preach it without frowns, sour looks, and a gainsaying heart, but you must make it the very ground of your salvation. This you must do, not by a cold speculative assent to the truth that God will be merciful to whom he will be merciful; but you must accept of the mercy which he freely offers to you, and account the whole from first to last, a gracious gift of God, given to you not for works of righteousness which you have done, but in consequence of your being predestinated, according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. You must count yourselves quickened together with Christ (united to Christ) when you were dead in sin, saved by faith that it might be by grace, and you the workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them. Not that you are to conclude all this to be true as to you out of Christ, which would be preposterous; or that true faith consists in believing that Christ died for you in particular, or that you will be saved let you do what you will; but I am speaking of a christian who has given up his whole soul to Christ by the full consent of the will, encouraged to venture upon him by the free offers of grace in the gospel. Such a christian ought to know the grounds

of his hope; and those grounds ought always to be God's own unchangeable purpose of mercy. How can you attain to such exercises as these except you acknowledge the doctrine of election? How can you attain to a lively uniform exercise of faith in Christ, unless you have the divine purpose of God in view? Will it not tend to cultivate faith and hope in your hearts if you were to have clear discoveries of the nature of free grace in the whole of your salvation, also to have clear views of the plan on which grace is bestowed upon a hell-deserving sinner, where and how that grace originated, through whom it is bestowed, and what is the nature and unchangeable perfection of the Giver? These are the very leading features of the gospel; and who can study into these things without taking into view the very essence of the doctrine of election.

Such is the interesting nature of this doctrine, that I feel it my duty to urge it upon every individual to make himself acquainted with it, and not only so but to make use of it in all christian exercises. If you have not an opportunity to hear this subject handled in the pulpit as often as you would wish, yet you enjoy the happy privilege to read it in the bible. It is a grand mistake that election, as some would insinuate, is one of the secret things which belong unto God and not unto us; it is true we are not told the precise number or the individuals elected. But I have I think sufficiently proven that the scriptures abundantly prove the doctrine to be revealed to us.

What an unhappiness it is (not to say shame) that when God has revealed such an important doctrine, which is the very foundation of the gospel, which is the only proper ground of the encouragement of a lost sinner and the hope and comfort of a christian, it should be kept hid in the bible and neither read with pleasure nor considered with accuracy.

Many a poor christian goes halting to his grave; he seems to blunder into heaven unawares, after travelling

the whole way in darkness, not being able to trust his Saviour's word and promise. Well might our Lord address him after he had by a faithful hand rescued him from the billôws of Jordan. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What would be his answer? "I never could believe that thou hadst an eternal design to save me, but now I know it and glory to thy name." Christ might reply as he did to Thomas, "because thou hast seen me" "thou hast believed, blessed are they who have not seen" "and yet have believed."

May God of his boundless goodness direct us into the knowledge of his will, "for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things." To whom be glory for ever. Amen.

BOOK III.

The nature of the different laws of God. The Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Redemption.

CHAPTER I.

The nature of the moral laws of God.

THERE are three kinds of laws which God has instituted among mankind to direct them in their duty, and to establish their happiness, and to promote his own glory. All which he has established under various dispensations by his awful authority as the moral Governor of the world: 1. Moral laws, 2. Positive laws, 3. Laws by way of covenant, contract, or agreement.

1. The moral laws of God are summarily comprehended in the ten commandments. They are called moral, not only because they are general rules to direct us in our manners and conduct, but because they are naturally right, and have their authority not merely from God as a Sovereign but also from their own natural propriety and holiness. God's moral laws are truly glorious in consequence of his divine authority enjoining them upon his creatures, because the sovereign authority of such a being, as God is, must give infinite dignity to the laws which he has given. This glory belongs equally to all the various laws which God has given to his creatures. Even the laws which were merely ceremonial and only intended to answer some particular purposes, and to continue only for

a time, during certain circumstances had equal dignity in this respect with any others while they continued in force, but God in his infinite wisdom and goodness by his own awful sovereignty could alter, repeal, or disannul them when he pleased; and when disannulled they had no claim to reverence and respect, as existing laws of our Creator. But the moral laws of God are truly very different. They are right in their own nature, and never can be repealed, or disannulled, even by the authority of God. At first view, perhaps, this may be thought blasphemy. And I acknowledge that many sensible divines and philosophers have thought otherwise. It seems a daring thought that the divine Being should be governed in his procedure by any thing but his own divine will. It seems to imply that there is something on which God must depend, and consequently must be his superior.

But notwithstanding the apparent plausibility of those objections, I sincerely advise the advocates for God's absolute sovereignty over even the moral law, or moral principles, to beware lest they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. While, through the goodness of their hearts, they wish to think and speak for God's glory, they should beware lest through improper views of moral excellence, or what constitutes the real glory of God, they think and say things which must of necessity destroy all proper notions of God's moral character, and consequently strip his moral perfections of all their glory. It would be our duty to love God, if he had never commanded us to do it. And the excellence of that command is so far from depending on the will of God that the will of God is excellent, because it enjoins that on us which is in itself excellent. Had the will of God been otherwise we could not be under obligations to obey. If God had commanded me to kill my neighbour, or my child through malice, spite, or revenge; if his will was that I should deceive and lie, my duty would be to

disobey. For superiority in natural powers never can infer moral obligation, to do what is morally wrong. Hence you see that the glory of God consists in his moral excellence, or in other words, in his conformity to the moral law. God himself is as firmly bound in duty (not obedience) to his creatures, as his creatures are bound in obedience (or duty) to him. What we call the principles of moral rectitude require that both God and his creatures, according to their respective relations, state, or condition, should do that which is right. It would have been wrong had God given bad laws to his creatures; but the laws of God are holy, just, and good, and consequently they are a glory to the Lawgiver. Had he given contrary laws it must have been to his dishonor; and his arbitrary will could never have justified his requisitions. But the glory of God consists in his will's being perfectly right, and his universal government being founded on the precise principles of equity.

It is on these principles only that we can say that God is holy, that he is lovely, or that he is to be revered. I confess that God's spirituality, his infinity, his power, and his wisdom (as far as wisdom is a natural perfection) when considered as exercised according to the nicest principles of moral excellence, give an awfully grand idea of the unspeakable glory of God. But take away this latter idea, and what have you left? A Spirit every where, dreadful in power, full of subtilty, and always acting arbitrarily without any law, or rule of rectitude. We might fear him, it is true, but we never could love him, or have any complaisance in him; and for this good reason, because he would have nothing in him lovely; but every thing that is terrible.

Let us admit for a moment that there is no such thing as what we call the reason and nature of things, or first principles of moral rectitude, or natural right and wrong.

Or in other words, let us say that right and wrong are solely determined by the will of God; that whatever God wills is right, let that be what it may. On this hypothesis these things will follow.

1. That God is a tyrant, and all his creatures are slaves. A tyrant is one who governs by laws founded on his own will, without being obliged to found those laws on rules of equity. A slave is one who is obliged to obey those laws, let them be right or wrong.

2. It would be morally impossible for God to have a will at all. If a being has no motives to influence his choice; or rather to induce him to choose, or if the arguments on both sides are in every respect equal, that being does not choose, because he cannot possibly have a choice; he cannot be swayed either to the one hand or to the other, for there is nothing to influence him; he consequently cannot possibly have a will, or at least his will cannot possibly act. In all moral cases, every motive must be an argument, showing something to be right or wrong; and it is impossible for an argument to be without a foundation; there must be some rule or data on which it must rest, and from which it can draw the influential conclusion. Now on the above hypothesis, where is the rule or data? There is none, for none will be granted. Therefore there can be no argument, and consequently no motive. The conclusion is inevitable, God cannot possibly have a will; or if you would rather his will must forever lie dormant; for there can be nothing to draw it into action*.

3. The divine Being never could act at all. Every one knows, who knows any thing, that the will is the leading spring of action. Without it we can neither stir hand nor foot. Before God could be supposed to act, we must suppose him to choose his line of conduct. But according to

* Dr. Edwards has demonstrated beyond all contradiction that there can be no such thing as a self-determining power in the will. Edwards on Free Will.

the above demonstration this could not possibly be. Therefore by the above hypothesis, the glorious Creator and moral Governor of the universe is nothing but a great almighty Spirit, inert, absolutely motionless, and incapable of choice, and yet the whole moral law depending on his will.

But God is an infinite Spirit whose will is perfect, and whose works are glorious; and of course the above hypothesis must fall to the ground.

Again: What do we mean when we say that God created us in his own image or likeness? We only mean that he made us holy, and that our holiness is the very same as his. But what is our holiness? Nothing but a conformity to the moral law. The holiness of God consequently must be the very same thing, even a conformity to the moral law. Why does the christian glorify God for his holiness? Is it merely because God has a will, or because he chooses one thing to be right and another thing to be wrong? No, but because he conceives the will of God to be perfectly right. Why does he love the law? Is it merely because it is the will of God? No, but because it is holy, just, and good. Why does the christian love God? It is because he is holy. But why does he love holiness? Is it because God is holy. Nay verily, that is the reason he loves God; but he loves holiness because it is in itself right, and not wrong; and consequently it is lovely in its nature, and renders every thing lovely that is possessed of it; and because God is perfectly holy, he is perfectly lovely.

The notion that God is above all law is in my humble opinion a vague undefined notion; and I hesitate not to pronounce it an unintelligible idea. It is true, and it will forever be a truth, that God is not dependent on any of his creatures; that he cannot be accountable to any; that he owes obedience to none. But that he is under no obligations by any rule or law whatever, gives me such an inglorious

idea of God, that I can by no means adopt it. I must have liberty on this subject to use common expressions, such as obligation, right, wrong, &c. I wish to speak with reverence, but we cannot communicate our ideas easily, without speaking as men. When God created Adam, that moment he was under moral obligations to take care of him, to provide for him, and to govern him; and Adam became under obligation to love his Creator, to reverence and obey him; and when Adam sinned, God became under moral obligations to punish him for his crime; and so we may say in all the various circumstances which attend all the creatures of God, that he is so unchangeably holy that he will do nothing wrong but every thing which is right and proper to be done. He must give them good laws and execute them faithfully. Now it is not difficult to see that if God had done otherwise it must have been wrong. I grant the idea of the glorious Sovereign of the universe doing wrong is indeed a mere supposition, but it is so only because of his infinite perfection; and the glory of God is and forever will be, that he is and always acts in a perfect consistency with the principles of moral rectitude. He must consequently abide by a rule; and that rule must be a perfect one, and what we call a moral law; and it must be the identical rule which he gave to angels and to men, in order that they might wear his own image. It is the glory of an angel or a man to be conformed to the moral law, because then and only then he is conformed to God; and it is the supreme glory of God to be conformed to the self same rule in the true spirit of it; not merely because he chose to be so, but he chose to be so because it was right and because he could not be glorious any other way. Hence it is that the bible so often vindicates the divine conduct on these very principles. "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? A God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is he. Be ye holy for I the Lord

“your God am holy. Are not my ways equal? Are not
 “your ways unequal? Which of you convinceth me of
 “sin? He is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his
 “works. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation
 “of his throne. What iniquity have your fathers found
 “in me that they have gone far from me? The Lord is
 “righteous in all the works which he doeth.”

Many such passages I could quote plainly showing that the bible vindicates the honour of God on the natural principles of morality; even on the very rules of morality which would vindicate any man acting in his sphere and in his degree like God. Hence it is evident that God wills and acts according to the spirit of the moral law; and that his glory is, that his natural perfections are employed or exercised in an infinitely exact conformity to this law.

CHAPTER II.

The same subject continued.

Let us again admit that God's own will is the primary rule of his own actions in his divine procedure. Then the following things are of course inevitable.

1. Every act of God would be neither right nor wrong, and consequently he would be entirely void of holiness.

God could not be right because he would have no rule to justify his choice or his conduct in any thing whatsoever. He would not be wrong for a similar reason: there would be no rule to condemn him let him do what he would. An action cannot be either virtuous or vicious without a choice or unless it is voluntary. The will cannot be virtuous unless it chooses a good thing; neither can it be vicious unless it chooses a bad thing; but God could not choose a good thing or refuse a bad thing; for by the supposition there could be no good or bad thing to choose

or refuse previous to the act of his will. It follows consequently that he must be eternally devoid of holiness.

2. There could be no justice in God. Justice consists in punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous as they deserve; but according to this supposition God could not punish or reward according to desert, for that would imply a rule of equity which is not granted in the supposition. He might punish the righteous and reward the wicked if he pleased; he must proceed by arbitrary determination; and consequently there could be no justice in the case for want of a rule of equity; therefore he could not punish or reward exactly according to merit; for the supposition is that there is no rule but only the will of God. If he therefore determined according to desert it must be accident and not justice. God is consequently devoid of justice according to this supposition.

3. It would be impossible for God to be unchangeable. The supposition is that God has no rule but his own will. The will of God must change toward his creatures in many respects according to their circumstances and conduct.

The only proper notion of God's unchangeability is that he is never otherwise than he is; nor can possibly be otherwise in all his natural perfections; and that in the exercise of those perfections he uniformly and invariably wills and acts according to the strict rules of moral rectitude and propriety as to himself and towards all his creatures in all their actions; neither is it morally possible for him to do otherwise. Hence it is that his laws, providences, threatenings, promises, judgments and mercies are invariably in a most perfect consistency with that unchangeable rule however various they may be in themselves, according to the various circumstances of his creatures.

Now only admit the above supposition, and say that the will of God is the primary and only rule of the actions of the Deity; then the bible will prove that God has changed

and will change thousands and thousands of times in his conduct towards his creatures and even in his mind and will towards them.

For instance: when God blessed Adam and placed him in the garden of Eden, he had one will; when he cast him out of the garden he had another; when he instituted the covenant of works as the only way to life, and now when he forbids it and enjoins the covenant of grace, a change has taken place in the will of God, and consequently in his dispensations. I could mention the choosing and rejecting the Jews, the seventh and the first day of the week for the sabbath, circumcision, the passover and baptism and the Lord's supper, and many other important changes which took place in the mind and procedure of the divine Being.

In vain would it be said that all these changes take place in consequence of his eternal purpose; I would readily grant this but it would only make the matter worse; for it would show that God from eternity purposed to be changeable, and that he is changeable by an unchangeable purpose. There is a palpable difference betwixt God's blessing and condemning Adam with a will which is the sole rule of the divine conduct, and his doing so with a will which invariably by a moral necessity acts according to what the rule of equity requires to be done to a creature according to his different deserts. In the last case the mind of God was exactly the same when he blessed as when he condemned Adam, he was equally just in both, and did not vary in the least degree from what he ever was and ever will be. The motives of action were founded on the very same principles; and although he conducted differently towards his creature, it was because the invariable rule required it in order to do right; but the divine mind suffered not the least alteration. In both cases he did exactly what equity and justice required according to the standing rule of equity and justice, from which he

never will nor ever did swerve in the least iota. But on the other hand when we admit the will of God as the only determiner of the event, I ask why did he change his mind? You cannot say because it was right, for by the supposition it could not be right until the will of God made it so; consequently the whole of the change depended on nothing but his own will. When he did change, where was his unchangeability? Do you say again he determined from eternity to change? I ask by what rule he designed to change? not a rule of equity for that is forbidden by the supposition; the rule must be that he determined to alter to what he pleased. Where then is his unchangeability? If, therefore, God has nothing to determine by but his own will he is one thing to day and another to-morrow, and cannot possibly be possessed of infinite unchangeability.

4. If the will of God is the standard of right and wrong then it would be no infringement on the divine character to be unfaithful to his word and promise, and the believer could have no solid ground for hope and confidence.

On this supposition truth and falsehood would have an equal claim to propriety if the divine suffrage could only be obtained. If it was the will of God to speak the truth to day the truth must be spoken, because it would be wrong to speak falsely. But if to-morrow it should be the will of God to speak falsely it would be wrong for him to speak the truth, for his will would justify only a falsehood. While ever he chose to keep his promises it would be right for him to do so, but if he chose to break them it must be wrong for him to keep them; for it would contradict his will which is the only given rule of equity. Consequently were he to deceive and disappoint the hopes of all his people it could not be wrong, for his will would justify him in every thing. There could be no obligation in his word or promise, for he could change it when he pleased. He could say one thing and do another, and al

would be justified by his will. But there can be no promise without an obligation; and there can be no obligation on one who can and will do as he pleases in spite of all law. No one could trust to his word; and consequently he could never be considered as bound by his promise. Of course his people could have no hope, at least no solid ground of hope, and if they built their hope on God's word, if he should disappoint them they would no doubt suffer loss, but it would be no harm in God to do so; for his will would always justify him in whatever he would do. Consequently the holy bible must be a thing of nought; no dependence could possibly be put on it. You cannot say that God must be true, for that supposes an obligation, which is not admitted by the above supposition. If the will of God is the only rule he will be just as holy and as glorious in speaking a falsehood as the truth, in breaking his promise as in keeping it. It must be a truth on this hypothesis, therefore, that unfaithfulness can be nothing against the glory of God. And the true result of the whole on the above statement is that God has no glory; he has nothing but a will, and that can have no motive of moral action without a moral law to influence it; but this is denied, and consequently there cannot possibly be any moral excellence in the Deity.

But blessed be God that the bible gives us a very different character of our adorable Creator: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth go before his face." His moral laws are excellent in their nature, always requiring that which is right and forbidding that which is wrong. The nature of those laws is such that they cannot be altered and never can have an end, while there is a moral agent to be governed.

How extensive, how great, and how glorious must the moral law be in the true spirit of it. It has the highest possible claim to our obedience, not only from its own moral excellence but also from the awful authority of

God our Creator. It must be dreadful to transgress those laws. The sinner must be awfully guilty and justly exposed to divine vengeance. His heart must be wrong, wretched and unholy; and when once broken how impossible it is for the sinner to satisfy the demands of justice. How vain are the self-righteous hopes of sinners. Every soul must be forever undone who will not fly to the Lord Jesus Christ for redemption; and happy is it for us that we enjoy the gospel, which only can give us well grounded hopes of eternal happiness through the blood of atonement and the sanctifying grace of God.

The moral law is enstamped on the heart; the conscience accuses or excuses according to the conduct of the subject of God's moral government. This law was given to Moses on mount Sinai; and it is established by the gospel, and is the unerring rule of life, according to which the hearts and lives of believers are sanctified and brought by divine grace to bear the image of God, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. This law convinces of sin and shows us the need we have of a Saviour. This law condemns the unbeliever and justifies according to the gospel all those who by faith are united to Jesus Christ, who for his people has satisfied the law and made it honorable.

Thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift of his Son.

CHAPTER III.

The nature of the positive laws of God.

I MIGHT observe that all the laws which God has given to his creatures, except the moral law, are positive laws.

I will first enumerate some of those laws and then explain the nature of them.

1. In this enumeration I will only mention a few of the

most particular laws of this nature. That memorable law forbidding Adam to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden was of this kind. The seventh and afterwards the first day of the week to be kept holy to the Lord, the ritual of the Jewish worship and the ordinances of the christian church, viz. circumcision, the passover, the various institutions of the temple, clean and unclean beasts, water in baptism, bread and wine in the Lord's supper, &c. were all positive laws. These will be sufficient to give the reader a general view of this subject. I proceed,

2. To explain the nature of those laws. And we observe the following things.

1. They must always be consistent with and never contradict the moral law. God could not consistent with his moral character have commanded Adam to insure Eve his wife as a condition of the covenant of works; but to refrain from that tree or any other tree, no doubt, in the garden was a proper test; it being no way repugnant to morality. To offer bullocks or lambs for sacrifice was not morally wrong; but for a man to offer his firstborn was what God hated, because it was a cruel violation of the moral law. Although God did tempt Abraham, as a grand trial of his faith, to offer his son Isaac, yet he carefully prevented him from doing any thing immoral. It never could have been right either for God to give that command or for Abraham to obey it as a test of obedience; but as a test of faith it was perfectly consistent with the moral law, and God could give and Abraham could proceed in his obedience to the command as far as God intended him to go.

God had given Isaac by promise, and had given his promise to Abraham that in Isaac his seed should be called, and all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him. Here was a firm foundation for faith; and the command was a proper trial of Abraham's trust in the promise. God did not intend the death of the child but still

to fulfil his promise; and Abraham relying on the promise knew that he could do nothing that would be a disadvantage either to himself, to Isaac or to the world, so that his faith was indeed tried but not his obedience; there was no disadvantage or injury either intended by God or expected by Abraham, but the very contrary insured by promise. Therefore the moral law was not broken by either party. Give me as firm a promise ratified and sealed, and as much faith as Abraham had, and I will not and could not hesitate to do what he did; but if my faith would fail then obedience would be tried. I think Paul (Heb. 11. 17, 18, 19. Rom. 4.) and James (chap. 2. 21, 22.) had exactly this view of the matter. I have been a little particular on this positive command to Abraham, because it is the only one in all the bible as far as I recollect which looks like immorality.

2. Positive commands can be disannulled and of course have been and will be always disannulled whenever the end is answered for which they have been given. There is a time coming when even the gospel will cease to be preached.

3. We are always entirely dependent on the divine will for positive commands. There are thousands of occurrences not verbally revealed in the ten commandments or even in the bible at large, which we easily discover from moral principles laid down in the word or implanted in the heart to be right or wrong. But not one positive precept can be known, neither is it a law until it is revealed, and then no longer than till it is disannulled by the same authority by which it was enacted.

4. Positive laws must not only be consistent with and not contrary to the moral law, but they must always have the fulfilment of the moral law in view as their ultimate end. The design of the prohibition not to eat of the forbidden fruit evidently was to establish Adam and his posterity in a perfect state of holiness and happiness or to

punish them for disobedience. Both the seventh and first day of the week were appointed to sanctify the sabbath and to call the Jews to remember their deliverance out of Egypt, and us to remember our blessed Redeemer with holy gratitude and love. Thus you may see that all the positive laws of God do directly or indirectly tend to holiness, to answer the views and designs which God has in carrying on his grand plan of moral government.

5. And lastly. A positive command or appointment appears to be the only proper test or condition of a covenant. This leads me in the third place to consider the nature of the covenants which God has been pleased to enter into in conducting the great affairs of his kingdom.

CHAPTER IV.

The Covenant of Works.

GOD in his infinite condescension and goodness was pleased to enter into covenant with Adam our first parent, as a representative of all his posterity. The history which Moses gives of the whole matter is indeed very short; and he speaks of this important transaction under the idea of a command or prohibition. But the command being a positive and not a moral command, makes it put on the appearance of a covenant. The whole attention of Adam, Eve, the serpent, and even God himself being directed to that single article, and that not a matter of any moment otherwise than as a condition, seems necessarily to give us the idea of a covenant. Such a prohibition would certainly have been beneath the dignity of the infinitely wise Creator and Governor of the world, but as a condition of a covenant. In Hosea 6. 7. it is expressly said "but they like Adam, have transgressed my covenant;" the Hebrew word is Adam and ought to be so read. But the

apostle Paul puts the matter beyond all doubt, in the 5th chapter to the Romans, and in the 15th to the Corinthians, first epistle, where he runs a parallel betwixt Adam and Christ, both as public persons, representing their respective seed, all whom Adam represented living in him, and all whom Christ represented living in him, as their head and representative, which could not possibly be a truth, but only by covenant.

It is consequently evident that God did make a covenant with Adam; and that in that covenant he represented all his posterity.

According to the nature of all covenants the engagements must be mutual and voluntary. It belonged to God, as infinitely superior to Adam, to propose the terms, and it behooved Adam to submit to infinite wisdom and goodness, by his consent to the covenant; considering himself a dependent creature on God his Creator. The covenant was actually made and confirmed as we have shown above; and consequently the parties were agreed, and both became under solemn engagements to each other.

Moses says that the engagement on Adam's part was a mere negative, even not to eat of the tree of life, even the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which stood in the midst of the garden. Easier terms could never have been proposed. It shows most amazing goodness in God in fixing the terms so, that to appearance, it almost made the eternal happiness of the human race a moral certainty; and probably the time of probation was very short. No doubt Adam solaced himself with the happy prospect of a complete establishment in happiness and glory. The less the difficulty of performing the conditions, the greater the sin of breaking them; the more inexcusable and guilty must Adam be; and consequently the more dreadful would be the curse of God in case of disobedience.

Moses says nothing of the engagements on God's part only the penalty to be inflicted in case of disobedience. However the nature of the case shows plainly that there must be a promise of life, either expressed or implied. Also we must suppose that it must be of such a nature as to render Adam's circumstances better than they would otherwise be; otherwise the covenant would only have been a snare and no instance of divine goodness.

I am inclined to think that God on his part engaged to keep Adam in a perfect state of holiness, enabling him by his grace to continue in perfect obedience to the moral law, and consequently to maintain him in a state of complete happiness in the enjoyment of God as his happy portion, while Adam kept from eating of that tree; and in case he would continue in his obedience to that only prohibition, for such a time, at the expiration of that term of time, he would relieve him from that prohibition also; and the covenant should be established with him and his posterity, insuring the blessings of holiness and happiness for ever. I beg my reader's serious attention to the following reasons.

1. It cannot be proven that perfect obedience to the moral law was a condition of the covenant of works. I grant it was absolutely necessary for Adam to be holy, and for him to continue perfectly so; and therefore he must have kept the moral law perfectly; and perfect obedience is as necessary to his happiness yet, even in heaven, as it was in the garden of Eden; but all this does not prove that it was a condition of the covenant of works; neither does it demonstrate any necessity for it to be so. He could, in a perfect consistency with morality and free agency, have been preserved in a state of perfect rectitude, by divine grace, according to covenant engagements without meriting any thing by it, or without its being a condition of his confirmation. This very thing might, if God saw fit, be one of the precious bless-

ings which God engaged to give him in this very covenant, upon the easy condition of not eating of the forbidden fruit. If God saw fit thus to covenant with Adam there could be no impropriety in it, and it would have been an inestimable favour to Adam.

2. I can see no propriety in making both the moral law and the forbidden fruit a condition; and if it had been so it would certainly have made the terms of life much harder than it would otherwise have been, had the moral law or the forbidden fruit been instituted alone. How could we vindicate the goodness of God in appointing a super-numerary restriction in addition to the moral law, when the law of itself would have been completely sufficient? In such a case as this, a case of such infinite importance to Adam and his posterity, I cannot think it possible that God would enter into a covenant with him, by enlarging the rules of his duty beyond the limits of the moral law, to make it more difficult for Adam to stand than it would have been had the moral law been the sole condition. And why should we have such thoughts of God when the bible tells us no such thing.

3. The forbidden fruit might be a test of Adam's obedience to God in this one particular point of obedience; but it could be no test of his obedience to the moral law if he had to keep the moral law likewise as a condition. We are driven to our shifts here to find the use of the forbidden fruit; but we can find none. Moses makes it the only condition; and when we introduce the moral law also, we can find no other use for the forbidden fruit than as a mere test of Adam's obedience to the moral law. But we have not considered the absurdity of making obedience to one part of a condition, a test of obedience to another. Although Adam could not break this precept without disobedience to God, which would be an indirect breach of the moral law; yet he could break the moral law without eating the forbidden fruit, if the

moral law was a condition; so that in this case it could not be a test of his obedience to the moral law. But if God was pleased to engage to keep Adam in a state of purity, while he kept from eating the forbidden fruit, then the forbidden fruit or his obedience to this one prohibition would be a sure and positive test of his conformity to the moral law; for while Adam kept the one, God was engaged by promise to keep him in the other.

4. If the keeping of the moral law was the condition of the covenant of works, Moses was certainly very deficient as a historian in not mentioning the most important article of that condition, and barely mentioning a circumstance which was of far less importance in the covenant than perfect obedience to the moral law would be.

5. Why did God seem to scruple Adam's word when he told him that he knew he was naked. "Who told thee (says he) that thou art naked?" as if it was an impossible case to be naked without he had eaten of that tree: "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" This plainly implied that by breaking that positive command was the only possible way in which Adam could be stripped of righteousness or the favour and protection of God. It is evident that if Adam had been found innocent of eating of that tree, no other accusation could have been brought against him; and consequently that was the only condition of the covenant; and that was the only way Adam could have broken it.

6. I scruple very much whether it was possible for perfect obedience to the moral law to be a condition of that covenant; and certainly I would scruple the propriety of it very much. That covenant was of such a nature that Adam was to stand, not only for himself but also for his posterity. Very probably he was to stand but a short time until he would be confirmed. The condition was of course only to be kept until the appointed time,

and his posterity not bound to keep it at all; for Adam, who represented them, was according to the tenor of the covenant to keep it for them. Now who does not see the impropriety of the moral law being the condition of that covenant? The moral law is eternally binding, and Adam never could be released from it. Also his posterity are every one as firmly bound to keep it as ever Adam was; and how then could he keep it for them. But if we admit the account that Moses gives of it to be correct, every difficulty vanishes in a moment. Adam could be released from the condition whenever God saw fit, and his posterity properly represented, and all confirmed in a state of perfect holiness and happiness forever, in consequence of God's engagement on his part of the covenant.

7. In all this I do not mean that the moral law has nothing to do in the matter. Nay, so far from this that it would be impossible for any being to be happy without it. None could enjoy happiness without good rules. But the whole business lies here: perfect happiness consists in perfect rectitude; and in order that Adam and his posterity might be happy they must be holy. But the question is, how were they to be holy? God created Adam holy at first, but that was not enough for futurity; he must also continue so or fall into misery. God must either guarantee his holiness or he must do it himself. It would be nothing but what would be expected, if God had left him to act for himself; but then he could never have been established. But if God was pleased to condescend to magnify the riches of his grace, he could in his infinite goodness and wisdom enter into a covenant with Adam, to establish him in his rectitude and happiness. The bible says he did so. But Adam was created a free agent, and must give his consent. It was necessary therefore that the covenant constituted to guarantee to Adam his eternal happiness should have such condition or conditions, as would demonstrate his voluntary choice

in the matter as a free moral agent. This could not be the moral law; for he was under obligations before to keep that, and never could be absolved from that obligation; and his consenting to it could be no testimony of his agreement to the covenant; neither could the condition ever be dissolved; and consequently the term of the covenant must be lost for ever. Adam would have enjoyed no advantage; but with the addition of the prohibition of the forbidden fruit, he must have suffered a disadvantage from the enlargement of his duty, which could be nothing but a snare laid for his fall. Consequently there could be no grace or goodness in the covenant of works; for Adam could have done better without it.

But if God was pleased to preserve him in a state of holiness, he could engage by covenant to do it without infringing on Adam's moral agency, provided he would voluntarily agree to the covenant; but this was absolutely necessary before it could be made; for the consent of both parties is necessary to a covenant. But inasmuch as Adam was already bound by the moral law to obedience, it would not be a proper condition on which to constitute a covenant, and especially such a covenant as we are now speaking of; which guaranteed to Adam a perfect conformity to that law. The condition must be some indifferent thing which would not be in itself either lawful or unlawful; the tree in the midst of the garden would do as well as any thing else; and Moses says that was the very thing. Now while Adam refrained from that tree he had nothing else to fear. Had he broken any precept of the moral law before he eat of the forbidden fruit he certainly would have died. For the covenant could not nullify any thing in the moral law. It would not have been right either for God or Adam to make a covenant that would operate against the standing rule of equity, in any thing whatsoever. But the stipulation was that he should be preserved in a state of perfect rectitude while he continued obedient

to the prohibition; therefore it was morally impossible for him to break the moral law, unless he eat the forbidden fruit. Thus by the covenant perfect obedience to the moral law was secured by the grace of God. But, alas! when Adam eat the forbidden fruit the covenant was broken, and the criminal laid under the curse; he became naked, not stripped of clothing for he had never worn any; but exposed to the penalty of the covenant which was death, and was also destitute of protection by the grace of God, having forfeited his right by breaking the covenant. In which unhappy case he became alienated in his heart; being filled with terror he hated God as the worst of enemies; fled from his presence, and evidently felt the awful consequences of sin; expecting, no doubt, every moment to experience the horrors of death from the vindictive hand of his Creator. The moral law, as it were, returned on the poor unhappy culprit in its full power; and Adam was condemned not only for breaking covenant with God, but also for every transgression in thought, word and deed which he committed against the divine dignity and authority of the law. So that although this law was not, and I think could not be, a condition of the covenant, yet it is so far from having nothing to do in the matter that it remained in full force, both before and after the fall, and does to this day and will to all eternity, not as a condition of a covenant, but as a rule of life; and so it is, even under the gospel dispensation, with its full penalty: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, &c." But the believer is redeemed; not from his duty or the law, as a rule of his duty, but from the curse in consequence of his failure. And Jesus Christ is, on the same principles, engaged by covenant to bring the believer to a perfect conformity to the moral law, having paid the penalty due to the justice of God.

CHAPTER V.

The Covenant of Works farther considered.

ADAM fell; and all his posterity in him their representative. There is no dispute here. But the question is how did he fall? In answer to this question I will honestly give my opinion.

1. As to what Moses says, who is the oldest historian in the world. We find that his account of this matter is as follows: Gen. 2. 8, 9. "That God planted a garden "eastward in Eden and there he put the man whom he "had formed." Adam was not made in the garden, but afterwards placed in it. "And out of the ground made "the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the "sight and good for food. The tree of life also in the "midst of the garden, even the tree of knowledge of "good and evil, &c." This is a very beautiful description of the garden. A certain tree in it is noted by its situation being in the midst of the garden, so located according to the beautiful arrangement, no doubt, of those trees as to be conspicuous, occupying the middle station; and no doubt was a remarkable tree, good for food, and pleasant to the eye, (chap. 3. 6.)

This tree was called the tree of life, and also the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

"The Lord God (verses 15, 16, 17.) took the man and "put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep "it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou "shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Hosea expressly calls Adam's

breaking this command, breaking God's covenant. St. Paul evidently points out Adam here as a covenant head representing all his posterity, as I have already shown. Moses here very particularly and concisely relates the condition of the covenant, consisting in a positive command or prohibition.

We would try in vain to show that there was any thing naturally evil, poisonous or mortal in this tree. The local situation of it precluded all danger of mistake as to the identical tree forbidden. The two names given to it are very significant; evidently showing it to be the article pitched upon by divine sovereignty, and the tree characterized, only in consequence of the prohibition, as the terms of the covenant on Adam's part.

It was also called the tree of life, because according to the covenant engagement it was an infallible test of life to Adam, as long as he refrained from eating of the fruit of it; which undeniably proves that it was the only condition of the covenant; for if any other thing was a condition either in whole or in part, he might have died by that other thing, without eating of this tree; and consequently it could not be a tree of life or a test of life. Adam could have worshipped Eve; he could have worshipped the Sun or any thing else; he could have cursed, profaned the name of God; he could have worked on the sabbath day; in short he could have broken any precept of the moral law, as far as his circumstances would admit, if the moral law was a condition; and had he done so he must have died; and had he died for a breach of any part of the moral law, he must have died without eating the forbidden fruit; then this tree could not be a tree or test of life to Adam, and Moses named it wrong.

Not only so but the name of this tree shows that Adam could not break the moral law; not that he was naturally unable to do it, but that the covenant on God's part insured life to Adam, which he could not do without

insuring holiness to him; for God cannot do impossibilities, neither will he, or, morally speaking, can he do any thing wrong. If God did insure life to Adam on the condition of his not eating the forbidden fruit, which he certainly did, then he either insured holiness or he must have insured life if Adam refrained from that tree, let him be holy or not, which would have been a very absurd thing. God never could insure life without holiness; but he did insure life on condition that Adam would not eat of the forbidden fruit, which was not a precept of the moral law, therefore he insured his conformity to the moral law; the tree in the midst of the garden was a test of that life, while ever it was untouched, and was of course properly called the tree of life; of which more by and by.

Jesus Christ is three times in the book of Revelation called the tree of life, in a direct allusion to this very tree. Rev. 2. 7. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Here is an evident allusion to Eden, the paradise of God; to the tree in the midst of it, the privilege to eat of it, provided the terms were complied with. What a striking allusion is here to this peculiar circumstance, (*viz.*) if Adam had refrained from that tree until the time specified in the covenant was fulfilled, then the prohibition would have expired, and he would have had a right to eat of that tree; and his having a right to eat of that tree would unquestionably have been an inestimable blessing; for in that case it would have been a test of his having done what the covenant had required of him, and consequently a test of his establishment in holiness and happiness for ever. So here the gospel offers us Christ, with all his benefits insured, on the footing of the covenant of grace; the terms are to believe on him. If we will not comply with the terms we are not interested in the covenant, and have no right to the tree of life, to the rest, the surety in the covenant of grace; but if we over-

come all difficulties, persecution, distress, self-righteousness, pride and enmity against the gospel, and yield ourselves to Jesus as our only righteousness and strength, then we shall enjoy a privilege superior to what Adam forfeited: even to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God; to enjoy Christ as the pledge and surety of all the blessings of the covenant, well ordered in all things and sure; he having made atonement for the breach of the covenant of works, and insured eternal life to every believer.

In Rev. 22. 2. we have another instance of Christ's being called the tree of life, alluding to this same tree. "In the midst of the street of it and on either side of the river was there the tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits, yielding her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Here is certainly an allusion to the garden of Eden and to the tree of life in the midst of it. Historians and commentators have had many conjectures as to where the garden of Eden stood. But to compare this text with the account which Moses gives, I think will give us some correct ideas on the subject.

The fig tree is evidently the tree alluded to in this text. The fig trees in the eastern countries grow very large; it is said that fifty horsemen can shelter under one of them; the leaf is very large, and both the branches and leaves set in good order, well calculated for beauty, and to shelter from sun and rain. The leaves of this tree, for the healing of the nations, beautifully represent to us the kind protection of Christ from afflictions, distress and temptations, and particularly the validity of his atonement to screen us from the wrath of God, and to heal the breach of the first covenant, and to entitle us to the precious fruit of that tree, the gifts of the divine Spirit completely to heal our spiritual maladies, and restore the moral image of God to our souls. The word twelve is a

certain, for an unlimited number, meaning a sufficiency for the whole church, which used to consist of twelve tribes, and now built upon the twelve apostles. This tree yielding its fruit every month means the full and constant supplies of grace which believers receive from Christ, in all times and seasons from one end of the year to the other. One kind of the fig tree is ever green, especially in those warm climates; and it has fruit on it always green and ripe, without any order, except that one month matures the fruit. Now from this text I conclude that the forbidden tree was a fig tree; and I flatter myself that it is not a vague conclusion. Christ is evidently spoken of in this text as the tree of life standing in the midst of the garden, or paradise; and he is also evidently described as a fig tree. Adam's sewing fig leaves together to cover himself with, is a corroborating circumstance; and no doubt he took those leaves off that very tree, hoping that the leaves of the same tree, the fruit of which had brought the curse upon him would shelter him from that curse. But, alas! he had forfeited his right to that tree as a tree of life; and without shedding of blood there was no remission. But the leaf of the blessed fig tree that stands in the midst of the paradise of God will certainly screen us from wrath.

But as to where the tree of life stood I must remark, however out of place it may be, that the first part of the text now under consideration, is in my opinion very unhappily translated: "In the midst of the street of it, and "on either side of the river was the tree of life." I have seen streets in towns and cities, and I have seen islands in rivers; but no person ever saw a street in the middle of a river. I have seen a tree on one side of a river, and another tree on the other side, and I have seen a third tree on an island in the middle at the same time; but no person ever saw one tree standing in the three places at once; the truth is there is no idea can possibly be found

in the sentence. But the Greek is not difficult. *Εν μεσω της πλατειας αυτης, η τε ποταμος ενλευθεν η ενλευθεν ξυλον ζωης.* The tree of life was (or rather, he showed me the tree of life *εδειξε* verse 1.) in the midst of a certain flat of ground, and in the midst of the river running on each side of said flat. The idea is plainly this: he showed me the tree of life as it stood in the garden of Eden, standing in the middle of a beautiful, rich level piece of ground, either an island or in the fork of the river, which running on each side watered the garden and made it very fruitful: so that the tree bore a great variety and plenty of fruit, and beautiful and profitable foliage, all tending to recover lost sinners from the awful consequences of the fall.

When I compare this description with the account of Moses, I find that the garden was not situated in an island, but in one of the forks of the river. A great river (said by historians to be by the confluence of the river Euphrates and Tigris) went out of (the upper parts of the country of) Eden to water the garden (the garden must be in the lower part of the country and not very far from the mouths of the river at the place) where the river parted and became four streams called Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel and Euphrates, a very rich, level and beautiful country. And according to the allusion by St. John the river must run on each side of the flat of land, midst of which the tree of life stood; so that the garden must be in the fork betwixt some two of those branches, and most likely betwixt the Euphrates and the Tigris, as Moses mentions them last although they were the two middle branches; they being the largest and retaining their names from the head to the mouth of the river.

By attending to these passages accurately we have, perhaps, found the very spot where the guilt of the human race originated, and the very kind of fruit which poisoned the posterity of Adam.

Once more: Rev. 22. 14. "Blessed are they who do
 "his commandments that they may have right (or honour,
 "privilege or advantage of, in, or) to the tree of life, and
 "may enter in through the gates into the city." The
 bible, the account of mankind and of the great represen-
 tatives of the human race, begins and ends with the tree
 of life. "That do his commandments." Adam had to do
 his commandments. He had to fulfil the condition of the
 covenant of works before he could have a right to eat of
 the tree of life, which stood in the midst of the garden.
 So we have to fulfil the condition on which the grace of
 the gospel is offered to us, according to the plan of the
 covenant of grace, which is to believe on the Lord Jesus
 Christ, before we can have a right to the tree of life
 which stands in the midst of the paradise of God. But
 Adam did not fulfil the conditions of the first covenant,
 therefore God drove him out of the garden, and placed
 cherubims and a flaming sword; setting a guard of
 angels with, no doubt, a visible representation of some
 instrument of vengeance, well expressed by a flaming
 sword at the east side of the garden, to deter Adam's ap-
 proach to the tree of life. I will explain this more parti-
 cularly by and by. If therefore, we comply with the
 terms of the covenant of grace, which is to believe on
 Christ, we shall have a right to the tree of life, and we
 shall enter through the gates into the city or garden.
 Clothed with the righteousness of Jesus by faith, ac-
 cording to the plan of the new covenant, the cherubims
 with the flaming sword will give way, and we shall take
 of the tree of life and live for ever; for Jesus will be our
 pledge and surety of our eternal salvation (Rom. 5. 8, 9,
 10. and 8. 32.) Let us take care that we do not give
 those most important passages of scripture a legal turn,
 which to my own knowledge is shamefully done both by
 ministers and people. If we say that to overcome means
 to fulfil the moral law, in order to be blessed and to eat

of the tree of life or enjoy the benefits of Christ; again, if we say that to do his commandments means to keep the moral law or to try sincerely to do it, that we may have a right to the tree of life, and to enter through the gates into the city, we demonstrate our shameful ignorance of the gospel plan; and although we may tell a thousand truths, yet the drift of our discourse flatly contradicts the bible; and our hearers must be drawn off from such doctrine, or the moral law will condemn them as sure as there is a God in heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

The consideration of the Covenant of Works continued.

THE tree in the midst of the garden had also another name signifying the design or use of it as a trial of Adam's obedience. It was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Good and evil are words very expressive. Good will mean both happiness and holiness. Evil is just the contrary, sin and misery. Adam was in a good state while he continued innocent and happy; but he was in a bad state when he became guilty and miserable; and this tree God appointed as the only criterion by which the good or evil state of Adam should be determined; so it was emphatically the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Here we may notice three things. It was appointed by God to be the only test of Adam's state. It was the very thing by which he fell from a good state to a bad one; and the very thing that God appealed unto to judge and to determine whether his state was good or evil; and by which he was condemned. Now if I am asked, did not Adam break the moral law when he eat the forbidden fruit? I answer, I care not whether he did

or did not, as to the point in hand. It was enough to break the covenant, for him to break the positive precept; and had he broken every precept of the ten in the moral law, as some divines very curiously demonstrate, it would not make the breach of the covenant any worse. I do not deny but he indirectly broke the moral law by his disobedience to a positive precept; and we are certain that he became alienated from God immediately; but all this is nothing to the point in hand. Adam stood in the moral law, but not by the moral law; when he fell, he fell from the moral law, but not by the moral law; when he was judged, he was not judged by the moral law. It was the tree in the midst of the garden that did the whole. The moral law had its force on Adam undoubtedly in both states, as an individual but not as a covenant head. In eating the forbidden fruit he became federally guilty; and that was the only guilt that was imputed to his posterity. In breaking the moral law he became only personally guilty as an individual; but that guilt was not imputed to his posterity. So the tree in the midst of the garden was the only thing that was the test, and was properly the knowledge of good and evil; and consequently the only condition of the covenant.

We will now turn to the 5th chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans. Here I will only notice two things; first, what we have already observed, that it is clearly proven that God did make a formal covenant with Adam; which appears from the parallel run betwixt him and Christ, both as the head of those whom they represented in a covenant, and those whom Adam represented becoming guilty through him, &c.

2dly. I will just notice that in the whole account of Adam and Christ, the apostle seems to point to the circumstances related by Moses in Adam's fall, and I think clearly intimates that the condition of both covenants were positive precepts and not the moral law.

In the 19th verse he uses the word *παράκοη* which every Grecian knows comes from a root, which signifies to hear, which implies disobedience to a positive precept, which depends upon the will of the lawgiver pronounced in the ear, and not written on the heart. And it is worthy of notice that God brings as a partial charge against Adam, "because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife" and not to my voice. Also the apostle frequently uses the words *παραπίπτω* and *παραπιπίω* which signify a fall, or to fall from a good to a bad state; which Moses expressly says was by eating the forbidden fruit. He also says that the law entered that the offence might abound, plainly intimating that the moral law had no part in the transaction, until the offence was given or the covenant broken; and then every transgression was individually, not by imputation from Adam, an accumulation of the guilt both of himself and all his posterity.

Having explained the nature of the covenant of works and pointed out the proper condition of it, we proceed to answer the question, How did Adam fall? I answer, simply by eating the forbidden fruit. Gen. 3. 6, 17. But let us inquire more particularly into this very important transaction.

The scripture says that God made Adam after his own image; which image was not only his natural but also his moral image; but when we speak of God's making Adam in his moral image, we must not mean that God by an act of his creating power infused holiness into Adam; but after he made him he immediately conducted so towards him as to cause, by a moral necessity, Adam to be holy.

It is an old theological maxim that God created Adam holy; but that maxim never was true but on the above explanation. The want of proper conceptions on this very point causes us to have confused and contradictory no-

tions about God's being the author of sin, Adam's fall, the conveyance of original depravity, regeneration, &c. And I am persuaded that if we had correct views of this one thing, the bible would make the rest comparatively easy. Here again I beg leave to use the words *cannot*, *impossible*, &c. applied to God. And I know that thousands in the world would think it blasphemy to say that God cannot do any thing and every thing, right or wrong, possible or impossible; which, by the by, is a low, groveling and a very absurd notion of the Deity. But to proceed.

God could not make Adam or any intelligent creature either holy or unholy. It would be naturally impossible for God to make any thing holy; because holiness cannot be created or even caused to be, by an exertion of natural power or strength; and for the same reason he could not create any thing unholy, with this additional reason, it would be wrong for him to create a sinner if he could do it. If God created Adam holy, there could be no moral excellence in that holiness; for Adam could not have any act or choice in it. And of course it could be nothing but a mere natural capacity, and neither virtuous nor vicious.

That I may make this plain, even to common capacities, I will observe that there can be no holiness or unholiness in any being whatever, except he has it by his own choice. God could by his power and did create Adam's body; and he also by an act of the same power breathed life into him; and he became a living soul. But there was more than all this to do before he became a holy soul. Adam as he came out of the hand of God was possessed of natural powers, and no doubt in a very high degree. He had all necessary powers of body and the necessary faculties of mind; but all this was not holiness, neither was it wickedness. This soul must act, and it must act freely too, before he could be either holy or

wicked. This act must not be done for him, nor yet by accident by him; but it must be his own free choice. Holiness is the disposition of the heart towards that which is morally good or right; unholiness is a contrary disposition. No being can be holy without this disposition; and no action can be a holy action without it. This disposition is the same as the will or choice. God can and does give the natural capacity in the soul to choose; but it is naturally impossible for even God himself to give the choice any other way than through the understanding by motives; because the choice must be free; and as holiness is in the choice, therefore God could not give it by creation; nor yet by infusion or any other way than by arguments addressed to Adam's understanding. Hence it is evident that in strict propriety it is not true that God created Adam holy; for it was in the nature of things impossible to be done. But I acknowledge that Moses says, "God created man in his own image;" and that Solomon says, "God created man upright;" but these scriptures do not mean natural impossibilities. Also it is proper for us to say even that God made Adam holy; for it must be granted we have scripture warrant for the expression; but we should take care not to mean impossibilities when we say so. The true state of the case was this, God created Adam with every power and capacity, both of soul and body, to act as a rational creature; and did not leave him without any knowledge of his duty, but addressed his understanding with a suitable revelation of himself and of his will immediately; by which Adam's choice was by proper motives immediately determined and fixed on the proper object; and Adam consequently became holy. Thus God enstamped his moral image upon him. This is what the bible means, and this is what we ought to mean when we say God made Adam holy.

CHAPTER VII.

Adam's Fall.

WE have seen that in order to holiness the will must be influenced to choose and delight in proper objects, by motives addressed through the medium of the understanding. Holiness depends on motives. The motives calculated to produce true holiness must always be truth or true doctrine. False doctrine always leads to sin, because it gives a wrong bias or inclination to the mind; true doctrine always produces holiness; but you must remember that this is only true when our sentiments reach our hearts; for then, and then only, our doctrine or sentiments affect our determination or choice. We never will be perfect in holiness while we are but partially right in our views and ideas. We can only be perfect in holiness when we come to know, even as we are known, and to see Jesus as he is. But while we only see through a glass darkly, our holiness will be shaded with imperfection. 2 Cor. 4. 4. and 3. 18.

Every good philosopher must see that holiness could not be maintained in the soul, but only by the same motives by which it was first begotten there; kept in view to influence the mind, and keep it still inclined to the proper object; for the mind will invariably act according to motives in view.

Hence these three things are evident. 1. That no creature, let him be ever so perfect, can possibly be of himself unchangeably holy; for his holiness must for ever depend on his motives of action, brought home to the heart, which might, for ought we know, be interrupted by a thousand incidents which we can have no conceptions of. I think this is abundantly demonstrated by the trial of the fallen

angels; and of Adam who certainly had every opportunity a creature could expect or desire.

2. That it is by covenant engagements that the happiness of any creature can be established, even in heaven; so that it is by promise the christian stands, and will, and can stand for ever. The elect angels, no doubt, are on the same footing, by some kind of a covenant by which they are established in glory.

3. It must be an unspeakable happiness for a creature, and infinite goodness in God, to enter into a special covenant, so that God the great Creator should engage in his unchangeable faithfulness to maintain and establish his dependent creature in holiness and happiness for ever. But God must not infringe upon the freedom of the will of his creature, whom he has made a free agent; he must have a signature of his hearty consent to such honourable proposals. What could exceed the beauty or the goodness in the test appointed to Adam. "Thou shalt not eat of the tree in the midst of the garden." Only do this and I am your God and portion for ever.

Now my reader asks me the third time: How did Adam fall? I have been preparing all this time to answer this question to your satisfaction; and now I hope I am fully able to do it.

Satan the grand enemy of God, full of subtlety and art, entering into the serpent, took the advantage of Eve when she was alone, and tempted her to eat of the forbidden tree. He knew it was in vain to tempt her in any thing else; neither was he permitted to do it; because in every thing else she was secured by the covenant as I have already shown: but here the way was open, for in this Adam was left to himself. He brings on the attack with great art and address. He introduces a familiar chat on a darling subject. Nothing could possibly have been more entertaining to our first parents than the covenant of works, which was such an astonishing display of divine goodness. He pre-

tends to inquire as if he wished to know the particulars. Eve eagerly replies, expatiates on the subject, tells him the spot where the tree stood, and adds a clause to the prohibition, which she perhaps interpolated from Adam's charges to her. "Neither shall ye touch it lest ye die." Satan having got such easy access, improves his opportunity, puts on the appearance of a solicitous friend wishing to advance her happiness, and turns expositor on the spot. As if Eve was entirely mistaken in the sense of the passage, he says "ye shall not die, surely, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened." Here is, indeed, false doctrine, a pointed lie, calculated to lead to sin. The first sentence is calculated to put her off her guard, by removing her fear of the penalty. "Ye shall not surely die." The next is a flattering bait for wisdom. "Your eyes shall be opened." You will be wise, have a great increase in knowledge. And he insinuates that God knew it; this was as far as he could venture by way of positive proof; but to strengthen the assertion and to impress the mind of Eve with the idea that what he said was agreeable to the word of God; he gives a false construction to the name which God gave to the tree, insinuating that instead of God's appointing it as a test or criterion, by which they should be judged either to happiness or misery, it should make them as gods to know every thing, good and bad.* The whole was false.

* This together with his temptation on the mount is truly a masterpiece of subtlety, art and falsehood. I apprehend his construction of the name which God had given to the tree, crowned the whole business. Eve knew that to be a "thus saith the Lord." God did not intend what Satan said, but by his art he made Eve think so. But it seems no wonder Eve was deceived by this interpretation; it stands as a good one to this very day, and has deceived numbers for nearly six thousand years. I confess I feel ashamed when I recollect how often I have explained the name which God gave this tree, the very way the devil did, although I knew he was a liar, and had nothing but the devil's explanation to prove mine.

Satan always expounded the scriptures wrong which he quoted. He tried the same scheme with our blessed Saviour with amazing dexterity and art; but Jesus understood the scriptures better than he did, and quoted a text against every temptation; by which texts he regulated his conduct in the midst of his trial and completely baffled the wiles of Satan. Had Eve done so she would have won the day. But listening to the false doctrine of Satan she was unhappily deceived. Viewing every thing under a false gloss she conceived that the tree was good for food; she could not believe that death would be the consequence of eating it. The fruit to appearance was very pleasant, and she expected to become very wise. Alas! alas! "she took of the fruit and did eat."

According to the account of Moses, Eve immediately proposed the forbidden fruit to Adam, brought it, and offered or gave it to him; and he did eat. Paul says (1 Tim. 2. 14.) "Adam was not deceived;" but he certainly was tempted; and the temptation was undoubtedly very strong; at any rate it overcame him. Adam in his reply to God speaks of Eve as his only tempter, perhaps not, as some think, to lay the blame on God; but just telling the naked truth, not having yet learnt the art of deception. From what Paul says, in the above text, some think that Adam laboured under no deception, but wilfully and knowingly eat the fruit, out of tenderness to his wife, that he might die with her. But there is no absurdity or difficulty in understanding this sentence of the apostle as an ellipsis; he is not treating this subject, but only proving that a woman ought not to lead in public worship; and introduces the unhappy consequence of Eve's taking the lead of Adam, and betraying him into sin, as an argument to check any thing like an assuming spirit in women in matters of religion; and therefore expresses himself very concisely, leaving out some words, as what he says is only an argument to prove the point he was on. I would, for my part,

rather understand the apostle so, than to take him literally, and make him speak positive nonsense and absurdities. The apostle's meaning was simply this: Adam was not first deceived; but the woman being first deceived, went foremost, and led him in the transgression; then his argument was conclusive, (viz.) therefore let not a woman ever again pretend to lead in public worship; but let her learn in silence with all subjection, (Gen. 3. 16. "He shall rule over thee," Gen. 3. 17. "because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife.") No person can dispute but there are wilful sins and that Adam sinned wilfully. Perfect ignorance will perfectly excuse sin; and the criminality of all sin is in proportion to the knowledge of truth (John, 9. 41.); but all sinful actions are in consequence of deception; and all deception (or being deceived) is in consequence of believing a falsehood, or false doctrine. Truth never will or can deceive; and when it has its influence it always sanctifies (John 17. 17.); falsehood always tempts to evil, and when believed, it always deceives, and leads to sin (John, 8. 44—47. Ps. 119. 118.)

Eve had a great advantage over Adam in her tempting him to eat. No doubt she related Satan's comment on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with high colouring; for she was now deeply interested; but she had an argument infinitely more powerful than any Satan had, or could have with her; she had actually eaten and did not die. Facts are unanswerable things. Perhaps she felt nothing the worse. Adam could easily conjecture that he might eat also, not considering through his hurry of other thoughts that he was the covenant head. Other motives out of view, the present ones false and flattering, urging him to be equal in knowledge with his darling Delilah, she presenting the fruit with all its agreeableness to the sight—*Dreadful crisis!* "*And he did eat!*"

His rash hand, in evil hour
 Forth reaching to the fruit, he took, he eat.
 Earth felt the wound; and nature from her seat
 Sighing, through all her works, gave sign of woe
 That all was 'lost.*

MILTON.

Thus Adam fell; urged by false motives, and not attending to the truth, he broke covenant with God and exposed himself and all his posterity to the penalty of death. The first effect which they felt was a consciousness of guilt. Their eyes were opened, which had been before blinded with false and deceitful arguments, and persuasions; immediately after the horrid deed was done, a sense of guilt seized their consciences; they knew that they were naked, stripped of their innocence, no more under the protection of God, but exposed to the penalty of the covenant. And as by eating of the tree in the midst of the garden they became thus exposed to divine vengeance, they, driven by a sense of guilt to lay hold of any redress which might be dictated to them by a wild imagination, under the tortures of despair, fled to the same tree probably which proved their ruin; attempted to screen themselves by a covering made of its leaves. Some translate the word an apron, some a girdle, but the greatest presumption from circumstances is that it was a general covering; but they put but little confidence in it when the time of trial came on, for "They hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

I am well aware that many are of opinion that the lack of clothing was meant, by our first parents being naked; and that they were ashamed of it after the fall, in conse-

* Milton says this of Eve; but it certainly is more correct to say it of Adam. We are not certain that Eve was a party in the covenant. We are certain Adam was; and Eve does not appear to be sensible of guilt, till Adam sinned. Then all was lost indeed.

quence of lust, and that to cover their shame they made themselves aprons, &c. But I cannot see any thing in the account of Moses, nor yet in the circumstances of the case, that argues any such thing. 1. For Adam and Eve, who never had worn any garments, to feel shame, because they were naked, is an idea so little, that we cannot conceive it as a consequence of such an awful thing as the fall. Moses, who is deservedly reckoned among the sublimest writers in the world, after giving such a grand description of the first transgression, could never be excused for mentioning such a trifling circumstance as this must be. 2. The advocates for this sentiment seem to be sensible of this, and therefore allege as a reason, that after the fall they felt a lustful propensity towards each other, and therefore made themselves aprons to cover their shame. But this makes the matter ten times worse, and is so far from being worthy of the grandeur of Moses, or to be thought of as one of the consequences of the fall, that it almost tempts a serious man to smile. Can any man believe that Adam and Eve under the horrors of despair, expecting the stroke of divine vengeance every moment, could feel any such things? And what if they had, would it have been any harm? which of the commandments would they have broken? We should remember that Eve was Adam's wife.

3. Why did they hide themselves from God? When God called "Where art thou?" Adam said "I heard thy voice in the garden and was afraid [not ashamed] and hid myself." Why? "Because I was naked." I know not why any person should be either afraid or ashamed before God on the account of natural nakedness. Clothes do not hide from God. But not to have on a robe of righteousness would indeed be enough to make a sinner afraid; and that was the case with Adam and Eve. Here Moses appears sublime indeed. This was a dreadful consequence of Adam's sin. No wonder he fled from

God's presence. He was a sinner! Moses beautifully represented the simplicity of the first pair. "They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." But that does not say or imply that they were ashamed of their nakedness after they fell.

4. "God made them coats of skins and clothed them;" not that they were ashamed of their nakedness, but for three important reasons.

1. It is agreed by all that those beasts were killed for sacrifice. Consequently the skins of those sacrificed beasts were typical of the garment of Christ's righteousness, of whom they now had the promise; as I have already explained in my treatise on election.

2. God by taking off their coats of fig leaves of their make, and clothing them himself with coats of skin of his own make, showed them the insufficiency of their own righteousness which they might attempt to work out, by endeavouring to keep the covenant of works; that they should no longer turn their attention to that tree, or expect that it could screen them from divine wrath, but only to the blood of atonement, which the seed of the woman would shed for the remission of their sins.

3. It was expedient that clothing should be introduced when the world was immediately to be peopled by Adam's posterity.

Another consequence of the fall, which took place in our first parents, was an alienation of heart from God. This took place in consequence of guilt. Adam could not feel God as an enemy until he felt guilty; and as soon as Adam became guilty, or had forfeited his right to God's favour, the divine manifestations were judicially withdrawn from him. Thus having lost all motives to attract his heart or attach his affections to God, and guilt and fear driving him directly from God, he forsook him, and fled from his presence; he hated him as an enemy, and could not have complaisance in him. This seems plain

from Adam's reply to the call "Where art thou?" The answer contains four important things. 1. "I heard thy voice. 2. I was afraid. 3. Because I was naked. 4. I hid myself." This is the order in which it is set down in the text. The natural order and the sense is this, 1. I was naked. Guilty. 2. I heard thy voice. Who I knew would punish me. 3. I was afraid. I did not wish to die, if I could escape. 4. I hid myself. Fled from thee as mine enemy.

Thus Adam by the fall became totally depraved, liable to death, and all his posterity with him. Every child of Adam is born under the imputed guilt of Adam's first sin, viz. his eating the forbidden fruit. Inasmuch as all were represented in him, as their covenant head, they all would have been, had Adam stood, equally righteous with him, and would, as Adam did before he fell, have enjoyed with Adam all necessary motives to holiness by constant communications from God according to the covenant; which would have maintained the whole in a state of perfect holiness and happiness to all eternity. But now in consequence of Adam's fall they become equally guilty with him in his first transgression; and as Adam degenerated into a state of depravity or moral evil by the judicial withdrawment of divine manifestations from him by God, who only could give them unto him, and so losing all motives to holiness; and of course every motive to the contrary from time to time presenting themselves, by a moral necessity, became unholy: so all his children are born under the same state of guilt; all motives to holiness are consequently withheld by God as an act of justice according to the covenant; motives to sin surrounding on all hands, of course motives to sin always the strongest, having no contrary motives to contend with, it is morally impossible but that every son and daughter of Adam must be unholy as soon as they are capable of the very first moral action.

These arguments shew that all mankind by the fall are equally guilty; the guilt of Adam's first sin is equally imputed to all; and they are even begotten in the womb under such circumstances that whenever they can be said to be individually a child of Adam they are guilty of Adam's first sin. When it can be said that a child can be a subject of moral government I know not. But it cannot be until he is capable of choosing by the influence of rational motives. But whenever that time comes the first moral action is a wrong one, because he being under the curse has not motives to holiness presented, and consequently cannot incline to holiness but to sin, and thus goes on adding sin to sin, continually breaking the moral law, adding the guilt of every moral evil to the original imputation of Adam's first transgression. Hence David says, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;" and Job, "Who can bring a clean thing from an unclean?"

CHAPTER VIII.

God's justice vindicated in man's universal guilt and depravity.

THAT we may vindicate the justice of God in the universal depravity of the human race we observe the following things.

1. An act of special favour never can be an act of injustice, unless the person who receives it is a criminal, and no proper channel of mercy opened. (Matthew, 20. 13—16.)

2. Justice must in all cases have its demand; but when it is satisfied, even those who have transgressed may enjoy even special blessings. (Rom. 3. 31. 1 Cor. 5. 21.)

3. Justice never can admit a blessing where a curse is

due; for justice cannot bless and curse the same person at the same time and in the same case. (Gen. 2. 17, and 19. 25.)

The texts I have quoted undoubtedly prove the above propositions to be true; and they are so self-evident that they need no proof. I hesitate not to presume that my readers will admit them as incontestible.

1. On the first I argue; That if Adam had to depend on his perfect obedience to the moral law, and all his posterity for ever for their happiness, they must have been for ever in danger of falling. We could, in justice, have asked no more of our Creator, it is true, but he could give us more if he saw fit; he could enter into engagements to establish us in perfection; but he must do it in a way consistent with moral liberty, or our moral agency would be completely destroyed, which would in effect destroy our holiness instead of establishing us in it. It certainly would be a favour for him to do so, provided the condition of the covenant was easier kept, than it would be to keep the moral law for ever; but if the condition was a mere trifle and the time of probation short, the advantage to us would undoubtedly be incalculable; and we would be laid under an infinite debt of gratitude to our great Creator for such a special favour. God was pleased to do so. He entered into a covenant with Adam as a representative of his posterity, as we have already seen. The nature of this covenant we have examined. We have demonstrated that the blessings insured were holiness and happiness for ever; and the condition was not to eat the forbidden fruit.

This was so far from injustice that it was infinite goodness, and an astonishing instance of special favour. But alas! our first father broke the covenant and plunged himself and his posterity into a state of guilt and misery; so that while we acknowledge the goodness of God we have to lament our unhappy fall.

2. The plan of the gospel comes under the second proposition, which we expect to treat at large in course.

3. The third proposition contains the principles on which the justice of God is vindicated, in the universal depravity of mankind.

We are to remember that holiness is not any thing mechanical, accidental or compulsory; it must consist in the free choice and inclination of the heart to that which is morally excellent. To speak with reverence, God neither would nor could force a man either to be holy or sinful; for it is an impossibility to constrain the choice to any thing whatsoever; consequently every man must choose for himself; and he is either a holy or an unholy man, according to the objects of his choice and according to the motives which induce him to choose.

The moral excellence of any thing morally excellent will not be perceived, unless our minds are enlightened by divine grace. This I believe to be a truth, although I do not pretend to know what divine illumination is. The bible proves the necessity of it, and so does experience. "He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." But however the Spirit enlightens the understanding, it is necessary in order to perceive the proper motives to holiness; no person can be holy without it; and I believe Adam in a state of innocence, or when he was first created, had as much need of divine illumination, as any man has since the fall; neither could he be holy without it any more than we can now. When he was first created, he in the first moment of his existence occupied middle ground; he was perfectly innocent yet had neither guilt nor holiness; and it was impossible for him to be either right or wrong until he performed his first moral action. The notion that God concreated holiness in or with Adam is as childish as it is absurd. But God instantaneously enlightened Adam's mind, which brought divine truths to his view and swayed his choice, so to speak,

and he immediately became a holy man in consequence of his choosing what was morally right, from proper motives. How God illuminated his mind I know not, but that he really did is very evident; and let him do it what way he might, it was no doubt the very same way he enlightens the believer, after he has come from under the curse of the broken covenant, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and becomes entitled to this divine illumination.

This illumination giving manifestations of holiness and divine glory to the soul, first produced holiness in Adam, and produces regeneration in a believer on the very same principles. They are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Thus "God who" had lately by his almighty power "commanded the light to shine out of darkness" shined in the heart of Adam to give him the knowledge of his glory, and thus "he shines into our hearts" to this day, when the penalty of the law is removed by faith in Christ, he being made sin, or a sacrifice for us, "to give us the same knowledge, in the face of Jesus Christ."

But still how the divine Spirit does this, I know not; neither is it necessary to know it. I can mention four ways in which perhaps it is done.

1. By giving the understanding a capacity of some kind, by which it perceives moral excellence. But I confess I have no idea here. If my reader can get a good one out of the sentence he is very welcome to it; and if in this sentence I have given him an idea I have given what I have not myself.

2. By presenting moral truths in such a manner, or attended with such circumstances, as gain upon the understanding so that it takes up the idea of moral excellence. Here also I must confess my ignorance.

3. By bringing forward some influential circumstances accompanying the truth, as motives to induce the mind to

dwell upon moral subjects, so long and so intensely that the understanding gets a proper hold of them. Here I have a clear idea, but whether it is the right one or not I will not affirm; and

4. By expelling from the mind all opposite motives, so as to give the truth the ascendancy. This I can also understand. Now put the two last together, more or less, as need should require, and say that some interesting circumstance or circumstances (for there are many) are brought forward which induce the mind to fix intensely and long enough, and other things kept out of sight which would have a tendency to divert the mind from the truth; and if the reader will venture to say that this is the work of the Spirit in illumination, I will not contradict him, although I dare not affirm it to be right.

When a man is enlightened, he is not conscious of any additional strength, or natural capacity given to his mind; neither is he conscious of any new truths coming to his mind, if he was taught in the gospel; if not he may be, and doubtless Adam was, when he was created; perhaps the jailer was; for he was a heathen. But at any rate he perceives the truth with such clearness, that he feels it interesting his heart. He finds his mind intensely set upon it; and he finds that all other motives have lost their influence on his mind.

Upon the whole, although we cannot say how it is done, yet it is evident from 2 Cor. 2. 12, 13, 14. and from the bible at large, that the soul will not perceive moral excellence, and be influenced thereby, unless God is pleased to enlighten the understanding, and give the knowledge of his divine glory. And it is also evident, that when he does it will make a man holy. (2 Cor. 3. 18.)

This divine illumination is what God engaged to continue with Adam, and grant to his posterity in the covenant of works; which would have for ever secured his conformity to the moral law; and he would have been for ever

holy and happy. This illumination Christ offers to sinners in the gospel, when he proposes to write the law upon their minds, and put it into their hearts. Believers have it insured to them in the covenant of grace, which guarantees their holiness for ever. Unbelievers reject it when they reject the gospel, and consequently can never be sanctified.

But to come to the point. Adam, for himself, and all his posterity, by eating the forbidden fruit, for ever forfeited this inestimable blessing; and consequently sin in all its horrors is entailed on his posterity, bringing down on them inevitable ruin. For without God illuminates their minds they never can be holy, which is evidently proven by the following scriptures: 1 Cor. 2. 14. "The natural man (a man of himself, or a man under the curse of the broken covenant; or, more literally, a man with the natural powers of the mind, (Ψυχικὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπος) perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God (δὲ-χέται) for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (Foolishness, viz. things not seen, μωρία, spiritually discerned, viz. not perceivable by natural capacity, but in a spiritual manner πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται.) And v. 15. "Ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς" He who is divinely illuminated "ἀνακρίνει πάντα" has a perception in all things, (both natural and spiritual); "αὐτὸς δέ," but he himself "ὕψ' ἔδενος ἀνακρίνεται" is not perceived by any one; (no one perceives either what he does or how he does it; that is, no one Ψυχικός, in a natural state, or with the natural power of the mind without illumination.) Verse 16. "Τίς γὰρ ἐγνώκεν Κύριον, ὃς συμβέβηκεν αὐτῷ;" For who has known the mind of the Lord? who will instruct him? "but we have the mind of Christ." That is, no man can discern the will of God unless God instruct him; but we have the gospel to direct us how to obtain divine illumination, (even by faith in Christ.)

In the eleventh verse we have the same doctrine taught us, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him; even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God."

I apprehend the apostle explains this important circumstance in Rom. 8, 7. "Because the carnal mind (even a mind in a state of nature, under the penalty of the law) is enmity against God, (hating God as an enemy) for it is not subject to the law of God, (not set in order by the law *υποταβειναι*) neither indeed can be" (while it remains under the curse of the law), verse 8. So then, they cannot be reconciled to God, or be conformed to his will, who remain in such a state, not brought out of it by the gospel, (verse 9.) But if your minds are illuminated by the Spirit of God you are not in a state of nature, under the curse in which you were born a child of Adam; but interested in the gospel, which delivers you from the curse by the atonement of Christ. So that if any man is not illuminated by the Spirit of Christ, he has no part or interest in his atonement. On this point I will refer the reader to Eph. 1. 18. Matt. 13. 11, 12. Eph. 4. 18—20. 2 Cor. 4. 4. Eph. 2. 1—5. 2 Cor. 3. 18, and 4. 6.

CHAPTER IX.

The vindication of God's justice continued.

We come now to inquire into the nature of the death threatened in the covenant, in case of disobedience. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

It has universally been given up by the orthodox divines, that death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are all included in this penalty. But I must confess that I am so un-

happy as to differ from the common sentiment, in several important things and in this also. I cannot adopt contradictory sentiments. I am confident that not one syllable of the truth contradicts another.

It appears evident to me that spiritual death, consisting in guilt and depravity, was the particular thing meant by the words, "thou shalt surely die" or as it is in the Hebrew, "dying, thou shalt die."

I am not willing to admit, that temporal death makes any part of that curse, any more than the headach, the spleen, the pleurisy or any other disease; or any of the common afflictions of life.

It appears that Eve's sorrow both in conception and child-bearing, her subjection to her husband, the ground bringing forth thorns and thistles, Adam's toil and labour and his returning again to the dust should all constitute that wisely ordered train of afflictive dispensations of God's providence, which he instituted under the gospel plan, or dispensation, with a fatherly design towards his church and people, and ought not to be considered as making any direct part of the curse of the broken covenant. I will give some reasons why I think so, and then cheerfully allow my reader to differ in sentiment, if he sees fit.

1. God told Adam these things after he had denounced the curse, particularly on the serpent for his individual fault in insnaring our first parents, and on the serpent's seed, the non-elect; and after he had given the promise of Christ to deliver him, and all the elect from the curse of the broken covenant. Although the whole human race was now under the curse, according to the penalty of the covenant, yet God was not now pronouncing that curse on the elect, but revealing the gospel to them, including all those afflictions as necessary parts of the gospel plan; as in Mark, 10. 30. where affliction and persecution

make a part of Christ's legacy to his disciples, as connected with the radical blessings of the gospel. And Paul tells Timothy (2 Tim. 3. 12.) that all shall suffer persecution, who will live godly in this world. Paul calls death our salvation. (Rom. 13. 11.) If then, it is a part of the discipline of the gospel, how can it be the curse of the law? and even the death of the non-elect might easily be viewed as a dispensation of providence towards them for the sake of the church; and to bring them through that channel to their condign punishment.

2. Christ undoubtedly paid the ransom in full for every believer when he suffered on the cross; he did not leave a drop in the bitter cup; and consequently the whole is imputed to believers which undoubtedly does completely deliver them from that penalty. It is evident that Christ completed his work of atonement before he gave up the ghost (John 19. 13.) "It is finished." His vicarious sufferings were done and perfected. Also when Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, although it certainly does deliver him from every part and degree of the curse of the law, yet it does not deliver him from one thing which God pronounced to Adam and Eve. Eve and all her daughters conceive and bring forth, in sorrow. Adam and all his sons live on the fruit of the ground by sorrow and toil of some kind or other; and the fields of believers bring forth thorns and thistles, as bad as any others; they are as often sick and oftener persecuted; and at last they all die and return to the dust. This surely decides the question. Divines, feeling the force of this objection, say that Christ took away the sting of death. This I grant; that is, he took away sin, and the strength of sin, even the curse of the law; but with all, he did not take away temporal death, for this plain reason, because it was no part of the curse of the law; had it been a part of the curse, he would have undoubtedly delivered us from it.

3. Not one of the non-elect ever will escape any part of that curse. If temporal death is a curse, sorrow in conception and child-bearing, labour and toil, briers and thorns, and every thing mentioned to Adam and Eve are curses also. How many wicked women never have children? How many wicked men live in affluence and ease compared to many pious believers? How could it be, that those who are redeemed from the whole curse of the law by Christ should suffer ten times more of this part of it (for they are generally the poor and afflicted) than thousands who are legally exposed to it?

Having rendered my reasons, I cheerfully submit the decision of the question to the reader, to judge as he sees fit; and upon the whole, it makes no great matter which way we determine, only I would rather be right than wrong.

2. As to eternal death I have no objections against counting it a part of the penalty of the law; and a tremendous part it is. Yet were I indulged to speak accurately on the subject, I would say that the eternal duration of the death which the law demands is solely in consequence of the insufficiency of the sinner to come up to the requisitions of the law in a shorter time. It is not, strictly speaking, eternal in its own nature; but it is effectually so in its consequences when inflicted on a finite creature. Christ endured it in three hours. But no creature could ever say "It is finished." Had the law respected duration, and not validity, and fixed the term of eternity (if my reader will pardon such an awkward expression) to the penalty, we never could have been redeemed. But inasmuch as the law justly required only sufficient punishment to magnify it and make it honourable, the infinite dignity of Christ's person, he being a divine person, and his infinite ability to bear the whole without being defiled with moral evil, rendered full satis-

faction to the law in his vicarious atonement on the cross; so that the believer can say with Paul "I was crucified with Christ, therefore I live."

But if these things were done in the green tree, what shall become of the dry? The sinner is finite; he is not able to give infinite honour to the law of an infinitely glorious lawgiver in any given time; for he has nothing in him infinite but duration. Moreover the law requires, as we shall see presently, the infliction of spiritual death; which would sink any finite being into an irrecoverable state of moral pollution, from which he never could regain himself. So that the sinner must indeed suffer to eternity. (Matt. 25. 41. 46. Rev. 22. 11.)

3. But the radical essence of the curse of the law is death spiritual; which although it includes guilt in a certain sense, yet especially it consists in the withdrawment of the glory of God, or divine illumination from the soul. It is very improper to say that spiritual death is sin; and this unhappy idea, which has been generally entertained, has been the cause of all the difficulty, which divines have found, in accounting for the general depravity of the human race, consistent with the justice of God. When we say that moral evil, or wickedness in heart is spiritual death, then if we say that God has any direct hand in producing it we make God the author of sin; and to show how all mankind became universally polluted and to vindicate the divine perfections, has been an insurmountable task. Our notion of God's creating Adam holy, has also had a powerful influence on us, to render this subject very difficult.

Now let us lay aside those ideas, and consider how it was only possible for Adam to become holy, and continue holy; and let us consider that spiritual death is the withdrawment of the illumination of the Spirit of God, or the divine glory and perfections, and consequently to leave

the soul without sufficient motives to holiness; and then let us understand the nature of the covenant of works, in order to see the propriety of this withdrawment, on the strict principles of justice, and all our difficulties will be over. We must soon see that it is so far from being difficult to account for the universal depravity of the human race, that in justice, after Adam broke the covenant, it would be morally impossible to prevent it.

1. I have demonstrated that holiness and sin is the disposition of the mind; and that God, strictly speaking, did not and could not make any being holy or sinful, by an act of his power; and also that good motives are essentially necessary to holiness; and the want of them will inevitably involve a dependent creature in sin, through the influence of false motives taking place.

2. I have also demonstrated that God made the tree in the midst of the garden the sole condition of the covenant of works; and that he promised Adam on this condition, to grant him all necessary manifestation of his glory and excellencies to keep him in a state of perfect holiness; and threatened to withdraw them immediately, the very day he would eat the forbidden fruit.

3. I have proved that Adam did eat of that very tree, and consequently forfeited his right to the illuminations of God's Spirit; and consequently rendered himself liable to spiritual death in all its dismal consequences.

4. I have demonstrated that spiritual death was the particular curse of the law, the very penalty annexed to the covenant; and also that it consisted in the suspension of those divine manifestations, and consequently moral darkness.

5. It is also proven that Adam's posterity were in the very same predicament, in consequence of Adam being a public person, and their federal head.

Now remember that according to prop.. 3. page 205, Justice never can admit a blessing where a curse is due;

for justice cannot bless and curse the same person, at the same time and in the same case. The truth will come forth, that God must in justice withhold the influences of his grace from every child of Adam, in consequence of the forfeiture, and according to the penalty of the covenant of works, which is spiritual death; the inevitable consequence of which is, every child of Adam is under this awful curse. The soul is formed and put into the body, when and in what manner God pleases; it is not material how or when; but whenever the soul and body are united, there is a child of Adam under the curse; not blessed as Adam was, when he became a living soul, with motives to holiness that would certainly incline the choice to that which is good, but left in darkness, as Adam was when he fell; not one ray of divine light reaching the heart, but surrounded with motives to evil from every quarter, and continues to be in that doleful situation, bound under the fiery guard of the flaming sword, which turneth every way to keep the way of the tree of life; and never can be rescued, but by the application of the blood of the atonement. The plain and inevitable consequence must be, that as soon as ever the child comes to be capable of moral action, let that be when it may, the very first act is sin; and so the sinner will inevitably go on adding sin to sin, unless redeemed by the cross of Christ, to eternity. Justice never can admit the blessing of restoration to be applied, until the curse is removed, which is due by the covenant of works; which never can be done but only by an interest in Christ according to the covenant of grace.

Thus it is easy to see, how universal depravity takes place, even by the strictest principles of justice; and God is so far from being stained with the impeachment of sin in the case, that it would be morally impossible for him to maintain his honour and dignity in his moral gov-

ernment, if he did not inflict that dreadful curse of spiritual death on every child of Adam.

There is but one objection, which I can see, lying against this doctrine, and that of but little force when it is examined. It may be said, what is the difference betwixt sinning wilfully, and wilfully doing that which is the occasion of sin? If God knew that the withholding divine light from the soul, would be the cause of sin, was he not equally criminal in such a case, as if he had actually been the immediate author of sin? I answer no.

If the first action be wrong, then, and then only the evil subsequent to it is charged to the original cause. Hence Adam was very guilty in eating the forbidden fruit. But if the first action or cause be just and right, then the evil which may follow in consequence of it, can never be charged to the first actor. It is the nature of sin to proceed forward in its consequences, and to revert backward in its guilt, until it comes to where a crime was first committed, and there it stops short, and cannot extend to a good action. For instance, if A does a just action, and B does wrong in consequence of it, C does wrong in consequence of that, and D, of that, &c. Now note the table annexed to this, and suppose A does a just action, he is not guilty. See A with a nought under it. B takes occasion in consequence of the conduct of A to do wrong, he has by supposition two degrees of guilt; see No. 2 under B. C also does wrong in consequence of B, and is four degrees guilty; see No. 4 under C. The sin goes on to D, who is one degree guilty; see No. 1 under D. Now to add up their criminality, you must begin at D; his guilt is not increased any, as he was the last sinner, and the guilt of the others are not laid to his charge. But you must add his guilt to C, which makes five degrees; see No. 5 under C; then add the guilt of D and C to B, and it makes seven degrees; but you can go no farther, because A is perfectly

A.	B.	C.	D.
0	2	4	1
0	7	5	

just in what he did. But B has seven degrees of guilt, and five more than he had at first; C has five, and one more than he had at first.

Suppose A was Joseph, who did right in going at his father's command to see his brethren; B, his brethren who sold him; C, Potiphar's wife; and D, the chief butler. Suppose again A was Christ going to Gethsemene; B, Judas; C, the chief priests; and D, Pilate. So you see when a person's actions are just, he is not accountable for the ill consequences that may attend them:

John the Baptist was beheaded because he reproved Herod; but John was not guilty. Paul and Peter and all the apostles, except John, lost their lives for preaching the gospel; but they were not guilty. Jesus Christ greatly aggravated the guilt of the Jews, by his doctrine and miracles; but yet he was not chargeable for it. So you must see the objection falls of course to the ground.

CHAPTER X.

The vindication of God's justice farther continued.

ALTHOUGH the moral law is not a covenant, nor can be a condition of a covenant, yet no covenant can be made without it, which is lawful and just. No covenant can be binding on the parties, which is contrary to the moral law; and the moral law always binds both parties equally, according to the stipulations, or conditions agreed to, and confirmed by mutual consent. This it does on the common principles of truth and justice. Although the moral law was not, and I think could not be the condition of the covenant of works, yet it bound both parties to fulfil their respective parts on the condition agreed unto; because justice, truth and faithfulness are morally binding in all lawful contracts. When Adam eat the forbidden fruit, he

did not break the moral law, as a condition of the covenant, but only as a rule of equity, binding him to his positive contract. Therefore the law viewed him as guilty of unfaithfulness to his contract; but it was the covenant that plead guilty; and the law only seconded the plea as thinking it right, according to the conditions agreed unto. The law, therefore acted as an umpire betwixt the two parties, and on the condition of the covenant decided against the transgressor. Adam as a federal head was the transgressor; therefore, he was condemned to death, on principles of equity, for breaking the covenant, by eating the forbidden fruit. God was therefore under moral obligations to inflict that death upon him.

But we, who are interested judges, think that although God would be under covenant engagements to give the reward had Adam stood; yet he could remit the punishment incurred by the fall. But this is far from logical reasoning. The principle of justice is as strict on the one side, as on the other; and even granting that God could remit the punishment if he would, yet it could not be unjust to inflict it, if he saw fit. But we should consider that his own glory is the grand object of all the proceedings of the Deity. Every instance of mere mercy, is an indignity to any law. If God would remit, when the dignity of his law required punishment, he would certainly act derogatory to his honour. He must therefore miss his grand object, his own glory; and the real glory of God would be made subordinate to the happiness of a base sinner. This would certainly be wrong; and God could never govern the universe on such principles; and therefore to save sinners Jesus Christ became a ransom, to magnify the law and make it honourable.

What is to hinder any man to see the unhappy consequences of the fall? He eat, and by eating forfeited all the blessings of the covenant, and incurred all the curse. What could God, even a God of infinite, inflexible justice, and unchangeable truth, do in such a case?

1. Could he bless Adam? No: he was guilty, and a curse was due. Could he preserve him any longer in a state of rectitude? No, that would be to bless, and a curse was due: and he could not bless and curse him, at the same time, and in the same case. Could he continue his divine manifestations of moral excellence, and glory? No: justice forbade; neither would it be suitable to keep him holy, when he must on the principles of justice, be damned for ever.

Could he protect him from false motives, and temptations calculated to draw him into sin? No: all is forfeited, and lost.

2. Could he curse Adam? Yes: and justice said he must do it. Truth said he must; the covenant said he must; and the moral law said he must.

Must he withdraw all divine light, and truth, and all communications of moral excellence from him? and leave him to wade through darkness and delusion, exposed to snares and temptations on every hand? Yes: this is what Adam agreed to, in the covenant. This is what God said he would do, if Adam eat of the tree; this is what justice, truth and law demands, and must have; and consequently it must be done, or God must act contrary to truth and justice.

Now, what must be done with his posterity? Nothing can be done for them more than could be done for Adam. All share the same fate. All were represented in Adam. All became liable to the same curse, and forfeited the same blessings, and consequently must be treated in the same manner. Justice cannot spare a single soul; they must all die, deserted and lost, without God, and without hope, in the world.

These principles which I have laid down do certainly show us the only rational way of accounting for the universal depravity of mankind on the strictest principles of equity and justice.

We have a strange propensity to think that God can do any thing; and that he is under no moral obligation whatever to do that which is right. We think, because there is none greater than he to call him to an account, therefore he may not only do as he pleases, but also please to do any thing, whether right or wrong. Although we do not think God would punish the innocent yet we are sure he might pardon the guilty: not considering that he is under as inviolable obligations from the rectitude of his own nature, on moral principles, to punish the guilty as he is to reward the righteous; and he can no more act contrary to justice in the one case than he can in the other. God could no more pardon Adam after he fell, than he could punish him before he fell; had he done either, he would have done wrong; he would have acted unjustly. But it is said (or at least thought) what of it? Who could punish him? Suppose none. Granting that almighty power would screen him, what would become of his holiness, of his glory, or of his moral excellence? Would a God that would do wrong, that would do unjustly, be lovely? Could angels love him? How wicked such notions of God! yet we pretend to call him glorious, and in the midst of our ascriptions of glory, we feel disposed to think he might do the most inglorious things. God could not give Adam a blessing, after he fell, but on the gospel plan. Every blessing was forfeited by the fall. In such a case, God could no more have blessed Adam, than he could have hurled Gabriel from his seat in glory; and the one would be as inglorious in God as the other; because the one would be as unjust as the other. But the truth is, both would be wrong, wicked, and unjust. But, blessed be God, he is a God of justice. Therefore Gabriel must keep his seat in glory, and fallen Adam must die; every divine manifestation, or communication of moral excellence which would make him happy, or holy, was forfeited, and must be withheld from him, and his

seed for ever, according to the covenant. Let my reader glance his thoughts through the bible, and he will find it not only a general truth, but he will be struck with several remarkable instances of God's withholding his spiritual influences from the hearts of men; and the only exceptions are those who are interested in Christ, and are favoured with divine communications in consequence of the atonement of the cross. Let me point to some remarkable proofs of this doctrine. Look at the antediluvian world. The imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually; that is, their views and notions were wrong continually; hence the whole earth was corrupt, and filled with violence. But Noah found grace, or favour in the eyes of the Lord, and walked with God, and was a just man, and perfect in his generation.

Take notice of Pharaoh, and you will have a striking instance of God's withholding light from his mind, even in the midst of pointed instruction. This is called hardening his heart, because hardness or stubbornness of will is the necessary effect of the absence of good motives; which Pharaoh, in Adam, had forfeited, and the presence of motives to evil, which he had incurred.

Take a general view of the whole heathen world. With all the wisdom and learning of the philosophers, they were mere fools, and never came to the knowledge of the true God. I am a great friend to the excellent treatises of heathen morality, abundantly extant in the world, considered as a proof, and display of the natural powers of the human mind, according to the light it has. But to set up heathen philosophers as competitors with Christ, and his apostles, or the bible, is fulsome arrogance, and ridiculous nonsense. It is true we very justly admire many fine strokes, both of wit, sense and morality in the philosophy, both of Greece and Rome; but, alas! how little is it all, and how little has it all done! They did not as much as know the first lesson in true divinity, that there is but one God, and that we must worship him only.

They had their gods by thousands, and their different ways, by thousands, to please them. And by the by, not one of their gods, nor one of their ways to please, or pacify them, would stand the reason of a child of ten years old, who had carefully read the bible. Your little son would laugh to see a great king, and a wise philosopher, falling down on his knees, or on his face, to worship a bird, a bull, a he-goat, or a cat, or even onion stalks. And if you think these too diminutive, let the sun, moon, the stars, the carved images of Diana, Hercules, Bacchus, the Succoth-Benoth of Babylon, or any of the idols of Egypt, Babylon, Rome, or of the thirty thousand gods of Greece be substituted in their place, still he would laugh. But what would he say were he to see a company of bacchanalians worshipping the jocose Bacchus, very religiously, with a drunken frolic; or were he to see a company of the worshippers of Succoth-Benoth, very devoutly prostituting their daughters to strangers, in honour to the divine goddess, what would he say? Would he say they were wise, they were good, that they needed no light to influence them or guide them to that which is right? Would he not say that God, truth and common sense had forsaken them; and that with all their philosophy they were left to the baleful influence of Satan, falsehood and delusion? It is truly astonishing that the advocates for natural religion are not ashamed, when they pretend to oppose the philosophy and morality of the heathens to the religion of Jesus. The apostle Paul had a just view of what nature, assisted by the greatest degree of learning and study, could do; and that it could do nothing to make the world either wise or good. I hope my reader will attend carefully, at a leisure moment, to what he says in 1 Cor. 1. 18. and downward, and chap. 2. and 2 Cor. 4. 2, 3, 4. Rom. 1: 16. to the end.

But farther: what has the light of heathen philosophers done? Has it restored the ruins of the fall? Has it brought mankind back to holiness, to love God and to keep his

commandments? Has it produced one single instance of it? Not one. When the apostles went out among them preaching the word, they found them all without hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2. 12.); it never so much as taught them to know God, much less to love and serve him according to his will.

Moreover that you may have clearer views of the awfully destitute state of man in consequence of the fall; and also that infidels may see their folly in boasting so loudly of natural religion, as they call it, in preference to the bible; we ought to consider that those very philosophers, who have done so much honour to the capacities of nature, borrowed all the good sense they either had or wrote, from men inspired and the bible; at least this is so much the case, and so notorious, that it is impossible to prove it otherwise. Every expert reader knows that Egypt, Chaldaea, Greece and Rome, were the nurseries which produced the most of the lawgivers, moralists and philosophers among the heathens so greatly renowned for wisdom, sense and virtue, especially Greece and Rome. Abraham sojourned in Egypt (Gen. 12.); Joseph who was inspired by God was sold into Egypt, and exalted by Pharaoh to be next to the throne in dignity and authority. Moses also was brought up in the royal family, who not only had a princely education, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, but also was instructed by his parents in the true religion; and the whole family of the patriarch Jacob dwelt in that country four hundred years. The bible made a part of the grand library at Alexandria, long before our Saviour's time; where the Greeks used frequently to finish their education.

Abraham was a native of Chaldaea, and after he was called out of his native land still had his friends in that country; Isaac got his wife from that country; and Jacob lived there with Laban, a principal man of that place, twenty years. There the Jews were in captivity seventy

years. Daniel was a man of high authority. Ezekiel also, Nehemiah, Ezra, Esther and Mordecai, were all inhabitants of that country; and after the return of the Jews many still remained, and consequently the bible with them.

Cadmus, who was the first who instituted learning among the Greeks, was a Phenecian; one of the countries of the Canaanites which belonged to the Jews, bordering upon or among the parts of that country which the Israelites really inhabited. He was a prince and fled to Greece for fear of king David, and no doubt was well acquainted with the Jewish religion and the Hebrew bible. It is also very evident that the Greeks were very conversant with the Egyptians, and got much of their education and knowledge among them. Pythagoras, Solon, Plato and several others, their most renowned philosophers travelled into Egypt to get knowledge and wisdom.

Philosophy and learning did not begin among the Romans until they had conquered Greece; and it must be evident that at that time the Hebrew bible was well known among the learned part of the world. They were so well acquainted with the Jewish religion that Horace, their celebrated poet, very well knew the duties of the Jewish sabbath and circumcision (Lib. 1. Sat. 9.). If those learned men had not been acquainted with the bible, how came it to pass that so many of their sayings, rules and songs are little else than manifest quotations from Moses and the prophets, altered to their own taste? And how could their celebrated critic instance Moses as one of the sublime writers?

How evident it is that the best of the laws and morals of the heathens came by inspiration; and what remains or at least what is contrary to the bible does very little honour to human nature.

But if we look among the Hottentots in Africa, and the eastern parts of Tartary or the islands of the sea, where the bible never was, or among the numerous tribes of

Indians in America, instead of boasting what nature can do, we must be struck with an awful sense of the dreadful consequences of being left of God as a just consequence of our fall.

But my reader will not I hope stop here; he will also consider the account which the bible gives of some of those who have enjoyed the light of revelation. Here he will find that mere doctrinal knowledge, taught by Jesus Christ himself, will not reform the corrupt heart, unless the divine light of truth shines into the understanding.

What an astonishing circumstance is the state and fate of the Jewish nation! After hearing what they heard, and seeing what they saw, no one would have expected any such thing. But the reason is, God gave them over to blindness, "That seeing they might see and not perceive, "and hearing they might hear and not understand." And among the gentiles where the gospel was preached, although all possible plainness and honesty were used, yet the hearts of thousands were not touched; and so it is to this day; and the scriptural reason is, "If our gospel be "hid it is hid to them that are lost, (left in their lost state). "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds "of them who believe not."

So you may see that death reigned not only from Adam to Moses, but also from Moses to us, and will to the end of the world, and to eternity over all those who are not interested in the covenant of grace. All which establishes the doctrine I have been endeavouring to vindicate.

CHAPTER XI.

Adam expelled out of Paradise.

WE come now to consider Adam's expulsion out of paradise. After God found him guilty and under the curse, in consequence of his transgression, instituted sacrifices and clothed them with the skins of the sacrificed animals, he cast them out of the garden. Gen. 3. 22. "And the Lord God said—" It is a little difficult to know whether this is a divine soliloquy or a consultation of the Trinity; or whether it was addressed to the holy angels, inasmuch as they were to be employed in guarding the way of the tree of life. However this was, it is generally agreed that what he said was by way of irony. The first part of the text, I think, is evidently ironical. "Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." This is nothing but a repetition of Satan's explanation which he gave to Eve, of the name which God had given to the tree of life, when he appointed it as the criterion to determine Adam's state, to be either good or bad; and by which, as this irony plainly shows, Eve was deceived. The meaning is simply this, behold the man has believed the serpent's deceitful term, which he gave to the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, represented to him by his wife who being deceived first, deceived also her husband; he has eat the forbidden fruit under the false expectation of becoming wise as gods, to know every thing good and bad. This ironical expression is well calculated to give a striking view of Adam's folly in believing such a glaring falsehood, when he had the declaration of God to show him the danger of eating the forbidden fruit. But it was now done, and he was now liable to death. "And now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live for ever." This part of the text is

thought to be ironical also. But I cannot think so, but that it is giving the important reason why he drove out the man.

I have already observed that the tree in the midst of the garden was appointed for two ends: the one to prove Adam's obedience, or to be a criterion by which his good or bad state should be made known; the other to be a seal or test of his having fulfilled his part of the covenant; which was to take effect after Adam had continued obedient until the time was out, which was stipulated in the covenant: after the expiration of which term, he would have liberty to eat of that tree which was prohibited as a trial of his obedience during the term specified. But when the specified term would be out, the injunction, would cease of course according to the covenant; and his having liberty by the covenant, or according to bargain, to eat it would be a test or seal of life. The language of his eating of the tree, which before had been forbidden, but now permitted, would be, you shall live for ever, according to the covenant, because you have fulfilled your contract; and God on his part is under covenant engagements to maintain your life, and standing in holiness and happiness for ever; and this is the seal or test, you are now permitted to eat of this tree, from which you had been prohibited as a test of your part of the covenant, which you have now fulfilled. I wish my reader to remember this.

If God had not confirmed Adam at the expiration of the specified term, he would have acted contrary to truth and faithfulness; and consequently he would have done wrong, provided Adam had stood. On the other hand, when Adam broke covenant it would have been wrong for God to have confirmed him. But we must remember that Adam's eating of this tree by God's approbation was the covenant test of his confirmation. Consequently it would have been wrong for God to have

permitted Adam to eat of that tree after he had fallen; because he had forfeited the privilege of ever eating of it as a test of his life. "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden." It is evident to me that this must be the sense of the text; for there is no other sense that we can possibly put on it. It would be childish to imagine that there could be any peculiar virtue in that tree, as some have imagined, that would have healed Adam of his wound, had he got the privilege of eating. It required infinite satisfaction to divine justice, and a restoration of God's moral image which is holiness to do that; and it is quite preposterous to say that the fruit of a tree could do any such thing. If righteousness could come by any such way as this, Christ would have died in vain. But the sense is, the covenant would not admit Adam to have liberty to eat; and consequently God in a consistency with the covenant could not give him the privilege of eating; and therefore in a just compliance with the requisitions of the covenant, "he drove out the man."

We are now come to the last effect or consequence of Adam's fall, which is mentioned in Gen. 3. 24. "And he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

This is a farther testimony that the tree of life in the midst of the garden was by the covenant appointed to be a test of Adam's confirmation. When God would give him privilege to eat of it, it would be a covenant sign that he should live for ever; but seeing Adam had broken the covenant, he had forfeited his right; and God could not in justice have given a test or seal of everlasting life when he had incurred the curse of death. Therefore he not only drove out the man, but also, to show him the impossibility of his ever obtaining life by that broken covenant he placed at the east of the garden, particularly at the place where Adam went forth, cherubims and a flam-

ing sword, to guard the tree appointed to be the test of eternal life, if he had stood; evidently showing him that he never should be established by the conditions and promises of that covenant, because he had transgressed.

As to the cherubims and the flaming sword we may observe that the curious fancy of the learned world have given us many opportunities to fix upon the right meaning. A fiery eruption. A burning meteor. A mere hieroglyphical account according to the ancient mode of writing. Some think that the garden was totally consumed by fire; because some historians say that the soil of Babylonia, the country in which the garden was, is of a bituminous or inflammatory nature, like the country about Sodom. But all this is mere conjecture. For my part, I see no reason why we should not understand Moses literally. The appearance of angels on almost every important occasion has been a very common thing. The providence of God appears from scripture to be conducted by the administration of angels under his divine direction, and especially his dispensations of grace. These ministering spirits, in the primitive ages of the world, and of the church, generally assumed a visible appearance, both to encourage, protect and direct God's people, and also to execute his judgments on his enemies. Thus angels appeared to Abraham; to Lot in Sodom; to Jacob; to the Israelites; to Balaam, and even to his ass; to Elijah and Elisha; to Elizabeth, and Mary and Joseph; to the shepherds and many others. It certainly cannot be improbable that God in such an important matter as this should place a guard of angels to prevent Adam from eating of the tree of life. No doubt Adam was used in his state of innocence to the appearance and conversation of angels. Eve seemed to converse familiarly with the serpent, as if it was no new thing to converse with spirits in visible forms; and it is very probable she had no knowledge of wicked or fallen spirits, and consequently suspected no harm, which

gave Satan a great advantage; and her own innocence perhaps became the means of her delusion. But the angels placed to guard the entrance to the garden were clothed with terror; they were armed with a weapon of war; and although Adam was not used with swords, yet the appearance was unusual; and his own guilty conscience would quickly cause him to suspect the use of the deadly weapon; and the flaming appearance of the sword naturally pointed it out to be an instrument of justice against him who was that instant cast out of paradise, having forfeited his right to happiness. Upon the whole the true meaning of the passage is this: God placed at the east of the garden a guard of angels with an angry, flaming sword; which sword was brandished in every direction, or which guard of angels manœuvred every way to guard every entrance to the tree of life; to cut off all possible hopes of obtaining salvation by the covenant of works.

This would indeed have been a dreadful dispensation and would have been fatal to Adam and all his posterity had not God given the promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent. But this wonderful promise being given to direct their views to the Messiah, his casting the man out of the garden of Eden, and so awfully guarding the tree of life, shut Adam and all his posterity up to the faith; and the law becomes our school-master to bring us to Christ, that we may be saved by faith.

CHAPTER XII.

The covenant of redemption: the persons stipulating; the articles and the name of it.

GOD of his own boundless mercy and good pleasure instituted another covenant, the grand object of which is to glorify the riches of his grace in the salvation of lost sinners. This is called by some a covenant of grace; because in it there is indeed an infinite display of divine grace and mercy to sinners. It is called also by others a covenant of redemption; because by it sinners are redeemed from death by the atonement of the cross. This covenant, to view it in its full extent, was betwixt the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is evidently represented in scripture as a mutual agreement, in which the glorious Trinity engaged in the eternal counsels of heaven to redeem sinners from death and ruin. The Father, Son and Spirit each engaged to perform their respective parts in this wonderful work.

This subject is so awfully sublime and so infinitely beyond our finite conceptions, that our ideas are necessarily confused, and our language can scarcely find words by which we can express ourselves intelligibly. God not only said "Let us make man in our own image," but also, let us redeem and restore man to our image again. (Isa. 6. 8.)

Inasmuch as the grand preparatory part of man's redemption was, in the natural order, to be performed before the divine Spirit could, according to the infinite plan, proceed to his work, which was a more gradual and secret work upon the heart; and as the Spirit proceeded in consequence of what was done by the Father and the Son, and as his work was to apply the great salvation purchased

by the Son and approved by the Father. The two first persons are in scripture generally represented as the principal parties in the covenant and the principal actors in the grand scheme of redemption; yet the Holy Spirit is always introduced as acting an infinitely glorious part in the covenant of grace; and although in the scriptural account of this covenant the Spirit is seldom represented either as the person speaking or the person spoken to, but as the person spoken of; yet he is always spoken of as a person who has a very special part to act in the salvation of sinners. (John, 16. 7—15. Isa. 42. 1.)

The Father is represented in scripture as the great and glorious Majesty of heaven, as the Fountain of deity, infinitely offended with sin, yet determining to be gracious and merciful. The Son as Mediator is represented as an infinitely divine and glorious person, acting under the special appointment and authority of the Father, acquiescing in and fulfilling his divine pleasure. And the Holy Spirit is represented under the glorious characters of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, of God and of Christ, the seven spirits before the throne, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and the principal agent in applying to sinners the benefits of this wonderful covenant.

1. The Father chose or elected the Son to be the surety in the covenant, on the validity of whose suretyship the whole scheme was founded from first to last. He was consequently the first elect of God chosen for the very purpose of redeeming his people. “Behold my servant
“whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delight-
“eth; I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth
“judgment to the gentiles.” (Is. 42. 1.) “Chosen and
“precious” (1 Pet. 2. 4, 6.). “Behold I lay in Zion a
“chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth
“on him shall not be confounded.” (Prov. 8. 22, to the
end. Is. 42. 6, 7. 1 Pet. 1. 20.)

Because the Son was elected as the surety and federal

head of his people. The covenant was particularly betwixt the Father and the Son; and the work of the Spirit was introduced in the covenant by way of promises and engagements to Christ and his people. Farther, it belonged to the Father to choose from among the fallen race of Adam whom he saw fit according to the counsel of his divine will; and to give them to Christ as his spiritual seed. To intrust their salvation in his hands, and vest him with all necessary offices, power and authority to carry on the glorious work. To promise him all necessary support, and encouragement in the arduous task, and at last to accept of the satisfaction which he was to make equal to the demands of infinite justice and to insure him a glorious reward for his sufferings. (John, 6. 39. and 10. 29. and 5. 26, 27. Mat. 28. 18. Is. 53. 10—12. Psal. 110.)—Also to impute the righteousness of Christ to believers and justify them freely for his sake, &c. (Rom. 8. 33. Is. 61. 10. and 42, 21.)

2. The Son acceded to the choice of the Father, and cheerfully submitted as a surety to undergo the agony and death incurred by the apostasy of his people whom his Father gave him to redeem. He engaged to fulfil the law and make it honourable in his own death and sufferings in the room of sinners; to undertake the whole government and direction in the wonderful plan; to make the whole universe subservient to the glory of God and the good of his people. He consequently engaged, agreeably to his Father's will, to assume human nature in the fulness of time, to be born of the virgin Mary as the seed of the woman, to submit to all the humiliating circumstances of poverty, human frailty, persecution and reproach, to be a pattern and example of humility to his people. (Heb. 10. 5—9. Isa. 42. 21 and 9, 6, 7. Rom. 8. 28, to the end. Heb. 10. 5. Isa. 53. 3, 4.) And at last to submit to the shameful death of the cross, where he made atonement for the sins of his people and purchased

every blessing for the elect world. (1 Pet. 1. 18, 19, 20. Act. 20. 28. Eph. 1. 14. 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20.) He submitted to give his life away and to take it again. He was also after his exaltation to make continual intercession for his people. (Heb. 7. 24, 25.) He was to have the care and management of their whole salvation. (1 Pet. 5. 7.) He will raise them up at the last day and judge the world in righteousness, condemning the wicked and unbelievers. When every knee shall bow to him and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father, then shall the Son, the glorious surety, take his people to himself in his Father's kingdom with songs of everlasting joy; and sorrow and sighing shall be no more. (John, 5. 19—30. Mat. 25. 34—41. Isa. 35. 10.)

3. The part which was assigned to the Holy Spirit in this covenant was in general to fulfil the engagements and promises made to Christ and his people. 1. To uphold, strengthen and quicken the Lord Jesus Christ. To prepare a body for him. (Luke, 1. 35.) To set him apart to the work of redemption. (Mat. 3. 16. Luke, 4. 1.) To attend him through all his temptations and ministrations. (Luke, 4. 1. 18, 19. 21. John, 3. 34. Isa. 11. 1—5.) To support him in his sufferings and agony. (Heb. 9. 14.) To raise him from the dead. (1 Pet. 3. 18. Rom. 8. 11.) And finally to bear witness of his Messiahship and glory as Mediator after his ascension. (John, 15. 26. Acts, 5. 31, 32. Heb. 2. 4.) 2. The Holy Spirit was also to fulfil many precious promises in the covenant, made through Christ, for and to his people. To bring all the elect to Christ. (Ps. 110. 3. John, 6. 37. 44. 45 and 16. 7—11.) To give them faith. (Phill. 1. 29. Col. 2. 12. Eph. 2. 8. 18.) To regenerate them, (2 Cor. 3. 17. 18.) and carry on a work of sanctification in their hearts. (1 Pet. 1. 2. John, 16. 11.) To give them comfort and joy, to witness their adoption, to seal them to eternal life, to be an earnest of their heavenly inheritance, and to direct and assist

them in prayer. (Rom. 14. 17 and 15, 13 and 8, 15, 16, 17. Eph. 4. 30 and 1. 13, 14. 2 Cor. 1. 22. Rom. 8. 26, 27.) And finally to raise the dead bodies of believers from the dead that they may be made complete in holiness and glory. (Rom. 8. 11. Phill. 3. 21.)

These are the leading particulars contained in the covenant of redemption. It was made in the infinite counsels of eternity for the great and glorious purpose of manifesting the glory of God in the salvation of lost sinners.

In speaking farther on this glorious subject I shall generally speak of the covenant as particularly made betwixt the Father and the Son. I conceive this to be proper, because as I have already said, although the divine Spirit is by no means to be set aside as a party, he having such a glorious part to perform; yet his work altogether consisted in the Father's performing his engagements to Christ, and in Christ's performing his to his people; so that the covenant, although it was a mutual engagement betwixt the three persons, each to perform their respective parts, yet was established betwixt the Father and the Son. The promises were made by the Father to the Son; and the Son engaged to the Father to perform the condition, which properly speaking was the covenant; and on this ground the Holy Spirit proceeded to his important work. This is evident from the above statement which I have given. We have three things to consider. 1. The name. 2. The condition. 3. The moral propriety of the covenant.

1. The name. I grant it is of no great consequence as to the name we give this covenant; but it is better to give it a right name than a wrong one. The bible gives it no name. There are three particular views which the scripture gives us of this covenant; and the name might be varied according to each particular view. If we view it as having the salvation of sinners as its object, we may call it a covenant of grace. If we wish by the name to

distinguish it from the first covenant we ought to call it a covenant of mercy; because the first covenant was as properly a covenant of grace as this, although the grace was not given or insured on the same conditions; and Adam had no more to do in order to live than believers have. Adam had to keep from eating the forbidden fruit; and his life and the life of his posterity for ever was on this simple condition most graciously insured to him, as I think I have clearly demonstrated; so that that covenant was to all intents and purposes a covenant of grace; and the proper names to distinguish this, from that, would be to call that a covenant of grace, and this a covenant of mercy.

But if we view it as it subsisted betwixt the Father and the Son, and both to fulfil their respective engagements to each other it was not a covenant of grace, because there was in this view of it no grace in it; but all was merit, and that on the strictest principles of justice. Not a single blessing could be obtained until it was merited by the blood of the cross. This consequently was a real purchase; and as grace is directly the opposite of works, merit or purchase, it must certainly be a very improper name for this covenant; and inasmuch as redemption does imply the paying of a price or ransom, which was the identical condition of this covenant, under this view of it, which indeed is the proper view, I must think it ought to be called the covenant of redemption. This is the only covenant that we know of that God ever made which did require works as a condition; and it is not a little surprising that this should be the only covenant that some call the covenant of grace, even the very covenant which had no grace in it. But when the Lord Jesus Christ covenants with his people, as I shall explain in its proper place, that covenant is a covenant of grace indeed; because rich blessings are bestowed without merit or works as a condition on the part of the creature; and seeing

the creature is a hell-deserving sinner it would still be more proper to call it a covenant of mercy.

But I make no doubt we all agree as to the nature of the covenant; and if so I will not contend about the name, only I ask (and give) liberty to call it what I think is right, and also to give my reasons for the propriety of the name I give it, as I have done.

CHAPTER XIII.

The condition of the covenant of redemption, or the righteousness of Christ.

The condition of the covenant of redemption is the next particular about which we are now to inquire. In this important condition our eternal salvation was at stake; and Jesus Christ the second person in the Trinity engaged to his Father in this covenant to fulfil it, as the glorious Representative and Surety of his people. In the perfect performance, or fulfilment of this condition our redemption consisted; the price was paid which divine justice demanded; and consequently, in the fulfilment of this condition does consist that righteousness of Christ which is, according to the gospel, imputed to believers; by which righteousness the sinner is delivered from all his guilt, and is justified in the sight of God, and entitled to all the blessings promised by the Father to Christ, and in him to his people whom he represented. His people in due time, and on proper conditions as I shall by and by explain, are made actually partakers of the blessings of this wonderful covenant in consequence of the fulfilment of this same condition in the person of their glorious surety. But the question now before us is, what is this condition? I answer, To suffer the penalty of the law. (Rom. 3. 24, 25. and 5, 6. 8, 9, 10, 11. 2 Cor. 5. 21.

Gal. 2. 21. and 3. 13, 14. and 6. 14. Phill. 2. 8, 9. Col. 1. 14. 20, 21, 22. and 2. 14, 15. 1 Thes. 5. 9, 10. 1 Tim. 2. 6. Heb. 2. 9, 10. 14, 15. and 9. 12. 14, 15. to the end, and 10. 10. 12. 14. 19, 20, 21, 22, and 13. 12, 13. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. and 2. 24. and 3. 18. 1 John 1. 7. and 2. 2. and 3. 16. and 4. 10. Rev. 1. 18. and 5. 6. 9. 12, and 7. 14, 15. John 3. 14. 15. and 10, 11. 15. 17, 18. and 11. 50, 51. and 12. 23, 24. 27. 31, 32, 33. and 16. 10. and 17. 19. compared with Heb. 10. 29. "The blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified." John 18. 11. and 19. 11. 30. 37. Mat. 20. 28. and 22. 4. Is. 53. 5—12. and 63. 1—3. Act. 20. 28.

I have here quoted about forty passages of scripture, to prove that the passive obedience of Christ was the fulfilment of the condition of this covenant; and consequently constitutes the righteousness which is imputed to believers; by which they are completely justified in the sight of God, and entitled to all the blessings of the new covenant. Were it necessary I could, and were it prudent I would, quote as many more on the subject. But I hope the reader will entertain himself at some leisure hour in examining the passages I have quoted; and I would recommend it to any person to take notice to the doctrine of the bible on this subject; and perhaps he will find that neither we nor our father Calvin have stood upon scripture ground, when we have asserted that the righteousness of Christ consists in his active and passive obedience; or that he fulfilled the moral law in its precepts as well as penalty in our room.

I have for sometime past attended to this subject with much diffidence, and no little perplexity and surprise, and also with a conscientious deference to the sentiment of the orthodox divines. But I cannot reconcile it to my feelings, to profess a doctrine which I cannot believe, or believe a doctrine when I can see no foundation for it in the bible. I am far from conceiving it to be a dangerous

doctrine, to believe that the active and passive obedience of Christ constitutes his righteousness to be imputed to sinners; or yet, to believe that this righteousness consists in his death and sufferings only. Neither do I think it a mere matter of indifference. I would wish to found my sentiments in such an interesting matter as this on the word of God. "In vain we teach for doctrines the commandments of men," and we ought to have a "Thus saith the Lord" in the only meritorious cause of our salvation. It would be no honour to our glorious Surety to ascribe to him any thing done in our stead, which would be either redundant, unreasonable, impossible, or improper, and especially to prove it upon him by his own word, if it says nothing about it. These considerations make our inquiries into this matter, of more serious importance than perhaps at first sight, they may appear to be. Although every prudent man would and ought to pay every respect to the opinions of others, which he could consistent with reason and propriety, yet it would be too great a compliment upon any man or even upon synods, and councils to believe a doctrine to be true which they never have proven nor can prove from the bible; although there is no subject in the whole word of God, either more particularly or frequently treated than the righteousness of Christ, as the grounds of our justification, in the sight of God.

In arguing on this point, I shall offer the following things.

1. It would be impossible for Christ to obey the precepts of the moral law in the room of sinners. He could obey it; and he really did obey it, fully and completely; but not in the room of any other person but himself. For this is the only way in which he could possibly obey the precepts of morality. He was under as solemn obligations himself to keep the moral law as any of his creatures could be; and when he came to the cross, he had

and could have no more righteousness by his active obedience than was necessary for his own justification as a moral agent or an intelligent being, on whom the principles of morality must have an infinite claim. There is no such thing in nature as any intelligent being having more righteousness than the moral law requires of him, as to active obedience. I have fully demonstrated this in my treatise on the moral law. There are two kinds of obedience, and two kinds of righteousness; the moral law never can require but one of them at a time, in order to justification; one of those kinds is a perfect compliance with its precepts, which is holiness; the other is, in case of failure, suffering the punishment due to justice. Now this last can be done for another by an innocent person, because he being innocent, there is no suffering due from him to the law; and when he has as a substitute obeyed the penal demands of the law, he being righteous himself, he has all his penal righteousness to give to the other whom he represented. But holiness is a very different thing, unless you can find a substitute who need not be holy; or in other words, who has liberty or a right to be a sinner. I do deny that Christ was such a person. And if you say that Christ was himself the lawgiver, and consequently was above law and not subject to the moral law; I will refer you to my treatise on the moral law, where I have demonstrated that that idea is too low and awfully absurd to be admitted by either a good philosopher or divine; and we ought to consider that the bible has never taught us that doctrine (John 8. 46. and 18. 23. Heb. 7. 26, 27, 28.)

2. That must be a wicked and unjust law which would require perfect obedience and satisfaction for disobedience. I never read of such a law even among the Turks much less in the holy bible; and if there ever was such a most unreasonable law, no such case could ever come before it. It is naturally impossible for a man to fulfil a law per-

fectly, and yet be liable to punishment for transgressing it; and it is just as impossible in a substitute, or surety, as it is in the principal. Admitting that it was a possible case for actual righteousness to be imputed; if the Lord Jesus Christ had, as a substitute, fulfilled the moral law, I ask, would the law impute that perfect active righteousness to the sinner? If not, it would be injustice; if it would, it would make the man perfectly innocent, and completely righteous; the man could not in justice be considered as guilty; then pray, what would the surety suffer for? Justice never could punish without guilt; if in such a case the surety must die, he must die by the hand of an unjust tyrant. Such a death would be absolute murder. There have been unjust punishments, I grant, among imperfect men; but still there was some pretext. Even the chief priests and Pilate himself pretended great justice, and innocence; the chief priests said he deserved to die because he was a blasphemer; Pilate acknowledged his innocence, but washed his hands and only permitted the judgment to take place under his authority, as a Roman governor, after the chief priests had taken the blood of the innocent upon their own heads and the heads of their children. But this case is a positive oddity; for God himself is introduced as acknowledging perfect innocence, and yet without any pretext demanding satisfaction, when the law was perfectly fulfilled by the surety.

8. The bible abundantly proves that satisfaction was made to divine justice by the death of the cross; (see the texts I have quoted above). It is therefore evident that Christ did suffer the penalty due to divine justice. This certainly, if it proves any thing, proves that the law was considered as broken; but no law could be considered as broken when it was perfectly obeyed, either by the principal or surety; consequently the bible proves that Christ did not fulfil the law actively in the room of sin-

ners, because it does prove that he did fulfil it passively in their room; and reason and justice cannot admit of both.

4. Why should it be said that perfect justice should demand perfect obedience, both to precept and penalty in this case; when no being, as far as we know, ever has thought of such a thing in any other instance whatsoever; and I will venture to say that if any such case should occur, every one would view it as wicked, ridiculous and unjust. There have ten thousand similar cases taken place in our common courts of justice, but never one instance of such a thing required. The case which comes nearest it, is when a man swears the peace against his neighbour; in this case the neighbour has to give a surety for his good behaviour. But does the surety behave well for his neighbour? And if the neighbour transgresses, is the good behaviour of the surety imputed to him? No certainly: this is a morally impossible case. But he is bound to pay the penalty to make good the damage; and this is all that justice could demand of him. If after he would pay the penalty, his judge would require a series of perfect good behaviour too, before he would acknowledge the sufficiency of his righteousness and suffer the prisoner to go free, he would commit himself as a judge; he would be laughed at as a fool; he would be despised by all men for his tyranny and injustice. Perfect obedience is as much as the law can require in the first instance. In case of transgression, adequate suffering is all it can require in the second. Was it not enough for the sinner to die? Or must he live and die too before justice is satisfied? And must his surety perfectly obey the precepts of the law, in order that by the imputation of that perfect righteousness, which is perfectly up to what the law in justice could possibly demand, the sinner might be perfectly righteous; then after he had made him perfectly righteous, must he die for him as a sinner? Such ideas are too hard for me; I can neither see them nor feel them.

5. In the treatise on the condition of the covenant of works, I have shown the impropriety of the moral law's being a condition of a covenant; and we have no authority from the bible to make it one, either of the covenant of works or the covenant of redemption. Jesus Christ kept the moral law perfectly; so he did the ceremonial law, and also the civil law; Matt. 5. 17, and 3. 15. and 17. 24, 25. 27. but not as a condition of a covenant, but as a rule of life. Here I observe that you must understand what is here said, as to his actively fulfilling the precepts of the law. Mankind never was bound to keep the moral law as a covenant, but only as a law directing to duty and forbidding sin. It is absolutely necessary to be governed by it, and always was and always will be; and every transgression incurs guilt, and exposes the sinner to punishment. Perfect obedience to this law, as a rule of life, was insured to Adam in paradise by covenant as long as he kept from eating the forbidden fruit; and would have been to eternity had he kept the covenant. On the very same principles the covenant of grace insures a perfect conformity to this same law, only on the condition of faith, as I shall show hereafter; which conformity begins in regeneration, is gradually carried on by sanctification, and completed in glory. All this is evident in all the promises of the gospel.

Sinners are guilty by the imputation of Adam's first sin; which involves them in a state of death, and under the curse of the broken covenant. To this guilt they add the guilt of their innumerable actual transgressions of the moral law. For it is absurd to say that the divine law, as a rule of perfect righteousness, should lose its power, either to direct, to forbid, to justify the innocent or condemn the guilty.

Now from this statement it is easy to see what the surety in the covenant of redemption had to do, in order to fulfil the condition of the covenant. He had to become

guilty by the imputation of the guilt of his people, and to die in their room; by which death he made a complete atonement, and for ever did away the guilt of all who believe in him. By this atonement he procured a perfect righteousness, which is imputed to believers; in which they become completely delivered from guilt; and consequently perfectly righteous in the sight of God.

Here the active obedience of Christ is said to be necessary in connexion with his passive obedience; the one to remove guilt, the other to render the sinner righteous; the one to redeem from hell, the other to entitle to heaven. But I think I have sufficiently shown the impropriety of those ideas. We must remember that there is no medium between righteousness and guilt; and there can be no medium between guilt removed or atoned for, and perfect righteousness. Righteousness in a sinner, or in one who had been a sinner, could not possibly consist in actively fulfilling the law; but only in his having endured the penalty of the law. It is actually impossible to consider one who has broken the law, to be a perfect fulfiller of it, any other way than by making atonement for his crimes. To say he was righteous any other way would be a downright falsehood.

It is in vain to pretend to make a difference in the case, because of the introduction of the surety; for the law considers the surety in the very same case as the sinner, and cannot, as a surety, consider him any other way. A sinner's surety is legally viewed as a transgressor; therefore the prophet Isaiah saith "he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." It was consequently impossible for the obedience of Christ, if his obedience was vicarious, to be considered as perfect; because the law, viewing him as taking the sinner's place, considered him as having already broken the law of God; and therefore could accept of nothing at his hand but death. The

dictates of justice in this awful case were not to tamper with the requisitions of the broken law, by the obedience of one though ever so perfect in himself, and for himself, who was now considered as a legal offender; but the demand was "Awake O sword against my shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts! Smite the shepherd. (Zec. 13. 7.) He who spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all. (Rom. 8. 32.) For without the shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9. 22.)

6. If justice had demanded perfect obedience to the precepts of the law after it was broken, it would for ever have prevented our redemption; the demand never could be satisfied; the price never could be paid. The reason a sinner cannot redeem himself by suffering the penalty of the law is, because he is not able to bear it and live. But his surety being stronger than he, was able to die and to take his life again. "For it was not possible for death to hold him," (Act. 2. 24.) The sinner could therefore be redeemed on this footing. But if the law required active obedience too here, it would introduce a condition which would be impossible for the sinner to perform; not merely because he was too weak to perform it; for if he was a god he could no more do it then than he can now; because it is an impossible case. No broken law can be perfectly obeyed, neither by the transgressor nor yet by his surety; for this simple reason, because it is broken already. If therefore Jesus Christ had to fulfil the law by perfectly obeying its precepts, as a surety for the sinner, and yet the law obliged to view him as a sinner, and also to accept of his obedience as perfect, he certainly would have failed; he could not do a thing naturally impossible to be done; and consequently our redemption would have been an absolute impossibility.

CHAPTER XIV.

The same subject continued.

WE are now to inquire into the scriptural account of this matter.

Those few texts brought forward to prove the vicarious active obedience of Christ, do not at all prove the point. When this point of divinity is discussed, it is very evident that the scripture is all but laid aside, and arguments drawn from the nature of the case are chiefly relied on to support the doctrine. But I have I think, sufficiently shown the absurdity of those arguments; so that if the few texts which are generally quoted do not establish the doctrine, it must fall of course; for I have demonstrated that reason and justice do oppose and contradict the idea. But it would be impossible to defend such an important doctrine as this would be, on which the one half of our salvation depends, without scripture; therefore some texts must be quoted, let them prove the point or not; and the half of the world would swallow the chapter and verse, and pronounce probatum est, let the text say what it would. But a good proof is nothing the worse of being examined; we shall therefore attend to the proofs adduced on this subject.

The best proof brought forward, and I believe the best in the bible is Rom. 5. 19. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The whole strength of this proof lies in the word obedience, as opposed to disobedience. The word disobedience means whatever Adam did in breaking the covenant of works, and that was eating the forbidden fruit; the word obedience must mean whatever Christ had to

do as a condition of the covenant of redemption, and what that was is the very question betwixt us; but let it be what it may, it is exactly what Paul meant by the word obedience. If I say it was death only, I beg the question; if you say it was active obedience also, you beg the question. The word obedience will mean either active or passive. If a man transgresses the law, he disobeys it; and when he refuses to submit to the penal demands of that law, he is still disobedient; and when he is dragged to justice, the law takes its own demands; but when the culprit comes voluntarily, confesses guilt, and submits to the penal demands of justice, his sufferings are properly obedience to the law: it is passive obedience, it is true, but it completely satisfies the law; and when he has completely borne the penalty his obedience is a perfect obedience to that law; and he is consequently perfectly righteous, because he has done every thing the law required. Now in this case, he not only satisfies the law, but he makes it honourable. There can be no circumstance in which a law can be honoured more than in the case of a voluntary obedience to its penal demands; not that the law in itself is any more intrinsically excellent in this case, than in the case of active obedience; but the suffering subject more evidently honours it by a voluntary submission to the penalty, than he could do by obeying the precept; and that especially if he had an opportunity of escaping the punishment. A person can have and always will have many selfish motives to obedience, but he never can have but one motive to induce him to submit to the penalty; and that is centered in the dignity of the law itself; and consequently every excellence of the law shines conspicuously to all, in the face of the voluntary sufferer. Thus it is certainly demonstrated that voluntary suffering is the very genuine spirit of obedience. So we see if this text proves any thing in the question, it proves

on my side; it is evident from the above arguments that voluntary suffering is one thing meant; and when you argue that the law requires active obedience also, you lack proof; and I have shown that your statements are sophistical and false. But the truth is, the text proves nothing as to the question in debate; for it only says obedience, and leaves us to decide what is meant by the word, whether passive obedience, or both passive and active; and this is the main question. Therefore my opponent gains nothing by this text.

Again, Is. 42. 21. is quoted as a proof of this doctrine. "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable." The strength of this text lies in the words, *magnify* and *honourable*. Here we must observe that the honour of the law is in consequence of its being magnified. But the question is, will it not completely magnify any law to fulfil its precepts perfectly? and if the subject transgresses, will it not completely honour the law, for him voluntarily to submit to the penalty? I answer affirmatively, in both cases. I ask again, does it require both to magnify the law in case of transgression? I answer no. I argue from the nature of the case, and from facts. 1. It is the nature of law in its demands for perfect obedience to look from the present time forward; in its acts of justification in case of perfect obedience, it always looks back from the time present to the beginning; in its penal demands it looks neither backward nor forward but steadfastly at the transgression; and when satisfaction is made by suffering the penalty, then the law looks forward again for perfect obedience, but never looks back for it. The law always holds the surety to the very same terms that the principal has to fulfil. The surety cannot be obliged to do, neither can he do what is legally impossible for the principal to do in his own case. Now, no person in his senses can question the truth of the above proposition. Now, on the supposition that the law required perfect obedience of Christ, both actively and passively, then

1. It would look back for perfect obedience after it was transgressed, which is contrary to the nature of law. 2. It would hold the surety to what the principal was not bound; for no law binds a sinner to perfect obedience, and to bear the penalty of disobedience too. 3. It would oblige the surety to do, what was legally impossible for the principal to do. Perfect righteousness consists in perfect obedience without one instance of disobedience; but it is legally impossible for a sinner perfectly to obey the law, because he has disobeyed it already. And 4. To crown the whole, in this case the law would oblige the surety to do what he could not do as a surety. Christ could and did keep the law for himself; but as a surety for a sinner he could not; because the law viewed him as a transgressor already; and no obedience he could perform, except passive obedience, could be legally perfect. Therefore it cannot require both active and passive obedience to magnify the law and make it honourable.

2. I argue from facts that penal obedience will and does magnify any good law; and both together do really dishonour it. For well authenticated facts I appeal to all the judicatories in the civilized world; no one ever was known to demand any such thing as perfect rectitude and punishment; so far from it that no judge has dared to demand both. And every one knows that the law never appears with more dignity and awful glory than when it arraigns a criminal, and pronounces the vindictive sentence upon him; and especially doth justice appear in all its inflexible majesty when a voluntary surety is made to smart for the crimes of an offender whom he represents.

The celebrated king of the Locrians made a law that adultery should be punished with loss of both the eyes; not long after the law was made his own son was convicted of the crime prohibited. The king to save his son from total blindness, and also to maintain the dignity of the law, caused one of his own eyes to be put out, and one of

his son's. That king did more real honour to himself and his law, than his son could have done by preserving his chastity for seventy years. What infinite glory it must give to God, and his divine law, for the second person in the blessed Trinity voluntarily to take the place of the sinner, rather than the sinner should be lost; when divine justice could not dispense with the honour of the broken law, and when God spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all. O reader! words are poor in such a case as this. All the devils in hell, or all the angels in heaven could not show so much of God or his holy and just law, as the bloody cross of our crucified Redeemer. What could the law ask more? Must we introduce the absurd idea of vicarious obedience? No: if the text proves any thing, it proves that the law was completely honoured in the vicarious sufferings of our glorious Surety, who died that sinners might live.

Another text brought forward in support of this doctrine is Matt. 3. 15. "Jesus answered and said unto him, suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." John the Baptist was Christ's forerunner sent to prepare his way. Jesus according to the law of Moses, at the age of thirty, which was the age in which the priests were to be set apart to the sacred office of the priesthood (Num. 4. 3. 23. 30.) came to John at Jordan to be consecrated to his office as Mediator, according to the Jewish rite, by washing with water; (Exod. 40. 12—16. Lev. 8. 5, 6—13.) where he was also consecrated with the anointing of the Holy Ghost descending from heaven as a dove and resting upon him, and a proclamation from the Father in heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." John's office was not only to prepare, or notify the people of the coming of Christ; but also to prepare the way for Christ by making his paths straight, to give him a correct and legal introduction into his public office as a Mediator, or high

priest, according to the Levitical law. Jesus being of the tribe of Judah could not be consecrated by the Levitical high priest, (Heb. 7. 11—19.); and completely to disannul the order of Aaron, he was to be constituted a priest after the order of Melchisedec, which order was higher than the order of Aaron; for Levi the father of the tribe of Aaron paid tithes to, and was blessed by Melchisedec; (Heb. 7. 6—10.) John was therefore sent before, with a divine commission to consecrate a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, and of the tribe of Judah, by washing with water at the proper time of life, (Luk. 3. 23.) according to the Levitical law of consecrating the high priest. Thus he prepared his way, and made his paths or course into his office straight. The ways which would, without this extraordinary mission of John, have been crooked and rough or disorderly, were made to consist with the orderly consecration of the priesthood according to the ceremonial law. John had a very strong notion or view of Jesus when he presented himself for baptism, but was not able to see into the grand design; and feeling a solemn reverence towards the glorious Messiah, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to stoop down and unloose, forbade him saying, “I have need to be “washed of thee; and comest thou to me” to be washed? Christ seems as if he admitted the truth of what John said, according as John meant, but replies, “suffer it to “be so now.” Then gives the reason. It behooves us, both you and me, to go according to legal institutions. You are sent with this special commission to baptize; (John 1. 33.). I must be set apart to my public office by washing, according to the law of Moses. In this manner it becomes us both to do all things as the law directs them to be done. John perceiving his mistake, and understanding the solemn design, proceeded to set apart our adorable high priest to his sacred office by washing him in the river Jordan.

Therefore, how absurd it is to strain this text to prove the active obedience of Christ to the moral law, in the room of sinners, when there is not a single syllable in or about it, that looks any thing like it. It is truly surprising if the bible gives to my opponents no better proof than this, to establish the one half of the grounds of their title to heaven.*

Another proof for this doctrine is quoted from Phil. 2. 8. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The best translation, I think would be "Even to death; yea, the death of the cross" (*μεχρὶ θανάτου* usque ad mortem, *θανάτου δὲ σταυρου* mortem verè crucis.) The sense I take to be this (viz.): The obedience of Christ was truly of an humbling nature, he was obedient even to the penalty of the law, which was death, and death too of the most ignominious kind; even the death of the cross. Then the apostle goes on, "Therefore hath God also highly exalted him," &c. My opponents put their meaning to this text in order to make it favour their sentiments (viz): that

* How astonishing it is that the baptists can found their doctrine of immersion and adult baptism on the baptism of our Saviour! Do they pretend to consecrate all their members to be high priests and mediators, after the order of Melchisedec? What kind of reasoning is this? Because Christ was thirty years old when he was set apart to his mediatorial office, therefore none but adults must be baptized, when at the same time Christ never pretended to be baptized by the christian baptism at all! And because they think he was immersed, they must follow him in the water and out of the water; follow him where? to the priesthood? in his compliance with the rites of Moses in consecrating the high priest? Is this good reasoning? Can we believe that Christ set us an example to follow his steps, in conforming to the ceremonies of the Jewish law? If the baptists must prove their tenets, let them take proper texts to do it, if they can find any, and not prostitute the baptism of our Saviour, which does not relate to the baptism under the gospel at all, but to the consecration of the Jewish high priest; and was the way in which he was legally inaugurated.

Christ as a surety fulfilled the whole law from his birth even to his death including his active and passive obedience. Now that Christ did fulfil the law perfectly in all its precepts no one disputes; but that he did it vicariously, or that this obedience makes a part of the justifying righteousness imputed to the sinner is the dispute; and that this is the sense of the above text needs proof. If my opponent asserts his sense to be correct, much more may I; for I think mine is the most natural and elegant. If I ask him to prove his sense to be right, if he does he will do what many have attempted to do; but what no man has ever yet done. If he asks me to prove mine to be right; I immediately point him to Heb. 2. 9. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." Here by comparing these two passages together we see that to be made a little lower than the angels is the same as to be found in fashion as a man, and to humble himself. That to become obedient unto death, means the suffering of death. That to be crowned with glory and honour, means God's highly exalting him and giving him a name above every name, &c. It is a little remarkable that in both texts there is a striking repetition, the same thing expressed in stronger terms. In the first it is said, "Unto death, even the death of the cross," (see my explanation above). In the second it is said, "For the suffering of death—That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." It would be better to be rendered thus, "For he by the grace of God tasted death for all." The sense is, God hath crowned him with glory and honour because he suffered death; not only so, but because he did it through his own divine benevolence and grace, and in a voluntary compliance with the will of his Father who sent him.

Therefore, if this text proves any thing decisive in the case it proves for me, and not for my opponent.

Again, the advocates for active obedience bring forward Rom. 8. 3, 4. "For what the law could not do, " in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his " own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin con- " demned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the " law might be fulfilled in us," &c.

The argument lies here according to our opponent. The law cannot justify because we are too weak to obey its precepts. This no person disputes; for it is impossible for the law to justify a sinner. But my opponent infers that if we must fulfil the precepts of the law to enable it to justify us, Christ had to do the same. Now this inference is false and sophistical. It is false because there are two ways to fulfil the law; one by precept, the other by penalty; and it never yet has been proven that the law requires both. But I have demonstrated that the contrary is true. It is a sophism because it brings forward a show of argument to establish a falsehood; and the conclusion does not follow from the premises. The premises are, 1. We must keep the law before it can justify us; 2. But we have broken it; Therefore Christ who is our surety must keep it for us. Now this conclusion is not fair, because the premises do not prove but that a broken law might be satisfied by enduring the penalty. So that to draw this conclusion is so far from a fair argument, that it is merely begging the question; for whether a broken law demands active or passive obedience, or both, is the main question in debate.

But Paul without any sophistry, tells us what our surety had to do. "He condemned sin in the flesh;" but how? Now the answer to this question decides the point. The text says, "For sin" *περὶ αμαρτίας* or by sin. What is the sense of the word sin in this place? To answer this, we appeal to 2 Cor. 5. 21. "He hath made him to " be sin (*ἁμαρτίαν*) for us who knew no sin." Here the word sin is evidently used to mean atonement or sacrifice

for sin. Rom. 6. 10. "In that he died, he died unto sin once." The same thing is evident here also, Heb. 13. 11. "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burnt," &c. Sin here also evidently means a sacrifice; and if you read the 12th verse you will see that it immediately had that blood in view which was the sin or sacrifice which Jesus shed on the cross, to sanctify the people, 2 Kings 12. 16.

From all these circumstances I think it is pretty evident that in order to condemn sin in the flesh Christ had to become sin, a sacrifice or atonement, which is nothing else than to suffer the penalty of the law; at any rate it is abundantly evident that it is far from proving the contrary; and our opponents are far from proving their point.

CHAPTER XV.

Christ's passive obedience the fulfilment of the condition of the covenant of redemption.

I CANNOT conjecture how it was ever thought of, let alone believed, that the active and passive obedience of Christ was necessary to fulfil the broken law of God in our room. But it has been believed these many years; and so generally believed too, that with the exception of very few comparatively it has been a doctrine accepted, *nemine contradicente*.

I have critically and candidly examined the strongest proofs I can find in the bible for it, and that I have ever read or heard brought forward in support of it; and I candidly think, although it is roundly asserted, generally received and strenuously maintained, that it is not supported by the word of God; neither can it bear a critical investigation on the principles of equity and justice.

Here I will advertise my reader that he who asserts a positive doctrine is under obligations to the public to establish it by testimony; but he who asserts a negative doctrine is under obligations to invalidate proofs and arguments brought against him, and to point out the unreasonableness of the thing being, which he denies; but he can be under no obligation to prove his point, because he has nothing to prove. But although the *onus probandi* is not mine, yet I think it my duty to direct my readers to some important passages of scripture on this subject.

But before I proceed I beg my readers to remember that the silence of scripture on this point is and must be to a judicious inquirer a sufficient proof of the matter, when this is the grand subject from one end of the bible to the other, and consequently frequently, largely and minutely discussed. You can hardly open the new testament but you will meet, in some part of the page, some account of what Christ has done to save sinners; and often you find it the subject of whole chapters and even whole books; witness the epistle to the Romans, Gallatians and the Hebrews, where the doctrine of justification through the atonement of Christ is treated with the greatest accuracy and minutest argumentation, and yet not a word clearly proving the necessity or propriety of Christ's active obedience in the case.

Is it a truth that there is such an astonishing silence on this particular point? that the conditions of the covenant and the terms of a sinner's acceptance with God are stated and explained over and over times without number, (so to speak) yet nothing about Christ's active obedience in the room of sinners, or as any part of his justifying righteousness to be found mentioned either by types, prophets, Christ himself, nor any of his apostles? not even by Paul himself who leaves no stone unturned, who called God to witness that he had declared the whole counsel of God? This doctrine is asserted by those who espouse it to be

the only ground of our acceptance with God and title to heaven. It must be consequently a most important doctrine. If it is true, why does the bible keep it hid from us? Was it inconsistent and improper for God to reveal to us the ground of our title to heaven? I have examined the principal texts brought forward as proofs to this doctrine by the best writers on the subject; but nothing is said in them at all to prove it. Such an omission would be fatal and very unexpected indeed in such a book as the holy bible. My opponents may retain their sentiments in welcome; but they need not expect I can believe it to be a scriptural doctrine when I know the bible does not prove it true.

It is in vain to account for this unaccountable omission by alleging that the death, blood, cross, &c. of Christ is always mentioned as including the other part of his righteousness. We could easily understand it and admit it to be so, did it only sometimes occur; but when it is always the case we have to add that meaning, without any authority, which is really making too free with the word of God. We have no right to construe the bible so as to make it speak according to our mind whether it will or not.

I have quoted a number of texts with a design to show my reader how full and pointed the scriptures are on the great doctrine of atonement. I hope my reader will take the trouble to examine them at his leisure; and at present he may take it for granted that there is not one out of the forty passages which I have there quoted but speaks pointedly of the atonement of Christ as the condition of our salvation. I could very easily quote till my reader would be tired of quotations; for every one who is acquainted with the bible knows that it is full of such passages directly on this subject, although our opponents cannot bring forward one to prove their point without straining it to the last degree, as I have shown.

I will now examine some texts, omitting for the most

part those which just speak of the atonement of Christ, and select those especially which give us the idea that all Christ had to do to procure salvation was to suffer the penalty of the law. In that remarkable prophecy in the 53d chapter of Isaiah we have several things to the point: v. 5. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and "with his stripes we are healed. v. 10. Yet it pleased the "Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief. When "thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see "his seed; he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of "the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall "my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their "iniquities," &c. In this passage this doctrine is established. That the complete fulfilment of the promises in the covenant made to Christ by the Father took place and shall take place solely in consequence of Christ's suffering wounds, bruises, stripes, cutting off (v. 8.) grief, making his soul an offering for sin, bearing their iniquities, and (v. 12.) pouring out his soul unto death; all which Peter plainly intimates was done in his own body on the tree, (1 Pet. 2. 22—25.) which is a paraphrase on this very passage. The promises to be fulfilled are to see his seed, prolong his days, God's pleasure or purpose to prosper or to be fulfilled in his hand or under his direction, to see the travail of his soul or the fruit of his sufferings, to be satisfied, to justify many by his knowledge; or he wisely conducting the matters of his kingdom, bringing thousands to the knowledge and acknowledgment of him by faith as their only atonement shall be the meritorious cause of their justification, dividing a portion and the spoil with the great and with the strong. (v. 12.) It is evident that the whole salvation of the church of Christ and every individual in it is comprised in these promises; consequently I infer that the whole salvation

of sinners is in consequence of Christ's suffering on the accursed tree, bearing our sins in his own body.

Rom. 3. 20. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." By the deeds of the law is undoubtedly meant active obedience or fulfilling the precepts of the law. The reason why no person can be justified by active obedience is because by the law is the knowledge of sin; that is, the law testifies that all flesh has broken its precepts. The law does not except the flesh even of Christ when it views him as a legal surety; neither can it; for the law could not possibly accept of Christ as a surety without viewing him as a sinner; therefore, it must be granted, it cannot be got over that Christ could no more be justified as our surety by active obedience than we could. Consequently (for the inference is inevitable) the active obedience of Christ was not vicarious or the law must condemn it, and therefore cannot be a part of his imputed righteousness.

V. 21. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested." The righteousness of God is undoubtedly the righteousness of Christ, who is a divine person and fulfilled the law under the authority of his Father. (John, 10. 18.) This is abundantly evident from v. 25. "Whom God hath set forth," &c. This text proves, therefore, that the righteousness of Christ is "without the law."

This is an elliptical sentence; for it is impossible for any righteousness to be without the law; for neither righteousness nor sin can be without a rule of rectitude; (chap. 2. 13. and 5. 13.) The full sentence is, "The righteousness of God without the deeds of the law," or without active obedience. This text then proves that the righteousness of Christ is without active obedience. It must be without either his active obedience or ours; but it cannot mean ours; for we have no hand in it; for it is the righteousness

of God, of Christ; and consequently the righteousness of Christ without his fulfilling the precepts of the law. This important idea in the negative lays the apostle under the necessity of pointing out the positive; for he is treating the subject systematically; and the salvation of both Jew and Gentile was depending. Therefore he proceeds to point out particularly in what this righteousness consists. And as in v. 21. he had said negatively that it did not consist in his active obedience; so in v. 24. 25. he says positively that it does consist in his passive obedience. "Being justified freely by his grace through the *redemption*, that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth "to be a propitiation (or atonement) through faith in his "blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins which are past through the forbearance of "God."

Rom. 5. 10. "For if when we were enemies, we were "reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, "being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." There are some who think the life here spoken of is the active obedience of Christ; but the generality of the more judicious understand by it the intercession of Christ. And it is certainly evident that his living intercession is what the apostle meant by the life of Christ, from Heb. 7. 25. The apostle had said that the priests under the law were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but that Christ continuing ever had an unchangeable priesthood. "Wherefore (he argues) he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever "liveth to make intercession for them." This is also evident from chap. 10. 12.

This being proven, I proceed to observe that the above text proves that the death of Christ is the only ground of reconciliation; and that reconciliation is the ground of salvation. Now how unreasonable must it be to suppose that the apostle could mention the death of Christ, and

the life of Christ after his resurrection and ascension, and yet not the active obedience of Christ, if his active obedience is one special part of the grounds of our justification. It is certain that this text makes the death of Christ the ground of reconciliation and of Christ's intercession; and it is certain from John 16. 7. 8. that an application of the benefits of the gospel is in consequence of Christ's ascension to his Father, and his prevalent intercession; that the Spirit is sent to abide with believers in consequence of Christ's intercession is also very evident from John 14. 16. "I will pray the Father and he will give you "another comforter," &c. From all these scriptures it is evident that the whole salvation from first to last is in consequence of the death of the Son of God. Again,

Gal. 6. 14. "God forbid that I should glory save in the "cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." If Christ's active obedience is the only thing which entitled Paul to heaven and happiness, as our opponents assert, then he was certainly rash and quite unguarded and indeed very wrong in this most glorious resolution. Paul certainly ought to glory in the active life of Christ, as well as in the cross of Christ; for the one delivered him from hell and the other entitled him to heaven. He therefore certainly neglected, or forgot, or refused to acknowledge the full half of his redemption; and consequently missed the full ground of his glorying. And it is in vain to say the one is included in or understood by the other; for inasmuch as that never has been mentioned in the bible, it lacks proof.

Heb. 9. 15. "For this cause." For what cause? Because the blood of Christ who offered himself without spot to God, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (v. 14.) "He is the Mediator of "the new testament" (or covenant.) For what purpose was he appointed the Mediator of the new covenant? "That by means of death for the redemption of the "transgressions under the first testament, (or covenant)

“they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” This is certainly to the point.

Five things are proven by this text. 1. That the covenant of redemption was founded on the blood of Christ. 2. To the conditions Christ did agree; and he did become the Mediator of the covenant. 3. That in fulfilling this condition he died. 4. That his death was the redemption of transgressors. And 5. The only condition on which those who are effectually called do receive the promise or title to eternal glory. Therefore

Corol. 1. It is not true that the active obedience of Christ entitles us to heaven; the scripture is so far from proving that doctrine, that it positively asserts the contrary. The above text proves that the promise of eternal inheritance is to those who are called by means of death for a redemption.

Cor. 2. It also proves that redemption is by means of death; so there is nothing for active obedience to do in point of suretiship for the sinner, or as to his title to every blessing of the covenant.

Cor. 3. That doctrine is consequently not only unscriptural, but directly contrary to scripture; because it asserts that our title to heaven, or the promise of eternal inheritance, is through Christ's active obedience; whereas Paul in this text asserts the contrary, even that it is by means of death. That doctrine is therefore false, not having a “Thus saith the Lord” to support, but a “Thus saith the Lord” to contradict it.

CHAPTER XVI.

Christ's passive obedience the meritorious cause of our justification.

IT is acknowledged by all and proven by Lev. 16. 2—23. that the high priest went into the most holy place with the blood of the sin offering, and with fire off the altar to burn incense in the most holy place, to make atonement and intercession for the people. It is also acknowledged that the holy place was a type of heaven. Paul affirms that “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” How evident it is from all this, that the intercession of the high priest and the intercession of Christ, is and was in consequence of the blood of atonement. It is acknowledged by all that the intercession of Christ secures to believers the favour of God, and the acceptance of their persons and all their services; and at last their eternal inheritance in glory. Paul makes salvation to the uttermost an immediate consequence of, and secured by Christ’s perpetual intercession. Heb. 7. 25. “Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost, &c. seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us:” and in v. 24. he makes the unchangeable priesthood of Christ the ground of his intercession. And in chap. 9. 11, 12. and 10. 12. he makes the intercession of Christ to be in consequence of his having offered himself a sacrifice for sin. It is very remarkable how elegantly the apostle describes the sole ground of the triumphant joy and perfect security of the believer; notwithstanding every possible circumstance or occurrence whatever, in heaven, earth and hell. (Rom. 8. 32—39.). Now take notice of the 34th verse, where we

are directed to the whole ground of the christian's triumph. 1. "It is Christ that died." Here now is the radical ground of all. 2. "Yea rather that is risen again." Here is the infallible testimony of the validity of his death. 3. "Who is even at the right hand of God." "For the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins." Entered into the most holy place by his own blood. And 4. "Who also maketh intercession for us." To trace the matter back from the effect to the cause it stands thus: 1. The impossibility of being separated from God's favour or the love of Christ, or of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 2. Christ's intercession. 3. At the right hand of God. 4. His rising again from the dead. And 5. The death of Christ. Thus you see that the death of Christ is the meritorious cause of all; his resurrection the testimony of the complete efficacy of his death; and his resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God, a testimony of the full approbation of his Father, and a due and orderly location for intercession; and his intercession is the direct efficient cause of the whole work of salvation; but the only merit, or prevalent ground of the plea of Christ's intercession, which obtains the full blessings of the covenant is the *gréat sacrifice of the cross*.

The bible asserts these things too plainly and too often to be denied. How then is it possible for us to assert in the very face of scripture, proving and asserting again and again to the contrary, that it is the active obedience of Christ that entitles us to the favour of God, to the blessings of sanctification, and to the glorious inheritance of heaven? Does Paul, who treats the subject with all possible logical accuracy, establish our title to heaven or our sanctification on the deeds of the law? Or does he talk of Christ's entering into the most holy place, in consequence of his actively obeying the precepts of the law? Does he

not assert the very reverse, that it was by his suffering the penalty of the law in our stead? What is the meaning of the words sacrifice, blood, atonement, offering, suffering, death, &c.? What is to be understood by the phrases, the suffering of death, through death, reconciliation for sin, to offer sacrifices, Christ being come a high priest, thou art a priest, such an high priest, not by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, eternal redemption for us, blood of Christ, offered himself, by means of death, death of the testator, not dedicated without blood, blood of the testament or covenant, purged with blood, without shedding of blood, purified with bitter sacrifices, offer himself to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Christ once offered to bear the sins of many, offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, offered one sacrifice, by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, consecrated through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, the blood of sprinkling, suffered without the gate to sanctify the people, through the blood of the everlasting covenant? Do these words and phrases mean active obedience? Are we to conclude from them that Christ fulfilled the precepts of the law as a surety in our behalf? Yet these are the very words and phrases, which the apostle makes use of, in explaining, proving and establishing the very ground of our justification and complete salvation. What objection could the apostle have against mentioning the active obedience of Christ, if it is one of the grand pillars of our salvation? But seeing he has carried the point without it, and fixed upon the passive obedience of Christ, what right have we to introduce another ground of salvation? To introduce this additional ground of justification would certainly weaken, if not contradict the apostle's reasoning. His arguments evidently go to prove that the atonement of Christ was perfectly sufficient to perfect our complete salvation; but this doctrine positively denies it, and says that all the atonement does is to procure our

pardon, but gives us no right or title to acceptance with God, to sanctification or heaven. But I say again, "in vain we teach for doctrines the commandments of men." Should we not be afraid to interpolate into God's covenant such an important article as will effectually change the very condition of it? Now if the scriptures have not made it necessary for Christ to obey the precepts of the law as a surety for us, we certainly do very wrong in shifting the grounds of God's everlasting covenant. But if the bible proves the entire sufficiency of Christ's passive obedience we cannot possibly be justifiable in asserting the contrary. When we find such a profound silence in scripture on this particular, before we presume to infer it from dark hints, by far fetched constructions and inferences, we ought to consider whether such a thing as active and passive obedience is possible, reasonable or just; lest we thoughtlessly introduce the bible as requiring, that which would be no honour for God, or for Christ, to attempt to perform, or for the law to require.

Again, It would require Christ to be invested with another office, to fulfil the precepts of the law as a vicar in our stead. The scripture is, on this supposition, deficient in not telling us what this office is, nor yet saying a single word about it. Perhaps this argument at first sight may appear sophistical, or rather whimsical; but let us consider it a little, and perhaps we will find it unanswerable.

1. He could not do it as a prophet. The business of a prophet is to teach, or instruct. He may instruct by any means possible. Christ instructs by his Spirit, word and example. Consequently he could keep the precepts of the law as a prophet, to set an example before his people; and the bible expressly says he did it for this very purpose. (1 Peter 2. 21, 22, 23.) 1 Cor. 11. 1. "Be ye followers of me even as I am of Christ. 1 John 2. 6. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to

“walk even as he walked. John 13. 15. I have given
 “you an example that ye should do as I have done to
 “you. (Rom. 15. 5.) Mat. 16. 24. Let him take up his
 “cross and follow me. John 10. 4. He goeth before and
 “the sheep follow him. John 12. If any man serve me,
 “let him follow me.” (Eph. 5. 1. John 8. 12.) But it is
 naturally impossible for him to fulfil the law as a surety,
 in the room of sinners as a prophet, because the business
 of a prophet does not apply to such a thing.

2. He could not do it as a priest. The office of a priest
 is to make atonement and intercession. But the fulfilling
 of the precepts of the law, is the direct opposite of atone-
 ment; for it is working out a perfect righteousness by
 the deeds of the law for the express purpose of justifica-
 tion without sin; and consequently the design of it is to
 prevent the necessity of an atonement. If Jesus Christ
 had an office to fulfil the precepts of the law as a surety,
 the complete execution of that office would completely
 nullify his priestly office; for I have already shown that
 perfect obedience, and atonement for sin, are incompat-
 ible with each other. A sacrifice must be pure, or free
 from sin. Aaron could not be a priest but on the prin-
 ciple of first purifying himself by an atonement for his
 own sins; then he could offer for the sins of the people.
 (Lev. 16. Heb. 7. 27.) No first born of men could be
 offered, because all have sinned; therefore God directed
 the Israelites to redeem the first born with a lamb. (Exod.
 13. 2, 12, 13.) He claimed the first born of every thing
 as his own; yet he ordered the lamb to be sacrificed in
 the room of the first born of men. God appears to abhor
 the thought of men sacrificing their children, no doubt
 for the unnatural cruelty of it, and also because the
 children being in a state of sin, such a sacrifice could not
 be acceptable to the Lord. The priest was to be purified
 with sacrifices; also he must be free from all superfluity
 or deficiency in his bodily parts. (Lev. 21. 17—21.)

The sacrifice also which he offered to the Lord was to be without blemish. (Lev. 21. 18—22.) All this typified the spotless purity of Christ, both inwardly and outwardly, and points directly to Christ's fulfilling the law for himself in order that he as a priest, and himself as an offering might be fit to offer, and be offered as a sacrifice holy and acceptable to God in the room of his people.

From these things it evidently appears, that although the office of a priest was peculiarly and directly to make atonement, yet it was his preparatory duty to keep himself clean, and also to have a clean offering; and reason and propriety dictate the excellence of those rules. From this, therefore, it is abundantly evident that Jesus Christ had to keep the law; and that he really did so, not only as a prophet to set an example before his people, but also as a priest to fulfil his preparatory duty, to fit himself for the proper execution of the priest's office, that he might be a proper atonement for the sins of his people, and that he might be a perfect priest to offer himself a sacrifice to God.

Now although the scripture is silent as to Christ's active obedience as a part of our justifying righteousness, yet it is so far from being silent as to the life of Christ, that it gives us a special account of it, not only that he lived holy, but also the end which was gained. We have seen already how pointed the account is, as to the example of Christ; we have also observed the meaning of the typical unblemished state of the priests and sacrifices under the law; and we also have it particularly stated in the new testament that Christ was the complete anti-type of all these things.

Jesus expressly says, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." No doubt the moral law was particularly meant as well as the ceremonial law, and seeing both are positively proven in scripture, it is proper to understand it both actively and passively. The whole life of Christ, as related by the evangelists was a life of spotless holi-

ness, so that when he came to the cross, he came as a lamb without blemish and without spot. And although God would not accept of any of the first born of men as a sacrifice, they being born in sin, yet he accepted his only begotten Son, born of a virgin, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Thus according to the correct account of the bible, we find that our blessed Saviour being the seed of the woman, and not the natural seed of Adam, was born without the limits of the covenant of works, and consequently without guilt and sin. Living his whole life in perfect obedience to the moral law, he became a suitable and proper high priest for us, and a fit and proper sacrifice to be offered without spot to God; he being both the priest and the sacrifice.

The apostle Paul certainly takes notice of this important circumstance in Heb. 9. 14. "Who (Christ) through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." He must certainly mean the spotless purity of Christ, as a sacrifice without blemish. Also chap. 7. 26, 27. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's." This is surely to the point. He was inwardly holy, outwardly harmless; and consequently he was undefiled; he was without blemish; and, as the priest and the sacrifice under the law were to keep separate from, and not to touch any thing unclean, so alluding to this circumstance he is said to be separate from sinners, viz. in his state and character separate from or a contrast to sinners, not touching any thing morally unclean. My opponent acknowledges the perfect holiness of Christ in all this; but says that it was to fulfil the law in our room; but he must remember that this lacks proof, (as I have shown) and that I have demonstrated this to be unjust

and legally impossible. Also in addition to what I have said the apostle here, where he is treating the subject, does not say a word about his perfect life being meritorious as a vicarious righteousness, but only to make him a suitable priest, and his atonement to be for us and not for himself, "Who needed not as other high priests to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins and then for the people's." So that it is certainly plain that Christ's active obedience was to prepare him to be a suitable atonement for us; and that it is his atonement only that is imputed to us for justification. If Christ had not kept the moral law perfectly he would have had to make atonement like Aaron, first for himself and then for the people; but he could not have borrowed righteousness, like Aaron did, from another to purify himself; he would have had to shed his own blood to fit himself to shed blood for his people. But the apostle says he needed no such thing, because he was holy, harmless, &c. Besides, if the typical blood without any active righteousness did give Aaron acceptance before God, which it certainly did, why cannot the antitypical blood, even the blood of Christ, to which Aaron looked through the blood of the bullock, render those acceptable to whom it is applied, even without active obedience? If not, then this blasphemous conclusion must be drawn, viz. the blood of the type was greater than the antitype.

Again, v. 28. "The law maketh men high priests who have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was (revealed) since the law (to David, Psalm 110. 4. long after the priesthood was established in Aaron) maketh the Son (an high priest) who is consecrated for ever," τετελειωμενον, completed, perfected, finally declared righteous or holy; who needed not to offer for his own sin, because he was without spot or blemish, being consecrated or made holy by his miraculous birth and active obedience.

Thus we see that Christ could as a prophet fulfil the law, and also at the same time fulfil it in the prerequisite duties of a priest; but he could not fulfil it either as a prophet or a priest in our room, as our surety for the perfect fulfilment of the law; and as I have already observed, had he another office by which he could go our security to his Father for the perfect fulfilment of the law for our righteousness, he must lay aside his priestly office because the two would clash and operate directly against each other. Perfect obedience must for ever render atonement unnecessary; and in that case Christ must appear at the right hand of God as a counsel, not as a priest; he must hide his wounds and plead not guilty. He must put off the purple robe and put on the white robe of spotless innocence; he must obtain liberty to the captive, not because he had paid the debt, but because no action lies in consequence of perfect obedience to the precepts of the law. I grant that this, to speak after the manner of men, would have been infinitely easier for Christ to do; for it would have been infinitely agreeable and even as his meat and drink to keep the moral law; but it made him sweat, and groan, and bleed, and die, to make the atonement; and I cannot conceive that infinite wisdom would choose the bitter instead of the sweet. But the evident truth is justice left no alternative; for blood it must have; (Heb. 9. 22.) and hence the bloody cross is the only ransom.

Lastly he could not fulfil the law as a king. This is so evident that I will not say a word more about it. It would certainly be imposing too much on the common sense of my reader to pretend to demonstrate that a king, acting as a king, could fulfil the law as a surety for his subjects.

I shall offer but one proof more. (Heb. 10. 9, 10.) "Then said I, lo I come to do thy will, O God." This is a quotation from Psal. 40. 7, 8. Paul applies it to Christ consenting to the covenant of redemption; in which the

word *will* is taken notice of by the apostle as expressive of the conditions of the covenant which Christ cheerfully undertook to perform; and by the performance of which will or condition he procured a title to all the blessings of the covenant for his people. He comprises the blessings of the covenant in the word *sanctified*; because the grand design of the covenant was to restore the moral image of God, which we lost in the first covenant, which consists in holiness; and this lost image is restored by sanctification; and every thing necessary to it, and a consequence of it is comprised in this one word. (Rom. 8. 30. 1 Pet. 1. 2—5. Heb. 12. 14.) But the whole depends on what Christ did in doing his Father's will; this the apostle says was the offering of his body once for his people. "By the which" "will (says he) we are sanctified through the offering of" "the body of Jesus Christ once." I think there can be no evasion here. Can my opponents force in the active obedience of Christ here, in spite of the positive declaration of Paul, making the atonement the only thing, and arguing both the propriety and sufficiency of it?

I acknowledge that it is a very common thing both in speaking and writing to mention one particular part of a circumstance, for the sake of brevity, as including the whole; and sometimes the whole is taken for a part. (John, 12. 19. Rom. 13. 10.) Thus faith is elegantly taken for the whole life and salvation of a christian; we are also said to be saved by hope. But it must be very unreasonable to be understood so without there is something that makes the meaning evident. I certainly would understand the apostle (Rom. 8. 24.) to mean that hope was the only grace of the Spirit, were I not told that there were other graces. But how unreasonable must it be to understand active obedience to be included in passive, when it is neither said to be so in the bible nor yet necessary in the nature of the things themselves. Must I conclude a man is perfectly holy because I see him condemned as a sin-

ner? No: so far from it that I must have very creditable information before I could believe it; and when I would believe it I would undoubtedly think he had an unjust judge. Such constructions as these are so far from being naturally or necessarily admitted that we cannot believe them when they are asserted.

It is in vain to say that in this case Christ died, not for his own sins, but the sins of his people. I ask was it because his people were righteous that he kept the law for them? No, certainly: for then the law would require the righteousness of two persons in the case of one person; which is unjust. Then it must be for the sin of his people that Christ fulfilled the law. Now admitting this, I ask again, did the law require any thing more than perfect active righteousness instead of sin? It certainly could not. Then when Christ died, after he had satisfied the law for the sin of his people already, did he not render two satisfactions for one crime? No person wilfully and knowingly could hold such sentiments without being guilty of blasphemy against God and his divine law. How can divines leap over such heterogeneous consequences in order to maintain an old tradition, and assert without any proof or reason that the death and sufferings of Christ include his active obedience in our stead? For my part I am not disposed to knock out my brains as a compliment to my ancestors, dearly as I love them. When I believe this doctrine I must have an argument which has some force in it; and bad as I am I will give that much honour to the bible as to learn from it what Christ did for the salvation of sinners.

CHAPTER XVII.

The moral propriety of the covenant of redemption.

WE are in the third place to show that the covenant of redemption is perfectly consistent with the principles of moral rectitude and justice.

Before I proceed to the discussion of this point I will make a preliminary remark. There is nothing in all the bible that can counteract the diabolical designs of Satan or level the pride of the human heart but the condition of the covenant of redemption fulfilled in the atonement of the cross of Christ. (1 John, 3. 8.) Satan in his influences on the minds of sinners bends his force particularly against this point in the gospel. He cares not what your creed is, or how many articles you have in it, if you only leave out this one article, viz. the atonement of the cross. He still considers himself sure of his prey let the sinner believe what he will and feel what he may if the cross of Christ is not revealed to him. He knows that nothing but that can save a sinner; and that that can and will save every one, even the very chief of sinners, if it is applied unto. (2 Cor. 4. 3, 4.) All the world has been in opposition to the cross; and thousands even of those who profess the christian religion, although they acknowledge themselves friends to the gospel and even pretend much respect to Christ, yet deny the vicarious merit of the cross. The papists can depend upon the virgin Mary and all or any of their canonized saints, and the effects of purgatory, and the prayers and absolution of their priests. The socinians can look to the rules and example of Christ. The arminians can acknowledge free grace given to all yet none to be saved by an established covenant but in consequence of improving and continuing to improve that

common grace. But notwithstanding all the sophistical arguments which the pride of man, or the cunning and malice of Satan can invent, the doctrine of the vicarious atonement of Christ can be vindicated to be perfectly consistent with justice and equity.

All confess that God is infinitely holy and just, and consequently will do nothing wrong: and that he is infinite in wisdom and knowledge, and consequently he cannot be mistaken, and cannot do any thing improper through ignorance, inattention or oversight. The bible unquestionably proves the plan of the gospel to be founded on the vicarious atonement of Christ as a surety; as I have sufficiently explained and proven. The inference must consequently be, that the atonement of Christ must be consistent with every dictate of holiness and propriety; it being the will of a God of infinite perfection and glory.

Every just law can if it will, admit of suretiship in every case where a surety can be admitted on equitable principles. This is evident from the universal practice of courts of justice, which every one knows and acknowledges; and also from the bible which mentions it as lawful, and gives us several examples of it. Prov. 6. 1—5. and 11. 15. It is true these texts advise to carefulness in the matter, but do not condemn it as wrong; so also Prov. 17. 18. and 22. 26, 27. Judah went surety to his father for Benjamin. Paul was surety to Philemon for Onesimus. It was usual to take pledges and give hostages in various cases and circumstances.

But several circumstances are necessary to render it just to be a surety, especially for Christ to die in the room of sinners.

1. None can be forced to be a surety against his will. But Jesus was willing; and became a voluntary surety. Ps. 40. 7, 8. Heb. 10. 9. 10. Tit. 2. 14. "Not my will" "but thine be done." "My delight was with the sons of" "men. Here am I, send me."

2. Every surety must have a right to do, or give what he is to be bound to by his suretiship. Hence the civil law does not admit of surety, where life is at stake; because no man has a right to dispose of his life. But our glorious Surety had. "I lay down my life, says he, for my sheep. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10. 15. 18.

3. As no man can be forced to be a surety, so no man can oblige the law or the person having the demand, to take him as a surety. But the Father was well pleased in him and chose him, and promised to accept of his atonement. Mat. 3. 17. Is. 42. 1, 6. and 53. 10—12. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake. He will magnify the law and make it honourable."

4. If the person was known not to be able to answer the demands of justice he could not be admitted; for justice cannot be disappointed or trifled with. But Jesus was able to bear the stroke of death and to satisfy the demands of justice. Ps. 89. 19.

5. The public must not lose a good citizen, and save a bad one. Every principle of justice and good policy would refuse suretiship in such a case. But there was nothing lost, but every thing gained, so to speak, by the death of Christ. He died indeed; but he arose again the third day. He was buried on our Friday, in the evening, which according to the Jewish mode of reckoning time, was the sixth day; he rested from his labours in the tomb on the Jewish sabbath, which was our Saturday; and very early in the morning on our sabbath he rose; which made the third day. He was dead from three o'clock on Friday evening till about six on sabbath morning at break of day, about thirty-nine hours; then he arose triumphant from the grave having spoiled the powers of death and hell, and purchased eternal salvation for his people. Rom. 4. 25. So that his death was no loss but infinite

gain. God was glorified in all his perfections; our adorable Surety was highly exalted and crowned with glory and honour. The law was magnified and made honourable; and thousands of sinners were redeemed from eternal ruin and made for ever happy in the enjoyment of God as their glorious portion for ever.

Notwithstanding blinded mortals through the pride and enmity of their hearts find fault with this plan, and employ their boasted wit and wisdom in ridicule and scorn; yet the gospel plan is the admiration of angels, the terror of devils, the glory of God and the salvation of sinners who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This plan of grace and redemption can not only be proven from the bible; but it can also be vindicated from every principle of morality and justice. Well might the apostle say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema maranatha; and God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Upon the whole, from the view which I have taken of this covenant we may conclude that it well deserves the honourable title of the covenant of redemption; because that when all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, when we had involved ourselves in a state of ruin and despair, God of his own boundless grace and mercy was pleased to give us another covenant head, in whom was treasured the rich stores of his love, grace and mercy. But in order that we might be removed from under the curse and entitled to the boundless grace of this covenant, he, our Surety had to suffer the curse for us as the price of our redemption, and consequently as the condition of the covenant. We find that the holy life of Christ was to set us an example to follow his steps, and to prepare himself to be the great high priest and atonement for his people. We find that according to the terms of the covenant he offered himself on the cross, a sacrifice once for all; and that by his one offering he hath

for ever perfected them that are sanctified. We have seen that his passive obedience alone is the robe of righteousness which is imputed to believers. That it is sufficient for our complete justification; by which we are redeemed from hell and entitled to heaven. That his glorious resurrection is a testimony of the validity of his sufferings and the approbation of the Father; and that through his prevalent intercession the divine communications of the Spirit are sent down to accompany the gospel, to gather in his people, and apply to them the inexhaustible riches of his great salvation. That we not only have a clear account of it in the infallible word of God; but also that the justice and equity of the whole plan can be fully vindicated to the satisfaction of any reasonable mind. What heart that ever has felt the power of divine grace, can withhold the tribute of praise? What heart that has ever inquired, "What shall I do to be saved?" but has found a complete deliverance by having the interesting inquiry answered by the glory of this covenant? What heart that has ever fled to the blood of sprinkling but can rest in this covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure? and finally who, that ever has a title to the blessings of this covenant, but shall be for ever with the Lord?

CHAPTER XVIII.

Improvement.

If any cannot feel thankful for the covenant of redemption, it must be because they are not sensible of the ruins of the fall. It is the most astonishing circumstance that ever was heard of. For God to create ten thousand times ten thousand worlds is not comparatively astonishing. It was truly a glorious display of his almighty and eternal power and godhead. His common and universal provi-

dence is a continued manifestation of his divine wisdom and goodness. But the covenant of redemption is the reconciling of jarring perfections; wherein God gives a most striking view of his moral excellence and glory. Holiness is God's moral character. Holiness consists in the exercise of justice, goodness, and truth; and justice is the radical principle of all. Justice always has one of two demands: The first is perfect righteousness: If this be wanting, then the second demand is death. On the exercise of justice in the first case God is good to his creatures individually by blessing them with happiness; but when his law is transgressed, then justice has its second demand, which is always penal. In the exercise of justice in this case God is good as a moral governor to his creatures at large, taking the whole government and his whole kingdom into view; and his goodness consists in punishing the wicked. This does not make the individuals happy who have sinned; but it is essentially necessary to the happiness of the general subjects of his government, which could not be happy without it; for it is impossible for sin to make happy. So that God's goodness is the consequence of the proper exercise of justice. Truth is the opposite of falsehood. When justice is exercised exactly according to its demands, then there is no deception or disappointment; truth fulfils the expectations of all; but if God would not punish the wicked, or if he would punish, or even not justly reward the righteous, in either case there would be falsehood, deception, and disappointment. So that both goodness and truth depend upon the proper exercise of justice; and justice is the essence of God's moral character; and the proper exercise of justice in all cases and in all circumstances and towards all creatures is spotless holiness. Jer. 50. 7. Ps. 89. 14. and 47. 8. Now for God to punish the guilty race of Adam, as he has done the devils in hell, would be a most natural exercise of justice in its penal demands:

but every individual must be miserable for ever. Individual goodness towards sinners is mercy; but mercy can never take place, because goodness is the exercise of justice; and justice forbids goodness to be exercised to individuals who have sinned and rendered themselves liable to misery. So that mercy and justice are as directly opposite to each other as any two things can possibly be. But justice sits on the throne and holds the reins of government; and nothing can be done contrary to its dictates.

But God was determined to be merciful, and to give a display of his divine glory in making sinners happy in the enjoyment of himself. He had thousands of sinners who had transgressed his holy law, and lay under the vindictive sentence of his justice. All the devils in hell, and fallen Adam and all his posterity were present in his view from eternity; all held fast, by his inflexible justice, under an irrevocable sentence of damnation. He passed by the angels who sinned, and chose to save sinners of the race of Adam; and also farther to glorify his awful sovereignty, he chose whom he would of Adam's posterity and gave them to Christ as his spiritual seed in the covenant of redemption. Here are the wonders of redemption! Wisdom opening the way for mercy by satisfying justice! Giving it its full demand in our glorious Surety! We behold the whole plan exhibited in the cross of Christ! Our faith with solemn wonder and profound reverence beholds Jesus of Nazareth hanging on the accursed tree; in his boundless love he takes the bitter cup and drinks the very dregs of his Father's wrath; the sword of justice which cannot pity nor spare vented all its vengeance on his devoted head. The glorious victim fell, and the sinner untouched. "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Now mercy begins to triumph; she decks herself in the

bloody garments of the cross and takes justice in her soft embrace; they mutually kiss each other and unite their voice in proclaiming "Glory to God in the highest; peace" "and good will towards men." Never was there such a display of the glory of God. Never did mercy and justice unite before. Devils saw it and were confounded. Angels saw it and adored. Men saw it and mourned and rejoiced and hoped for pardon. In all the records of history was it ever said; in all the secret recesses of the mind was it ever thought, that God could be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth on Jesus? But the bible proves the fact, and the gospel proclaims salvation to the ends of the earth. -

O my soul art thou interested in this wonderful covenant? Has Jesus done all this for thee? Hast thou broken the laws of God? and does he mercifully forgive thy sin? Who am I, and what is my father's house, that I should be so happy? I cannot think of hell but I feel my just desert; and yet am I an heir of an eternal inheritance, through the death of my dear Lord?

O believer, what has Jesus done? He has fulfilled the condition of the covenant of redemption. He has died that you might live. He has satisfied justice that you might receive mercy. And where is he now? He has ascended to his Father. Blessed Intercessor! he is at the right hand of God; he has taken his own blood, and has entered into the most holy place. The validity of his death obtains every blessing from his Father. When he pleads his blood nothing can withstand him. No benefit is too great for it to purchase. Justice approves; and the promises of the covenant insure the blessing to every believer. Infinite wisdom planned, and conducts the whole plan. Infinite power executes, and infinite truth and faithfulness secure the performance. And what can I say more? Are these the blessings which are denied devils, and which sinners despise? Are believers the only partakers? And is the believer unthankful? Unthankful did I say? Would my rea-

der be astonished were I to say, that even the believer can hardly trust his soul in the hands of the Saviour notwithstanding all? Does such a covenant as this admit of a doubt? This second covenant was not like the first, Adam was a finite, fallible creature; Christ was the Lord from heaven. The first covenant was doubtful from the beginning, because of the fallibility of Adam, who had to fulfil the condition of it; but the second was so well ordered in all things and sure, and the surety so infallible, that thousands were pardoned and saved, and went to heaven long before the condition of the covenant was really fulfilled. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all the prophets, and the thousands of Israel and Judah, who believed long before the coming of Christ in the flesh, received pardon and sanctification, and a title to, and an entrance into the kingdom. God risked his eternal honour on the faithfulness of his Son, and applied the blessings of the covenant even before they were purchased; because the surety was faithful. How firmly does the apostle argue Rom. 5. 9. "Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." But alas! notwithstanding the stability of the covenant, the faithfulness of the surety and the ransom paid, yet believers are prone to scruple their title to happiness. We are apt to introduce conditions as terms of salvation, which are hard to perform; and not contented with faith the only condition of the gospel, we substitute some of the very blessings stipulated in the covenant as terms which we have to perform, such as repentance, reformation, good feelings and good works. We forget what the apostle says, Rom. 4. 16. "Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed;" and when we are brought to acknowledge faith as the only scriptural term of salvation, we are prone to work still by believing; and we try to purchase instead of accept of salvation. Thus the poor desponding believer, instead of trusting with a

suitable firmness to the promises of the gospel, is trying too much to obtain acceptance by the deeds of the law; falsely imagining that he must become acceptable to Christ, not as a sinner but as a penitent believer; and his faith must consist of holiness of heart, hatred to sin, love to God, sore, sorrowful repentance, and a thorough reformation. Now had Christ come to call the righteous and not sinners, and if the law would accept of a sincere, instead of perfect obedience, such believers might, for what I know, have a comfortable hope and much thanks for their industry in preparing their hearts for Christ. But the fact is; Christ came to save sinners, and offers freely every thing necessary to salvation; and only asks the consent of the heart to the generous proposal. The unhappy man, fond of lending a helping hand, and feeling that much is to be done before he can be saved, starts back, and cries, "The terms are too easy." But he forgets, or perhaps never considered, that Christ and not faith had to perform the work. So he foolishly loses sight of the overture, by quarrelling with the diminutive size of his faith. Thus for want of proper views of the covenant, or plan of redemption, he cannot feel his interest in it; and is forever trying to save himself in order to persuade Christ to save him and render his prayers and his faith acceptable to the Redeemer of sinners. But if doubting christians must doubt we cannot help them while they will not be persuaded to trust with confidence in the promises of God. But let those who can say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." I say let all such consider the infinite stability of the covenant of redemption.

The moral law is glorious and dreadful. It is the grand stratum of the whole procedure of the divine government. The covenant of works (as we call it) was made with Adam as the representative of his posterity. This cove-

nant graciously proposed and stipulated every necessary grace to Adam and his posterity, to maintain them in a perfect conformity to this law on the easy conditions of not eating the forbidden fruit. We are consequently left without excuse; and it really is enough to level our pride with the dust to think of the gracious opportunity afforded in the first covenant to us in our federal head. Heaven with all its glory; holiness with all its divine beauty; in short, perfect conformity to the moral law and perfect happiness in the enjoyment of God for ever was freely overtured in that covenant in terms so low that it is impossible to think of it without blushing. Was it possible that Adam could not keep from eating of that tree? How little, low, servile and mean was the action? and how dreadful the consequences?

But mankind have a strange and a proud propensity to make the conditions of God's covenant hard, just because the harder the terms of any covenant are the more honour there is in keeping them, and the more excusable we would be in breaking them; therefore sinners to have a shadow of excuse must introduce the whole moral law and the forbidden fruit too as the condition of the first covenant; so that if Adam had kept the covenant he would really have made a grand purchase; and the greater the purchase the less the grace, and the less honour to God the more to Adam; and there is none of his posterity but feels now a disposition to lay in their full claim to glory. But alas! Adam fell! What, fell? and yet nothing to do but not to eat the forbidden fruit? Our proud hearts rise at the thought. It is enough to make Satan himself blush with a hellish shame, were it possible for devils to blush at sin, to think of the paltry bait and the meanness of such disobedience. What! to barter holiness and heaven for a fig! and figs enough beside. No, we cannot find words to express our abhorrence of such folly, and the infinite meanness of our venerable father. We easily slide into a

palliating excuse, by introducing the whole ten commandments as a condition; and the forbidden fruit as a supernumerary article to serve as an artful bait to trepan Adam into a transgression. Thus through our arrogance we gild over as well as we can (and indeed bad is the best we can make of it) the most silly, low, groveling and shameful action that ever was done under the sun, except the conduct of sinners towards the gospel. But with all our excuses and with all our pride wo to the man for ever who lives and dies under that covenant. It is a broken covenant; its blessings are forfeited; and its penalty is incurred; and nothing but death can be expected from it. He who goes about establishing a righteousness of his own, or expects to find mercy by fending off the stroke of the flaming sword in the hand of the cherubim, or expects to slip in in spite of the flaming vigilance of the cherubic guard to the tree of life must experience a final disappointment.

How unspeakable is the condescension of God. "When
 "there was no eye to pity, nor hand to bring deliverance
 "he was pleased (and indeed it was his good pleasure)
 "to lay help on one who is mighty." We have seen that Jesus Christ (Jesus Christ, O my heart lies submissive at his feet, prostrate and adoring) has paid the ransom: and having established and sealed the covenant of redemption by his own blood "he is exalted as a Prince and a
 "Saviour to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness
 "of sins." By his sovereign orders the gospel is proclaimed to guilty, fallen sinners, containing the overtures of eternal salvation from guilt, sin and misery.

Although the blessings of this covenant are meritoriously founded on the satisfaction of the bloody cross of Christ, yet the purchase being complete, the price fully paid, and all things being ready, the offer of the whole is made and the blessings completely insured on the humiliating condition of faith. It is impossible for an easier or more suitable or simple thing to be thought of by the mind of man than faith.

Here the poor sinner feels his pride again. It rises against the covenant of works; it rises also against the covenant of grace. The objections do not lie against the blessings and promises, at least so far as they relate to happiness; but O the conditions are as easy, so little, so low, so totally insignificant and trifling. It is as bad as not eating the forbidden fruit. It is worse, ten times worse; for that took some time of trial, but this is done in a moment. That had not half so much to do as this; and yet this is ten times easier done. All our art is employed to explain the nature of faith to make it suit our pride; and when we have it half explained we have our souls half saved; and then we have our difficulties, fears, doubts, surmises, despondings, &c. lest Christ should have the honour of doing all. But you say I am uncharitable; no man is so bad as this. I will ask my reader a few questions. Are you a lost sinner? Do you feel it? Does Christ offer you salvation? Is he willing to give it to you freely? Does your heart consent to the offer? Now when you answer all these in the affirmative, the last question affirmatively is faith. I now ask again, Can you trust him? If your heart now gives back, and you find it impossible for you to put your trust in Christ you are the very proud wretch which I have been describing. You are like Naaman, the Syrian, you bring with you ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment; and you like Abana and Pharpar better than Jordan. But you cannot believe a word I say; for you are certain that you are so far from bringing any thing, or pretending to bring any thing, that alas! alas! you have nothing to bring. This is certainly the truth; you certainly have nothing. But this is your grief. But this would not grieve you if you were humble; but you feel bad and cannot trust in Christ because you are poor. Do you not feel ashamed to complain of want when you are surrounded with the rich offers of the gospel? Remember what

God says, (Isa. 52. 3.) "Thus saith the Lord, ye have "sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed "without money." Let us cease from pride and be contented with the terms of salvation, and simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and we shall be saved; and let us stay our minds upon him and he will keep us in perfect peace.

In the last place. Every plan of God tends to humble the pride of man. The covenant of works taught his fallible state and tended to establish him on the principles of free grace. The covenant of redemption takes the whole business out of the hands of the sinner; and the Lord Jesus undertakes the business of a surety; he purchases the benefits and freely bestows them upon undeserving creatures. The terms on which he bestows his grace are truly humbling, and the whole plan from first to last calculated to give all the glory to God and establish the creature entirely dependent on divine truth and faithfulness.

Nothing can be established on firmer basis than the covenant of redemption. Everlasting love is the moving spring of all; inflexible justice, the radical principle on which every claim is valid; the complete atonement of Christ, the foundation of every claim; the truth and faithfulness of the parties contracted, the solid ground of confidence in every promise and engagement; infinite wisdom to scheme and conduct the plan and infinite power to execute. How happy must every soul be who has an interest in Christ? It is in vain to attempt to describe the happy situation of him who has Jesus Christ for his surety. His salvation must be sure indeed. "He that spared not "his own Son but delivered him up for us all; how shall "he not with him also freely give us all things?"

BOOK IV.

The covenant of grace considered and explained.

CHAPTER I.

The general plan and nature of the covenant of grace.

THE covenant of grace is that covenant or contract which is made betwixt Christ and the believer.

I very cheerfully admit that the parties contracting are on the one part the Trinity, the Father, Son and Spirit, not only one in essence but united in one general plan, each person having an important part to act in the salvation of a sinner. And every believer united in one body on the other part; but if you would rather, I have no objection to the idea of one of the same covenant made with every believer individually having the same end in view, the same promises and the same condition. But inasmuch as Jesus Christ is made head over all things to the church and has the whole management committed to his trust I conceive it very proper to say, as I have said above, that the covenant of grace is made betwixt Jesus Christ and the believer; and as this is the simplest idea and most easily expressed and understood I shall use it in treating the subject.

There are some who blend the covenants of redemption and grace together and make but one covenant; the condition of which they say is the righteousness of Christ. They

think it improper to call faith a condition of a covenant because it is itself a gift of God; consequently they say that there is no covenant made with the believer at all only as he is represented in Christ. This covenant is therefore what I call a covenant of redemption. They call it a covenant of grace; and they make the active and passive obedience of Christ the condition of this covenant of grace.

I am not disposed to enter into any illnatured disputes on this subject. It appears to me, and I feel it such a pleasing thought, that the great and eternal God should condescend to give lost sinners another opportunity for salvation through the wonderful atonement of his dear Son, that it is enough to repress every turbulent passion, and melt us down into wonder, gratitude and love. But still I think it the duty of every writer for the public to give his genuine sentiments on every subject he undertakes to discuss; and I think it is the duty of every reader to read with candour, and allow every one to think for himself; and while we hold to the great atonement of Christ we cannot be far wrong, whether we make but one covenant or two; while ever we glory in the cross of Christ we cannot be radically unsound in our principles however we may differ in our sentiments as to many circumstantial matters in divinity. Having premised these things I proceed to speak as I believe. And although I know I differ from many, yet I can have charity for all who acknowledge the righteousness of Christ as their only righteousness, however we may differ as to names, numbers and forms.

The bible undoubtedly gives us the idea of a covenant of grace made betwixt Christ and believers, and makes faith to be the condition of it. (Mark 16. 16.) The name of a covenant always is derived from the nature of the condition of it. If the condition is something to be done to purchase the property or benefits of the covenant, it is properly called a covenant of works. The covenant

made with Adam, were we to admit the moral law to be the condition, would be of this nature. The moral law is, and always was and always will be, a law of works; and when Adam broke covenant with God, he had no security for his perfect fulfilment of the moral law; and having once disobeyed, even in a positive precept, which was the stipulated condition of the covenant, he acted indirectly contrary to the spirit of the moral law; because the moral law always enforces every covenant which is made consistent with the principles of equity. Adam having thus broken the covenant, he was exposed to all the consequences of both the broken covenant, and the broken law. Thus the scriptures positively assert the impossibility of salvation by the deeds of the law; because the law demands death in case of the least failure; and Adam and his posterity were not able to fulfil it. But Christ in the covenant of redemption had to atone for the breach of the first covenant and the perpetual transgression of the moral law. This was a matter entirely subsisting between the Father and the Son: the Father as the offended Majesty of heaven, and the Son as a surety for the sinner, standing betwixt the sinner and justice demanding death for the transgression of the laws of God. Jesus our blessed Surety found this covenant to be indeed a covenant of redemption; he had to wade through blood, agonies and death in order to redeem those whom his Father had given to him. The very last mite was paid to divine justice, before it was possible for an offer of peace to be made to sinners.

But when justice was satisfied, and the atonement was made then, in the order of nature, the important negotiation took place betwixt God and sinners. The covenant of redemption is consequently the whole ground on which the covenant of grace depends; Christ could have no authority to propound terms of peace, or make any proposals to sinners without it; neither could sinners

have sufficient grounds to accept of the offered benefits, and trust to the overtures of Christ, but in consequence of the purchase of the cross. God is pleased to deal with us as reasonable creatures, and on the proper principles of moral agency; and therefore it is necessary for terms to be proposed, and agreed unto before it would be possible for sinners to be saved consistent with the principles of moral government.

This most important business is conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ in consequence of a special delegation from the Father; and he conducts the whole business by his word and Spirit. All the properties of a covenant are clearly discovered in this interesting transaction; the parties, the engagements, and the condition. The parties mutually agreeing, the engagements containing all the blessings of the gospel on the part of Christ; and faith the condition on the part of the sinner without which no blessing in itself of a saving nature, can be bestowed.

In treating of these three particulars in their proper order, we hope to explain fully the covenant of grace; and may God grant, that we may not only understand this all interesting doctrine of the bible, but also feel our souls interested in all the blessing of it.

CHAPTER II.

Jesus Christ the first party in the covenant of grace.

1. GENERALLY speaking all covenants have two parts: the first part contains the benefits and advantages of the covenant, exhibited by proposals; the other part contains the condition on which those benefits are to be bestowed. Also all covenants have two parties, one to each part; and although many persons may be engaged on each side of the covenant, yet they all make but two parties; for

every person engaged must be on one side or the other of the contract; and all persons engaged on the same part must have a common interest, and so, can make but one party. He who has the benefits to bestow, on whatever condition, is justly the first party in the covenant, because the other is the dependent party; and he who has the condition to perform is the second party. This at least is generally true; and it is emphatically so in the covenant of grace.

Jesus Christ the Son of the living God is the first party in the covenant of grace. He was the second party in the covenant of redemption, and had the condition to perform in obedience to his Father; as we have already seen. Now he stands as a Mediator betwixt God and man, vested with all power and authority from the court of heaven to reconcile sinners unto God. Here we will take notice of three things in Christ.

1. The dignity of his person. It is impossible for us finite creatures to conceive of the dignity of Christ. The idea which the holy scriptures give us of him is truly sublime, and enough to fill our hearts with love and reverence. He is called the only begotten Son of God. The Father with a voice from heaven acknowledged him as such. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He is the brightness of the glory of God and the express image of his person; and in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. To him is ascribed all honour and glory belonging to the Deity. The names by which God is pleased to make himself known are given to him; the perfections and works of God belong to him; and all are directed to worship and honour him even as the Father. He is God, and man, in one dignified person; and as such he is the glorious party in this covenant.

With what awful dignity did Christ appear on earth, even in his state of humiliation. At his birth, angels and •

the host of heaven usher in his entrance into the world with exalted strains of glory; shepherds hasten to see the wonderful sight; wise men from the east directed by a star come to the place and behold with wonder the young child lying in a manger. With what dignity did he sit in the midst of the doctors, when he was but twelve years old, to the astonishment of all who heard him. After he entered into his public life, he could make the whole city of Jerusalem to move at his presence. The dignity of Christ when he was upon earth did not exhibit itself in worldly pomp and splendor; he evidently appeared above the influence of earthly glory and grandeur; and his peculiar glory appeared in the testimonies which he gave of his being really the Son of God. Therefore he said to the Jews, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him." There was such a majestic simplicity in the very manner in which Christ wrought his miracles, and such an awful grandeur in the miracles which he wrought, that it is impossible to read them without some view of the divine dignity of Christ. Who could, without feeling the presence of God, behold him standing on the deck of the ship commanding peace in the midst of foaming billows? How easily does he make diseases, death and devils surrender at his word? With what awful majesty did he feed seven thousand people at once and had more provisions left when he was done, than he had when he began. He took Peter, James and John and went up into a mountain, and there he unveiled his glory before them; and his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light. What an honour must it be to be in covenant with such a glorious person as Christ; to be united to him in bonds that never can be broken. But

2. I proceed to notice his divine power and authority from the Father, to stipulate with his people; to engage them to himself in a covenant relation, and to fulfil all his covenant engagements unto them. The foundation of Christ's kingdom is the blood of the cross. His people belong to him, through the gift of his Father, by purchase. This was the condition he had to perform in the covenant with his Father; and in consequence of this, he is vested with all power and authority in and over his people, and over all things for their sake.

This authority of Christ is abundantly evident from many passages in scripture. Is. 61. 1—3. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek," &c. This remarkable passage our blessed Saviour read and applied unto himself (Luke 4. 16—21.) John 3. 35. "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand." John 5. 26, 27. "For as the Father hath life in himself so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. And he hath given him authority to execute judgment also because he is the Son of man." Mat. 28. 18. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; Go ye therefore," &c. 1 Cor. 1. 30. "Who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." Phil. 2. 9—11. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him," &c. (1 Cor. 15. 24—28. John 12. 49, 50.) John 14. 31. "As the Father gave me commandment even so I do. My Father is greater than I." verse 28.

From these texts which I have cited, and many others, we see that Jesus Christ in carrying on the work of redemption in all the overtures which he makes to sinners, and when he establishes his covenant with believers, acts under the authority of God; that he has an undoubted right to take the vilest sinner under his care and keeping who will believe in his name; and that he can and will

fulfil all his engagements to his people to their eternal salvation according to the covenant of grace.

3. I will next mention some particulars which, in an infinite degree, qualify the great Redeemer to execute the important trust committed to his hand. And

1. He is possessed of infinite wisdom. His whole plan is before him. He can see the exact tendency and effect of every measure he adopts, and can scan the result of every dispensation. He with infinite skill can conduct and manage the great affairs of his kingdom; he can communicate grace to his people where, when, how, and in what degree he sees fit. He can baffle all the devices of Satan, and counteract all the influences of the world, and of sin. No weapon formed against his cause shall prosper; neither shall the gates of hell ever prevail against his church and people.

2. He is infinite in knowledge; and he is every where present. There is not a thought or a feeling, or a want which his people have but he perfectly knows it; no possible circumstance can take place but under his inspection. The believer can be in no possible place but he is in the presence of his covenanted God. This is a source of consolation indeed. It gives every possible advantage in prayer. Christ knows the very breathings of the believing soul; the believer can find a throne of grace in the wild forests, on the craggy mountains, or in the darkest dungeon. Christ, every where present, knowing all things foresees every danger and the very place where the snare is laid for any of his people; he knows the crafty steps of the roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour; and he can give all necessary grace to conduct his people through all their difficulties and trials.

3. He is infinite in power. He measures the waters of the ocean in the hollow of his hand. He takes up the isles as a very little thing. He supports the universe by his almighty arm. He does as he pleases in the armies of

heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Angels fly at his command; devils shrink at his frowns; sinners perish with the breath of his nostrils; but believers are safe in his covenant. O he is the mighty God of Jacob, travelling in the greatness of his strength able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him.

4. He is unchangeable in his truth and faithfulness. If he speaks, it must stand fast for ever. His promises are yea and amen. The blessing is perfectly secured by his word; none ever trusted him in vain. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed but his covenant shall never depart from his people. Heaven and earth shall pass away but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

5. He is just and holy. This renders him most lovely and excellent. His justice is the radical principle of his moral excellence; and his glory is founded on his inflexible justice: God's justice is dreadful to a rebellious sinner; but it is the guard and protection of his covenanted people. Justice always protects where there is no guilt; and guarantees the performance of all lawful contracts. He who is interested in the covenant of grace is interested in the covenant of redemption; and consequently is interested in the full discharge of the sinner from guilt and condemnation; and hence the apostle Paul says, God can be just and the justifier of him who believeth on Jesus; and the apostle John says, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

6. In the last place Jesus is boundlessly merciful. Why will ye die, O house of Israel? He is long suffering. He has been known to weep over sinners. How feelingly he pleads with them to accept of salvation. He cautions and warns, urges motives upon motives, and never casts out one that comes. Nothing can surpass the description of tenderness and mercy which is given in the parable of the prodigal son. How tenderly he deals

with his people. He gently leads the weak, and carries the lambs in his bosom. He bears with their weaknesses, fretfulness, and unbelief. He corrects with a fatherly tenderness; but he never forgets his covenant.

Upon the whole what a glorious Saviour is Christ! How well qualified to be a Mediator and to negotiate with sinners and to conduct the great affairs of his kingdom.

This dignified person, officially sent from the court of heaven possessed of such infinitely glorious qualifications, is the first party; and engages in the first part of the covenant of grace. Surely if sinners knew him they would most cheerfully engage in covenant with him; and if believers knew him better, they could trust their eternal all in his hands.

Give up my soul, and be happy for ever.

CHAPTER III.

Believers the second party in the covenant of grace.

AFTER the exalted view which the scriptures give us of the glory of Christ; what an awful contrast do we feel when we take a view of the second party in the covenant of grace. Poor fallen Adam and the chosen part of his wretched race all in their guilt and sin, full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores present themselves to our view by thousands; a black and polluted group of miserable creatures, just emerging from a dungeon of death and horror; pained to the heart under a sense of wretchedness and woe, coming at the kind invitations of the gospel, holding out the withered hand to Jesus, crying, Lord save me or I perish. O my soul art thou amongst them? Such a view as this is indeed enough to melt our hearts in gratitude, love and wonder. To see our exal-

ted God surrounded with angels, casting down their crowns at his feet crying, Holy! Holy! Holy! is a sight awfully glorious, but not surprising; but to see him striking hands, confirming an everlasting covenant with a hell born sinner to redeem him at the expense of his own blood, is enough to stop the harps of angels for a moment to gaze, to see what their God is doing. Have we ever felt the love of a crucified Saviour? Such love as this is too great for mortals; it gives us sensible pain, by making us happier than we can bear, and yet we are willing to die with the exquisite pleasure. But stay, I must not forget that I must treat the subject with calmness and candour.

A sinner of the fallen race of Adam, a rebel by nature and by practice is the second party in the covenant of grace. He has the conditional part to fulfil; and in fulfilling the condition he becomes a believer; and the covenant is confirmed for ever, never to be forgotten; but of this more in its proper place. Here I will observe the following things:

1. This party in the covenant is not a fallen angel, but a fallen man; one who broke covenant with God by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden and exposed himself to all the penalty of the broken law. Christ did not take on him the nature of angels, but the nature of the seed of Abraham.

2. There is no circumstance whatsoever, provided he hears the gospel and performs the condition proposed in the gospel can hinder him from being a party in this covenant, because it is freely proposed to all indiscriminately without exception. No kind or degree of sin or criminality whatever, provided as above, will ever be an objection against him. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

3. The true character of this party is that he is a sinner, guilty, morally vile, helpless, unable to save himself,

by nature prone to evil, and averse from every thing good, a child of wrath even as others, without any thing to recommend him to the favour of God. Such is the unhappy state of every one who is invited by the gospel; and as such he must come and engage in this blessed covenant with Christ.

How happy would it be for sinners were they sensible of their lost state; were they sensible of their need of a Saviour, and would be persuaded to come to Christ and enter into covenant with him, before it is for ever too late.

II. Having taken a view of the parties in this covenant we come now to consider the engagements on the part of Christ. I think every believer must feel himself interested here and catch every word that drops, with divine authority, from his dear Redeemer's lips. The question now is what does Christ propose and engage to perform? The life of our souls depends on this. But before I speak to this question I will make some observations which I hope will have a tendency to impress our minds with a sense of the boundless love and goodness of our dear Redeemer and to encourage us to accept of the kind offers of his grace.

1. What he propounds in this covenant is from first to last purely disinterested. It is true, Christ interests himself in every circumstance of his people; he counts them as the apple of his eye; and in consequence of his engagements to his Father, and to his people, and in consequence of his atonement which he has actually made, he is deeply interested in the issue of what he has done and what he has engaged to do. His truth, his faithfulness, and, in short, his whole glory, as a Mediator, is at stake in the good management and order and success of his kingdom. But when we consider him absolutely independent of all his creatures, and all their circumstances; when we consider that he is in and of himself completely glorious and happy, that he is the fountain of all good,

and that none or all his creatures can add any thing to him, in whom all fulness dwells; and when we inquire into the first cause of the whole plan of the gospel, we must answer with gratitude and wonder that all was of his mere good pleasure; that infinite, boundless and unchangeable love was the moving spring of all. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. Fear not little flock for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself."

2. Weak imperfect men often change in their resolutions; they sometimes fly from their proposals and are often inconstant in the fulfilment of them; but we cannot have such thoughts of Christ; every offer of grace he makes is in earnest. Consequently we need no greater testimony of the full consent of Christ on his part of the covenant than his own free offer. The offers of the gospel are so sincere, and such an uncontradictable proof of the readiness of Christ to bestow, that many of our most eminent divines have uniformly called them promises. But although they are not promises, and although it is not proper to call them so, yet there is such an unchangeable firmness in those overtures made to sinners that they are a solid foundation to proceed upon in fulfilling the condition on which they are made. Whenever the condition is fulfilled the believer justly claims a right to every proposed blessing on the solid footing of covenanted promises; because the fulfilling the condition induces an obligation on the part of the offerer on the unchangeable basis of his truth and faithfulness, and consequently every overture is hereby converted into an unchangeable promise by the ratification of the covenant by faith.

Christ offers full and free salvation to thousands who never receive salvation; they never accept of the offer; they

never fulfil the conditions on which the offer is made; and consequently Christ is so far from being under any obligation by promise to bestow the salvation which he offers that the very condition on which it is offered completely bars the possibility of the bestowment of the offered grace for want of the fulfilment. But whenever the condition is performed there is no lack of engagement on Christ's part; and every offer becomes a solid promise; and the believer may be sure of the performance. This is great encouragement indeed.

3. These proposals of Christ on his part are equally encouraging to all sinners to whom they are made; and they are the leading grounds of encouragement to any sinner whatever. No one sinner under the gospel can possibly have a greater right than another previous to believing. No gifts, graces or qualifications whatsoever can give any one sinner a prior right to another, for this plain reason, the offer is made without distinction to every one. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." It is a grand masterpiece of the devil's policy to blind the eyes of sinners in this important article of the gospel. (2 Cor. 4. 4.) A sinner ought always to take encouragement from the offers of Christ. If Christ calls, surely the sinner may venture. Let his guilt, sin and horrid unworthiness be ever so great, even if it were ten times greater than it is, if Christ invites, the poor wretch should always do like Mary, when Martha came and told her "The master is come and calleth for thee: as soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto him." "Zaccheus come down." But I proceed to speak to the question. What does Christ engage in this covenant to perform?

1. In the place, as the only meritorious ground of every blessing of the covenant, and in which every blessing is comprised. He engages to constitute the sinner

perfectly righteous by the imputation of his own perfect and complete righteousness to his soul.

This righteousness is not the holiness of Christ. It is not the moral purity of his nature either divine or human. Holiness cannot be imputed. Holiness is the direct opposite of sin. Righteousness is the direct opposite of guilt. Perfect perpetual holiness only can prevent sin, but that holiness must be the person's own; it cannot be wrought for him; it must be in him before he can be counted holy. This plainly shows that holiness cannot be imputed; and that it would do no good if it was imputed; for unless a man has holiness in his heart and life he will be a sinner; and it is impossible for him to be otherwise. When once a man ceases to be personally holy he is a sinner; and nothing but sanctification can remove his sin; for nothing but sanctification can restore him to personal holiness. But sanctification is not the imputing of Christ's holy life to the soul; but it is the Spirit's work in the soul transforming it into the holy image of Christ.

When righteousness is imputed it instantaneously makes the sinner righteous by removing his guilt; and from that moment he is no more under condemnation but in a state of perfect and complete justification. The sinner is a sinner attended with imperfections still, and will be so until he is perfectly sanctified by the Spirit of God. But because the all-sufficient merit of Christ's atonement is imputed to him he is free from guilt. "For there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. He that believeth on him is not condemned." This is the righteousness of God without the law, which is manifested by the gospel and imputed to believers by faith. This righteousness is the only meritorious cause of our justification and acceptance with God. It gives us a full and complete title to every blessing of the covenant of grace. The first thing done to a sinner after he has complied with the conditions of this covenant is the imputation of this

righteousness, which gives the believer a claim to every thing treasured up in the gospel for his complete salvation. (2 Cor. 5. 21.)

2. He engages the full pardon of all sin. This is a most inestimable benefit. The poor unhappy creature is now brought from under the curse of the broken law. Christ says, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness and your sins; and your iniquities I will remember no more." Pardon is a free gift entirely unmerited by the sinner, and freely bestowed by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. The proper notion of pardon is this: not that God withholds from punishment through his mere clemency, when he might inflict the penalty on the principles of justice; but it is a more glorious and exalted idea: he views the believer as not guilty, in consequence of his spotless righteousness which he has in Christ Jesus his glorious Surety; and consequently pronounces him justified in his sight. There are two things said to be in justification: one is, not to pronounce guilty; the other is, to pronounce righteous. But this distinction is more in idea, than any thing else. There is no medium betwixt guilt and righteousness; he who is guilty, is not righteous; and he who has no guilt must be righteous of course. Whenever the verdict, not guilty, is pronounced, the judge must justify; and whenever the righteousness of Christ is imputed, not guilty is infallibly the verdict, and justification the glorious consequence.

Justification is not a work of God in us, but an act of God for us. It is done and recorded in heaven; rejoice rather says Christ, because your names are written in heaven. Consequently justification cannot be known by the feeling of the heart. Those who ground their hopes of pardon on the light, or happy feelings which they suddenly experience in their hearts are liable to dreadful mistakes in one of the most important articles of salvation. A false hope, a satanic injection, or a mere fancy,

if depended on, will produce the very same effect. But there is a sense of pardon truly genuine, which will produce perfect peace of mind, which is not even liable to deception. It uniformly consists in an unquestionable consciousness of a hearty compliance with the condition of the covenant of grace, and consequently a firm dependence on the righteousness of Christ imputed to the soul according to the unchangeable engagements of Christ in this covenant; which always must bring forward this inference, even that the soul is perfectly justified in the sight of God. So that it is by faith we know our justification; and the ground of this faith is the validity of Christ's righteousness, and the unchangeable stability of the covenant of grace. It is to be sincerely wished that those who talk of happiness, and of a load of guilt removed, yet cannot tell any thing more about it, or those who formed such notions on sudden sights, texts, or voices, &c. would try to understand the gospel better, and get a scriptural ground of hope, lest they be disappointed when it is too late to alter their condition.

3. Adoption is another precious benefit of this covenant which Jesus engages to the believer.

This filled the beloved disciple with holy wonder: "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed "on us, that we should be called the sons of God." We may well say in this case, as the chief captain said to Paul, "with a great sum obtained I this freedom;" for we are not free born. "I will be a Father unto you, and "ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty." The righteousness of Christ, which removes guilt and obtains acceptance with God, is the only ground of adoption. Jesus purchased this privilege for his people by his own blood. We are predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. "Now therefore, says "Paul, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of

“God. God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying Abba, Father; wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

There are three things contained in adoption: God is our Father. We are his children; and we are heirs of his kingdom. We know our adoption in part, the same way by which we know our justification; for it is impossible for us to know our interest in Christ without knowing both our justification and adoption; also our receiving the spirit of adoption, or a filial temper of heart towards God as our heavenly Father is a scriptural evidence of our adoption. But, alas, we are often froward children. But blessed be God, the privilege is purchased for us, and secured by Christ in this glorious covenant.

4. Sanctification is another inestimable blessing, for which Christ engages to believers in the covenant of grace. This is the grand object in view in this covenant. Hence Paul says, “This is the will of God even your sanctification.” Holiness is always necessary to happiness; without it no man shall see the Lord. Christ in covenanting with his people says, “I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts.” Holiness to the Lord is the grand inscription of the gospel. We are chosen in Christ, “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you and will do it.” Four things take place in consequence of sanctification.

1. Love. Here I include love to God and to every thing that is holy. Holiness is the particular attracting

excellence of the beloved object of holy affections; and because God is infinitely possessed of it, he is the supreme object of the believer's love. Yet the believer can never feel his affections to God very strong, unless he is lively in the exercise of faith. Faith not only believes (so to speak) that God is holy, but also takes realizing views of his glory; this sets the affections afloat; and the heart feels delighted in God as a God of spotless perfections and excellence. Our affections are often felt more sensibly going out in complacency to God's people, because they are present to our view; and we need not (at least so much) the medium of faith, either to see their excellence, or to hold communion with them; and we always imagine a christian a thousand times more holy than he really is; because his imperfections are mostly hid from us; and it is beyond our philosophy to think them half as bad as we feel ourselves to be. Even Paul must call himself the chief of sinners and less than the least of all saints; but here the venerable apostle spoke as he felt, not as he thought; for he well knew that he was not a whit behind the chiefest of them, although he felt himself nothing; here he spoke as he thought and felt both.

But let us think and feel as we may, we are always sure to feel our love to holiness; not a mere approbation of it; for devils and wicked men feel that always; but a cordial delight in it. Believers do not feel this delight without alloy; for then the work of sanctification would be over; they also love sin, and hate it too; and often, and always in some degree, commit sin in every thing they do, and hate themselves for it. The flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, often distracts the believer and makes him cry "O wretched man that I am!" Yet there is no surer sign of holiness than this very thing; and it never is, but in those who are in covenant with Christ.

Love to God and holiness have an abiding seat in the heart. There may be a strong habit of love even at times when it is very little felt; and we are often necessarily, and often foolishly diverted off our beloved object; yet the heart is possessed of irradicable affections. Genuine love is a cool rational principle which takes its time to fix upon its object, and always fixes with judgment; and when fixed, it holds fast and never can alter while our view of the object remains the same. Sometimes it raises a storm in the passions; and very often in such cases the heart is quite un governable, and very often with its lofty strides tramples many humble graces all but to death. those who are too often addicted to such towering affections are sure to lack some of the most beautiful graces of a christian. Young believers are very apt to be trying their wings; but it is always safer to walk than to fly, at least too high, until we have learned where our great strength lieth. No ship can skim the waves like the nimble cutter; but she never has half the grandeur, the strength or the riches of the noble merchantman, or the man of war who sails steady and uniform.

Upon the whole that love which is produced by sanctification is a hearty attachment to, and a complacence or delight in that which is morally right. Believers love sin too much; but unsanctified sinners never love holiness. Here is the scriptural difference betwixt a sanctified and an unsanctified soul; the believer is often, and always in some degree like the unbeliever; but the unbeliever is never like him. The believer does often and in some degree always love sin; but the unbeliever, although he like his father the devil always approves of holiness, as right and excellent, yet he never loves it. There is a great difference betwixt the approbation of the judgment and the relish of the heart; every well informed man has the one, but only believers have the other.

We must agree to these things, unless we hold to perfection in holiness, and deny the necessity of the progress of sanctification; and we must acknowledge imperfection and consequently the necessity of sanctification carried on in the believer gradually, unless we mean to shut our bible and make religion to be any thing or nothing just as we please.

I have often been pained to the heart, to hear the characteristics of the christian painted from the pulpit with such high colouring that no christian this side of time ever attained half way to it; and the preacher's own heart at the same time was no doubt an instance of the false description. There is a wide difference betwixt the rules of religion, and the attainments of the imperfect christian; and when we condemn all those who do not attain to the perfect rules of the bible, we condemn every christian in this world of imperfection. Thus christians are kept for ever doubting; and their views are turned entirely to the perfection of the moral law, as the only ground of their hope; and they scarcely ever think of believing or looking to the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of their salvation, or of resting on the stability of the covenant of grace.

The least degree of the love of holiness is a covenant earnest of the whole kingdom; and Christ will give more according to his own plan, and in his own way; for he is engaged to do it by an everlasting covenant.

I have been the more particular on the article of love, as it is the leading principle of all the rest. I proceed to observe,

2. That hungering and thirsting after righteousness is another effect of sanctification. (Mat. 5. 6.)

Jesus Christ pronounces the man blessed who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and gives him a covenant promise that he shall be filled; which plainly proves that he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness has fulfil-

led the conditions of the covenant, or in other words, has believed on Christ. When a special characteristic is designated in a promise, that characteristic must be a consequence of faith; for Christ gives no promise to an unbeliever in no shape or character whatsoever; neither does he give any covenant blessing to an unbeliever: "He that believeth not shall be damned." But he engages the general blessings of the whole gospel to him who hungers and thirsts after righteousness; for he saith, "he shall be filled." Blessed words, dropping from the lips of a faithful God!

The heart going out in longing desires is hungering and thirsting. When these desires are for things morally good, such as holiness, conformity to God's will, deliverance from sin and corruption, views of God's glory, and divine excellence, communion with him, &c. then we hunger and thirst after righteousness. The covenant engagement is, they shall be filled; not now or at this or that time, nor yet at any time when the believer pleases; but when Christ pleases, who has the blessing to bestow, and according to what rule or process he sees fit to adopt. But the engagement is the hungry soul shall in a proper time be infinitely satisfied with every real good. What a glorious promise is this! ye hungry souls wait upon the Lord, "for you shall be filled." "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6. 35.): that is, shall never perish with want.

3. Repentance is another branch of sanctification; and Christ is engaged to give it, exalted at his Father's right hand for this very purpose. Love to holiness is the first principle of true gospel repentance. Repentance is a word of different meaning in the bible; sometimes it relates to the proper act of faith in its closing with Christ; (Acts 2. 38.) the consequence of which is forgiveness of sin; which every man of sense knows is the consequence

of faith only. But there is another sense of repentance which the scriptures give us which is not the act of faith but the consequence of it, and consequently a branch of holiness; which is an effect of Christ's performing his part of the covenant, when the condition is performed on the part of the sinner. This is evident from Ezek. 36. 31. taken in connexion with the preceding verses from the 25th particularly. This kind of repentance is very beautifully described in the 2d epistle to the Corinthians, 7th chap. 9, 10 and 11 verses, where it gets the name of repentance. Also in the 12th chap. of Zech. from the 20th verse downward. But as I intend to treat the important doctrine of repentance in course, I shall say no more about it here, but only observe that it makes one essential article which Christ engages to give to believers in his part of the covenant of grace.

4. Obedience, or the holy life which christians endeavour to live, and which they attain unto in some degree, is a very important branch of sanctification which Christ engages, in the covenant of grace, to give to believers. This is a very critical article in divinity; and I will endeavour to treat this subject with care in its proper place. At present I only observe that every disposition to obedience to God's moral law, disposing and enabling the christian to live holy is an instance of the faithfulness of Christ in performing his engagements in the covenant of grace.

5. I shall in the last place, just mention in a summary way that Jesus Christ engages to give, and daily to communicate those graces by such means and in such a degree as he in his infinite wisdom sees fit; and so he engages to conduct the believer through all the difficulties and trials of this life, to assist him in the discharge of all the duties of religion, and to render his person and services acceptable to God. So that through life, at death and the tremendous day of judgment, and throughout eternity, Christ by his own righteousness and Spirit, accord-

ing to his own faithful promise, becomes the surety in this covenant for the complete happiness and glory of his covenanted people.

I have omitted the intercession of Christ in this place because it is by the intercession of Christ, pleading the merits of his own death, that all these blessings are obtained and all these promises are fulfilled to believers; and of this most efficacious intercession we will have occasion to speak in its proper place.

But here it is proper to note that ever memorable promise of Christ to his disciples: "I will pray the Father, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may "abide with you for ever." Thus we see that Christ not only engages the bestowment of all necessary grace but also promises by his intercession to take such measures as will infallibly secure the bestowment of grace to all those who are interested in this covenant.

CHAPTER IV.

The condition of the covenant of grace.

WHAT the condition of the covenant of grace is has been a matter of dispute among divines. Some say it is the righteousness of Christ; others that it is faith. As to the fundamental plan of salvation I make no doubt all agree, however differently they have expressed themselves on this point. And I apprehend the difference of sentiment has arisen from a mistake as to the particular question under consideration. Those, who say the righteousness of Christ, speak of the meritorious cause of justification. Those, who say faith, speak of the condition on which that righteousness is imputed; and they are both perfectly right; but they are treating quite different subjects. When the question is, how is a sinner justified in the sight of

God? if you mean the meritorious cause the proper answer is, by the righteousness of Christ. But if you mean the condition on which that righteousness is imputed to the sinner, the proper answer is faith. This is certainly the apostle's idea. (Rom. 3. 22.) "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all who believe," and chap. 5. 1. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is nothing more evident from the scripture than that the righteousness of Christ is our only justifying righteousness, and that faith is the only condition on which that righteousness will be imputed. "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

But when we speak of the righteousness of Christ being the condition of the covenant our idea is not correct. Christ's righteousness, properly speaking, cannot be the condition of any covenant. It was not, properly, the condition of the covenant of redemption. The condition of that covenant which Christ had to perform was properly to make the atonement by suffering on the cross; and by fulfilling that condition he procured or wrought out that righteousness which is offered on Christ's part to the guilty sinner in the covenant of grace. So that his righteousness is not the condition in either of the covenants, but only the consequence of Christ's death; which death was the condition of the one covenant; but the offer of righteousness made to sinners is the consequence of this death; which righteousness is imputed to sinners on the proper condition of faith.

We ought always to remember that there is a great difference betwixt inquiring, as to our proper title to justification, and how we become possessed of that title; the one is the righteousness of Christ only, the other is by faith; the one is imputed to us in consequence of the other; the one is Christ's to give on his part of the cove-

nant, the other is ours to perform as the only condition on which the gift of righteousness is imputed. It is true, faith is a gift; but we must act it, that is, we must believe or we must be damned.

Some object to faith as a condition because it is not meritorious. But it is not necessary that a condition of a covenant should be meritorious. It may or it may not be so. The condition is always according to the will of the parties contracting, and especially according to the will of the first party in the covenant. The condition may be up to the full value of the thing contracted for, as it was in the covenant of redemption, where Christ had to purchase his people with a full redemption up to the infinite demand of justice. Or it may be for one half, or one fourth, or any part of the value of the benefit contracted for, just according as the agreement may be. Or the condition may be such as to require nothing but the mere consent of the party who receives the benefit. All covenants by way of gift are of this nature. Ephron desired to make such a covenant with Abraham, (Gen. 23.) and give his field and the cave in it, but Abraham would not consent to the conditions. So also was the contract betwixt Ornan and king David for his threshing floor. (1 Chron. 25.)

The covenant of grace has faith as the only condition, that it might be by grace. But although faith is not meritorious in itself, yet it secures the blessings of the gospel by a covenant compact in consequence of the truth and faithfulness of Christ who was pleased to overture the blessings on this very condition; and when the condition is performed the believer has his claim, not by purchase, but by covenant right, and consequently has a ground of consolation founded on unmerited grace as strong as unchangeable truth and faithfulness can make it.

Again. It is objected to faith as a condition, because faith is a gift of God. I confess that faith is a gift of God; but I can see no reason why it may not be a condition

nevertheless. It is evident that God the Father gives faith, and not Christ as a Mediator. The Father gives it as a fulfilment of his promise to his Son, on the condition of Christ's purchase, according to the covenant of redemption. If therefore the Father gives faith in the fulfilment of his part of the covenant with his Son, faith must be a conditional article in Christ's compact with his people, by which according to the terms of the gospel they become personally interested in the blessings of the covenant of grace, and consequently is the only stipulated condition of that covenant.

God promised to Christ saying, "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power; Ps. 110. 3. also that he shall see his seed; that he shall see the travail of his soul; that he shall justify many; &c. Is. 53. and in chap. 54. 13. "Thy children shall be all taught of the "Lord." Our Saviour alluding to these engagements of his Father, with the firmest confidence saith, "all that "the Father hath given me shall come to me." He affirms that none can come unto him except the Father draw them; and that they who hear and learn of the Father, cometh unto him. John, 6. 37, 44, 45. This is still further evident from Phil. 1. 29. where it is said that it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe on him. Now, as faith is the gift of the Father, it is very proper for it to be proposed as a condition by the Son, to his people; and it truly sets the whole plan in a glorious view, when we consider the Father as engaged in covenant with the Son, to insure the performance of the condition, by which the believer obtains a personal right in the covenant of grace, to all the blessings overtured in the gospel. Thus the Father performs his engagements to his Son, in bringing all to him, whom he had given to him; and the Son, according to his proposals in the gospel, casts out none, but gives everlasting life to all who come unto him.

The way in which God gives faith does not hinder it to be properly a condition of the covenant, even if it were the gift of Christ himself. Faith is an act of the will, and consequently can be produced no other way than by persuasion. It never can be improper for any person who chooses so to do, to bring forward every proper motive to induce the other party to agree to the terms of the covenant he may wish to make with him; and the establishment of the covenant may, and often does, depend on the influence of those very motives; and when the consent is gained, it cannot disannul the covenant that arguments ever so weighty were used to gain consent. Thus God by his word and Spirit persuades the sinner to yield to the condition of the gospel, and thus he gives faith. But yet the sinner being persuaded by the word of God brought home to the heart by the Spirit, performs the act of faith himself, and properly comes up to the terms of the gospel; and by so doing becomes personally interested in the blessings of the covenant by faith as a proper condition.

This view of the matter is certainly agréeable to the account which we have of the gospel plan in the bible. We may indeed talk differently, and think differently on this subject; but let us say and think as we may, we never can alter the eternal plan of the gospel. It still holds good, and will to the end of time; that "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3. 36.

CHAPTER V.

The nature of faith, or the condition of the covenant of grace.

FAITH is one of the most important doctrines of the bible. It is the only condition proposed in the gospel by which it is possible for a sinner to be interested in the righteousness of Christ. It is impossible for us to be saved without it. There is no promise in the gospel made to an unbeliever. We must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or we must be damned. Faith is simple in its nature, but important in its consequences, and very extensive as to the various objects of its exercise. Faith, in itself, is the act of the will consenting to the offer of the gospel. Salvation is the assured consequence of it; and it is exercised on all the promises in the bible.

We ought to have clear ideas of the nature of faith. It is a matter of such interesting importance, that our ideas of the gospel plan must be very confused unless we have clear ideas of faith. Whenever we are confused in our notions of faith, we imagine the gospel to be hard; and that it is a difficult thing for a sinner to be saved; we feel discouragements in all our hopes of salvation; doubts and fears reign in our mind; and we can enjoy but small degrees of the comforts of religion.

But when we can see and feel that faith is simply to come to Christ by the easy act of the choice of the mind and can trust our eternal all in the hands of a faithful Saviour, then there is nothing appears more easy, plain, or solid than the gospel of Christ.

I have said that faith is the act of the will. The soul consents to the offers of the gospel. The heart chooses to be saved by the righteousness of Christ according to

the gospel plan. The gospel proposes the benefits of salvation freely to the helpless sinner. Faith is to accept of or agree to those proposals. The bible lays the plan of the gospel before the sinner; viz. justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and sanctification by the Spirit of God. Faith gives up to the plan, and the mind is willing, and actually chooses, and consents to be saved according to this plan. When I am explaining the nature of faith in the pulpit, using a simplicity and freedom of language so as to be easily understood, I sometimes say, it is giving up to Christ; giving up the heart to Christ; giving up to the gospel; accepting the offers of the gospel; willing to be saved by Christ; willing for Christ to save the whole soul; willing to be pardoned by his imputed righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit. Sometimes I use scripture phrases, such as, coming to Christ, receiving Christ, looking to Christ, opening the door of the heart, &c. If the reader will take any one of the above phrases or explanations, and put the most simple and easy sense he possibly can upon it; he can hardly miss understanding what faith is; and the more simple and easy he makes it to be, the more accurate will his notion of faith be; because faith is the easiest thing that can possibly be, to be any thing at all. Indeed it is all but nothing; and the soul that acts it, does nothing, but consent for Christ to do all.

Let us feel it ever so hard to believe, we should never think it hard to believe; because we sometimes find it difficult to do things which in themselves are very easily done. There is nothing can possibly be easier than to consent; yet if we are not willing we will find that easiest thing, the hardest thing in the world to do. If any man finds by experience that the want of an inclination makes it difficult, or impossible for him to believe, (and no other reason can he possibly find) I am certain that man ought to be damned; for he might get salvation given to

him freely on very easy terms, even on his consent to receive it. But we should never say that faith is hard in itself, because we are not persuaded to believe.

We sometimes falsely imagine that because faith is the gift of God, it must be some great thing, almost, and sometimes altogether impossible for any mere man to perform; and under those false notions of the magnitude of faith we never attempt to act it, carelessly or fretfully waiting on God to perform it for us. We forget that God gives it only by persuading us to consent to the gospel. And even when we are persuaded, and do actually consent to Christ as our only Saviour, we are still waiting for the gift of faith; for while we have such notions of the exceeding greatness of faith, we cannot think that such a great thing as the gift of God, can be so little a thing as the consent of the will; and under these views, when we try to believe we are trying to do something we scarcely know what; but it is sure to be something ten times greater than faith is; and consequently something which we cannot do, for we can do nothing else.

Not only so, but we often bewilder ourselves by blending faith with other graces. The inevitable consequence of this is, we view the gospel as hard and difficult, and the terms of it impracticable; we are under these views of faith for ever trying to repent, to be holy, to live holy &c. instead of acting faith on Christ. Sometimes we take in the prerequisites of faith in order to make a true believer; then we are always measuring the degrees of our convictions, and comparing them with the feelings of others; and if they can tell a loftier story than we, we conclude that we have not enough to make us believers. Thus with those wild notions, we have convictions, repentance, love, holiness and every thing but faith, to make a believer; faith is such a simple thing, that it is quite overlooked among such gigantic things as convictions, love, and repentance.

The easiness of the condition of the gospel often causes us to doubt, or mistake the reality of faith. There is nothing in all the gospel plan that either galls the proud heart, or delights the humble heart more than faith. It is unspeakable satisfaction to the humble believer to count himself nothing, and look to Christ for all. But the proud heart starts and cries, the terms are too easy. If the poor helpless sinner had only some little to do, he would come over it the better; but only to believe, is thought a very unlikely way to gain the kingdom of heaven.

Not to make faith the condition of the covenant of grace undoubtedly tends to give us obscure ideas of it. If faith is not the condition of the covenant, then it is no more a term of salvation than repentance, or holiness. It is indeed very difficult to see the true nature or design or effect of faith, but only as a condition. But if it is not a condition, it must be a part of the salvation. If so, what part is it? Here we are under the necessity of making faith to consist a little of every thing: it must be itself holiness; it must be the ground of repentance; it must be a principle of love; in short it must be every thing but the very thing it is; and that it never can be, without being a bare condition of the covenant. Make it the condition on which salvation is proposed to a free agent, and then you must acknowledge that it is just the consent of the heart to the overtures of the gospel; and while it does nothing itself, it effectually interests the believer in those promises of the covenant which Christ fulfils, and by fulfilling which he freely bestows full and complete salvation on this very condition. Thus it is by faith that it might be by grace; and the promise is sure to the believer. But when we make faith to contain the seeds of every grace, then we must conclude that every grace of the Spirit, in some degree at least, is a constituent part of faith; if so, faith must be love to God, love to our

neighbour, holiness in heart and in life, hatred to sin, repentance, and in short every blessing proposed in the gospel. This makes faith hard, and exceeding difficult indeed; so that no sinner can act it without possessing every benefit of the gospel, except pardon, and complete glory; and Christ has but those two things to bestow in consequence of faith; because faith itself is a compound of all the rest. Now this is a notion of faith which is too common; and it is both confused and absurd, for it makes faith to be works. No person can deny, but that repentance is works, and that holiness consists in works. Love to God and our neighbour, and all the consequences of it, are the very works of the moral law; and although repentance is not a particular precept of the moral law, yet the disposition of the heart, which is the very principle of it, is the spirit of the moral law. But the scripture opposes faith to the works of the law. This notion of faith must consequently be antisciptural. It is also confused; because it makes faith to be both the means and the end. It is the only instrumental channel of receiving holiness, and conformity to the law of God, and yet it is that very thing itself, which it is the condition of receiving. Thus when we indulge such notions of faith, our explanations of it are unintelligible; we neither understand what we say or mean ourselves; nor yet can any others understand us; we having no clear ideas ourselves, we can give none to others.

But when we view faith as the simple consent of the heart to the proposals of the gospel, we make it to be nothing in itself, yet it gives the believer a hold of Christ in all the promises of the gospel; it being the only condition on which all the promises of salvation are made; so that by the simple consent of the mind the blessings of the covenant are insured by a God of unchangeable faithfulness. The believer on his consent to God's own offer lays a covenant claim to the free gift of righteousness,

justification, sanctification, repentance and every grace proposed by Christ in his word, and resting upon his eternal truth, he is sure of his salvation in every part and degree of it. Such an idea of faith gives us a view of the beautiful simplicity and grandeur of the gospel calculated to save sinners on the proper principles of free grace.

Another reason why our ideas of the gospel are confused and unsatisfactory is, we do not place a suitable and proper confidence in the feelings and exercises of our own hearts, in our acts of faith and exercises of mind in believing. However trifling this may seem to be at the first view of it, I conceive it to be a matter of infinite importance in the right exercise of faith. I have introduced this matter here because an explanation of this particular will tend to give us right views of the nature of faith and to show us that by doing wrong in this matter we envelop the doctrine of faith in darkness and ambiguity.

This unhappy diffidence as to any thing we feel in believing and in any of the exercises of religion arises from several mistakes, which I will here take notice of.

1. Whenever a person is concerned about his soul his mind is set upon the most important things of religion; and every thing he thinks of, except one, is in its own nature great and important. There is but one little thing in the whole plan of the gospel; and that is faith. The things in their own nature great and important are on the one side sin, guilt and damnation; on the other righteousness, pardon, repentance, love, holiness, &c. add to these death, judgment, the immortal soul and eternity; every one of these are matters of essential magnitude.

But faith has no virtue or efficacy in itself; and were it not for the blessings of the covenant being attached to it as a condition of their bestowment it would neither remove guilt, procure pardon or sanctification. It could avail nothing for a man to be willing to be forgiven had not Christ proposed to pardon him on condition of his willingness to

• receive it; neither would his willingness procure one communication of the sanctifying Spirit but on the same principles. So that faith is in itself of no avail towards salvation. But God must deal with us as moral agents, seeing he has made us such creatures. He could cause the sun to shine or the planets to revolve without waiting for their consent, for they are not capable of moral government; but he could not save a moral agent but on the principles of persuasion. So that God is under a moral necessity, in order to save a sinner, to propose salvation, and by proper motives to influence the creature to consent to the application of salvation unto him. Hence it is that faith is constituted the only condition of the gospel. This consent is faith. God persuades by proper motives until he gains our consent, and thus he gives faith; but there is not a particle of salvation bestowed or applied until the consent is gained, neither can there be, because it would be contrary to the principles of moral government. Now this consent, however necessary it is on the principles of the gospel, as the condition on which God proposes to pardon and sanctify, yet is by no means any part of the salvation, but only the free choice of the creature to receive it graciously.

When we compare the important salvation of Christ to the act of our will it makes faith, however necessary as a condition, to be in itself very little indeed. Here now is where the mistake lies: the person under concern about salvation, under an awful sense of sin, filled with great ideas of salvation, cannot easily be brought to believe that a very little thing is necessary to insure his eternal welfare. He falsely imagines he must do some great thing, even something which may be in some measure answerable to the greatness of the salvation he has in view; every power of his soul is summoned to action; his life is at stake. "*Omnia magna.*" Hell on the one side and heaven

on the other, and faith the only way of relief; this faith, thinks he, must be something great, noble and sublime; all the capacities that are within are now in action; the man is now going to believe; he is now going to escape hell; he is now about to gain heaven. But alas! (*Montes par-turiunt.*) What does he do at last? The sum total is, Lord save me or I perish! and when the heart says this it only expresses its consent to the gospel proposals. But the man feels as if he does nothing; and no wonder, for he really does nothing; he only gives his consent for Christ to do all for him. His feelings, all this time, are both real and conclusive; but his ideas of the matter are so great and his feelings, in themselves, so far from accomplishing what he desires, that he pays no attention to them; and it scarcely enters into his mind that these feelings give him a covenant claim to the blessings of salvation; he, therefore, disclaims, and even reproaches every feeling of his heart; and out of disregard to what he feels he is reaching after greater. But greater, more earnest or a more real consent of his heart he cannot give; he may give this over and over again, but that is of no avail; for the last act is not a whit stronger than the first; and the unhappy creature thinks that if he were to add a thousand noughts together it would make nothing at last. Thus he goes on counting every feeling he has, not worth a thought; and consequently the whole gospel is a perfect mist before his eyes.

2. Another mistake lies in our sense of Jer. 17. 9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Here the doubting believer thinks he has solid ground to go on; he thinks he is forbidden by this text of scripture to trust any thing to his own heart. But he never dreams that he mistakes the sense of the text. And he finds by experience that while he cannot trust to his own feelings he cannot trust to any thing else. The reason is plain; the promises of the gos-

pel are pointedly and expressly made, not to all indiscriminately, but to those who believe, that is, to those who do really, as a rational creature capable of moral action, consent to the gospel plan. Now while we will not allow ourselves to believe our own feelings which we are conscious of, we never can know that we have a single promise to trust to; we can trust as little to the promises of the gospel as we can to our own feelings; and consequently every thing relative to our salvation is doubtful.

This is more than a mere notion; it is a fact, experienced by every one who will not give proper credit to the feelings of his own heart in the article of faith.

The text above cited does not mean that a man's heart will deceive when it is, as it were, appealed unto as to the very feelings of which it is and must be conscious. This would be an impossible case. We may, perhaps, not know whether the disposition which we feel is really what the gospel requires. But this would be an error in the judgment and not in the heart. I will give a few instances in which the heart deceives through the desperate wickedness which is in it, viz. Through its unhappy propensity to sin and aversion from religion it often persuades to put off religion from time to time. Go thy way for this time, said Felix, when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee. The argument is, there is time enough yet. The object is a little longer gratification in sin. The wicked heart is disposed to put a false gloss on every thing. It represents sin as eligible, religion as gloomy, this world as important, death, judgment, hell and eternity it can keep out of view, &c. It often pleads against the law of God, the bible, the gospel, and all the means of grace. It sometimes pretends to religion and disposes to hope for mercy from God without the trouble of being truly religious. There is no need, says the deceitful heart of so much tumult and bustle about religion. It is enough to attend church perhaps now and then, or

at most regularly; to conduct morally, to be honest, to do no harm, &c. It sometimes persuades a person to take convictions of conscience for conversion, and a common belief of the truth of the bible and the gospel to be faith. It sometimes takes the general offers of the gospel for promises, and trusts to the offers without fulfilling the condition on which they are made.

These are the general ways in which the heart deceives; and here it is proper to observe as a general rule that whenever the heart deceives, it goes contrary to an unbiassed judgment; and it sways the judgment contrary to the understanding by its own inclination; or perhaps the nice philosopher would rather I would say the judgment is always formed on the inclination of the heart and not on the doctrines of the bible.

But it is far otherwise as to the real feelings of the heart. Here are positive facts; and facts never can deceive as to their existence. I perhaps may be at a loss to know whether what I feel is faith, through the want of a correct judgment; but I never can possibly persuade myself to think that I do not feel what I really do feel. My heart will inevitably speak the truth here; and it never will or can deceive.

Upon the whole, this text gives us no authority to scruple our own feelings; and while we indulge a scrupulous disposition, as to the conscious sensations of our own hearts, we never will have clear ideas of the gospel, nor enjoy much of the comforts of religion.

3. In the last place, I will mention another mistake which has an unhappy tendency to draw off our attention from the simple feelings of our own hearts in believing, viz. We are apt to have quite mistaken notions as to our right to the promises of the gospel. There are promises in the gospel suited to the condition of every believer whatever; yet many are to be found who cannot trust in those promises and are consequently afraid they never

will be fulfilled to them, and are of course continually labouring under doubts of their salvation. We have such a natural propensity to purchase the benefits of the gospel that it is not easy to induce a proud sinner to expect to receive a benefit unless he has a price in his hand. How natural it is to imagine that it requires a man to possess a high degree of piety to lay claim to the promises of Christ. The idea is that piety gives the right, and not only piety but even a very high degree; and here is laid down an undetermined claim. There is no rule to determine what degree of attainments is sufficient to give a man such a glorious claim as this. We dare not make the moral law the determining rule to lay claim for mercy; this would be too bare faced; and we institute sincere endeavours in the room of perfection. But this is ridiculous; because it introduces the divine Redeemer as rewarding us very highly for trying to do what is beyond our power. But wicked and foolish as it is, we are apt to proceed upon it; and when we do we are sure of one thing, we never arrive to that degree of sincerity by which we can be warranted to lay in our claim to the promises. But this is false, legal and absurd. This is always attended with two consequences: one is we are for ever hunting after evidences of religion to establish our title to the promises; another is we always neglect the very things in which our title consists.

The believer's right to the promises consists in three things. 1. Meritoriously, in the great purchase of the cross. This is the believer's claim in justice to every blessing promised in the gospel. 2. He has a claim founded on the veracity of the word of Him who was pleased to promise; and 3. He claims as a believer, on covenant engagements, in consequence of his having fulfilled the condition on which the promises are made. Thus the believer claims a personal right, as a believer, alluding to the covenant of grace, with his eye on his faith as the

sine qua non; and looks to the truth and faithfulness of Christ to perform what he has said as the *per quam*, and pleads the purchase of the cross as the only *pro quo*.*

The only personal right which we can have to the benefits promised in the covenant of grace is faith. To ascertain this right we must answer this question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" To answer this question affirmatively we must feel our hearts believing; and to do this we must actually believe. The moment we actually believe we will feel our hearts consenting to the gospel plan. We must give full credit to the testimony which our hearts give in the case, and inquire whether what we feel in our hearts answers to the overtures in the gospel; if so we should feel ourselves interested personally in the covenant of grace, and the simple word and promise of Christ a sufficient warrant to rest with assured confidence in God for pardon and sanctification and every grace of the gospel.

But when we search for our right, in what we call the marks or evidences of religion, we invert the whole system of the gospel. Those evidences, such as repentance, love, holiness, &c. when we feel ourselves possessed of them are the identical benefits bestowed on us according to the promises; and they are bestowed in consequence of our personal interest in the covenant by faith; and therefore can by no means be our right or title to the promises. Now although we acknowledge all this to be true, yet by turning our attention entirely to marks of grace to ascertain our right to the promises we are disposed to neglect the direct acts of faith, and consequently

* *Sine qua non*, without which, nothing. *Per quam*, by which (the efficient or acting cause.) *Pro quo*, for which (the meritorious cause.) The first means the condition, the second the faithful engagement, and the third the foundation of all. The first is faith, the only condition; the second the truth of Christ in the promises, and the third the atonement of the cross.

we pay no respect to the cordial sensations of our own hearts in believing; and while ever this is the case we will doubt as to our interest in the promises and can have no confidence in God.

CHAPTER VI.

How God gives faith. Or the prerequisites of faith, by some called the first act of faith.

No man will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, except it be given to him from above. I have already observed that God the Father draws sinners to Christ. Christ himself is also said to be the author and finisher of faith. He is the meritorious cause of every privilege and grace given in consequence of the gospel, and has purchased the Spirit; and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to accompany the gospel to render it effectual to convince of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

When God gives faith, he does not give any new natural power; neither does he act for the soul; nor is it proper to say he acts in the soul, except by illumination; but he persuades the soul to act for itself. He persuades by the truths of his word brought with divine light to the understanding, by his holy Spirit. By this the sinner is influenced by proper motives, having clear discoveries of the interesting nature of the truths of the word. He is brought to believe firmly those truths, and is persuaded to act accordingly. The soul thus being brought to realizing views of those divine truths of God's word, so as to be suitably affected by his belief of them, is the reason why some call this the first act of saving faith; and because there is undoubtedly something in this view, or belief, which the soul has, far beyond a common historical credit which is given to the word of God, and inas-

much as all the acts or conduct, so to speak of the soul towards Christ, are in consequence of this, some have thought that this is the only proper definition of faith. But I do not at present intend to dispute these points, only to observe that if this be true, then God gives faith wholly by illumination, and not by persuasion; for persuasion is always by arguments; and arguments must contain something which is credited. Without feeling any disposition for debate on this point, as I conceive it a matter of no great consequence, I have thought it perhaps the most correct and scriptural, and the easiest understood, to consider what some call, and what indeed I used to call, the first act of faith, as prerequisites of faith, or certain things done in order to persuade the sinner to believe; and under this view of it, I shall at present treat the subject.

Two things are necessary in order to persuade a sinner to believe in Christ. He must have a suitable sense of his lost state as a sinner; and he must have a suitable view of the offers of the gospel.

1. He must have a suitable sense of his lost state as a sinner. He obtains this by the Spirit's influences, bringing the law of God home to his heart. The doctrines of the bible relative to our shameful apostasy from God, our actual transgressions of the divine law, our awful guilt and exposedness to divine wrath are seen and felt; and the sinner is impressed and influenced in a manner suitable to the nature of the truths he believes. Guilt stares him in the face; and the tremendous attribute of justice is dreaded by the unhappy wretch, conscious that he is obnoxious to the frowns of his Maker, whose laws he has violated. He cries out under the pressure of anxiety, "what shall I do to be saved?" He flees to duties, vainly hoping he can mend what he has broken. Prayers and tears flow apace; confessions, repentance, vows, resolutions and vigorous exertions to turn from sin, &c. These

are generally the first attempts to relieve the wounded conscience. Thus by the convincing influences of the Spirit of God, somehow, (I cannot tell how, but only by illumination) the fears of the sinner are addressed, attended with all the dreadful alarms of the law of God, speaking in angry accents to the guilty conscience. Here I must notice, is the place of danger. All who make shipwreck of faith, do it here. Here lie the only dangerous rocks and sands, where the vessel is moored or wrecked to destruction. A wrong step here is the radical source of all atheists, deists, cold formal professors and the worst kind of hypocrisy; and nothing can save a soul from inevitable ruin, but the simple offers of the gospel clearly discovered, and brought home to the heart by the Spirit of God. Here preachers have a critical task to perform; and we often do more harm than good. In such a case as this, when the sinner is sensible of his awful deserts at the hand of God, for a preacher to insist upon prayer, repentance, reformation, or any branch of holiness as a condition of pardon and acceptance with God, is poison to the convinced soul, and never fails to sap the very vitals of religion, unless counteracted by the Spirit of God. There is nothing but the simple doctrine of faith can save the life of a convinced sinner.

A sinner under the convictions, and stings of a guilty conscience, is roused from his sleep of security. He finds there is death where he is; and he must fly somewhere, and will fly somewhere; and there is but one place of real safety for him to fly to. Finding no rest for the sole of his foot, he must go in quest of an ark. The first he comes to is prayer. Here he dwells, pouring out his soul with tears, like Esau, representing his wretched situation with a view to move his father Isaac to alter his mind; but all is in vain. The next is confession, sorrow, reformation, which is called repentance. This looks well at first sight, and promises fair for pardon for all that is

past, on the condition that the sinner will do better for the future. And in order to make the bands of the sinner strong, vows and resolutions are introduced; and the matter seems to be settled for awhile, and a false hope is indulged. Affairs now wear a tolerable good aspect in the view of the reformed sinner; and christians begin to love him as one who exhibits a hopeful appearance. But alas! what is it all? The work of conviction is of God; but the unhappy course which the sinner takes is wrong; he has not yet believed in Christ, and never will until he gets a suitable discovery of the gospel; and when sinners stop here, the effect will be, in some one thing, and in some another. In some instances a cold formal hypocrite is formed, attending to the common duties of religion with scrupulous punctuality; but he is void of faith, and consequently void of true religion. Or perhaps he gets weary of a troublesome conscience, and rather than work so hard to keep it quiet, will grasp at every shift to live easy. A proud, wicked and deceitful heart, far from Christ, and still under the power of sin and Satan, begins at length to scruple the reality of religion. The pleasing doctrine of universal redemption is a sovereign antidote against a guilty restless conscience. Or perhaps the infidel scheme chops all short; and the man employs all his wit and ingenuity to make himself believe that the bible is false, and that Christ is an imposter. The divine Being now is thought to be very merciful; and there is no danger in sinning against a God of such boundless goodness. O how dangerous it is to be without an interest in Christ by faith.

But when the divine Spirit designs to give faith, he not only convinces of sin, and pursues the frantic soul through all the labyrinths of his selfish schemes; but sooner or later gives a suitable view of the gospel. Now the poor sinner is not only alarmed, and called to fly from danger, by a sense of sin, and a discovery of his

ruined and lost state, but is also directed where to fly. Jesus the Saviour is exhibited and discovered in the gospel, both able and willing to save. His offices as a Mediator proclaim his ability and authority to save; and his free offers made in the gospel declare his willingness. These most important truths are seen by the lost soul. The sinner is overcome, urged on the one hand by a sense of danger, and drawn on the other by a view of the suitability and freeness of Christ in the overtures of the gospel. The heart is won, and gives consent to be saved by Christ only.

Thus God gives faith; viz. disposes the sinner to believe, or to receive Jesus Christ as he is offered in the gospel, by inducing or persuading the heart by proper motives addressed through the understanding. From what I have said, it appears that both our fears and hopes are addressed by the word of God; and that it is essential to faith that the sinner be convinced of his lost ruined and helpless state by nature; and that he must discover the suitability and willingness of Christ in the offers of the gospel; and when this is the case he will consent to the gospel, and give up his heart to Christ; induced thereunto by the powerful persuasions of the holy Spirit. Thus the sinner is made willing in the day of God's power. Thus the Father draws. Thus he hears and learns of the Father, and cometh unto Christ.*

* No doubt the reader has noticed that I have confined my ideas of a convinced sinner to a sense of guilt; and probably he may think it strange that I should depart from the common orthodox notion of the necessity of a sinner's being made sensible of the odious nature of sin so as to hate it upon the account of its moral turpitude. The reason why I have omitted that part of the usual definition of conviction is, I am not certain that it is true. I readily grant the sinner must have such a sense of sin as will give him a real sense of guilt and danger. A sense of sin must precede a sense of guilt; the one cannot be without the other. He must have such a view of God's law and justice as will convince him of his danger of wrath and punishment. But to have

CHAPTER VII.

The offers of the gospel and the effect they have on the convinced sinner.

WE are not to imagine that sinners are influenced to come to Christ from any view of preparations or qualifications in themselves to render them fit or welcome to

a sense of the odious nature of sin he must have a view of the moral excellence of holiness; this would require a holy disposition. In order to hate sin he must love holiness. If he loves holiness and hates sin he is a true penitent; for this is acknowledged by all to be the very nature of gospel repentance. If therefore all this is prerequisite to faith, repentance must precede faith. But it is universally acknowledged, as far as I have been able to learn, by all orthodox divines, that gospel repentance is a consequent of faith. How then can it be a necessary prerequisite?

From the account which the scripture gives of the convictions of sinners, previous to their believing on Christ, I cannot see that they had any thing more than a real sense of guilt and danger. The three thousand under Peter's sermon were pricked in their hearts and said, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Paul, on his way to Damascus, trembling and astonished, said "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" The jailer "called for a light and sprang in and came trembling, fell down before Paul and Silas and said, what must I do to be saved?" If any person can see any thing more than a deep sense of guilt and danger in these special instances, I confess I know not where he finds it. I do not think it is right for us to assert things as the necessary work of the Spirit in bringing a sinner to Christ without the bible gives us authority to do so. It is certainly true that nothing more is necessary than to persuade the sinner to yield to the gospel, or in other words, to gain his consent; and if any man will venture to affirm that a sense of guilt and helplessness on the one hand and the free offer of complete salvation on the other are not sufficient, I think he will assert what neither the bible nor experience will prove. I readily grant that a deep sense of the odious nature of sin as opposed to holiness is a part of true religion; but it does not follow from thence that we must have it before we believe in Christ.

come, or which may induce Christ to accept of them when they do come. This is a notion too often entertained; but it is both absurd and very dangerous. We find great difficulty in persuading sinners to come just as they are. The proud heart objects; the language of the heart is this, "I am too guilty, too vile, too wretched, too unworthy. Christ will not receive me; I have no right to expect mercy at his hand." It is impossible for a sinner under a deep sense of sin to have a thought that he can meet with acceptance with God unless he has pretty clear views of the gospel offers. He is consequently apt to set about a reformation, hoping by some such means to render himself at least more fit to approach the Majesty of heaven. Not only so, but even after he has got some discoveries of the gospel, he hates to come in all his wretchedness and sin. He feels in his ideas of coming to Christ as he does in his ideas of going to church; he must wash and dress in order to be decent.

But the worst of all is we are apt to mistake the nature of the offers of the gospel; and indeed I am sorry I have to say that we are too often taught to do so, even by those who ought to understand the gospel better. By pointing out the wrong notions which we have of the offers of salvation, we will have occasion to explain the true notions which we ought to have of those offers. There are in the gospel both general offers and special offers to particular characters. The general offers are made to all indiscriminately, such as the following, "He that believeth shall be saved. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. Whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely. Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved;" and many others. The offers made to particular characters are such as these, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," &c. Jesus in his

tender compassion not only extends the free proposals of salvation to all but knowing our backwardness to come, especially under a sense of sin and shame, overwhelmed with fear, is also pleased to address those particularly who are in distressed circumstances.

Now, because we find many of the overtures of the gospel addressed particularly to such and such characters, we are so unhappy as to conclude that none but such are invited to come. And hence we are apt to conclude that there are certain states of mind necessary to qualify a person to be a proper subject of the call of the gospel, such as hungering, thirsting, poverty of spirit, a deep sense of sin, a considerable degree of repentance and reformation; and what is indeed very curious and artful we sometimes go so far as to make it necessary to have a great sense of guilt, without being afraid of punishment; and we must have a strong desire to be holy, without any desire to be happy; and to desire to go to heaven or not to go to hell spoils all our religion, and totally disqualifies us for the calls of the gospel. These unhappy notions are very hurtful and tend to defeat the grand design of the gospel. There are only two things necessary to constitute any person a proper subject of the gospel call: one is, he must be a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins; another is, the gospel must be preached to him. Grant these two things, and nothing else is necessary to make a proper subject of the offers of salvation; and such a man will find it so at the day of judgment either to his joy or his sorrow.

It is true, the weary, the distressed, the poor burdened soul is invited, and invited tenderly; but his being poor, weary and distressed does not in the least degree give him a right to come; his having a sense of sin may dispose him to come; but any other person, not perhaps half as distressed as he, if he would come, would be every whit as welcome, and perhaps do ten times the most honour

to the gospel. We are often very much mistaken as to our distressed feelings. As much as we think of them and encourage them in our hearts, and sometimes imagine we are very humble when we feel bad, I would wish for no greater testimony of pride and an arrogant, selfish and haughty spirit. For a man to be distressed and sunk under the offers of the gospel is very little honour to the gospel. Yet we fondly think that such are the only persons worthy to be invited by the gospel. But it shows that our hearts are stubborn and obstinate, full of unbelief and rebellion against Christ.

But again, although Christ has addressed particular characters, yet there is no man who has read the bible but is invited to come to him for salvation; and it is his duty to come, and to come just as he is. Let a man be ever so wicked, the gospel invites him to come to Christ. It is true Christ does not promise to bestow salvation to all; he only promises to believers. All the offers of the gospel become promises to believers; all the things promised to believers are only offered to unbelievers. It is the nature of the gospel invitations to make a sinner welcome to accept; and let a sinner be ever so distressed and urged to come to Christ, yet he should feel his encouragement to come only in the free offer of the gospel. All our anguish of mind, our tears and confessions do not make us one whit more welcome to come; we should feel ourselves unworthy, guilty sinners when we come to Christ, and come because he calls us. Let a sinner feel himself ever so bad, guilty and sinful, how can he help feeling himself welcome when he sees Christ in the gospel offering, inviting, calling and insuring acceptance if he would come unto him. Let sinners remember that the bare overture is a sufficient warrant for them to risk their immortal souls on the plan of the gospel.

Farther, I would observe, that although a sense of sin and danger is by no means a meritorious recommenda-

tion to Christ, or in any wise a recommendatory qualification to entitle us to the benefits of the gospel, yet such is our nature, and the nature of the case, that no man ever will come to Christ without it. Without this we will not, nor can, possibly feel our need of Christ, and consequently can have no proper motive to induce us to embrace the offers of the gospel. Without a sense of danger we never could see the excellence or suitableness of the gospel. The gospel without this would be a mere theory or system of doctrine suited only to answer the necessitous circumstances of sinners; but although our being sinners renders us fit objects of mercy, yet we must have a sense of it before we can either see our need of mercy or prize the offer. Hence the necessity of the Spirit to teach and convince us of our lost state; and the gospel not only invites us but also teaches us our dangerous and helpless situation. The idea of the gospel is not to bring us to a sense of our guilt and ruin, in order to make us fit subjects of the call and invitation, but with the call God argues with us to persuade us to come at his call. And when we are convinced of sin and danger we are not any more the proper subjects of the call in consequence of our convictions than we were before; we are only more inclined to accept of mercy; and when we come to Christ we do not receive mercy because we are sensible of our need of it, but it is graciously given unto us on the condition of our consenting to receive it; our sense of our need only moves us to embrace what is freely offered for Christ's sake. So that conviction is by no means a fulfilment of the condition of the covenant of grace, nor any terms of our receiving the promises, but only a prerequisite of faith, which operates as a motive on us to believe or receive what Christ offers us freely on the condition of faith only.

But, as I have said already, conviction only starts the sinner; he must and will fly somewhere for help; for death

is ready to lay hold of him. The gospel invites him to come to Christ. By the offers of the gospel we are not only directed where to apply for help, but we are encouraged to make application. This is a matter worthy of serious regard. No sinner could have the least ground of encouragement to apply for mercy were it not for the free offer of Christ in the gospel; and he never would have thought of such a scheme had it not been revealed to him. Adam after he fell was filled with an awful sense of the wretchedness of his state as a sinner. I have no doubt but the devils and damned souls in hell have a deeper sense of sin and wretchedness than any believer ever had. But their unhappiness is, there is no place pointed out for them to fly to. They know of Christ too; but they have no encouragement to come to him because he has never called them. Adam had no encouragement to come for mercy until he received the intimation of the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent. But as soon as the gospel invited him he was both directed and encouraged to hope for mercy; so the three thousand, so Saul of Tarsus, so the jailer; their sense of danger was great; but all this had not the least tendency to give them any hope; but as soon as salvation was freely offered to them they consented to the offer and were comforted with a hope of salvation. If some glorious Saviour, able to save to the uttermost, would proclaim through the dark abodes of Tophet "Look unto me and be saved," O what joy would gladden the regions of despair. Under the directions and encouragement of such a gracious overture, they would no doubt repair to the standard of peace with shouts of glory to their kind deliverer.* I have in-

* If it is true that regeneration is before faith in the order of nature, what I have said about the devils accepting the gospel would not be true; for they would have to be renewed before they could believe, and consequently they would have to experience and receive the principal part of their salvation before they would have any personal interest in

troduced this circumstance to show that no sense of sin, guilt or misery can afford the least encouragement to a sinner. And when sinners feel a disposition to encourage themselves under the hope of acceptance with Christ on the footing of distress and sorrow, &c. they are certainly wrong; for it must be true that the simple offers of the gospel are the only proper grounds of encouragement for a lost soul. There is the greatest encouragement given in the offers of the gospel. No sinner could expect greater; neither is there any need for greater. There are three things on which the encouragements of the gospel are founded, which ought to be considered by every sinner.

1. The merit or purchase on which those overtures are founded. This is nothing less than the blood of the cross. When the convinced sinner argues from his deep contrition, makes mention of his pain and sorrow, tears, vows and resolutions to encourage his soul to approach to God, how meagre it looks! and indeed dwindles into nothing when compared with the great atoning sacrifice of Christ. But, on the other hand, when he views the justice of God receiving ample satisfaction in the death of our dear Redeemer, and pardon and sanctification and every thing necessary to salvation offered on the solid footing of perfect satisfaction and a meritorious purchase, this encouragement urges him on to a most cordial acquiescence in the overtures of salvation, without the least doubt of his acceptance with God, through the merits of the cross.

Christ, or would be personally brought from under the curse. But this doctrine, although it has often been asserted, yet it never has been proven by scripture; and I am pretty sure it will be very hard to demonstrate from the general plan of the gospel or the principles of sound philosophy. Mistaken notions of faith make mistakes in the general plan of the gospel. Faith is the radical condition of the gospel offers; and if we are wrong in our notions of faith we must model the whole gospel to suit our false notion.

2. The fulness contained in the offers of the gospel is truly an excellent ground of encouragement. What does the sinner need which is not offered to him freely? What shall I say? righteousness, pardon of sin, peace with God, sanctification, strength, light, life, protection and complete glory. Need I quote texts to prove that all these things, with all their extent and fulness, are offered in the gospel to sinners? This must certainly be great encouragement to a soul who feels himself poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and that especially when he finds that all is offered on the positive purchase of the cross. But to crown the whole,

3. The offer to the sinner is free, without money and without price. However dear those blessings cost the Saviour who offers them, yet we are invited to come and take of the water of life freely. Was there ever such an instance of grace? Is not this encouragement enough to render the sinner damnable if he does not receive such inestimable blessings, all paid for to his hand and offered freely? And is it not enough to induce all, who hear the glad tidings, to flock to Christ like the doves to their windows? Now consider what is, and what from the nature of the case must be, the condition of our salvation. Must we come before the Lord with a price in our hand? Will we have the impudence to interpolate terms of our own? to shove in our paltry sorrows, fears, penitence, tears, vows and reformation, &c.? No: the conditions are, "he that believeth shall be saved." And the flames of hell will convince the unhappy wretch who lives and dies in the expectation of salvation on any other footing of his fatal error: "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Therefore the conditions on which the offers are made are really encouraging. Every offer demands the consent of our hearts. Were it enjoined upon us to repent, to be holy, to love God, and to keep his commandments, or to make atonement for our guilt, we might lie down in

sorrow. Such offers as these (however they might, and indeed they do consist with our duty, only we have the privilege of making atonement by our Surety) could never give us any encouragement, as a condition of our acceptance with God. But when these are the very things which constitute the overtures of the gospel, and are freely offered to us, we are thereby invited to receive them. Our consent is required in order to the application of those benefits to our souls. This being the true state of the case, the sinner if he has proper views of the plan, must feel himself greatly encouraged to surrender up his whole soul to Christ upon the bare offer of the gospel.

Upon the whole, there can be nothing more encouraging to a sinner than the simple offers of the bible; and the less the sinner takes encouragement from other things, and the more he is encouraged by the gospel only, the more comfortable he will be in believing.

CHAPTER VIII.

What views the sinner must have of Christ and salvation in order to believe.

IF the apostles lived in our day, I doubt not but they would have as much trouble to correct our errors which we introduce into the gospel plan, as they had to correct the errors of the judaizing teachers. It seems as if we had a strange propensity to make the way of salvation difficult and obscure. Whereas the truth is, there never was any thing more simple, and free from perplexity and difficulty than the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour. I have frequently attended on definitions of faith until I have concluded that I would rather undertake to save my own soul, than to believe on Christ.

Faith has been represented as such an intricate, nice, and delicate thing, that I have thought there was no chance at all for such a blundering creature as I was, that could tell neither first nor last of the whole business. I have heard the sinner led on step by step coming to Christ, so that when he came the great length of believing, he was actually fit for the kingdom of glory; and Christ had very little to do. For somehow, I never could tell how, he was nearly saved before he got within reach of the Saviour. I have noticed already that a sinner must be sensible of his guilt and danger. Here it is thought that such a sense of sin is necessary, as will cause the sinner to loath and abhor it on the account of its contrariety to God and holiness. Here we introduce a positive blessing of the covenant; a most precious branch of sanctification which Christ has promised to the believer; and which he offers to the sinner; and yet it is introduced here as a prerequisite, or at least a constituent part of faith; and yet we say that faith is the very condition on which depends the fulfilment of that very offer; and the bestowment of that very blessing. I have heard such contradictions often from the pulpit, and have read them frequently in books; but I am very loath to believe that such difficulties can be found in the bible. I have also said that a sinner must have a view of the suitableness and freeness of Christ in the offers of the gospel. Here I would turn the attention of the reader particularly.

It is not necessary to a sinner's believing, that he be able to view all the excellencies of the gospel. I question much whether Gabriel can do that. St. Paul counted himself not to have already attained; but he reached forth towards those things which were before. It did not appear to the apostle John what we shall be. I think we may conclude upon this, that the convinced sinner must discover that Christ is both able and willing to save him; and he must have such a degree of light on this subject,

as will be sufficient to induce him to venture on the gospel plan, and submit his case to the direction of Christ. To define any exact degree of light in this matter, farther than what I have said, would certainly be beyond our province. Perhaps some sinners are more stubborn than others, and consequently require stronger motives, and of course clearer discoveries. But here a serious question arises. What is meant by the fulness and freeness of Christ?

By the freeness of Christ is always to be understood, our being invited to receive mercy, without any merit of our own; and that every one is made welcome to come just as he is, without any thing to recommend him to Jesus; and that Christ will graciously give every blessing of the covenant to every one who will come to him, notwithstanding his guilt and pollution, and utter unworthiness.

As to the fulness of Christ we may observe, 1. Every excellence which is in him as a Saviour; his complete atonement or righteousness imputable according to the gospel; all that rich variety of the influences of his Spirit to apply a full and complete salvation to the believer; his infinite wisdom; his truth; his power; his goodness and mercy, &c. These divine excellencies of Christ, constitute his fulness; and a sinner must at least have a general view of them, as far as it is necessary to persuade him to give up his heart to him for salvation.

2. By the fulness of Christ is more especially understood the sufficiency of the benefits he proposes in the gospel to sinners. Pardon and sanctification will comprehend the whole. To mention more particulars we may say his righteousness as the ground of all. Justification, adoption, sanctification; a new heart, love to God and holiness, repentance, perseverance, protection, and final victory over sin and death, &c. The sinner must view so much of this fulness in the offers of the gospel, as

will be a sufficient motive to induce him to consent for Christ to take possession of his heart and grant him what he stands in need of in order to salvation.

As to the kind or degree of this view or discovery, in order to beget faith in the heart, it is impossible, as I have already observed, to say any thing, but on general terms. Those who wish to draw sinners to Christ without the deeds of the law, who wish to make the gospel plain and easy, and to introduce faith as the simple condition of the whole of a sinner's salvation, speak only of such a view, and of such a degree of it as will draw the sinner to Christ under the hope of mercy.

Those who feel a disposition to make the plan of the gospel hard and perplexed, who are much afraid of presumption and hypocrisy, who imagine that religion consists in very serious doubting and fears lest we have none, run this matter very high. The first prerequisite is regeneration. And it must be granted that this is necessarily produced by the views which they make necessary to faith. Then the sinner must have a slight sense of guilt; not too much lest his faith and feelings be all selfish; but he must have a very high sense of the moral evil of sin, the baseness of his depraved heart, so that he will hate sin, and long to be rid of it from a view of its contrariety to holiness. Moreover, he must have a spiritual view of the excellence of holiness; not so much as it is connected with happiness; for that would be too selfish; but as it is in its own nature excellent, and lovely. He must have a view of Christ's righteousness as the only ground of his pardon; but his mind must not at the same time be much concerned about forgiveness. He must especially behold the holiness of Christ, and his heart must love him for his holiness; he must have a spiritual view of Christ as a King to rule and govern him; he must have a spiritual view of the moral excellence of his laws, and feel a complacency of heart in

them. Thus he must be drawn by the genuine cords of complacential affections to Christ, with a holy heart deserving to be saved, especially from the power of inward corruption. Now comes faith, consisting in coming to Christ with a holy heart, hating sin, loving God, and Christ, and holiness, repenting, and resolving to obey the commandments of the Lord.

There is so much real religion in the above description of true and saving faith, that at first sight it really is enough to charm us into a belief that it is true. Had the supposition been that the man was a believer long ago, and that Christ, in his faithfulness, was thus carrying on a work of sanctification in his heart agreeably to his promises, I would most heartily acquiesce in it, with one exception, viz. I would not disregard heaven and hell so much. I sincerely wish the notion of disinterested religion was buried in eternal oblivion; there is no man's heart but must feel it a most unnatural and unreasonable religion; and the bible teaches no such doctrine.

But to introduce all this as essential prerequisites of faith is truly darkening counsel by words without knowledge. It makes the conditions of the gospel perplexed and difficult to understand and impossible to come at. What does salvation consist in? It consists in regeneration, a holy heart, love to God and holiness, hatred to sin, repentance and a corresponding life and conversation; all founded on the righteousness of Christ imputed by faith. Consequently faith must be before them all, because the scriptures abundantly prove that all our salvation is bestowed on us on the condition of faith. If, therefore, faith is the condition on which we receive salvation how can we receive any part of our salvation before we believe? To say that we are born again, that we hate sin and love holiness and God and Christ, that we repent, &c. before we are personally interested in Christ by faith, is really inverting the whole order of the bible

and makes the most beautiful plan of the gospel a chaotic jargon.

* The above definition is indeed a good definition of true religion; and the believer often acts, or rather exercises faith on those very principles. The reason is plain; he has been for some time in personal union with Christ by faith, and Christ is fulfilling his promises. He is consequently a new man; he has spiritual views of sin, holiness, the divine law of God, of Christ, and the whole plan of the gospel. Therefore, he is actually possessed of a holy principle and acts under the sanctifying influences of divine grace; his renewed acts of faith will undoubtedly be performed under the influence of holy motives, and will answer to the above description. But how unreasonable must it be to call upon a poor lost sinner, before he is personally interested in Christ, and consequently under the curse of God's law and justice, to put on all the characteristics of a soul who has been for some time interested in the covenant of grace by faith. Must a man partake of all the blessing of the covenant before he has an interest in it? And if he can have an interest in Christ and partake of the principal parts of salvation before he believes, what sense can there be in those numerous texts which say we are saved by faith?

But I will treat this subject more particularly in the next chapter. I will now inquire as to what views a sinner must have of Christ and the gospel in order to believe.

He must have a view of the righteousness of Christ. That is, he must understand that Christ died in the room of sinners, that his death satisfied justice, and is freely offered in the gospel to him as his only justifying righteousness. He must see that by that righteousness imputed, he can be pardoned, and obtain the blessing of God, and

* Except as above, page 347.

be reinstated in the favour and friendship of heaven. This is a glorious sight to the law-convinced sinner, and has a powerful influence on his heart. Here it is proper to observe, that the righteousness of Christ is the radical ground of the sinner's salvation; it is the hope of the believer, the price of every benefit of the covenant; and whenever it is imputed it gives a full and complete title to every particle of salvation. Consequently whenever the righteousness of Christ is offered in the gospel, the undeniable right to the whole kingdom is offered. And when the sinner, convinced of sin, conceiving himself as having forfeited his right to every blessing, and consequently under the curse of God's broken law, gets a view of this righteousness, he views the radical principle of the whole gospel; and although he may not have correct views of the genuine nature of those blessings, yet he sees the grand title to them all, and this title freely offered to a poor, guilty, lost creature, even a hell-deserving sinner. Now will any venture to say, that such a sight as this will not effectually persuade such a sinner to accept of this righteousness? What more had Peter's converts? What more had the jailer? Now suppose the sinner would give his consent to such a proposal as this, would it have any effect? Certainly, he would by that very act of his mind, become a believer; and that righteousness would be that moment imputed to him. What would now be the state of that man? Christ has found a sinner, not a half saved saint; and he has given him his own righteousness and has brought him from under the curse of the law; and he is now entitled to all the privileges of the sons of God. By submitting to this righteousness, the very foundation of Christ's kingdom, he has now become a subject; and Christ is under covenant engagements to bestow whatever that righteousness lays claim unto.

Here I must further observe, that the sinner in all this transaction has a general view of the things contained in the offers of the gospel. Although he has not a sanctified taste for holiness, yet he is very sensible of the necessity of it; and this is enough to induce him to consent to obtain the privilege of sanctification by the blood of Christ. And so of every grace or blessing offered in the gospel. This would not do for an evidence of true religion; but it will do for an argument to induce a lost sinner to go to Christ for religion. There must be a great difference betwixt the religion which Christ will give in faithfulness to his own offer and pursuant to the claim of his own righteousness when imputed by faith according to the conditions of the gospel, and the mere motives used to persuade a sinner to come to Christ for salvation.

On this plan it is true yet, what was said of Christ long ago: "This man receiveth sinners;" also, that "He came to seek and to save that which was lost. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He that believeth on me though he were dead yet shall he live. If ye believe not on me, ye shall die in your sins. Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life."

This makes the scheme of the gospel simple and easy. It is not perplexed with contradictions; it introduces no heterogeneous ideas in the gospel. We have the sinner saved by faith through the imputed righteousness of Christ. We have him quickened together with or in union with Christ. We do not represent the sinner coming to Christ possessed of every mark of a true christian; partly saved by Christ, and partly before he comes to him; partly by faith and partly without it. We do not represent the sinner as receiving precious gifts of a holy nature, while he is held under the curse of God. Nor

God blessing the sinner with a new heart, with a holy disposition, before he has by faith a personal interest in the new covenant. We do not call upon sinners to come to Christ just as they are, with all their guilt and sin, and with the next breath tell them they must be born again, and have a holy heart, to love God and holiness, and hate sin before they can come. We do not make the condition of the covenant of grace to consist in the blessings of it. Neither do we hold to faith as the only condition of the gospel; yet bestow the principal part of the blessings before the condition is fulfilled. We do not make the righteousness of Christ the meritorious ground of every part of a sinner's salvation, and yet make the sinner personally a partaker of a considerable share of that salvation, before he is personally interested in that righteousness, and consequently remaining under the old covenant. We do not preach Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, yet make the sinner a saint before Christ has any thing to do with him as one interested in him.

But on the other hand, we find the sinner in a lost, helpless, guilty state; we preach the word to him; we convince him by the word, accompanied with the divine Spirit, of his lost and ruined state; he becomes sensible of his guilty condition, of his need of a Saviour. We offer him the spotless righteousness of Christ freely; we urge him with many arguments to accept of it; the Spirit of God sets home all those motives. The sinner gives up to the offer of the gospel; becomes a believer, obtains pardon, and a title to every blessing. Christ engages his complete salvation, renews his heart, causes his Spirit to dwell in him, sanctifies him, gives him repentance, makes him love God and holiness, &c. and thus makes him fit for heaven. Here Christ saves a sinner, saves him by faith. The sinner comes just as he is, guilty and sinful, without a spark of religion, and Christ becomes the author of

eternal salvation to him as a believer, gets all the glory, and sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. O that sinners would only try the value of the righteousness of Christ.

CHAPTER IX.

Faith before regeneration and sanctification.

It has been set down as an uncontroverted truth, that in the order of nature regeneration precedes faith. But by what I have already said in the last chapter, my reader perceives that I think differently. I will not repeat the arguments I have already offered on this subject; but call the attention of the reader to something further. The question before us is not as to time; but as to which is in consequence of the other. If faith is what some divines make it to be, as I have noticed in the last chapter, regeneration must be before faith. But if it is as I have described it to be, regeneration must be a consequence of faith. There are some scriptures which would be very difficult to understand unless we acknowledge faith to produce regeneration. "Without faith it is impossible to please him," (God). The sinner must certainly meet with the approbation of God, or God could not bestow such a blessing as regeneration upon him. But how could God be in favour with an unbeliever so far as to grant him such a distinguishing favour, even as to create him anew, in his own image. Again, God is always pleased with a holy disposition; the man who is born of God's own Spirit must please him. But the apostle says, without faith it is impossible to please him; consequently faith must precede regeneration; for the regenerated man is certainly pleasing to God. This in my view, clearly de-

eides the question; else we cannot understand that text of scripture.

We all acknowledge without any difficulty that the word saved, or salvation, is a general term, and means the whole and every part of the deliverance from guilt and sin which the sinner receives from Christ. If any are disposed to deny this, I ask what part of our redemption is left out of view? It must of course be regeneration, or it would not help my opponent any, if we are allowed to embrace this in the sense of the word saved. But pray, why is not regeneration a part of our salvation? Our blessed Lord makes it a capital part: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." And Paul says, "he that is in Christ is a new creature." It makes one of the special articles promised in the covenant: "A new heart I will give you." But why do I argue a point so evident; none will, or can dispute it; for it is indeed a very special part of our salvation. I now observe that there is no doctrine in all the bible so evident as that we are saved by faith: "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Now to apply this scripture to the point in hand, I must say, he that believeth shall not only be pardoned, but also shall be regenerated. If you object to this construction, I ask, why? is not regeneration a part of our salvation? This I have positively proven; and consequently my construction is good, and my argument is unanswerable.

Paul says, "by grace ye are saved through faith." Remember there is no stop at the word *saved*, plainly proving that our salvation is of grace because it is through faith, agreeing with what he says in another place arguing on this very subject in the case of Abraham: "Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace." If these texts taken together prove any thing, they prove that what is not by faith is not by grace. If therefore regeneration is not by faith it is not by grace. But re-

generation is a grace, and therefore it is by faith; and consequently no man can be regenerated until he believes in Christ.

“Even when we were dead in sins,” says Paul to the Ephesians, “hath quickened us together with Christ.” *συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ*. In union with Christ he hath quickened us even when we were dead in sin. This certainly proves that we are brought from a state of death in sin to a state of life in holiness in consequence of our being united to Christ; and the scripture tells us of no way to be united to Christ but by faith. Consequently faith precedes regeneration.

We have the very same ideas with some enlargement in Col. 2. 13. “And you being dead in your sins and “the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him having forgiven you all trespasses.” This text proves, in addition to the idea of being quickened with Christ, that the regeneration of the Colossians followed the forgiveness of all their trespasses; which every one knows, who knows any thing of the gospel, is in consequence of the righteousness of Christ imputed by faith. Regeneration must of course be in consequence of faith.

In Eph. 1. 13, 14. we have these remarkable words: “In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed “with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest “of our inheritance, &c.” A seal is the impression of an image; the seal of the Spirit is the impression of God’s image; and this image is the earnest of our heavenly inheritance. No person in his senses will deny but that this is done in regeneration; and the apostle very elegantly marks with peculiar accuracy that this is done after believing. How is it possible, after all this, that regeneration must precede faith?

I will now call the reader’s attention to some scriptural positions which I will lay down as a ground of argument.

1. We must be reconciled to God by the death of Christ, before we can be saved by his living intercession. (Rom. 5. 10.) Note. It is by faith we are reconciled to God. (Rom. 5. 1.)

2. We are saved from wrath by justification by the blood of Christ. (v. 9.) Note. Justification is by faith. (v. 1.)

3. We must be buried into death (by baptism) with Christ, before we can rise with him and walk in newness of life; and if we are dead with him we shall also live with him; and if so, we are indeed dead to sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 6. 3—11.) Note 1. Paul was speaking to adult persons; and baptism is always taken as a sign or seal of faith. And the truth is, it is by faith only that we are buried with Christ. Note 2. To be dead with Christ, and to live with him, means regeneration, and the progress of sanctification. Note 3. It is in consequence of our union with Christ by faith.

4. Paul was dead to the law before he could live unto God. (Gal. 2. 19.) Note 1. To be dead to the law means to be brought from under it by faith in Christ. (Rom. 7. 4, 5, 6.) Note 2. When Paul was by faith in Christ dead to the law, then he was regenerated, or made alive to God.

5. Paul was crucified with Christ. Gal. 2. 20. Note. Here is the very same manner of expression as the apostle uses in Eph. 2. 5. and Col. 2. 13. above quoted. The preposition *συν* in conjunction with the verb, not meaning together, in the same place, or merely at the same time, but in union with Christ, as a sacrifice, surety or atonement. Note 2. This union is acknowledged by all to be by faith only.

6. Paul lived in consequence of this federal, or vicarious crucifixion. (idem.) Note 1. The Greek preposition

$\delta\epsilon$ has several meanings. It means, *but, yet, nevertheless, also, indeed, truly, therefore, or, in consequence of which, &c.* Our translators have giving it the word *nevertheless*, which is the worst meaning they could possibly have invented; it completely spoils the whole beauty, and sense of the passage. It introduces the idea of Paul's being dead, and yet alive, which is absolutely nonsense unless you wade through a dark figure, and is quite contrary to the apostle's meaning. Only put the word *therefore* in the room of the word *nevertheless*, and you will have the sense of the apostle, and the natural sense of his whole plan of the gospel; and the passage will be natural, easy, and truly elegant. "I am crucified with Christ, "therefore I live, ($\zeta\omega\ \delta\epsilon$); yet not I, but (therefore $\delta\epsilon$) "Christ liveth in me." Here ought to be a full stop; and the apostle proceeds to draw his conclusion. "Therefore ($\delta\epsilon$) I live the life which I now live in the flesh, by "faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," ($\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\ \epsilon\mu\kappa$ instead of me.) Note 2. The life Paul lived was in consequence of Christ's dying in his room, and of his interest in his death by faith. Note 3. Paul was interested in Christ's atonement by faith before he lived, by Christ living in him. Note 4. It is evident from Eph. 3. 17. that the only way, by which Christ lives, or dwells in our hearts, is by faith, which only can produce spiritual life.

7. Every unbeliever is under the law. (Gal. 3. 11, 12. 25. Rom. 4. 14, 15.) Every one who is under the law is under the curse. (Gal. 3. 10, 11.) Note 1. Regeneration is a blessing of salvation in its own nature. Hence the apostle (Titus 3. 5.) says, "According to his mercy he "saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing "of the Holy Ghost." That we should be conformed to the image of Christ, and that we should be holy, was the great object of God's foreknowledge and predestination.

And Paul ranks this among the spiritual blessings with which God blesses us in Christ Jesus. Note 2. No spiritual blessing can be given to any person until he is removed from under the curse of the law. (Gal. 5. 4. Rom. 4. 14, 15.) Hence Christ says, "If ye believe not on me ye shall die in your sins." Note 3. No person can, by the constitution of the gospel, be brought from under the curse of the law, but by faith. (Rom. 4. 16.) Consequently the great blessing of regeneration cannot be bestowed on an unbeliever, who undoubtedly remains under the curse of the broken covenant.

8. We are begotten by the word. (James 1. 18.) Christ sanctifies and washes his church with water by the word that he may make it glorious, not having spot, wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish; (Eph. 5. 26, 27.) but it is expressly said, the word will not profit without faith. (Heb. 4. 2.)

I humbly presume that if any man will strip himself of all prejudice, and not allow himself to believe any thing just because he has believed it before, or because he has been taught to do so by others, and give the arguments which I have advanced a candid hearing, and consult the sense of the passages I have quoted, he will say with me, and I presume with the bible, that faith is, in the order of the gospel, before regeneration.

CHAPTER X.

Whether faith be a holy act or not.

It must be granted that an unsanctified soul cannot do any thing really holy; that every thought word and action of an unrenewed person is unholy. This very thing has no doubt been one of the principal reasons, and perhaps the only one, which has caused many to mistake the true nature of faith, and to imagine it to be a holy act of a regenerated soul. If faith is a holy act, it must proceed from a holy principle, and consequently it must require a holy heart to believe. This looks plausible at first sight, and would certainly overthrow all that I have said on the subject, were it true that faith is a holy act.

But the misfortune is, this has been taken for granted without either proof, or examination; and the unhappy consequence has been that the true nature of faith has been enveloped in darkness, the gospel not well understood, and the sinner has been thought to be saved from death in sin, before he was united to Christ. This is certainly the consequence of this notion of faith. If faith is a holy act, regeneration must be before it; and the soul must be renewed before it is united to Christ; and consequently the sinner is not properly saved by faith. This view of the matter seems to change the gloss of the argument, and makes my reader suspect that the point can be maintained, notwithstanding the gigantic appearance of this almost self-evident objection.

The question is not, whether the christian, who is already united to Christ by faith, and is born again, having Christ dwelling in his heart, and under a process of sanctification, is holy in the exercise of faith. This is by no means disputed. The apostle Jude, v. 20. exhorts his be-

loved christians to keep themselves in the love of God by building up themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. The exercises of the faith of a holy christian, by which he is daily built up, are undoubtedly holy.

But the question is, does the sinner, coming to Christ on the offer of the gospel, just as he is, full of guilt and sin, when he gives himself to Christ for salvation, perform a holy act or not? I answer no; my reasons are the following.

1. The scriptures do not give faith that characteristic; and the gospel never did require a sinner to be holy in order to come to Christ; and it is highly improper for the sinner to attempt to be holy before he comes; but to come just as he is by nature and sin. Rev. 3. 17, 18. "Because thou sayest I am rich, &c." v. 20. "If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in, &c." Chap. 22. 17. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Is. 55. 1, 2. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, &c. and he that hath no money come, &c. buy without money and without price, &c." John 3. 14, 15. "As Moses lifted up the serpent, &c." Had the bitten, poisoned, Israelite to break the strength of the poison, before he looked to the brazen serpent? or did his looking to the serpent do it? So it is betwixt the sinner and Christ. If Moses had preached to the Israelites, as my opponent would wish us to do to sinners, he would have marred the type; and if we would preach holiness as the terms of the gospel, we would mar the antitype; and the beautiful figure which our Saviour used would be unintelligible. It is evident from the above texts that holiness is not the condition of the gospel. And I could easily quote many more. But if faith is holiness, and if it requires a holy heart to act it, then holiness must be the condition of our salvation; and then there can be no sense in the gospel.

2. If there is one particle of true holiness in faith, it is so much done in the salvation of a sinner, without the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and consequently contrary to the gospel plan. If the sinner can get one particle of holiness, why not twenty or five hundred? Where is the stopping place, where the sinner must go to Christ for more? But where does he get that quantum of holiness, necessary to his coming to Christ? It must somehow come from Christ. Does he get it from Christ without an interest in him? or can he get an interest in him without faith? What book teaches us such terms of salvation? Whatever book it is, it surely contradicts the bible.

3. The grand, and indeed the only argument, which is of any force to demonstrate that faith is a holy act is, because it is an act of obedience to God. But this proves too much by far; and consequently it proves nothing at all. Every act of obedience to the moral law, performed with a holy temper of heart is undoubtedly a holy act; but every act of obedience to God is not of this nature. Thousands of sinners perform a thousand acts of obedience to God without the least spark of true holiness. Many a wicked husband loves his wife and children with as much tenderness as the law of God requires of him, without any holiness. Many persons attend punctually to the preaching of the word and support the gospel liberally, some attend to the ordinances and even live an honest moral life, without any true holiness. Even the devils themselves have in many instances obeyed God punctually; at his command, they would go out of the demoniacs, submissively ask permission to enter into the herd of swine, acknowledged Christ to be the Son God; but yet they were not holy. Now if every act of obedience to God was holiness, both wicked men and devils would be holy. No one denies but what faith is an act of obedience; but it does not follow from hence, that it is an

holy act. It requires more than obedience to constitute a holy action. It requires the heart to be itself holy, possessed of complacence, or delight in the moral excellence of the thing itself, or of the law which enjoins it. Does the sinner possess such a heart when he believes? I grant Christ will give him such a heart afterwards, when he is brought from under the curse of the broken law, by the imputation of the perfect righteousness of the cross, by faith; and in so doing he will break the power of sin and implant his own image. But the question is, has the sinner got it before he comes to Christ? If you say yes, I answer, you cannot prove it. And if you do, you will prove that the whole of salvation is not by faith in Christ; and if you do that, you will prove that the bible is false.

4. God is undoubtedly holy in all things which he doth. His moral laws are holy in their nature. His positive laws are right; but whether they are holy or not, is a nice question. Holiness is a radical principle which cannot change. God cannot change his moral laws, because they are holy; if he would change them, he would introduce what would be contrary to natural holiness, which must be sin. But he can change his positive laws, make them, and nullify them, when he pleases, because they are right no longer than it was his pleasure.

Faith is not a precept of the moral law; but a positive command. It is certainly right to obey it, and a sin to disobey it. But whether it is a holy act, or only a righteous act to obey a positive precept, is so nice a point that I would not wish to make it a ground of argument on either side of the question in hand. I have said just so much on it as will show that my opponent has something to do, that will be something difficult before he can demonstrate that it requires a renewed heart to perform an act of obedience to a mere positive precept, especially when he considers that it is a condition on which that

very holiness is to be bestowed graciously upon the sinner by Christ only.

At any rate this argument will stand good, that Christ offers holiness to a sinner on the condition that he will obey a positive command; even consent to receive salvation. Consequently holiness is not a constituent part of faith, but a grand part of the salvation which is offered on the condition of faith. There is a great difference betwixt the proper performance of a moral precept, and the performance of a positive precept, especially when that precept is constituted a condition of a covenant. A mere literal performance of a moral precept will not be holiness, because holiness has a special relation to the disposition, or taste of the heart; if that is wanting, the moral law is broken still in the particular thing which it requires. But it is not so with a condition of a covenant which is always a positive law, and still more especially in the condition of the covenant of grace, where holiness is the grand blessing proposed. A mere literal compliance will give a just claim to the blessing proposed, and will lay the party proposing under engagements to perform; and there really can be a hearty consent to the gospel without such a divine and spiritual taste for holiness, which is necessary to constitute a holy heart. If it were not so, no sinner could ever be saved on the plan of the gospel; and such a condition as would require holiness, would never suit a sinner. If the gospel offered holiness to a sinner, on the condition of holiness, he never could perform the condition; and the thing offered must be given him contrary to the plan of the gospel.

5. If faith is a holy act, it must proceed from a holy principle in the heart. That holy principle must beget faith. If so, then holiness is not begotten in the soul, in consequence of Christ's imputed righteousness; for that righteousness is always imputed by faith. The blessings of the covenant are bestowed partly by faith and partly

not; partly through the righteousness of Christ and partly some other way. The sinner is not altogether indebted to the cross; for he obtains a grand benefit before he is interested in the benefits of it. Christ performs a part of his offer before the terms are complied with. He gives a great blessing before the curse is removed. He instamps his image before the sinner is willing. He gives a part of the gospel feast to the sinner before he gives the wedding garment. If faith is a holy act, no sinner can ever come to Christ as a sinner; but wearing the image of God, in the dress, and act of holiness. If faith is a holy act proceeding from a renewed heart, the sinner is not fit for hell when he comes to Christ; for holiness disqualifies for hell, and makes fit for heaven. The spirit of adoption is given him before he is a son. He may claim kindred with God whose image he now has, before he is united to Christ to give him the title. He has the earnest of the inheritance while he is under the curse. He enjoys the blessings of the second covenant, before he is dead to the first. (Rom. 7.) All the remainder of the blessings of the covenant is granted on the condition of holiness. The blessings of sanctification and the condition on which they are bestowed are the same thing. If faith is a holy act proceeding from a holy heart, when Christ says, "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," he means, he that is holy shall be made holy, but he that is not holy shall remain unholy.

But I will dismiss the subject, and leave it to the candid reader to consider my arguments; and I think he will be convinced that faith is not good works, but the consent of a lost sinner surrendering to the offers of the gospel.

Even my opponent is highly pleased with the exquisite demonstration of the apostle Paul in the fourth chapter to the Romans; yet some how, he does not notice that the logical arguments of the inspired apostle completely

overthrows his opinion, that faith is a holy act, and a consequence of regeneration. It is admitted on all hands, that the essence of holiness is the obedience of the heart to the moral law. All holy actions therefore must of course be a conformity to the law. Consequently if faith is a holy act, it must be a conformity to the moral law; for otherwise it could not be holy. This my opponent not only admits, but even asserts and makes the very ground of his argument. Therefore it must be what the apostle means by works, the works of the law, the law, and the deeds of the law. For all acknowledge that Paul by these phrases meant holiness or holy obedience.

Now let us read some of the apostle's arguments according to this sentiment, and see how it will look. (v. 2—6.) “ If Abraham were justified by an act of
 “ holiness, he hath whereof to glory. But (he had) not
 “ (whereof to glory) before God, (for he was justified by
 “ faith). For Abraham believed God, &c. (Faith there-
 “ fore can not be a holy act). Now to him that worketh
 “ (performs an act of holiness) is the reward reckoned not
 “ of grace, but of debt, (because an act of holiness is a
 “ meritorious act, and when performed as a condition,
 “ has its legal claim by merit and not by promise). But
 “ to him that worketh not, (does not perform a holy act),
 “ but believeth (which is not legal or holy obedience,
 “ but only the gracious condition of the gospel;) his
 “ faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David de-
 “ scribeth the blessedness of the man to whom God im-
 “ puteth righteousness without works, (or holy obedi-
 “ ence). (v. 13—16.) For the promise was not to Abra-
 “ ham, and his seed through the law, (which, would be
 “ holiness) but through the righteousness of faith (which,
 “ on the contrary, has no holiness in it). For if they which
 “ are of the law, (who are considered as holy and conse-
 “ quently meritorious) be heirs, faith (which has no me-
 “ rit in it, and is the only possible condition of free

“ grace) is made void, (the very nature and design of it is
 “ destroyed by introducing the law in its place,) and the
 “ promise made of none effect, (the gracious plan of the
 “ gospel with all its engagements by promise is nullified).
 “ Because the law worketh wrath. (The law being bro-
 “ ken has no part in the condition of the gospel, if it had
 “ it would demand perfect holiness and would condemn
 “ the sinner instead of confirm his right to the pro-
 “ mise;) for where no law is there is no transgression.
 “ (But when the moral law has no place as a condition in
 “ the gospel, the believer does not come under its con-
 “ demning power and consequently it does not interfere
 “ with the rights and privileges of believers). Therefore
 “ it is of faith that it might be by grace, &c. (It is en-
 “ tirely of faith independent of the law, so that the whole
 “ benefits of the gospel might be purely of grace, with-
 “ out any worth or excellence in the believer, and that
 “ Christ might have the whole glory of our salvation.”

It is true the apostle was vindicating the doctrine of
 justification by faith without the deeds of the law. But if
 faith be a holy act, it must be a part of holy obedience
 to the moral law, which will necessarily introduce the law
 into the scheme of the gospel, and make obedience to it,
 the very conditional article, which the apostle has surely
 refuted in this chapter with his usual force and ingenuity.

By consulting Gal. 3. 11, 12. we find the very same
 doctrine vindicated. It is said, that it is evident that no
 man is justified by the law, because the just shall live by
 faith; and the law is quite a different thing, and expressly
 declared to be not of faith. But if faith be an act of holy
 obedience to the law, which it must be if it is holy at all,
 then it must be the very same as the law, which is directly
 contradictory to the whole of the above demonstration.

What God has put asunder, let no man join together.

CHAPTER XI.

The process of the gospel with a sinner according to the plan I have explained. Some objections answered.

LET us now take a comprehensive view of the powerful effects of the gospel on a sinner in drawing him to Christ, agreeably to the plan which I have laid down and endeavoured to explain.

1. The sinner is indeed in a deplorable condition; dead in trespasses and sins; sinful, morally vile, and polluted; alienated from God and holiness; estranged from every thing morally good; a slave to sin and Satan; under the reigning power of his own lust, and corruption. Add to this, he is a guilty creature exposed to wrath, and the sore displeasure of God, under the curse of the broken law, and entirely helpless, unable to deliver himself from this miserable condition; and what still adds to his unhappiness, he is entirely insensible of his lost and undone state.

2. In this miserable situation the gospel finds him, informs him of his lost state, and offers him salvation. The stupid insensible wretch is disposed to slight the offers, hears with inattention, and slowly learns that he has any need of a Saviour. The gospel is fraught with every necessary instruction, and meets every deplorable account, with a kind offer of mercy. The kind overtures of every necessary grace are handed out, attended with an accurate account of the whole plan and procedure, with the simple conditions on which the blessings of the gospel are to be bestowed. Every proper motive attends the solemn proposals dressed in every form, and introduced under every advantage addressing the hopes and fears of the sinner. But all will not move, until the Spi-

rit of God comes with power, and accompanies the truth to the conscience. Strange that a reasonable creature should be so hard to induce to lay to heart his best interest.

3. Divine grace accompanies the doctrines of the word; and the very first effect produced is, the sinner is convinced of his lost state. He feels himself a guilty sinner, and finds at length that he must perish for ever, unless the Lord will have mercy upon him. He is now disposed to give ear to what Christ offers him in the gospel; he hears as for his life and soul; and 'at length under the teaching of God's Spirit accompanying the word, he finds there is full salvation offered freely to him, on the humiliating, but easy condition of believing. Pardon and sanctification are offered freely. Pardon on the footing of Christ's own death and sufferings in the guilty sinner's place; which righteousness is imputable by faith, and entitles to every blessing of the covenant of grace, necessary to his complete salvation. Such views he has of himself, and of Christ in the gospel, as dispose and enable him to consent to be saved according to Christ's own plan. Encouraged thereunto by the simple offers of the gospel, and urged by a sense of his own wretchedness; he ventures his eternal all upon Christ, and endeavours as well as he can, to put his trust in the great atonement.

Thus the Spirit of God gives faith; and thus the sinner is induced to come to Christ; and he comes to him for salvation; thus the condition of the covenant of grace is fulfilled; and thus the sinner comes, as a sinner to the great Physician of souls, with nothing but guilt and sin; and pleads the righteousness of Christ for every thing he needs.

Having thus taken a short view of the sinner coming to Christ, I shall answer some objections to this plan.

1. It is quite too easy. Any sinner might be saved on such easy terms. I most cheerfully give up to the sentiment; and I count it one of the peculiar glories of the gospel that this is really true. I would not indeed say it is too easy; but I will say it is as easy as any thing can possibly be, unless we make it hard by introducing some of our own judaizing ceremonies, or some pieces of our heathenish philosophy. Then we will make it hard indeed. I will venture to say, that whenever a serious inquiring soul gets his mind rid of all his romantic notions, his views of selfish recommendations, particularly his worthiness to come to Christ; when he is properly humbled under a sense of his utter inability to do any one thing whatsoever to make him more acceptable than he is, or ever was since he fell in Adam; and discovers the free offers of complete salvation made by Christ in the gospel to his own soul, the whole business will be settled immediately. There is no more time necessary, than for the sinner to make up his mind. When a man sees that hell is his portion, unless he gets deliverance, and finds deliverance at hand in the offers of the gospel, full and free, by an almighty Saviour able to save to the uttermost. In such a case as this, one half minute is enough to fix the whole business. He has nothing to do but to give his consent; and by that simple act of the mind, he casts all upon Christ. Does he do wrong in this? No: Christ asks him to do it; and his doing it, is nothing but what Christ requires as the condition of the gospel. If he would not do it he would be damned for not doing it. Now is this sinking mountains, and filling up valleys? Is it a holy act, and does it require a sanctified spirit to perform it? No such thing. It is properly doing nothing, but what is consistent with a moral agent to do, in his own case; even to give his consent for Christ to do all. And what has Christ to do? Answer. He has every thing to do. What does the sinner need?

This will answer the question fully: righteousness, pardon, justification, repentance, love, holiness. Cannot Christ do it? Will he do it? Has he proposed to do it? (Mark 16. 16.) This is hard work I confess. Not hard for him who is almighty; but it would be truly hard for the sinner. Hard, did I say for the sinner? He might try his utmost to do the smallest particle of it. But he would fail and be damned at last. But Christ does it, who can do it. And what has the sinner to do? Answer. Nothing. But the objection says this is too easy. Yes, I confess it is too easy for pride, arrogance, haughtiness of spirit, self-righteousness. An independent genius would wish to do every thing himself, and be as little beholden to Christ as possible; and when he goes on these self-righteous principles, he effects nothing; and all he does is to be repented of. It is indeed impossible for the sinner to save himself; and the more we intermix the condition of the gospel with self-righteous notions, the harder and darker we make the gospel to ourselves; hence the apostle most elegantly says to the Corinthians, "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." If God is pleased to make the condition of our salvation easy, must we poor helpless wretches object to it? But it is said any sinner, and every sinner might be saved on such terms. Yes truly; sinners of the worst stamp, even if they were ten thousand times worse than the devil could make them, might be both easily and completely saved, on the very terms of the gospel; even the ignorant and unlearned, dunces and half fools, and African slaves may be saved as well as the most learned bishops in the world. And is this a fault? What if God is pleased to fix the plan of the gospel so, as to be a stumbling block to the wise and prudent, to the proud Pharisee and the philosophers of Greece, and yet to save the poor believer, must we be offended at the plan, and count the terms too low? Suppose he chooses

the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; the weak, to confound the mighty; the things which are base and despised and even things which are in the estimation of men insignificant and nothing, to bring to nothing the high towering schemes of proud mortals, that no flesh should glory in his presence; (1 Cor. 1. 21—31.) Is this a fault too? Suppose the publicans and harlots gain admittance into the kingdom of heaven just by yielding to Christ, while the highflying adept in orthodoxy binding heavy burdens on men's shoulders is shut out; Would this be a fault? Suppose Zaccheus obtained salvation by coming down at the call of Christ and receiving him joyfully; Was this a fault? Suppose the disciples received salvation just by leaving their nets at the call of Christ and following him; Was this a fault? Suppose the thief on the cross, went to paradise just by saying, "Lord remember me;" Was this a fault? Suppose the poor publican met with the divine approbation by saying "God be merciful to me a sinner;" Was this a fault? Must the sinner be at the pains to do impossibilities, and absurdities? Must he send to heaven to bring Christ down from above, as if Christ had never come, or had done nothing when he was come, worth depending upon? Or must he send down into the grave as if Christ had never risen, or given any proof of the validity of his sufferings? This would indeed be like doing something. But what if the sinner, instead of being at all this trouble and expense, would take for granted what the gospel told him, and would believe that all was ready, brought to hand, and laid at the very door of his heart? If therefore he would acknowledge the Lord Jesus, and consent to him under the view of his being the true and all-sufficient Saviour, and would be saved; would it be any harm? If the rich young scribe, who had kept all the commandments from his youth up, had disposed of his estate, morality and all, and had taken Christ at his word and

followed him, would he not have made a good exchange? and would it have been any harm for Christ to have given him treasure in heaven, on such low, and easy terms? The truth is, those who do not like the easy terms of the gospel, will find terms hard enough for them; terms too hard for devils to fulfil; terms which made the Lord Jesus sweat blood to fulfil; terms which will make them weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth for ever in the lake of hell.

2. It is objected that this view of the gospel plan makes faith a selfish thing, begotten by the fear of punishment and the hope of salvation. I am so far from denying what is here asserted, that I would object myself against any plan that any man could propose, unless it was founded on these very principles.

This objection puts me in mind of a very sprightly observation of Mr. Marshall in his treatise on sanctification, in answer to this very objection. He represents such objectors as directing sinners in coming to Christ, to carry fire in one hand to burn up heaven, and water in the other to quench the fire of hell. This observation is not only sprightly, but it really gives a striking view of the ridiculous nature of those disinterested ideas of religion which are made such a distinguishing mark of true grace. Some divines insist, that a man cannot be a sound believer unless made even willing to go to hell, and rather choose it, if he thought it most for the glory of God. *Nemo semper sapit*. Wise and good men will sometimes say foolish things; and it is generally our duty to bear with their folly; but when such ridiculous nonsense as this is handed out to the world, the men ought to be pitied, and the sentiment ought to be most cordially despised. If any man was to tell me that he felt so, I would without the least hesitation conclude that he was either a liar or a fool. No man in his senses ever did feel so, ever will, or ever can, unless in a fit of dull stupidity and

downright sullenness. I grant the hardened, careless sinner feels careless about hell or heaven. But to be careless or indifferent about punishment, is downright rebellion against God in all the threatenings of his word. To be indifferent about heaven, is a wicked slighting all the offers of the gospel. Christ says, " Verily I say unto you " fear him, who is able to cast both soul and body into " hell." He also says, " Strive to enter in at the strait gate." But I need not quote particular texts; the whole gospel addresses our hopes and fears. Does God intend that we should take no heed to what he says, and neither fear his justice nor desire his mercy? To make such wicked rebellion against God the distinguishing mark of true faith, or even any part of it, is both wicked and dangerous. Before any such thing could take place, a man must have less sense, and less feeling in him than an idiot. He must be incapable of any argument or any impression from motives of any kind whatsoever.

It is impossible for a man to do any one thing without consulting self-interest. In vain we pretend to put on the stoic, and say that our conduct is indifferent as to what we conceive to be our best interest. God does not require us to feel ourselves disinterested; but on the contrary he has calculated his gospel to rouse us to a sense of our danger, and calls upon us to act accordingly. What harm is it for us to consult our interest? Was it wrong for Christ to endure the cross and despise the shame for the joy that was set before him? certainly no. Is it wrong for us to follow his example, and accept of the righteousness of the cross, for the joy he sets before us as the happy consequence of doing so? impossible. If this objection is good, Moses had no religion; because he had respect to the recompense of reward. And Paul was highly blamable for recommending him so highly for it, even making this the moving spring of his faith. Surely my opponent in his principles must think that

Paul gives Moses a very bad character, in declaring that self-interest was the very foundation of his faith. Were I to say that because Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, and because he had respect to the recompense of reward, therefore he chose Christ, and so became a believer, my opponent would object either to the truth of my story, or to Moses's faith as selfish. But Paul says so, and I leave him and Paul to contest the subject. Noah's faith was not a whit better; the moving cause of his faith was his being moved with fear at the warning of God. So Abraham also looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Such persons seek a country, a better country, that is a heavenly. Paul himself viewed his crown which he expected to receive at the last day and kept the faith. Peter exhorts to give diligence to make our calling and election sure; so that we may have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord.

If a selfish principle spoils our faith, why does the gospel uniformly address our selfish feelings? If Christ will not receive a sinner when he comes to him for fear he dies, why does he tell him he will die if he does not come? If Christ will reject a sinner if he comes to him on the hopes of receiving life from him, why does he offer him life, if he does come? If the objection is valid, what would Christ do if a poor lost sinner would come, alarmed by the danger which Christ warned him of, and encouraged by the hope of deliverance which Christ offered him; and especially after he had said, "him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out?" I say, what would Christ do in this case, if the objection offered be valid? He must reject him, because his faith was stirred up by a selfish principle; and yet Christ himself provoked that very principle in the sinner by offering to deliver him from danger, and to make him happy if he would come; and add to all this, he had insured him that he

would not cast him out if he came, for no cause whatsoever. What would Christ do?*

* If the devil had been the author of this disinterested scheme of faith, I would have given him great credit for his ingenuity, subtlety and art; although I would never have expected that he could have succeeded with sinners, had not the bible and experience proven the real fact. (2 Cor. 4. 4.). When the Lord Jesus Christ offers salvation freely to all who will come unto him, and urges by motives addressed to our hopes and fears, it would be a grand piece of policy in Satan to invalidate the force of those motives, by persuading sinners to believe that to be afraid of hell, and desire to go to heaven, are inconsistent with true religion; and that they must be born again and by a holy temper of heart, they must possess an ingenuity of principles, and a heart set purely on holiness without any desire towards self-interest or any motions from the thought of pleasure or pain, before they can come to Christ. He gains many a soul by this stratagem, and worries many poor believers half to death by it, and causes them to go halting perhaps all their days; while a sinner lives secure in sin, it would be good policy in Satan to let him alone; but if he is alarmed under a sense of his danger, then it is the devil's policy to keep his eyes blind as to the gospel plan. If possible, he must lead him into self-righteous schemes and try to keep him from Christ. If the sinner seems to turn his views towards Christ, great ingenuity is necessary to induce him to fix his affairs in due order. Faith must now be represented as a very nice and profound piece of divinity; and he must represent the Lord Jesus as very choice as to whom he will receive. There must be no such a thing as a flaw in faith; it must be the genuine stamp. It must not have any fear in it, nor any desire of happiness. This would be very artful; by this means the sinner would immediately begin to fix for Christ; and the task is as hard as for the Israelites to make brick without straw.

Poor sinners! it is a pity of them when they are led blindfolded to their own destruction. They are prompted to endeavour after things, which are impossible for them ever to obtain; even a disinterested faith. They never can feel themselves disinterested. They try to come to Christ without any desire to be saved by him; but they find it impossible. They try, and try again but never can get in right fix at all. I wish preachers would take heed lest they further the cause of Satan with their definitions of faith; lest they keep more souls from Christ than they bring to him. And I advise sinners to study the gospel better, and come to Christ just as they are without any ceremonies about it, lest they be damned and go to hell before they are ready to believe.

3. Another objection is, "it indulges sloth, inattention to religion, and begets a lazy, ungodly spirit, and prevents progress in holiness, and upon the whole encourages sin instead of sanctification.

This is a bold objection, but a very common one. It strikes, barefacedly at the gospel plan. The simple language of this objection is this: The believer feels no gratitude to his benefactor. He is, and must be an ungenerous, ungrateful wretch to the best of friends. I have often thought of this objection, and have often attempted to answer it in the pulpit; but I scarcely ever think of it but with abhorrence. If we think that sanctification is our own work, and that Christ has nothing to do in the business but look on and applaud our activity in religion for doing things the scripture says we cannot do, this objection must stand good. But if it is the work of Christ to sanctify by his Spirit; and if we are led by the Spirit of God when we are the sons of God; if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, and helps our infirmities, and sanctifies us wholly in body, soul, and spirit in consequence of his faithfulness, who has said he will do it; then this objection appears in its abominable colours, intending to sap the very foundation of the gospel. It robs Christ of the whole honour of the work of sanctification, which is the principal honour of the Redeemer, and gives it to the paltry activity of the helpless sinner. It is presumed by this objector that a sinner can do something if he would try. If he has something to do he will be stirred up to do it; and that nothing will be done for him, or to him, or in him but on conditions of his doing something for himself. If this is not the very spirit of the objection I am at a loss to know what it means. I am confident the objector cannot honestly look his own objection in the face without a blush. What can the sinner do? Suppose he would do his best, what would it be? Would it be pardon, regeneration or sanctification?

It is very evident from the bible he would do neither of these. So with all that is said and done, there is nothing done. It is truly hard work, to work hard and do nothing at last. Yet it is supposed that it is better to be very active ourselves than look to Christ; and it seems as if it was dangerous to trust to him. Will not Christ do more, and can he not do more for us than we can do for ourselves? The sinner comes to Christ for salvation. Christ promises to give it to him. A part of that salvation is sanctification, and Christ is faithful to his promise, and gives his Spirit to work in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Now, what danger can there be in coming to Christ for all things, under the encouragement which he has given, to do all things for us most graciously. Will Christ under all these engagements and promises, dwelling in the believer's heart by his Spirit which he has given him, suffer the believer to go to sleep? Will the Spirit of Christ be inactive in the believer's heart, until he wakes? Surely such objectors have a miserable idea of the faith, fulness and good management of Christ, and a very high opinion of their own wisdom, strength and dexterity. How far do they differ from Paul! Paul said he lived, but retracts the idea, as if unworthy of his dear Saviour. He corrects his expression, " Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life " which I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Did ever my opponent notice that Paul, with his usual ingenuity, and force of argument, answers this very objection? Let every one who thinks it dangerous to come simply to Christ as a lost sinner and trust him with his whole salvation; let every one who thinks it indulges and connives at sin, and begets sloth; let every one who imagines he can effect something noble by his own industry, read Rom. 6. " What shall we say then? shall " we continue in sin that grace may abound? God " forbid." But let me just remark that my opponent's

argument rests on the supposition that we can do something, and that Christ will not do what he has to do, unless we do our part. But the apostle's argument rests on this: that our spiritual life depends on our interest in Christ's death, and the efficacy of his resurrection, by the same Spirit which raised him from the dead, quickening us unto good works, and rousing us from our sleep and death in sin, to a life of holiness; and that the whole is in consequence of our union with Christ by faith. I cannot but note that the apostle mentions, that while they were strangers to Christ, they were the servants of sin; but after they had obeyed the gospel they became free from sin and servants to righteousness (verse 17. 18.). Upon the whole I conclude my answer to this objection by asking this interesting question: whether I ought to yield to my opponent's objection founded on self-righteous principles, or to the sentiment of an inspired apostle who founds his sentiment on our interest in Christ who is able to make us alive unto God; and who will do it according to his promise in consequence of our interest in his death.

CHAPTER XII.

The use of the means of grace.

WE are often directed to use the means of grace. This is indeed a very good direction in its proper place. Sometimes they are not used at all; sometimes they are used slightly, or merely in a formal manner; and sometimes they are used in the room of the things, for the obtaining of which they were appointed.

There are three things which may be considered as the means of grace, which I will mention. The reading of the word, the preaching of the gospel or rather the

gospel preached, and prayer. All which are made effectual to salvation by the Spirit of God. By reading we may understand, particularly our making ourselves acquainted with the holy bible, which is the only foundation of all true religion. Although the principles of reason do mightily assist us to understand the doctrines of religion when we have the radical principles laid down, yet it is proper to say that true religion is always, since inspiration has ceased, derived from the bible; and it is the grand work of the divine Spirit to cause the truths derived from the word, suitably to impress the heart. The Spirit helps us to understand truth, disposes us to think, and apply our hearts to the truth, but never reveals any new truths, not contained in the word of God. 2 Tit. 1. 19—21. 2 Tim. 3. 15—17. The reading of books is an excellent mean of improvement, and tends to explain the bible and help us to understand the truths therein contained. But care ought to be taken here, as well as in preaching the word, that we do not suffer ourselves to be led astray by the ignorance of authors, or wicked designing men who have done much harm in the world, by departing from the truth and endeavouring to establish their own notions, and artfully insinuating their own selfish schemes instead of explaining the doctrines of the bible. It is recorded to the everlasting honour of the Bereans (Acts 17. 11.) “that they received the word “with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures “daily, (to know) whether those things (which even the “inspired apostles preached) were so” (or not).

2. The preaching of the gospel is indeed the peculiar means of grace which God in his infinite wisdom has appointed for the salvation of sinners. This is no disparagement to the written word. Although the written word is the foundation of all sound preaching, and ought to be considered so both by preachers and hearers, (and no man preaches or hears as he ought to do, unless he prove the doctrine, either by positive texts, or by the

general construction of scripture doctrine) yet God is pleased to accompany his preached word with power, to the conviction of sinners, and to building up believers in the faith. There is something in the nature of public preaching which the world feels and cannot help but feel, which is better felt than told; which makes the preaching of the word the principal mean of grace. I will mention a few particulars. The natural disposition of mankind to appear in public, to mingle with the crowd, even to see and be seen, is no trifling circumstance in such a case as this, where almighty Power can, and often does accompany, even a single sentence to the heart and render it effectual to salvation. Thousands of instances make it evident that persons who would not read a chapter in the bible for weeks or months, have been brought perhaps by mere curiosity, or may be something worse, to hear a sermon which has been made the date or introduction of serious attention to religion all their lives.

Public preaching has all the advantages of oratory; which has no small influence on the mind of mankind. A living speaker with all the natural art and address and argumentation has a powerful influence on the human mind; doctrines are not only brought forward and explained, but enforced upon the mind by motives collected from all quarters; the passions are interested as well as the understanding enlightened; the sinner is arrested and persuaded to fly to Christ for salvation. No person who has ever read the histories of Greece and Rome can be ignorant of the powerful effects of public speaking. Our Saviour could hold the hands of public officers sent to lay hold of him, and cause them to return with this high commendation as their only reason for not executing their office: "Never man spake like this man." Peter could and did in one public address arrest the hearts of three thousand at once. Paul could cause Felix to tremble and almost persuade Agrippa to be a christian; and there are

many instances to prove, that when the public preaching of the gospel is attended with divine Power, so to speak, there is nothing can stand before it; the heart of the stoutest sinner has to bow and submit. It is evident from scripture that God has put a peculiar honour on the public means of grace. Preaching, it is true, seems to be a very simple thing; yet it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them who believe. This is not a mere pretence; for the world finds it a fact, let them think of it as they may, that sinners are converted to God, believers strengthened and nourished, the church of Christ maintains its ground and prevails against all opposition from earth and hell, principally by the means of public preaching.

3. Prayer is another mean of grace on which we are directed to attend. This is a precious privilege, and a very useful one. Prayer is calculated to stir up devotion, a suitable sense of dependence, gratitude for past favours, and as it were prepares us to receive favours, and to make a right use of them when received. Prayer may, and often does, and mostly should, attend other means; when we read or hear, we ought also to wait on God in the use of those means with hearts desiring his blessing. Prayer is a very suitable mean in the exercises of the graces of the Spirit. Often the soul believes in prayer, exercises faith in prayer, exercises love, repentance, hope, confidence; and I might say, every feeling of the heart may be expressed by prayer. Upon the whole we find that God has directed us to pray; and we also find that when he intends to bestow a blessing, he gives a heart to ask for it. (Ezek. 36. 37. Zecha. 12. 10.) I might mention some other means of grace included in these which I have already mentioned; but my particular design at present is not so much to point out the means and explain their nature, as to direct to the proper use

of them, and to rectify some mistaken notions about them.

We should always remember that reading, preaching and prayer, are not the conditions of the covenant of grace. Many a man lives stately up to the external forms of religion both in private and public without an interest in Christ; not only so, but were he to do so, till he would be as old as Methusaleh it would be the same case still, unless he would do more than just use the means. “Not every one who says Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter.”

It is always bad divinity to direct a sinner to the use of means, if we promise them salvation on that condition. There is nothing more common than to tell sinners to pray, and to promise them salvation if they do. And this text is always quoted as a warrant for it. “Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened.” Wherever there is a promise of any spiritual, or saving benefit, faith is always to be understood as the condition. The idea of asking, seeking, knocking as the condition of receiving, finding and being opened, must certainly be to ask in faith, seek in faith, and to knock in faith. The idea of prayer is certainly correct; but it must be a prayer of faith, or the blessing can never be bestowed. To substitute the word earnestly in the room of faith, is certainly very incorrect. We ought to pray in earnest indeed; but this earnestness must also be in faith, or it cannot come up to the requisitions of the gospel. It is cold comfort indeed, to a distressed soul to tell him to use the means, and wait for the blessing. He

knows that many have done that, and have gone to hell at last; he knows that some are represented as rejected, who even plead this before God: "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence; and thou hast taught in our streets. Have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils, and done many wonderful works? Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss." And if we advise him to diligence and earnestness, the work seems hard, and he is weak. He is apt to think of the case of Esau; of the young scribe who wanted to inherit eternal life, and of Dives in hell. "Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. But let him ask in faith nothing wavering." The shortest and easiest way for a sinner to take is to believe, to come just as he is. And if he says he cannot believe, you need not tell him to pray, for he will receive nothing from the Lord, unless he ask in faith; (James 1. 6, 7.) and it is always as easy to believe, as to pray in faith. He may believe in the time of reading, preaching, praying, talking, thinking; either running, walking, or even standing, sitting, or lying. But if he insists upon it that he cannot believe, the scripture says, provided he tells the truth, that he must be damned. There is no help for an unbeliever, who will not believe. He may pray, he may read, he may hear, he may repent, he may weep, he may do what he pleases, and with all his might, and with every power of both soul and body, if he does not believe he will be damned at last.

But it may be objected that this doctrine entirely destroys the use of means. I answer no; does mixing a little faith with the means destroy their use? You want to use means; but you do not want to use them right. And because I want a sinner to pray in faith, you think I do not wish him to pray at all. There is certainly a difference betwixt a believer waiting in the use of God's appointed means, in the patient exercise of faith for the fulfilment of all the promises of the gospel, and the sinner who has no

interest in Christ, and has no promises to trust to. The believer may wait with confidence, knowing that Christ will in due time give him every necessary blessing. But the sinner can not wait long lest he dies; and if he would die before he would get faith, he would be damned. It is no time to parley, when the avenger of blood is pursuing and the word of the Lord saying "Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation." A moment's delay in such a case may be eternally fatal. And for the sinner to content himself with praying and waiting on God in the use of means, and yet keeping his heart back from Christ, is poison to his soul. No: let him take the kingdom of heaven by violence; for it suffers violence; let him take it by storm. Let him give up his heart to Christ in spite of every thing that would oppose him, or persuade him to the contrary. Then he may ask with Christ's righteousness on him, he may seek and knock, he may read and hear and sing and think and talk, and he shall receive and find and it shall be opened unto him. He shall have access to God every day, and obtain every necessary grace in due season. But God forbid that ever I should advise a sinner, who is every moment in danger of hell-fire, to wait the length of the Lord's prayer till he believes in Christ.

All that is necessary for a sinner, is to see his lost state; and the only way of salvation through Christ, and the means of grace are necessary to teach him these important lessons. The heathens will not be condemned for the sin of unbelief, because they have no means of grace to teach them the plan of salvation; but as soon as a sinner knows enough of himself, and of Christ, as to render him justly liable to damnation for not believing, then he is certainly inexcusable if he does not believe in a moment. Let such a one know assuredly that God holds him inexcusable while he continues an unbeliever; and let him wait for no ceremonies, but come at the call of

the gospel, guilty, and unworthy as he is, and cordially submit to Christ for salvation.

Those who make faith to consist in holiness, love, repentance, and every part of salvation, and must have the sinner to fix up, and march with a solemn air, a-la-mode, must consequently take up a good deal of time to prepare; and of course it is no wonder they have to detain them so long in the use of means before they have them ready to go to Christ. But those, on the other hand, who urge sinners to come as they are, even as old Adam prepared them by his fall, they find sinners all fixed to their hand, proper subjects of the call of the gospel, the very kind, which Christ came to save. They have nothing to do but to tell them that they are lost sinners, and to offer them salvation freely through Christ, and then instantly to urge them to come to an all-sufficient Saviour.

I am now asked whether I would allow sinners to neglect the means until they came to be believers. I answer no: but let them learn, from the means, their lost state, and the chance the gospel gives them for salvation; and let them not live a day, nay, not an hour, without believing. I would wish the means to be used, truly, but let them be used right; and any person of common understanding must know, that cannot be done without faith; “for without faith it is impossible to please God.”

But cannot an unbeliever pray to God? and is it not his duty to do so? I answer, certainly he can; and it is his indispensable duty. But he must believe on Christ or he will pray wrong.

But it is still urged, what can the sinner do when he has no faith? I answer, he must believe. What, you say, believe without faith? No: but he must get faith by believing. Faith is not a thing that you must have, before you can use it. It is itself an act of the will; you possess it consenting, or by making choice of Christ in the offer of the gospel. No man has faith until he actually believes,

and by actually believing he possesses faith. If a sinner wants faith, you tell him to pray for it; I tell him to believe; and by the time he has performed the act of believing he will have faith; but without really believing, were he to pray a thousand years, he would not get faith when he was done; for faith is believing and nothing else. The last question is, what if he cannot believe? I answer, if this is true, he must be damned.

CHAPTER XIII.

Whether true faith can consist with doubts and fears; also the various circumstances attending believers in their exercises of faith in Christ.

I AM inclined to think that the nature of assurance is in every degree of true faith. That is to say, every person who has really given up to Christ, has some degree of trust, which gives him a hope of his salvation; which the whole world cannot rob him of, and which he would not, and could not part with, on any terms whatsoever. We do not call this assurance, because properly speaking, assurance is a clear prospect of salvation resting on such an unquestionable foundation as leaves the mind clear of doubt in its expectation of such a glorious benefit. But although we do not call the hope which the desponding believer enjoys, by the happy name of assurance, yet the faith is the same; the foundation is the same; and the effect in the believer, as far as it goes, is the same. There is a hope, and this hope is a good one; although it may be small, yet it is founded on the great atonement of the cross, and consequently never can possibly fail. Although the believer is weak in the exercise of his faith, yet Christ remaineth faithful and will hold him fast. Whenever the sinner gives Christ his consent on the

free offers of the gospel, and yields to him as the author of eternal salvation, the whole business is eternally fixed. Christ has fixed his whole plan, and knows what to do, and has now promised to fulfil his part of the covenant. The sinner has fulfilled his, and the rest depends on Christ; he has to justify, and sanctify; “and faithful “ is he that has promised and will do it.” (1 Thes. 5. 23, 24.) It is true the sinner has done nothing, and no wonder, for according to the covenant of grace he had nothing to do. He has believed; he has given all up to Christ; and that is all he was required to do, and it is well for him, for he could do nothing else. Thus the whole business stands betwixt Christ and the believer. The poor believer through his weakness, and fear, and blindness and unbelief, may try a thousand plans beside, but all prove abortive. Christ holds him fast, and will never let him go.

I must further observe, that a sinner under a sense of sin, viewing himself lost and undone, requires some degree of confidence in Christ, before he can trust his soul in his hands; this confidence he obtains by suitable views of Christ in the offers of the gospel; he considers, not only what is offered, but also who he is who offers; and when he obtains sufficient arguments to induce him to venture upon Christ, he has of course motives sufficient to induce him to put some dependence upon him. This dependence will, of course, beget some degree of confidence; which will produce a hope; which hope is of the nature of assurance, although it may be so weak, and so beclouded with fears and suspicions, through the weakness of the exercise of faith, that divines do not call it assurance. But let faith grow strong, and it will expel those fears; and consequently comfort will grow strong; the believer will feel his interest in Christ, and attain unto what is called assurance.

But it is my design at present, not so fully to explain this matter, as to point out the circumstances of believers in closing in with Christ, under many difficulties which may attend them. Here I beg my candid reader to indulge me, as he has often to do, to speak freely, as I generally do in the pulpit, on this subject, and not confine me too much to the minute rules of criticism. When I am treating such interesting subjects I always wish to get into the sinner's heart, and feel as he feels, think as he thinks, and speak as he speaks; and that is very often not very correct and logical.

It is, perhaps generally difficult for a person to tell the precise time when he first believed on Christ. I do not mean that it is so difficult to tell, or recollect, when serious impressions were first made on the mind, nor yet when comforts have been obtained with clearness and satisfaction, or even the first instance of relief or comfort. But, notwithstanding the believer can sometimes relate the very time and place of his first impressions, and when and where and how he got comfort, and can relate many instances of relapses, and returns of comfort which he has experienced; still it may be difficult for him to tell when he first believed. Even although he may be able to know with certainty that at or until such or such times he did not believe, and at such or such times afterwards he was a believer, yet it may be impossible for him to say at what precise time he first became interested in Christ. It is true, it is impossible to believe without being sensible of the act of believing; but often the believer does not know that what he feels is faith. He knows how he feels; but he may not know that what he feels is what the gospel states as the condition of his interest in Christ. Perhaps all the world could not convince him but that he cordially consented to the gospel; and at the same time he may not imagine that this is faith.

But it is not essential to our having an interest in Christ that we be able to tell the moment of our believing on him. Neither is it essential, that we be able to explain what faith is; yet it would be very desirable for us to be so well acquainted with the nature of the gospel, and of the exercises of our own hearts as to be conscious of our believing, when the motives of the gospel gain our consent to Christ. Until this is the case, although we may indeed have an interest safe, yet we need not expect much comfort. Our confidence in Christ, or in the promises never can be strong enough to expel our fears, until we are conscious of our surrender to the gospel, and have sense enough to know that this is performing the condition of the gospel covenant. I will now point out a few particular cases in which believers may be, and frequently have been, even in the act of believing in Christ.

1. The weak believer has been often compared to queen Esther approaching the king's presence, when she knew not how it would fare with her. More frequently still he has been represented as venturing to Christ, like the four lepers who sat in the gate of Samaria in the time of famine occasioned by the Syrians besieging the city. Those lepers were conscious that they would die unless they would go to the camp of the Syrians. If they did so, there was a *perhaps* they would live, otherwise they must die. Although I do not like to direct sinners thus to come to Christ, or rather I would say, I would wish sinners would have better views of Christ and the gospel, when they come to him for salvation, yet I believe that many poor desponding souls do actually come to Christ, on this very footing, and obtain complete salvation by it. But such believers are very dark and uncomfortable, and must remain so until they come again, or exercise faith on him from better views of the gospel. Those who are sensible of their own emptiness, and have only a clear

view of the all-sufficiency of Christ, and but a glimmering view of his willingness, yet so much as persuades them to venture, always come on a *perhaps*, like queen Esther and the lepers. And those who come on a mere *perhaps*, never can go further than *if* in their hopes of salvation; Christ will be faithful to them, it is true, but they never can trust him more, than the motives will enable them to do, which induced them to come to him; and while ever that is a bare possibility, that same possibility will be the only ground of their hope, which must be always weak, and much pestered with doubts and fears. I would be far from discouraging such weak believers; but for their comfort and direction, I would counsel them to endeavour to consider that Christ is as willing to save as he is able; and that his acceptance of a sinner, who will come unto him, does not depend on a mere capricious notion which may happen to take place in his divine mind, on seeing a sinner coming. Such notions of Christ are too unworthy of such a glorious Saviour; yet such believers indulge them too much, even contrary to their own better judgment.

Christ has actually offered salvation freely; and he has told us what he will do, if the sinner will come: "I will "in no wise cast out." What an infinite difference is there betwixt the situation of the weakest believer coming to Christ, and the chance of queen Esther going to the king who never had made one offer unto her, and had no word or truth to forfeit even had he ordered her to be slain; or the chance of the lepers, when the Syrians never had held out the provisions of their camps by any proposals of mercy to any.

The queen, no doubt, although her whole dependence was built on the grace and favour of king Ahasuerus, yet put on every possible appearance which would be calculated to gain his favour. So no doubt the lepers had their pitiable tale made up, ready to be delivered in the

most moving manner to gain that favour on which their life depended; so those believers influenced by the same motives are apt to be very anxious about doing every thing right, and are much afraid that every thing they do is wrong; they try to believe right, to pray right, to weep right, to repent right, and in short to do every thing right; and yet they think they do nothing right. So their whole hope, joy and comfort is, *if, may be, perhaps, and I wish*. Yet Christ will carry them through; and when they get better views of him they will trust more to him, and less to themselves; and until then, they must build their wood, hay and stubble, and wade through their difficulties as well as they can.

2. Some believers have so much sense that they know every thing by doctrinal knowledge. They are generally sound in their sentiments and often much attached to the rules of religion; but alas they are apt to employ all their good sense against themselves, and what is still worse against the simplicity of the gospel. They commonly have a keen sense of their lost, ruined and helpless state. They generally perform their duties well as to the matter of them, and try to do every thing in joint. They have too much sense to depend on uncertainties in a matter of such infinite importance as their souls' salvation; and yet they have not become fools, that they might be wise.

They never feel a disposition to scruple the all-sufficiency of Christ; but they are always suspicious of themselves. They are sure that the willingness of Christ depends on their willingness and do not consider the difference betwixt a condition of performance and a willingness to perform. The offers of the gospel always demonstrate the willingness of Christ to do what he proposes; but the consent of the sinner is the condition on which he will perform. This consent is not the condition of Christ's willingness, for he was as willing be-

fore as after the sinner consented; but the consent is the condition of the actual bestowment of the blessings overtured in the gospel. Here is the place where weak believers, who are sensible persons, always show themselves fools. Ask them whether Christ is able to save them; they answer quickly, yes. Ask again; "is he willing?" They answer, "yes, if I am willing." Just as if Christ's willingness depended on their willingness. There is no knowing what mischief this sentiment does. It keeps many sensible active men back; overwhelmed in fears and despondence, while many an African slave lives on the top of mount Pisgah, who perhaps has never learned the letters of the alphabet.

Such sensible believers are like rickety children, nothing grows but their heads, which become an overbalance for the other parts of the body. What a pity it is that good sense, which might be and always is an ornament and a great advantage to a christian, when rightly used, should be rendered almost worse than nothing, through misapplication, and in consequence of its being employed in the service of Satan and pride and against the simplicity of the gospel. It is nevertheless true, that with all their objections against themselves, and against the gospel, through their mistaken views and notions, yet they have a saving interest in Christ from the first moment they gave up to the offers of Christ in the gospel. But they never will be comfortable christians until they come to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

3. Some persons under deep distress imagine that Christ is neither able nor willing to save them; and it is not as easy to answer their objections to their satisfaction, as one would imagine. Such persons are not generally logical reasoners; and they cannot feel the force of an argument. They are too much in earnest to take your word for such an important matter as their salvation; and

their sense of sin is an overbalance for all they can see in the gospel. They think they are the worst sinners in the world; they conclude their sins are too many and too great to be forgiven. But the truth is, such persons have not a proper view of pardon, and very slight views indeed of Christ's atonement. They somehow imagine that God forgives sin by an arbitrary or capricious notion whenever he pleases to do so, by simply absolving a guilty person from deserved punishment according to his own pleasure; but they have but little hopes of obtaining such a special favour. They think they have offended him so highly, they despair of ever finding him so well pleased with them, as to grant them such a blessing; they feel their arguments too weak to move him, and are ready to conclude that, without a mere accident, they will have to suffer punishment; and what is still worse, they think that although Christ is the Saviour, yet they have so sinned that he is highly offended at them, and that it is as hard to be reconciled to him as to his Father without him. They have consequently little hope that he will accept of them if they do come to him. Such persons have no ideas of Christ's atonement as the procuring cause of pardon. They do not consider the validity of the death of Christ. The cross of Christ to them is a mere name without any meaning, the death of Christ, the blood of Christ, the sufferings of Christ, &c. are all synonymous, unmeaning phrases. They do not consider that a person of such infinite dignity as Jesus, died in our room, and by so doing answered the demands of justice, and purchased pardon and every grace for those who will come and receive it; and that pardon depends on the perfect righteousness of Christ, counted over to the sinner's behalf, which righteousness is not only sufficient, but also freely offered in the gospel to the vilest sinner. Such persons are in a bad situation. They have low groveling ideas of God, of Christ, and the

gospel. I advise them to read 2 Cor. 5. 25: "For he hath made him to be sin for us," &c. and John 6. 37: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But all is not lost that is given over. Such persons have a sense of their lost state; they have to learn the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour; then they will come, and submit to the gospel, and find that the precious blood of Christ can, and will, cleanse from all iniquity.

4. Some believers depend too much on what they call feelings and frames. Such persons are mostly either very happy or miserable; they are either foremost or hindmost; they are either soaring in a fine gale, or wading in muddy water. It is very common for such to be very happy one day, and spend the next in running down all the views and feelings they had the day before. Such persons love to run themselves down; their hearts are bad; they call themselves hypocrites; they say they neither love, nor fear, nor feel, half enough; they love to hear sermons and read good books, but they never hear good, they think, except they be in a lively frame. They love to talk about religion, but they mostly entertain you with their complaints, or keep you answering objections. If you turn their views to Christ, they cannot come to him. If you direct them to believe, they answer they cannot; and they become such staunch predestinarians that they think it useless to try till God gives them faith. If you urge them to trust in the promises of the gospel, they have no right to them, and if they had, they have not faith in lively exercise enough to do it. If you tell them to wait on God, they have not patience enough to wait so long; and the hardship is, they are afraid they will be disappointed at last. Thus every thing is wrong until they get into the next lively frame.

The peculiar fault of these persons is, they trust more to grace than the Giver, more to the earnest than the

promise. When this fault is corrected they will live happier; but if they do not learn to trust more to Christ than they do, they will indeed be happy when they get to heaven, but they will have an uncomfortable road to get there.

CHAPTER XIV.

The various cases of believers farther considered.

IN the fifth place, there are some believers who are always rejoicing, and very often transported with ecstasies, excepting some chance times when they seem to have lost all; and then they are miserable indeed. These are generally very happy christians, especially in lively times in the church. But the unhappiness is, their fervour and zeal, too often led by feelings and not by judgment, do little honour to the gospel, except among those who, having felt the power of the gospel, have judgment and charity enough to make allowances for the fervour of a person, who has more sail than ballast. But the men of the world who have never felt the sweet enjoyments of religion, and know nothing about an interest in Christ, are apt to find fault, and go away and say, the whole is enthusiasm.

These aspersions are something difficult to guard against. Even men of the best judgment, in a high frame, often miss the mark. And I confess it is not best to pay too much respect to the men of the world; but I advise all such persons to notice what the apostle Peter says on this subject. 1 Peter 3. 15. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

There are some of this class of christians sensible and judicious, who can regulate their highest frames with

prudence, and will not indulge themselves in the gratification of every feeling. They possess a firmness in the gospel; and the bible is the solid ground of all their hopes. They are strong in faith, and of high sensibility, and have good reason for every feeling they have; and almost every view of Christ in the plan of the gospel makes them feel. These are very happy christians; they are an ornament to the church and an honour to religion. But all such persons ought to beware lest they meet with a thorn, to keep them humble. It seems strange that high frames in religion should make a good man proud. One would imagine they would have a contrary effect. But so it is, through our weakness, that we are apt to be intoxicated with the delightful exercises of religion, and forget the Giver of our blessings, when we live in the midst of plenty.

There are others of this class who are never well but when they enjoy high degrees of feelings. These persons are generally not very steady; they are apt to be floating in their minds and something whimsical. You cannot lay much stress on their judgment; and you have frequently to check them for their imprudences; they will often occasion fifty prudent sensible men to sit silent to listen to noise and nonsense; for they can't bear to feel happy without letting every body know it. They are generally full of zeal, and wishing, and trying to do all the good they can; and very often do more harm than good at last. When they happen to be cold and lifeless in religion they are not good for much. You can hear nothing but complaints; and if their time of desertion lasts long, they become fretful and restless. It is not best to live too much on good frames; those who do so are apt to be puny. The sincere milk of the word, received by faith, is the safest diet for a christian. Those who cannot be satisfied without high affections, and towering views or

feelings, are like cachectical children; their bowels grow faster than their heads.

6. Some believers are much addicted to dreams, visions, or sights, which they have seen with their bodily eyes, to texts coming suddenly into their mind, and to sudden feelings and impressions on their mind. The experience of those christians is generally odd and singular. Their imagination is strong and very productive; and they are apt to trust more to their own whimsical notions, than to the word of God. The devil can lead them captive at his will. He can give them a dream, a sight, or vision, a text, and impressions; and they are ready to run at every call. Such persons ought to take care that they do like the Bereans, who searched the scriptures to see if these things were so; and not suffer themselves to be deluded by vain imaginations, or the suggestions of Satan.

In the last place I will briefly describe the believer whose happy state and circumstances I would covet above all others. He is sensible, judicious and prudent. He understands the gospel, and gives his hearty consent to it. He trusts entirely to Christ for his whole salvation, and lives in the uniform expectation of enjoying every thing which is promised to him in the gospel. He is not flighty but steady, not flashy but uniform, not dull but cheerful, not passionate but firm, not ecstatic but feeling. He occupies the middle regions, never much elevated nor depressed. He possesses a steady and solid peace of mind. When he enjoys a lively time, he is happy in it, and enjoys himself, and conducts himself with judgment and prudence; and when he is left in a state of desertion to languor and coldness, he waits with patience and resignation, until the Lord returns again, and still holds fast the gospel, and maintains his trust and confidence in God in all times and under all circumstances. He meets and rebuts every accusation and temptation by the word

of God, and the invincible weapon of the cross of Christ. He waits with patience and confidence for every necessary grace of the gospel, and never considers himself praying in vain for pardon, sanctification, eternal glory, or any blessing which Christ has promised to give. He does not indulge fears and doubts about his case; he feels conscious that he has given his whole heart to Christ, and intrusted his whole salvation with him on the genuine offers of the gospel; he consequently relies on the truth, and unchangeable faithfulness of Christ; and is persuaded that he is able to keep what he has committed to him against that day.

Such a christian is not only an ornament but a pillar of the church of Christ. He will be a leader, guide and an example to all around him. In the most interesting matters of religion and the most serious concerns of the soul, he is inquired at, and is ready to give aid. In short, he lives comfortable here, will die happy, and he will find at last that his confidence was not in vain in the Lord.

But my reader asks, "where shall we find such a christian?" But let us not think that I have painted too high. The character looks beautiful I know, but not more so than thousands of God's children have realized. The gospel is calculated to make us all so; and it only requires a suitable exercise of faith, with a competent knowledge of the leading doctrines of the bible to make us ornaments to the church of Christ.

I will conclude this part of my treatise by a few pertinent inferences as a summary of the doctrine of faith.

1. He, who feels his lost state, no matter how much or how little, and discovers free and full salvation offered to him in the gospel, and heartily consents to be saved on that plan, is a believer.

2. He, who has his whole trust, be that strong or weak, fixed on the death of Christ for salvation, in consequence

of a hearty surrender to the proposals of the gospel, is a believer.

3. He, who wishes for salvation, not any how, no matter how, but because Christ has purchased it and freely offers it, and because God can give it in a perfect consistency with his glory as the purchase of the cross, is a believer.

4. He who wishes in his heart to honour the Son of God with the complete salvation of his soul, and to be saved no other way, is a believer.

5. He, who prays to God for pardon and sanctification for Christ's sake, and really does consent to receive those blessings for which he prays, through the channel, through which he prays, is a believer.

6. He who gives Christ a hearty welcome into his heart by consenting for him to take the whole management of it, is a believer.

7. He, who gives his heart to Christ by consenting for him to take it, to do with it as he proposes in his word, is a believer.

8. He, who hopes to be saved in consequence of his trust being in Christ only, and that trust in consequence of Christ's truth and faithfulness in the overtures of the gospel, to which overtures he has consented, is a comfortable believer.

9. He, who wishes Christ to save him according to his own plan, expressed in the offers of the gospel, heartily begs and prays him to do so, but is afraid he will not, is an uncomfortable believer.

N. B. If this man would take it for granted that his earnest desire is really consenting to Christ, which is coming to him, which is believing on him, and then confide in him as a God of unchangeable faithfulness, he would become a comfortable believer immediately.

10. He, who loves holiness and longs to be holy, has believed.

11. He, who hates sin and earnestly wishes to be delivered from it, has believed.

12. He, who repents, loathes and abhors his sin, or himself for sin, has believed.

13. He, who feels his imperfections, and heartily mourns over them, and applies to Christ for pardon and cleansing, has believed.

14. He, who attends the means of grace generally for any or all of the following purposes, viz. to know more of God, to see more of him, to enjoy communion with him, to glorify him, to know more of himself, to get sin more mortified, to get more conformity to God, from a hungering and thirsting after holiness, has believed.

15. He, who applies immediately to the atoning blood of Christ, the first thing he does after he is sensible that through his weakness and imperfection he has committed sin, gives one of the best evidences he can give that he is a comfortable believer, provided he does it with suitable confidence.

16. He, who must stay away from Christ awhile repenting, before he can hope to find acceptance, yet is sorry in his heart for the sin he has committed, and hates it and hates himself for it, and in a few days or weeks, ventures to come to Christ for pardon and sanctification, is an uncomfortable believer; and has committed a worse sin in repenting with the views he had, before he came to Christ, than the sin he was repenting of. Unbelief is the worst sin in the world.

Finally. Any person, who has the whole of the above evidences or the one half or the one fourth or even a single one, and even any one of the sixteen, will assuredly go to heaven: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ
"and thou shalt be saved."

CHAPTER XV.

Improvement.

WHAT an infinite depth of wisdom and goodness is manifested in the gospel plan! Christ has not died in vain. He has not risen in vain. He has not ascended in vain to his Father's right hand. He who died on mount Calvary is the brightness of his Father's glory, the delight and wonder of angels, the grand foundation of the church, and the all-sufficient Saviour of sinners. The world has seen him dressed in human nature, assuming the wonderful name and character of Immanuel, God with us. He took a miraculous descent from the regions of glory, and was born in Bethlehem. At a proper age, and by divine authority he was set apart to the awfully glorious work of redemption by the baptism of John. He attested his divine authority by the doctrines he taught, and by the miracles he performed. Having given full proof of his mission, we have seen him go up to Jerusalem with a stedfast design to accomplish what he had covenanted with his Father to do. Justice demanded death as the penalty of the divine law; and death was the condition on which sinners could be redeemed. How awfully glorious and dreadfully merciful did he appear when he took the sinner's place. All nature felt the shock, from the high orbit of light in the meridian of heaven, to the low caverns of the earth. Even the solid rocks felt and to this day exhibit the evident symptoms of the agonizing groans of our crucified Redeemer.*

* How astonishing it is to find the rocks rent in all places over the face of the whole earth, even the greatest as well as the smallest. We

We have seen him led to the judgment and to the place of execution surrounded with obloquy and scorn; and even while he was expiring in agony and death, his bloody persecutors could wag their heads and deride him in the midst of his sufferings. Did this most inhuman treatment rouse the almighty vengeance of the Friend of sinners? No: so far from it, that it moved his pity; and instead of blasting them with his anger, he prays for them: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." But all that men could do scarcely deserves a thought, but only to let us feel what wretched sinners we are. When he complains, it was when he came to the turning point of our salvation, when justice called for the sinner's blood, when the Father withdrew from him, in his just infliction of the awful penalty of the law; then he cried out in significant accents of bitter anguish and pain, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" He gave up the ghost. The work was done. The price was paid; and the covenant confirmed for ever.

We see that in consequence of this wonderful ransom, Christ, who conquered death and hell, has ordered his gospel to be proclaimed to dying sinners; that he enters into covenant with those who believe in his name, and engages to them by promise the blessings of salvation. The fulness that is in him, the freeness of his overtures, and the faithfulness in which he engages in covenant with his people, are truly enough to charm our very souls, and make us feel him our everlasting friend, and place our utmost confidence in him.

But when we consider the condition on which he of-

could perhaps account for some instances of the fractures of rocks, but I humbly think the wisest philosopher would show his wisdom, in not pretending to show cause for this universal circumstance of the rocks being generally rent over the face of the whole earth; but acknowledge it as a consequence and an evidence of the death of Christ.

fers us the very life of our souls, purchased by his own blood, we are overwhelmed with a sense of his divine goodness. He asks us to consent and receive salvation. Could more merciful or more easy terms be offered to a sinner? Can we complain of the difficulties of the gospel, when it brings salvation to our door, lays it at our feet, and urges us to receive it gratuitously.

How many thousands of sinners are now in glory, in consequence of the merits of the death of Christ, and of the faithfulness of Christ to his people. He never loses one who believes on him. He will make the weakest believer triumph over death and hell. He asks nothing as a conditional reward for what he has done or for what he promises to do. He calls sinners and invites them to come just as they are; and every one that comes he saves from eternal ruin.

But, alas, we have a strange propensity to lessen the merits and glory of Christ by introducing hard and difficult terms by which the gospel is adulterated, and our minds beclouded and our comforts destroyed. We must introduce our scholastic definitions, by which we, like the proud hearted pharisees, teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Thus we enjoin things as conditions of the gospel, which the Lord never commanded, neither came they into his heart.

To see a persecuting Saul travelling to Damascus and becoming an eminent christian, to see a trembling jailer arrive to the comforts of the gospel in a few hours and by a few words, to see Peter converting three thousand murderers with one short discourse, is enough to make us conclude that the way of salvation is simple, plain, and powerful. To hear our Saviour proposing his terms, and his apostles proclaiming them to the world, and to see thousands and thousands of stiffnecked Jews and heathenish idolators enjoying all the sweets of religion, just by

coming at the call of the gospel is astonishing, and enough to make us believe that it is not such a terrible task to believe in Christ. How then does it come to pass that the gospel is more difficult now than it was then? Pride, pride is at the bottom of every difficulty that is thrown in the way of a lost sinner. There is no difficulty can be found in the gospel. All the gospel requires is to come to Christ as helpless sinners; and he himself insures salvation. If this is hard, there can be no difference betwixt hard and easy; for nothing can be easier than this; and if this is hard, nothing can be easy under the sun.

Every sinner, who ever will be saved, must be saved on the very same plan on which the jailer was saved. And pray, how was he saved? Paul had him safe in a few minutes. How did he do it? Did he make him run the gantlet betwixt the law and the gospel (to use a military phrase) for a week, a month, or a year? Did he make him do penance as a preparatory prerequisite of faith before he was fit to come to Christ? No: he did it by speaking eleven words. In four words he offered the blessings of the gospel: “Thou shalt be saved;” by the little word ¹ and ² ³ ⁴ he connected the overture with the condition; and with ¹ six words he laid the whole condition of the gospel before him: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” A ¹ ² ³ ⁴ ⁵ ⁶ short sermon; but it did the business effectually. The jailer consented; and the matter was settled at once. Paul did not stand on stepping stones; neither did the jailer; neither did Christ. Paul called; the jailer came; and Christ received and saved him.

We feel ourselves highly pleased to read Acts 8. 26—39, where we find Philip converting an Ethiopian eunuch by explaining to him the seventh and eighth verses of the fifty-third of Isaiah; and he had him ready for baptism by the time they came to the first water course.

But notwithstanding all, how difficult it is to persuade a sinner to come to Christ. He has a thousand things to do; and his wicked heart is undoing as fast as he can do for his life. He has to feel, and to feel more, and to feel more yet; and his heart will not feel for him. He has to weep; and every tear is valued equal to gold; but the sockets of his eyes will not afford enough for the purpose. He has to repent; and while he repents of one sin he commits a dozen; and he gets worse instead of better. He tries to hate sin; but he cannot hate it enough. He tries to love God and holiness, but still it is not enough. And what is the worst of all, he tries to divest himself of all selfish principles, and have all his views and feelings purely disinterested. This is a devilish trick, and always sets the sinner to work hard for nothing.

Thus betwixt one thing and another there is often five or ten years, and perhaps sometimes more, spent in preparing to believe; the gospel all this time inviting the poor wretch to come as he is. And at last when he has wasted his time and strength and spent his money, and nothing better, but still getting worse and worse, he begins to conclude that he will go to hell in spite of all that can be done. He now begins to wish and pray for faith; but faith will not come, because he will not come to Christ. But his case is now getting desperate; he can wait no longer for faith; he must come without it. The gospel still calls; and lo! the poor wretch ventures, just as he is, submits to Christ, and finds faith and Christ both at once, and complete salvation as the balance of the contract. Now to look at the way sinners do before they will believe makes faith appear difficult; but this is a wrong view of the matter. The difficulty lies in not believing; while the sinner refused to come as the gospel invited him, he had difficulties on every hand; but whenever he set his face toward the gospel, there was more done in one minute than he had done in ten years before; and he

had no labour nor trouble neither. Before, he toiled hard; betwixt the law, pride, and the devil, he had his hands full, and did nothing at last. And how did he come after all his preparations? just as bad as a proud heart and Satan could make him: poor, guilty, vile, naked, smiting upon his breast, saying “God be merciful to me a “sinner!”

Sinners under serious impressions are apt to feel a number of objections against themselves. They ought to try to answer their own objections themselves, if possible; and the only way to do it effectually, is to bring them to the gospel. Any objection that can be covered with an overture of the bible ought to be instantly quashed, and never more suffered to rise. Such persons are apt to lay their objections before their pastor and frequently will not yield even when they are fully answered. I would not discourage any serious persons, or by any means dissuade them from conversing with their minister or any religious friend; for I believe God is pleased to honour his ministers by accompanying their endeavours to the comfort of distressed souls; witness the case of Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius: the one directed to Ananias, and the other to Peter at Joppa; yet it is certainly the duty of persons to try to be themselves satisfied as to their difficulties, and compare their notions with the all-comprehensive offers of salvation made to the chief of sinners. An accurate view of the gospel would answer every objection a sinner could make. We ought to be careful to consider who are the subjects of the gospel call, and what the gospel offers, and on what conditions. The proper answer to those inquiries are, 1. All who hear the gospel are invited to come to Christ. Here you must guard against false and wicked constructions, which are too often put on the scriptures on this subject. You must not imagine that because Christ invites the poor, the hungry, and the heavy laden, that the call of the

gospel is confined to them, for none who come will be rejected. Neither must you think that such and such qualifications are necessary to prepare you to come to Christ; for he has given his word that he will not cast you out if you come unto him. You must not imagine that because Christ says he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, that self-righteous persons are not called, but those who are sensible of their sin. I mention this text particularly, because the whole world seems to be grossly mistaken as to the sense of that text. By putting the little word *self* in the text, you make our Saviour speak perfect nonsense, flatly contradict himself; and what is still worse, you attribute to him a positive falsehood. Christ calls the ends of the earth; and whosoever will is made welcome to come. He commanded the first offers of the gospel to be made at Jerusalem; he invited the rich self-righteous young man to follow him; he spent three years of his life in preaching to the self-righteous Jews; he called self-righteous Paul; and who is not a self-righteous man less or more? If therefore Christ did not come to call the self-righteous to repentance, why did he do it? and why does he do it to this day? and some of them not only outwardly but effectually by his Spirit? witness the three thousand under Peter's sermon, and Saul on his way to Damascus. If he did not come to call the self-righteous Jews, why did he preach to them that they should repent? It is a downright falsehood to say that Christ came not to call the self-righteous; for he did, over and over; and he never did, what he did not come to do. He was expressly sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

What Christ said was true. He was found fault with because he eat and kept company with publicans and sinners. He vindicates his conduct by saying his business in this world was with sinners, and not with righteous persons. He therefore had a right to proclaim the calls of

the gospel among sinners of every class and circumstance whatsoever; that he viewed the world as dead in sin; and that there was none righteous. Inasmuch therefore as his business was not with mankind as righteous persons but as sinners, why should he be blamed for associating with all sorts of sinners, and embracing every opportunity to call them to repentance? But to say he did not come to call the self-righteous, when he did it, and came to do it, would be absurd, contradictory, and false.

The truth is Christ never hindered a sinner to come unto him yet. He may come self-righteousness and all; and he will in no wise reject him. All such notions as have a tendency to limit the offers of the gospel, and induce sinners to attempt to qualify themselves for the gospel are false and dangerous, and ought by all means to be rejected.

2. As to what the gospel offers to every sinner that hears it, we may sum up the whole in the word *saved*. Christ offers pardon and sanctification to every soul that hears the glad tidings. This offer is not made merely to them that come; it is offered, whether they come or not; and lastly, the conditions on which those benefits are offered is faith. The condition is not, if you hunger or thirst, if you pray or repent, if you confess and reform, if you love and obey, &c. but if you come and accept.

There is no such thing as altering the terms. You must not add a single thing to it; and you cannot take any thing from it, for it is as low as it can possibly be already. You must come; you must just come; and you must do nothing but come.

Those who attempt to bring a holy heart to Christ, have a similar disposition, and expect a similar reward, and will meet with similar fare, as he who brought tidings to king David of Saul's death, with his crown and bracelets in his hand. The truth is there can be no such thing as coming to Christ with a holy heart. Coming to

Christ is believing on him, or consenting to receive salvation from him. This no holy man can do; and if any one attempts to do it, he will find it impracticable. An angel could not believe on Christ; he might, and does believe him, but not on him, or in him. A devil could, if he had the chance, because he is a sinner; but an angel is holy, and therefore could not come to him for salvation. We sinners may, and can, and ought to come. Sinners, and not righteous persons can be the subjects of salvation. We are sinners; and salvation is offered to us; and we are consequently called to accept of it. It is our duty and our privilege, to come at the call of our dear Redeemer, and cordially with gratitude accept of his offered mercy.

How many thousands have been in the world, and are to this day, who have lived and died, without enjoying one offer of mercy! We pity them; but we cannot help them. But, alas, how many who have the offers of mercy every day they live, line upon line and precept upon precept, live in a total neglect of their great salvation. When we consider the worth of the immortal soul, and the inestimable price of salvation, and the gracious conditions on which it is offered, we are ashamed, astonished, and confounded at the thought of a lost sinner rejecting and despising those gracious proposals. Who would ever have thought that a sinner would neglect the salvation of his own soul! Do sinners know that they must die? Do they know that they must live for ever? How can they make choice of the empty, fleeting enjoyments of this world, which cannot make them happy in eternity! When a sinner has his own choice whether life or death, it is truly strange that he would choose to die eternally, rather than embrace the gospel. If the gospel called sinners to do some great thing, if it laid some insurmountable difficulty before them, they would at least be more excusable; but when they are invited to accept salvation

as a gracious gift at the hand of an almighty Saviour, no possible excuse can be plead in their behalf. The solemn interrogation in the bible must indeed be very pertinent in the case of every sinner who rejects the free offers of salvation: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Even to set aside every principle of duty or obligation, and all the soft and tender feelings of gratitude to the best friend and kindest benefactor, and to argue from principles of self-interest, sinners never could vindicate their awful neglect of the eternal salvation of their own souls. But when we add to this, the solemn obligation of sinners in point of duty to a gracious sovereign, even their Creator and Redeemer, their case looks desperate. And when we still farther take a view of the price that was paid, who paid it, and how it was paid, and for whom, it kindles our indignation to think of the infinite baseness of a sinner's ungrateful heart. It seems to require proof (but alas there are proofs too many!) to make us believe it possible that there can be such a foolish, wicked, and ungenerous soul upon the face of the earth. It is really astonishing, that notwithstanding all that Christ has done, and notwithstanding all he offers, many to whom the offers are made, are the very persons who reject the salvation proposed freely, foregoing all the blessings of life, and the everlasting glory and happiness of heaven, and at the horrible risk of eternal damnation. No intreaties will move them. No proposals will allure them. No threatenings deter them. No arguments will persuade them. Some live in a sullen inattention to every thing good. Some sport their time away in merry entertainments and diverting amusements. Others neglect the one thing needful, through attention to the business of the world. Others again are not merely inattentive to religion, but try to laugh it to scorn, ridicule and deride the gospel, and make a laughing sport of every thing serious. Surely no man need covet their happiness, nor

envy their prospects. Can God Almighty bear with such rebels? Is there not a day approaching when their faces will gather blackness, and terrible confusion? Will not the precious blood of the cross cry aloud for vengeance against those who ridicule and set at nought the infinite treasures of the gospel? O sinners! sinners! learn to be wise before your day is over. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; but wo to the man who striveth with his Maker." Your breath is in your nostrils; you depend on God every moment you live. While he gives you life and health and the gospel too, you can vaunt as if you were something; you can spend your lives in sin, set your Maker at defiance and despise the offers of his mercy. But remember that for all this God will call you to judgment. Sinners are such puny things that they shrink at the appearance of a worm; yet they are so audacious that they can outbrave the threats of their Maker.

"But let them remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." With all the pride and haughtiness of a sinner's heart it will not be hard for Omnipotence to humble him. He who could stand on the deck of a ship in the midst of a furious storm and say to the winds and the foaming ocean, "Peace, be still;" he who could make all nature to sympathize with his dying groans; he who burst the bars of death and came forth like a mighty giant in spite of Pilate's seal and guard, with one word can make the sinner shrink to nothing.

Let me exhort careless, wicked rebels against the gospel to consider what they are doing. It is no trifle for you to neglect or reject the offers of salvation. There is a price put into your hand, but you have no heart to improve it. You could be saved if you would only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is dreadful to reject the offers of

the gospel. To prove obstinate when Christ calls and invites you to come to him for life, will be fatal to your souls. Look at the antediluvian world and learn to fear your Maker's displeasure. Go down to Egypt and ask king Pharaoh the consequence of disregarding the word of the Lord. Go down to Sodom and Gomorrah and see the effects of bold impiety. What became of Korah, Dathan and Abiram for their rebellion? Behold the desolation of proud Babylon! the habitation of doleful creatures, the owls, the dancing satyrs, the wild beasts of the desert and the islands, and dragons. (Is. 13. 21, 22.). See the dreadful consequence of rejecting the calls, warnings and invitations of a crucified Saviour, on the hardhearted and unbelieving inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem. Their temple rased to the foundation, and the devoted nation scattered abroad over all the face of the earth, exhibiting an awful example in all our seaport towns and cities of the displeasure of Him whom they nailed to the accursed tree.

How many instances could be called up to view, in which God has showed the greatness of his power and the terrors of his wrath. Yet sinners hardened and rebellious, in spite of all intreaties, warnings and examples, will rush like the horse into the battle, and run upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler. Sinner! do you mean to try the strength of the arm of God, and provoke him to the combat? Will you not submit to Jesus before he roars like a lion, and leaps upon his prey? If this stone, the head of the corner, at which you are offended, and over which you stumble, falls upon you, it will grind you to powder.

How awfully malignant is the sin of unbelief. The greater the blessings offered in the gospel and the easier the conditions on which they are offered, the more inexcusable must the sinner be who refuses to comply. But if,

as we have demonstrated, the everlasting blessings of eternal salvation are offered to a sinner, entirely lost and undone, on the low condition of his simple consent to receive it, if he refuses, it is impossible to calculate the aggravations of his crime. The violation of every demand from the sinner's best interest is ready to stare him in the face, and pronounce him lost to all sensibility as to his own happiness. Every degree, from the highest to the lowest, of ingratitude even to the dearest friend who has laid down his life for our sakes to save us from death, cries aloud for vengeance on the unbeliever, who ungratefully disregards the blessings of salvation and undervalues the vicarious sufferings of Christ. The highest and the basest degree of pride rules in the heart. The greatest dishonour that can possibly be done to God is unbelief. The most daring affrontery, rebellion and obstinacy is in this sin. It contains the height of madness and folly. There is no possible excuse for unbelief. If a sinner only hears the gospel and enjoys the offers of salvation, his mouth must be eternally shut if he does not accept of free, unmerited mercy. Had he to make atonement for his own crimes, he might say he was unable; had he to change the disposition of his own soul, he might say that the task was too great for him; had he never heard the gospel or had the free offer of salvation, he might say it was impossible for him to believe; and would certainly be free from the sin of unbelief. But when Christ offers his own righteousness for his justification, and his Spirit to sanctify; when in short, every thing necessary is offered freely and the sinner has no condition to perform, to have the whole kingdom secured as a free gift of God, but barely consent to receive it graciously, he cannot be excused if he does not believe. Had he to be regenerated or sanctified before he could believe, had he to love God and holiness and hate sin and repent, had he to be divested of all self-love and

neither wish to escape hell nor be happy in heaven, he might be reasonably excused. But when he is invited to come just as he is by nature, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and receive of Christ every thing necessary for his salvation, if he refuses he must be sealed up in eternal silence, and never be able to utter a syllable in excuse for his ungrateful conduct.

The too common excuse of sinners "I cannot believe" looks so meagre and wryfaced, that it is a shame for a man ever to make use of it. Those who preach that doctrine, if they mean any thing else than an unwillingness to be saved by Christ, have never understood the nature of faith; and they ought to study the gospel better before they preach another sermon. Every sinner who makes this excuse wishes in his heart to lay his Maker in the fault; and barefacedly impeaches both the wisdom and the goodness of God. God could as well save a sinner without faith as with it if the sinner is not able to believe. If God has to plant all the principal parts of salvation in a sinner's heart to enable him to believe, the gospel plan is quite out of a sinner's reach, and consequently does not suit his case; and it must be impossible for God to condemn a man for unbelief; for no just law condemns or criminales any person for not doing what he cannot do.

It is in vain to say that the sinner has lost his ability in the fall. This is like the old astronomy which made the sun revolve round the earth. What power has the sinner lost by the fall? The power to believe on Christ he never had, nor could have that power until he fell. Adam before he fell could no more come to Christ for salvation than he could fly to Jupiter's moons. Adam could not lose what he never had. It was by the fall he got power to accept of the offer of salvation. None but a fallen creature can believe. Gabriel never had that power nor ever will. Many a sinner *will* not; but no sinner *can* not, who enjoys the

gospel. They all can if they will; and will be damned if they will not.

I sincerely advise every sinner not to take that excuse to the bar of God. If you do, sinner, you will be found among the liars who will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. But try whether you can believe or not. Try hard; and if you cannot do it by trying hard, try easy; and I will warrant you will do it effectually.

BOOK V.

The nature of the salvation proposed in the gospel or covenant of grace, promised and applied to believers. Or the consequences of an interest in Christ by faith.

CHAPTER I.

Justification.

WE have attempted to explain the nature of the covenant of grace, the parties, and faith the condition of the covenant. We have seen that whenever a sinner believes, he performs his part of the covenant; and Christ, according to his own proposals, comes under covenant engagements to make good his word, in granting every grace stipulated in this covenant to the believer; who is now interested in him, and by faith united to him, and has a covenant claim to the whole of that precious salvation which was purchased on the cross and offered freely in the gospel. I come now to treat of the happy effects of an interest in Christ, and to explain the nature of those graces and blessings of the gospel, which constitute the salvation of a sinner.

The first and most immediate consequence of an interest in Christ by faith is the imputation of the spotless righteousness of Christ. What this righteousness is I have already explained. The proper idea of imputation is to reckon over to another, so that in law whatever is thus reckoned over is legally considered as belonging to

the person to whose account it is placed. Guilt or righteousness can be and is thus imputed. In such cases of imputation, the two persons are legally considered as one. The law of God viewed Adam and his posterity as one, and would have viewed his posterity righteous had he kept the covenant; but in consequence of his sin, his guilt is imputed to them, and they all become legally guilty and under the curse. When Christ became the surety for the sinner, the law considered him one with the sinner; and he was viewed by the law as a transgressor. Thus our guilt was imputed to him, in consequence of his voluntarily assuming our place; he consequently suffered the penalty due to or demanded by the law in our room. When a sinner believes, according to the gospel plan, the law views Christ and the believer as one; and the believer is legally considered as having satisfied the demands of justice in Christ his surety; the law placing what Christ has done to the sinner's account; and thus the sinner by imputation becomes righteous. And every one must see how completely righteous the believer must be; having the great atonement of the cross to plead in his behalf.

Thus the believer is justified through the righteousness of Christ. Justification is justly ranked among the graces of salvation, and is indeed the first thing that is done for the believer on the footing of the imputation of Christ's atonement. Hence the apostle ranks it first in the blessings of the gospel. "If while we were enemies
 "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,
 "much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his
 "life." Rom. 5. 10. Compare this with the preceding verse and you will find that reconciliation and justification are the same thing. "Being justified by his blood,
 "we shall be saved from wrath through him." Also in Col. 2. 13. he says, "and you being dead in your sins,
 "&c. hath he quickened together with him, having for-

“given you all trespasses.” Here you may see that reconciliation, justification and forgiveness are all synonymous phrases expressing the same thing.

Justification is therefore God’s pronouncing the believer just or righteous, through the imputed righteousness of Christ; by which righteousness, his guilt is removed or rather atoned for; and consequently “his sins” and his iniquities are remembered no more.”

The Westminster divines have given an excellent definition of justification; only we ought to read *even* instead of *and*; and then it would read thus, “Wherein” he pardoneth all our sins, even accepteth (accounteth “or declareth) us as righteous in his sight, only for the “righteousness of Christ,” &c. This would show that pardon and accounting us righteous for Christ’s sake is the same thing. Perhaps this is what they meant. It is however the true gospel notion of pardon and justification. When we who are fathers pardon our children, we do it by a mere act of grace or pity, by withholding the rod which is justly due to the offender, and thus suffering the guilty to go unpunished. We consequently, in such cases, never justify; for it is legally impossible to justify where guilt remains unatoned; we only suffer the child to remain with his guilt upon him, but remit the punishment. But God never pardons so; it would be directly contrary to his justice, and contrary to his word. He has declared that he “will by no means clear the guilty.” If God could (or would) forgive in this manner there would have been no need for the death of Christ. When God forgives sin he does it, not by a mere gracious act of omitting or withholding the just punishment due to the sinner, but by imputing the atonement of Christ to the believer; by which atonement the believer is accounted perfectly righteous, and not a single particle of guilt remains. This is pardon infinitely above ours indeed. It is pronouncing him, who was in himself a sinner, com-

pletely righteous in consequence of his interest in Christ by faith.

Moreover, God's accounting the believer righteous is the very same thing as to acknowledge his right and title to the blessings of the kingdom; for the same righteousness which removes the believer from the curse must give him a title to the blessing.

The notion that justification consists in two distinct parts, viz. a deliverance from guilt, and a title to heaven or pardon and acceptance, has arisen from the notion of Christ's active and passive obedience constituting our justifying righteousness. For as the righteousness consists in two distinct parts, so must justification also; or we could find nothing for Christ's active obedience to do. And the notion of Christ's active and passive obedience as our righteousness has arisen from our notion that Adam had to keep the moral law as a condition of the covenant of works, as well as not eat the forbidden fruit; and also our notion that the moral law must be actively kept, when it is broken; and that it would not be satisfied with the fulfilment of the penalty. So that we have a system beginning in the garden of Eden, and extending to the life and death of Christ; and from the life and death of Christ to the believer's justification; and from justification through the process of sanctification; placing regeneration, the radical part of it, before the sinner has by faith any personal interest in either the active or passive obedience of Christ, and the remaining process afterwards; until at last the active obedience lands the believer in heaven.

It is generally the case that when a man starts wrong, the farther he goes the farther wrong he gets. And he will never get right by keeping on. When we adopt wrong principles we are under the necessity to continue wrong to make our sentiments gingle; for right and wrong never can agree; and if we begin with wrong

ideas we must go on with them; for it looks better to have a system than a jumble, even if we should be wrong.

When I used to preach those sentiments, I confess I thought I was right; I had been taught all my life to think so. But I never attempted to prove those parts of my doctrine from the bible. I never knew where to find texts that would prove it; and I was always above quoting a mere chapter and verse for proof, when the words said nothing to the point, or perhaps would prove the contrary. The one half of the world will not take the trouble to inquire whether a text quoted as a proof does really prove the point or not. After taking certain things for granted as first principles, I could demonstrate with great clearness and build as beautiful a system as any man of equal abilities. But when I began to think more for myself, and inquire more strictly after truth, and like the Bereans, searched the scriptures to see if these things were so, I soon found that what I had taken for granted, as the very ground of all my arguments on these important points was not established by the bible; my beautiful system of arguments fell of course, having lost their basis. When I said the moral law was the condition of the covenant of works, I could not find it so in the bible. Then I could see the absurdity of any one doing that for another, which both had to do, each for himself. And a temporary condition to be that which must be obligatory for ever.

Another of my maxims was; that the broken law demanded perfect obedience and the penalty too. But I could find no such thing in the bible. I was so sure this was right, that I could hardly believe my own eyes. I was truly astonished that I could not establish this point. But I could not make scripture; and I was unwilling to force the bible to speak my sentiments whether it would or not. But on viewing the matter I found it a self-evi-

dent absurdity, and wicked injustice. No law ever did or can do so, in order to justification; either obedience, or suffering the penalty in case of disobedience, will justify any man; but both are legally and naturally impossible.

Founded on this, another of my maxims was Christ's active obedience in the room of a sinner. But this fell of course; for if it is contrary to justice to obey and suffer too, Christ could not fulfil the precepts in the room of sinners. I found no solid proof for it in the bible, but a great many against it. However, while I took this for granted, I had to take several other things for granted before I could argue very systematically. I had to say that Christ was above law, and needed not to obey it for himself, in order that his obedience might be imputed; for if he was bound himself he could not obey for another. All this time I forgot that Adam had to obey for himself and others too. The very same arguments which would have shown the impropriety of Christ's keeping the moral law for his people, if he had to keep it for himself, must completely overthrow Adam's obedience to the moral law for his posterity; for let Christ be above law or not, we know Adam was not.

Here I had to stride over several absurdities. This sentiment implies that if Christ had not been a surety he might have done any thing; it would not have been wrong for him to hate holiness and love sin; but because he was a surety for a sinner he must be holy and do nothing wrong. It implies also that a lawgiver is never bound to do right; he must make his subjects do right, but he himself may do as he pleases, because he makes the law. I wonder if he is bound to make good laws, or has he authority to make bad ones, and direct his subjects also to do wrong? It is farther implied in this sentiment that the law of God requires double duty. It became the duty of Christ, because he was the surety for his people, to take the moral law as the rule of his life;

and after he had observed it punctually, even to perfection, his people also are bound in duty to do the very same thing. Not only so, but when this perfect righteousness is imputed to the sinner, it does not fulfil the law for him at last. But this is impossible; for perfect obedience has no possible degree of guilt; and if imputed to the sinner it must render him completely free from the least charge of guilt and imperfection; yet the surety had to die for him as a guilty sinner after he had made him perfectly free from every degree of guilt, by the imputation of his own perfect obedience. So God's law requires in this case three perfect duties; two of the surety, and one of the principal himself. It must consequently be twice wrong for once right. I could not find these things proven in scripture.

Another maxim I had was, that the passive obedience of Christ procured our pardon; and his active obedience procured our acceptance with God, and title to the blessings of the gospel. But I found I could not prove this doctrine; but that the bible declared the contrary. I found that our boldness to enter into the holiest was by the blood of Christ. And that by means of death we receive the promise of eternal inheritance; and that by Christ being made sin (or a sacrifice) for us, we are made the righteousness of God in him. Also that it is through the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ that we are sanctified.

Consequently I also set it down as a necessary truth that justification consisted in two distinct parts: pardon and acceptance. But the bible tells us that we are pardoned by the imputation of Christ's righteousness (Rom. 3. 25.), through faith in his blood; and that we receive the quickening influences of his Spirit in consequence of his having forgiven all trespasses (Col. 2. 13.).

God is always pleased with those who are righteous; he pardons none but those who are righteous through

Christ by faith; so that pardon and acceptance with God is really the same thing. To be not guilty is to be righteous; to be righteous is to be acceptable to God. Where there is no guilt there must be a title to common privileges. There is no medium betwixt pardon and acceptance; the same person who is pardoned is accepted by that pardon. The same word which proclaims pardon, implies acceptance; for the one cannot be without the other.

I do not apprehend there is any dispute here; the dispute lies in the particular ground of both. Those who differ from me say that pardon is by the imputation of Christ's death; and with this I agree. But they say that acceptance is by the imputation of the life of Christ; but I think I have sufficiently shown the absurdity of this sentiment. Upon the whole, justification is a most glorious part of our salvation. In it we are saved from guilt and eternal punishment. It is honouring to God. It is making a guilty sinner righteous through the spotless atonement of the cross. It is done in a perfect consistency with all the divine perfections. God is just, and the justifier of him who believes on Jesus. And it completely opens the way for all the communications of the divine Spirit to carry on a work of grace in the heart, and entitles the sinner to all the rich variety of the blessings of the gospel through the infinite righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well might the psalmist say, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

CHAPTER II.

Adoption.

ADOPTION is another consequence of an interest in Christ. This is a pleasing circumstance, in which we have an interest in the love of our heavenly Father, in his tender care and kind protection. We possess a filial temper of mind towards God, and are heirs of the glorious inheritance with the saints in light.

Adoption is a direct consequence of justification. The believer being united to Christ by faith, and freely justified through his righteousness, through the great love wherewith God hath loved him, having predestinated him unto adoption, is received into the happy number of the children of God. He is acknowledged as a child and treated as such. Adoption presupposes that we are by nature strangers to God, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. It supposes that we had no right to the blessings and privileges of his house. But in this wonderful dispensation of the gospel, we, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

It is true, and a glorious truth it is, that the righteousness of Christ is the meritorious cause of every blessing of the covenant of grace; but the circumstance of adoption, the appellation of sons and daughters is in consequence of our union, or oneness with Christ. He is the only begotten of the Father; and believers by faith are united to him; are in him; become all one in him (Gal. 3. 28.). They become the children of God by faith. Christ is their elder brother, and the first heir of all things; and believers become joint-heirs with him. By his precious

blood they are redeemed from under the law that they might receive the adoption of sons; and because they are sons, God sends forth the Spirit of Christ into their hearts to give the kind intimations of their sonship. They possessing the same mind which also is in Christ Jesus, feeling a cordial love and friendship, and reverence towards God, and a dutiful temper of heart wrought in them by the divine Spirit, by faith and confidence claim their heavenly relation, in their familiar and intimate addresses to his throne call him by that paternal appellation *Abba*, which signifies *Father* (Gal. 4. 5, 6.).

This is like a child indeed, exercising a suitable confidence in God, under the relation of a father. Adoption is a testimony of our right and title to the kingdom of heaven. A child is an heir in law, and cannot be cut out of his lawful inheritance. Hence the apostle says, (v. 7.), "If a son, then an heir of God through Christ." What a glorious heirship is this! an heir of God! It is counted great to be the heir of an earthly king, but to be God's heir, and that on the solid footing of claiming through the firstborn, is truly a wonderful circumstance. The same apostle (1 Cor. 3. 21, 22, 23.) on the same principles extends the privileges of God's children: "All things," says he, "are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, (Peter) or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

On a view of such unbounded honours and privileges as these, the humble believer is ready to shrink under the load, and asks with the stripling David, "who am I? or what is my life, or my father's house that I should be the king's son?"

The apostle John calls upon his fellow christians to "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And on this footing he presents us with the most glorious

hope the gospel is calculated to give. Says he, the present privilege and honour which we enjoy is, that we are, even now in this imperfect state, the sons of God; which gives us such a glorious prospect that we are not now able to have ideas adequate to the exalted state to which we shall presently arrive. But although we cannot comprehend the glory of that happy state, we are sure of two things, which insure every thing that we can possibly desire, or that can constitute our happiness, viz. "We shall be like him:" like God! complete in holiness and happiness! Also "we shall see him as he is;" we shall be admitted into his presence; and as Paul says, "we shall be ever with the Lord;" and as Christ himself said, "where I am, ye shall be also."

Adoption is not, nor can it be a consequence of regeneration; but regeneration a consequence of it. It is naturally impossible for a child begotten by a father to be adopted by him. His father's house is the natural privilege of a born child; but a strange child is taken into the family by adoption, and obtains his privileges by special grace and favour; and when adopted is governed and brought up according to the laws, usages and customs of the house. So God adopts believers, having forgiven their trespasses, being united to Christ by faith, even in the rude state of nature; and having adopted them he cultivates their hearts, and by his Spirit conforms them to his image, by regeneration and sanctification. Hence Paul most elegantly observes to the Galatians, (chap. 4. 6.) having told them "Christ was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," he adds, "and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." To the same purpose he says to the Colossians, (chap. 1. 21, 22.) "and you who were sometime (or once) alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works; yet now hath

“ he reconciled in (or by) the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight.” Adoption is not a work of the Spirit, but an act of God. Regeneration is a work or at least the introductory work of the Spirit. The one is that by which the justified sinner is acknowledged as a son; the other is that by which he is made to possess a filial temper of heart, and is by the process continued in sanctification, brought up as a son in a holy conformity to the will of his heavenly Father, and made meet for his heavenly inheritance.

Christ gives to all who receive him, even to those who believe on his name, the honour, power and dignity to become (γενεσθαι) the sons of God by adoption. Those become (εγγενηθῶσαν) the sons of God; not by birth, blood, or parentage, nor by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but only by the will of the Father. Christ by his righteousness imputed in consequence of faith opens the way for adoption, and God the Father adopts by a gracious act of his own will. (John 1. 12, 13.) “ Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” (Eph. 1. 5.)

We become the children of God, indeed, by regeneration, but not in the same sense as we do by adoption. All mankind are the sons of God as they were begotten by his divine power in creation; so are the devils; and so are angels. But angels, as they are holy creatures, are eminently the sons of God. (Job 38. 7.) God is the author of holiness; he not only created the natural faculties of the mind, but also by suitable manifestations of himself he influences the mind towards that which is morally excellent. Thus he becomes the Father of believers, by begetting them by his Spirit and word of truth. (James 1. 18. 2 Cor. 3. 17, 18.) But adoption is another thing; which is evident from the explanation I have already

given it. In regeneration a sinner becomes a child of God, as he is begotten to a life of holiness; but in adoption he is admitted to sonship as one with Christ, and in him is privileged to partake of the blessings of God's kingdom; and those very sanctifying influences of his grace are among the peculiar advantages to which he is privileged as an adopted son.

We may farther observe that the salvation of a sinner consists in two parts: the one is done for him; and the other is done in him and to him. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to divide the latter into two, and say that three things constitute the sinner's salvation. 1. What is done for him. 2. What is done in him. And 3. What is done to him. Taking the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the righteousness imputed, and faith by which it is imputed, it being the condition, not as any part of salvation, but the special ground or plan on which the whole salvation is bestowed, then justification and adoption will be the first part; sanctification in all its branches the second; and the resurrection and admission into glory the third. But what I am about to observe here is that adoption is a summary, or rather the result of what is done for a sinner. That is to say, the sinner being united to Christ by faith, the righteousness of Christ imputed to him and he completely justified, the result is, one who was by nature far from God is now fully reconciled, freely pardoned, received into covenant, becomes an heir of all things, and is graciously admitted to the enjoyment of all blessings and privileges necessary for his eternal happiness. This is adoption; and happy will the man for ever be who is an heir of God through Christ.

When a lost sinner is sensible of his guilt and lost and undone state, he feels himself invited and directed by the gospel to accept of the offers of salvation; he comes poor, lost and helpless on the invitation, and accepts of Christ as his surety. The righteousness of the cross is imputed,

even counted over to him, and he is freely justified; his guilt is removed; and he is considered as righteous through his surety; he therefore is viewed as fully entitled to the blessings of the gospel, which insures complete salvation. He, being united to Christ by faith, is brought from under the old covenant and into the new. The result of which is adoption, or a stranger taken into the family of God by special grace, and entitled to the laws, customs and usages of this new situation.

Every proper means and agency are employed to bring the newly adopted child to a suitable and fit capacity to enjoy his new estate, so as to be himself happy and not to mar the happiness of his holy brethren. Hence the necessity of regeneration and sanctification, to which those who are adopted are entitled by the blood or atonement of Christ; and of which they have the glorious privilege by adoption.

It behooves all unbelievers to consider the wretched state in which they are. Not adopted into the family of God, they are aliens, strangers and foreigners; children of the world and of Satan; under the penalty of the broken law; guilty, wicked and helpless. They have no righteousness to entitle them to any favour or blessing. They are exposed to all the fatal effects of guilt and pollution; children of wrath; heirs of sin and death; and fast posting to destruction.

When there is a door of mercy opened for the wretched, a way of salvation for the miserable, when it is possible for those who are afar off to be brought nigh by the blood of Christ, O let sinners of every description who enjoy the offers of mercy come at the call, and yield themselves up to God on the footing of the gospel! Those who are far from God, are far from happiness; and it is in vain to expect to enjoy the privileges of children unless we are adopted into the number of the sons of God.

Finally, let believers know and feel their happy privileges, and claim their blessed relation to God. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved." Those who are adopted may and ought daily to use a happy freedom with God as their heavenly Father, and enjoying the glorious hope of the gospel ought to purify themselves even as he is pure.

CHAPTER III.

The Intercession of Christ.

THE intercession of Christ is a very important article in the gospel, and truly worthy of our serious attention. Nothing can be more pleasing than to think of Christ appearing before his Father pleading the cause of his people.

I have introduced the intercession of Christ in this place, after having treated of faith, justification and adoption, and previous to my treating of the most important doctrine of holiness in all its various branches and exercises, because the scriptures seem generally to give us the idea of the practical or experimental part of our salvation which is wrought in us by the divine Spirit, to be peculiarly in consequence of Christ's intercession.

The intercessory arguments are presented to God arising from the atonement; for our surety could not prevail with God but on the footing of a complete atonement for sin. God will by no means clear the guilty. A sinner must always come with an atonement in his hand to gain the favour of God. And herein consists the glory of the gospel plan; the sinner is permitted to approach the throne of grace with a vicarious atonement, even the righteousness of Christ. Christ having taken the sinner's place and offered himself a ransom for sin, appears as an

high priest in the most holy place, even in heaven itself in the presence of God for us, having borne our sins in his own body on the tree. He, on the footing of the perfect atonement which he made on the cross, claims a perfect right, as the sinner's surety, to every blessing contained in the covenant of redemption. Christ Jesus, our dear Redeemer, always stands as an intercessor with his own righteousness, exhibited on the sinner's behalf; so that the poor, worthless, imperfect sinner in all his prayers and services obtains acceptance with God, being represented by the perfect righteousness of his surety and intercessor. (Heb. 9. 24. and 7. 24, 25. and 10. 12—23.)

The intercession of Christ may be divided into three parts, to wit, For the elect at large previous to their personally believing; for the elect individually at the instant of believing and becoming by faith personally interested in his atonement, according to the covenant of grace; and lastly, for believers who are through Christ justified and adopted into the family of God.

1. Christ claims the promises of his Father for all those whom he in covenant had given him out of the world. He having done what his Father gave him to do, on the validity of his sufferings, having given his soul to death, he looks for and depends upon the fulfilment of the engagements of his Father, to make his people willing in the day of power; and that he may see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. We have an example of this in that ever memorable prayer which he made immediately previous to his sufferings, (John 17.) particularly where he prays not for the world, but those whom God had given him; (v. 9.) and in v. 20. where he prays for all who will believe on him.

It also appears evident that Christ put the greatest confidence in his Father's word, where he says "all that the Father hath given to me shall come unto me." In consequence of the prevalence of the plea presented before

God, the Spirit is sent down to convince of sin and of righteousness, and to persuade sinners to accept of Christ in the offers of the gospel: "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you; and when he is come he will reprove the world, &c."

2. When the motives of the gospel have prevailed over the sinner, so that he gives up to the offers of salvation and becomes a believer, he is instantaneously interested personally in the righteousness of Christ, according to the condition of the covenant of grace. Then the intercession of Christ immediately puts on a new form. Before this, as we have already observed, Christ plead that the sinner, whom he had purchased, might be brought to him; but now the sinner has actually come according to the gospel; and Christ immediately presents his righteousness in his behalf, and claims his justification. What a change of circumstances takes place here! The guilty creature has come to Christ with all his guilt; but is presented to God in the beautiful garment of a complete atonement; which washes away his crimes, burying his guilt in eternal oblivion; he is therefore fully justified and received into favour, admitted to all the privileges of the children of God, as I have already explained. Thus "Christ being come an high priest, &c. by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

3. Christ intercedes continually for those who are justified by faith and are adopted into the family of God, and to be made partakers of the blessings of his kingdom. It is peculiarly on the account of his intercession that the believer enjoys the various benefits of the gospel. And as I have noticed before, the scriptures generally give us this idea as to the intercession of Christ.

The apostle to the Romans, 5th chap. 10th v. seems to found the intercession of Christ on our reconciliation

by his death: "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." When we compare this with Heb. 7. 25. we find that the life of Christ means his living intercession: "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." We also should notice that the word *saved* in the one text, and the word *save* in the other, not only mean our deliverance from guilt or punishment, but in a special manner have respect unto the inward work of the divine Spirit, delivering us from the power of sin in our hearts; and so preparing us for happiness and glory, as the peculiar effect of Christ's intercession.

To this effect we are to understand that most animating expression of our Lord to his disciples: (John 14. 19.) "Because I live ye shall live also." The death of Christ is the radical ground of every benefit of the gospel. But if Christ had not risen again to live for ever, Paul says, our preaching would be vain and your faith vain. But the glory of Christ is, "that he was dead and is alive; and behold he liveth for ever and ever, and (consequently) he has the keys of death and hell." When he ascended on high he is said to lead captivity captive, and give gifts to or receive gifts for men. In Christ's intercessory prayer we easily discover the drift of his intercession: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." I might quote many other passages of scripture to show that our access to God, and all the blessings we receive in our salvation are through the glorious intercession of our dear Redeemer.

It is a peculiar blessing indeed that we have one exalted at our Father's right hand, who has purchased salvation for us; and on the solid ground of a full and com-

plete purchase, sees to and provides for the actual bestowment and application of every purchased blessing. One who is infinitely wise, powerful, rich and good, true to his trust, careful in every state and circumstance of his people, and determined to save to the uttermost! How is it possible that a believer can lack any real good thing? He may indeed for want of proper confidence indulge fears and suspicions; but, blessed be God, our unbelief or want of confidence can never make the faith or faithfulness of God without effect. Believers will find to their infinite surprise, that they knew but comparatively little of what Christ was doing for them.

We often find the duties of religion seemingly difficult to perform. The dung of our sacrifices might justly be cast in our faces. Sometimes our hearts are cold, our affections low. Sinful inclinations sometimes rise high and threaten to make a prey of us. Our prayers and confessions are but cold formalities, and our services and devotion but empty ceremonies. And even in our best frames how much have we to acknowledge with shame? and how far from sinless perfection? The glory of God's divine perfections, and the spirituality of his holy law would consume us and our works; and we would fare like Nadab and Abihu, were it not for our glorious Intercessor. We live because he lives. We are saved because he pleads our cause; in short, we enjoy every blessing of the covenant, because our Redeemer liveth and maketh intercession for us. The Spirit is sent down to convince of sin and of righteousness; to show the sinner his sinfulness and guilty state in consequence of sin, and to point him to Christ, like John the Baptist, only with divine power, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world;" we come at the call of the divine Spirit applying the truths of the gospel, and by so doing we believe in Christ and comply with the condition of the covenant of grace; Christ immediately

presents his spotless righteousness in our behalf; and we are justified in consequence of his atonement, as having made complete satisfaction for sin; and are adopted into the enjoyment of all the privileges of God's children. Christ, our adorable Redeemer and Intercessor, as it were, takes a new stand before the throne of God, or rather takes a stationary position which he never quits, until he gives up the kingdom to his Father, and God becomes all in all. (1 Cor. 15. 24. 28.) And by his intercession he obtains every blessing which he has purchased for his people, in due time and in due order.

Every petition which a believer puts up, according to the will of God, is presented by Christ to the Father, with his spotless righteousness to procure the benefit. This is one of the most encouraging circumstances to a poor, weak, unworthy creature that is to be found in the whole plan of the gospel. It is truly animating, and enough to strengthen and revive our spirits, to think how our unworthy prayers must appear before God, after they pass through the atoning blood of Christ. Often we ask for things wrong through our ignorance both of our real state or condition, and also of what is really good or suitable for us. And for want of a perfect knowledge of God's designs in his infinitely wise management, the particular blessings which we desire would often cross the plan and divine purpose of God. And indeed we must confess, that through a froward, proud, domineering, and even a fretful and peevish spirit, we ask for blessings with wrong principles and motives. A thousand daily imperfections might here occur to our mind when we think of the many ways we do wrong. Our desires are often cold; and when we are warmly engaged we are apt to trust more to our happy feelings than to our precious Intercessor. Alas! what would we get, what could we do, and what would become of us, were it not for Christ? But in consequence of our having such a high priest,

who hath an unchangeable priesthood, who hath entered into the holy place by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us, appearing constantly in the presence of God, we enjoy the glorious privilege of drawing near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Our blessed Intercessor, in his infinite care and skill, suffers none of our imperfections to come before God, but covers them all with his spotless atonement, and presents his Father with the petitions of his poor imperfect children, dressed in the perfection of his own righteousness. If weak christians would consider this important circumstance, it would silence their complaints as to the unworthiness and weakness of their prayers, and encourage them to come to the throne of grace, even if they had nothing to say but "God be merciful to me a sinner." If we would entertain such ideas of Christ, as our intercessor, we could not fail to feel the happy effects of it. 1. It would always direct our minds to Christ in our prayers; and our prayers would be according to the gospel direction: (John 16. 26.) "ye shall ask in my name." 2. It would give us a blessed confidence in prayer on proper principles. 3. It would greatly encourage us to pray; and it would take away our unbelieving fears and discouragements in prayer, which we too often indulge. 4. It would make us feel humble under a sense of our dependence on God. And lastly, It would cultivate a spirit of resignation to the divine will, by enabling us to expect in due time to receive what we pray for agreeably to what we know to be his will from his word, and to submit the rest to the disposal of his wisdom and goodness.

Christ sometimes gives a strong desire to his people, makes them feel their need, and draws forth their hearts, in earnest longing for his blessings before he bestows them. This is the intercession of the Spirit in our hearts.

Sometimes he surprises the christian in bestowing blessings upon him unexpectedly. The spouse is an instance of both these circumstances. How earnestly she prays for gales of divine grace: "Awake, O north wind, and "come thou south, &c." Christ answers, "I am come "into my garden, my sister, my spouse." "Tell me, O "thou whom my soul loveth, &c. If thou knowest not, "O thou fairest among women, &c." Again she says, at another time, "Or ever I was aware my soul made me "like the chariots of Aminadib."

Surely God will withhold no real good from those for whom Christ intercedes. It is, indeed, impossible for us to fathom the depth of his dispensations; neither need we attempt to understand all his ways of dealing with his people. But one thing we may always know, and ought always to feel: that what he gives and what he does is for our real good; (Rom. 8. 28.) and while ever Christ lives in heaven our advocate with the Father, our cause can never possibly fail.

Our most natural and easy notions of Christ's intercession is, that he even verbally prays and pleads our cause before his Father; and that he hears and grants the blessings in consequence of it. This is always the case with those who have never used themselves by study to accurate thought, and to have correct ideas on the sublime subjects of divinity. Even the most learned of us have these very ideas on this subject, unless we take the trouble to think accurately, and ascend to philosophical niceties. And indeed it is no wonder, for to this we are accustomed, and mostly under the necessity to form our ideas of spiritual things from the ideas we have of things temporal, with which we are daily conversant, and which we can see, hear and feel; that the first impression is what is common to all; and the same impression lasts, in a very considerable degree, in spite of all our refined philosophy. Also when we are in our devotional frames, we

have not time to philosophize; we have something else to do; we have to take our ideas as they come. For instance, when the most accurate divine can hardly pray to God, even in secret, without putting his ideas into words, and sometimes audibly too, when he, according to the directions of the bible, puts his trust in Christ and views him as his intercessor; how natural and easy it is for him to have the idea of Christ praying for him just as he does, only making allowance for Christ's dignity and nearness to the throne as his intercessor.

I am far from thinking this to be wrong. Christ, speaking after the manner of men as was common for him to do, and as suited to our capacities to receive, gave to his disciples these very ideas: "I will pray the Father. When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father. If I go not away the Comforter will not come; but if I depart I will send him." This is also the natural idea which we gather from the 17th chapter of John, where our glorious Advocate gives us, as it were, a sample of his intercession before his Father for his people. Many passages might be quoted to indulge these our common ideas of Christ's intercession: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. See also Rev. 8. 3, 4, 5.

There are sentiments inculcated by some and also adopted by many, which I consider injurious to the comfort of God's people, and consequently hurtful to the general cause of religion. It is said we must have ideas of God exactly as he is, or we are guilty of idolatry in our worship; that we must have correct views of Christ as he is, both as God and Saviour, or we cannot believe on him. This is truly fetching divinity to perfection; and I question much whether the saints in glory or the holy angels, have yet or ever will arrive to this degree of perfection. Many christians have in consequence of those

ticklish sentiments, with very little foundation in the bible, spent their days in fear, lest they should not have exact conceptions of God and of Christ. It has a tendency to darken all the evidences of religion, and entirely prevent christians from having that confidence in Christ which the gospel requires in order to their comfort. If a man has such a knowledge of God as to conceive of him as a God of eternal existence, possessed of infinite holiness, justice, goodness and truth; and conceives him to be his Creator, Preserver and final Judge, the proper object of his love, reverence and worship; if he conceives that he has offended him by transgressing his holy laws, and that he is justly liable to his infinite displeasure in consequence of sin; if, moreover, he views Christ as equal with his Father, as God, and becoming man; and that he is God and man, and a Mediator between God and man; that he died in the room of sinners, and fully satisfied justice; and that he is now seated at the right hand of God to make intercession for his people; that he offers to save all who will come to him, or accept of him as their only Saviour: I say if a man has such ideas of God and of Christ, and attends to the offers of the gospel and comes to Christ as a lost, helpless sinner, there is no danger of his salvation. He may learn more and more of God and of Christ at his leisure; and Christ has promised, by his word and Spirit, to teach him what is necessary for him yet to know, for his furtherance and growth in religion. (Heb. 11. 6. John 16. 12, 13. Col. 1. 10.)

But I must observe before I finish this clause of my subject, that this nice piece of divinity of some of our fathers, is another instance amongst many of the strange propensity of the human heart to make the gospel hard, and religion to be exceedingly nice, critical and difficult. Pride is at the bottom of it all; and Satan is not idle in establishing such difficult systems, to discourage sinners in attempting to come to Christ on the simple call of the

gospel, and to worry weak believers by unhappy doctrines: the mere nice philosophical commandments of men, without any gospel authority. A man who could get to heaven by a very learned, scholastic knowledge of the genuine nature of God and his divine perfections, and of all the minute wonders of Emanuel and mysteries of the gospel, must not only have hard work, but also gain the praise of "well done good and faithful servant;" thou hast been faithful in very many intricate and insurmountable things, "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But on these principles it would require a man to be sensible and old enough to be the president of the United States to be a christian. On these terms I would say, God have mercy on our youth and African slaves, not to mention the great bulk of mankind besides. "God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise."

But although accuracy in knowledge, especially in deep points of divinity, is not absolutely necessary to constitute a true christian, yet it is truly laudable and profitable to a christian to grow daily in his knowledge of God and the gospel, and it is a truth that the more correct our knowledge of God, of Christ and the plan of the gospel is, provided we do not perplex ourselves with intricate points or introduce those difficulties as prerequisites or conditions in the plan of the gospel, the simpler the gospel will appear, and the firmer our hope and comfort will be.

And to return again to the subject of Christ's intercession, I would in the last place observe that although it is very natural and very usual to have the idea of Christ actually praying to God for us, and although Christ gave this idea to his weak disciples, who were at that time not able to receive very correct notions about his kingdom, and even although this is a very comfortable thought, yet it is not the full idea which the scriptures give us of this important circumstance.

The real state of the case is this: Christ, having made complete atonement by his death, rose from the dead and ascended to his Father in the character of a mediator, where he is in his two natures, the divine and human, in one glorious person; having received this honour and dignity from the Father for the suffering of death, God, the Father, thus expressed and still expresses his high approbation of what Christ had done in the sinner's room. He, perfectly satisfied with the atonement of the cross, has exalted the Son at his right hand. Jesus, the great high priest, wearing the office and dignity of his priesthood for ever, with the very body which hung on the cross, took his place as the intercessor for his people. There he is continually in the presence of his Father as their surety with his perfect atonement or righteousness, presented before him on the sinner's behalf. The Father beholding the righteousness of his Son is for ever well pleased; and the poor imperfect believer for Christ's sake is accepted in his person and his services, and obtains every necessary grace according to the ever prevalent plea of this perfect righteousness.

O believer, look up to heaven with joy and wonder, and see the two faithful parties in the covenant of redemption: the Son having faithfully fulfilled the awful conditions; the Father faithful to his Son in accepting the sacrifice he offered; and now having exalted him as a Prince and a Saviour, he faithfully grants every blessing claimed by that atonement. And Jesus faithful to you, poor worthless creature, applies by his divine Spirit every blessing to your soul. There is no possibility of failure here. The ground work is too solid. The plan is too firmly laid in the depths of infinite wisdom, and executed by Almighty power! Surely to see Jesus standing before God on your behalf, showing the prints of the nails and the mark of the spear, is enough

to make you cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Reader, art thou a believer? If not, make haste, submit to Christ in a moment, lest you die. For however well pleased God is in the atonement of Christ, yet he is a dreadful avenger of the blood of his dear Son. But if you are a believer, can you possibly doubt of your salvation? With such an advocate in heaven, how can you be lost? how can sin threaten with its deadly sting? can devils prevail? Nay, let me ask with the apostle, who is he that condemneth? Christ has died, yea rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God making intercession for us.

CHAPTER IV.

The covenant grounds of a believer's sanctification and glory.

WE come now to lay before the reader our view of the principles on which the believer obtains the privilege of sanctification, and his complete admission to a state of eternal glory. To prevent misconstructions of what I may say on this important subject, I observe that the atonement of Christ is the meritorious ground of every benefit which the believer ever enjoys, and that faith is the condition proposed in the gospel by which we become personally interested in all the consequences of that atonement.

That I may be the more clearly understood I again observe, what I have already explained, that holiness is not a created faculty of the mind produced by natural power, but the choice or disposition toward that which is morally excellent. Sin is the direct opposite disposition. Holiness consequently is not produced by, what we commonly mean by, infusion. God did not infuse a holy

nature into Adam at creation; neither does he infuse holiness in regeneration. It would be naturally impossible for him to do it. God can be the *moral author* of holiness; so Satan can be the *author* of sin. Holiness consisting in the choice of the heart, it must be produced by motives. God by furnishing Adam with proper motives to holiness, or that which is morally right, became the author of holiness in Adam; and hence it is proper to say that God created him holy or in his own image; not that he really created him so, but as soon as Adam became capable of moral action, or rather possessed of moral powers, which was as soon as he was created a living soul, God by giving him suitable views of his divine glory and excellence persuaded him, and he made choice of that which was really good; so that the first action of the soul of Adam was holy.

So we must understand the scriptures when they speak of regeneration as a work of creation: "created in righteousness and true holiness." In a similar passage Paul seems to have my ideas exactly where he says (Col. 3. 10.) "and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Knowledge is the only channel through which a motive can be presented to the mind; and it is really in, or by knowledge, a man who is a sinner can be made new or possess a new disposition. He must in the first place have new discoveries which he had not before; and having got new discoveries he is presented with new objects which attract the mind; the objects are God's moral image; consequently the man is transformed into the same likeness, and the same mind is formed in him as also is in Christ Jesus.

We have the same idea held up still more fully in Eph. 3. 18. Speaking of the gentiles in a state of nature, "having (says the apostle) the understanding darkened, "being alienated from the life of God (that is from holi-

ness) through the ignorance that is in them, because
 “of the blindness of their heart.” This certainly shows
 that the want of proper views of holiness, and consequently
 the want of proper motives to holiness, is the cause of
 “their giving themselves over (v. 19.) unto lascivious-
 ness (giving themselves is choosing, or wilfully devot-
 ing) to work all uncleanness with greediness.” v. 20.
 “But ye have not so learned Christ;” that is, Christ
 hath not so taught you, v. 21. “if so be that ye have
 heard him (that is believed on him, Rom. 10. 17.) and
 (consequently) have been taught by him (or in him) as
 the truth is in (or by) Jesus.” Thus divine views are
 given by Christ to believers by which they are disposed
 v. 22. “to put off concerning the former conversation
 the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful
 lusts.” Lust is the inclination. When the person inte-
 rested in Christ and under his divine teaching gets the
 knowledge of God and views his divine glory and excel-
 lence, the old state of the mind which was wicked in con-
 sequence of false or deceitful dispositions produced by
 falsehood is put off; that is, v. 23. they are renewed in
 the spirit of their mind. They have a new temper or
 disposition, influenced by the truth as it is in Jesus pre-
 senting them with new motives; which is, v. 24. “to
 put on the new man which (drawn) after God (as the
 glorious attracting motive) is (thus) created in righte-
 ousness and true holiness.”

When God shines into the heart, and gives the know-
 ledge of his glory, “we then with open face beholding
 the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image
 from glory to glory;” influenced and attracted by the
 glory of God, we are brought to possess the same glory
 or likeness, which is done by the Spirit of God through
 the glass of the gospel manifesting the glorious excellence
 of God unto us.

These passages, with many which might be quoted,
 certainly show what holiness is; how regeneration is

performed in us; and the nature of regeneration and sanctification. It is consequently evident from what has been said, that holiness in Adam and in the angels took place the same way; even by manifestations of the divine excellence made unto them to influence them to a holy choice or disposition; and that this disposition could not be created by an act of almighty power, nor yet infused by the divine agency directly upon the mind, but only by such discoveries to the rational mind as would morally influence the creature to choose and delight in that which is good.

It is also to be observed, that sin or unholiness must take place on the very same principles; it being a disposition of the mind to that which is morally wrong. In order to sin, God must withdraw from the rational mind his divine perfection, which will immediately leave the creature in darkness as to any thing that is good; and evil motives through falsehood representing objects under false colours crowding on the soul will immediately seduce and draw the soul to choose and delight in that which is evil. But for more on this subject, I must refer my reader to what I have said in a former treatise.

But before I am ready to communicate my ideas clearly on the main subject in this chapter, I must refresh my reader's memory with another particular.

Agreeably to the explanation above, we say God made Adam holy. But it would require the same manifestations of God's glory to keep Adam or any creature holy, which made him so at first. The moment those manifestations ceased, the creature would fall from God. For none but God can give them. This, by the by, shows us how much we are dependent on God for every thing that is truly good; and how wretched must every creature be without him.

When God entered into a covenant with Adam and his posterity in him as their federal head, he covenanted to

continue those divine communications with him for ever and protect him from being overcome by false motives; the consequence of which would have been, Adam would have been established in holiness for ever, in a perfect conformity to the law of God. I have argued this point at length in its proper place. I will just add here that it would have been impossible for the moral law to be the condition of that covenant or any such covenant; for Adam must in justice be left to himself in this important article, or it would have been no trial. If God had made perfect obedience to the moral law the test in the covenant, he must either have withdrawn those manifestations from Adam, or continued them with him; had he continued them it would have been no trial; for he must have stood; and it would have been morally impossible for him to have fallen; had he withdrawn them he must have been immediately left in moral darkness; and consequently would have instantly fallen of course. So that no trial could have been in the case; and consequently no covenant could possibly be made on such terms. But the promise of the covenant was, as I have said, to continue Adam in a state of holiness and consequently happiness for ever on the gracious condition that he would for such a given time keep from eating of the forbidden fruit. This was not a moral but a positive precept; the promise on the one hand was a sufficient motive to allure; and his fears were sufficiently addressed on the other by that awful penalty: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." With this Adam was left to himself as a proper trial of his obedience to a positive precept as easy to keep as easy could be. The threatening was of this nature, that if Adam eat of the forbidden fruit, God would instantly withdraw his divine manifestations from him, and leave him in moral darkness. Death would be the immediate consequence in all its dreadful forms. Also all his posterity was to be left in the same unhappy situa-

tion. Now how did the matter go? Adam fell. Consequently he and all his posterity fell under the dreadful curse of being deserted of God, and never to have one single gleam of divine light to dawn upon them to eternity. Thus all the children of Adam are born into the world under that curse, and consequently necessarily, or justly, are deprived of any motives to holiness; and not one of them ever is, or ever can be, holy until he is interested in the covenant of grace.

Now I have the way clear to point out to you the ground of a believer's sanctification and glory. Christ by his death made an atonement in the room of his people, and cancelled all the guilt that lay against them on every hand in consequence of the fall. In consequence of which God promised in covenant, to restore those precious divine manifestations of his glory. This he could do consistent with all his perfections when the guilt of his people was removed. This was a second trial for their establishment in holiness and happiness, by his covenant engagements to reveal his moral excellence to the mind, and never to withdraw his divine glory from them. These covenant engagements were on the honourable conditions, that Christ the second Adam, who became the sponsor for his people, would die in their room and so satisfy the demands of justice. Jesus undertook the dreadful work and completely performed the whole. He waded through blood and death; and by the dignity of his glorious person, being the eternal Son of God, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, in a suitable time suffered the whole weight of infinite vengeance, which would have crushed his elect to eternity. No wonder the withdrawment of God's divine glory and excellence overwhelms the poor dependent creature in darkness, when it made the glorious man Christ Jesus, supported by his divinity, to cry in agony and excruciating horror, "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken

“me?” This appears to be the penalty he had to bear. It is probable this awful time of desertion began at the sixth hour, when the light of the sun was withdrawn, and continued until he said, “It is finished,” which was about the ninth hour; three hours in all of dreadful suffering. He had hung three hours on the cross before the darkness took place. He pronounced the work finished, very probably, when he got relief by the return of the glory of his Father, and just as he submitted to temporal death; which it is thought, and very probably, was not occasioned by his other sufferings, for they appear to be over; and it is very evident, from the thieves not dying till their legs were broken, and from Pilate’s marveling that he was dead so soon, that he voluntarily gave up his life, by the power of his divinity commanding his spirit to quit his body, which immediately became dead.

Justice now lets go its angry hold; the debt was paid, and the guilty sinner completely ransomed from death. In a proper time he rose from the dead as a pledge of the resurrection of his people and as a divine testimony of the validity of his sufferings. And now the covenant is confirmed for ever, never to be forgotten. God is now well pleased, and the sinner delivered from the curse, and made an heir in Christ of the blessings of the covenant. And now we are to remember that as the covenant with Adam insured, provided the condition had been fulfilled, the constant manifestations of God’s excellence and glory, so in this covenant, he promises the same thing as the radical blessing, on the condition the sinner can be brought from under the curse of the first covenant. This is now done, and consequently the way is opened for the lost creature to be completely restored.

We have shown already how the sinner becomes personally interested in the covenant of grace even by faith. Consequently when the sinner accepts the offers of the gospel, the atonement of Christ is counted to him and he

is thereby taken from under the penalty of the first covenant, and entitled by covenant promises to the blessings of the covenant of grace. God in truth and faithfulness sends his Spirit to manifest his glory to the believer's soul. The soul, now furnished with new motives which it never had before since it had lost them in Adam, is immediately drawn towards God, and feels earnest desires after a conformity to his image.

These discoveries of God and holiness, according to the covenant, are never to be finally withdrawn, but to become greater and greater, until the believer is perfectly conformed to God, and made completely holy. Before the believer could fall finally away, God must withdraw these communications of himself from the soul; if this was done, a fall would take place immediately, as it did when Adam eat the forbidden fruit. But how can this ever take place, when the covenant is confirmed, never to be broken? Before God could withdraw the divine motives to holiness from the believer, he must first break his covenant, and forfeit his truth and faithfulness. Will God ever do so? No: he declares "that the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord who hath mercy on thee."

Not only so but he would curse a soul on whom is the righteousness of Christ, and who has made a full atonement for all his transgressions; can God curse where there is no guilt?

He would cause a soul to die for whom Christ was a surety. Is not Christ a sufficient surety? But why should we think such things? Surely those who indulge such notions must have very low conceptions of the gospel plan.

Why God does not make a full manifestation of himself immediately to the believer and so perfectly sanctify

him at once is a question I do not wait to answer here. But why should we complain? he has promised he will do it in a proper time. When we shall see him as he is then we shall be like him.

This is what I conceive to be the covenant grounds of a believer's sanctification; and certainly I think it much more like the doctrine of the bible, than to talk of the active obedience of Christ being imputed to purchase it, and entitle us to it. It is easier understood on this plan, than to talk of any particular purchase respecting it, only that grand purchase which bought us with a price, even the precious blood of Christ by which we, in our glorious Surety, satisfied the justice of God, cancelled all our guilt, and was brought from under the first covenant, and into the covenant of grace. This was all the purchase there was any need for, to entitle us to every blessing in this covenant. God gave his sanctifying grace to us according as he has covenanted to do on these conditions. But O what love and gratitude do we owe our glorious God for such a covenant! and what love do we owe our dear Redeemer, who by the agonies of his own death has brought us into covenant with God again.

And yet we can hardly trust him, notwithstanding all. We are afraid of guilt when we have none. We are afraid of Satan when he is dragged at our Surety's chariot wheels. We are afraid of every thing, when every thing is sure. O my dear fellow christians, let us be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; let us try and think something, say something, hope something and even do something that will be an honour to our Lord and Master.

CHAPTER V.

Some texts explained, and some common phrases in divinity relating to our sanctification.

I CANNOT dismiss this subject, until I explain some very interesting points relative to our sanctification which are involved in it, and which I fear are not well understood by many of my readers. It is not best to have certain phrases in divinity, which we borrow, even from certain texts of scripture, or from the tradition of the fathers; and at the same time have no digested ideas, and know not what we say, or whereof we affirm. On the principles I have explained above, relative to our sanctification, I proceed to explain some texts in the bible, and some common phrases in divinity which are not easily understood, but on the principles which I have laid down.

1. "Christ dwells in our hearts." When the question is put to us, how does he dwell in our hearts? the answer is sometimes, "by faith;" and again we say, "by his Spirit," &c. All this is true, and scriptural. But now the question is, what do we mean by these expressions? Here the mist begins to rise; and we have but confused ideas ourselves, and we can give nothing but confusion to others. But I answer:

Christ does dwell in the believer's heart. Eph. 3. 17. The apostle seems always to take care when he is speaking of any benefit which we receive of a saving nature, to mention faith as the condition of it. Christ in the believer's heart is the vital principle of holiness; and our union with him, and his union with us, is our hope of glory. (Col. 1. 27.) And it is all by faith, which is the only condition of the gospel. 1. Federally, as our cove-

nant head, faith unites us to Christ by the terms of the covenant. Justice looking upon the surety and the principal as one and the same person, what the one does the other is viewed by the law as doing; hence they are consolidated, or incorporated legally, as but one body. Hence Christ became guilty through the sinner, the sinner being legally in him, and consequently the sinner died or made the legal atonement when Christ died as his surety. On this very principle Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, therefore, I live," (which is the proper translation. The word *nevertheless* very unhappily mars and spoils the beauty and the sense of the verse.)

2. After the sinner had in Christ completely atoned for his guilt, then he was no longer liable to death; and his surety dying as the head of another covenant, and fulfilling the condition of that covenant, he insured to the sinner a complete interest in the promises of that covenant. The law having considered the sinner in Christ before his death to make him guilty, so now after his death it views Christ in the sinner. So that as the sinner in Christ made him suffer, now Christ with his full atonement considered in the sinner, the sinner is legally delivered from the curse, and consequently justified through the atonement of his surety who is now viewed in him, and has fulfilled the condition of the new covenant. The believer is therefore entitled to all the promises contained in the covenant of grace, which insures justification and sanctification and eternal glory. (Heb. 10. 16, 17. John 14. 2, 3.) Thus "Christ in us is the hope of glory" both as to happiness and sanctification.

3. By faith the sinner is interested in Christ's atonement, and consequently in the covenant of grace which insures sanctification. Thus Christ dwells in us by faith, not only for justification as we explained above, but also for sanctification as we shall now explain. 1. Not by the imputation of his active obedience; this is too important

a point of doctrine to be established with no better authority than the mere notions and commandments of men. I have seriously inquired into the doctrine of Christ's active obedience. I was induced to it, not by party spirit, nor yet through a vain expectation of being the head of a party, nor yet to revive an old exploded opinion which has been driven out of the church a hundred years ago. I love to agree with every man as far as I can. I conscientiously believe I would rather follow, than lead. But I cannot follow when I think I am led wrong. But to return to my subject.

2. Christ dwells in the heart when his image is there. This is a metaphor, the word Christ put for his image or likeness. The apostle has many such expressions: "My little children of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you," till you be fully conformed to the doctrines of the gospel. "For me to live is Christ." But the passage (Eph. 3.) explains itself. (v. 14.) Paul prays for the Ephesians, "that he would grant you, (says he v. 16.) according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit, in the inner man." Christ's glory is the brightness of his Father's glory, which shines in him, even the fulness of the Godhead. Every perfection of the deity exhibited in Christ as a mediator is the riches, or fulness of his glory. It is according to this, that his people are strengthened in every grace, by the Spirit in the heart or inner man; and in being conformed to this glory of Christ, believers (v. 17.) possess Christ in their hearts, and all in consequence of their interest in him by faith; and he farther prays, on the same principles, that in consequence of their being firmly attached to, and delighting in the glory of Christ, and cordially attracted to his glorious image they might go on to perfection in their conformity to him; being enabled (v. 18.) to comprehend, or fully to discover the infinite extent of the love and loveliness

of Christ, (v. 19.) until at length they be filled with all the fulness of God, that is entirely conformed to his image; and so Christ would dwell in them more and more in consequence of their interest in him by faith. To express it more briefly. By faith we are through Christ interested in the promises of the covenant, and consequently receive manifestations of the divine glory; and we are thereby more and more formed in the image of Christ and by his holy image Christ dwells in us.

We have this idea also in Rom. 13. 14. "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" and in v. 12. the same idea is represented by casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light.

And in 2 Cor. 13. 5. Paul says, "Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

2. Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by his Spirit. This is frequently represented to us in the scriptures; and the idea is, that the Spirit of God, having persuaded the sinner to believe in Christ, is the efficient cause of the union actually taking place betwixt Christ and the sinner, according to the gospel. But especially the Spirit is the efficient cause of the holy image of Christ being formed in the heart, and of carrying on a sanctifying work, so that the believer grows in conformity to the divine will. This he does by manifesting Christ in all his divine excellence to the believer; which, as I have already shown, has a transforming effect, in changing the heart into the same image; and as the Spirit continues and increases his divine illuminations, so the believer grows in sanctification until he becomes a perfect man in Christ, or Christ in his image becomes perfect in him. (John 16. 8—15. 2 Cor. 3. 18.)

3. Christ dwells in us by his word; because the word is the particular means which the Spirit of Christ makes use of to reveal his divine truths to his people, by which

he makes himself known unto them, that they may be restored to holiness as has been already explained: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Thus they are begotten by the gospel; and Christ is formed in them, by the saving effects of the gospel on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. (John 15. 3—7.)

4. We often speak of God giving us strength, helping, assisting and giving us grace, &c. All such phrases are of equal import. But we do not mean natural strength, help or assistance; but that he does it all by light or motives, argument and persuasion. When God gives me strength to exercise faith, he gives me a manifestation of his truth and faithfulness in his promises, which induces me to put my trust in him. When he gives me strength or grace to love him, he reveals his divine beauty and excellencies to me, and so charms my heart and engrosses my affections. When he enables me to repent or gives me repentance, he gives me a view of his holy nature and his holy law, and I am allured and delighted with divine excellence, and I hate my sin and loathe myself for it, and long and endeavour to guard against it and to live more holy. Thus when he strengthens, assists or gives any grace, he does it by his Spirit and word, giving some manifestations which operate on me as motives to rouse or excite me to action, or to whatever thing the argument tends. We always act freely by our own natural strength, and according to the choice we freely make under divine influence, through divine manifestations, when we get grace and strength from God. When Christ is the wisdom of God, then he becomes the power of God. When he is made unto us wisdom, then he is also made righteousness and sanctification to us. When he draws or allures us, we run after him. We are drawn with the cords of love, allured and won over, when we are moved from a view of divine glory, mercy and excellence. We are drawn with the bands of a man, when

we are dealt with like rational creatures, capable of choice, and so powerfully argued with, that we are under a moral necessity to comply.

5. It is usual to say, Christ has purchased every blessing for his people, that he purchased the gift of the Spirit, and all the graces and operations of the Spirit, &c. The scriptures give those ideas, and we ought with due gratitude and humility to be ready to acknowledge our entire dependence on Christ for every blessing we enjoy as the purchase of his precious blood.

Yet if we think that Christ purchased those blessings directly, we perhaps will not be correct in our ideas. Christ purchased nothing directly but pardon; that is to say, he laid down his life particularly and especially to answer the penalty of the broken law. He offered himself a sacrifice, purely to satisfy justice and procure our pardon, by removing our guilt and constituting us righteous; and consequently our justification was the direct object of the great atonement. Our sanctification and confirmation in grace and all things in which they consist, and eternal glory, the final issue of our salvation, were only indirectly purchased by Christ. Those common blessings of the gospel were, as we may say, consequential things, necessarily connected with the atonement in consequence of the plan on which the atonement was made and the execution of that plan. Christ suffered no more than was necessary to satisfy justice for sin and to buy our pardon; neither was it necessary nor was it possible for him to do more. Justice cannot inflict punishment where there is no guilt; when ever the guilt of sin was atoned for, justice could inflict no longer; the suffering must immediately come to a close; any, the least degree over would be unjust. So it must follow, that the atonement of the cross, which was the price paid, was for sin, and for sin only; so pardon was the only blessing directly purchased by the blood of Christ, and all other

blessings are merely consequential, bestowed on the plan of the new covenant in consequence of our interest in it by faith.

The church is said to be purchased. (Acts 20. 28) The people of God are said to be purchased,' (1 Cor. 6. 20. and 7. 23. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.) because Christ could not have a church or people without paying the ransom for them, due to divine justice in consequence of their guilt. And in this sense they are his redeemed people. But still the purchase was justification, and the price was his precious blood. The eternal inheritance of the saints is called the purchased possession, (Eph. 1. 14.*) because justification through the atonement of Christ interests them in the covenant by its promises according to the gospel plan. So that the blessing promised is only indirectly purchased through the direct purchase of justification, according to the plan on which the purchase was made.

The apostle, in the 9th chap. to the Hebrews, verse 15, gives us this very idea: " He is the Mediator of the new " testament, that by means of death for the redemption " of the transgressions under the first testament, they " which are called might receive the promise of eternal " inheritance." I will give the following paraphrase on Rom. 5. 1, 2: Therefore, in consequence of Christ's dying for our sins, we being justified by faith have peace, and are brought through his redemption to a state of reconciliation with God as the purchase of his death. In consequence of this, we have access, are introduced into this grace promised in the covenant wherein we are esta-

* This text is not well translated. It is consequently not very easily understood. The true translation is this, " Which is the earnest, " (or so much in hand) of our inheritance (or estate) which evidences a title to the redemption of our acquisition (or property which " was lost, but regained by the purchase of Christ) to the praise (or " advancement) of his glory."

blished, by the free promise and grace of God, and we rejoice in the hope which the gospel gives us of obtaining divine manifestations of God's glory to conform us to his image, and fit us for the enjoyment of himself for ever.

If I had a servant in prison, who could not be liberated without paying a ransom; were I to pay the ransom, the direct purchase would be his freedom; for that, and for that only, would the price be paid. My plan would be immaterial as to the purchase; it must be made, let my plan be what it would, or my servant must lie in prison; but it would deliver him from his imprisonment, let me use him as I saw fit afterwards. My plan might be to make him a merchant, a mechanic, a farmer or any thing else. I do not directly purchase a merchant, or mechanic, or farmer; I only purchase freedom for a poor prisoner, and afterwards, in pursuance to my plan, I make him what I designed to make him. In this case his freedom was the only thing directly purchased, which would be grace indeed; but the benefits he afterwards enjoyed were only indirectly purchased, and he enjoyed them by my own good will without any direct purchase. Yet every benefit he enjoyed, he ought justly to esteem as an indirect purchase, it being a consequence of my paying the price of his freedom on the plan I did, which introduced him into those happy circumstances.

The plan of God appears to be this. God was determined to glorify himself in the salvation of a number of sinners of the race of Adam. They were held fast in strict justice under the penalty of the broken law. The first thing to be done was to bring them from under that penalty. The penalty was death, in all its horrors. God in covenant gave a number of those unhappy sinners to Christ, to restore to a state of holiness and glory, on condition that he would suffer death for them, to redeem them from the curse of the law; which would open the way for all necessary manifestations of God's divine

excellence and glory, to induce them by proper motives to holiness; which manifestations were forfeited by the breach of the first covenant, and which forfeiture must be removed before they could be granted again. If Jesus Christ would pay the price of their redemption, God the Father promised that he, dealing with them as moral agents, would draw every one to him and make them willing to submit to the offers of his righteousness for their justification; so that none of all whom he had given him should be lost for want of faith.

The second person in the glorious trinity consented and undertook the awful work. He came; he died; and by death redeemed his people from eternal ruin. The covenant was thus confirmed for ever; the conditions fulfilled; the price paid; the penalty endured, and all things made ready to prosecute the glorious plan of restoring the lost sinner to a state of holiness, to fit him for eternal happiness.

Sinners are called to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that they may be personally interested in the wonderful purchase of Christ, as rational creatures to be governed on moral principles. It appears evident from the divine conduct with his creatures, that it is necessary that they give their consent to their own happiness, and if they will not do it they must be miserable. Consent to misery or punishment for sin is not necessary or expected, but to happiness it is, and must be; for the Deity himself cannot make an intelligent creature happy whether he will or not.

The covenant now puts on a new style: it assumes not only the name, but also the proper nature of a covenant of grace. It has a most gracious condition; attended, very justly, with an awful denunciation, if the condition is not complied with: salvation on the one hand, and damnation on the other. The condition is simply to ac-

cept of the righteousness of Christ. This is called faith, or believing.

The offer of the gospel finds the sinner held fast by the covenant of works, a child of wrath even as others: tells him his awful state, and tells him what Christ has done to procure his pardon; and calls upon him immediately, on the spot, before he moves another step, even before he draws another breath, to come to Christ for salvation. The gospel never tampers with a sinner; it is in solid earnest; it knows better than to parley about morality, preparations, and all the various duties of the law. Faith, faith is what it requires, and nothing but faith; and if the sinner will not believe, if he was as holy as the young scribe who kept the law from his childhood, it will pronounce damnation on him in a moment. But if the sinner believes, the gospel will then make him both hear and feel what morality is. *

* It is in vain to preach morality to a sinner. To keep sinners playing about the moral law, trying to be good before they apply to Christ, is wretched divinity indeed. Such sermons may perhaps gain some applause, and perhaps may go for a day's work; but I am certain they never will gain a soul. They are as bad to the soul as poison is to the body. To please the sinner with fine heathenish harangues on the duties of the law, the rules of moral honesty, and the fine art of living orderly, before he is redeemed from the curse of the law, is like entertaining a culprit with diverting stories on his way to the gallows. He may be diverted, it is true, but not saved.

There is no possibility for a sinner to be sanctified without an interest in Christ by faith. He might as well attempt to reconnoitre the planets in an air balloon as to attempt to get the least particle of true holiness without faith. God will not, he ought not, nay he cannot, grant the least manifestation of his holiness to the soul, until the sinner is actually ransomed from the curse of the broken covenant. In such a case, he is not, and cannot be inclined to that which is good. Let holiness be ever so excellent in its nature, you may discant upon the beauties of moral virtue till you wear out your pulpit and your lungs and the sinner's patience into the bargain, he cannot discern it, it is all foolishness unto him. The curse of the broken covenant is upon him, and you cannot take it off. He must

The covenant of grace is so planned, that the condition of it, when complied with, by interesting the sinner in the atonement of Christ, delivers him from the power of the law as a covenant; and the very same thing which brings him from under the covenant of works, brings him into the covenant of grace. Faith is the condition of coming from under the law, because it receives the atonement which it requires; consequently the law lets the sinner go, having no claim against him. But faith is also the condition of his interest in the covenant of grace; because the atonement which it receives, was made on the plan of the promises being made sure to believers on the very condition of the atonement: so that the sinner, by the simple act of receiving the ransom, not only is delivered from the hold of the covenant of works, but also lays hold of the covenant of grace.

But the most refined and accurate idea of this matter is this: The covenant of works and the covenant of redemption, as to the true intent and meaning of them, are the very same thing; and the covenant of grace introduces the sinner into the happy effects of them both, connected together in one general plan. It is true they differ in many important circumstances; but they agree in the grand design; which is, the confirmation of the creature in a state of holiness and eternal glory.

They differ, 1. as to the head of the covenants: the first, Adam; the second, Christ. 2. As to the condition: the first, obedience to a positive prohibition; and, in consequence of failure in the first, which involved the creature in guilt which the first Adam was unable to remove, the second was suffering the penalty. It is evident, that if

apply to the blood of Christ the first thing he does. The justice of God is a dreadful thing, it locks the sinner up faster than with ten thousand bars of iron, and nothing but the price paid on the cross can bring him out of his dungeon. The sinner must believe or he must be unholy still.

Adam had been able to make atonement for himself and for his posterity, he could have completely insured to himself and his posterity the blessings of the covenant, even after he fell. But he was not; and therefore Christ covenanted to do it for as many as his Father chose to give him. 3. Adam represented the whole human race; Christ represented only a part. 4. There was a penalty to the first covenant, because Adam, the covenant head, was to fulfil the condition by a preceptive obedience; but there was not penalty to the second, because the condition of the second was to fulfil the penalty of the first, so that there was no place for a penalty, for one penalty upon another is not lawful. The condition of the first covenant was obedience to a law, consequently a penalty necessarily was implied, and also pronounced. Had Christ been obliged to fulfil the precepts of the law as a condition of the covenant, there must have been a penalty; for there can be no just law without a penalty, either expressed or understood: it would be a mere nugatory thing without any authority, and consequently no law. But Christ had only to bear the penalty, and therefore there could be no penalty to the new covenant annexed to the condition of it. 5. The fulfilment of the promises of the first covenant consisted, not in the sanctification of the creature, because he had never sinned, but in confirming him in holiness and happiness; but the promises of the second, engage sanctification to the sinner, who is polluted in consequence of transgressing the first covenant.

But although these are very important articles of distinction, and sufficient to denominate them as two covenants, yet they are but circumstantial things. The grand end of both is the same as to those who are saved, viz. the confirmation of the creature in the image and enjoyment of God.

When Adam fell, the covenant laid a penal hold on the sinner. Christ, under the circumstances of the new

covenant, stept into Adam's place and answered these penal demands; and when the sinner, by faith, becomes interested in the covenant of grace, the old covenant, in consequence of the atonement, lets go its penal hold of the sinner: the sinner consequently lays hold of it, and claims by a just title the fulfilment of all its promises; which promises are now renewed under the economy of the gospel and suited to the work of sanctification.

Upon the whole, Christ directly purchased a deliverance from the penal demands of the law, which we call pardon, justification, or deliverance from guilt; and all the blessings of holiness are the effect of the atonement, and directly in consequence of the gracious promises of the covenant of grace.

CHAPTER VI.

The dreadful effects of guilt, and the blessed effects of atonement, or righteousness.

GUILT is the consequence of sin; it is the forfeiture of happiness, and a liability to punishment. Guilt totally seals up the sinner in a state of unholiness; so that it is impossible for a sinner to be made holy, while the least degree of guilt remains upon him. I have already shown that holiness is a free act of the will or disposition of the mind towards that which is morally good; and that sin is a contrary disposition. I have also shown that this holy disposition is in consequence of suitable motives presented to the understanding, by which the mind is influenced to choose that which is excellent; and that in order to this, it is necessary that God, our great Creator, possessed in an infinite degree of every moral excellence, should make a suitable manifestation of his moral excellence and glory to the creature, in such a manner as to attract his heart

and dispose him to that which is good; and that without this the creature will be left to falsehood and moral darkness, (so to speak) swayed by motives to evil; the awful and perpetual consequence of which will be sin.

It was entirely an act of goodness in God to give to Adam, after he had created him, those divine revelations of his glorious excellencies, to engage his heart unto himself and so to make him a holy creature. It was also a great display of goodness to enter into a covenant with him, on easy conditions, to continue those manifestations to him and his posterity for ever, to keep him in a holy and happy state. It is too nice a point for me to determine the moral obligations of the Deity to grant those motives to holiness unto his creatures, on their simple conformity to the moral law without any covenant engagements, neither is it necessary at present. But this is certain, that when he was pleased to enter into a covenant he engaged every thing necessary to the complete happiness of his creatures, on the conditions mentioned in the second chapter of Genesis: consequently, a fulfilment of the condition must have intitled to the fulfilment of the promises; but to be guilty must have a dreadful effect.

On these principles the question is, what is the consequence of guilt? The answer is plain, viz. not only punishment, the just wages of sin, but also a total and everlasting suspension or withdrawment of every manifestation of moral excellence from the soul; so that being justly deprived of suitable motives to holiness, and influenced only by motives to that which is evil, the poor unhappy creature wanders in darkness, and does nothing but sin against God continually. This desertion is properly spiritual death; and God inflicts it on every one who is guilty.

Guilt, consequently, always is and must be the grounds of a sinner's continuing in a state of unholiness; and it is impossible for him to obtain the least particle of holiness

until this awful forfeiture is removed. While ever guilt remains it holds the creature fast in chains under darkness; adding sin to sin, and transgression to transgression. If God does not pity him and restore to him the light of his divine glory, the whole universe cannot reclaim him. This accounts for the wonderful circumstance which we find recorded in scripture, that if ever a creature of God, subject to moral government, once sins against him, he is lost for ever. Witness the devils in hell; and they never cease sinning, except their career of iniquity is stopped by divine mercy from God himself; for none other can pity, and no other hand can bring deliverance. Witness the fallen race of Adam.

O how vain it is for sinners to pretend to holiness, or to go about to establish a righteousness of their own. And what a fearful thing it is to refuse to submit to the atonement of Christ. Unbelievers wax worse and worse, and ever will, both in this world and that which is to come, continuing under the awful load of guilt, attended with all its horrid consequences. “After thy hardness and
“impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath
“against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

It is impossible for us to obtain holiness but by atoning for our guilt; and it is impossible for us to atone for our guilt but by faith, laying hold of the atonement of the cross of Christ.

We are now to inquire into the blessed effects of atonement, or of righteousness. Righteousness is the opposite of guilt, and has the direct opposite effects. When we are righteous on a covenant plan, we are not only entitled to present holiness, but to perpetual holiness, even an eternal confirmation in holiness and happiness for ever.

Had Adam kept the first covenant, this perpetual holiness and happiness would have been our happy portion. But now we must obtain it by atonement, as it is propo-

sed to us in the covenant of grace, and procured by Christ in the covenant of redemption. When we believe in Christ we are personally interested in the atonement of the cross; this completely removes our guilt, and, as I have already shown, gives a claim to the promises of the covenant, which promises and insures us the blessed manifestations of God's divine excellencies. The Spirit by the word brings divine discoveries to our minds; the forfeited blessings of the covenant returns to the poor benighted soul, and the lost image of God immediately begins to be restored. Captivated with the excellence of holiness, we begin to love God and his holy law, to mourn over sin and to engage with delight in the service of God.

And as it is impossible for guilt ever to be imputed to us again to our condemnation, because of our interest in the blood of the cross, therefore those motives to holiness will never be finally withdrawn from us any more; but all things shall work for our good, and no real good thing can be withheld from us, inasmuch as we never can forfeit our right to the blessings of the covenant. Blessed indeed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. He who believeth shall never be ashamed, shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.

Corol. 1. The devils will be devils in hell to eternity. They have never received any views, or had any discoveries of the beauty of holiness since they forfeited those blessings by sin. They are guilty creatures, and never can be relieved from their guilt, for they cannot make atonement. Sinning continually, the score increases, and no atonement made for them. They consequently never can be sanctified. They never will or can be admitted to enjoy such a blessing as to view the divine glory of God's perfections, and nothing else can possibly make them holy.

Corol. 2. Those who die out of Christ will be in the very same predicament. Dying in a state of guilt, and left in a state of guilt when Christ gives up his mediatorial kingdom, (1 Cor. 15. 24—28.) they must remain in a state of guilt, and consequently remain unholy for ever.

Corol. 3. It is a most dangerous thing to trifle with the gospel, or to live destitute of faith. He that is destitute of faith is destitute of holiness, and is in danger every moment to be consigned over to an eternal state of guilt, and consequently to an eternal state of unholiness.

Corol. 4. There is no salvation out of Christ. Deists, who deny the atonement of Christ, must perish for ever. All their wit, sense, learning, and pretended morality, and power of natural religion, cannot deliver them from guilt; and consequently they will, in spite of all they say, or can say or do, remain in a state of unholiness. They need not pretend to bully their Maker out of the manifestations of his divine excellence to their souls: they never can get one till they believe in Christ, to remove their guilt. But this they will not be persuaded to do; therefore guilt and pollution, hell and damnation, must be their portion for ever.

CHAPTER VII.

Some interesting passages of scripture explained on the above principles.

SEVERAL very important texts and passages of scripture, which are difficult to have clear conceptions of, are explained on the above principles, which I have attempted to demonstrate and establish. I will bring forward some of them and point out their meaning.

Eph. 5. 14. “Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” As the mari-

ners called upon Jonah who was asleep in eminent danger, so the calls of the gospel summon careless sinners to be sensible of their guilt and danger, and fly to Christ that they may be delivered from a state of guilt and death; and Christ, who is the light of the world and the light of men, and who turns many from darkness to light, will give them light: giving them a view of the glory of God, to incline their souls to holiness.

But on the other hand, (2 Cor. 4. 3, 4.) those who believe not, but remain in their lost state, are in a blinded state; so that the gospel is hid to them, and does not exhibit Christ who is the image of God to their souls. But (v. 6.) God shines into the hearts of those who believe, and gives the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; so that (chap. 3. 18.) they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit or divine influence and effects of the Lord, whose glory brings the soul to the same glory or likeness.

Christ opens the prison doors; (Is. 42. 7.) turns from darkness to light; (Acts 26. 18.) from the power of Satan unto God, that they by faith may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Gal. 2. 20. I am crucified, legally considered as having made atonement for my sin, in union with Christ; therefore the law does not view me as guilty. Yet it is not in consequence of my own righteousness, but that of my Surety, who is one with me as my covenant head, and who also has formed his image in my heart. So that the spiritual life which I enjoy in this imperfect state, I possess by Christ, through my union to him and his faithfulness to me in all the promises of the covenant.

2 Cor. 5. 14. "For the love of Christ constrains us;" we are powerfully influenced by the wonderful love of Christ, to yield ourselves up to him in all our duty, when we only consider that he is our Surety and great Atonement according to the gospel plan; "because we thus

“judge.” This is the view we have of this most important matter, viz. “That if one died,” as a surety or an atonement, “for all; then were all,” for whom he died, “dead,” not only liable to death in consequence of guilt, and spiritually dead in sin, but also dead with him as a federal head, “crucified with him:” having virtually suffered the penalty of the law in him at his death. For the law always considers the principal one with the surety, and doing the same thing he does in his place.

I know divines have generally explained this text as relating to spiritual death, and liability to death in consequence of guilt. But although this is necessarily implied in the idea of atonement for sin, yet this is not the grand idea of the apostle in this place. His main idea is, that those for whom Christ died, died legally in him; his death being counted as their death; and so they are considered in law as making the atonement, because Christ made the atonement for them. The apostle often gives us this idea in his demonstrations of the gospel plan; and in consequence of not taking this idea, I confess that I have been very dark, and consequently gave very confused ideas of many such passages of the bible; and if other divines had better ideas, who have laboured to explain those passages, it is a pity but they had favoured the world with them in a clearer light than they have.

On this idea the apostle proceeds, (v. 15.) “And he “died for all” as a surety, “that they who live,” who were represented by him, and who were redeemed from death by his atonement, “should not henceforth,” after they had made a complete atonement for their guilt and were thereby entitled to life, “live unto themselves,” as if they were independent of God their Creator, or Christ their Redeemer; “but unto him who died for them,” and redeemed them from guilt, in whom they are entitled to life by the atonement, “and rose again;” demonstrating and proving the validity of the atonement which he made in

their room. (v. 16.) “ὥστε ἡμεῖς ἀπο τῆ νυν.” “So that we “now after this,” after this plan or distribution of affairs, “know no man,” do not conceive or know any man who is thus dead with Christ, having made full atonement for sin, “after the flesh,” considered in a state of nature, exposed to the penalty of the divine law, left of God in a state of guilt and darkness, “yea, though we “have known Christ.” If indeed, according to this statement, we have conceived Christ “after the flesh” as our surety, standing in our natural state, exposed to all the consequences of guilt, “yet now, henceforth,” after he has suffered in our room, and finished his work, and made a complete atonement, “we know him no more” as a sacrifice for sin. For (Heb. 9. 25, 26. 28.) it was not necessary that he should offer himself often; but once, in the proper time, he hath appeared to put away our guilt by offering himself a sacrifice; and he, having once offered himself a sacrifice to atone for the guilt of many, it is not necessary for him to die again; but he will come again, not with sin imputed to him, but as having purchased full salvation for those who look to him and depend upon him as their only atonement. “Therefore,” (v. 17.) it follows, as a natural consequence from what I have said, that “if any man be” a believer “in Christ,” is crucified with Christ or is dead with Christ, “he is a new creature,” introduced into new circumstances. “Old things “are passed away,” the old covenant has lost its hold of him as a sinner; his guilt is gone, for ever buried and forgotten; his forfeiture removed, and, as a glorious consequence of this, “behold,” however astonishing it is, “all things are become new:” he is newly justified, he is adopted into a new family, he now has new light and manifestations, new motives, which beget new dispositions in his soul; his thoughts, views, hopes, desires, and his whole man is formed into the image of God: and all

these things are of God (v. 18.) in consequence of our reconciliation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the sixth chapter to the Romans the apostle very conclusively answers that too common objection against the doctrine of free grace, "Shall we continue in sin that 'grace may bound;'" as if the doctrine of salvation by grace connived at iniquity, and indulged sloth and inattention to religion. He establishes his argument on the very principles of atonement; plainly showing that it is impossible for any one to live under the influence of sin, after he has made atonement, and is completely delivered from the curse of the law. He carries on the same idea as we have already explained to be in Gal. 2. 20. "I 'am crucified with Christ, therefore I live,'" &c. I will not insert the passage but only give the leading ideas in his argument.

It is impossible, says the apostle, (v. 2.) for us to continue in sin when we are redeemed from it by the atonement of Christ. How shall we, who are crucified with Christ for sin, live any longer in it. After we in Christ have satisfied the penal demands of justice by death, we are entitled to the manifestations of God's excellence and glory, which will change us into his image, and always, less or more, influence us towards that which is holy. Our very profession of the gospel shows that we have atoned for our sin by the death of Christ. (v. 3, 4.) If therefore we are in Christ in his death, certainly when he rose from the dead after he had made atonement for us, we also will rise with him to a new state: "He that is in 'Christ is a new creature.'" For if we have been considered in him and he acting for us when he died, we also (v. 5.) must rise as he did from the power of sin, having satisfied all the demands of justice.

It is truly the case, according to the plan of the gospel, (v. 6.) that we, in our state of nature, as bound to answer

the penalty of the broken covenant, were legally considered in Christ when he was crucified; and this atonement was made that the whole strength of sin might be broken, that we should not be led by sinful propensities under the influence of wrong and sinful motives; but, being delivered from that unhappy state and brought in the marvellous light of the glory of God, we might be holy. For (v. 7.) he that has suffered the penalty of the law is free from all the evil consequences of sin. It therefore follows that if we be dead, or crucified with Christ, (v. 8.) we may rest assured that we will live with him; for our being interested in his crucifixion is the very thing that entitles us to the life that is promised in the covenant.

Thus the apostle lays the foundation of the whole life of the believer on the atonement of Christ, which delivers him from the curse of the broken covenant, and entitles him to the sanctifying influences of the gospel.

By this plan it is very evident that salvation by free grace is so far from indulging sin, that it is the only thing that does and can break the power of it; and it is also evident that our sanctification depends entirely on the atonement of Christ; and hence the apostle, with infinite propriety, says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in " the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world " is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This ought to be rendered, "by which" (to wit, by the cross or atonement) "the world is crucified," &c. This would identify the apostle's argument, and confine us to the idea of the atonement, which was his identical meaning.

CHAPTER VIII.

Regeneration.

REGENERATION is generally said to be the first dawn of sanctification in the soul. It is expressed in scripture under the idea of being born again, created anew, created in the image of God, putting off the old man and putting on the new, &c. Although I have no great objection to saying that regeneration is the first impression of the image of God on the soul or the first act of sanctification, yet I cannot but think it not very improper to say that it is the whole work of sanctification taken under one view. The apostle John says, (1 John 3. 9.) “ Whosoever “ is born of God sinneth not.” It is very difficult to understand this text but by putting such a meaning as this to it, that as far as he is born of God, or in his renewed nature, he doth not commit sin, or that he doth not habitually commit sin; but the idea seems to be that, as far as he is regenerated he does not sin: consequently, as he grows in grace he grows in regeneration, and becomes more and more holy as he is more and more born of God.

But still it is natural enough to say that it is the first begetting of spiritual life in the soul; so that the soul after it is born grows in sanctification until the believer becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Under this view of it I have generally spoken of it and shall now treat the subject.

Regeneration is one of the happy effects of an interest in Christ by faith. It is the effect of the truth of God’s word brought to the heart by the divine Spirit; giving the believer spiritual views of holiness, which is the glory of God which attracts the soul, and gives it a holy disposition; or, in other words, brings the soul to a con-

formity to the divine will. This we may say, is the first work of a genuine saving nature in the soul, by which the ruins of the fall are beginning to be repaired, and the moral image of God restored to the fallen creature.

The curse being removed by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, there is access to God, and the divine Spirit engages in his important part of the work of our salvation, and by his divine operations through his word he changes the heart and brings it to a conformity to holiness.

As to the effects of regeneration, I observe in the first place, that it produces a great change in the soul. This change is always sensibly felt; the person is very sensible of it although he may not know what it is; whether it is regeneration or not, whether it is true grace or not. But however uncertain he may be as to what name to give his new feelings, he feels them powerfully in his heart.

This change may be wrought in the heart when the person is very young; in which case it will not be so apt to be remembered. It also may be intermixed with very great fears and distress, and many other exercises of the mind; in which case it will not be very clearly ascertained. Also the first spark may be very small, and much corruption to oppose, like the smoking flax; but let these circumstances be as they may there is a change, the man is not what he was before.

2. The change is a moral change. It is not in the natural powers of the soul. There is no new power given nor taken away; but divine truth affects the soul so as to produce the change in the choice, taste, or disposition of the mind; consequently it must be produced by motives according to the principles which I have already explained.

3. The change in regeneration is from a taste or relish for sin to a taste for holiness: consequently, the person hates sin and abhors his former ways of iniquity, and

loves God and the ways of holiness. This disposition of his heart is expressed by strong desires, earnest prayers, pantings of the mind after a conformity to the will of God; also in self-loathing on the account of sin, serious confessions, and endeavours to turn from sin and to live a life of holiness.

It is frequently said, that the genuine feelings of this change may be counterfeited by natural feelings, the effects of fear, self-love, &c. I grant that fear and self-love can and will produce many feelings; but there is nothing but regeneration can produce such feelings as I have described. I have heard hypocrisy and many species of false feelings painted with such life and dexterity that one would be disposed to conclude that it was impossible to distinguish betwixt the work of God and the work of the devil, or of the corrupt heart; and many a poor child of God has famished almost to death attending upon such critical definitions; and very often when the true characteristic comes forth it is so exceedingly refined, and runs so far into perfection, that there never was a mere man since the fall of Adam has ever come half way to it.

The truth is, we ought never to think that any disposition of the heart is like holiness; and if a man hates sin and loves holiness, he has feelings which nothing but God can give him, and which he never does give to any but those who are brought from under the curse by the imputation of the atonement of the cross. If you feel afraid of hell, it will not hurt you; if you want to go to heaven, it is very well, I would think you a fool if you did not; and if you feel a pleasing pleasure or happiness in loving holiness and in being in some measure holy, I would not scruple it, if you are regenerated; and for you to feel your desires going out after God and holiness, no matter how happy you are in those desires, your happiness will not destroy the holiness of your heart.

Some are very much afraid lest they love holiness and hate sin from wrong motives. But if it is a fact that you do love holiness and hate sin, it makes no odds from what motive you do it; for neither your Maker nor the devil could make you do it from wrong motives: it is an impossible case. God only can give the motives that will incline you to holiness, and he never gives wrong ones; and if wrong motives were presented to you they never could lead you to holiness, to make you love it and hate sin. If it is only true that your heart does delight in holiness and loathe iniquity, you need not trouble yourself about your motives: God will take care of these for you. But you say that you must act for the glory of God. I grant it. But if you love holiness and hate sin, you do act for the glory of God; for there is nothing but the glory of God that can induce you to love holiness.

Upon the whole, regeneration is a precious grace, and contains the grounds of every branch of holiness: we never can be happy without it, or see the kingdom of God. If we are the subjects of it, we have an interest in Christ and are justified by his blood. If we wish to obtain it, we need not attempt it by keeping the moral law; for although the moral law is to be our rule of life, yet it never can create a sinner anew, or sanctify him in the least degree. The only plan is to believe on Christ. Come to him just as you are, and he will give his righteousness, which will redeem you from the curse of the law. Then God will change your heart, by revealing his divine glory to you.

CHAPTER IX.

Sanctification: particularly, some reasons offered why it is imperfect in this life.

SANCTIFICATION is another benefit of an interest in Christ. Sanctification is causing the child of God to grow; it is to make a sinner holy. Regeneration is the commencement of sanctification, as I have before observed, but sanctification is the progress of the work.

That holiness is necessary, and even the principle part of our salvation, is so plain a doctrine, that no one disputes it. That holiness is produced in a sinner by sanctification is also an evident matter; but why sanctification should be a progressive work, to be continued, and not perfected in this life, is a question which we may ask, but cannot easily answer: but difficult as it is, I will venture a few thoughts.

There are somethings which, although naturally possible yet are not morally possible, and some things not suitable to be done. The wisdom of God is manifested in choosing plans which will the most easily and effectually bring about his divine purposes. These are positions which no one can deny.

God purposed to save a number of Adam's fallen race: he consequently chose them out of the world, and gave them to his Son as his peculiar inheritance. It no doubt was not fit, and probably it was morally impossible to choose one particular tribe or nation of people. At any rate, God manifests his adorable sovereignty more by choosing his people out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and no doubt it has a greater tendency to correct the common manners of the world, by the more general spread of the gospel; to call in the elect

from various quarters of the world, and by the influence of the sentiments and example of the people of God. Deists no doubt may laugh at this, as laughing is their principle argument, and has a powerful tendency to convince fools; yet the world has felt both the disadvantage of the want of the gospel, and the glorious advantages of the gospel, ever since the fall of Adam. Before the flood, when there was no bible extant, and religion was considerably confined to a line of Adam's posterity from him to Noath, the consequence was shocking to the last degree; until the flood came and swept them away with an awful overthrow for their wickedness. And afterwards, when the bible was confined to the tribes of Israel, how awful was the state of the surrounding nations! Even Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome, which have exhibited the greatest geniuses in the world, accomplished with every advantage of science and study, with all their morality and nice philosophy, present us, at last, with little else than monsters of iniquity and debauchery of every kind, both in their worship and common manners; and all authorised by their courts and councils, wise men and philosophers; and when Christ came into the world he found it in a miserable situation indeed. We have a shocking statement of the unhappy situation of the heathens in the first chapter to the Romans; and even to this day, to take a view of those parts of the world, which have never been visited by the gospel, or which have been deserted by the gospel, is enough to excite our pity as well as our abhorrence.

But, on the other hand, how was the face of the earth changed when the proper time came, when there was no more a necessity to preserve the tribe of Judah as a repository for the oracles of God, to designate the true Messiah, and to establish our belief on him.

When the gospel was preached among the gentiles by the disciples, it made the whole Roman empire to feel

the powerful effects of it. These men were not attended with mighty armies, equipt with weapons of war. They had not even the advantage of human literature. They had not either influence or civil power. They were poor, illiterate, and despised. But they had the gospel to preach. They had to tell the nations that they were wrong; that those gods whom they worshipped could not save them; and that they must be saved by believing on him whom Pontius Pilate crucified at Jerusalem, who had risen from the dead as the only Saviour of the world: very unlikely weapons indeed to conquer mankind. But what was the consequence? Churches were planted in all parts of the world, and it was not comparatively very long until you find a christian emperor on the throne of Rome in spite of all the power of the civil sword; and the little boys, with ropes tied round the necks of the idols which their fathers used to worship, dragging them up and down the streets for play things; and from that day to this the names of heathen gods are only known in books by the learned, as gods whom the heathens used to worship before they heard the gospel. However lightly the man of the world may look upon these things, they are truly most astonishing and enough to convince us that the gospel is the wisdom of God and the power of God. Who can refrain from astonishment and conviction to read the simple narrative of the New Testament? It is true, only the bare facts are mentioned without any colouring, and the world is left to think of the facts as they see fit; yet the things done are truly incredible but on the idea, that they are the works of the Lord; and they are truly marvellous in our eyes.*

* The history of Christ and his apostles exceeds every thing that ever was read, for the simplicity of the narrative of the most interesting facts therein contained. No historian that ever has written, especially the transactions of a great favourite, is at all to be compared with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It must be supposed

At this day we call those nations civilized who are brought from a state of barbarity. But pray, who are

that they loved Christ and his cause, and it is very evident from their writings that they did. Christ was their Lord and Master, and they had left all and followed him. Yet how perfectly free is their history from any thing like flattery, encomium, or even painting. Neither do they use any reproachful language as to the conduct of the persecutors of Christ; but they content themselves with relating the bare facts as they stood, without the least insinuation on the one hand or the other. This is a perfect exception from all the world beside; and I do not believe there could be a man found that could do it. He could not bear to refrain from praising his friend, and reproaching his enemies who would wrongfully persecute him. He could not tell of stupenduous, miraculous things without high epithets; his very feelings would not admit him, he could not keep down his own sensations: he would have to show what he thought, and he must try to make others also think with him. Disinterestedness, and ingenuousness is the excellence of the style and manner of historical writing, and many men of high taste, and noble talents and erudition have tried it; and although some have succeeded much better than others, yet none have come near the mark but the poor fellow travellers of our blessed Lord.

Are you not surprised that you never read the epithets blessed, glorious, adorable, wonderful, kind and dear, added to the name of Christ? No such things. It is, the Lord Jesus said or did so and so. How could they help vilifying the chief priests? that base wretch Caiaphas and the law, hypocritical scribes and elders? And does Judas escape their reproaches too? that cursed traitor! And how does Pilate fare, that wretched infamous judge, who could basely condemn an innocent man to die? and poor cowardly Peter, who bragged that he would do mighty feats? Are you not astonished at such ingenuousness? You find nothing but Caiaphas, and the chief priests and elders, and Peter, and Judas, and Pilate. And could they give an account of what they did with calmness? Surely when they begin to spit on their Lord and Master and smite him, and crown him with thorns, and clothe him in mock royalty, and pretend to bow before him in derision, will they not begin to show some indignation? such base inhuman treatment of a man who had never done any harm. No. They did so and so, and that is all we hear about it. Will they not at least extol to the very clouds the most unparalleled fortitude, patience, and meekness of their Master under such unheard of trials? No. They just tell us how he did. But let us come to the

the civilized nations, and who the barbarian? Even those who have the gospel, and those who have not. We may introduce a thousand reasons for civilization and reform in laws and customs; but some how it happens that the bible is always at the bottom of every good reason that can be offered. There might be several other good reasons why God chose his people promiscuously from among the rest. If the whole body of the elect were together, perhaps it would be worse for them than it is now; the rest of the world would be more pointedly and visibly their enemies, and it would require a constant miracle to preserve them from their rage and annoyance. This was considerably the case with the Jewish nation. God's people also by such a plan would be cut off from any intercourse with the men of the world, and would be deprived of every advantage and assistance of a worldly nature which they now enjoy.

cross, and what is the account there? Is there no picturesque, no painting? Do they not dwell on this wonderful occurrence? No. "And they crucified him;" simple facts still. But that most alarming, most interesting, and most marvellous circumstance of the darkness that took place while Jesus was suffering; this surely would provoke a very high description! No. "Now from the sixth hour "there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour;" and they tell us that Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. If this is not simplicity I know not where we shall find it. When we come to the resurrection we still find the same honest simplicity in the narrative, although very grand and instructive. So we may say of his ascension, and the account they give us of all the miracles which our Saviour wrought.

Surely there never could be such a book written by the art of man, exhibiting such grand and interesting matter with such amazingly disinterested ingenuousness; and yet not dry and unentertaining, but rising into the truly sublime; interesting us and laying hold of our feelings without any art or seeming intention; and we find more interesting matter, in which the very life of our souls are at stake in one page, than we can find in many, many pages of the most ingenious writer in the world.

Christians consequently have to live intermingled with the wicked, and such an intercourse would very ill suit a state of perfection in holiness; and it is probable, that this is one good reason why God permits, generally, his people to live ten, fifteen, twenty and thirty years in a state of nature before he calls them effectually by his Spirit; that they may be fit to stay in this imperfect state to do what he has for them to do, and may be the better capacitated both to bear with sinners and to do them good. God often called Israel to remember that they were once strangers in Egypt; and it is a truth, as to preachers, that the church derives infinite advantage from their past experience, even in sin. Perhaps an angel would not know how a sinner feels. Our blessed Saviour knows how to succour those who are tempted, having been tempted himself; and Paul says, speaking of Satan, we are not ignorant of his devices.

Of course it would not be best for the saints to become perfectly sanctified at once: they would have a miserable time of it in the world, and the world would have a miserable time of it with them. Perfection in sin, and perfection in holiness never could be happy together: if it could, there would be no need for a hell, or a final separation. And seeing it appears best for a christian to experience a sinful state for awhile it must be best for him to be still imperfect, even in a gracious state. His friends and neighbours, and perhaps the wife of his bosom and his children, are not all yet brought in; he must therefore bear with them till God's time. But how could all this be done unless he had something to mourn over in his own case, which, as it were, tempers him to his situation. He remembers what he once was, and how many calls and warnings he withstood, and with what a malevolent temper he did it too. This makes him wait with patience, while he considers with gratitude and wonder his former

state, and while he reflects upon his present short comings in the sight of God.

It is not fair to object to the above statement, that the Lord Jesus Christ made an experiment of a perfect man living in this world of imperfection, for two reasons: He was a man of continual sorrow; he often expressed his grief with sinners, and even heavily complained of the imperfections of his disciples; and he was the very but of the resentment of the world, except his few followers; he felt himself continually surrounded with enemies, laying snares for his life, and often had miraculously to deliver himself out of their hands: they watched his words, and watched his conduct, and were always ready to find fault with every thing he spoke or did. This was surely not a happy state to live in, and it required more than man to support under it: also it is very evident that it was his perfection that turned the world against him.

Again, Christ was supported by his divinity, and it is not fair to compare circumstances with our blessed Lord, for he thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Angels could not be happy, confined in the company of devils; else where would be the wisdom of God in appointing different stations finally for the righteous and the wicked? "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" It is true Christ spent thirty years, especially three, tabernacling with sinners; but he was God as well as man, and with all he suffered much grief and sorrow.

Farther: It is very probable, that the present state of this world would not be suitable for a perfectly holy man: not only the sin which is in it, and sinners abounding, which we have considered above; but even the lawful employments and engagements necessary for our support here, being often very difficult and perplexing, would be but ill suited to a state of perfection. Experience abundantly proves that this world is not friendly to religion, and there are as many souls lost through the

influence of what we call the lawful things of the world as perhaps any other thing. I readily grant that religion inculcates industry and frugality, and forbids sloth and idleness; but the reason is, because we are appointed by God to live here by the sweat of our faces, and he commands that he who will not work should not eat. Religion enjoins obedience to all God's precepts; hence lawful industry makes a part of religion. But if it was not necessary for us to labour for our livelihood while we live here, religion would find us something else to do than to grapple after this world.

Experience farther proves, that a christian in a very lively frame is not very fit for worldly employments: I am not here speaking of enthusiastic flights of mere fancy, but the rational and solid exercises of true religion. How often the christian in a very lively time forgets as it were his business. The mechanic holds his hammer or planestock in his hand, or lays it down to converse awhile and gaze upon the divine glories of his Redeemer. I have seen the farmer hanging over or resting upon the handles of his plough, and his mind taken up with the glorious subjects of religion; and when the mind gets engrossed with religion it is not such an easy matter to call it off to the cares and perplexities of the world. If this is the case with a soul which is still imperfect, how must it feel when perfectly swallowed up in the divine glory, and engaged in all the perfection of religion? Could the farmer conveniently pitch his crop? could he plan his work? or could he feel much satisfaction in his daily employment? I am confident of one thing, he would be very glad of the return of the sabbath, and would wish for heaven where his sabbath would never end, and where he would not be interrupted in his happiness.

While Adam was perfect he was continued in paradise, lived on fruit, and had plenty without labour; he was to

dress and keep the garden it is true, but what the word dress means I know not; perhaps Moses only adopted the word dress alluding to the customs of the world in keeping gardens, which is always esteemed delicate business: but let it mean what it will it was not labour. But when he had sinned, then, and then only, he was qualified to make his living out of the ground by the sweat of his brow. It is also worthy of a remark, that heaven is called Paradise, with an allusion to the garden of Eden, where christians will enjoy a state of perfection again.

Another reason may be, for the imperfection of holiness in this life, that it would more fully manifest the glory of the Redeemer. It must show goodness, faithfulness, wisdom and power to an infinite degree indeed, to make a poor, weak, imperfect worm triumph over death and hell. Paul seems to have this idea when he could not get the thorn removed, but only a promise of support under it: he immediately gloried in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Saints are represented arriving to heaven as coming out of great tribulation; and God permitted Pharaoh to harass the Israelites, and keep them sometime in hard bondage, that he might get him glory in bringing his people out with a high hand.

I might add to this, that if sanctification was perfect saints would not have any conflict. In order to perfection there must be such a full manifestation of the divine glory that there would remain no struggle betwixt grace and sin. The believer would consequently lose his laurels of victory in a spiritual warfare. Paul could tell Timothy near the close of his life, that he had fought a good fight and kept the faith, and therefore there was a crown laid up for him against that day. It is a peculiar glory to Christ to place the crown of victory on the heads of his followers, and it is the glory of the christian to receive it; but both Christ and his people would lose that glory

if holiness was perfect here, because there would be no warfare.

In the last place: It perhaps would be an impossible case. It seems pretty evident, from the nature of holiness and the constitution of the human body in its mortal state, and also from some things in the bible, that perfect holiness would take the life in a moment. If so, there can possibly be no such thing as perfection in this life.

1. Holiness is a conformity to God. Perfect holiness is a perfect conformity to God. But the question is, how is it obtained? In order perfectly to sanctify at once, there must be a full manifestation of the glory of God, instantaneously made to the sinner, to transform him into the same image, so that the whole soul must be swallowed up in the transcendant beauty of the divine perfections: this is what the soul will enjoy after death. Hence the apostle John says, "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Christ says, "the angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven;" and he prays that his people may be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory. But who could bear such glory in this mortal state? "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Therefore,

2. The human body is not strong enough to bear such a full manifestation of the divine excellence. The body of Adam was immortal: God alone has immortality; (1 Tim. 6. 16.) all other beings are dependent, and are immortal only when God supports them, and renders them so by his sustaining power; and he will never suffer a creature to die that has no guilt. Devils cannot die, because God will not suffer them to die; and so as to the souls and bodies of the damned in hell. But he has determined that our bodies must die, and he has formed them with such a contexture that several things will cause a dissolution to take place. It is evident from experience in a thousand instances, that the human constitution can-

not stand a violent shock, either from air, electricity or other external things; but even shocks upon the mind have often proved fatal to mankind. Although we may be very unable to account for it, yet we find, in fact, that it is the case. Sudden joy or sudden grief, sudden frights or sudden ecstasies, all have made their victims; and we cannot well deny, but that such a sudden blaze of divine glory as would be necessary to transform a sinner to a perfect saint, and cause him to be immediately divested of every the least imperfection, and completely swallowed up in spotless perfection, would leave the frail body lifeless immediately. I say this cannot be well denied when we have often seen infinitely less things do it. For instance, when the door-keeper of the congress in Philadelphia dropped dead in a transport of joy on hearing of the capture of Cornwallis; when old Eli and his daughter both died on hearing that the ark of God was taken by the Philistines; when the keepers at the sepulchre of Christ became as dead men at the sight of the angel.

Again: when we have in the late wonderful revival seen hundreds lying motionless, and to appearance dead, for hours, under divine impressions; some dropping in an instant, as if by a fatal shot; others convulsed and distorted; when at the same time they fell vastly short of perfection; how can we suppose that the body could stand the perfection of glory? We must certainly adopt the emphatical proverb, he that is faultless is lifeless: it must be an impossible case to be perfect and live here.

Here you must remember that the divinity of Christ supported his body in a state of perfection; and, for what we know, perhaps the sudden return of the divine glory of his Father, after suffering an awful time of desertion, and a withdrawment of divine support took his life at last.

3. There are things recorded in scripture that greatly favour this sentiment. It is not improbable but the apostle

to Timothy speaks on these very principles: (ch. 6. 16.)
 “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which
 “no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor
 “can see.” Moses prayed to God, (Ex. 33. 18.) “I be-
 “seech thee, show me thy glory.” But God said, (v. 20.)
 “thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see
 “me and live. (v. 22. 23.) It shall come to pass, while
 “my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of
 “the rock, and will cover thee with mine hand, while I
 “pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou
 “shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be
 “seen.”

Probably from this circumstance it became a received notion among the ancients, that if any man saw God he would die. And when God talked with Moses face to face, yet he did not show him his glory in the sense he requested, he could not do it without taking his life. Perhaps he answered his prayer on mount Nebo on the top of Pisgah, where he showed him the promised land; and may be through the type of the earthly Canaan, he gave him a view of the glory of heaven. But this is conjecture; yet it is a possible case, and no doubt it would be as sweet, and as easy, and as quick a death, as Moses could have died.

St. John, (Rev. 1. 17.) when he saw a vision of Christ, fell at his feet as dead. St. Paul, in his vision of the third heavens, did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body.

Upon the whole I will leave the reasons which I have given with my reader: he may judge whether they are satisfactory or not; but I cannot think them altogether inconclusive. But God knows his own reasons best; and we find from scripture that sanctification is imperfect in this life, and I hope we will be able to acquiesce in his glorious plan. We must struggle with sin and temptation

a little while; but while the conflict lasts we may encourage ourselves with the assurance of a glorious victory in the end. For God has promised that where he has begun a good work he will perform it till the day of Christ. He will make us faithful unto death and then he will give us a crown of life.

CHAPTER X.

The nature and progress of sanctification.

WHEN the sinner is interested in Christ by faith, and the divine Spirit has begun the great work of salvation in the heart, having, so to speak, planted the seeds of holiness by regeneration, he never deserts his work, but takes up his abode in the believer, with the design to restore the image of God fully to his soul.

Sanctification is therefore to make a sinner holy. It is not itself holiness, but holiness is the effect of it; and it is the work of God in the heart producing it. Consequently sanctification is the continuation of divine illumination, or the continued manifestations of the excellencies of holiness to the soul, by which the soul is kept steadfastly possessing, less or more, a disposition towards God and holiness. Although the christian does, in the general, grow in grace, yet it is not essential to the work of sanctification, that he continually should advance in holiness; for, even if he should not advance in the least degree in his conformity to God in the temper of his heart, or in his life and conversation, for any given time, say one year or ten years, yet the work of sanctification is going on; it is continued let the christian advance in holiness or not. Yea, even when the christian is on the decline, and through the influence of false motives falls into sin, yet still the work of sanctification is continued.

This startles my reader. How is it possible, says he, that sanctification can be going on, when the christian is standing still or going backward? I ask, how is it possible for a farmer or tradesman or merchant, to be very industrious, and yet get no richer, and do nothing more than keep his family on common allowance? or, if any misfortune happens him, as he calls it, although he has laboured equally hard, or perhaps more so, yet he is worse off this year than he was last? So it is in sanctification. Sanctification is not the progress of a christian: this is only the effect; that is the cause. Sanctification is not a seed planted, which grows of itself. Regeneration plants the seed: sanctification operates like the sun and rain, and does one of three things: it keeps it from dying altogether, or it keeps it as green and flourishing as it was before, or it makes it flourish and thrive. The life, or even the luxuriance of the plant, is not the sun and rain, but the effect they produce on it. So the spiritual life of the christian or the growth of the christian is not sanctification, but the effect of it; and for holiness to continue in ever so small a degree, or to increase, or to be at a stand, it still requires sanctification. If sanctification should cease, the christian would immediately cease to be a saint; and nothing could keep him from falling from grace, except the imputed righteousness of Christ. But if the righteousness of Christ would not prevent sanctification from ceasing, it would not prevent the final ruin of the soul.

We therefore conclude, that sanctification is what we have said, viz. the continuation of divine illumination, or the continued manifestations of the excellencies of holiness to the soul; by which the soul is won over to the choice and approbation of that which is good, and hates and abhors that which is evil. The holy Spirit communicating divine truth to the soul and continuing to do so, more or less, is the whole work of sanctification, unless

you take into view the influence and care which is employed, through the glorious management and direction which Christ has over the universe in preventing temptations to sin; and indeed this is to be taken into our view of sanctification. The apostle is very plain on this subject in 1 Cor. 10, 13: "There is no temptation taken
 "you, but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that
 "ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a
 "way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

We are changeable creatures. Our lack or imperfection in knowledge renders us so. Any being who is of himself completely perfect in knowledge, must be unchangeable. It would be morally impossible for a new motive to be presented to his mind: and it is impossible for the will to change without a new motive. But infinite perfection in knowledge would cause every object or possible occurrence to stand for ever present to view, and consequently the mind would be eternally influenced the same way, and it would be morally impossible for that being ever to be any thing else than what he is. If any being had a motive which never was in view before, and admit it to be strong enough, it would and it must change him in a moment: or, suffer an influential motive to be forgotten or to go out of view, and an alteration would take place immediately. But either of those would suppose imperfection in knowledge: so that it is plain that God's perfect knowledge makes him unchangeable.

Although angels and saints in heaven grow in their knowledge, yet we cannot say that they alter or choose different things from what they did before. Nevertheless acquiring clearer conception of the same objects, their will acts more vigorously; which is a change in reality, yet only to a higher degree of the same things; and even this is not of themselves but of God, who continues to give them knowledge, and more and more knowledge of those things. So that angels of themselves are infinitely far from

unchangeability, through their imperfection in knowledge; and what degree of sameness so to speak they have, they are dependent on God for it: so that they are really changeable creatures with all their stability and glory.

There is a sense in which both the angels in heaven and believers even on earth are unchangeable, viz. by the unchangeable truth and faithfulness of God in his promises to give them knowledge, which furnishes them with motives; and consequently they remain steadfast through the faithfulness of God. On this very principle the angels are established in heaven; and believers on earth persevere in holiness. All motives to good come by the knowledge of the truth: all motives to evil come by falsehood. The work of sanctification consequently is to give us the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and to guard us from falsehood.

This accounts for the wonderful conduct of God towards all his creatures, in entering into a covenant with them. There can be no establishment without promises: creatures could have nothing to depend on, and consequently could not be happy. But there can be no promises without a covenant or agreement of some kind. Sanctification is the fulfilment of the promises of the covenant which relates to holiness, and therefore consists in the communication of the knowledge of the truth, which always influences the mind to that which is right, and in counteracting falsehood, which always inclines the mind to evil.*

* How awfully dangerous it is to preach errors; and what a world of mischief is done by it. I grant every error is not fatal, because there may be truth enough to preponderate. But errors in the leading doctrines of the gospel must be fatal to the soul. Unless sinners are persuaded to come, lost and ruined as they are by nature, to Christ for every part of salvation, they must for ever remain in a state of death and sin. To persuade sinners to endeavour to repent and reform, and prepare themselves for a reception from Christ is rank poison to the soul. To persuade sinners who are under the curse of

When the divine Spirit causes the divine glory to shine into the soul, then it is sanctified; and the causing the glory of God to be manifested to the soul is the work of sanctification. Some times these manifestations are much clearer than at other times. The clearer the soul views the divine perfections, the more it will be engaged and exercised in holiness, and so vice versa.

Christ continuing to grant these divine discoveries to the soul by his Spirit and word, is the progress of sanctification; and is all in consequence of faith. This work will never cease before the whole is complete, even until the believer becomes a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Sanctification progresses, or continues while ever the soul has discoveries of the excellence of holiness; let those discoveries be ever so faint, yet they will have their effect to incline the soul to that which is morally excellent, and consequently to conform it to the image of God. Holiness progresses, when those divine manifestations become brighter and brighter, and brings the soul to a greater conformity to the divine will.

I will not here inquire whether the word sanctification is proper to express those continual manifestations of moral excellence to saints and angels in heaven which continue them in a state of holiness; or those manifestations to Adam when he was first created, and promised to him in the covenant of works, had he fulfilled the condition of that covenant. No doubt, strictly speaking, the whole is properly sanctification; for whatever makes holy is sanctification: yet the most natural idea to us is that sanctification is the making a sinner holy. This is truly a marvellous work. That God should reveal himself in the trans-

God's law to obtain holiness by a regular life, and strive to keep the divine law, is a miserable attempt to persuade to impossibilities, and a barefaced attack upon the cross of Christ. The condition of the gospel is faith; and sinners have no other shift for life, holiness and happiness, but to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

cedent glory of his excellence to an innocent creature is not strange; but that he should grant such an inestimable blessing to a sinner who had forfeited his right to every favour, and do it through the wonderful atonement of his dear Son, is such a favour that it attracts our attention, and seems to confine our ideas of sanctification to ourselves as the proper subjects of it; and it must be at least granted, that in making a sinner holy is the most glorious display of sanctification. This very circumstance leads us in our definitions to say, sanctification is the making a sinner holy; even bringing him, who is by nature opposed to God and holiness, to a conformity to the image of God.

There is nothing more certain than the progress of sanctification administered by Jesus Christ through the Spirit by the word, according to the covenant of grace, to those who are interested in him by faith. The promises are yea and amen in Christ: Yea, in the affirmative; amen, in the certainty of the performance of the things affirmed. The engagements on God's part in the covenant of works were conditional; so that in Adam the proposals of blessings to him and his seed were not yea, nor amen; they were neither affirmed nor yet made sure; there being no establishment pronounced, but all suspended on the condition until it was performed. But in Christ, the head of the new covenant, every thing is made sure to the believer; Christ being faithful and infallible, and also having really fulfilled the conditions of the covenant. Therefore the blessings promised to the believer are not conditional things, but emphatically yea and amen, so let it be.

The sum and substance of the promises of the gospel to the believer, either directly or indirectly, relate to the conformity of his heart to the image of God. "All scripture is profitable for doctrine, &c. that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" so that the work of sanctification goes on, and

will go on by the faithful fulfilment of those promises, until the believer, being admitted finally to a full view of the divine glory, will be complete in holiness, “and
“without blame before him in love, not having spot or
“wrinkle or any such thing.”

It is consequently the duty of every sinner who enjoys the opportunity of the gospel to believe in Christ, and not to go about to establish a righteousness of his own. I repeat it again, and I wish it to be ever remembered, that every attempt to mend the heart is vain and wicked, and will inevitable end in eternal ruin, except we believe in Christ; but a grain of faith, not greater than a mustard seed, will eventually sanctify the vilest sinner. Fly to Christ, who only is the light of the world and the life of men, and you will be interested in all the promises of salvation. “But if you refuse and rebel, ye shall be de-
“voured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath
“spoken it.”

CHAPTER XI.

Holiness, its nature, &c.

THE effect of sanctification is holiness in heart, and in the life and conversation. Holiness is called the aggregate of the divine perfections; it is therefore the glory of God. Holiness is also the excellence and glory of a christian. It makes him like God. It renders him lovely, adorns his heart and life with moral excellence; and prepares him for heaven and eternal glory. In treating this important subject I observe,

1. That holiness is in itself the disposition of the mind toward that which is morally right. It is the direct opposite of sin. The divine will being unchangeably disposed or inclined to every thing morally excellent, constitutes

his moral excellence; and God is consequently infinitely holy. Holiness is excellent, and glorious in itself: God is excellent and glorious, because he is holy. God does not render holiness glorious; but holiness is God's glory. Sin is not base because the devil is a sinner; for sin would be equally base if there never had been a devil. An angel is glorious because he is holy; but holiness would be glorious if there never had been an angel.

But although we cannot possibly conceive or have an idea of there being no God, nor yet can we easily have an idea of his doing any thing wrong, or having any wrong disposition; yet we can easily see that holiness is his glory, because holiness is in itself right. Holiness is not a creature; it cannot be created; neither is it a being; it has no existence; it is only the disposition of the mind of a being or a creature which does exist, or is created; and that disposition renders that being lovely, because it is towards that which is morally excellent. The standard of holiness is the moral law. I do not mean by the moral law the ten commandments literally; but that eternal law of equity and rectitude which is the fundamental principle of every just law of a moral nature. This law takes cognisance of the mind and conduct of all beings capable of moral government, from the highest to the lowest; and they are holy or unholy according as they are conformed to this law or not.

God is infinitely and eternally conformed to it; and therefore he is infinitely holy. Angels are perfectly conformed to it, and are therefore perfectly holy. Adam was perfectly conformed to it; he was consequently perfectly holy. Satan broke this law and became a devil: Adam broke it, after he broke covenant with God, and became a sinner. By the effect of sanctification believers in Christ are partly conformed to this law, and are consequently imperfectly holy. When the gospel has its full effect and the work of salvation completed, then they will again be

brought to a perfect conformity to this law, and consequently will be perfect in holiness, and fit inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven.

2. Holiness originates in the will. It is impossible for a man to do one thing holy until he has holiness in his heart: he must choose and love that which is morally right, before he can be holy in any part of his conduct. The will is choosing or choice. When a man chooses, or makes choice, his will is exercised in doing so. The will holding to or continuing in its choice of any object with firmness, is the disposition of the mind. The will acting vigorously towards its object, the mind being engrossed or taken up with it, is affection; at least the affection of love. When the will acts more vigorously still towards the object, so that the mind is in a high degree affected, we call it the passions of the mind. Again, when the will exerts its utmost strength, and the mind is, as it were, swallowed up with the object, then it gets the name of ecstacy.

If the man chooses that which is morally good, influenced or moved thereunto by the moral excellence of the thing, there must be holiness in all these different moods of the will; yet it must be acknowledged, that the most natural and eligible place for holiness is in the disposition and the affections. Perhaps I might venture to say, when the christian possesses a steady disposition and regular affection towards that which is good, he is more like God than in any other state of mind whatsoever. When he has a simple choice, his mind just preponderating, so to speak, towards moral rectitude, he makes a dull, sleepy, inactive christian. You must be long acquainted with him before you can guess whether he is a christian, or a mere formalist. When a man possesses a steady disposition toward holiness, he makes a uniform, steady and respectable christian: he makes a respectable member of the church, and is justly considered as an honour to religion. When a christian possesses a steady and uniform affection.

or in other words, when his affections are generally in a natural and even flow towards God and holiness, he is a most agreeable, lovely person; his company is courted and when enjoyed it is fine and profitable. When a christian is full of passion and always flying, he is apt to be turbulent, and makes a great many blunders, and gets many a broken bone by his rapidity and downfalls; but when the christian is ecstatic, none but God can manage him.

3. Holiness extends to the life and conversation. Here is a wide range indeed. In whatever sphere a man acts in the various circumstances and conditions of life, his whole conduct will savour of the disposition of his heart; and if his heart is holy his conduct will be holy also. The circle of public life, amidst the important business of church and state, exhibits holiness. In the more retired business of common life, in whatever department or occupation the man may act, his actions will be tinged with holiness: holiness is exhibited in all the intercourse betwixt man and man. Truth, faithfulness, benevolence and charity, will mark the conduct of the holy man. In all his dealings with his neighbour, righteousness is his peculiar characteristic; and he always feels a cheerfulness to relieve the poor, to succour the needy, and to act for the happiness and comfort of all around him.

Perhaps you are now ready to say, this is to carry matters to a very great extent. It is so indeed, but not too far for the true nature of holiness to extend. It is to be lamented that we are very far from perfection in these things, both in heart and life; but wherein we come short, it is through our imperfection in holiness. Yet there are instances, not a few, of christians, even in this imperfect state, who have been exemplary and honourable to the christian religion in all those things.

The holiness of an action depends principally upon two things. The thing itself must be lawful; and it must be

done with a right temper of mind, or from right motives. No action in itself wrong can be made holy from the best possible disposition: even an angel would not be holy were he to do wrong with a good design. I grant that a good intention may soften or mitigate the criminality of the man, because the wickedness of the heart is not added to the criminality of the action; but the goodness of the heart cannot make that right which is unlawful. When a good man does a bad action with a good design, he acts under a mistake; the motive which led him to it was a false motive; but it is impossible for ignorance or falsehood to produce holiness. But supposing the action to be right, yet it must be performed from a right disposition; he who performs it must be moved thereunto by the moral excellence of the thing itself, as agreeable in the sight of God and his holy law. Only admit these two things and the action will be holy; or in other words, the man who performs it will be holy in so doing.

Again, holiness is exhibited in the conversation, or converse of the holy man. There are many who are very orderly in their lives, and even reserve and modest in their words, who yet do not exhibit holiness in any thing they do. There is an earnestness or heartiness in conversation, and also there is a certain dryness which is manifest: by these different modes of conversation, we are sure to judge of the real state of the mind; and we seldom miss the mark. I think I am not far wrong when I observe, that the holy temper of a man's heart is as clearly seen in a fireside chat as any other way; but still there are allowances to be made for the natural turn for familiar conversation.

Lastly, holiness is manifested in our duties which we owe to God. This is truly a kind of heavenly holiness; it is hard to counterfeit here. The christian feels true delight when he is conversing with God. He feels it a happiness that it his duty to wait upon God: he counts it no less a privilege than a duty. When he thinks of God,

when he reads his word, attends to his ordinances, and holds interviews with him in prayer, not only in public, but also in the closet; although he feels the obligations of duty, yet he is not constrained by mere duty to engage in holy worship, but his heart leads him along as to a banquet; he goes, like David, to God his exceeding joy. It is not a strange thing for a christian to be glad and to rejoice in God; and when he is providentially prevented from waiting upon the ordinances of God, he often thirsts like the hunted hart pants for the water brooks.

It is true, the christian is not always lively in his holy exercises; but sometimes, and indeed too often, has his dull and sluggish frames; yet this is the natural tendency of a holy heart. Let the blessed bridegroom put in his hand at the hole of the door, and the spouse will soon feel her bowels move for him.

Thus holiness begins in the heart, captivates the affections, and God who is infinitely holy becomes the beloved object; and every thing that wears his image is loved for the sake of holiness. The word of God, his law, his gospel, his ordinances and his people are all the objects of the believer's affections. The heart being thus engaged, the holy disposition runs through all the various branches of the christian's duty, and causes his life and conversation to be such as becometh the gospel.

CHAPTER XII.

Repentance: the place it holds in religion; some mistaken notions of it; the true sense of the word in several passages of scripture.

DELIGHT in holiness always necessarily supposes a hatred to sin. Sin and holiness being direct opposites, he who is drawn to holiness must of course be drawn from sin. To hate sin, is the very reverse of sinning; consequently, to hate sin is a material article in holiness. No person will ever hate sin unless he loves holiness; and no one who has been a sinner will hate sin without feeling sorrow for it; therefore that most rational exercise of a christian's heart of loving holiness, hating sin, and being sorry for it, is called repentance. But before I proceed to inquire into the nature of repentance, I must make an observation or two, to correct some mistaken notions on the subject.

1. There is no doctrine in the bible of more importance in its nature than repentance; there is nothing more reasonable than that a sinner should repent; and there is nothing more certain than that a sinner will repent, whenever he is made the subject of divine grace. The interesting nature of repentance, its being so essential to religion, and one of the peculiar characteristics of a true believer, have made many serious persons mistake and misplace it. It is often made the condition of our salvation, when it is in truth, only a constituent part of it; it being the result of a sinner's loving holiness. It is often put in the room of faith, and often joined with it. It being works, and faith being grace, sinners are naturally fonder of salvation by repentance than by faith. Repentance, it is true, is a bitter pill; but it savours a little of atone-

ment, which makes it much more grateful to a proud heart, than the humbling doctrine of faith which receives the atonement of another, and strips the sinner of every rag, and dresses him entirely in borrowed garments, and makes him repent out of love and gratitude to his kind Redeemer, after his sins are forgiven. This is very agreeable exercise to an ingenuous humble believer; but it goes down very roughly with a proud selfish sinner.

Also Satan is not idle in seducing serious persons to make repentance the condition of their interest in Christ. He knows the sinner can only repent legally like himself until he believes; and he cares not how much he tries; for he never can get an interest in the atonement of the cross by it. It is therefore so much time lost, and the devil gains two points by it; he makes a little hell to the sinner here, by the pains of repentance (for nothing but a sense of pardon can make repentance agreeable); and he is sure of his prey at last; for if the sinner would weep the very soul out of his body without faith, it would only be out of hell here into hell for ever.

2. It is not an uncommon thing to hear such expressions as these: If you do not repent you will be lost. Nothing but timous repentance can save a sinner. If you believe and repent, and turn to God you will find mercy. God*forgives the penitent sinner. Repentance is necessary to pardon: qualifies to receive pardon. You cannot receive pardon or expect pardon, except you repent; and many such expressions as these are in common use among people in books and in the pulpit.

All such expressions ought to be connected with very clear gospel doctrines, and well defined, and well understood, or they will surely lead sinners astray. There are certain little words in common use, in all languages which have a great share in communicating ideas. In our common language we attach certain meanings to little adverbs, which immediately strike our mind and

give us the first idea; and it is hard to alter it by all the rules of criticism: such as these, *if, except, unless*, &c. and these words almost always give us the idea of a condition, and we ought to be very careful what we make the condition of our salvation. When I say, "if I have religion I will repent;" the word *if* makes religion the condition of repentance, and my doctrine is good: but if I say, "if I repent I will get religion;" here repentance is the condition on which I obtain religion, and my doctrine is legal and false. If you say, "you cannot obtain pardon except you repent;" the word *except*, makes repentance the condition of pardon, which is wrong: but if you say, "if you repent you are pardoned;" pardon is made the condition of repentance, which is right. Thus you see how the gospel plan can be exhibited or contradicted by the very mode of our expressions.

Moreover, we can construct a sentence in such a manner as to couch a condition in it without using any express conditional terms; for instance, if I say "nothing but repentance can save a sinner: God forgives the penitent: none but those who repent can be forgiven:" all these three sentences evidently make repentance the condition of pardon and salvation, and are legal and false. But were I to say, "salvation brings a sinner to repentance, or none but those who are forgiven will repent," the condition would be altered, and the doctrine true. We ought to be very careful how we either give or take ideas on those doctrines which relate to the terms of our salvation: the life of the soul depends on our understanding the gospel plan.

3. I will turn my reader's attention to some passages of scripture which speak of repentance, to which we ought to attend with care, lest we carelessly and ignorantly take wrong ideas and give them to others on this important scripture doctrine. But first I wait to remark that we have two leading ideas from the word repentance:

one is sorrow, remorse, anguish of spirit, hating one's self for something done wrong; another is a change of sentiment, altering our plan, adopting or embracing something which we did not before, or to which we were before opposed.

There are two Greek words always made use of in the new testament, translated repentance: one is μεταμελεια, which signifies a sorrowful reflection on what has been done, grief, careful anxiety, painful reflection, &c. whether on good or bad principles; the other is μετανοια, which signifies a change of the mind, heartily turning from and giving up former hopes and plans and attachments, and betaking one's self to a new course of procedure, &c.

I will now lay down two maxims which can never be contradicted without going contrary to the gospel plan.

1. God, who has the sole right to fix the terms of salvation, has appointed faith as the only condition of our salvation.

2. Repentance, which consists in hatred to sin, and a godly sorrow for it, must be a consequence of sanctification, and a part of that salvation which is received on the condition of faith. Therefore,

When the scripture uses the word μετανοιω as the condition of our pardon or salvation, it must mean faith; for sorrow for sin and hatred to it, which is repentance and a part of our salvation, cannot possibly be the condition of it. That which produces the same effect, must be the same cause. Things that are equal to one and the same thing, are equal to one another. If faith is the condition of our salvation and produces repentance, then, when the scripture says that μετανοια is the condition of, and produces the same thing, μετανοια must mean faith, and not sorrow for sin and hatred to it; or otherwise πισευω (to believe) means repentance; for they must mean the same thing when they are put for the same thing.

When the scriptures give us the idea of gospel repentance, they frequently express it by very definite and emphatical words and ideas, such as mourning, bitterness as for a first born, the soul cast down, the bones broken, sorrow for sin, watering the couch with tears, the head as waters and the eyes a fountain of tears, the soul afflicted, &c. The memorable account the apostle Paul gives of the repentance of the Corinthians is worth notice. (2 Cor. 7. 8—11.) He says, “though I made you sorry I do not repent, though I did repent (μεταμελομαι), &c. “Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: (μετανοιαν) for ye were made sorry (or made to sorrow) after a godly manner, (or for God’s sake κατὰ Θεον). For godly sorrow (κατὰ Θεον) worketh repentance (μετανοιαν a change of the mind) to salvation (or in salvation as a part of it, or furtherance in it) not to be repented of: (αμεταμελητον not to rue or be sorry for or regret) but the sorrow of the world worketh death. (mere carnal or legal sorrow is no part of salvation) For behold, this selfsame thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, (or hastening, quickness σπουδην) yea, what clearing of yourselves, (apologizing or defending) yea, what indignation, (bitter groaning, αγανακτησιν) yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea what revenge! in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

This is a description of evangelical sorrow in strong explicit terms; but repentance is not taken as a condition of salvation, but only as an exercise of godly sorrow.

We have several instances of the word μετανοεω used as a condition of an interest in Christ, which we now proceed to attend unto, which according to the maxims I have laid down cannot mean evangelical repentance but faith.

Acts 2. 38. Then Peter said unto them repent (μετανοησατε). Now suppose Peter meant evangelical repen-

tance, then he would place repentance, which is the consequence of sanctification, before faith, and he would make the work of sanctification to be going on before the sinner had an interest in Christ by faith. We cannot imagine that Peter had any such idea.

Suppose again, that he meant that kind of repentance which sinners have before they come to Christ, consisting in fear, under a sense of guilt and danger, and awful apprehensions of wrath. This would be every whit as bad. This would make Peter call upon them to do what they were doing already. They were already convicted and cut to the heart, and crying to the apostles, "men and brethren "what shall we do?" And does Peter aggravate their misery by telling them to go on to perform that as a condition of forgiveness, which they had performed already?

It was Peter's duty, *ex officio*, to direct them how to get relief; and he must direct them according to his orders. And what were his orders? Mark 16. 16. "He "that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He certainly did so. It is true he used the word *μετανοησατε*; but the meaning here cannot be repentance, neither legal nor evangelical, but simply, believe. Those men were those very Jews who had stained their hands with the blood of Christ, through spite and wickedness: "Ye have taken," said Peter, pushing home conviction to their consciences, "and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." They also depended on the law of Moses for salvation and had rejected Christ: "We know that God spake unto Moses; "but as for this man we know not whence he is." But now they are alarmed under a sense of guilt and danger; they cry to Peter and the rest, "what shall we do?" Peter, to administer relief to their distressed souls, gives them a gracious call of the gospel, saying, *μετανοησατε*. Change your minds about Christ's being an impostor, alter your notion of the validity of the rites of Moses and adopt the doctrine of the cross, make a profession of

Christ as the only Saviour, and look to him instead of the law of Moses for pardon and salvation, and you shall be acknowledged of God by the gift of his Holy Spirit; and thus he went on exhorting them to take the proper measures for their salvation; (v. 40.) and we find in the end (v. 41.) that three thousand gladly, with the consent of the mind, received the word according to Peter's directions, not by repentance but by turning their minds from Moses to Christ crucified, even by receiving the word, which is a proper definition of faith. And no doubt God gave them evangelical repentance in due time.

Not long after we find Peter and John in the temple; (chap. 3.) and having healed a lame man forty years of age, who had been lame from his mother's womb, the people struck with astonishment ran together to see the wonderful sight. Peter takes the favourable opportunity and again pushes home conviction upon them, and (v. 19.) makes another offer of the gospel to them. We have no account of convictions on this occasion, but we must reasonably suppose there were from what is said in the 4th verse of the 4th chapter. Peter however gives them a gracious call, saying, "repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out;" here is the very same word, *μετανοήσατε*; and in the very same sense as before, doubtless. And pardon is offered on the condition of it; and from the result of the whole, in chap. 4. 4. we find that many of them which heard the word believed, viz. did as Peter directed them, which plainly shows that the word means to believe; because if it meant to repent, St. Luke, the historian, ought to have said, many of them who heard the word repented.* John the baptist preached the doctrine

* The remaining part of the 19th verse, and the 20th and 21st verses of this chapter (viz. chap. 3.) always have been to me unintelligible, and indeed on to the 24th verse inclusive. How commentators ever understood it, or whether they did or not I cannot tell; but for my part I never could nor can I yet see any sense in the English

of repentance, (Mat. 3. 2) “ saying repent ye for the
“ kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And when Christ

translation of this passage. The passage reads thus, “ Repent ye
“ therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when
“ the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”
When is this time of refreshing? Some expositors say it was at the
time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. But how this
was a time of refreshing I cannot tell. I know it was a time of great
tribulation. (Mat. 24. 21.) It is again said that it was at the millen-
nium, and perhaps at the end of the world. These will be refreshing
times indeed; but if the penitents under Peter’s discourse had to wait
till then before they would get forgiveness they would be very old
men. But the proposal of the gospel is pardon immediately on be-
lieving: (v. 20.) “ And he shall send Jesus Christ who before was
“ preached unto you.” Here I ask would he send Jesus Christ at the
destruction of the temple, at the time of the millennium, or at the day
of judgment? And would he send him because Peter’s hearers re-
pent? And must they wait for forgiveness till he came? Again,
(v. 21.) “ Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restit-
“ tion of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his
“ holy prophets since the world began.” Did all or any of the holy
prophets say that the heavens must receive Christ till Jerusalem
would be destroyed, till the millennium, or till the day of judgment? If
they did they were wrong; for heaven sent him down long before any
of them came to pass; and two of them are not come yet, and Christ
has come eighteen hundred years ago. (v. 22.) “ For Moses truly
“ said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up
“ unto you, &c.” Did Moses say that God would send Christ after
Peter preached to those penitents, or after they would believe? even
after he had come and ascended again? (v. 24.) “ Yea and all the
“ prophets from Samuel, &c. as many as have spoken, have likewise
“ spoken of these times.” What times? When Jesus Christ should
be sent to Peter’s penitents? The times of refreshing from God which
Peter promised would come when his penitents should be pardoned?
If any person can tell what Peter meant they can guess better than
I can; for I can see no sense in it from first to last. But what is to be
done? Does Peter speak nonsense? no: let us go to the original, and there
we will find both good sense and elegance, calculated to encourage
poor distressed souls to accept of the offers of the gospel. I will now
give my own translation of the Greek, with notes included in paren-
theses: “ Change your whole system of salvation, because you are
“ wrong in your notions of Christ and of Moses, and suffer yourselves

himself began to preach, he said, (chap. 4. 17.) "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The same Greek word is used here; and as John was the forerunner of Christ, it is reasonable to think that he called the attention of the Jews to Christ, who was immediately to make his public appearance in the world as the Messiah. The true spirit or meaning of the word *μετανοείτε* in those

"to be turned from your hopes of salvation by the law of Moses, to the gospel of the crucified Saviour, that your sins may be forgiven through that atonement of the cross; because the times of refreshing (*αναψυξης* the times of cooling, after labour. Is. 28. 12.) have come from the presence of the Lord (*ὅπως αν*, not *when*, but, *because, seeing, inasmuch as, for*, &c. *ελθωσι*, not *shall come*, but *have come*; there is a great difference betwixt saying a thing shall be hereafter, and saying it has come already. This unhappy turn of the translators together with the word *when*, instead of *for* or *because, or seeing, or inasmuch as*, has made this passage quite unintelligible); and he has sent (*αποσειλε*, not *shall send*, but *has already sent*); Jesus Christ who was preached unto you before (by the prophets who foretold of his coming). Whom heaven must have contained (or whom it was expedient for the heavens to have continued to keep) until the times of restitution of all things (or restoration) which God had spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets from the beginning (prophesying of the coming of Christ in the flesh. As for instance): Moses truly said unto the fathers a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, as he did me, &c. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and all who have come in order, even as many as have spoken, have prophesied of these very times. (Repent ye therefore, submit to the gospel and you shall obtain pardon for all your sins; for Christ has actually come, and calls you to believe on him, for your salvation)."

I have indeed given a free translation, rather an explanation; but I have not strained the sense of the Greek. I have not translated the past tense for the future, and made Peter prophesy of things yet to come, which have come already; and I have not made Peter's converts wait for forgiveness till, God knows when, after they had believed. The whole passage is easy and consistent; and commentators could understand it; and would not be obliged to strain the text to get sense out of nonsense, and even make Peter the inspired apostle be inconsistent, by trusting to a false translation, without looking at what was said in the original.

places where John uses it must be a call to the Jews to prepare their minds to receive and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, through a sense of their need of him as lost sinners, and from a sense of the utter insufficiency of all the rites and institutions of the law of Moses. Thus he prepared the minds of the people for the coming of Christ. And when Christ began to preach he, using the very same expression, meant essentially the very same thing, even that he was the true Messiah which was promised them; and that they must acknowledge him by faith as their only atonement; sensible of their lost state by sin; and that they must not trust to Moses for salvation. St. Mark says, (chap. 1. 4.) that John preached the baptism or doctrine of repentance unto the remission of sins. This makes it plain that *μετανοια* is really faith; because it is by faith only that we can be interested in the atonement of Christ unto (*εἰς*) the remission of sins; and that repentance which is the effect of sanctification is always a consequence of faith, and therefore is subsequent to pardon. The same evangelist (v. 15.) says, that Christ when he preached the kingdom of God or the gospel, said, "the time is fulfilled; repent and believe the gospel." Put in the word *even*, instead of the word *and*, and it will read thus, repent, even believe the gospel. Or as it stands the sense is, be sensible of your danger in consequence of sin, and of the impossibility of salvation by the law; and believe the gospel giving up your hearts to me as your only Redeemer. The apostle Paul had exactly this sense of John's preaching, and construes it precisely as I have done: (Acts 19. 4.) "Then said Paul, John truly baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus." So that according to this the baptism of repentance which John preached was to believe on Christ.

Upon the whole, from every view of this subject I think we are fully warranted to say, that we must never make repentance a condition of our interest in Christ, unless we mean faith by the word repentance; and then it does not mean that holy exercise of heart which is a grand effect of sanctification and consequently subsequent to believing and a grand part of our salvation which we obtain by faith; and then the word repentance or *μετανοια* means a suitable sense of sin, of the insufficiency of all other plans of salvation, and the sinner betaking himself to the gospel for the salvation of his soul.

I have been a little more particular on this subject because I fear many jumble this kind of repentance, which is indeed only another word for faith, with that repentance which is the work of the Spirit on the heart of a believer and so make it a term or condition of our interest in Christ; which is certainly very wrong, and tends much to darken our views of the gospel plan, and so to destroy our comfort in religion, and to hurry us into legality.

CHAPTER XIII.

The nature of true evangelical repentance.

REPENTANCE is a saving grace; that is to say, it is a grace of salvation, and a very grand part of salvation, without which it is impossible for a sinner to be saved; for how is it possible for a sinner to be saved, without salvation? When a sinner is born again he begins to repent, and not before. Repentance is either legal, or evangelical. Legal repentance is produced by the law without the hope of the gospel; evangelical repentance is produced by the gospel. When a sinner is sensible of guilt, and has no discovery of the atonement of Christ offered to him in the gospel, and consequently has no hope of pardon, he is

filled with a slavish fear of punishment. The justice of God is a terror to his mind; he, conscious of guilt, dreads the consequence of his having broken the law of God. Fear, anxiety, trouble, and even torture are the consequence. The unhappy wretch repents; but there is no religion in his repentance; but it is legal, and slavish; it bears the image of hell; and his torture and anguish is in its degree the same as devils feel. Thus Judas repented, and Felix trembled, but without any godly sorrow for sin, but through a slavish terror of the consequence of guilt. This is legal repentance.

But on the other hand, when a sinner under a sense of guilt and ruin, gets a view of the fulness and freeness of the gospel offers to his soul, he is persuaded to come poor and helpless to Christ for salvation; and thus by faith he becomes interested in the atonement of the cross. This gives him a blessed hope of pardon and salvation. He is brought from under the curse, and is blessed with the divine influences of the Spirit, as I have already explained. He is consequently changed in the temper of his mind; and a work of sanctification is begun and is carried on in his heart. He now loves holiness; he loves God and his law, and desires to be more and more holy. Thus the ground is laid for true repentance by the effect of the gospel bringing the sinner into a sanctified state. The sinner consequently hates sin; mourns over his sinfulness, and hates and abhors that which is contrary to the holy will of God. He regards, and loves the law of God as holy, just, and good, but feels his daily shortcomings; and it is his daily study to live agreeably to the divine will. This is evangelical repentance, and is an exercise of a holy heart.

Sometimes this repentance produces a severe conflict in the mind, is attended with many tears and sorrows and sighing; but in those cases it is frequently mixed with legality. When a sinner has a view of the odious

nature of sin, and at the same time feels himself guilty, and has but faint views of the gospel, he is sure to have a sore heart. He feels himself the vilest creature under the sun. He loathes his own heart, and cannot forgive himself for his folly. And often when he gets a hope of forgiveness by a return of gospel light, he still feels his abhorrence of sin. Often in this case he wishes he could live without sin, and is sometimes impatient under the thought of living in such a state of imperfection; yea, there are instances, not a few, of such persons wishing to die, to get rid of a wicked heart. I do not say that all such feelings, thoughts, and wishes are right; nay I would say that many of them may be very wrong; but still they demonstrate that the person does hate sin and is sorry after a godly sort.

But although evangelical penitents have many such feelings, and often legality mixed with what is genuine, in the calmest and most comfortable seasons he enjoys, he is no less a penitent than when he feels his heart the sorest; and mostly more genuinely so then than at any other time. For although religion occupies the affections in a high degree, yet it is a rational thing; and when the christian in his cool reflections on the nature of sin, even under the comfortable views of God's pardoning mercy feels, or knows that his heart hates it, and loves holiness he is then as truly a penitent, and perhaps as simply so, as at any other time whatsoever. St. Paul was no more a penitent when he said, "O wretched man that I am" than when he said, "I know whom I have believed."

He who is always complaining of a bad heart is not apt to be an agreeable christian, although he may be a good one; and he would complain less, if he had less pride, and more humility. I love a cheerful penitent, who really hates sin, but is willing to struggle with it like a good soldier, and to wait with patience, and fortitude till God is pleased to close the warfare. I am not against persons

weeping, but I would wish them to weep as often for joy, as for sorrow; and I would not think any the worse of your repentance, were I to find you always cheerful under the hope of pardon; neither would I think any the better were I to find you always fretting under a sense of sin. Generally pride and self-righteousness are at the bottom of every distressed mind. An humble submission to the gospel, although it does not hinder but give a true sense of sin, yet it never fails to ease a distressed mind, and makes it even sweet to repent. Mary Magdalene was noted by our Lord for loving much, because much had been forgiven her.

It is always a true sign of gospel repentance to turn from sin to holiness. If a man's heart is turned from the love of sin to the love of God, his life will be habitually in conformity to the holy disposition of his heart. That person certainly lays himself liable to be suspected who lives habitually in sin. Yet I am not fond of running marks or evidences too high. On the other hand I would not for the world encourage iniquity by any means whatsoever. But I do really think there is no little mischief done by too high colouring in giving the characteristics of true religion. Every true christian has one evidence of his being a true penitent in his being sensible of his daily shortcomings. Yet it must be true that he who hates sin will endeavour to live a life of holiness.

Upon the whole we may conclude that a true penitent is one who loves holiness and hates sin, sincerely confesses his iniquity and endeavours to live in obedience to the commands of God.

Although repentance is not a condition of our salvation, yet it is a necessary part of it. There can be no such thing as salvation without holiness; and we can have no holiness without repentance. In order to get repentance we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He by his word and Spirit gives us repentance by sanctification.

When we love holiness, we will hate sin and be sorry for our transgressions. And that our repentance may be the more genuine and free from alloy we should endeavour to maintain a steady and uniform comfort in religion. In order to this it is necessary that we should daily feel ourselves depending upon the atonement of the cross as our only justification, and never expect acceptance with God on any other plan. It is one peculiar glory of a true christian, not even to wish for pardon, on any other plan, but the gospel. For my part I never feel better than when I feel it a happiness to think that Christ will have the honour of my whole salvation. But when I begin to repent, and confess my sin in order to gain favour, I have a wretched time of it; and there is no religion in all the unhappy feelings which I have, at last. The true penitent especially when he feels his whole soul taken up with the love of Christ is ready to say with Paul "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and he wishes, and is determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

There is a great fuss (to use a low phrase) made about the motives from which we hate sin, and love holiness; but I never perplex my mind about such critical nonsense. For it is impossible for any man to hate sin without he is moved to do it by something; and what ever that something is, it is right, let it be what it will; for you cannot hate sin from a wrong motive; Christ will take care of our motives, if we will only believe in him. Satan is always glad to perplex us about our motives; it tends to draw us off from Christ, and makes a little hell upon earth. Let a man love holiness and hate sin; and there is no danger but he is a true penitent, and will endeavour to live a life of holiness in the fear of God. Not that he will be perfectly holy either in heart or life: "For there is not a just man upon earth that liveth, and sinneth

“not. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,
 “and the truth is not in us.”

From what we have said it appears that true genuine repentance is not a melancholy thing; neither is it a spirit of fear, doubting, or complaining and scrupling our interest in Christ. I confess that the unhappy way in which the gospel has been managed and understood by too many is calculated to make even christians always hang their heads disconsolately and ever full of uncertainty. The wicked world has noticed it, and branded religion with melancholy and despondency. It has not been so very uncommon for some to express a very high opinion of those who were much addicted to doubts and despondency; while on the other hand the comfortable christian has been frequently branded with hypocrisy; and a melancholy state has been frequently recommended as very favourable to a growth in holiness, while a comfortable state has been slandered as cultivating pride, sloth, and inattention to religion, and even hypocrisy, and presumption.

For my part I know not what a doubting christian is to be commended for. I grant he is to be pitied, but it is mostly for his pride, stubbornness and folly. O! you say, he is such an humble penitent. What? an humble penitent who cannot be persuaded to look to Christ? who cannot come poor, guilty, and wretched as he is? an humble penitent who only frets because he is a sinner, and has nothing to recommend him? I pray God ever to deliver me from such humility. No: repentance is a manly, noble principle, that inspires the heart with a firm detestation of and opposition to every thing that is contrary to the will of God, and makes the heart loathe and detest the sin of unbelief as much as any other sin whatsoever. It requires a noble spirit to be sorry for, and detest that which is wrong, and to hope for pardon through the glorious atonement of the cross; this repentance is

attended with a correct sense of sin, and is impregnated with the most exalted gratitude and love to a most gracious Benefactor and Redeemer. But to fret and despond, to sit in discontent, and to indulge despair, is an exercise which becomes a devil, much more than an humble believer. It is true, many christians indulge this unhappy disposition too much; but let them never call it repentance. A person who is rightly sensible of the grace and goodness of God is led to repentance. (Rom. 2. 4, 5.) But those who are not, are apt to treasure up wrath unto themselves through their hardness and impenitent hearts.

CHAPTER XIV.

Evidences of religion, or the signs of a gracious state; some mistakes in this matter noticed.

PEACE, joy and comfort, on the most solid basis, are to be enumerated among the happy consequences of an interest in Christ by faith. The comfort of a christian in this life consists in peace of mind, peace with God, and in his own conscience; joy in religion, in the pleasing exercises of godliness, and in God as his exceeding joy; and in the happy prospect of final perseverance, and finally of eternal glory and happiness in the world to come.

The comfort of a christian depends on two things: the faithfulness of Christ in all his engagements in the covenant of grace; and in the evidences he has to evince his interest in Christ. By the faithfulness of Christ the believer is made to enjoy the blessings and privileges of the gospel; and by the evidences of religion he is enabled to trust to Christ as his faithful Saviour, and consequently to enjoy a comfortable hope and assurance of complete salvation. But the christian is often so perplexed about

his evidences, that he loses his comfort by hunting for them.

Here the preachers of the gospel are greatly to blame; I do not mean all the preachers; although no doubt we all do wrong in this very thing; but there are not a few, I fear, who are like Job's comforters to many a poor child of God. Mere legal preachers always do more harm than good, if they can be said to do any good at all. Those who never, or seldom direct sinners to Christ; and when they happen to give room for his blessed name and cross, do it merely by way of parenthesis, as a sentence, or part of a sentence, of no great importance, need not, and I suppose do not intend any thing but to cultivate a little decency or morality; and Cicero, Seneca and Socrates could do it as well as they, although they were heathens. If a poor soul was to become serious by some means, and get a sight of his lost and helpless state, God help him under such preaching! for I am certain the preacher could not.

There are others who are pious experimental preachers, who are yet not good gospel preachers; that is they do not preach the gospel clearly. Their sermons are full of Christ, the cross, faith and believing too; but it is in such a way, that a poor soul cannot tell this or that, so to speak of the matter; and Christ and his cross are so interwoven with other things that the christian for his life cannot tell what to do, or how to think. Such preachers are for ever chasing hypocrites, with the nicest definitions and most refined marks and characters. They hunt them through all their dens and lurking places, and scarcely ever catch one at last. Hypocrites are long winded creatures; they can outrun almost any preacher; it is in vain to attempt to catch them by speed of foot. The best way is to give them just one or two close shots from the accursed tree; if any thing will take them it will be that; and you will have another advantage, you will

never wound a christian by it; for the cross of Christ, although it is death to the hypocrite, yet it is the very life of a poor distressed soul.

But instead of the simple unsophisticated doctrines of the gospel, the niceties of criticism, and hair-spun distinctions are employed to jumble the hope, and cut off the confidence of hypocrites; and many a precious child of God is run almost to death, before the hypocrite imagines that he is the object of pursuit; so that the main object is lost, and the weak believer is kept a mere drudge to his own experience. Many precious sabbaths are spent hearing such useless discourses; and many weary lungs such ministers have, doing nothing but wounding God's people, in trying to detect sinners by art and cunning, and scholastic divinity.

I will here take the liberty to mention a very general error in preaching and writing: it is almost universally the case among pious experimental preachers to run the characters or marks of the true christian so high, that no man upon earth ever did, or can in this imperfect state reach half way to the description; and yet every soul is pronounced void of grace who does not attain to it. Perhaps this may be thought too censorious and injudicious; but I sincerely wish there was not too much room for it. I know the grand design is to detect the nominal professor, and to sap the false hopes of the hypocrite. But it is bad to do evil that good may come; and it is not necessary nor salutary to strain beyond the truth to save a sinner.

The rules laid down in the bible for a christian to walk by are perfect, and so they ought to be; and when a preacher is prescribing from his bible to his people how they ought to live, he ought to lay down those rules; and wherein we come short of those rules we are wrong without doubt. But there is a wide difference betwixt the perfect rules of duty, and the real attainments of of the most advanced christian in the world; and there consequently ought to be a difference betwixt our direc-

tions to christians according to God's word, which allows of no sin, and our describing what the christian really is in this imperfect state. Christ could direct his disciples to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. Yet he could assure them of eternal happiness, and find fault with them in many things: "O ye of little faith. Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. Get thee behind me Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God &c. Thou shalt deny me thrice. What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Thomas reach hither thy finger, &c. and be not faithless, but believing. Because thou seest thou believest. O fools and slow of heart to believe, &c." So also Paul could correct many things wrong in his beloved children without disputing their religion; and John, although he could say if they were born of God they sinned not, yet he could also say, if they said they had no sin they were liars.

I know that those preachers have no intention to preach perfection in this life; but if a preacher in the run of his discourse gives the idea, that a christian must have a heart all swallowed up in the love of God and holiness, and no desire or inclination to sin; in vain does he throw in a little parenthesis (making allowance for imperfection) and then sentence all who have not that unspotted character as void of grace; every christian that hears him will be hurt (except some who may happen to be in a very high frame at the present time) either for himself or for him. If he takes for granted what the preacher has said, he must conclude himself void of grace; for he must be conscious that he comes far short of the beautiful description. But if he has presence of mind to reflect a little, he must be hurt for the preacher and a number of his dear brethren; for he must know that he has asserted a falsehood, in a most interesting case even to the wounding of many of God's children.

I have sometimes read books and heard sermons.

where every grace, feeling, exercise, and conduct of a christian were represented as counterfeited: a true faith and a false faith, a true love and a false love, a true fear and false fear, a true repentance and false repentance, a true hope and a false one, and a true every thing and a false every thing; and all drawn so near together that an angel could hardly tell the difference betwixt them; one the work of God and the other of human nature. Truly I have thought dame nature was a most excellent mountebank; and Herod and Felix and king Agrippa, &c. are brought in as proofs. What did ever appear in these men like a christian? Herod heard John the Baptist preaching, and did many things. The devil did more for the gospel when he flew on the seven sons of Sceva than ever Herod did. Felix trembled like the devil for fear of the day of judgment. Agrippa, taken with Paul's most elegant defence, was almost persuaded to profess the christian religion. But is all this to be compared with the saving influences of God's Spirit? certainly no. Did Herod, Felix, Agrippa, Judas, the stony ground hearers, or any others, who are brought as proofs that there is but a mere mote of difference betwixt them and the true christian, ever give up their hearts to Christ? Were they ever made sensible that they could do nothing? And did they come as lost sinners to the cross for pardon, without any recommendation? Did they hate sin? Did they love God? Did they feel the corruptions of their heart? In short did they do any thing like a christian? And did Christ, John the Baptist or Paul chase them from post to pillar, to distinguish them from the true believer? No such thing. And if preachers would content themselves with the plain doctrines of the gospel, they would do more good, and less harm than they do, by their fine spun distinctions betwixt the believer, and the hypocrite; and when they are done they mostly distinguish only betwixt an imperfect believer, and a perfect saint or an angel in heaven.

I do not love to hear preachers making the way of salvation more difficult than to remove the Alps. I would rather any time undertake to save myself, as to possess every thing necessary to salvation, before Christ would do any thing for me. It is true, I would go to hell either way; but on the former plan I would go to hell with some honour, like a brave hero fighting for his life and liberty, losing his life in the field of battle. But in the latter case it would be miserable to depend upon another to do every thing for me and yet be lost at last, because I could do nothing for myself; and my surety standing idle, looking on and seeing me going to ruin, because of my own insufficiency. If we were to believe every thing we hear and read, even from sensible, pious divines on this subject, we would certainly think it one of the most difficult and intricate things to be a true christian. The notion of impossibility, all but a natural one, as many preachers represent it; and altogether a natural impossibility, as their hearers are sure to understand them, (except about ten in five hundred, who have more sense than their preachers have) produces a most unhappy idea of the gospel; and makes that blessed system of free grace calculated to make poor helpless sinners to sing for joy, a mere jargon of intricate absurdities; and when these preachers are attacked on the subject by men of sense and experience in religion, they have nothing to support them but the too current sentiments of their forefathers. Sinners are called to come to Christ; yet we find when the duty of coming is explained, that he is to be renewed first; so that he must love God and hate sin, and be taken ^{up} with the moral excellence and beauty of Christ, and discover all his glorious perfections, and be captivated and charmed with his holiness, before he can come. Then when the characteristics of a sound believer is displayed, we have motives upon motives urged upon us as constituent parts of faith. And the most part of them false at last. And faith has two special proper-

ties, which some assert must always attend it, one is to be perfectly free from self-interest, which is as glaring a falsehood as ever was preached. And another property is, to be all holy in our views and desires, and entirely a new creature, delighting in God for his divine glory and excellence; and this is as grand a falsehood as the other; for faith has not the least tincture of either the one or the other. For faith has self-interest for its first motive; or in other words, a sense of guilt and danger is the first thing that induces a sinner to consult for his safety; and then a view of the free offers of pardon and salvation is the very thing that induces a sinner to come to Christ; and he comes guilty and wretched, not merely in his feelings, but in his very state and circumstances to Christ, under the influence of the assurance which the gospel gives him of deliverance from his state of wretchedness; and he comes guilty under the curse of the law of God, without a spark of holiness, to Christ to obtain complete deliverance from his wretchedness. Now, this is to be a believer; and any person who would allow himself to think five minutes on the offers of the gospel, and let his own common sense put a meaning on them, would know and feel that faith is and must be what I have said, viz. a lost sinner just simply coming as he is, on the free offer of Christ to him for salvation.

But instead of this simple definition of faith, when this most important article is described and the character and feelings and exercises of the true believer are laid before us, we must be changed from sin to holiness; we must love God; we must hate sin; we must have the most pure, disinterested and spotless desires after Christ, as a being of perfect holiness, charmed by nothing but his essential glory. We must desire holiness for holiness' sake. We must hate sin for sin's sake; and we must desire nothing for our own sake. If we did, it would be like the wild gourds; and we would be pronounced hypocrites

at once, and our faith branded as spurious and vain. Good God! If this was the gospel plan, what would become of sinners? There never would nor could be one sinner saved in this world; and Christ would be dead in vain.

When such descriptions are laid before us in order to show whether we have ever soundly, as they call it, believed on Christ; instead of describing the first exercises of a poor lost sinner coming to Christ for salvation, we have a ten or twenty year old christian characterized, who has experienced a great degree of grace, and has had peculiar experience of sanctification; and even he has not gone half the length of the attainments which are said to be necessary for a lost sinner to have in order to interest him in Christ; and what is worse still, even the believer himself never will, neither in this world nor that which is to come experience those disinterested finesses of (pretended) religion which are sometimes made the very leading characteristic of an interest in Christ. Such doctrine is calculated to make comfortable christians fall back into a state of dreary darkness; for false doctrine always operates against truth, like mists and clouds coming betwixt us and the sun. A christian never can witness to the truth of such descriptions in his own conscience; and consequently he must be cut down, and conclude he has no religion.

Doubting christians will always think such preaching the best preaching in the world. The reason is plain; doubting persons always love to swim in muddy water if they are in earnest about salvation; and indeed the Spirit of God will not give them any thing else to swim in till they look to Christ. As Dr. Young intimates, "the sick in body call for a physician, but the sick in mind call for more disease." This indeed seems strange and unnatural; but we are to consider that those who have no comfort in Christ must have comfort somewhere; trouble of mind is generally deemed a very hopeful sign

of religion; and so it is indeed, as far as it shows that the sinner is not altogether hardened and careless; they therefore love to object against themselves and all their feelings, that they may have more distress of mind lest they be careless and thoughtless; and the more distress they have the more hope they have; and consequently the more distress they feel the more comfort they feel. Poor souls! How far is this kind of comfort, from the true, genuine comforts of the gospel! Yet so it is and so it will be, till they understand the gospel plan better than they do. Now, such sermons are the very delight of such christians. They make them sad, sorely distressed. The poor heart is ransacked, probed to the bottom, and by a very unskilful hand too. The sound flesh often suffers more than the proud flesh; but no matter so that it gives pain; and the more the better. Nothing pleases such persons better than something that has a little self-righteousness in it; and there is here every kind of it, in all shapes and sizes. The bill is very extensive.

1. A sense of guilt and danger, and a proper law-work in consequence of it.

2. There must be no fear of hell; for it is death to consult self-interest.

3. A heartfelt hatred to sin loathing and abhorring it as evil in God's sight.

4. A steady and uniform resolution to turn from sin to God and holiness.

5. Not one sin in heart or life but must be forsaken.

6. Deep repentance for every sin as dishonouring to God.

7. A heart devoted to God and his service, not for reward but for holiness' sake.

8. A view of Christ in the free offers of the gospel as a complete Saviour.

9. A view of his divine excellence and glory.

10. A most cordial delight in Christ for his moral excellence.

11. Not a selfish desire of pardon and happiness from Christ, but

12. A pure desire after holiness; and let pardon come of course.

13. A sincere love to God for his divine perfections. Some also add,

14. A willingness to be damned if it would be most for God's glory.

These articles which I have mentioned include in them, regeneration, and every necessary work of the Spirit in order to qualify a sinner to believe; and while they are descanted upon, as the only proper grounds on which to conclude as to our faith in Christ, the doubting christian is highly pleased; because there is so much said about experimental religion, and views, motives, and fitness to come to Christ, and hopes of acceptance when we get all those prerequisites of an interest in the Redeemer. But still he is not half ready to come. Yet he finds he is beginning to be ready; and he hopes after awhile he may venture to come; and he hopes after he gets all things in order, he will not only come, but he will also find acceptance.

Thus his pride is fed; and the food is very palatable indeed; and it is the more so because there is a good deal of anxiety promoted; it begets trouble of mind, and it is a hopeful sign of grace; so we mix vinegar with our food to give it a relish, and to assist the digestion. Such christians rather than trust to God according to his word, and go on straight to Canaan in spite of fenced cities, and the sons of Anak, would rather travel forty years in the wilderness in a circuitous route, going sometimes backward and sometimes forward, sideways and obliquely or any way except the right way; and it is well for Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh who
are

not the cause of their rebellion against God, in giving an ill report of the way of access to God according to the gospel plan.

Give me the first and eighth articles in the fourteen which I have set down, and I will ask no more to induce any sinner to believe; only let these be seen and felt, and there is no danger but the man will come to Christ; and when he comes, there is no danger but he will find acceptance without any thing to recommend him.

Ministers who are not themselves comfortable in religion, but perplexed in their own minds, have a natural propensity, in giving the evidences of religion, to explain and expatiate upon the intricate circumstances and difficulties which they themselves experience; they will object to their hearers, what they feel to be objections to themselves. Their sermons are pious, searching and experimental, but very perplexing and discouraging to a weak believer. They are good to awaken sinners; but when they begin to cry, what shall we do to be saved? they are but sorry hands to direct them to Christ, or to give the consolations of the gospel.

Uncomfortable ministers are like consumptive parents; they are apt to convey their disorder to their children by a hereditary taint. They are not unfruitful, but their offspring is apt to be weakly. It is not difficult, or uncommon to direct sinners to believe in Christ, and to speak against justification by works; but when we come to explain faith, or to show how a sinner believes, we often miss the mark; and by a mistake here, in the very conditional article of our salvation, we subvert the very principles of the gospel. For instance, to make faith to consist in the articles which I have enumerated above, or to make them prerequisites to faith, is very bad divinity and a kind of a plausible way to throw away the cross, and to adhere still to the covenant of works under a disguise.

CHAPTER XV.

The same subject continued.

IT is not uncommon to give as an evidence of an interest in Christ, that we do not allow ourselves to commit any known sin; that we do not wilfully commit any sin; that we do not live in any known sin; that we live wilfully in the neglect of no known duty; that we are always engaged in the vigorous exercise of religion; that we have no love to sin, or any inclination towards that which is evil; that we love God with a steady, uniform and unabated ardour; that we enjoy constantly sweet communion with God; that we live entirely above the world, &c. On the other hand it is said that one sin will prevent the union betwixt Christ and the soul; if we live in the wilful act of one sin we are unbelievers; if we wilfully omit one known duty, we have no religion; and a great variety of such characteristics are laid down as standing rules, or criterions by which we are to know whether we have religion or not.

I have often wondered that men who are acquainted with their own hearts do not consider better what they say in a matter of such vast importance as this. There is no christian under the sun but what wilfully commits sin every day he lives. And there are no other sins committed but wilful sins. I grant there are sins of ignorance; but there is no such thing as accidental sin. Both sin and holiness originate, or consist in the choice, or inclinations of the mind; those acts which are not wilful, are accidental, and consequently neither virtuous nor vicious. I grant that christians may do things wrong ignorantly; in this case the action is voluntary although the choice was not to sin; perhaps if they had known it was wrong they would not have done so. If this is what is meant by

not sinning wilfully, I would ask does a christian sin no other way than ignorantly? The answer is plain; that he does every day he lives. What man could pretend that he loves God as the perfect law requires? or his neighbour as himself? Does the best christian this side heaven keep one single sabbath perfectly holy to the Lord? Does he not allow of some wrong thoughts, or words, or even actions? or are these sins too little to be noticed in the characteristics of a true christian? We cannot with propriety say that a christian has no inclination to sin; for the truth is he has, and he will have, while ever there is a remnant of corruption in him; and that will be till he dies. If you say the christian does not live habitually in any one, I know he wishes not to do it; and tries not to do it; but the matter is, does he find by experience that he does not do it? You say not wilfully. I ask does he do it accidentally? And what is the great difference betwixt committing one sin continually or habitually, and committing one sin now and another then, and so, to add sin to sin? and which is the worst habit? Is the christian never cold in religion? Does he not sometimes put off his coat, and is too lazy to put it on, even to open to his beloved? Does his heart ever witness that he is sometimes too lazy or too busy to pray? and that he often prays with very cold desires? Does not the world often insnare him and draw his heart off from God and religion? Does not the christian feel himself sometimes deserted of God and left to wish it was with him as in days past? And does he not sometimes feel his heart so dead and stupid that he is ready to conclude that he has no uneasiness about it?

Now if a man was to tell me that he had no experience of these things, and I believed he told me the truth, I would, I hope, be honest enough to tell him that he knew neither God, nor himself, and was absolutely destitute of religion.

I ask again, did David sin wilfully when he committed adultery with Uriah's wife? Did he wilfully send for Uriah in order to conceal his crime? Was he wilfully the cause of the murder of Uriah? Did he wilfully tell lies in two or three instances? Did he wilfully number the people to the destruction of many in Israel? Yet when he did all these things he had religion, and was a man after God's own heart; not in those sinful things; but this was his character. Good old Abraham denied his wife. Where was his faith then? Did he do it wilfully? So did Isaac. Was it any sin for wise and good Solomon to have seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines? and was it wilful? He was led to idolatry. Was it wilful? Did Peter wilfully deny his Lord? Did Paul wilfully quarrel with Barnabas about Mark? and which of them was in the right? I suppose he was right when he accused Peter with dissimulation and not walking uprightly and drawing off Barnabas also; yet they all had religion.

Was it a wilful sin in Moses to go beyond his commission and smite the rock, when God commanded him to speak to it; instead of speaking to the rock he spoke proudly to the people. These things, with many other instances given us in the bible, were not recorded for us to take encouragement by them to commit sin. But when we consider all that I have advanced, and know them to be true, we certainly ought to take care how we hand out our infallible evidences of religion.

I do verily believe that the grand object of preachers and writers in being so particular on these points is to guard christians from sin, and to detect hypocrites, and to defend the doctrines of free grace as not countenancing iniquity. But there is no necessity to tell lies in order to support the truth. Jesus Christ does not wish us to contradict his own word and the experience of our own hearts and of all christians in all ages of the world in order to keep his people from sinning.

I have been at some loss to know how a minister could so coolly and deliberately and repeatedly and publicly say, that a christian does not wilfully commit one sin, when he himself, as a good man, acquainted with the imperfections of his own heart, must know that what he says is either a falsehood, or it demonstrates that he himself has no religion, and never had; for if he is a real christian, he is and must be conscious that he never came up to the description.

“Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”

Once more, I cannot but take special notice of a wonderful circumstance. It is generally held as a sound calvinistic doctrine that he who wilfully lives in any known sin is not a true christian; and it is not only held as a truth, but it is generally preached in our pulpits, and held out as a distinguishing criterion by which to judge whether we are in a state of grace or not. It is well known that numbers of our preachers in the southern states of America are slaveholders. I do not mean by this hint, to introduce an argument on the subject of slavery; there is no necessity to say one word proving the immorality of holding slaves. It is a point long ago given up by all. I suppose there is not a man in the United States, whose judgment is worth attending to, but would feel it a dishonour to him, as a man of sense and as a citizen of America which has fought and bled for freedom, to be thought one who would vindicate the practice of slavery, either on principles of morality or sound policy. But I do candidly think it an oddity in divinity for a preacher of the gospel of the meek and lowly Jesus to go up into the pulpit and solemnly tell his people that if they live wilfully and habitually in the practice of any known sin

they are not true christians, when at the same time he owns eight or ten African slaves, and can sell and barter in human flesh, and knows at the same time that it is a general practice among the people of his congregation.

They do not pretend to deny that it is wrong; they frankly acknowledge it a moral evil and most abominable sin too against all the laws of God and humanity: a sin of the nation and injurious to the happiness, the peace and good policy of the land, and contrary to the mild dictates of the gospel which directs us to do as we would be done by, according to the general spirit of the law and the prophets. But it is to be lamented, that although they are very willing to acknowledge the sin, yet they are not ashamed of it; the reason is, it is a sin practised by men of high rank; the affluent and the honourable and even the generality of the clergy are abettors of the crime, black as it is; and it is a profitable sin, and attended with elegance and fashionable politeness; all these things considered, it is no great wonder that they are not ashamed; and the true reason is they have not yet got grace enough to make it reach the heart. For indeed it requires more grace than generally falls to the lot of slaveholders, to make even a preacher of the gospel, who ought to be exemplary in good works to make his light shine before men, genuinely sorry for a sin which is profitable, elegant and generally practised.*

But many things are plead in favour of this acknowledged sin: "I have them now. I wish there had never

* I do think that if the clergy in America, had by some means which would not be injurious to the peace and good order of the nation, firmly determined never to possess any slaves, that they might not be examples in their sacred character, in that awful sin which hangs over our country; the whole continent of America would feel it to the quick. There are enough of respectable characters among them whose example would influence; and at any rate they would have let the world see that they would not countenance a moral evil.

Sin is a dreadful thing. It lays hold of individuals when it is indul-

“one come into America. It is my duty to take care of them. If I had not my slaves another would, who, no doubt would use them worse than I do. So that upon the whole it is my duty to do as well by them as possible, &c.” I make no doubt but you have some pill to ease a guilty conscience. A good man cannot live in a known sin with an easy conscience; and he must have some way to lull it to sleep. Any sinner will do the same thing. The drunkard pleads his causes too: “I needed a little refreshment; and I wanted to treat my friend. I could not be thought a bad fellow. I kept my senses, and was able to do my business. Upon the whole I don’t think I did any harm.” So every other habitual sinner has his reasons, and palliations, and excuses; and who makes the best excuse is to be tried at the day of judgment.

But the slaveholder replies, and perhaps with some indignation too, “what will I do?” I answer, as to your slaves I cannot tell you what you either can do, or will do. Perhaps the sin has got such a firm hold of you, that you cannot extricate yourself from it easily. God, no doubt, will do something with you, if you can do nothing with your slaves. But my business at present on this subject is to tell you of one thing you can do, and ought to do; and I wonder your own good sense and honesty has not directed you to do it long ago. Quit telling your congregation, that if they wilfully and habitually live in any known sin they have no religion. For if this doctrine is

ged; it lays hold of states and nations, and entwines itself round the miserable culprit, and fixes its deadly fangs indissolubly fast in the most dangerous spot; and it becomes impossible for the unhappy captive to disentangle himself from its embrace, until it drags him down to ruin.

It is a sad sign when one sin begins to plead for another and when the evil of parting from it makes it best to continue in it. But must the sacred desk become a prey? Lord send deliverance in due season.

true, you will most assuredly go to hell. You are the very person who does wilfully, avowedly, habitually and confessedly live in the daily practice of the worst sin that ever our country was guilty of; and you never preach that doctrine but you spit upon your own coat. I do not say that doctrine is true. I confess I have more charity than to conclude rashly that all slaveholders are void of religion, even although they do live daily in sin wilfully and allowedly; yet it must be granted that it is a shame for a christian, and much more a preacher of the gospel, to live daily in sin, and to be an example to the people of a crime that is black indeed in all its circumstances and contrary to all the laws of humanity and religion. But although you are so weak and wicked as to live in sin, yet you ought to preach the gospel right, and not say things that are either false, or inevitably prove that you yourself are void of true religion.

As it is not my purpose at all to treat the subject of slavery, I just wait to observe that as to the manner in which the Africans are used both as to religious education, and as to food and clothing, and as to common economy and discipline, although, blessed be God, there are some exceptions, yet in too many instances they are awfully neglected; and instead of a religious education, or even civil humane usage, we are presented with neglect and barbarity too shocking to be mentioned in a christian country; neither can we think of them without feeling our very nerves recoiling; and our hearts swelling with indignation. I hope those who are clothed with sacred orders do generally keep clear of those shocking barbarities which are practised towards slaves; yet I fear even they are not altogether innocent; and I also fear that some, who are comparatively called humane masters, think that they by their good usage to their slaves make a kind of atonement for the radical sin of slavery.

It would not be a difficult task to prove that it is the duty of every one who possesses slaves to get them (at least the young ones) baptized, to give them a religious education, to cause them to attend family worship and the public worship of God, &c. And although the wicked and careless part of the world would laugh at these things, yet do not divines, who study the rules of the gospel, know that this is their duty if they have slaves under their authority? What then must we say when we hear a preacher in the pulpit telling his people with that awful solemnity which becomes his sacred character that if they live in a known sin, or neglect a known duty, they have no true religion; and perhaps at the same time he has two or three or perhaps ten or twenty slaves whom he has never dedicated to God in baptism; who have seldom or never been present at the time of family worship or been taught the Lord's prayer, and growing or having grown up ignorant of God of Christ of themselves and the way of salvation; and if we must add to all this, (it is still worse) that they are but half fed and clothed, and with all attended with the lash, as becomes a slave to oblige them to fulfil their tasks; such preachers ought to be careful lest their own sermons rise up in judgment against them at the great day; and there ought by all means to be a consistency betwixt their doctrine and their practice.

I have been a little particular in introducing this very important circumstance here; not only to show the world my perfect abhorrence of the practice of holding slaves, but also as it affords a striking instance of the very great impropriety of preachers running their characteristics of the true christian far beyond the experience and attainments of this imperfect state. When this is done, the consequences are bad in many things. It is not a trifle either for a teacher to preach false doctrine, or for his people to believe it. It never fails to make the gospel

and religion appear a most difficult thing. When a poor sinner, conscious of his shortcomings, hears his preacher in whom he confides as a man of sense and experience in religion pronouncing every one void of grace who commits one known sin or neglects one known duty, who does not feel a steady and uniform delight in God and holiness, or feels any inclination to sin, &c. his heart immediately sinks into despondency; conscious he comes far short of the mark, he concludes that he is a stranger to God and religion. He never dreams that his minister comes as far short as he does; and never could stand the test of his own doctrine. He immediately turns his attention to those evidences, which indeed are very desirable things; and every christian possesses a degree of them. He tries to live without sin; he tries and tries, he wishes, and loves, and longs, but alas! he finds himself a sinner every day; and every sabbath he is made to believe he has no grace. Now this is a mere self-righteous plan and tends to keep the christian always in himself; and he loses all the comforts of the gospel by trying to be as religious as his minister says he must be before he can be religious; and sinners seeing the religious always drooping and melancholy get out of humour and are unwilling to try to get religion at all.

And indeed the christian loses his beautiful, cheerful and lively countenance, and appears under the garb of distress, anxiety, and trouble. But that my reader may have a statement of what I think to be the true scriptural evidences of an interest in Christ, I will give my sentiments on this important subject in the three following chapters.

CHAPTER XVI.

How and when a person may be certain of an interest in Christ.

HAVE I an interest in Christ? Have I true religion? Am I sure of salvation on good scriptural grounds? These are questions which the true believer often asks and seriously endeavours to answer. It is my intention to lay before my reader a view of the genuine marks of a true christian. Evidences of religion are external and internal: the external evidences consist in the religious or holy life of the christian, and are particularly the evidences we give to others. Internal evidences consist in the views, feelings, taste, and temper of the heart, and are the evidences which should always go foremost in our inquiries as to ourselves.

1. External evidences are simply good works, consisting in words and actions or the general conduct of the christian. We cannot judge of others' hearts any farther than we can judge by outward conduct. If you wish to show me your faith, you must do it by your works. It is by your fruit you will be known. If your life and conversation are regular, if you live soberly, righteously and godly, it is charitable to judge well of you; especially if you show a holy temper of heart in the way in which you perform your good works. A holy heart always disposes a person to holiness of life; and it is the sole prerogative of a person himself and not his neighbour to judge from what principle he performs his actions; so that the man himself ought to have a respect to his outward conduct as well as his neighbour. But our brethren have nothing to judge by but our outward conduct.

But here we must take care not to look for perfection. It would be unreasonable to expect perfection in this life; and we can have no authority from the bible to pronounce sentence against a man because we find he is not perfectly holy in his life. The scripture says if a just man falls seven times he shall rise again; and if thy brother trespass seven times in a day and repent thou shalt forgive him; yea even to seventy times seven. David said this is mine infirmity; and iniquity prevailed against him. Upon the whole the experience of all christians is a testimony of the truth of the scripture doctrine of imperfection in this life. So that while on the one hand we should not in the least degree encourage a loose inattention to the perfect rules of religion; yet we ought to be cautious in pronouncing our anathemas if we find our brother has been overtaken in a fault.

2. Internal evidences are the acts of the will; they may be called by different names such as choice, disposition, affections, desires or love, hatred, delight, &c. And the special object of those exercises is what ascertains the characteristic. The internal evidences of an interest in Christ may be included under two heads, faith and holiness; and by adding to this a correspondent life, we have indeed the scriptural testimony of a gracious state.

Here again it is necessary to observe that we are no more to expect perfection in our hearts than in our lives. Grace does not consist in having nothing wrong, but in having something right. If a man has much corruption, if he has some genuine holiness, he is interested in Christ, and is in a gracious state. If he is full of unbelieving fears and doubts, yet if he has the least grain of faith he is united to Christ, and is interested in all the blessings of the covenant of grace. We should never determine our evidences by quantity. If they are only of the right kind, the least discernible degree is as substantial and certain as ten times the quantity. Neither ought we to

determine our evidences of grace by number; for he who has ten circumstances evidently showing the various exercises of grace, is not any surer of salvation; that is, his salvation is not a whit surer than his who has but one. It is not like a legal trial where judgment goes according to preponderance of evidence, sometimes by number and sometimes by degree; for one single principle in the heart truly gracious will overthrow ten thousand evidences for sin. If a man really hates sin as dishonouring to God, his heart may be full of opposing principles, yet even if his heart was very bad naturally and far from perfection, yet he has grace or he never would hate sin. Thus Paul, because he had a delight in the law of God, although he had a body of death, and found not how to perform even when he had a will, yet he did not scruple his gracious state.

There is much mischief done here both by preachers and people; e. g. when a preacher is enumerating a number of evidences, as is very proper, a poor distressed soul while one evidence is handed out feels comfortable, because he is conscious he possesses it; perhaps the next overthrows him, because he cannot see it so clear as he did the other; and perhaps when the sermon is done he finds himself possessing about the half of them; but, alas! because he cannot grasp the whole he concludes he has no grace; and perhaps at the same time another person could apply what he could not, and could not take those he could; and he is in the very same case because he could not take the whole. And perhaps the preacher gives an unhappy turn, either by pronouncing judgment at the close of every evidence, carrying the idea that every man is graceless who has not this, which is often imprudent; instead of saying every man has grace who has felt as he has described, which is almost always the most prudent manner of expression. Or, perhaps, as I have heard often, the whole is taken together at the close of the description; and every one is pronounced graceless who does not

possess the whole; and perhaps the description has been so high that even an angel could hardly reach to it. This is always imprudent, and does much harm; and all the good it does is to make a christian hang his head and conclude he has no religion.

Every true christian feels often afraid of hypocrisy; and preachers generally urge as to this. Although this is very proper and produces good effects, when conducted with prudence; yet when it is misplaced it is productive of effects very hurtful to christians and the cause of religion. A preacher ought to warn his people against hypocrisy; and people ought to take the warning. But I do not like a minister to preach as if he thought all professing christians were hypocrites, except himself and two or three more who are very eminent for piety; or to paint the character so artfully, that it would be impossible to escape being a hypocrite, unless in case of perfection. Such over ticklish discourses always make christians mere slaves to religion; and christians who are overly afraid not only of hypocrisy, but also lest they themselves are hypocrites, are always bowed down with sore apprehensions of danger, even where there is none, and as Dr. Young says, make a thousand deaths by fearing one. There is no necessity for a person to be always ready to give up the ghost for fear he is not honest. An honest heart will always speak for itself; and it is not so very difficult to tell a mere dissembler from an honest child of God. Imperfection in heart does not make a man a hypocrite; weakness in faith does not, neither does selfish motives, or consulting for one's best interest; and to act accordingly, a good christian may have all this; but to be a hypocrite is to pretend to be what we are not. We should be afraid of hypocrisy, it is true, but we need not be afraid we are such; the first is our duty, the second is mostly our sin.

Again: another error productive of much harm, is to overlook our faith in our inquiry into the state of our souls. When a person is conscious that he is a believer, and has a suitable exercise of faith on Christ, he can discover the corresponding or consequential evidences of grace with some ease and propriety. But when he is scrupulous of this he can never be satisfied in any thing else. If a man is not conscious of his having given up his heart to Christ on the proposals of the gospel, so that he has his trust fixed on him in the promises of the gospel, all the regularity of his life or the holiness of his heart will not ascertain his interest in the Redeemer to his comfort. I confess that a holy heart is a sure mark of grace, and does really prove that a man has faith and is interested in Christ; because holiness is always the effect of an interest in Christ. But God has ordained or fixed the gospel plan, so that no man can be comfortable without he puts his trust in him; and it is impossible to trust in Christ unless we are conscious that we have submitted to the gospel. It is by believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and in believing we have joy, and our fears and anxieties are removed when we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep what we have committed to him against that day. When we examine ourselves we should make faith itself the primary inquiry; we should examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

But when we neglect this, we begin and end our examinations in darkness, and are never able to draw any conclusion with any solid comfort. Examination into our state of holiness, repentance, love to God, hatred to sin, &c. are called the reflex acts of faith. I do not contend whether the phrase is proper or not; but we will make a miserable hand of reflecting unless we have some faith to go upon. It is indeed poorly worth while to build fabrics in the air; we may talk of determining our states by the

graces of holiness in our hearts; and it is not at all difficult to do the wind work; but let us try it in practice, and we will find on the experiment that we must put our trust in Christ, as poor wretched sinners, before we can be sure of our interest in the gospel plan; for this simple reason, because faith and not holiness is the only condition of our personal interest in the blessings of it; and we must ascertain the one before we can ascertain the other. But when we never consider that faith is as clear an evidence of our interest in the gospel as holiness can possibly be and so neglect it, and bend our force in our inquiries toward holiness, we neither look to Christ nor trust to the promises of the gospel; and we always labour in vain and are sure to feel the unhappy effects of it.

I am well aware that it is urged that we ought to ascertain our faith by the effects it produces in our hearts and lives, before we conclude that we are believers; and I confess, at first sight, this theory looks well and promises fair. This is the old established system, which has been the means of holding many a precious soul in darkness and distress. And I have only one objection to it; and that is, (to use an old proverb) it always puts the cart before the horse. I am well satisfied it will tally with no man's experience who ever arrived to a comfortable assurance of his salvation; and whenever a comfortable christian gets into doubts of his interest in Christ, this is the very cause of it; and he will, as sure as he exists, continue comfortless until he begins with his faith, and comes on the simple call of the gospel, independent of all his marks and evidences of grace, and casts himself as a lost sinner at the foot of divine mercy, with a hearty surrender of all into the hands of a crucified Saviour; then, yes then, and not till then, the sun will break forth as from behind a cloud; and he will be ready to acknowledge the work of the Spirit of his dear Redeemer in every good thing he feels in him or about him.

Faith is not a mere problematical thing which can only be ascertained by mathematical demonstration. It is positively felt in the heart, and is ascertained by sensible experiments. It has its evidences, I grant, in its effects; but you cannot with all your logic satisfy a christian that he has it, unless he is conscious that he feels his very soul believing in Christ. He may acknowledge that he does love God, and longs to be like him; and that he hates sin and longs to be delivered from it, as most detestable; and that he loathes his own heart, and is ready to be revenged on every lust, if he could only get at them, &c. and it would be very easy for you to demonstrate on those principles the certainty of his gracious state; but he is not going to take your demonstration; he feels too much sin with all his goodness; he considers himself a mere sink of iniquity; and he will not take your *say so* for proof, nor yet your logical arguments as decisive. Now, what is the reason? Is the man a fool? No: he could argue just as well with you, as you can with him, on the very same subject, and prove you to be a christian as well as you him. But the whole mystery is, the poor man has lost his confidence in Christ; only persuade, by some well timed offer of free and full salvation, the poor wretch to come just as he is to Christ, and by a faithful promise bring him to put his whole dependence in him for salvation, and the business is all settled; and you have a comfortable christian who can now both see and feel his evidences of grace. But to pretend or attempt to persuade him that he has faith, before he feels it, is vain to all intents and purposes. He who is engaged in search of evidences in his heart, to evince his interest in the gospel, and at the same time has no suitable view of Christ in the offers and promises, is in quest of a Saviour, and he feels a disposition to make a little saviour of every grace he finds in his heart; and it is in vain to warn him of it and forbid him to do it; he thinks there is no danger; for

he finds so much corruption mixt with his grace, that he rather quarrels with, and runs them down than trusts to them; and he does not suspect the cunning of his own heart while he frets because his own goodness is not worthy of his confidence. But if he was conscious of his believing in Christ and putting his trust in him, he would have the radical evidence of his interest in Christ, in the very act of his soul, leading to Christ, faithful in all his promises as his only Saviour; he would have the perfect righteousness, and the truth, and unchangeable faithfulness of Christ in his word, as the grounds of his confidence. His fears being allayed, and he getting footing on the gospel plan, is able to bear with imperfection and can see grace mixed with corruption, and acknowledge with gratitude as the precious work of the Spirit what before he considered as only the effect of mere nature, education, or slavish fear, and not worth a thought.

But perhaps it may be objected that this would encourage presumption, and induce hypocrites to indulge a false and presumptuous hope, and would tend to encourage laxness and mere formality in religion. It might be, and no doubt is sometimes the case. Sinners do often abuse the best things in the world. But if they do, it is no objection to the plan. I am not disposed to lay aside a good thing because some are disposed to use it wrong; and especially to adopt in its room what would have a worse tendency. I have in substance answered such objections before. I shall only observe here, that for a sinner to come to Christ on the free offer of the gospel just as he is, is not presumption; and after he is conscious of the consent of his heart to Christ to trust his eternal all unto his care and rest with full confidence in his promises, is not presumption; and inasmuch as Christ will be faithful to him according to his word he will have the only chance that he possibly can have, to be really engaged in and possessed of true and vital religion. So that instead

of presumption, hypocrisy, a false hope and laxness in religion, it is the only antidote and infallible cure of the whole. The only way to cure hypocrisy, a false hope, &c. is to bring the man straight to the cross; and then let him say with Job, "though he slay me yet I will trust in him."

Presumption lies on the other hand. Will a sinner presume to refuse to come when God calls him? Will he refuse to trust to his word? Will he dare to follow his own plans, and adopt his self-righteous schemes of accomplishments, preparations, looking to and resting upon his sorrows, repentance, vows and sincere endeavour to be holy, instead of Christ? Is he a connoisseur to prescribe to God how and in what manner he is to come and accept salvation? No: bring this presumptuous hypocrite to the cross, and let him be cured.

Another error in our inquiries into our religious state is, that while we are very solicitous and anxious in our inquiries about our love to holiness, hatred to sin, repentance and obedience to the moral law, and all the various exercises of holiness in our hearts and lives; and while we are very scrupulous about our views and motives, ends and designs, we hardly ever think it worth while to think of the gospel, or of any of our duties which it enjoins upon us to perform, or any of the sins we are guilty of in neglecting them. We are always poring upon the law and perplexing ourselves about our duty and our shortcomings in the duties we owe to God, our neighbour and ourselves. We are very sensible of our need of pardon; but when we inquire whether we are pardoned or not, or whether we have any hope to receive it, we overlook the atonement of the cross, and our interest in it by faith, and dwell with great promptitude and anxiety upon the genuine nature of our repentance and our godly sorrow for sin, and what progress we have made in complying with our vows and resolutions. This is an error which

does much harm. It dishonours God, and keeps the poor soul always in darkness.

Not all the good sense and correct doctrinal notions of the gospel which we have will keep us from it. The pride and natural opposition of our hearts to the gospel are an over match for all the sense we have. A serious, conscientious man is very ready to ask himself of his taste for holiness, and to inquire into all his duties of morality. But, although he very well knows that his morality cannot save him, and that if he does not believe on the Son of God, the wrath of God abideth on him, yet he forgets to ask himself, whether he has complied with that all-important condition of his salvation, even to believe on Christ. Also he can enumerate his crimes and confess them, and be sorry for them, and try to turn from them; but he is sure to forget the very worst sin he commits; which if he would turn from, all his other sins would be eternally buried in the atonement of Christ, but if persisted in will eventually terminate in the sin against the Holy Ghost. This is the only sin which must be overlooked! And what is it you say? Even the *little* sin of unbelief.

Indeed I would be far from saying any thing designedly that would be in the least disrespectful to holiness; or to hinder a serious inquiry after a conformity to the moral image of God. But we ought to take the right way to do things; "*est modus in rebus.*" We are not to place the moral law in the room of the gospel, or to throw away the gospel to show our love to God and religion. We should always, after a sense of guilt and the utter impossibility of salvation by works, place the gospel before every thing else; because it is the wisdom and the power of God to salvation, to every one who believeth. I am persuaded, if serious inquirers would ask themselves the following questions, and let their minds dwell upon such subjects, they would find more real comfort in the gospel in a few months, weeks or days, and perhaps even in a few

minutes, than they would or possibly could in seventy years poring upon the moral law, without them.

1. Am I a lost ruined sinner utterly unable to save myself?

2. Has the blessed Son of God made a complete atonement for sin?

3. Is divine justice fully satisfied in that atonement?

4. Have I any chance to be interested in it, wicked and wretched as I am?

5. What is that plan?

6. Does Christ himself offer, fully and freely, himself to me; unworthy me?

7. Does the gospel call me, invite me, and urge me to come to Christ?

8. Is the invitation really to me; one of the vilest, unworthiest?

9. And does he just require the consent of my abominable heart?

10. Dear Jesus is it true? and can I withhold my consent?

11. May I come just so; guilty, helpless, without the least recommendation?

12. Will he not reject me, and spurn me from his presence?

13. If I come, will he give me his righteousness, his Spirit and full salvation?

14. May I trust him? and will he be faithful to his word?

15. Did he ever deceive? Is he not true, and his promises faithful?

16. Will he not only pardon me, but also sanctify me and do all things for me?

17. Will it honour him for me to come to him, and trust all to his hands?

18. Does he not give me an unquestionable right to do all this by his own offer made to me in the gospel? and can I be guilty of presumption in taking the liberty to

do what my Lord in his own condescension and goodness has given me the liberty to do?

To assist and direct you in your inquiries, I will annex texts of scripture to each of those questions, which you may rely upon as the true answer which Christ himself makes to them.

1. Rom. 3. 9. Both Jews and gentiles are all under sin. v. 10. There is none righteous, no not one. v. 19. Every mouth stopped and the whole world become guilty before God. v. 23. For all have sinned and come short, &c.

2. Rom. 5. 8. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. v. 10. We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, while we were yet sinners. 8. 3, 4. God sending his own Son, &c. 2 Cor. 5. 21. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

3. Mat. 3. 17. Lo a voice from heaven, saying this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Ps. 85. 10. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Is. 42. 21. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. John 19. 30. Jesus said, it is finished.

4. s. 1. 18. Come now let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, &c. Chap. 53. 1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money come; yea come buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Rev. 22. 17. Come, come, come; and whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely. 1 Tim. 1. 15. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Mark 16. 9. Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he cast seven devils. Ezek. 16. 6. When I passed by thee, I saw thee polluted in thine own blood; I said unto

thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live. 33. 11. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, &c.

5. Mark 16. 16. He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned. John 3. 16. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish; but have everlasting life. Eph. 2. By grace are ye saved through faith. Acts 16. 31. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Rom 10. 11. For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

6. See the texts under No. 4.

7. See also No. 4. John 5. 40. ye will not come unto me that ye may have life. Luke 19. 41, 42. He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known even thou, &c. Matt. 23. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, &c. how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. John 8. 24. If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

8. Rev. 3. 20. Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, &c. Luke 19. 5. And he said unto him, Zaccheus make haste and come down. Matt. 11. 6. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. Is. 45. 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth. Prov. 8. 4. Unto you O men I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. v. 34. Blessed is the man that heareth me. John 7. 37. Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst let him come. He that believeth &c. Mark 16.

9. Ye will not come &c. Ps. 110. Thy people shall be willing, &c. Is. 1. 19. If ye be willing and obedient &c. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, (of his heart, which is the consent of the will.) I would have gathered you, but ye would not. Prov. 23. 26. My son give me

thine heart. Rom. 10. 6—11. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness.

10. John 6. 47. Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me, hath everlasting life. v. 45. Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me. v. 67—69. Jesus said, will ye also go away? Peter answered Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

11. Matt. 8. 22. Jesus said follow me, and let the dead bury their dead. Luke 9. 61, 62. Lord I will follow thee, but let me first bid farewell to them at home; Jesus said, no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. Rev. 3. 17, 18. Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold, white raiment, eyesalve, &c. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Matt. 15. 24. I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Luke 14. 21. Bring in hither the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind.

12. John 6. 37. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out; whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely. If any man open the door I will come in and sup with him, and he with me. Prov. 8. 36. He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death.

13. 1 Cor. 1. 30. Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. John 7. 38, 39. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. He spake of the Spirit, that they who believe on him should receive. Rom. 8. 33, 39. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? &c. 1 Cor. 3. 22, 23. All are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

14. 1 Thes. 5. 23, 24. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, &c. Faithful is he that hath called you, and will do it. Phil. 1. 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ. John 14. 1. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. Luke 12. 32. Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

15. Tit. 12. God who cannot lie promised eternal life. Heb. 6. 18. That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us. Num. 23. 19. God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? 2 Cor. 1. 20. All the promises in him are yea and amen.

16. Rom. 8. 28. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. He is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification. Heb. 13. 5. He hath said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 1 Cor. 1. 8, 9. Who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of the Lord. God is faithful by whom ye are called. 2 Thes. 3. 3. The Lord is faithful who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. Heb. 7. 25. He is able to save to the uttermost, &c.

17. Eph. 1. 12. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. John 17. 10. All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. Rom. 4. 20. He staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. John 8. 49. Jesus said, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

18. Rev. 22. 17. The Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and let him that is

athirst come; and whosoever will, &c. Rom. 11. 29. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

Now, what does my reader think of Christ's answer to those questions? Could we ask any more? Is it not enough to chase our little objections, and make us ashamed of our desponding cavillings at the gospel? Only let the gospel address our hearts in the simple words of Christ, and nothing can be either more beautiful, easy, plain, or encouraging; and we must conclude with the apostle, if we are straitened, we are straitened in our own bowels. I am confident that if a serious mind was to turn his earnest attention and study to those texts of scripture which I have quoted, and such passages, and view them and consider them seriously as answers to those questions to which I have annexed them, it would do a thousand times more good than to read fifty volumes turning the brains upside down with marks and signs and evidences and criterions and characteristics &c. &c. &c. of gracious affections, of sound believers; and tracing hypocrites, and hunting up formalists, counterfeiting graces, and hunting for legal testimony to prove you sometimes a christian, and sometimes half a one, and sometimes nothing like one; and always drawing the lines as curious and as intricate as the different colours in the rainbow; darkening counsel by words without knowledge, and spoiling their good sense by too great a proportion of nonsense. And all our sermons constructed on such a plan, and formed on such models, are suited to draw the mind off the simplicity of the doctrines of Christ and to make us imagine it almost impossible for a sinner to be saved. And as for the comforts of religion, although many have been perplexed and driven almost to despair by such finenesses in divinity, I know not who can say they have been led to the cross of Christ, and made to sit under his banner. . . .

As for my part, I know not what the world may think. I can content myself with Paul, to be a fool for Christ, and to know nothing but him crucified; and if any person chooses the same plan, he will not be very long till he will be able to know whom he has believed, and be ready to say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And as for hypocrites, the cross of Christ will save them if any thing will; for it is the law makes a hypocrite, and not the gospel. And if I cannot lead him, I am not going to chase him; for that only makes him sevenfold more the child of hell than he was before. As for poor distressed souls, the cross of Christ will draw them after awhile, once they tire of their hunt after evidences; and the blood of Christ will be sweet to them, once they are half starved, as I was, on legality.

CHAPTER XVII.

The same subject continued.

WHEN a man is about to get religion, the first evidence he has of it is, he is convinced that he is a guilty, lost and undone sinner. My reader has noticed that I have not said this is an evidence of religion. I will warn you when I come to the first infallible mark of saving grace. It is now supposed that this man is about to get religion. I will not pretend to point out the particular degree of conviction he may feel. No doubt it is much greater in some than in others; and I have no doubt but it is much greater in some who never get religion than in some others who do. It is very proper that a sinner should have a sense of guilt; for every man ought to feel his real circumstances; and a state of guilt is the state of every man who has not an interest in Christ. But there is no true religion in a sense of guilt. The devils have it in a

very awful degree. Serious persons very often err in their notion about conviction: they imagine they must have extraordinary pain and distress: and can never believe they are right without several pangs of despair. And they are the readier to conclude so when they read the experiences of others which generally are painted in high colours; and they have not presence of mind to consider that the very highest things are related in books, and low frames are unnoticed; and by reading a continued story of great sensations and distress which perhaps takes up the history of five or ten years of the man's life, if they do not take care they will be impressed with the idea of a general scene which the reader has not experienced. He has had his low, flat, and easy times, and only now and then has felt remarkable trouble; consequently the story goes far before his experience; and the inference is, he has not felt half enough; he is nothing to compare with this good man; whereas perhaps the history only contains an account of a few months if they were put together in several; and may be if the reader's few months were added together with the necessary varnish of history, it would equal, or outgo the other; and preachers in giving descriptions are apt to colour very high and go beyond their own experience, and perhaps of many others. So that such grounds for such conclusions are very vague and hardly ever correct.

But there is no necessity to draw conclusions as to the degrees of our feelings at all, especially in convictions; and we should never conclude any thing by the feelings themselves but only by the issue of them. A small degree of legal conviction is always the best, provided the end is answered. All the use of conviction is to operate as a motive to induce us to accept of the offers of the gospel. But foolish mortals, fond of pain when it savours of atonement and feeds our pride, are apt to determine whether they have believed or not by the quantum of distress

which they think is necessary to make them believers, instead of concluding, as they ought always to do, that if they had had so much as was a sufficient motive to induce them to fly to Christ they have had enough. Whenever a man has had so much as served this turn he need not, and he should not, wish for any more; for more is useless, nay, is hurtful. It is neither honourable nor profitable to have such a proud rebellious heart as to require hard work, so to speak, to prevail with us to accept of Christ.

But we must have so much as will rouse us to such salvation, and to accept of it when the gospel offers it to us. If this end is gained I would not ask you a single question farther about it.

Before I quit this subject I will just observe that conviction is a sense of guilt and danger and the utter impossibility of our saving ourselves. It is attended with pain, anguish of spirit, anxious thought, fear, and distressing apprehensions of wrath; and these painful sensations are more or less according to the degree of our conviction and our darkness as to the gospel plan. But there is no religion yet.

Another evidence that a man is about to get religion is that he, under a sense of his undone state is anxiously concerned about salvation; he does not yield to the wretchedness of his circumstances so as to become sullen and hopeless; but he is inquiring "what must I do to be saved?" It is not material as to the length of time spent in these inquiries, but the quicker the better always. Peter could have three thousand souls caught in the gospel net in less time than it used to take him to draw his net for fish. I highly commend the jailer's and Paul's expeditious activity. He sprang in, fell down and brought out Paul and Silas, asked the solemn question; and Paul answered it. This was quick work indeed. It requires the plain apostolic doctrine to do business like this.

But some serious persons cannot be satisfied unless they take time for every thing; and some preachers also are afraid to hurry matters too fast, lest the man becomes a hypocrite through his bad motives. And the gospel is held back until a more proper and convenient season. The wound must be probed, the right eye must come out, the right hand and foot must be cut off, before a poor trembling sinner can be invited to come to Christ.

A minister should always be afraid his patient would die among his hands before he would get him ready to apply the sovereign remedy. But as to the evidence, it matters not as to time. The man is inquiring for life, and no doubt working for life too; but he gets a discovery of the gospel. Perhaps indeed but dimly, but so much however as raises his eager attention. He, with the degree of light he has, discovers Christ an able and a willing Saviour: his atonement sufficient; his state, authority, and office sufficient; and his proposals containing every thing necessary for his complete salvation; and all freely offered, and offered to him, and assurance given of full salvation if he will accept; and this the happy condition on which the offer is made, and the only condition he is at all able to comply with. There are four things he must see in the gospel: He must see Christ an able Saviour; this he learns from what he is in his person as a mediator, in his offices, and in what he has done upon the cross, &c. He must see his willingness to save; this he sees in his dying so freely, and in the free offers he makes to him. He must see the fulness or sufficiency of the salvation offered, and that it is really offered to him; and he must see the conditions on which it is offered.

Such a sight of the gospel gives him a hope, and so operates as a strong motive to induce him to accept the offered grace; but if his views are but glimmering; he is filled with strong anxiety; and hope and fear rise and fall alternately, and maintain anxious sensations in the mind.

Urged by fear and a sense of danger on the one hand, invited by the gracious overtures on the other, uncertainty attending as to the issue, and his immortal soul at stake.

But here I would observe that there is no necessity to discover all the moral excellence of Christ, nor yet to see the moral beauty of holiness as a part of the offered salvation; no more is necessary than what is sufficient to win the consent of the heart. I have shown already, in a former part of my treatise, the absurdity of such discoveries antecedent to faith. A view of Christ's moral excellence would immediately sanctify the soul; so would a view of the excellence of holiness. The man in this case would be a subject of sanctification, holiness, repentance, love and of all the radical parts of salvation before he would be a believer; which is absurd and contrary to the doctrine of the bible, as I have already shown. I mention this here to let my reader know that if he examines for real marks of true grace when he is inquiring into the prerequisites of faith he will commit a grievous blunder which may perhaps keep him long in darkness; for he will not find them where he is looking for them, and he will be apt to conclude, that his faith is not of the right kind; and this will break his hold of the promises, and becloud his mind, and make him write *tekel* on every grace he has; for it is impossible to be satisfied in any one evidence of religion, unless we are conscious of a gospel surrender to Christ. When we are disposed to look for holy exercises as component parts of faith, nay, even as qualifications previously necessary to believing, we are sure to miss our object; for we must be brought from under the law, becoming dead to our first husband, and be married to another, even Jesus who is raised from the dead as our justification before we can bring forth fruit unto God. (Rom. 7. 1—6.) And it is only by faith in Christ that we are delivered from the condemning sentence, or curse of the law; and becoming dead to that, in which we were,

bound, in consequence of our interest in the atonement by faith, we are by grace enabled to live in newness of life. (v. 6.) Now he who looks for, and endeavours after, holy dispositions before he believes, and indeed must have them to make his faith of some account, directly counteracts the gospel plan; and the apostle compares him to a married woman becoming an adulteress, by being married to another man before her husband is dead. (v. 3.) He is married to the law and is bound by the law of the first husband, but wishes to break through the obligations he is under to make atonement for his sin, and adulterously wishes to derive divine influences from Christ before he is married or united to him by the voluntary bond of faith. This is spiritual whoredom indeed. Christ is not the minister of sin. (Gal. 2. 17.) For if when we profess to be justified by Christ, we still hold our attachment to the law, by making a conformity to it a conditional article of the reality of our faith, we act inconsistently, and are certainly wrong; and (v. 18.) we make ourselves transgressors against the plan of the gospel which we profess to believe, and we sinfully (v. 17.) contradict our own professed system of salvation. And do we think that Christ is a mere servant (*δῆλονος*) a drudge to our inconsistencies? Must he after answering all the demands of the law by a complete atonement, be still bound as a slave to the law so that he cannot redeem a sinner unless he is holy in order to get an interest in him? God forbid. The truth of the matter is this: (v. 19.) In consequence of the law having a penal demand upon us, we had to make a complete atonement in Christ our surety. (v. 20.) We being crucified with him, and suffering, in our surety, the whole curse of the law (v. 19.) we are become dead to the law; it having no farther demands upon us by way of penalty; we are therefore by our surety completely delivered from the curse, and are entitled to the blessings of the covenant. In consequence of which we can now live unto God, become holy and love him and serve him in newness of life. This is

not mere theory; it is experienced in fact; for those who are personally interested in Christ, and crucified with him (v. 20.) do actually live; they are positively made holy, and do become spiritually alive. But it is not by way of preparation to obtain a personal interest in Christ; becoming holy in order to believe right; so that their faith might consist of love and delight in God, and holiness, a genuine hatred to sin, and in short a real restoration of a holy temper to the heart; which is unwarrantably thought necessary for a sinner to have before he can be personally interested in Christ by a true faith. No: but it is in consequence of Christ really living in them, by faith, and by the divine influences of his Spirit in consequence of this union. So that this spiritual life is begun and carried on by faith in, and the faithfulness of, the Son of God, who is the author and finisher of salvation.

On this plan (v. 21.) the gospel is not frustrated; and the grace of God, the free gift of his dear Son is not set aside (*αθετω*) misplaced. But still to have recourse to the broken law and to demand a genuine conformity to it, in order to be interested in Christ, is making the death of Christ which is the radical foundation of the whole business, a mere empty compliment (*δωρεαν*) and not out of any necessity to our salvation.

“ O foolish Galatians, (exclaims the venerable apostle, chap. 3. 1.) who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth (or believe, or give up to the truth) before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you.”

I conclude by cautioning my reader not to look for any thing more, in his views of Christ in order to his believing, than just so much, be that less or more, as will induce him to believe; and the only way to know whether our views of Christ, and the gospel, have been right, or great enough, we must determine by our recollecting, or by our positively feeling the consent, and surrender of

our hearts to Christ, and really believe on him. If we are conscious of the fact, we need not ask another question about our feelings and views which we have had before we believed. But if we are not conscious that we do actually believe, we should immediately set about the business of believing; and in order to be enabled to do it, we should consider that we are in ourselves lost, helpless sinners; and that Christ in the gospel offers us full and free salvation; that if we believe, or consent to receive it, we shall be saved, if not we shall be damned.

I now come to speak of an infallible evidence of salvation; I do not say of religion, but of a saving grace, and consequently that we are in a gracious state; and this evidence is faith itself. Here it is well to notice, that although faith is the first, and the surest, and consequently the best evidence of an interest in Christ which a christian can possibly have; yet it is the evidence he is the most apt to overlook, and pay no respect unto, especially in a doubtful frame. But before I say any thing more on this most unhappy neglect I must describe the nature of the evidence itself.

Faith like all other graces has its first evidence in the exercises, or sensations of the mind in acting it. The man, when he believes, very sensibly feels his heart believing. He may not know that what he feels is faith through his ignorance of what faith is; yet he is no stranger to the certain things he feels. If you tell him it is faith, he may not believe you; yet all this is no objection to the absolute certainty of his feeling it, and that he has the witness in himself.

When a man believes, he not only gives credit to the doctrines of the bible which gives him a view of his guilty and ruined state by sin, and also of the free offers of the gospel as I have already explained; but the peculiar article of believing is for the heart to be influenced by those truths he believes; so that he approves of, and complies

with the plan and terms which the gospel lays before him. His understanding perceives the truth; and the truth affects his heart and influences the will. So that although it is proper enough to say that the whole soul is engaged yet the simple act of believing is an act of the will. The act of the will is always what we call choosing; we may call it by different names, such as, consenting, being willing, coming to, accepting, giving up, complying, yielding, &c. all which words are employed to mean the act of the will; the phrases looking to, and trusting in, or trusting to, always imply choice; but they give us an idea of the exercise of faith rather than the first act of it. Thus when a plan is proposed in which we are interested, we agree, approve, adopt, coincide &c. When an offer is made to us, we say we accept, receive, consent, are willing, &c. and many other such expressions are in use, all signifying the simple act of the will. When a promise is made to us, we look to the promiser, trust in him, rest on him; we lean on a promise; we consent to an offer.

When we choose one thing, it is always supposed that we refuse another; but this does not suppose two different acts of the mind. The affections are the sensations of the mind under the influence or impression of the motives, introduced by the understanding, determining the will; so that they are nothing else than the heart in the exercise of volition under the influence of motives. But we do not call these impressions, affections, unless they are pretty strong and the will acts vigorously.

I suppose these ideas, to those who are not accustomed to accurate study, seem intricate; but I think that even persons, of not the strongest capacity, by a little careful application may see pretty clearly what faith is; and may be much assisted both to know and explain the feelings of his heart in believing on Christ, by having a tolerable knowledge of the nature and capacities of his own mind. A common farmer can understand very well how he acts,

if his neighbour offers him a good bargain; he can soon both feel, and tell him whether he is agreed or not. A man in distress is at no loss to determine how his will acts, if he has an offer of relief from a friend. A farmer's daughter addressed with handsome offers for marriage would not need much philosophy to know how her will was; she would easily know what influence motives had, and what to do and say to express her approbation. How easily does a man of the lowest capacity exercise confidence, when he has a promise to rest upon, made by, what he calls, a *sponsable* man.

Would my reader be astonished, were I to tell him that there is not a whit of difference, in the nature of the case, betwixt all the cases I have instanced, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? and the one just as easily done as the other; only let the motives be equally seen, and just as easily and as certainly known?

O! you, say, this is blasphemy! I think no wonder that thousands in the church think this to be monstrous divinity. They are disposed to believe that faith is one of the most difficult things under the sun. A man, it is said, must be born again; he must be possessed of genuine holiness; he must have a divine view of the glory of God; he must be captivated with the moral excellence of Christ; he must be panting after holiness; he must hate sin on the account of its moral baseness and contrariety to holiness, and as dishonouring to God; he must long to be delivered from it as a burden, and contrary to his pure desires. Moreover he must be influenced in a disinterested manner; he must not be selfish; the fear of hell must not at the farthest much influence him; nor yet the hope of happiness; but he must be all swallowed up in the glory of God, before he can pretend to come to Christ, or offer to hope to find acceptance with him.

I must confess there is a grand difference here. But, blessed be God, I can find no such doctrine in the bible.

Paul taught the jailer no such things. Indeed the apostle's doctrine called sinners to Christ just as they were in a state of nature, and promised them holiness after they came. Their way of salvation was as plain and as easy as any poor wretch could wish it. Their believers were comfortable and happy and pious; and they called them every how and every where; and it was just believe, look to Christ, no matter who they were, bloody Jews, and persecuting gentiles, idolators, whoremongers, drunkards, sinners of every description; every blessing and grace was promised through faith in Christ; and they got it in Christ; and they trusted to Christ for it; and they thanked Christ when they got it. It was far easier for the jailer to believe, than for you to buy a tract of land; and his rights to heaven were as safe, as your rights for your land could be. It was nothing under the heavens but just one cry for mercy, and one offer of the gospel, and one act of the will to accept of it; and three breaths did it all. Paul could make fifty believers for our one; and have them all shouting glory to their Redeemer before we could get one poor soul half ready to come in sight of the cross.

Ah! but you say, he was an inspired apostle, So he was; and he preached like it too; but the true reason is, he preached the gospel plainer than we do. If we would preach as simple doctrine as he did, and determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified, we could make as many and as comfortable believers as he could.

Where does the sinner get all this holiness? from the law or from the gospel? Not from the law; for that holds him fast under the curse, until he flees to Christ; and peremptorily, on the footing of inflexible justice, forbids him to enjoy one saving blessing; and it is faith only can save him, and not the deeds of the law. This is Paul's doctrine to the Romans, and Galatians. Does he get it

from the gospel? No: for the gospel requires faith or pronounces damnation by the express orders of Christ himself: so St. Mark tells us. Does he get it without either law or gospel? No: the thought is absurd; and there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved: so St. Peter tells us.

How then does he get his holiness? Even by believing in Christ, coming as a sinner, a lost sinner, a guilty sinner, an unholy sinner; and after he believes, God according to the gospel plan, gives him the seal of holiness by his Spirit of promise, or as he had promised: so St. Paul tells the Ephesians. God calls, when sinners come or believe; he justifies; after he justifies he makes them glorious in his own image and fits them for immortal glory hereafter: so Paul tells the Romans.

Again! After the sinner, some how, no matter how, or any how, gets his purity of heart, and all things in order how does he come to Christ? Does he come as a sinner? If he does he is certainly a hypocrite; for he is a saint. Does he profess to have nothing, when he has actually got half the kingdom? or does he come as a holy person, as he really is, with the Spirit of God in him, and the image of God on him? And will Christ receive him? On what authority would he receive him, when he came not to call the righteous but sinners? But what would he come for? for all, or for a part? for a whole salvation or a partial salvation? He has got part already and the principal part; for the grand end of Christ's coming was to restore the image of God. This is done already, at least in part. Does he come for fear of hell? He dare not do that; it would be too selfish; and it would adulterate all his holiness; and to come for heaven would be as bad.

Alas! alas! is this that glorious gospel which Christ and the apostles preached, or any thing like it? I think it does not require much depth to see that it is no more

like it, than the doctrine of those whom Paul wished to be cut off as troublesome to the Galatian church, was like his doctrine.

But what is there in all the gospel plan to hinder a sinner to come to Christ, destitute of, and to obtain whatever he is pleased to offer? What rule, or set of rules can be invented that could operate against a sinner in such a case? And if a sinner would take Christ at his word, and go instantly to him, on his call and overture without possessing that which he offered, would he be cast out? Is there yea and nay with Christ? Are not his gifts and callings without repentance? Then does not Christ offer pardon to a sinner? Is it inconsistent with the plan of the gospel for a guilty sinner to come to Christ for pardon? Does not Christ offer repentance? Is it wrong then for a sinner to come without evangelical repentance to him for that inestimable blessing? When Christ offers holiness, sanctification, a new heart, a heart of flesh, why may not a sinner come without holiness, without sanctification, with his old heart, with his stony heart to Christ to obtain from him those blessings he offers? When he offers to write his law upon the heart and in the mind, why may not a sinner come without the law written in his heart or in his mind, that Christ might fulfil his word in enstamping his image upon it? Once more; when Christ says that he will declare his Father's name unto his people that the same love which the Father has for his Son may be begotten in them and he in them (John 17. 26.) why may not a sinner come to him to get the manifestations of the name, or glory, of God that they may be possessed with the genuine love of God and so bear the image of Christ in their holy temper of mind towards God for his glory and divine excellence.

Now these are undoubtedly possible cases; and suppose such a case should ever be, that a sinner roused from his stupidity, alarmed with his awfully dange-

rous situation, and was to read those glorious proposals of Christ, and give up his heart to Christ on the bare encouragement of the gospel, and so come, just as he was, destitute of every thing that is good, destitute of pardon, repentance, holiness, sanctification, a new heart a heart of flesh, without the law written on his heart or mind, not having those transforming views of the glory of God necessary to change a sinner into the love of God, what would be the consequence? Would this not be faith? Would it not be the faith of God's elect? Would the gospel stop him? Could the law hold him back? Would Christ reject him? And when Christ would bestow every thing upon him which he had proposed, would it not completely save him? And in such a case, would not a sinner come to Christ, just such as the gospel calls, for gold, for white raiment, for eyesalve, and for every thing? Would not Christ save a sinner, exactly such as he came to save, and died for? Would he not be saved by faith? and would not Christ get all the glory? And now in the last place, acknowledge the truth; is not this exactly the gospel plan, according to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles? At any rate, such doctrine I have always found to suit my case the best; and I have never had reason to rue that I have had the blessed privilege of coming to Christ just as I am, and to acknowledge that salvation is through Christ alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Faith its own evidence.

I HAVE said that faith is the act of the will. When a man consents or chooses that Christ according to his own offers in the gospel should save him, he then believes. When a man acquiesces in the plan of the gospel and surrenders himself to it, he believes. When a man is cordially willing to be justified by the atonement of Christ and sanctified by his Spirit, he believes. When a man gives up the whole care and management of his salvation to Christ, he then believes. When a man covenants with Christ and gives his heart to him, he then believes. In short, when a man looks to Christ for his whole salvation, he is a believer.

His consent, choice, acquiescence, surrender, willingness, giving up, covenanting, giving his heart and looking to Christ, or any one of them, is his faith. And when he feels his heart doing any of them, he feels himself believing. And when he is conscious of those feelings, he is conscious of his faith, and has the first and the most important evidence of his interest in Christ that is possible for him to have; which if he lacks, that is, if he is destitute of the thing, it is impossible for him to have one other evidence of his gracious state; and if he will not look at this, he cannot and he shall not see any other.

This is the evidence that christians overlook and almost totally neglect inquiring for; and the consequence is, they are always uncertain, and have to live on a mere *perhaps*, even as to the eternal salvation of their souls. Every christian has it if he would only feel for it, (for it is to be found by feeling) and attend to what it says. It seems the least of all evidences; for faith itself is like a grain of mustard seed. But you must remember that the

holy bible is the judge, and gives its judgment of salvation, on this very identical little evidence: "He that believeth shall be saved;" and of damnation on the want of it: "but he that believeth not shall be damned." Doubting christians may esteem this evidence little, and not worth notice; but the bible views it as the turning point; and we will find at the day of judgment, either to our joy or eternal confusion, that this very evidence will determine the final sentence of the Judge of all the earth. Doubting persons may count it little, and disesteem and disrelish it, to rest their salvation on such a trifle, because it is all our part; and our pride hates to stoop to a low condition, and wishes to aspire to some of the noble exploits which the exalted Saviour has to do. Our pride can induce us even to attempt the awful work of atonement, as well as the sovereign business of sanctification, and try to plead our tears, and the pains and sorrows of repentance as satisfactory accommodations to inflexible justice; and our vows and resolutions, and reformations in heart and life, as favourable symptoms of our progress in religion, and right to and preparation for heaven; rather than yield to the humbling evidence of a cordial submission to Christ on the only condition of the gospel. Holiness being a direct testimony of moral excellence in ourselves, and only a presumption that we are interested in Christ, we are fonder of it than the evidence of faith. On the other hand, faith being a direct evidence of our surrender to Christ, and of our entire dependence on him for all things and only a presumptive evidence of our sanctification, its validity depending entirely on the engagements and promises of Christ, and being nothing abstractedly in itself, our pride rejects it and clings to the other, which is something in hand and makes us look more clever and independent.

We hate to be told of these things; but this has a powerful effect on us in our examinations. By refusing to

attend to the direct evidence of faith, our minds are led off from the radical spring of all true religion; to wit, an interest in Christ by faith. And we suffer sorely for our pride and folly; for we have so much sin in us that we cannot find an instance, or an exercise of holiness, but we find also such a degree of imperfection attending it, that it looks suspicious immediately; and here we need the atonement of Christ; but to bring in this would require faith; and we know not whether we have any or not, because we will not attend to nor give credit to its own evidence.

Thus the main article is uncertain for want of testimony; and all the rest is imperfect; and we have nothing but *if* to go upon. Our ground of comfort will consequently run thus: *if* I do love God for his glory, *if* I do love holiness, *if* I am sincere, *if* I do hate sin as I ought to do, *if* I do repent with the right sort of repentance, *if* my desires are from right principles. But my friend do you depend on your sincerity and not upon Christ? Do you not know that you ought to depend upon Christ? Yes, you say, *if* I had an interest in him. Now there is but cold comfort in all this; and give the devil a small allowance, let him change *do* into *did*, and *are* into *were*, and he could say every syllable of it.

But attend to the direct evidence of faith; and instead of saying *if* I had an interest in Christ, say, as becomes a believer, "Lord I believe;" throwing away your doubtful expressions. Any person can easily see, that by taking away the last *if* we remove all the others; but let it stand, the others must and will stand of necessity. If you do not attend to the direct evidence of faith, you never can ascertain your interest in Christ; and consequently you never can be sure of your salvation, until you open your eyes in that happy place where faith is not necessary. But you may depend on it, you will have an uncomfortable journey; and when you come to your journey's end Christ

might well say to you as he did to Thomas, "Because thou seest thou believest (or art sure); blessed are they who see not, and yet believe," (have a confidence in my word).

But you say how will I ascertain my interest in Christ? I answer, in the first place, go directly to Christ on his own offer of salvation, by consenting to the gospel plan; and while you are making choice of Christ and consenting to his proposals or afterwards, note the actions of your own mind, the choice of your will, the surrender of your heart; then believe this to be faith; the very condition on which the gospel offers you salvation. And lastly, believe that the word that says, "thou shalt be saved;" is the word of Christ, true and faithful; and put your whole trust in Christ as your covenanted Lord and Redeemer, and you will soon, and as soon as he, be as happy as the jailer. This will soon take away that *if* and all the rest of your *ifs* and reduce all to certainty.

We can certainly know assuredly how we feel, whether we consent to a proposal, whether we are willing, whether we approve, whether we give up our hearts. We can certainly know that this is the meaning of those scriptures which offer us salvation if we come, if we look, if we open the door, if we hear Christ's voice or word, if we comply, &c. which lays the terms before us on which Christ will undertake for us. We can certainly believe that he is able, willing, true and faithful. So that it is certainly true, that he that believeth hath the witness in himself. Now if you know those things, happy are you if you do them. But if you neglect the direct act of faith, and the positive evidence which it gives, to the very act of closing in with Christ, in vain you search for another; for nothing will prove a contract but what is a witness to the agreement. But rest the strength of your evidence here, and establish your interest in Christ, by your own

act and deed and all subsequent evidences will come in of course, and can be credited when they come.

Paul to the Heb. (chap. 11. 1.) gives us these very ideas: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, "the evidence of things not seen." Here faith is represented as the peculiar, substantial evidence of the things beyond our sight, and things we have in prospect. The apostle here is not describing saving faith in its act which unites to Christ, and as it is the condition of our personal interest in him, as is generally thought; but taking this for granted, or supposing this, he is telling us the evident ground on which the believer exercises his faith in the promises; and he makes faith itself the radical evidence which begets confidence in the believer and enables him to trust in the promises of God.

"Faith is the substance" &c. (*υποστασις*.) The word substance means any existing thing real and not imaginary. To analyse the word, it literally means a post or pillar or any thing which stands itself, and supports what is put on it. The Greek word means a thing which stands of itself, and may be firmly depended upon. Both the Greek and the English word are well chosen to express firmness and solidity, and consequently an excellent support of our hopes in our future prospects laying hold of the unchangeable promises of God. "The evidence &c." This second sentence explains the first. The word evidence explains the word substance, and makes it mean a firm, solid testimony or proof that can be fully relied on. The Greek word *ελεγχος* means an infallible proof or an invincible argument, and explains the word *υποστασις*, and makes it mean a substantial evidence, proof or argument; and things not seen, are the things hoped for.

A man must have an evidence of his interest in God's favour, before he can trust his promises. Faith is that evidence, and so begets a corresponding confidence in God. If you carefully read the chapter, you will find the apos-

the proceeding to give many instances of the effect of a suitable exercise of trust in God's promises. He first makes faith take a view of God, as the great Creator and Governor of all worlds, by the almighty power of his word. The Greek is very strong language indeed; the word for worlds (*αιωνας*) will mean, beings, worlds, ages, and eternities. The word for framed, (*κατηγεται*), means to bring to order, and prevent confusion. Such unbounded glory, power and wisdom, must afford a grand foundation for the utmost confidence, to one who has the substantial witness of faith, that he is interested in his favour.

Abel resting on Christ's atonement offered a good sacrifice. Enoch walked with God in the exercise of faith. Noah built the Ark confiding in God's word. Abraham left his native country, sojourned in Canaan, and offered his son Isaac, trusting to God. Sarah bore a son through the faithfulness of the promise to which she trusted. So Isaac, Jacob and Joseph did what they did in confidence in God. Moses's parents hid their son three months, trusting in God; they feared not the commandment of Pharaoh. Moses also refused the honours of Pharaoh's court, waded through vast affliction for the sake of religion, in confidence that he would not lose his reward; depending on God in the exercise of faith, he kept the passover; passed the Red Sea with his whole army without danger. The Israelites trusted to their encompassing the walls of Jericho to take the city, because the Lord had spoken it. Rahab was preferred after she had acknowledged the God of Israel, and trusted to the oath sworn to her in the name of the Lord; and in the exercise of her faith was saved, by means of a scarlet thread hung out at her window (almost as little a thing as faith.) Here the apostle quits stating the instances particularly, and promiscuously runs over several others, and at length concludes the wonderful account by saying "all these having obtained a good report through faith" or having be-

come good witnesses of the happy effects of trusting in God, “received not the promises,” but trusted to them. The two first verses of the next chapter contains an exhortation suitable to the evidences given “Wherefore &c. “let us run with patience (which is always the effect of “confidence in God) the race that is set before us; looking (or trusting in the same exercise of faith) to Jesus “(who is not only) the author (but also) the finisher of “our faith;” and who has promised every blessing to believers.

The whole scope of this passage goes to show the exercise of faith in trusting to Christ, in consequence of our having good grounds of our interest in him, by the substantial testimony of faith, enabling us to lay hold of the promises of a God of such boundless wisdom and power. How dangerous, and how far wrong therefore, must it be, to pay no attention to our faith, which only can substantially prove our interest in Christ, and enable us to exercise a suitable confidence in him?

There is more lost by not attending to, or not placing confidence in the testimony of our own hearts in the direct acts of faith, than the comforts of religion. The christian becomes a slave to his duties, and is sure to think more of what he is able to do, than what Christ has promised to do for him. It turns his religion into a servile task, to curry favour with his Maker, and quell the clamours of his own conscience; and consequently it tends to destroy the true spirit of his religion, which ought to be generous and noble, and changes it into mere legality.

2. It renders it impossible for a christian to perform one of the most agreeable duties enjoined upon him by the word of God: “Rejoice again I say rejoice. Be of good “cheer I have overcome the world. Fear not little flock.” How can a christian perform these duties, who knows not whether he actually believes in Christ? While ever he is in doubt of this, he must doubt of every thing else, and

cannot enjoy a comfortable assurance. A christian would cut an odd figure, who would rejoice and be of good cheer, when he knew not whether he was going to heaven or hell; and yet it is his duty to rejoice in the Lord always, and not to let his heart be troubled. Some think it a very great sign of religion to be always doubting, and fearful. Whether it is possible to make that a good sign, which is contrary to the directions of the bible and the spirit and tendency of the gospel or not, I know, that faith is, and always will be; because it is the very condition of the gospel. When a christian rejoices in believing, I know he must have religion; but when he doubts in unbelief, if he is a christian he has a poor way of showing it; and he is most certainly wrong as to his duty.

3. It hinders the christian to exercise a genuine gratitude to his God and Redeemer. What would a doubting christian be thankful for? for pardon, sanctification, for the hope of heaven, or the love of God, or, indeed, any of the blessings of the salvation of his soul? That gratitude must be very faint, which is rendered for a favour which a man knows not whether he has received or not, or ever will. The comfortable christian can feel the favours he has received; and his heart can glow with gratitude and love. But he who doubts of his interest in Christ, while he professedly gives thanks, his heart scruples the blessing for which his lips render praise.

4. It makes a christian approach the throne of grace in prayer fearfully, and ask his Father for blessings, without that confidence in his goodness, love, and unchangeable faithfulness, which becomes a child of God. The comfortable christian has a plea that is enough to inspire his very soul with boldness, when he comes to God in prayer, "seeing he has a great high priest who has passed "into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." The atonement and intercession of Christ emboldens his heart to ask for mercy and grace to help in time of need. But the

doubting christian is always uncertain. He asks, not in confidence, but hesitating. What a great difference there is betwixt a slave, at a slavish distance from his master, asking a favour, and a son, confiding in his father's love and faithfulness, asking with confidence that he will receive. It was a sprightly interrogatory of the poet:

Does he want slaves to grace his throne

These are some of the unhappy consequences of not attending to the only condition of the gospel, and of not admitting the direct acts of faith to be an evidence of our interest in Christ.

But, my reader inquires, have we no evidences but faith? I answer, yes, enough of them. But I have insisted the more largely on this, because it is overlooked; and because except we have this testimony, we can have no comfort from any other. It is very proper to call in corroborating testimony; and what I have said does not in the least object to it. But we must not neglect this, but see to it first, and carry it with us through all the process of our examination. The moment we drop this, we drop all, and get in darkness; and we know not whither we go. If we were more conversant with the gospel, we would be more in the exercise of faith; and if we were more in the exercise of faith we would be more dependent on Christ; and we would consequently be less legal in our religion, more comfortable in our views, and more holy in our hearts.

CHAPTER XIX.

Evidences of true religion subsequent to faith.

I COME now to speak of the evidences of true and vital religion which are the very things in which true religion consists. Although faith is properly called a saving grace, yet it is not in the first instance any part of religion, but only the conditional article which interests us in the covenant of grace, and so places us in a state, and under such circumstances, that we will infallibly obtain religion; so that it is impossible on the gospel plan for us either to obtain holiness without it, or not to obtain holiness with it. This faith being a gift of God of such an important nature, it is a saving grace in its connexion with the gospel, although it is not in itself religion or holiness.

But the things of which we are now to speak are the very exercises of true holiness, and the consequence of an interest in Christ; which none have but believers, nor can possibly have, because of the curse of the law; and therefore they are good evidences of true religion, and corroborating evidences to faith. Every evidence of true religion is an exercise of holiness; so that it is proper to say that holiness, or sanctification is the summary evidence, however it may be branched out into various exercises.

I will observe again that we should not search for all evidences at once; and one that is genuine will, or ought to decide the question, if we can find no more. It is dangerous to hunt for too many at once; we should take them as they come. Evidences of grace are generally discerned by their exercise, and we could hardly ever expect to have every grace in exercise at once, but one to day and another tomorrow, as we are called to it by God's dealings

with us. And as the christian is called to exercise his different graces at different times, so he must expect not to find all at once, although he has the radix of every grace in him, yet he will feel only one or two at a time according to his various frames. When a preacher is giving marks of grace, he may very probably and very properly run over many; and this man witnesseth this one, and another that, and the third a third one, according to their different feelings; but it would be very extraordinary if any one man could feel them all. Perhaps in a comfortable state, a christian might grasp the whole by the help of his recollection; but doubting persons do not love to trust their memory in such cases; they do not like to trust any how; they want all in hand; and it always happens that because they cannot witness all, they will have none. Having premised these things I proceed. And

1. He who has repentance is a religious man, and has an interest in Christ. Here you need not perplex yourself about legal repentance; for it is easily distinguished from that which is the true mark of grace. Legal repentance is the fear of punishment and is a very good thing, as a motive to induce a sinner to come to Christ. But this is not what I am speaking of. Neither need you perplex yourself about your motives; it is not hard to know them. The will always feels its motives; and when you feel yourself choosing, delighting in, or loving, or hating any thing, you can also feel the reason why; and that is always your motive. We never either choose, love, or hate, for nothing.

The grand reason why there is such immense difficulty about motives, is not because we do not feel them, for that is impossible; but because we will not give credit to our feelings when we have them. But what motive can possibly induce a man to hate sin who naturally loves it? Surely it must be a good one; and it is impossible to hate sin from a bad motive. It is Christ only can make you

hate sin, by the grace of his Spirit through his word, revealing to you the excellence of holiness, and consequently the moral evil of sin; without this no man will ever hate sin; and when we feel ourselves hating sin, and longing to be delivered from it, what need we scruple our motives? Are we afraid Christ will give us bad motives, or that Satan will give us good ones? and the more especially when we feel that we not only hate sin, but also as sensibly feel that we hate it by loathing its immorality, and contrariety to the will of God.

Now, he who feels, or sees holiness to be excellent or right, and feels his heart choosing it, and delighting in it, also feels his heart hating sin; he feels that he himself has been a sinner, and that he is a sinner yet; and he hates it, and hates himself for it; he frequently feels himself loathing his heart, his froward, wicked temper and disposition, and earnestly wishes and endeavours to be more holy; and sometimes he wickedly frets because he cannot keep his heart from sin.

This man is the subject of evangelical repentance; for he has got this by his interest in Christ through the gospel; who only can give it; who is exalted at his Father's right hand, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. Consequently he has the *ελεγχος*, the invincible evidence of true religion.

2. Love to holiness is an evidence of true religion. This is the very same principle with that of repentance, and is indeed the fountain, or original principle of all holy exercises. When the will of a sinner is towards holiness, it is of course opposed to sin. His will always has, in this case, a necessary reflex act, as well as a direct act. Holiness is the object in the direct act, and sin the object of the reflex act. When a body moves towards the north, it moves from the south, by one and the same motion. It requires both to constitute true holiness; and it is impossible for the one to be without the other; but the direct act

of the will is love to holiness; and the reflex act is repentance. Philosophers call the one choosing, the other refusing; although they are but one and the same act of the will, yet the objects are directly opposite, and the mind feels itself differently affected towards them: the one it delights in and desires to possess, which is love to holiness; the other it hates and opposes, which is repentance.

Nothing but a discovery of the moral excellence of holiness to the mind, can possibly induce the sinner to choose it, and love it. Education and philosophy can make us acknowledge it to be right and excellent; but only the word and Spirit of God can reveal to us the divine beauty and excellence of it, so as to charm our hearts, and lay hold of our will and affections. While we continue under the sentence of the broken covenant, we are shut up and hedged round by the flaming justice of God, which turneth every way to keep the way of the tree of life; so that we are bound fast in the shackles of spiritual death until Jesus Christ who broke the bands of death, having made a complete atonement, set us at liberty, in consequence of our union to him by faith. So that Christ only can give us such motives as will induce us to love holiness, and thereby beget true religion in our hearts.*

* How unphilosophical, and how awfully dangerous is the plan and the principles of infidels! How is it possible for men of rational powers, with all the advantages of reason and education, to rest their eternal welfare on principles so illogical as their principles are? They can have nothing under heaven to rest upon, after all their parade about natural religion and the power of reason and conscience, but barely two things: one is their own morality; and the other is the mere clemency of God. Does reason, or the book of nature, as they call it, say that a God of infinite perfection can suffer the least sin to go unpunished? If he did, could he be perfect? If we admit of the least degree of imperfection, what principle of reason will say that God can be infinitely perfect? Yet it is abundantly evident that God must be completely perfect; he therefore must be inflexibly just; and the least sin must have its due reward. Their hopes which they build on the mercy of God, must be false and delusive; for reason contra-

If therefore our hearts are delighted in holiness, and we do really love that which is morally good, we have true religion; and we do actually experience in our hearts the happy effects of an interest in Christ. There is no necessity to inquire after motives here; for none but good motives could beget the love of holiness in us; and none but God in Christ could give them to us; and if we do in-

dicts the idea of mercy, but only on the principles of a complete atonement. Deists must consequently be perfectly holy, or reason says they must suffer for their sins. Are they perfectly holy? Does reason say they are? Do their life and conversation show that they are? Why then do they talk of happiness and the favour of God in consequence of morality? Reason will easily grant that perfect holiness will obtain God's favour. But when we are sinners, what does reason say then? Certainly that we must suffer the penalty of the law; and that we must make an atonement for our sins or that a surety must do it for us. But who is the surety who takes our place? Here reason is silent; and revelation only can tell us. But deists reject him, and cannot reasonably expect to be benefited by the atonement of Christ; and indeed they laugh at the idea. Consequently they must make atonement for themselves. The book of reason, therefore, pronounces inevitable ruin upon a deist. Revelation gives them an opportunity of salvation, by offering them the perfect atonement of Christ; but their own favourite book, the book of reason, shuts them up, as fast as fate, in an eternal dungeon of despair and torment, without the least gleam of hope.

Reason as well as scripture, asserts that sinners cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but the bible lays a plan by which a sinner can be sanctified, by the atonement of Christ, bringing him from under the curse of the law of God, and entitling him to the divine manifestations of the glory and excellence of God and holiness, to influence them to the love of God. But how are deists to be sanctified, who live and die without an atonement, and consequently under the curse? The bible has actually sanctified thousands, and many even of the most vile and wicked, and has made even some deists themselves bow to its divine power. But the book of nature has never sanctified one; neither is it possible that it ever can, because it proposes no atonement for sin. Deists therefore with all their wit and genius must remain unholy for ever. It is indeed a pity that wise men should be fools, and reject the only plan for the salvation of their own souls.

quire, as such inquiries are natural and agreeable to a good man, the answer will always be found to be, because holiness is excellent and right.

But here you must remember that we are very imperfect in all these things. Serious minds are apt to imagine that they do not hate sin or love holiness, because they feel themselves too much inclined to do wrong, and too little inclined to that which is right. If we hated sin perfectly or loved holiness perfectly, we would be perfect in religion. But to expect this, is wrong in this imperfect state. There is a wide difference betwixt loving holiness and hating sin, in some degree, and not at all. The question is not how much do we love or hate, but do we really do so? The question is not, do I love sin? no man can clear himself of that; but do I hate sin? The question is not, am I often too careless about holiness, too cold, and too much attached to other things? but do I love holiness? If we can answer the question in the affirmative, the bible makes allowances for imperfection. You would not conclude that Paul had no holiness because he acknowledged that he was not perfect, nor had already attained when you find he was following after; nor yet when he said that he was brought into captivity to the law of sin, when you find he had nevertheless delighted in the law of God after the inner man. It would be wrong to conclude the spouse had no holiness, because she said she was black as the tents of Kedar, when she was comely as the curtains of Solomon; or when she kept the vineyards of formal professors, and neglected her own; when she loved Christ in her very soul, or when she was too sluggish to rise to open the door for her beloved, yet her fingers dropped with sweet smelling myrrh on the handles of the lock.

Upon the whole, he who loves holiness also hates sin, and is suitably influenced by this divine principle, and has an infallible evidence of true religion. He discovers

the grain of mustard seed removing mountains and growing into a great tree bringing forth fruit unto God. He has an evidence of his interest in Christ; and his faith is strengthened; and his comfort is founded on the solid testimony of the bible. He ought always to use those evidences to encourage him to put his trust in Christ, who has sealed him with the holy Spirit of promise.

CHAPTER XX.

The evidences of holiness.

OUR next business is to inquire into the evidences of holiness. This is the class of evidences in which it is our duty not only to attend to the disposition of our minds, but also the motives from which we act.

1. Love to God is an evidence of holiness. And here the holiness of God must be the motive which induces us to love him. Holiness is the glory of God; hence he is said to be "glorious in his holiness." God often speaks of his holiness; and he commands us to "be holy for he is holy." I doubt not but there are many who feel a certain delight in the ways of God's dealing with them, and who therefore speak highly of him, and acquiesce in his dispensations, who may have no other motive than just because he is good to them, and causes every thing to prosper in their hand. I do not say it is wrong for a true christian to rejoice and acquiesce in the providence of God, and be very thankful for his goodness; but if this is all, we demonstrate no real love to God.

Satan, although he was grossly mistaken, thought Job had no other motive for his great attachment to God than this. "Doth Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But

“ put forth now thine hand and touch all that he hath, and “ he will curse thee to thy face.” And when Job still maintained his integrity he was again tried as to his health with sore afflictions in his body; but still he maintained his delight in God, because he loved him not merely for his good providences towards him, but especially for his holiness. So Joseph loved God no less when he was a slave and in prison, than when he was the governor of Egypt. But although the sinner may feel an easy, quiet temper of heart, and a cheerful acquiescence in God as a benefactor, without any love to him for his holiness; yet when God turns his hand and makes him drink of the gall and the wormwood, he is like the wild bull taken in a net. (Is. 51. 20.) When they are scorched with affliction, they blaspheme the name of God and refuse to give him glory. (Rev. 16. 8. 11.) Saul was an instance of this: while he was in prosperity he sought to the Lord and his prophet Samuel; but when the affairs of his kingdom went contrary to him, he forsook the Lord and acted like a perfidious madman, and sought to the witch of Endor.

Others again are more religious in times of affliction, than they are in times of prosperity. When the hand of God is against them they repent and turn to God with professions of love and obedience, like Israel frequently did; (Psa. 106.) but when they are in prosperity they forsake the God of their mercies. So Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked, forsook God, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. (Deut. 32. 15.) But he who loves God for his holiness, although he has often to struggle with temptations and the corruptions of a weak imperfect heart, yet he loves God; and less or more discovers his holiness in all his ways and in all his works; and it proportionally attracts his heart towards him, like David, as his exceeding joy.

He who loves God, loves him because he is lovely. Holiness is the loveliness of God; for holiness makes him

lovely. Holiness is lovely and excellent in itself; God is excellent in his holiness. We do not love God as a being possessing existence; for that would only be a matter of mere speculation. An angel, a man, a tract of land, or a devil, has an existence as well as God, although dependent on him. We hate a devil, although he exists, because he is unholy. We are pleased with a tract of land, not because it is land, but because it is good land. We love or hate a man because he is either a holy or an unholy man. We love an angel because he is holy; and we love God above all things because he is possessed of infinite holiness.

A wicked man hates God above all things, for the very same reason, viz. because he is possessed of holiness; he himself hating holiness and loving sin. He who loves God earnestly desires to wear his image, to be conformed to his likeness, and to walk worthy of him, and to do those things which are well pleasing in his sight; and is sorry for and sensible of his shortcoming. Hence it is that love to God is said to be holiness. This definition of holiness is very good, although it is not logical. God is so perfectly holy, that it is proper to hold him up as the only complete, perfect standard of holiness. And to love him is worthy to be figuratively called holiness, although it is only an evidence of it; because it is for his holiness' sake that we do love him. Love to holiness, or the inclination of our hearts to that which is right, is our holiness; and our love to God is the evidence of it; because God is holy and is the proper object of truly holy affections.

2. To love the bible, the law, the gospel, the ordinances and the people of God are all evidences of holiness. The bible is a holy book; because its rules, laws, plans, proposals and promises are all right. To delight in the bible for this reason, is an evidence of a holy disposition in our hearts. The moral law, whether summarily comprehended in the decalogue, or interspersed among the sacred pages, enjoins that which is right, and forbids that

which is wrong. To delight in the law of God is therefore an evidence of holiness. The whole plan of the gospel is founded on justice in the exhibitions of mercy; and the design of it is to bring sinners back to holiness. To love the plan of the gospel from this view of it, is a sign of holiness. To love; or acquiesce in the gospel plan, as it proposes salvation to a man's own soul, is faith; but to love it as it both enjoins and insures holiness to a sinner, through a delight in holiness, is a sign of holiness. The ordinances of the gospel tend to further us in holiness, and are means of enjoying holy communion with God. To delight in these ordinances is therefore an evidence of holiness. God's people are in their degree holy, and show it in their life and conversation. To love them therefore for this, is an infallible evidence of holiness.

Were I to ask the reason why a child of God is not assured of his salvation when he daily feels this last evidence in his very heart every day he lives, the answer must be, because he cannot be satisfied without he knows he is a believer; which is the only condition of salvation; and this he cannot be satisfied in, unless he is conscious in his heart, that he does actually believe. This is the most conclusive, experimental testimony of the truth of this doctrine, of any in all the round of christian experience. I lived twelve years under general doubts and fears; and from the first, or as near the first as I took notice, I never was a day in which I had a doubt of a cordial love to God's people. Since I have been a preacher of the gospel, I have had every chance of acquaintance with serious people, in all the different states of their exercises; having been blessed with success in the gospel through the greater part of my ministry hitherto; and I never remember that I have found an individual but would acknowledge immediately that he loved God's people. And there is no hesitation as to the truth of what

our Saviour says on this subject: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." And also the apostle John says, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; and he that loveth his brother abideth in the light. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

Now here is scripture and experience tallying together, and both acknowledged true. Yet all will not do. The syllogism is plain, easy and undeniable; but the conclusion is never drawn until the direct testimony of faith itself, in its own exercise, draws it. The bible, which is infallible, testifies that if I love God's people, I am interested in Christ, am born again, and possess true religion. I do love God's people; I feel it in my heart. Their religious conversation delights me. I have the idea that they belong to Christ, that his Spirit is in them, and that they are conformed in their degree to his image. I love their company; I love to look at them, I love to think of them, I wish I was as good as them, &c. and when I hear of a sinner brought from sin to the paths of religion, let him have been ever so wicked before, and let me hate him ever so much, even although I hated his very looks and ways, and every thing about him as a sinner before, the moment I either see it, or hear of it, my heart is going towards him with sensible feelings of affection and good will. Now comes the conclusion. Therefore, I am a disciple of Christ, passed from death unto life, dwelling in the light; and God and his love dwell in me. But all falls through; the conclusion is kept back, in spite of all our good sense, our confidence in the truth of the bible, and the conscious testimony of our own hearts. Why? The doubting christian cannot tell, for he is sure of both the parts of the syllogism; but somehow, he cannot draw a conclusion, which he can hardly help drawing. Let him go on mere theory, and he can draw it in a moment; but

in his own case it is impossible. I ask again, why? Certainly just for the want of the direct evidence of the consciousness of believing; give him this, and he can, and will, and must conclude his syllogism.

3. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is an evidence of holiness. This is an exercise of holiness, more properly speaking; for it is an inclination of the heart toward that which is right. Christians feel this evidence more and less, at different times; sometimes indeed, it is very low, and scarcely discernible; at other times it rises higher and higher; and sometimes it rises even to panting, like the hunted hart for the water brooks. And the christian through his weakness, sometimes indulges a fretful temper, and either chides the delay of the divine influences of grace, and implicitly blames his Redeemer, in pretending to blame himself, or concludes he has no religion because he does not get all he wants.

4. To hate and loathe one's own heart and ways, and to feel an abhorrence of those things which lead to sin, to wish to be delivered from inward corruption, and to be consciencious in endeavouring to perform all the duties of religion, and to guard our lives from those things which are contrary to the will of God or dishonouring to the gospel, are all evidences of holiness. I grant the strictest attention to duty, and the most unspotted external morality of itself, is no sign of holiness; yet a regular life proceeding from a holy disposition of heart is an evidence of holiness, and always will, in a suitable degree, be a consequence of sanctification.

If a christian has been a moral man before he believed, he will only feel a change in the temper of his mind, and in the spirit from which he will perform the duties of religion. But if he was wicked in his former conduct, he will experience a change both in heart and life. At any rate, the believer or the holy man will struggle through his weaknesses and shortcomings, and uniformly love religion; and will endeavour to live soberly, righteously,

and godly in this world; he will study to maintain good works; and he will do it from a sense of duty and a real taste for holiness.

I might mention many other particulars as evidences of a gracious state; but I have placed before my reader what I conceive to be the most important, and those which are most usually inquired into. I have attempted also to arrange them in their natural order, in which it will be most likely to find them, and most convincing when they are found.

Here, in the last place, I will insert what I have before observed; that although you may inquire after all these evidences, one by one, either when you read them over or when they are laid before you from the pulpit, or brought forward in your examinations by your own recollection or judgment, yet you would do well, not to expect to find yourself in the exercise of them all at once; for perhaps you may find that you often experience the want of some of them; and be sure you inquire as to your consciousness of believing, the very first thing you do. If you succeed in this, you may go on to the others; only take care you do not overload yourself with evidences; one or two, or three good ones, is enough for once. But if you cannot ascertain that you are a believer, by the direct exercise of your faith on Christ, you may stop short; for you will labour in vain, in search of holiness, till you get that. For the want of this hint, many a serious person goes drooping to the grave. And if you find you are deficient in the positive surrender of your heart to Christ on the free offer of the gospel, your duty is to go forthwith and give your heart unto him, just as it is; and put your trust in him; and if you cannot do it the first trial, try again; if you fail again, be not discouraged; for Christ is waiting for you, with his heart full of pity, and his hands full of blessings; try a third time, and a fourth; and never give up trying, nor do one thing

else until that matter is settled; and then, and never till then, are you fit to examine for a single evidence of holiness. But when you are conscious of doing this, then you may feel for Christ in your heart; and you need not fear, but before long you will discover some proof of his being in you the hope of glory.

CHAPTER XXI.

Perseverance.

FINAL perseverance in grace is another consequence of an interest in Christ. This is a most interesting and a most comfortable doctrine. I know not how a poor, weak, fallible creature could enjoy any satisfaction in this world, were it not for the hope and confidence of being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and with this confidence any christian might rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I have several times hinted at this doctrine already in the course of this treatise; and I have of necessity established the principles on which it rests, in my treatise on election, and several parts of the covenants. It comes in course now to take a short view of it that we may be convinced of the truth of it, understand it, and derive the advantage from it which it is calculated to give; and we shall endeavour to be as concise as possible.

1. The doctrine of perseverance is established on the doctrine of election. If the bible proves the glorious purpose and plan of election to be the conformity of God's people to the image of his Son, and in order to this, their effectual calling, justification and final glory as we see in Rom. 8. 29, 30. the final salvation of the saints is infallible. When the bible proves that they are chosen in Christ, that they should be holy and without blame be-

fore him in love, as we see in Eph. 1. 4. and that they are saved and called with an holy calling according to his own purpose, and grace which was given in Christ before the world began, as we find in 2 Tim. 1. 9. when God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth as we see in 2 Thes. 2. 13. we never can hesitate as to the perseverance of the saints.

These scriptures, with many others, we have already considered in our treatise on election; and it is enough just to call the reader's attention to them here as infallible proofs that those who are in Christ will infallibly persevere in grace to the end.

2. This comfortable doctrine is confirmed by the death of Christ. Christ died, not merely to give a chance of salvation to his people, but to redeem them from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. Tit. 2. 14. Christ died for his sheep; and his Father loved him for giving his life for them. John 10. 15. 17. It is evident that his life was given for every one whose sins are pardoned; and if any of them should finally fall away, his death would, as to them, be in vain; and it is unreasonable, as well as unscriptural to think that such an infinite ransom should be applied in vain in any instance whatsoever. He must see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Christ as the mediator is made to his people wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and if so, then their salvation is infallible in every part of it. If they, or any of them fail in sanctification, then Christ is not their sanctification, or he is not in such instances a sufficient sanctification. The death of Christ is the hope, confidence and glory of his people; but if it fails, it is unworthy of confidence; and no reasonable man could glory in it. The death of Christ was a price paid for the salvation of his people: 2 Cor. 6. 20. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. If any of them be lost,

he must be an infinite loser, having lost the value of his precious blood; and divine justice which was satisfied resumes its claim on the sinner, after it had received the full ransom, which would be unjust. The death of Christ atoned for every sin which the ransomed sinner ever would commit. Tit. 2. 14. 1 Pet. 2. 24. Rom. 8. 33, 34. Nothing therefore but the insufficiency of his death can possibly be the cause of a sinner's condemnation when he is once interested in it. The death of Christ purchased every necessary influence of the Spirit for the sanctification of his people. If therefore his people are not completely sanctified, the purchase was not sufficient and failed for want of sufficient efficacy. John 7. 38, 39. and 4. 14. The suretiship of Christ is founded on his death. The intercession of Christ is also founded on his death. Heb. 7. 22. and 9. 15—17. and 7. 25. and 10. 12. If any finally perish for whom Christ is a surety and intercedes, his intercession must fail; his suretiship must fail; and the merit of his death must fail. But these things are impossible; consequently it is impossible for a saint to fall finally from grace.

3. The perseverance of the saints rests upon the faithful engagements of Christ to his Father for his people. Those engagements are evident from those places where Christ shows his willingness to engage in the work of his Father: "Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God." This is the will of him that sent me, &c. John 6. 38, 39, 40. and 10. 18. 27, 28, 29. If therefore Christ is faithful to his engagements none of his people can ever finally fall away and be lost at last.

4. This comfortable doctrine is farther established by the promises of the gospel made to believers: "He that believeth shall be saved." If believers fall away then, he that believeth may be damned; which is impossible as long as Christ is true, and able to fulfil his word. They

shall never perish; I will raise them up at the last day. They shall never come into condemnation; I will never leave you nor forsake you, &c. &c. How many, how true and faithful, how unchangeable and how powerful are these promises. But all is vain and false if one christian finally falls away.

5. The truth of this doctrine is farther established by the indwelling of the Spirit as a seal, and an earnest of the inheritance. Eph. 1. 13, 14. The seal is God's image, which is holiness instamped by sanctification; and this same holiness is the earnest, or so much in hand, to confirm the covenant, or give a proof of its validity, or a sure pledge that they shall in due time receive the whole. Now if one believer fails, (for every believer receives this seal and earnest after he believes, verse 13.) of the purchased possession, the seal is broken, the earnest is false, and the work of the Spirit is vain and delusive. But who can venture to assert these things? But they must do it, if they assert that a believer finally falls from grace.

6. This doctrine is confirmed by the oath of God. Heb. 6. 16—20. And is it possible that we cannot believe it still? If one who has fled for refuge to Christ finally falls away, his strong consolation is blasted, and the Deity is perjured, and the two immutable things, the promise and oath of God, have changed; all which is impossible. Therefore the believer never can finally fall away. For he is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, to an inheritance uncorrupted and which fadeth not away.*

* It is objected to this doctrine, although it is so well established by the gospel, and although the salvation of every soul depends on the truth of it, and although it is such a comfortable doctrine, that we may say that the comfort of a christian depends entirely on it; that it promotes sloth and sin, and retards our progress in holiness, &c. Those objectors might as well, and with a far honester face, say that the sinner is not left enough to do; that his salvation is too

This doctrine is the life of a christian in the midst of trials and temptations, and even in his most happy circum-

much by grace and too little by works; and that Christ in his truth will not be as faithful to work grace in a believer's heart for his own glory, as the believer would be for his own happiness. This is the true meaning of the objection; and if it was the true plan of salvation, God have mercy on us all! A pretty hand the sinner would make.

This doctrine, instead of having such a baleful tendency, is truly enough to inspire our hearts with every thing good, great and glorious. He must be dead to every feeling of gratitude indeed who could argue himself into stupid inactivity because he has a faithful friend so great and good that he has a right to his whole heart. Who can take a view of Christ at the right hand of God, pleading his own death and sufferings in his behalf without feeling him a friend who sticketh closer than a brother? How unnatural it must be to feel a heart inattentive to the best honour and dignity of such a friend as Jesus, who takes the whole charge of our salvation.

Hope is the greatest stimulus to activity that can possibly possess the human mind. There is no danger of a man becoming dull and sluggish and stupid who is influenced by a solid hope of obtaining a most glorious prize. Such a hope as this, says the apostle, inspires the sons of God to purify themselves even as Christ is pure; and nothing in all the bible is better calculated to give the believer such a hope, than the doctrine of the infallible perseverance of the saints.

It is evident that the salvation of a sinner is in consequence of God's purpose, Christ's death, suretiship, intercession and the inward work of the holy Spirit according to Christ's engagements to his Father and his promise to believers; how then can it be the cause of sin, when it is the only thing that delivers us from it? Does not the Spirit of Christ abide in the hearts of believers to sanctify them and to lead them into all truth? Then how can it retard sanctification for this work assuredly to go on in our hearts?

I have sometimes wondered if the class-leaders, preachers, elders and bishops, among our brethren the methodists ever think of Christ's intercession, his promises to believers, the prevalence of his atonement, &c. as the grounds of the believer's hope. If they do, what can they infer from these things? Certainly when they think of falling away, they must find some difficulty to reconcile their sentiments with those scripture doctrines. How do they come boldly to the throne of grace, because they have a great high priest who is passed into the heavens? Can they draw near to God with full assurance of faith? Can they have strong consolation because of the promise and oath of

stances he would have short and unsatisfactory consolation without this support. When a christian confines his

God who cannot lie, and yet believe they may fall away at the same time? How inconsistent are these things?

When a believer for whom Christ has died as a surety, to whom he has given his word for his salvation, and for whom he pleads his own blood, falls away, is it because Christ ceases to plead for him? or is it because of the invalidity of his plea? or is it because the man has got so wicked in spite of all the power of Christ's intercession and Spirit, that he is given up as insalvable? And does the Father love his Son to lose a sheep, when he had intrusted the salvation of his soul to him? And when Christ gives him up, does all his former sins which had been forgiven return upon him again? If so, is he punished for those sins, after Christ had suffered once for them already? Would it be just in God to do so? Every one grants that sins are pardoned through the atonement of Christ. But when a pardoned believer falls away, and his sins return on him again, what becomes of the atonement of Christ which was imputed to him? In this case it must become null and void. The blood of atonement which was sprinkled upon him, must be taken off; or does he go to hell with the blood of Christ upon him, and with his sins half pardoned? This would be awful indeed. When the blood of Christ is imputed, it is complete, and covers all sin. But the doctrine of falling from grace thwarts the whole system of the atonement of the cross, and makes our pardon depend on ourselves, and not on Christ

I have often wondered if the sensible methodists ever weighed their sentiments; and if they do, whether they are not sometimes struck with a sense of the absurdities of their plan. Or do they just content themselves with taking things for granted, without ever looking at them? Their whole scheme is bottomed on downright legality. I know they talk of free grace, and pretend to preach it too. But free grace is more than merely the word *free* and the word *grace*, put together to make two syllables. In the salvation of a sinner it means something: and something too that the methodists always deny, although they frequently use the phrase, and professedly hold to the doctrine.

Is their denying the doctrine of election any thing like free grace? It saps the very foundation of it. No man can deny this doctrine, without either denying salvation altogether, or holding to salvation without any purpose in God to save; and consequently the purpose must originate in the sinner. The sinner must take a notion to be saved, before God will take a notion to save him. Is this free grace?

views to his present circumstances, he may indeed be the happy subject of a very comfortable frame; but when he

Does their notion of falling away from grace look like free grace? Does it not depend on the sinner whether his salvation will be complete or not? When they tell us how the believer stands, we find it to be on these principles: "If they improve if they do not turn to sin, if they continue loving and serving God, if they do not elope from the fold of Christ;" just as if it required no grace to dispose a man to improve, to continue, &c. Now is this free grace? Is it not merely self-righteousness? and does it not evidently make the salvation of a sinner depend totally upon himself?

When they speak of Christ's faithfulness in his promises, what a miserable jumble of ideas they have? "If you will not leave Christ, he will not leave you. If you continue faithful, he will continue faithful to you. If you go on to love him and serve him, he will fulfil all his promises to you. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you. If you will not go on to love and serve him, he will let you perish, &c." These are a kind of promises, and this is a kind of faithfulness that are no more like the gospel than midnight is like the noon day. Does it require any thing more than common mother wit, to see what sort of a thing a promise is which is suspended on the works of the law which the sinner himself has to perform? Is it free grace? Is it yea and amen in Christ? Are not works the very foundation of it all? And when a sinner trusts to them, has he not first to trust to his own faithfulness before he can trust to the faithfulness of Christ? And who gets the praise? Truly the sinner and Christ very mutually divide the spoil betwixt them; only the sinner must have the first draw. Yet all this is free grace!

The plain sense of all this is, If I take a notion to be saved, Christ will take a notion to save me. If I continue in that notion, Christ will continue in his. If I keep Christ, he will keep me. If I keep the road to heaven, he will take me there. If I will be good, he will make me good; but if I change my mind, he will change his; and the devil may make his best of me for what he cares. Is this free grace?

On these principles every thing depends on myself: The pardon of my sin depends on myself. My sanctification depends on myself. My perseverance in grace depends on myself. The faithfulness of Christ in fulfilling his promises depends on myself. And in short every thing in the whole gospel plan depends on myself. And yet all is free grace! and the whole of it mere legality from first to last. The death of Christ, the glorious intercession of Christ, the suretiship of Christ, his engagements to his Father, the Father's engagements

looks forward and feels no support for futurity, but his own resolutions, which have been broken through a thousand times already, he is obliged to feel a damp on his spirits and to say like David in a desponding fit: "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." But when he can feel his faith strong in the support promised, on the solid footing of the gospel for perseverance to the end, his heart is stayed upon the Lord, and he can smile; and give glory to God, even when Satan rages, and a corrupt heart is ready to fail. Thus when he is weak, he is strong and hopes against hope, conscious of his having committed his care to God, and the keeping of his soul, as unto a faithful Creator, he waits for the fulfilment of the engagements of the gospel, which assures him, he shall not be ashamed, and that he shall never finally fall away. It is true he may say with David that the sons of Zeruiah are too hard

to him, the promises of Christ to believers, the actual and personal imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the soul, the Spirit as a seal and an earnest of heaven, and even the very oath of Christ, must all yield to my pleasure; and must be, and do, just according as I do.

Truly the devil would rejoice with a hellish pleasure, if this was the free grace of the gospel; for he would be sure of every soul, and could easily defeat the whole gospel plan.

Notwithstanding all their notions of falling away, yet they hold to perfection; a pretty perfection indeed! And fall from grace too! Truly a methodist grown perfect in holiness, by his own industry, as a condition of his whole salvation, will indeed merit the glory of, well done good and faithful servant.

But a good methodist's heart is nothing like his head. His heart is as sound a predestinarian, as my head is. His genuine exercises in religion are, I grant, on the principles of free grace; for here he is taught of God, and not by a methodist preacher. It is well for him that his head and brains will die, and rot with his rotten notions; and at the day of judgment he will come forth according to the eternal purpose of his Saviour, faithful to his word, and all his engagements; and he will know, and acknowledge, free grace as it really is; and he will join with the old reverend apostle in singing "Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, &c."

for him. He may find the flesh lusting against the spirit so that he cannot do the things that he would; yet the kingdom is established, and the mercies of David are sure. Thus David, when he was even much cast down, seems to comfort himself by this very doctrine: "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." And Job: "When he hath tried me I shall come forth like gold."

It is a pleasing thing to a christian under proper views, to think that God acts for his own glory, and that he does all things for his own name's sake, and it is not difficult for him to see how much glory God will get (so to speak) by bringing through such a poor, imperfect creature. This thought is truly noble and sublime, but when we apprehend that any thing in us, or done by us, is the motive with God to do this or that for us, we have low thoughts of God, and truly unworthy of the gospel. When God passed his word to Paul, saying, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee," he immediately began to glory in his infirmities, and even to take pleasure in them, that Christ might be glorified in his weakness. Paul showed more true greatness in this, than he did when he was exalted to the third heavens, (2 Cor. 12. 9, 10.) and he acknowledges it too; for of the one he would not speak but anonymously, but to the other he subscribes his name cheerfully. (v. 5.)

Take away this doctrine from a believer when he comes to grapple with death and what has he to support him? The christian does not die comfortably, in consequence of his own perfection and worthiness, but by looking to Christ the author and finisher of his faith. He who has promised final perseverance to his people will not desert them at death. No, rather let me say he will stand on the banks of Jordan, and command the waters to divide and give a comfortable passage. I do not say that every believer dies confidently, and without fear. But this I will say confidently, that he need not fear; for

Christ will never forsake him. We may lose our confidence; but he will not forget his covenant, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail.

All promises relate to futurity, and demand our confidence, according to the veracity of the promiser. The blessings promised are the object of our hope, which is the effect of our confidence. Every promise must be fulfilled; and nothing can prevent the fulfilment of a promise but either weakness or unfaithfulness. God is neither weak nor unfaithful; consequently his promises will inevitably be fulfilled. The person to whom the promises are made ought to trust to them. The promises are made to believers. The promises made to believers, engage every thing necessary to their salvation. These propositions are too plain to admit of dispute; consequently the believer ought, and has infallible grounds to trust in God for the fulfilment of all his promises in due time; and in doing so, he must hope to receive, and enjoy, every thing which is promised.


He must of course hope to persevere to the end. But God is both able and faithful; therefore his perseverance is inevitable and cannot possibly fail.

In order to be correct on this important subject I beg my reader to notice the following table of short sentences, in two columns, the one correct, the other incorrect.

INCORRECT.

1. God promises salvation to a sinner, if he will accept of it.

2. God promises conditionally to do so and so, or to do this or that.

 This is an unpardonable blunder.

3. God will fulfil his promises to you, if you can trust him.

CORRECT.

1. God offers salvation to a sinner, whether he accepts of it or not; but he promises nothing to him.

2. There are no conditional promises. That which has a condition is only an offer, and not at all obligatory, until the condition is fulfilled.

3. God will fulfil his promises to you whether you can trust him or not. Your weakness cannot make God unfaithful. Rom. 8. 3, 4.

INCORRECT.

4. God will be faithful to you if you will be faithful to him.

5. If I were sure I had religion, I could believe in Christ and trust his promises.

6. If I had the comfort to know that I was a believer, I could trust confidently to the promises of God.

7. If I knew that God had begun a good work in me, I would believe that I would persevere to the end.

✍ This sentence is very correct; only it is almost always misplaced.

8. It is impossible to trust, without evidences to trust to. We cannot see our interest in Christ without a holy heart.

CORRECT.

4. God will be faithful for ever. Your faithfulness is not the cause of God's faithfulness; but his faithfulness is the cause of yours.

5. If you believe in Christ he will give you religion and fulfil his promises to you whether you can trust him or not.

6. You never can have comfort until you are conscious that you do believe, and do actually trust in the promises. Comfort always comes by trust.

7. If you come just as you are to Christ, he will certainly begin his good work in you; and you will have a gospel ground of confidence in his promise to carry it on to the end.

8. It is impossible to have evidences of religion without faith; and it is impossible to be satisfied in them, until you are conscious of believing. We discover our evidences by trusting to Christ, after we have heartily surrendered to him.

Those who enjoy the comfort arising from the doctrine of perseverance enjoy it on the principles contained in the correct column. But those who enjoy no sensible benefit from that comfortable doctrine, and are always doubting, and know not whether they will finally be saved or lost, notwithstanding all they have experienced, proceed upon the principles contained in the incorrect column. If they could only be persuaded to change sides, they would soon experience a happy exchange, and would never rue their bargain.

CHAPTER XXII.

Death, judgment, and eternal glory.

VICTORY over death, acquittance at the day of judgment, and eternal glory, and happiness in heaven, are all the consequences of an interest in Christ. These are among the most grand and important subjects of religion; and afford matter for sublime thoughts and high colouring and declamation. But I shall just say a few things on each of them, leaving the rest to be experienced, when the christian comes to know, as he is known; and actually to enjoy what we can only have in prospect in this imperfect state.

1. There is nothing more opposed to our natural feelings than death. Death is called the king of terrors; and indeed it may justly be so called as to all those who have not an interest in Christ. It is painful to think of the death of an unbeliever. If he is sensible of his wretched circumstances at the near approach of his dissolution, he exhibits a spectacle of pity and horror. If he is not, although spectators are eased of a miserable object presented before them, yet the real state of the unhappy wretch is not altered in the least degree; excepting barely a few minutes' longer respite, before he plunges into eternal ruin. But if sinners will run the risk of dying out of Christ when they have the free offers of salvation, we cannot help it. Our business, at present is with believers; who enjoy, not only all the advantages which we have already mentioned and explained in this book, but also at the close of life, when all worldly comforts fail, and none can help but God, the incomparable advantages of the gospel still remain, without the least diminution.

Death to the believer is the greatest blessing. If the believer has a view of his interest in Christ, he must feel himself at the end of his race. I am persuaded that, were it not for the bodily pains, and perhaps the enervating sickness of the body, which render him unable through natural debility, the comfortable christian would die rejoicing. How pleasant must it be to unbuckle the harness, and shout for victory. This world is not the rest promised to the people of God. Canaan lies beyond the grave. It would be impossible to enumerate the difficulties and troubles of a christian here. But death is the close of all, and the inlet to everlasting peace and happiness, without alloy.

And even if the christian should die uncomfortably, through the weakness of his faith, it will be only a few hard struggles at the last, before all is over; but the real state in which he dies is not altered. Christ will be as faithful to an uncomfortable christian, as he will be to a comfortable one. Our fears and suspicions, which we indulge through unbelief, do not in the least degree affect God's faithfulness to his promises. It affects our present state of mind, as to our comfortable prospects; but Christ will never let a christian fall, through his weakness. This is great consolation indeed. If I am conscious that I am a believer, I know not but a cloud may come over my sun, even at its going down; but I know also, if it does, it will not stay long. I will soon be above clouds and mists, in the pure regions of eternal glory.

Death to a believer is, upon the whole, an exit out of this world to eternity; out of a state of imperfection to a state of perfection in holiness and happiness for ever. Although it may be profitable in several respects for him to be here, while God sees fit; yet to be absent from the flesh and to be present with the Lord is far better. (2 Cor. 5. 1—8. Phil. 1. 21—24.)

The body of the believer rests in the grave, waiting for the glorious promise of the resurrection, which will assuredly be fulfilled; when the sleeping dust shall arise and join again with the happy spirit, to be for ever happy together: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, "from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest "from their labours, and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14. 13.) "So when this corruption shall have put "on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that "is written:" (Hos. 13. 14.) "Death is swallowed up in "victory. (Is. 25. 8.) O death where is thy sting? O grave "where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15. 54, 55.)

2. To be acquitted at the day of judgment is an unspeakable blessing and a privilege, which belongs to none of the children of men but believers; and they have the assurance of it by the positive engagement of Christ: "He "that believeth, &c. shall not come into condemnation." (John 5. 24.) "Then shall the king say to them on the "right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the "kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the "world." (Mat. 25. 34.)

It is not my intention to dive into the niceties of the resurrection. The apostle (1 Cor. 15.) has demonstrated the possibility and the certainty of it; and the mode or manner of it is not material for us to know, nor perhaps possible for us at present to ascertain. God, who at first created us of the dust of the earth, can by the same almighty power recreate our bodies, so to speak, of the dust of our former body. And as he breathed in Adam the breath of life, so he can cause the soul to reanimate the new framed body, so that the man will again become a living soul; and consequently the same identical man which he was before.

It is shocking to think of the resurrection of the wicked. The senseless body brought out of prison and animated with the miserable spirit summoned by the almighty

mandate, opens its eyes amidst the horrors of the day of judgment. It must be unspeakably awful to be dragged to the bar of God. How tremendous the presence of the Judge! clothed with infinite glory! Jesus Christ the mediator, honoured with the ineffable glory of the Father, surrounded and attended with all the host of heaven, appearing in his human body with the scars of his crucifixion, the eternal memorandum of his great atonement for his people! But how will unbelievers stand the test or bear the dreadful shock? How is it possible for sinners now in the day of their merciful visitation to live careless and thoughtless, and slight the offers of the gospel, when they know and believe that this dreadful day is approaching?

But the day of judgment will be a triumphant day to believers. They are directed to look up and to lift up their heads, because their redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21. 28.) How unspeakably happy must the believer feel, when his body is raised, a glorious, incorruptible body, reanimated with a soul unspotted, and formed in the image of God! He will be a perfect man in Christ indeed. The Judge will be still his unchangeable friend. His righteousness will still be imputed; and the believer's title to eternal glory will abide the solemn test.

The great Sovereign of the universe, the Judge of quick and dead, with awful authority, and with infinite faithfulness and love, will pronounce the blissful sentence: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This will unquestionably determine their state, and introduce them into their heavenly mansions.

This will be a most sublime scene. Nothing on earth could ever equal it. Every thing, every circumstance, every state and station, begins to put on eternity and to wear the awful grandeur of unchangeability. He that is filthy must be filthy still; and he that is holy must be holy

still. Sinners are done with all their happiness and hopes; all their little resources of pleasure are cut off; and their empty prospects are vanished away; and nothing now remains but eternal wretchedness and despair, the dreadful consequence of sin and rejecting the crucified Saviour.

And on the other hand, the believer is done with all his cares, struggles, imperfections and temptations. The resurrection has given the final blow, destroyed the last enemy, and put a close to the warfare. And now the victory is obtained; and nothing remains but to wear the laurels in the mansions of glory, in honour to our glorious captain, in a complete conformity to his image and enjoying God as our infinite and eternal inheritance. "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

My dear reader, what low ideas we have of those all-interesting scenes! None but immortal eyes can see, none but immortal hearts can feel those things which are far beyond the reach of mortals this side the grave. But through the glass of God's word, by faith we can have a glimmering view, sometimes enough to make our hearts burn within us; and in the pleasing rapture of our mind, in full confidence in him who is unchangeable in his word, either to feel ourselves disposed to wait with patience, rejoicing in the prospect, or to say, "even so, come Lord Jesus."

But I have one thing more to add: One of the most solemn and interesting scenes which will take place on the great day of consummation, will be Christ Jesus, the glorious Mediator, giving up the kingdom to his Father, and God becoming all in all.

Nothing in all the military achievements of general George Washington exhibited so much true grandeur, or was so much calculated to strike our minds with sublime ideas, as that grand scene which took place when he delivered up his commission to congress, at the close of the war. The

noble ingenuousness and faithfulness, which evidently actuated the breast of him, who was justly reckoned among the greatest generals in the world, and the reception of the commission, exhibiting the cordial approbation of congress of the faithfulness of the general, present a very moving scene before us, which cannot fail to attract our approbation and admiration, and fill our minds with every idea that is good and great. But why do I descend to comparatively little things? The glorious scene which now presents itself to our view, is the great Redeemer of sinners; having completely performed his work, and brought to glory all whom his Father had given to him, now putting down all rule, and all authority and power with which he had been vested as a Mediator; (Is. 9. 6. Mat. 28. 18. John 5. 19—27. and 6. 39. and 14. 28. and 3. 35.) and yielding up the whole government of all things again to his Father, who had put all things under him. And the human nature of Christ becomes subject to God; and God the glorious Deity becomes all in all.

This is one of the things, as Peter observes, in Paul's epistles hard to be understood. But although we cannot sound the bottom of that profound doctrine, yet we can at least see this far, that the whole work of redemption will be closed at the great day; and in consequence of Christ giving up his authority, the final establishment of all things must take place. Christ will have no more power to save a sinner; the overtures of the gospel must cease for ever; and no sinner can have a divine warrant to believe on Christ; nor Christ authority to impute his righteousness, to give his Spirit, or to make intercession, or to do one thing relating to the salvation of one soul. All that Christ did relative to the salvation of sinners, he did it by special authority given to him of the Father as he often declares. But now the date of his commission, so to speak, is out; the glorious scene is closed; all the elect brought in; and Christ who was intrusted with

the management and care of the whole business, now presents his whole church to his Father without spot, or wrinkle or any such thing, saying, "Behold I and the "children which God hath given me." (Heb. 2. 13. Is. 8. 18.) The gospel plan now has extended its conquest as far as it was intended; and the redeemed of the Lord are introduced to their heavenly mansions to enjoy the glorious blessings prepared for them by Christ, and to behold his glory for ever. But the wicked and unbelieving are cast into outer darkness, never more to enjoy another call of the gospel. How can they, when there is no commissioned Saviour to give them one? He is truly a wise man who accepts of mercy while it is freely offered. But that unhappy soul who sits the time of his merciful visitation, must be lost for ever.* (1 Cor. 15. 24—28.)

* If the doctrine of universal redemption is true, from the 24th to the 28th verse of the 15th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians is false. The advocates for that system have changed their plan. The first idea was, that those who would be damned would make an atonement for their own sins by the torments endured in hell, denying sin to be an infinite evil. This idea, some more modern writers on the subject, seem to decline, and allege that they only suffer enough to change their hearts and bring them to a cordial submission to God. The absurdity of which I have sufficiently refuted in my explanations of the nature of the fall of Adam, and the nature of spiritual death, and the penalty of the law. The late American writers have taken still new ground, and allege that eternity is another dispensation of the gospel, where Christ makes more vigorous exertions, and uses the iron rod to bring hardened sinners to their senses, as they say; and by these means compels them to submit to the gospel; and when they believe they are still saved through Christ on the footing of the atonement of the cross.

But when we read the above cited passage, we find that this improvement of their plan is as absurd as any other. For we find that there can be no Saviour to save them when they do believe; or rather that there can be no offer of salvation made to them. Christ could make none, for he will have no authority. And if any of the devils in hell or any of the damned, would (for none other would or could) it would be of no account. So that their state will be fixed for ever.

3. In the last place those who are acquitted at the day of judgment will be for ever established in glory. As to

It is not to be expected that I can discuss this subject, in the bounds of a note; my intention is to advert to this very pertinent passage of scripture, as an incontrovertible proof of the absurdity of this vague and very ill founded sentiment. It must be admitted that the apostle in this chapter is speaking of the circumstances of the resurrection. His first argument is the resurrection of Christ; this he pursues with various reasonings and testimonies until the 18th verse. He then argues from the hopes which the gospel gives of futurity. Then he argues from Christ and Adam being covenant heads, having opposite effects on those they represented. Then he introduces this circumstance as another argument pointing out the necessity of the resurrection, in order that Christ may completely fulfil the special appointment of his Father; before he could possibly do this he must destroy death, which was the last thing to be done in the great plan of redemption; which most certainly proves the necessity of the resurrection. He then goes on to argue from the idea of baptism, which initiates us into the hope of the gospel, which is the resurrection of Christ, as the first begotten from the dead, and is the foundation of the hope of the glorious resurrection of all who die in him. This he calls being baptized for the dead, or baptized into the hope of the resurrection of the dead; which would certainly be a vain hope if the dead rise not. He then argues from the various and dreadful sufferings he endured in propagating the gospel; and particularly because he preached the resurrection of the dead. He then answers some objections and gives a most beautiful account of the nature of the resurrection; contrasts Christ and Adam; makes mention of the change of those who shall be alive when the resurrection of the dead takes place; describes the glorious state of the body after it is raised; and concludes the whole with the triumphant song of victory over death and the grave.

The apostle in this chapter is therefore evidently treating of the resurrection, from first to last; and when we compare this chapter with the last of the 25th of Matthew, and many other passages, we have two things established beyond all contradiction, viz. that in the issue of the judgment thousands will be sent to hell; and that Christ, the only Saviour, provided for the salvation of sinners, through whom only a sinner can possibly be saved, will lay down his mediatorial offices and give up all to his Father; so that it will be impossible for the damned ever to be saved through him, he having no authority to save.

Those unhappy wretches who hope for an opportunity of salvation in the other world will certainly find themselves awfully disappointed;

the happiness of heaven it is much easier to indulge sublime and glorious thoughts of it, than to communicate our thoughts by language. It would be impossible to reach, with our most exalted ideas, even the threshold of that happy place. The bible gives us the most lively and animated representations of it, dressed in all the beauty of style and figure, and confirms our hopes that hereafter we shall put on immortality, and be made partakers of blessedness, too great for tongue to describe, or even our hearts to conceive.

I will not say much on this most exalted subject, but leave my reader, after making a few simple observations, to his own meditations; or rather to wait till the happy time come, when he shall not need my feeble pen to attract his heart, but shall see as he is seen, and know as he is known.

1. The inhabitants of heaven are and for ever will be as happy as they can possibly be, according to their respective capacities.

2. Their happiness will consist in the enjoyment of God, in beholding his glory and in being perfectly conformed to his image.

3. Their happiness will be without alloy or diminution; free from all imperfection; separated from all sin and sinners; and in serving and praising God and enjoying him as their portion for ever.

4. They will be completely established in holiness and happiness. The imputed righteousness of Christ will for ever entitle them to the favour and friendship of God; and the constant manifestations of the divine glory will eternally keep them from sinning. They will consequently love and adore a God of spotless perfection for ever.

How unlike this valley of tears, this state of imperfection and sorrow! How unlike that doleful, lost and ruined

and when they find the door of mercy shut for ever, neither Saviour, nor gospel, and therefore not one offer of mercy, there will be nothing left but weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth.

state in which we were by nature! Jesus our forerunner has taken possession in the name of all his people, and will assuredly bring them all to that happy place. There is something truly elegant, sweet and glorious in that part of Christ's intercessory prayer to his Father for his disciples: (John 17. 24.) "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

O happy state, O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God!
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again.
Then shall I see and hear and know
All I desir'd or wish'd below;
And every power find sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy.

CONCLUSION.

NO wonder the angels desire to look into the mysteries of the gospel. The fulness of the godhead is manifested in the face of Christ Jesus. The gospel is a delightful study; and were it not for the depravity of our hearts we certainly would greatly relish and admire the wonders of divinity.

But alas! we are sinners and have lost our taste for divine things; and hence it is with difficulty that we can persuade sinners to attend to the doctrines of the cross of Christ. There is nothing under the sun so much concerns us to know as the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour; yet we are so infatuated that we feel the study of divinity the most irksome employment we can engage in. We have every opportunity to learn divinity: bibles, commentators, treatises and sermon books in our houses; and opportunities on the sabbath to attend upon public discourses, on divine subjects; and add to all this, we have the strongest possible motives to induce us to attend with diligence to the divine lessons which relate to our eternal salvation; yet, notwithstanding all, how many thousands know not the first rudiments of the gospel. Neither can they be persuaded to turn their attention to the very things which belong to their everlasting welfare.

It is strange and unaccountable how mankind can saunter away their precious time, and keep themselves always busy doing nothing. The sabbath is a mere burden for want of employment; and the time we have to

spare on week-days are either slept away with our eyes open, or spent in mere amusements, profitable to neither soul nor body. And when we choose to spend a few hours in the day; or in a long winter night in reading, a novel, a history or a newspaper claims our attention preferably to the word of God, or any thing that will bring us to the knowledge of Christ, or the method of the salvation of our own souls. Hours can be spent with pleasure, in insignificant nonsense, or curious trifles; but to be engaged a few minutes in the glorious things of the gospel will make us gape, and yawn, and flag, as if we had gotten out of our natural climate, and were engaged in something which did not concern us.

Can the philosopher account for those things? Were I to tell this story to the inhabitants of the moon, they would certainly not believe me. They could not imagine it possible that a rational creature, in danger of eternal ruin, who had an opportunity to escape, could be so careless about a matter of such infinite importance as to spend his time in mere insignificant trifles, while he was every moment in danger of hellfire. But a man of this world could laugh at his incredulity, and present himself as an instance of the fact. He could let the lunar inhabitant see that it is really possible for a sinner to slight his Saviour, and disrelish and disregard the offers of salvation made to his own soul; and that he can live year after year as happy as a prince with hell's horrors hovering over his head; and laugh and play and banter even the God who made him.

Considering its awful importance, there is nothing so much slighted as the gospel. Thousands in the world live as it were in sight of the smoke of the altar who seldom hear a sermon preached; and thousands who attend on the gospel every sabbath, and read the bible, are as bad as they. It is certainly impossible to account for such most unreasonable conduct in sinners, but on the

very principles which I have been endeavouring to explain.

Adam fell; and all mankind fell in him; they are deserted, left and lost in an awful state of blindness, guilt and sin. But although on these principles we can account philosophically for the stupidity and most unreasonable conduct of sinners, yet it will be no solace for a damned soul, that he can tell how he came to ruin. If a lost sinner sees and feels that he is in an irrecoverable state of misery in consequence of his having shut his eyes and stopped his ears against all warnings and reproofs and refused to accept of salvation when it was freely offered, it will not allay, but rather aggravate his misery. The time is coming, and perhaps not far distant, when those who will live in sin and refuse to obey the gospel will find that they must lie down in sorrow, in consequence of their carelessness, and refusing to submit to the offers of salvation.

There is not a man to be found, who lives under the gospel but knows he is a sinner. We have no difficulty to convince the world of this, or at least to bring them to an acknowledgment of it. They also know that God will punish sinners. The bible gives the glad tidings of a crucified Saviour; and it is universally acknowledged that faith is necessary to salvation, and that he that believeth not shall be damned; but the most difficult matter is to bring sinners to consider these things, and to lay them to heart.

Sinners are fond of present ease, and love sin, and have no taste for holiness; therefore they choose to live in sin at the risk of their lives; and to keep their consciences easy, they keep the dreadful consequences of sin out of view, and rush on headlong to destruction.

But God is pleased to make known his wonderful grace and mercy in bringing sinners to a sense of their sin and in persuading them to embrace the precious

offers of the gospel. Were it not for this, there never would one soul believe on Christ. The wonderful plan of the gospel, the death of Christ and the preaching of the word would all be in vain; for experience proves as well as the bible, that no one will come to Christ except the Father draws him by his divine teaching.

Jesus promised to send the Comforter; and in describing the grand business, or work which he had to perform he says, "He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." In doing this the sinner is made to partake of full and complete salvation. Wherever the gospel is blessed by Christ, it is in this very way: even by his Spirit reproving of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

The word "reprove" is not a very happy word to express the sense of the Greek word, *ελεγξει*. (John 16. 8.) In Heb. 11. 1. it is rendered "evidence." In John 8. 46. it is rendered "convince." To say "reprove of sin," is not very good English; to "reprove of righteousness and of judgment," is very awkward language, and has no idea at all. The word means to argue, so as to demonstrate; and the sense of this very important text is this: "And when he is come, he will demonstrate, so as to overcome by clear evidence the world, as to sin, as to righteousness, and as to judgment." The word "sin" means our lost and ruined state. The word "righteousness" means the way of salvation through the atonement of Christ. The word "judgment" means holiness or sanctification.

The Spirit convinces of sin, (because the sinner believes not on Christ,) when he clearly and fully makes it appear to the sinner that every thing he does is sin, until he believes; and that to believe is the first duty that he can possibly perform; and that all his actions in all his attempts to keep the law, or to perform his duty in every thing are nothing but sin, until he comes to Christ; that

he has no holiness, nor can have any, and can in no wise be acceptable to God but by an interest in Christ by faith.

The Spirit convinces, or demonstrates, as to righteousness (because Christ goes to the Father) when he brings forward the atonement of Christ, and shows it to the convinced soul, and gives clear views of its validity, and of the full approbation of the Father, on the satisfactory evidences given in the word; which is clearly evinced in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and his glorious exaltation at the right hand of God as an intercessor.

The Spirit by his divine illuminations demonstrates the propriety and excellence of holiness, and the infinite baseness of sin, by restoring to the soul the glorious manifestations of the divine excellence, and so influencing the mind to form a right judgment as to holiness and sin. This he does in consequence of Satan's being dethroned, and cast out of the sinner's heart; that is, when through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the soul is brought from under the curse of the broken covenant; all the dreadful consequences of the fall are removed; and the sinner is redeemed from his bondage to sin and Satan. He is consequently sanctified, and brought to a conformity to God's holy image. But let us notice, generally.

1. One of the distinguishing excellencies of the gospel is, that it lays a plan before the sinner, by which it is possible for his soul to become holy, and so the image of God restored to him which he forfeited and lost by the fall. And an excellence of this plan is, that faith is the only thing required as a condition on the sinner's part, in order to obtain every saving blessing of the gospel. How happy, how thankful, and how humble ought a sinner to feel himself, when he thinks of the gospel plan of salvation. O sinner! on such a subject as this, would to God I could speak to your heart. What a most unspeakable privilege you enjoy! Had God dealt with you,

as you justly deserved, how miserable you would have been, long e'er now! Instead of being a subject of the kind offers of mercy, you would be lifting up your despairing eyes in the flames of hell, mingling groans with devils, wringing your hands, and gnashing your teeth under the weight of inflexible justice. But instead of this you have Christ pleading with you, in the gospel, to accept of salvation; and because you are not able to ransom your own soul, he offers you his own righteousness for your salvation. By him you may be pardoned, sanctified, and made happy for ever.

Can you feel those circumstances, sinner? Do you know that by nature, you are under the curse of God's law? Do you know that Christ died on the cross, that sinners might live? Do you know that pardon and holiness are offered to you freely? Do you know that you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know that if you will not believe, you must be damned? How then can you be indifferent, and spend your time in carelessness about the salvation of your own soul?

But sinners are prone to make their excuses. They are too young, or too old; they are too busy or too careless; it is time enough yet. Or perhaps they say, they can do nothing; and it is in vain to try. It is almost useless to make any reply to these objections; for even when we easily demonstrate the folly of them all, yet the sentiment remains still the same. A sinner's heart will reply, even when his mouth is shut, or even when he acknowledges his own folly; yet his life and daily practice show that he is still the same.

I would solemnly warn every sinner to guard against giving way to any temptation, that would persuade him to put off religion one single moment. Let nothing discourage him from trying to believe in Christ. Christ is too precious, salvation is too interesting, and the immortal soul is too important to be slighted for insignificant

trifles. Heaven is too glorious, hell is too dreadful, and eternity too long, to be disregarded by one who expects to die every moment; by one who expects to live for ever. Life is too short and too brittle to be trusted to. Death is too near to be put off; and judgment is too certain and awful to be disregarded. Does not the sinner shudder at the thought of dying out of Christ? then how can he live one moment destitute of faith, when he knows not but he must die after the very next breath he draws?

2. How can infidels trust to a sorry indigested plan for their eternal salvation? And how can they reject the happy offers which they enjoy, founded on the rational plan of the gospel? If the gospel is mere priestcraft, those priests who contrived it, really deserve credit for their ingenuity. All the wit and wisdom of Greece and Rome never could have done it. Mere human powers would fall infinitely short of such a plan. And I am serious when I say, that it would be proper, and very rational, and what any man of common sense would expect and have a just right to demand, that those gentlemen who profess to be so far into the secrets of natural reason, and are so very highly blessed with knowledge, and are so well enlightened that they need no revelation from their Maker, before they attempt to overthrow the gospel plan of salvation, would lay before us a better one. This they have never attempted yet; although they have been writing, and talking, and thinking, through eighteen centuries; and this is the first thing they ought to have done. But it is no wonder they have never attempted to lay a better plan than the gospel; but have contented themselves with finding fault with the plan which was laid by Jesus of Nazareth. They are so much enlightened, and their diplomatic skill instructs them to know that it is much easier to pick at, and find fault with, a beautiful edifice than construct it; any fool can do the one; but it requires wisdom to do the other.

What few outlines of a plan which we can at all collect from their writings is a mere chaos; and they differ in their notions. Some will have no hell nor devil, because they have never seen any; some have no justice in God; and I confess they are consistent with themselves here; for there must either be no sinners, or no justice, or no hell; if there are sinners, and if God is just, and if Jesus Christ was an impostor, there must of course be a hell; for justice and sinners, without Christ, must have a hell; sin and justice never could make a heaven. Some have no hereafter, so that death puts a final end to our existence. Others again adopt a skeleton of morality, consisting in honour, honesty benevolence, &c.

Now, all these plans lack proof. Reason contradicts them every one. It demonstrates that we are sinners, and that God is just, and that consequently he must punish; and the infliction of justice must make a hell for a sinner; and that there is an hereafter. That plan is not a wise one which makes an immortal soul rest upon a mere vague notion for its eternal happiness. It is therefore reasonable for us to require something better than the gospel plan, before we can part with the christian religion. We have immortal souls; and we confess that we are sinners; and we know that our Creator is a God of inflexible justice; and we know of no way to satisfy its infinite demand, but either by suffering in hell for ever, or by the imputation of the atonement of Him whom deists despise.

The gospel is undoubtedly calculated to save a believer completely, if it is only true. It both pardons the guilty and sanctifies the sinner. It brings from under the curse, and entitles us to the blessing of God. This is salvation indeed, salvation of a sinner; and even reason itself declares that nothing short of this can possibly save one from ruin, who has transgressed the laws of God. We firmly believe the gospel to be true; it risks the

least, and insures the most; and on the strongest testimony of any other plan we have ever heard of; and deists cannot reasonably expect we can give up our religion until they produce us a better plan than the gospel.

In order to produce such a plan, they must have it to exceed the gospel in several particulars, before a believer can with propriety, on principles of common sense, exchange for it. In order to devise a plan preferable to the gospel, several things are necessary, such as the following:

1. It must give us a more perfect account of the divine perfections, of the works and providence of God, of the creation, of the introduction of sin, of the universal depravity of the human race.
2. They must tell us whether a sinner can be saved or not consistent with perfect justice. If not, whether God will submit to be unjust himself, to save a sinner from the penalty of the law; if he will not, they must tell us whether the sinner himself suffers the penalty; or does a surety do it for him? If the sinner suffers himself, can he be happy and miserable both at once? or can he survive his sufferings?
3. If a surety suffers for him, is he able to do it, and live? and are his sufferings adequate to the demands of infinite justice? Who is the surety? Where is he? Has he made atonement? or has he promised to do it?
4. They must tell us how we are to be interested in this atonement; or on what conditions God can be merciful to us. And in the last place, the truth of their account must be better established than the gospel is. Their proofs must be more substantial than the proofs for the christian religion. They must transcend the evidence or testimony which arises from miracles and prophecies, &c. Their arguments must be stronger than Moses' dividing the Red Sea, and supporting an army consisting of between two and three million, men women and children, in a barren wilderness forty years; than Joshua's commanding the sun to

stand still; than Christ raising the dead, feeding five and seven thousand, giving sight to the blind, commanding the winds and the waves of the sea; the general darkness of Christ's crucifixion, the resurrection of Christ, Peter's curing a lame man, and many such miraculous things.

Moreover their doctrine must be attended with power, so as to make their disciples to speak with tongues, and their principles prevail without civil authority, or the power of arms, in spite of all the opposition, spite, and malice of the world, of kings and emperors, fire and fagot. And add to all this, it must make sinners holy and regulate the disorders of the mind, to love God, and keep his commandments, better than the gospel does.

Such must be the evidences in support of their plan, before it would be reasonable to expect that a christian, or any man who would wish to act wisely, could lay aside the gospel plan and adopt theirs.

Some such plan as this, and supported by stronger testimony than the bible, they ought to have brought forward long ago; and inasmuch as deists have hitherto neglected this important part of their duty, it is to be expected that now in this enlightened age of reason, they will engage in the arduous undertaking. Before they pretend to vilify our plan, and call our holy religion a delusion, and priest-craft, and our adorable Saviour an impostor, let us be favoured with a better plan of salvation than ours, attested by better evidences; and if they cannot do it, let them draw in their invectives, and acknowledge, like men of reason, that they are outdone. They need not think that christians are such fools, as to give up their religion for a phantom; and to be laughed out of their principles, and jockeyed out of their hope. No: a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Our Saviour has made universal nature acknowledge his divine authority, from the sun in his meridian glory, down to the dark caverns of the earth.

He has made the very elements submit to his awful control. The animals both of the land and the seas, and the birds of the air have yielded to his authority. He has made man submit to him from the king on the throne to the beggar on the dunghil. Spirits from the highest order in heaven, down to the lowest devil in hell, have acknowledged his glory. His gospel has already stood proof against the rage, and scorn, and wit, and subtlety of ten thousand books, ten thousand swords, ten thousand dangers, fire and death, ten thousand devils, and ten thousand deists; and it can save a sinner yet, as well as ever it did, and gains ground every day.

And must we give up the bible? Not until they give us a better book; and if they offer us the book of reason in exchange, we will thank them very kindly for their generous offer, and tell them, that although they cannot find the bible in the book of reason, yet we can find the book of reason in the bible. If they wish us to exchange, let them teach us something we do not know, and give us something we have not gotten. Christians are not such dupes in this enlightened age as to exchange their birth-right for a pot of pottage. Deists may talk, and write, and laugh, and ridicule; but what will they think, what will they say, or what will they do, when they find at the last day, the despised Jesus of Nazareth, sitting on the throne of his glory, acknowledging his humble followers, and sentencing hypocrites, deists and devils, to hell? I am far from envying the happiness of deists in this world; and I am equally far from sporting with their misery hereafter; but it is a truth, the eternal welfare of their souls depends on the bible's being false. If I had not half the evidence I have for the truth of the bible, I hope I could never be guilty of such deliberate folly as to run such a dismal risk. But if they choose to do it, they must suffer for it in the end; and we need not torment them be-

fore the time. I sincerely wish they would be wise before it is for ever too late.

3. It is in vain for hypocrites to tamper with the gospel. Those who profess the Christian religion, and yet live contrary to its divine laws and doctrines, greatly injure the cause of the gospel. They cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. It surely can be no mark of reason, to acknowledge the bible to be true, yet live like infidels, paying no more respect to the rules of the bible, than to the coran, or to the morals of heathen philosophy.

Those who oppose the bible lay hold of this unhappy circumstance, with a sophistical pretence to invalidate its influence; and although the enemies of religion would find some excuse, even if they did not lay hold of this, yet it is a pity that the professed votaries for the bible should give occasion to their professed enemies, to reproach the cause of God.

Our Saviour and his apostles have guarded particularly against the unhappy consequences of professed christians conducting contrary to what they profess: "Let your light so shine before men that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven." Also Paul says to Timothy, "In all things, showing thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

It could not be reasonably expected but that many would be led to a profession of the gospel from sinister motives; hence it is that many acknowledge the bible to be true, and adhere to the orthodox principles of religion, who have never felt the power of godliness; therefore some are nothing but hypocrites, who would even contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, when their life and conversation are as bad, and sometimes even

worse than professed infidels. But let all such carnal professors remember that they are blots in the church; and as Peter says "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." And I have demonstrated in the table A B C D in this treatise, that they are accountable to God for all the mischief they do in dishonouring the cause of Christ, in opening the mouths of infidel blasphemers against the gospel.

4. The truth lies here: no man can either feel or exhibit the truth of the gospel, but he, who not only professes and believes historically those important doctrines, but also cordially complies with the requisitions of the bible, and consents to the covenant of grace. The true believer is interested in Christ, and is the subject of sanctifying grace. Consequently his heart is renewed; and he is disposed to that which is good. He is consequently the object of ridicule and scorn, both from infidels and hypocrites. Yet when arguments are hatched up against the gospel by infidels, the regular conduct of the true believer is never brought forward; but only the conduct of those who, according to the parable, say "I go sir, but went not." But the true believer, except some instances of his remaining imperfections, over which he daily laments, is sure to be an honour to the cause of Christ, wherever he lives and wherever he goes. The reason is plain: he feels the proper influence of the gospel, and is actuated by the Spirit of God in his heart; and consequently lives soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

5. Every one who has the opportunity to hear the gospel, ought to be aware of the awful consequences of trusting to a mere profession of religion. A man ought never to imagine himself possessing true religion, until he has believed in Christ. Nothing will bring a man from under the curse of the law of God, but the atonement of

Christ; and nothing can obtain that atonement but faith, which is the only condition on which it is imputed.

No man can be holy until he believes. The broken law, with inflexible rigour, forbids the removal of spiritual death until justice is satisfied. The unbeliever can be told of his guilty state. The Spirit of God can, consistent with the principles of justice, convince of sin, and reveal to the miserable culprit his lost and undone condition. Therefore it is not inconsistent with inflexible justice for the word and Spirit to alarm the conscience of the cursed sinner, and make him feel his awful wretchedness.

Also, no law can forbid any legal plea in favour of the culprit, which will not contradict the requisitions of justice. The introduction of a vicarious atonement, where there is no injury or dishonour done to the government, justice cannot forbid. Hence it is perfectly consistent with the utmost rigour of law, to admit the overtures in the gospel of the spotless righteousness of Christ; seeing he has, in the name of the transgressor, satisfied the law and made it honourable. The Spirit of God consequently, can, consistent with the rigour of divine justice, bring forward the overtures of the gospel, and enable the sinner to consent to the proposal; for in so doing he would act in a perfect consistency with the penalty of the broken law, both in convincing of sin and giving a view of the perfect atonement. But to remove the moral darkness of the mind by giving spiritual views or manifestations of the divine excellence, the beauty of holiness and the love of God, would be contrary to every dictate of justice, while the sinner remains under the curse. The covenant of works and the moral law would absolutely forbid it, until the penalty was endured. But when the sinner, sensible of his guilt and misery, and discovering the full and free offers in the gospel, is persuaded to believe, to yield to the gospel plan, and gives his consent; then he is delivered from the curse and entitled to the blessings of the covenant;

and the Spirit can, consistent with every principle of justice, restore the image of God to his soul.

Therefore let no sinner ever expect holiness but by believing in Christ. Every other plan is a mere evasion, and a diabolical scheme to frustrate the grace of God, and make the death of Christ to be a mere insignificant compliment. Let all mere formalists, who have a name to live and are dead, be afraid; knowing that all their morality and good order is performed on heathenish principles, and never can rescue them from the curse of God. They must count all they do but dross and dung, for the excellence of Christ, and to be found in him, not having their own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness of God which is by faith; or they must remain for ever in a state of guilt and pollution.

6. Every soul under the gospel, while he continues an unbeliever, runs a dreadful risk of committing the unpardonable sin. I hope the world will not think me too independent, if they find my sentiments different from the old orthodox opinion on this awful subject. It has been thought that light and malice to a very great degree constituted the sin against the Holy Ghost. I never could see any proof or reason for this. It is said that if Peter's light and Paul's malice were in one person, he would be an unpardonable sinner. This is indeed very whimsical. Paul's malice was occasioned by darkness: when he got Peter's light, it cured his malice immediately. It is consequently an impossible case to have Peter's light and Paul's malice; for Peter would cure Paul, if they were both one person; for they did actually become one person on the way to Damascus; and that person was so far from committing the unpardonable sin that by this very circumstance, he became a true christian and a most eminent apostle. This old opinion passes a very dry compliment on our Saviour's wisdom; who very seriously

warned the Jews against a crime which is, by this sentiment, impossible in its nature to be committed.

It is also said, that this crime is seldom or never committed now a days; and some have gone so far as to say it is now impossible. Indeed according to their construction, it is, and always was, impossible; and no doubt Satan is highly pleased when sinners are made to believe it impossible to commit a sin which Jesus very awfully warns them against; and a sin too, which makes Satan sure of his prey. But sinners had better take care. Christ has not warned when there is no danger; and sinners under the gospel are in danger of committing it every day.

Again, it has been universally agreed that the Jews committed the unpardonable sin by saying, Christ cast out devils through Beelzebub. I never could find any foundation for this notion. Christ gave them a most solemn warning, lest they should commit it when he would send down the Holy Ghost; particularly at the day of pentecost, which would be the last dispensation of the gospel. But he tells them plainly, that their blasphemously accusing him for being confederate with Satan should be forgiven them, if they would not continue to stand out against the gospel. The pharisees giving such a notorious evidence of their opposition to the gospel, in not yielding to the evidence of Christ's casting out devils, but even imputing it to the agency of Satan himself, gave grounds for this solemn warning. But to say that they had committed the unpardonable sin, is not only very far fetched but it will not comport with many circumstances relative to Christ's after conduct towards the pharisees, which plainly shows that they were not guilty of that sin.

Christ prayed for his persecutors on the cross. No doubt some may quibble here, who are attached to the former opinion. They may say the persons were not the same. But inasmuch as they were the pharisees whom Christ warned, and the pharisees whom he prayed for, I

have no reason to doubt but they were the very same persons. Christ could not with propriety pray for persons who had committed the sin unto death; for we are forbidden to pray for such; and it would be very improper to do it.

When Christ wept over Jerusalem and prophesied their overthrow by the Romans, (Luke 19.) he speaks expressly of their enjoying a day of grace, even then; which could not be true if they had committed the unpardonable sin. Peter on the day of pentecost accuses those very persons who were converted, of crucifying Christ, with wicked hands, after he had approved himself, or proved his divinity, by the many signs and miracles which he wrought among them. They were doubtless, the very persons who had blasphemed Christ, as having an unclean spirit. (Acts 2. and 3.)

Their saying that Christ cast out devils through Beelzebub, was not blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, but against the Son of God; consequently Christ tells them their sin was pardonable, it not being the unpardonable sin. Although it is a fact that the apostles spoke with tongues and wrought miracles by the Holy Ghost, yet it would be very improper to imagine that Christ needed the Holy Ghost to enable him to cast out devils or to work miracles. It was by his own essential power as the second person in the Trinity, and as the Son of man or Mediator; it was by the power delegated to him by the Father that he cast out devils. (John 5. 21, 27.) When Christ said, "if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils," or by the finger of God, as St. Luke says, he means by the power of his godhead. For the sense is plainly this: but if you would admit that I prove myself to be a divine person, possessed of the power of God in casting out devils, you would know that I am the true Messiah who am come unto you, with divine authority to give you salvation; but when you, rather than judge so rationally, impute my

miracles to diabolical intrigue, and admit the absurd idea of Satan rising up against himself, you demonstrate your incorrigible obstinacy against me; which if persisted in, under the dispensation, shortly to come, under the influences of the gospel by the Holy Ghost, whom I will shortly send down, as the last effort of divine grace, you will throw yourselves out of the possibility of salvation on the gospel plan; and your sin can never be forgiven you, neither in this world nor that which is to come. This sense is easy and plain, and agrees with facts. But the idea of the second person casting out devils by the third, is not easy, nor yet agreeable to the doctrine of Christ's divinity.

The true notion of the unpardonable sin I humbly conceive to be, to resist the last effort of the Spirit of God on the soul, persuading the sinner to believe in Christ. What these motions of the Spirit are, I cannot tell. But it is plain from scripture that the Spirit does strive with man; and that he will not always strive. How often he will strive with this man, and how often with that, we cannot tell; but God knows perfectly well. While the Spirit is striving, the sinner feels himself moved by something, he cannot tell how, but he is urged toward religion; he is alarmed, becomes thoughtful, serious and in earnest about his soul. But he resists. The Spirit withdraws and he becomes careless again, and perhaps worse than ever. The sinner perhaps flees to amusements, to frolics, to card tables, or drinking clubs, to divert his mind; or perhaps he misconstrues the doctrines of the bible to give ease to his conscience, or may be betakes himself to some self-righteous plan, and fixes on false ground. No matter how these things may be; the effect is, the Spirit is grieved, and the sinner returns to his carelessness again. The Spirit visits him again and again, and again; the sinner still resists his motions, until the last time comes, like the Jews in the days of pentecost. (O! the awful crisis!) He moves upon the heart of the sinner! he is

now for the last time in the purpose of God made serious. But alas! the wicked heart wards off the conviction! rejects the offers of the gospel! The Spirit bids adieu! and the sinner is gone for ever!

This is the unpardonable sin, which seals up the sinner and throws him out of the gospel method of salvation; he consequently will for ever remain without faith, never can be interested in Christ, and so can never have forgiveness, neither here nor hereafter. He consequently must for ever be under the curse of the law, as an unpardoned rebel, unrenewed, unsanctified, and under all the dreadful consequences of spiritual death; the holy Spirit having left him never to return! O wretched state of moral darkness and death! and all in consequence of rejecting the last motions of the Holy Ghost!

There is not a divine upon earth but must acknowledge that this, at any rate, is and must be *an unpardonable sin*. I never read of but one; this is one, that is committed by every soul under the gospel, who dies in unbelief. If there is another, there must be two. But there is but one. This is one. Therefore it is *the unpardonable sin*; even the *sin against the Holy Ghost*.

Sinners take care. This is the sin our Saviour warned the Jews of. This is the sin Stephen says they committed. (Acts 7. 51.) Peter implies the same. (Acts 5. 29—33.) Paul and Barnabas give us the same idea. (Acts 13. 44—46.) This is the sin every sinner under the gospel commits, who dies in unbelief, notwithstanding all the calls and warnings he gets, and all the motions of the Spirit on his soul. And he who rejects the last motion of the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but dies under the curse and is lost for ever.

Sinners, never allow yourselves to imagine that you cannot commit this awful sin. You are in danger of it every time you feel yourselves impressed about the concerns of your souls. You know not but it is the last time

the Lord will impress your hearts; if it is, and if you reject the divine influences, divines may tell you what they please, and you perhaps may believe them; but you will find to your eternal sorrow that to harden your hearts against the motions of God's Spirit, and thus to provoke him finally to depart from you, is this very sin in all its dismal consequences. You may be horrible sinners, it is true, in thousands of other ways; you may even like deists blaspheme the name of Jesus, and curse the God who made you, and thus treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath; yet if you will believe on Christ he will pardon you and sanctify you: many such sinners have been pardoned by the atoning blood of Christ. But if you refuse to hear the last call of the Spirit on your hearts, you never will believe on Christ; God will never draw you to him; and you must die in your sins. You should never consider yourselves safe, or out of danger of this sin, until you give up your hearts to Christ, and become interested in him by faith.

In the last place. May God bless his word. May sinners be persuaded to believe in Christ; and may believers be persuaded to put their trust in him. May God be glorified. May my dear reader be made a partaker of the rich blessings of the gospel. And may we all come to know and understand more and more of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Date Due

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