

S E R M O N S

A N D

T R A C T S,

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AUTHOR OF THE FAMILIAR LETTERS.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED IN ONE VOLUME,

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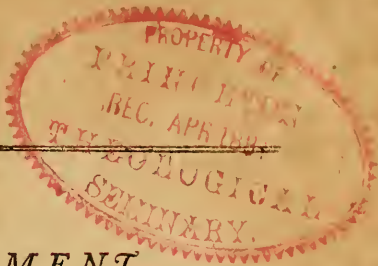
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Collection contains such of President DICKINSON's publications as it was thought would prove generally acceptable and useful, his *Familiar Letters* excepted, which have been often reprinted. His *Scripture Bishop, Vindications of God's Sovereign free Grace, Synod and Presbytery Sermons*, though seasonable publications at the time they were printed in America, relate to local and temporary controversies, at this time less interesting in Britain, or to subjects which have been treated with equal or greater advantage in other books.

CHARACTER of Mr DICKINSON, late President of the College of *New Jersey*. Extracted from the Reverend Mr FOXCROFT of *Boston*, his Preface to Mr DICKINSON's second Vindication of God's Sovereign free Grace, printed at *Boston*, 1748.

YET I must be allowed to drop a tear over my deceased Friend, endeared to me by a long acquaintance, and on the most valuable accounts, as a Scholar, a Christian, and a Divine of the first rank, in these parts of the world. His *Reasonableness of Christianity*, his *Scripture Bishop*, his *Scripture Doctrine*, his *Familiar Letters*, shine among his works that praise him in the gates, and embalm his memory. He had a soul formed for inquiry, penetration, accurate judgment, and disinterested attachment to truth.

With a natural turn for controversy, he had a happy government of his passions, and abhorred the perverse disputings so common to men of corrupt minds: Nor did he, as is too customary with those of an argumentative genius, suffer the eagerness of contention to extinguish the fervours of devotion, or of brotherly-love. — In his example he was truly a credit to his profession; by good works adorning the doctrine of grace, he was so zealous an advocate for. — He had generous sentiments with regard to freedom of inquiry and private judgment in matters of conscience and salvation, detesting all persecution and impositions in religion, and not approving subscription to human tests of orthodoxy. Yet nevertheless, as one set for the defence of the gospel, he boldly confronted what he took to be error, and knew not how to sit an idle spectator, when he apprehended an assault made on the *Christian* faith. He could not bear the thoughts of being found either a traitor to the cause of Christ, or a coward in it. Whenever he saw it openly invaded, or secretly undermined, he stood ready to appear in its defence, without consulting his ease or his credit. As bigotry and party-rage, malevolence, calumny and censure, too frequently mingling with religious disputes, were his abhorrence, so he was an enemy to temporising dissimulation, blind charity, politic silence, and that false moderation which sacrifices divine revelations to human friendships, and, under colour of peace and candour, gives up important points of gospel-doctrine to every opposer, but still is consistent with discovering a malignity towards others that appear warm defenders and constant asserters of those evangelical truths.

From the BOSTON GAZETTE, 20th October 1747.

Elizabeth-Town in New Jersey, 10th Oct. 1747.

ON *Wednesday* morning died here, of a pleuretic illness, that eminently learned, faithful and pious Minister of the Gospel, and President of the College of *New Jersey*, the Reverend Mr *Jonathan Dickinson*, in the 60th year of his age, who had been Pastor of the first Presbyterian Church in this town, for near 40 years, and was the joy and glory of it. In him conspicuously appeared those natural and acquired, moral and spiritual endowments which constitute a truly excellent and valuable Man, a good Scholar, an eminent Divine, and a serious devout Christian. He was greatly adorned with the gifts and graces of his heavenly Master, in the light whereof he appeared as a Star of superior brightness and influence in the Orb of the Church, which has sustained an unspeakable loss in his death. He was of uncommon and very extensive usefulness. He boldly appeared in defence of the great and important truths of our most holy religion, and was a zealous promoter of godly practice and holy living, and a bright ornament to his profession. In times and cases of difficulty he was a ready, wise, and able counsellor. By his death, our infant College is deprived of the benefit of his superior accomplishments, which afforded a favourable prospect of its future prosperity under his inspection. As he lived desired of all, so never any person in these parts died more lamented.

LIST OF THE TRACTS

CONTAINED IN THIS COLLECTION,

AND OF THE EDITIONS FROM WHICH THEY ARE PUBLISHED.

I. **T**HE *Reasonableness of Christianity*, in four sermons.
First edit. Boston 1732, Page 1—102

II. The true *Scripture Doctrine* concerning some important points of *Christian Faith*; particularly, *Eternal Election*, *Original Sin*, *Grace in Conversion*, *Justification by Faith*, and *The Saints Perseverance*,—in five discourses. First edit. Boston 1741, p. 105—296

III. Sermon on the *Witness of the Spirit*, May 1740. Second edit. Boston 1743, p. 297—322

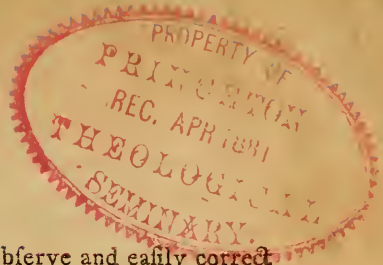
IV. Sermon on the *Nature and necessity of Regeneration*, with Remarks on Dr Waterland's *Regeneration Stated and Explained*. First edit. New York 1743, p. 323—378
In these Remarks it is proved, that the doctrine of *Baptismal-regeneration* is unscriptural.

V. *A Display of God's special Grace*. Second edit. Philadelphia 1743, p. 375—446

This Dialogue not only ably states the nature and source of the religious appearances in different parts at that time, but contains much instruction on experimental and practical religion of great importance and general use.

VI. *Reflections upon Mr Wetmore's Letter* in defence of Dr Waterland's discourse on *Regeneration*. First edit. Boston 1745, p. 447—483

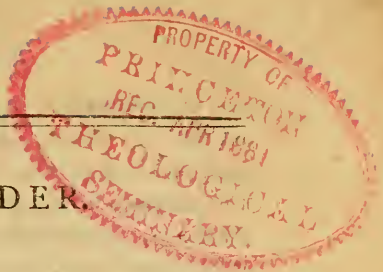
Here it is shown that the doctrine of *Baptismal-regeneration* is of a dangerous and destructive tendency.



THE attentive reader will probably observe and easily correct most of the following ERRATA :

- Page 19. *line last, for declaim read exclaim.*
— 35. *line 7. from the foot, for remonstrate read demonstrate.*
— 44. *paragraph 3d, line last, for voluptuous read voluptuous.*
— 92. *par. 3d, line 2. for amous read famous.*
— 93. *par. 4th, line 2. for wrough read wrought.*
— 126. *a little below the middle, for series read serious.*
— 184. *par. 1st, line last, delete all.*
— 230. *near the middle, for sinner read sinners.*
— 232. *near the middle, for parodon read pardon.*
— 293. *line 12. from the foot, for their read there.*
— 297. *line last, for The second read Republished from the second.*
— 334. *line 12. from the foot, for is the same read hath the same.*
— 379. *line 1. for Dispay read Display.*
— *ib. line last, for First printed read Republished from the second edition, printed.*
— 382. *par. 3d, line 1. for dialogestical read dialogistical.*
— 403. *about the middle, for their read there.*
— 424. *line 3. from the foot, for to direct read in direct.*

BOOKBINDERS are desired to observe, that the sheet immediately following page 102, where *The true Scripture-doctrine* begins, is wrong paged at the head, and lettered at the foot. But both pages and letters go on regularly from p. 121.



TO THE READER.

OUR Saviour upbraided the Pharisees, men that boasted high of their knowledge and practice in religion, and who lived in a time of great expectations, with their stupidity in not perceiving the then present aspects of divine providence, and moral prognostics of the day. *Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky: but can ye not discern the signs of the times?* From which it has been an observation, "That it is an important duty lying upon the people of God, to labour after a skill in discerning the signs of the times, which we live in."—Now if I may be allowed to have in any measure understanding of the times, it seems, that although a righteous God has been testifying against his backsliding Israel, in a variety of frowning providences, yet he is at this day *skewing them a token for good, is speaking peace to his people and to his saints*, in a very remarkable dispensation of grace.

The blessed God has by surprising ways begun among us, in almost all parts of this land (as well as in other places abroad), a most signal reviving of his work; and is *renewing our days as of old*. Herein we see a marvellous fulfilling of that scripture, *When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard*. Ah! what a melancholy prospect had we not long since, in regard to the general state of religion, and what dark symptoms on the rising age! But how has the cloudy face of things, even on a sudden, very much changed; and a more smiling scene opened before us! *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream*: or like Peter, when miraculously delivered out of prison, *he wist not that it was true*, which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. *Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory*; seems to be the language of the Lord of hosts, in his present dispensation, wherein he is *marching through the land*,

not in indignation, nor for correction, but in mercy. May all the dear children of God be stirring up themselves to take hold of his strength, and labour by prayers of faith to retain the presence of his grace; that *he who has begun a good work among us, may perform it to the day of Christ, may perfect what concerns us, and not forsake the work of his own hands. So will salvation be nigh to us, and glory dwell in our land.*

I know not what constructions may be put upon it; but I cannot forbear, on this occasion, transcribing some remarkable passages, of a prophetic aspect, from a printed sermon of that man of God, the late DR COTTON MATHER. (On Rev. xxi. 21.)

“ There are many arguments (says he) to persuade us, that
 “ our glorious Lord will have a holy city in America; a city,
 “ the *street whereof will be pure gold.*—Yea, the day is at
 “ hand, when that voice will be heard, *Put on thy beauti-*
 “ *ful garments, O America, the holy city!*—We are sorry,
 “ we are troubled, that the good seed of the word, fall-
 “ ing on the other *three soils* has brought forth so little good
 “ fruit, and for so little a while. But our glorious Lord will
 “ order that good seed ere long to be cast upon the fertile re-
 “ gions of America, and it shall here find a good ground, where
 “ it shall bring forth fruit, unto astonishment, and unto per-
 “ petuity! When our Lord uttered the parable, to which I
 “ have now alluded, we read, *He went into a ship,* and from
 “ thence instructed the *multitude that stood on the shore.* I
 “ will believe, that in this very action, there was a parable
 “ and a prophecy. By *navigation* there will be brought the
 “ word of a glorious Christ, unto a multitude afar off: and
 “ as the *ships cover the sea,* the earth (and thou America too)
 “ shall be filled with the knowledge of the glorious Lord. The
 “ fall of old Pagan Babylon was brought about by the diver-
 “ sion of her Euphrates from her: the fall of the new Popish
 “ Babylon will be accompanied with the loss of her Ameri-
 “ can interest: but when 'tis diverted from her, certainly it
 “ will then serve *the city of God*—It will be impossible, that
 “ the effect of the essays, used by men filled with the Spirit
 “ of Christ, and able to do more than all that was done in the
 “ primitive times, (For, *when he giveth the word, great will*
 “ be

“ *be the army of them that publish it*) should not be a conquest “ of America,” &c.

Will the Lord of glory be pleased to hasten these expected times of reformation ! Who knows but the *day of the Lord* is beginning to dawn upon us ! Has not “ the word of a glorious Christ, brought by navigation to a multitude afar off,” (however some may have wittily, as they thought, named it “ your imported Divinity”) been very manifestly as “ *good seed sown in good ground*, and bringing forth *fruit*, unto astonishment !”—And who knows but that, by the smiles of Providence on the British arms, way may very speedily be made for a triumphant progress of the gospel of peace, in its purity and power, into the Spanish America ! May the God of armies over-rule the present war and its consequences, to bring on such a glorious event !

In the mean time, may the true protestant cause, *pure religion*, be established, and flourish among ourselves, with an increase of prosperity and glory !

Among all the signs of the times, I can think of none that looks more favourably, and promises better to us, than the restoring of a *zeal for protestant principles* in religion, for those divine and ancient truths which are the peculiar glories of the gospel, and *things which accompany salvation*.—This is the *faith once delivered to the saints*: This the *doctrine, which is according to godliness*.—Was it not by this scripture-doctrine, these evangelical principles, as the moral means, under the power of the Spirit of God, that the apostles and their fellow-labourers in the word, subdued the kingdom of darkness, set up the kingdom of Christ, and brought forth fruit in all the world ? *So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed*.—Was it not by the same doctrine, that the Reformers began and carried on those happy Revolutions in the church, which gave such a shock to the Papal empire ?—Was it not by the same doctrine, that the Puritans were so useful in their preaching, to support the true Protestant interest, and to promote the conversion and edification of souls ?—Was not this doctrine laid in the foundation of the first churches of New-England ? And have they not hitherto, by the favour of Heaven, stood on this *pillar and ground of truth*, the *truth as it is in Jesus* ?—Has not this very obviously been the reigning doctrine, wherever

wherever the word preached has had any conspicuous success among us from time to time, in the general awaking and converting of sinners?—In fine, Was it not by an uncommon *band of God* with such preaching, that the illustrious *work* of the present day, through all these provinces, was first set on foot, and happily advanced?—Thus, with uncontrollable evidence, has the fountain of grace and truth put a distinction upon these sacred principles, *the doctrines of grace*, by gloriously owning and crowning them with a divine blessing from age to age.

I would not be understood to pretend, that these doctrines are every where, and at all times attended with equal power and the same effects. No; for they had not always an invariable success, even under the dispensation of inspired preachers: “*Who is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? So then, neither is he that planteth, any thing; neither he that watereth: but God, that giveth the increase.*” And, with adorable liberty, a sovereign God either suspends or *commands the blessing*, when and where he pleases; and *sendeth by the hand of whom he will*.—Nor would I be understood absolutely to confine real Christianity, or a valid ministry, to those fully in this scheme of principles; exclusively of all that dissent from any article of it, and in particular that most controverted one, *predestination*. No, far from this. For among other grounds of charity (as one speaks) “*We hope that their inward experience and the secret transactions between God and their own souls, are otherwise than their professed opinions;*” though, by an unaccountable inattention, they may not so sensibly feel the unhappy jar. Therefore we can say, after the example of the ingenious and catholic-spirited Dr WATTS, who, “*to conclude his sermon on that awful subject with the language of sincere charity,*” declares himself thus; “*I am persuaded, there will be found many holy souls, whose voices shall join in the triumphant song of glory to electing love, who had not learnt this doctrine ’till they came to heaven.*” So the late Dr EDWARDS, as rigid and sour a bigot to orthodoxy as some deem him, yet has left a like solemn attestation to his own candour and extensive charity: “*I bear no ill-will says he) to the persons I dissent from; yea, I pay an entire respect*
“*to*

“ to all those of them, that are men of learning and piety. I
 “ desire to entertain favourable thoughts; and to remember,
 “ that holy men do sometimes build hay and stubble on the
 “ foundation. I charitably believe, that there are many
 “ good men of the Arminian persuasion, though it is their
 “ unhappiness to be led away with the error of the age.”—
 Admirable instances of Christian temper! worthy of imita-
 tion and remembrance

However, this I say, by the best accounts, and by an impartial
 observation, I am persuaded, that few (or none) have to re-
 port any remarkable fruits of their ministry, in a prevailing
 work of conviction, and numerous effectual conversions, where
 there has been either an open opposition to the doctrines of
 grace, or a total absence of them, or but a cold and infrequent
 glancing at them. — When there is an eminently successful
 ministry, and when living practical religion is restored to a
 flourishing state among a professing people in any place, I be-
 lieve it will very commonly (if not ever) be found, there is a
 proportionable recovery of these gospel-principles to their
 primitive use and esteem, power and influence.

I frankly confess it a pleasing reflection to me (*for I am
 not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*) and in my eye it appears a
 comfortable preface of some good days to these churches,
 that this kind of divinity, although run down by some as *ob-
 solete, jejune and insipid* to the refined taste of the present *free
 and thinking* age, yet has of late in a happy measure retriev-
 ed its reputation, and established its value and improvement
 with multitudes among us. It has highly delighted me, to
 observe, with what a singular gust this *old-fashioned mystical
 divinity* (so called) has been entertained by our awakened
 congregations: To observe, how some distinguished preach-
 ers of it, when visiting their brethren, to see how we do, have
 been flocked after: To observe, what multitudes, stirred up
 by their occasional labours among us, remain *swift to hear*,
 and seem to have had *their feet shod with the preparation of
 the gospel of peace*: And to observe, how it has *pleased God
 by this foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*; even
 some that came to the word, instigated by curiosity, but load-
 ed with prejudices and disaffection to these tasteless antiquated
 principles, and to the empty preachers of them, yet by find-
 ing

ing a sovereign God *giving testimony to the word of his grace*, and feeling their own hearts under serious impressions (such as they never experienced before) about their everlasting concerns, have been drawn on impartially to consider, and finally to embrace these formerly naufeated truths, as Divine, and *worthy of all acceptation*. Which, I persuade myself, will be the usual effect, where any are brought under the like deep distress of conscience, by a convincing work of the Spirit. — And as for those who have indeed *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, they most certainly *desire the sincere milk of the word*, with a view to their *growth in grace*: and what can be expected from them, but that they conceive a high relish for these peculiarly evangelic principles! which have such a transcendent suitability to all the genuine appetites of their *new nature*, and such a moral fitness to humble that spiritual pride which they so often feel and mourn in themselves, to exalt the Redeemer and the Sanctifier, and to display the riches of divine grace in the salvation of apostate man! *Every one that is of the truth* (says our Saviour) *heareth my voice; and he shall go in and out and find pasture*. But “they are worthy to fast, that are weary of the bread of angels.”

I freely confess, it looks to me a hopeful symptom of “*the spreading power of godliness*,” that so many among us, particularly of *the sons of the prophets*, and other our promising youth, have lost in such a degree their taste for some books, that have been wont to consume many of their precious hours; I mean books of amusement and curiosity, and I mean too some authors in divinity, of looser principles, at best exhibiting little of the “religion of a regenerate mind,” or the true genius of the gospel:—And that they have learnt to relish others of a more spiritual and experimental strain; in special, the plain pungent scriptural works of the Reformers, and their successors, which wrote in their incomparable spirit and manner, on various accounts far excelling the generality of moderns, and the most nearly approaching to that divine pattern in the inspired leaders of the Christian profession. For as Dr WATTS (in his preface to Mr JENNINGS’s two discourses) judiciously observes, “Though it must be confessed, “without controversy, that there are some things, wherein “several of the preachers of the present time have the ad-

“ vantage of our learned and pious fathers ; yet there are o-
 “ ther excellencies in the sermons of the Puritanic age, which
 “ I should rejoice to find more studiously revived and cultiva-
 “ ted in our day. Among them I know none of more emi-
 “ nent necessity, glory, and usefulness, than those two,—the
 “ evangelical turn of thought that should run through our
 “ ministry, and the experimental way of discourse on practi-
 “ cal subjects.”

It appears to me a good indication of the life of Christiani-
 ty in themselves, and bodes well as to the maintaining and
 propagating it among their hearers, when they that *labour in*
the word, are careful to fill their sermons with the most vital
 truths of the gospel, and have a happy vein of spiritual expe-
 rience running through their ministrations.

Here give me leave to cite again the fore-mentioned sermon of
 our late venerable father and friend, DR MATHER.—“ Let
 “ me speak it (says he) for your comfort and honour : There
 “ is not a *street* of more *pure gold* upon the face of the earth
 “ at this day [Anno 1710.] for the gospel generally preach-
 “ ed in the true purity of it, than the churches of New-Eng-
 “ land. Be awakened, O ye churches of the Lord ! Be in-
 “ quisitive, whether in this day of common degeneracies, there
 “ be no vergencies to another gospel : Whether the doctrines
 “ of grace, delivered in our Confession of Faith, are not in a-
 “ ny hazard of not being duly adhered unto. If any persons
 “ gnash their teeth with indignation at the watchmen, who
 “ advise you to be solicitous for the preservation of this great
 “ interest ; I must faithfully tell you, those persons will give
 “ you great cause to be jealous of them.”

And allow me to repeat some lines of another important
 admonition from the same excellent hand, in his sermon in-
 titled, *The Minister*, preached to the anniversary convention
 of ministers at Boston, 1722. “ While we are examining,
 “ what subjects we have to be handled in our ministry, I must
 “ become an humble petitioner,—and I will blush to say so !
 “ —on the behalf of some truths, which all real and vital
 “ piety for ever lives upon ; and which yet, alas, are threa-
 “ tened with a sentence, at least, of banishment from the mi-
 “ nistry in some churches, which once they have been a beau-
 “ ty and a safety to.” [Then follows an enumeration of gospel-

doctrines, too large to be here inserted; as was designed.]
 “ My friends (says he upon it) what have these truths done,
 “ to deserve an excommunication from the house of God?
 “ Or are we fond of seeing an *Ichabod* upon our ministry?
 “ Verily, if we let these truths go, the glorious God himself
 “ will be gone; yea, be gone far from a forsaken sanctuary!”
 —What particular grounds the good doctor had for his complaints and fears at that day, or what rule he might go by in judging on the state of things, I list not at present to reflect or inquire.

I know not whether the sermons that pass the press, be a sufficient standard, by which to estimate the general tenor of preaching, among the body of ministers in a place. Those published among us, are mostly occasional performances, or such as some of the audience are pleased to ask a copy of, and happen many times to be such as the authors, left to their own free judgment, would not prefer, for the public light. So it comes to pass, that amidst the multiplicity of valuable useful sermons printed among us, yet there seems to be some room for the complaint, which judicious observers have sometimes made, That the grand principles of the everlasting gospel, though frequently touched on, are generally not allowed their due consideration, are not so distinctly stated and so fully inculcated, as their importance, the peculiar profession of these churches, and the ends of instruction and edification in the faith conspire justly to demand.

And it is observable, that among all our American writings (except Mr NORTON's “ Orthodox Evangelist,” and Mr WILLARD's large “ Body of Divinity,” both excellent works, but out of print) we have not a single volume, that I remember, upon these great points of gospel-truth, setting them together in one view.

I am of opinion, a book of this nature has long been wanting among us: and I give unfeigned thanks to God, which put this same earnest care for us into the heart of our Brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout the churches; particularly by means of his elaborate writings in vindication both of the faith and order of the gospel, and other more practical publications.—I look upon his present work the supply of a real deficiency; and more especially seasonable at this juncture

junction, when multitudes (learned and unlearned) are awakened to attend to the most serious truths, with a listening ear, and a mind open to conviction: When the *weak in knowledge* need further *light*, and a *helper of their faith*, to fortify them against the attacks of profane wits, that turn the *mystery of godliness* into banter: And when even the *strong and zealously affected*, many of them, need an *interpreter*, one of a *thousand*, to guard them against the extremes of censorious rigour, Antinomian jangling, and enthusiastic delusion; to temper the heat of their spirit with the principles of Christian prudence, and direct their zeal to its practical and most valuable purposes; not only to feed the flock in *green pastures*, but also to lead them beside the *still waters*, according to the sweet example of the supreme *Shepherd*.—Now, as Paul said of Timothy, *I have no man like-minded*, so I will presume to speak it, without any design of flattery or offence, I know no man better accomplished (in my opinion) for a work of this kind, than Mr DICKINSON: and without entering into recommendation of his performance, I doubt not, the superior and established character of the reverend Author, with the importance of the divine subjects, is enough to invite a general reading, and solicit the attention of every serious and impartial inquirer.

All I shall add is, my sincere and fervent wish, that *the God of all grace and comfort*, who is in this extraordinary season eminently *visiting the world*, to take out of it a people for his name, and who of his own will begetteth them with the word of truth, would so accompany his faithful word with the effectual influences of his sovereign almighty Spirit, unto the readers of this book, that as many as are ordained to eternal life may believe, and glorify the word of the Lord; and that it may serve to confirm the souls of the disciples, by helping them to know their election of God.—And for our dear Brother, who is thus set for the defence of the gospel, and contending earnestly for the faith of God's elect, my wish is, that his bow may be like that of Jonathan, which turned not back, nor failed of success and victory. Yea, though the archers should sorely grieve him, and shoot at him, and hate him, may his bow still abide in strength, and the arms of his hands be made strong, and the pleasure of the Lord prosper in them! May he see of the travel of

the Redeemer's soul in the abundant success of his whole ministry; and late be translated from his life of *services and sufferings on earth*, to receive the rewards of a *faithful and wise servant*, in the upper world, *unto the praise of the glory of grace in Christ Jesus; of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things: To whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Sit Anima mea cum Puritanis!

T. F.

BOSTON, N. E. Nov. 21. 1741.

A DIS-

DISCOURSE

ON THE

DECREE OF ELECTION,

EPHESIANS i. 4, 5.

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

THAT there is a supreme and eternal Being, and that he is possessed of all infinite perfections, are truths so visible by the light of nature, that to call these into question, is not only weakness and ignorance, but the height of stupidity and madness. *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.* But then we are soon covered with thick darkness, when we begin to enquire into the manner of his existence and operations. We have clear light to discover that he is, and that he is infinite; yet none but his own infinite mind can fully understand what he is, or how he exists. Here the enquiries of the most exalted creatures are nonplussed and the *angels are charged with folly.*—What haughty arrogance is it therefore, for poor worms to pretend to soar to these boundless heights, to bring the glorious properties of the divine nature to a trial at the bar of their own reason; and confidently to contradict what they

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

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

trine as it is set before us in the words of the text. In which is worthy our notice——

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

2. Here is set in view the object of the decree of election. *According as he hath chosen us.—Having predestinated us to the adoption of children.* By which cannot be understood these Ephesians only, to whom this epistle was immediately directed: but all that then were, or ever shall be true believers in Christ, and adopted into the number of his children; and none but such. Or, in other words, all and only those who ever have been, or ever shall be heirs of eternal salvation. The text plainly shews us, that election and adoption are of equal extent. For if these Ephesians were, all others likewise were *predestinated to the adoption of children*, who are privileged with so near a relation to God. And as all the children of God, and none but they, shall inherit eternal life, so all that shall inherit eternal life, and none but they, were *predestinated to the adoption of children*.

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

4. We have here likewise the pre-determined qualifications of all the elect, by which they shall be made meet to partake of the salvation appointed for them. *That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.* Those who are chosen

to salvation, are chosen also to holiness of life, as a necessary preparation for it. It is by God's decree, as well as by his revealed will, an established truth, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.—And it is further remarkable in the words; that none are chosen to salvation, because God foresaw they would be holy: but we are *chosen that we should be holy*.—The holiness of the elect is not the cause, but the consequence of the decree. This brings me to the last thing I would take notice of in the words, which is,

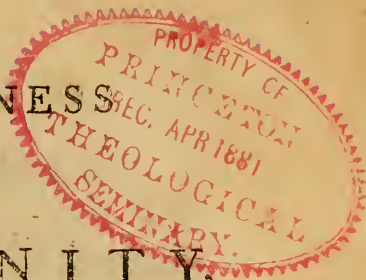
5. The only motive (if I may so speak) by which God was acted in the decree of election. *According to the good pleasure of his will*. He was himself his own motive and end. As there was nothing eternally existing but God, so there could be nothing out of himself to influence his eternal counsels. But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

1. That God has, according to the good pleasure of his will, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life.
2. All that God has elected, are chosen to salvation by and through the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. All who are thus chosen to salvation, shall be sanctified and made meet to partake of it.

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

1. I shall attempt a description of this decree. And by the *decree of election*, I understand *God's eternal purpose, according to the good pleasure of his will, to give grace and glory to a certain number of the children of men*.—I shall here only consider the decree of God, as my text does, with relation to men, and not to angels, as the objects of it. For though the eternal counsels of God must have considered and determined the state of all his creatures, whether of a superior or inferior nature; yet it does not so much concern us, what were his dispensations

THE
REASONABLENESS
OF
CHRISTIANITY,
IN
FOUR SERMONS.



WHEREIN

The Being and Attributes of God, the Apostasy of Man, and the Credibility of the Christian Religion, are demonstrated by rational considerations.

And the Divine Mission of our blessed SAVIOUR proved by Scripture-arguments, both from the Old Testament and the New; and vindicated against the most important Objections, whether of ancient or modern Infidels.

By JONATHAN DICKINSON, M. A.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ELISABETH-TOWN, NEW-JERSEY.

Cum dilectione fides Christiani: Sine dilectione fides demonum: Qui autem non credunt, peiores sunt quam demones. — AUG. de Charit.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE REV. THOMAS FOXCROFT,
Pastor of the first Church in Boston, New-England.

First Printed at Boston in the Year 1732.

TO CHRISTIAN READERS.

THE Reverend and learned Author of the ensuing Discourses needs not any epistles of commendation to such as are acquainted with his person and character: *whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches* in those remote parts, where Divine Providence has cast his lot. Neither is he unknown to the public: which has been favoured with several lesser writings of his, formerly published on special occasions; that must have left on the minds of those who have read them, a grateful relish, and such an idea of Mr Dickinſon's peculiar genius, capacity, and judgment, as cannot but prepare them to come with raised expectations and a particular gust, to the perusal of the following tracts: Which it would therefore be as superfluous to recommend to such, as it would be thought vain in me to attempt a profuse encomium on them for the sake of others; nor indeed would the known modesty of the Author indulge me in taking this liberty.

Only I must be permitted to say, that in reading these sheets I have thought myself very agreeably entertained, with the variety and compass of thought, excellency of matter, strength of argument, and vivacity of expression. And I must needs think, every serious discerning reader will find the beams of divine light, shining round the gospel-revelation, collected here in so close a union, and borne in upon him with such a force, as cannot fail (with a common blessing) to give heat and energy to faith and love, establish him in the principles and duties of Christianity, and guard him against the attacks of infidelity on all sides.

The general design of these papers is suggested in the title of them; yet it may not be improper to open the way to the reading them, by exhibiting a brief scheme of the whole work.

The *first* sermon is on *the being and attributes of God*. Where we are led into deep and entertaining contemplations upon the divine nature; by a particular view of the eminent

perfections of God, as they are illustrated in the works of creation: and have laid before us very plentiful and irresistible convictions of *his eternal power and Godhead*, to the utter confusion of all atheistical pretences.

The *second* sermon gives us the rational evidences of *our apostasy from God*: and then carries us into a delightful meditation on *our recovery by a Mediator*; producing a variety of presumptive arguments, many fair and lively characters of *probability*, that attend the Christian institution; its unparalleled intrinsic excellencies are considered; its perfect congruity to all the divine prerogatives, and illustration of the attributes of God; its correspondence to the nature and necessities of man, and conduciveness to our present welfare and future everlasting happiness, are set in view; and a numerous train of arguments drawn together in a comprehensive and perspicuous manner, that deserve a very attentive consideration, and which would have admitted of a copious display, had not designed brevity obliged our Author to restrain his pen.

The *other* Discourses point out to us the *one Mediator* between God and men, *the Man* Christ Jesus; and by many infallible proofs demonstrate, that *he* is the true *Messiah*, to the manifest confutation and shame of all deistical exceptions.

The *third* sermon considers the evidence from *prophecy*: explains the *nature* of a prophecy, as it is to be understood in the present argument; sets forth the *various ways*, in which divine predictions may be said to be *fulfilled*; instances in some of the more signal prophecies of the Old Testament, relating to the *Messiah*, his person and character, the time, circumstances, and consequents of his appearing; then shews from the evangelicall historians, that they have been literally and exactly verified in Jesus of Nazareth: And finally, to complete the demonstration, it is shewn, that as the *accomplishment* of those ancient prophecies is a certain indication of their *divine original*, so the united accomplishment of them all in the blessed Jesus is a loud testimony from heaven, that *he* is the *predicted Saviour*, and justifies his claim to the high titles, perfections, and relations, attributed to the Messiah in the prophetic descriptions of his person and kingdom; all which,
being

being of a divine extraction, consequently plead a divine veracity.

The *fourth* and last sermon is upon the argument from *miracles*. Where we have the correct notion of a miracle briefly stated: In the next place matter of fact asserted; that there were *true* and proper miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, in his own person, and by his apostles in his name: Then it is shewn how those miraculous operations illustrate the verity of his divine mission, and the certainty of his being the promised Messiah (in attestation to which character, assumed by him and ascribed to him, they were all performed) and so infer, by a just consequence, the truth and heavenly original of the New Testament, that admirable collection of divine revelations; which being written by inspired penmen, has been preserved and transmitted in authentic copies, without any material depravation, down to the present age.

Finally, the Author having thus demonstrated the divine authority and reasonableness of the Christian institution, shuts up the whole with some wise and good *rules*, to settle the minds of wavering professors, and direct persons convinced of the truth of Christianity in general (but at a loss, among the various divisions of Christendom, which persuasion or party to join with) how they may resolve their doubts, fix their choice, and determine in what particular *way, mode, or form*, they may best serve Christ, to his acceptance, and their own eternal advantage.

Thus I have given the reader a short and imperfect table of *contents*; a view of the principal scope and tenor of the Discourses here exhibited to the public light.—They are surely upon the noblest *subjects*, sublime in their nature, useful in their tendency, and seasonable for this sceptical day. And by a particular application of them to the ends of practice and devotion, which runs through and enlivens the work, it is adapted to impress and engage the heart, as well as employ the mind; to warm the Christian, as well as please and improve the scholar.

In perusing this little volume, the reader must summon his thinking powers to a vigorous attention, and call up his most devout reflections: The seriousness of the theme demands the latter; and the variety, as well as connection of argument, the former.

former. And when you have deliberated over the following pages, I doubt not you will be ready to break out in the language of the Apostle: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.—And God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

You will see what abundant *honours* Heaven did to Christianity, in the splendid *apparatus* to its introduction and establishment, and in the extraordinary successes that crowned it, when it made its solemn entrance into the world; which spread its fame, and justly recommended it to the high esteem and admiration of succeeding ages.

You will find, that the only wise God, our Saviour, has taken *all possible care for our satisfaction* in the certainty of revealed religion, and does not challenge our belief of the gospel, without giving us sufficient grounds; whether in regard of the internal signatures of truth and reason inseparable from it, or the external motives of credibility that accompany it: which, considered together, do put it beyond all rational doubt, and must needs produce a moral assurance of its heavenly original, in every one that will allow himself carefully and impartially to examine the credentials it brings with it.

Sure I am, you will see all the marks of divinity most evident on the Christian institution: and cannot doubt but you will be ready to say with the apostle, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: Though I suffer reproach as a Christian, nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed.* You will see the apostle had good grounds for that exhortation, *Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.*

You will rather turn your resentments another way, and be ashamed of *the profane abandoned mortals*, who reject, insult and deride a religion, so worthy of the blessed God; so consistent with the infinite dignity of the Son of God; so calculated every way to the true principles of reason, and to the exigencies of our apostate condition; so fortified with arguments of the noblest and strongest kind; so long triumphant over
all

all oppositions from earth and hell, and in so many happy instances from age to age the power of God unto salvation. All which considerations serve to aggravate the guilt and folly of unbelievers; to discover the just reason of their future condemnation, and detect the vanity of their present pretensions to *natural religion*, while they ridicule a revelation, the credit of which is so divinely supported, and the believing entertainment of which is indeed no other than a *moral duty*, founded in the natural fitness of things: it being a most fit and reasonable thing, that we should submit to credible testimony; and if we *receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. He therefore that believeth not God, in the record that he gave of his Son, and so maketh him a liar*, does herein act contrary to the fundamental law of creation, and must needs stand *condemned of himself*, as well as of all about him, as the shame and disgrace of human nature. Surely all truly rational and serious thinkers must inwardly blush for such a one, and be ashamed of his absurd and guilty prejudices against the gospel of Christ; when they see the frenzy and perverseness of conscious infidelity so exposed, in a glaring and convincing light, as in the subsequent Discourses; which fully make it appear, that no man rejects the principles of Christianity, because his reason runs counter to them, but because his lusts controul his reason and debauch his judgment, fix a depraved bias upon his will, and commit a rape on his conscience, by their infatuating charms. Hence it may be observed, these latitudinarian moralists are generally as libertine in their practice, as in their belief, and shew as little of the man, as they pretend of the Christian.

Again, *You will be ashamed* of those thronging herds in Christendom. of *unprincipled implicit believers*, who are so supinely negligent and ignorant in divine things, that they take the Christian profession upon blind *trust*, and not out of conviction and rational choice; stupidly led by education, popular fashion, public establishment, antiquity, or the like ignoble attractives: without acquainting themselves with the illustrious proofs of the divine authority of the gospel, or indeed with its important informations. So that they are *unskilful in the word of righteousness*; have need that one teach them which be the *first principles of the oracles of God*; and have nothing or little

tle more to plead for Christianity, than a Turk for the Alcoran, or an Heathen for his national antique superstition: while yet the religion of Christians admits of the most rational and ample apology. But *some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*

Again, *You will be ashamed* also of those *assuming* and *imposing* Christians (whether pharisaical and bigotted Papists, or too symbolizing Protestants) that adulterate the institutions of Christ, deform his religion, and invade his prerogative, who is sole King and Legislator to his Church, and the only Lord of conscience, by mixing their own *presumptuous* devices, or the *anomalous* and *spurious* inventions of others, in the sacred affairs of the Christian state*; by setting up unscriptural officers in the Church of Christ, by making new decrees and constitutions for the substantials of ecclesiastical polity, by framing new articles of faith, new parts or modes of worship; and severely enforcing their apocryphal innovations, rites, and tenets, by *secular penalties*, or rigorously obtruding the same as *indispensable terms* of communion, under the specious colours of apostolic tradition, uniformity, decency, edification, and the like: So shutting the *doors of the Church* against many, to whom a reasonable charity cannot but hope our Saviour will open the *gates of heaven*; and rudely reflecting too on the *wisdom* and *fidelity* of Christ, the great trustee of divine power, and dispenser of truth and good, who has given us a system of principles and body of laws, in the inspired records, that must needs be a perfect and decisive *standard*; to which nothing essential is necessary, nothing lawful, to be added, and by which every thing in the service of God is to be tried and regulated; and all our religious inquiries and observations bounded. Though, we confess, *human guides* are appointed by him, for the clearer understanding the mysteries of his doctrine, the order of his house, and laws of his kingdom, and for promoting the belief and observation thereof. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith*, or conscience, *but are helpers of your joy*; and *your servants for Jesus sake.*— To proceed,

You will be ashamed likewise of those *unevangelical* and (pretended) *rational* Christians, whether preachers or professors,

* See an excellent Sermon of Mr Dickinson's on this subject; where the true boundaries of Church-power are particularly considered, and set in their proper light.

whose favourite topic is the religion of nature, and whose darling rules and motives are of the philosophic kind; who leave a *crucified Jesus* very much out of their schemes of divinity, and make but little use of this blessed Mediator of atonement and intercession, in their devotions and dealings with God: who teach the principles or practise the duties of natural religion, with little or no explicit reference to a Redeemer, or reduction of things to the gospel model; and pay a very cold respect to the grand peculiars of the Christian revelation (though so nearly connected with salvation in the gospel-covenant, and in the reason of things), whether doctrines relating to the person, character, and offices of Christ, distinguishing grace, supernatural infusion, imputed righteousness, final perseverance, &c. or precepts, concerning covenanting with God, relying on Christ, living by the faith of the Son of God, and doing whatever we do in his name, praying with the Spirit and walking in the Spirit, directing our aims to the glory of God as our last end, and (in a word) consulting and applying the gospel of Christ, as our complete and unerring canon of faith, ritual of worship, and rule of morals, as well as charter of privileges and blessings. All which is so vital to religion, so coincident with apostolic instruction and example, so congruent to the temper and complexion of primitive and sound believers: but scandalously neglected, or indifferently regarded in the present day, by many professors and preachers even in the reforming world, to the great grief and regret of such as are jealous for the honour of Christ, and tenderly concerned for the souls of men.

Further, *You will be ashamed* of those heretical and wild opinionists, who professedly receive gospel revelations, and it may be *in pretence preach Christ*, but do miserably abuse, torture and *pervert the scriptures*, to their own and others destruction: As also of those enthusiastical perfectionists (*spiritual men*, falsely so called) who act in religion by no certain stated rule, but by a variable fanatic impulse or capricious humour, and vainly boast of those superior lights and refinements, which they think supersede all necessity of ministerial teaching and outward ordinances; and hence they explode the Sabbath, and sacraments, and discipline of the gospel, those blessed ap-

pointments of infinite wisdom and grace, as obsolete, and useless superfluities.

You will be ashamed too of the many carnal and inconsistent hypocrites, fools in Israel, who, while they *name the name of Christ*, do not *depart from iniquity*; and though perhaps orthodox scripturists, punctual devotionists, and precise zealots for some disputed matters of doctrine, or some affected formalities in religion, yet are shameful delinquents in point of morality, and live in open defiance to some essential precepts of the gospel; are public blemishes to the Christian name, by the most visible indications of a worldly spirit, by profane speech, or a dissolute behaviour: and thus give scandal to weak believers, and take the most probable method to harden infidels in their aversion and disgust to the Christian faith, by practically renouncing it themselves. Such therefore the apostle condemns as *enemies of the cross of Christ*, and requires the churches to extrude with shame, as unworthy the holy communion or even common society.

In fine, I will say to every *humble* and *pious* Christian, *You will*, upon a serious review, *be ashamed* even of *yourselves* also; from a consciousness of your being *so unstudied* in the glorious gospel, its rich contents and numerous proofs; *so unfurnished* for the vindication of your holy religion against the assaults of its many opposers; *so unaffected* with the amazing grace of God in the evangelical dispensation, its transcendent fulness of light and glory, its extensive spread among the Gentiles, and yet the astonishing distinction of Providence, in revealing it to some, while it is hid from others;—*so unthankful* for its great and precious promises, and incomparable benefits; *so infirm* in your belief of its peculiar discoveries, and soon shaken in mind by the impotent cavils of various seducers; *so wavering* and languid in your religious resolutions; *so remiss* in your endeavours of obedience to its excellent precepts; *so indolent* and careless about the propagation of Christian knowledge, among such as sit in darkness and are perishing for lack of vision, while you sit under a meridian shine of the Sun of righteousness.

In a word, *You will be ashamed* that you have so little of an *experimental* sense of the power and truth of the gospel; and that you are no better able to set a *seal* hereto, from your own
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personal and lively experience of that *communion* with *Christ* (in his word and ordinances) which is so congenerous to the *new creature*, so relishing to the spiritual taste of a real Christian, so improving to divine knowledge and true holiness; and the want or low degree whereof in many professors is so justly the matter of our mournful observation.

I doubt not you will find *such reflections* and *resentments* awakened in you; while, with a due application of mind and with serious pauses, labouring to enter into the spirit of the Author and importance of the subject, you peruse the following argumentative and pathetic defence of Christianity. You will feel uneasy sensations and relentings in your thoughtful breasts, with respect to yourselves: and must needs blush and be ashamed for the multitudes of defective Christians, who fall under any of the preceding ignominious characters, so opposite to the true genius of the gospel, and so derogatory to the credit of its divine Founder.

And now let me recall your thoughts to the above hint concerning *experience*: upon recollecting which, that of the apostle comes with a peculiar weight and force on my mind, *He who believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself*, 1 John v. 10.—A text that I would commend to every one for their frequent solemn consideration: and gladly could I, on this occasion, expatiate upon it in some pertinent and affecting meditations; but that in so doing I should too long detain you, and much exceed the proper limits of a prefatory epistle. I will hasten therefore to a close, with this hint,——

It should be our main solicitude, our first desire, that the Spirit of Christ may cause the light of the glorious gospel to *shine into our hearts*; and testify to its verity and divine extract, by making it instrumental, through his concurrent efficacy, to an indelible impression of the image of Christ on our souls: And let it be our next and constant care, that, by visibly exhibiting this inward experience, in an active life of universal conformity to the example and laws of Christ, we may give a solid attestation to the reality of our faith, and *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, as it becomes us, *in all things*: and thus evidencing ourselves sincere confessors, living witnesses for Christ, we may hope for his approbation in this world, and a glorious reception in the next.

To promote this experimental religion, and spread the genuine spirit and practice of Christianity, is the ultimate design of the following essay on the reasonableness of it. And to that happy end may the special blessing of Christ, whose cause is here espoused, accompany it to all, into whose hands it may come! So will the worthy Author, (who, I wish, may long live, a burning and shining light) have occasion to rejoice, in seeing this his labour attended with the desired prosperity: and *we* have reason to be thankful, for the benefit of this valuable publication.

These are the unfeigned sentiments, and the passionate wishes of

Your Christian Friend,

THOMAS FOXCROFT.

Boston, *Feb.* 29. 1731-2.

A DE-

DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

ROMANS i. 20.

For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse.

REASON is the dignifying and distinguishing property of human nature; whereby man, above the rest of the lower creation, is qualified to know, obey, and enjoy his Creator: By which alone he is capable of that *faith, without which it is impossible to please God*; and even of believing that first article, *That God is, as well as that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him.* Whence it follows, that he who has made us *rational creatures*, expects from us a *reasonable service*; and cannot be pleased with that faith, practice, or hope, that is grounded on education, or common opinion; and not the result of rational reflection, or enquiry.

It must therefore be agreeable both to our duty and interest, to enquire into the grounds of our *holy religion*; and reasonably to establish ourselves in those precious truths, on which we build our hopes; and not to take them upon trust, as I am afraid too many do. For which cause, I shall endeavour (God willing) to offer you some rational evidences of the truth of Christianity: and (I hope) full conviction, that *we have not followed cunningly devised fables*, in embracing the
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Christian religion; but a *light shining in a dark place, whereunto we do well to take heed.* And my first work is, to lay the *corner-stone* of this building; and to take a brief prospect of some of those demonstrations of the divine Being and perfections, which we are so plentifully furnished with, from the works of creation and providence. For which end, I have pitched upon the words before us, as the ground of our present meditations; wherein we may note,

1. The subject here treated of, which is the glorious God; denoted by the relative *him*, which relates to, and is connected with the foregoing verse, where the being and nature of God are expressly considered.

2. The sublime immense nature, and glorious perfections of the divine Being. [*The invisible things of him.*] The things of God are not only invisible to the bodily eye; but infinitely above the search of the most exalted understanding, inscrutable, and incomprehensible, to the most sagacious of created beings. For *who can by searching find out God?*

3. The clearest and most infallible certainty of these incomprehensible perfections of God. [*Are clearly seen.*] Though we cannot soar to the interminable heights, or dive to the boundless depths, of this infinite nature; we have demonstrative evidence of his *eternal power and godhead*, with many of his essential perfections. We may be infallibly certain, that there is a God, infinite in holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, &c. though we know not the manner of his existence, and operations.

4. The foundation of this certainty, or the means of our obtaining this clear vision of the *invisible things of God.* [*Being understood, by the things that are made.*] We see the cause by the effect; and have brightest evidence, that this vast and spacious world, with its amazing magnificence, lustre, and harmony, was not its own efficient; did not proceed from chance, nor could be the product of an author unequal to the work: And must therefore be the workmanship of an infinitely wise, and powerful Being.

5. The consequence of this evidence, [*So that they are without excuse.*] The heathen world, who know nothing of God, but what is visible from the works of creation and providence, may there observe such bright displays of infinite wisdom and power,

power, with other divine perfections, as will leave their infidelity inexcusable.——But we may more concisely sum up the words, in this

OBSERVATION, *That the glorious being, and infinite perfections of God, are evidently manifest, from the works of creation.*

THIS I shall endeavour to demonstrate, by these following arguments.

I. I think it unquestionably evident to all men, that they themselves have a being. This case admits of no debate; no man being capable to call in question his *own existence*, or doubt of his *being*. Whence,

II. It is equally certain to every man, that he has not always been, what he now is. Within the compass of a few years, we were first begotten, conceived, and born; and have passed the several stages of time, unto the age to which we are now arrived. This no man can doubt of. Therefore,

III. It is most sure, that we must have our original from some cause. An effect without an efficient, or a real being produced by nothing, is the most palpable absurdity, and the boldest affront to common sense.—This then is indisputable, that we did not make ourselves. For before we had a being, we were nothing, and could do nothing. And it is equally certain, that we are not the product of blind unactive chance. For how could so noble a being happen to spring out of nothing, without any creating power or energy? Whence then do we derive our original? Not from our parents: they were not omnipotent, to command us into being by their powerful word. Nor could such noble, immaterial, thinking substances, as our souls, proceed from them in a way of natural generation. For it is the height of absurdity to suppose, that a material substance, could give being to a spiritual one; as we shall hereafter consider. But were it supposed, that even our whole man, soul and body, was begotten by our immediate parents; whence had they this power? Or whence their own existence? If it be said, that they proceed in a continued chain of succession from their predecessors, the difficulty yet remains:

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For whence came the first link of this chain? It is equally absurd, to apply self-existence, or self-origination, to the first of our species, as to ourselves.—Thus, from the consideration of ourselves, we are led to the clearest views of an efficient cause, by which we are what we find ourselves to be. It is just arguing, Psal. c. 3.—*It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.*

IV. It is also clearly evident, that all those other beings, which are in the world, were produced by some cause. We are not only certain of our own being; but by the same intuitive certainty, we perceive multitudes of beings beside ourselves.—If we look upward, we behold a vast magnificent arch, replenished with innumerable multitudes of bright and glorious orbs; all of them performing their revolutions, and discharging their appointed functions, with the greatest harmony, beauty, and order. If we look downward, we see this huge massy ball of earth, upon which we tread, abounding with a surprising variety of animals and vegetables, each carrying in them the marks of consummate art and skill.

And can we imagine, that this immense canopy of the heavens was stretched out, those mighty globes of light hung up in the air, and whirled round in their respective circuits; or this earth, with all its furniture, created and founded on nothing, by their own efficiency? Can we, upon the view of a most stately and curious building, overlook the workman that made it, suppose it to spring out of nothing; or to make itself? No surely! the work shews the workman, and the effect the cause.

Hence then, the consequence is inevitable, that there is some great and glorious cause of ourselves, and of every thing we see and know: And this cause is what we call God. And hence, the very heathen world may discover *the God that created the heavens, and stretched them out; that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein, Isa. xlii. 5. For the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work, Psal. xix. 1.*

I know of but one considerable objection, against this reasoning and conclusion, that seems worthy of an intelligent mind; which is this,

‘ The world, in all its parts, may have eternally existed ;
‘ all the mutations and revolutions in nature, may have been
‘ effected by an eternal law or propensity ; and all the kinds
‘ of beings in the world, continued by an eternal succession.’

This objection, at first view, may fill the minds of some enquirers with confusion, while their thoughts are lost in the boundless abyss of eternity. I shall therefore take liberty to be something particular, in answering it.

That the world has not eternally existed, is demonstratively evident from this consideration,—Had the universe been eternal, it must have had a necessary existence: and it would have been impossible, that either the whole, or any part of it, should not have been, or have been any otherwise than it is. For, if not necessarily self-existent, it must derive its being from some cause, and consequently have a beginning: and it must also have continued by an infinite and eternal series and succession of necessary causes and effects. For if all the causes and effects in an eternally existing world, are not necessary, but contingent; that is, if they from their own nature might be, or might not be what they are: Then the world, in all its glory and magnificence, in all the symmetry, order, and perfection of its several parts, has for ever continued by mere accident, without any cause or reason: which is the height of absurdity. This then is most certain, that if the world be eternal, it derives both its being and continuance from absolute necessity.—But is it not most absurd and unreasonable to suppose the necessary self-existence of things that are evidently in their own nature contingent; and for whose existence, there is no more apparent reason or necessity from the nature of the things themselves, than for their non-existence? Is it not even ridiculous to imagine, that from the nature of things, the world must consist of just so many, and just such kind of parts as it now does, without any possible addition, diminution, or alteration? That the earth, for instance, could not have in its composition, one particle of sand more or less, than it has, nor produce one plant or animal, worm or fly, different from what it does? And yet this is the inevitable consequence of such necessity: For if the whole be necessary, every most minute particle is equally so.

Besides, if the world be from its own nature necessary, it

is every where necessary, to every point of real or imaginary space. For what may, from the nature of the thing, be absent from one place, may, notwithstanding any necessity to the contrary, be absent from any other, and consequently from every place. It being impossible that there should be any thing in one place more than another, to make it necessary. What therefore is necessary, must be every where so, and so be infinite, as well as eternal. Nay, and even every part and particle of the whole world, must by the same argument be infinite: For there must be the same necessity for all the parts, as for the whole, as is before observed. Whence, there must be (upon this supposition) more infinite beings than there are atoms of sand, or rays of light: which is the grossest absurdity.

Again, if the world exist from necessity, and all the parts of it necessarily perform their various functions and operations: Then it is also necessary that they for ever do so, without any diversity, variation, or change. Nature must always act by invariable and immutable laws, in the same order, with the same force, and to the same effect. For what is from the nature of the thing necessary to-day will be so to-morrow and *for ever*. And thus that man that necessarily lives to-day, must by the same necessity live always; he that is in health to-day must be so *for ever*. And, in a word, there can be no change in any part of the creation: which is so contrary to our constant experience in this world of change, that it need not be insisted on.

I will just mention one argument more against the eternity of the world, which possibly may be more intelligible, and more adapted to the capacity of my hearers, than what I have already offered.

The supposition of the world's eternity does necessarily contradict the possibility of a succession in any thing whatsoever. For a succession does in the nature of it imply a first and last, which are altogether incompatible with eternity, and cannot without greatest absurdity be predicated of a perpetual and unchangeable duration. To exemplify this, the succession of day and night could not have been eternal; such succession naturally supposing, that either the day was before the night, or the night before the day: If either preceded, there was a
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first, a beginning of the succession, on this side eternity. Supposing the day was before the night, it must either have had a temporal beginning, or an eternal existence: if the latter be granted, there could yet have been no eternal succession of day and night; but an everlasting day must have preceded the night, had the night commenced never so many millions of ages ago; there being an infinite distance between eternity and the remotest time: Nay more than so, had the day been eternal, there could never have been (upon the supposition before us) any night at all: For from whence could there be so great a change in the eternal and immutable course of nature? How could there be such new revolutions in nature, when under the same invariable laws, that had continued from eternity?

I might offer many other arguments to obviate the objection; but what has been said is sufficient, and possibly in the opinion of my hearers more than sufficient; I therefore reassume the former conclusion.

If the world has had a beginning (as is demonstrated) there must have been some Author, some efficient cause, by which it was created and made.

Having thus, by a view of the creature, discovered the Creator, and found evident demonstration of a divine Being from the works of his hands; let us next consider some of those *invisible things of him, which may be clearly seen and understood, by the things that are made.*

V. Then the *eternity of God* is ungainably evident from the works of creation. We are not capable of a greater certainty of any thing whatsoever, than of this, that there has been something from eternity; "since what has not eternally existed, had a beginning; and what had a beginning must be produced by something else." There cannot be a more unreasonable supposition, nor a more glaring contradiction, than that there was a time wherein there was perfectly nothing: For if so, there could have been nothing to all eternity. It being rather madness, than weakness, to attribute creating power and energy to mere nothing. This consequence therefore forces itself upon us, that the cause of all things, is an eternal, uncaused, independent Being. Whence we may justly declaim with the Psalmist, Psal. xc. 2. *Before the moun-*

tains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.

VI. It is likewise demonstrable from the works of creation, that this glorious Author of all things is a spiritual being. We certainly know, that we ourselves are thinking substances: the very meditation before us makes it evident, that we are capable of thought, reason, and reflection; that our minds can suddenly soar to the fixed stars, compass the vast circuit of the heavens, and even launch into the boundless abyss of eternity, where they have just now been.—And whence do we derive this power? Is it from dead unactive matter? Impossible! for matter is itself utterly incapable of thought, and therefore certainly unable to produce a thinking being. This may be brought to strictest demonstration.—If we allow thought to any matter whatsoever, we must allow it to every particle of matter; and thereby suppose as many thinking beings as there are atoms in the creation (the properties of all matter being the same) The absurdity of which supposition lies open to every eye; and it would be no less absurd to imagine, that some certain composition or modification of matter can produce thought. For unthinking particles of matter, however put together, are matter still; and if there was no thought in any of the parts, there can be none in the whole, whatever be its composition; since the whole can have nothing, but what it receives from the parts*. The consequence is therefore inevitable, that since all matter is from its own nature necessarily destitute of thought, our thinking rational souls must derive their being from some immaterial author: It being utterly impossible for that to be produced in the effect, which was not in the power of the cause.—And by the same argument, this glorious Spirit must have eminently in himself, all the perfections of all the innumerable intelligent beings that now are, or ever have been in the world, were they all contracted into one intelligence: Since they all depend upon him for their beings, capacities, and operations. And there cannot be more in the streams than in the fountain.—It is rational arguing in Psal. xciv. 9, 10. *He that planted the ear,*
shall

* The curious reader may see this more largely handled by Mr Lock, of humane understanding, Lib. IV. Cap. X. And in Dr Clark's Letters to Mr Dodwell.

shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teaches man knowledge, shall he not know?

If these speculations are too philosophical for some of my hearers, the argument may be proposed in a more easy and familiar manner.—It is plain to every capacity, that we have souls as well as bodies, that our more noble part is a thinking intelligent spirit, that there are and have been multitudes of spiritual beings beside ourselves; and that these all proceed from some cause, at least equal to the effect, who must therefore himself be a spiritual substance, possessed of all the excellencies of all other spiritual substances in the world: otherwise he must give what he has not; and the effect must exceed the virtue of the cause; which is manifestly absurd.

Thus by a reflection upon our own souls, we have discovered the necessary truth of our Lord's doctrine, John iv. 24. *That God is a spirit.* Let us now go on to consider some other of the divine perfections, legible in the book of creation. And,

VII. It further appears from the things which are made, that the first cause of all things must be an infinite Being.

The prodigious magnitude and amazing extent of the universe do loudly proclaim the infinite nature of its glorious Author.—Though we can have but an imperfect view of this scene of wonders, we may yet gaze ourselves into admiration and surprise, by what obscure and distant glances we are capable of. If we go no further from home than this globe of earth upon which we dwell, we have here a vast body, computed at near eight thousand miles diameter, and above two hundred thousand millions of miles in its bulk or solid content; which must appear to every eye a mass worthy of an infinite Creator. But as great as this seems to be, it is (as astronomers inform us) exceeded in magnitude by most of the heavenly bodies, and must be esteemed but small in comparison of some of the planets; especially if compared to that stupendous globe of fire, the sun. Now if we are filled with just admiration at the massy bulk of these huge bodies, how surprisingly great must be the space in which they perform their revolutions! The sun being esteemed above eighty millions of miles distant from the earth, and much further from some other of the planets; which, at those vast distances, are all observed

served to move round the sun, and yet never to interfere, or clash with one another.

Here we might make a stop, and adore the infinite perfections of the glorious Author of this spacious system of the sun and planets: But there are yet more distant, and greater objects of astonishment, that invite our attention, the fixed stars I mean, which seem to fill the spangled canopy, and appear innumerable to the naked eye; and yet vastly more numerous when viewed through a telescope, which discovers myriads of them not otherwise visible. These being supposed at due distances from each other (as they certainly are) how immense must be the space which they occupy! And if our modern astronomers are not mistaken, in a matter which they think themselves pretty certain of, there is a new scene before us, which will captivate our understanding, and utterly lose our thoughts; they suppose the great multitude of fixed stars to be so many suns, all of them endued with native light and heat; of like dimensions with our sun; and each of them accompanied with a system of planets, as our sun is; and consequently, each of them occupying as great a space, as was formerly supposed in the whole firmament.—This account of the universe makes it appear many thousand times greater than is ordinarily imagined, and should answerably excite our admiration and praises of the glorious Creator and contriver of such a magnificent world.

But having thus long gazed at the prodigious masses of these heavenly bodies, and the immeasurable space possessed by them; it is time to apply these considerations to the present purpose, and see if we cannot discover the infiniteness of the Creator, from this view of the heavenly regions: Which, if we will but open our eyes, must appear in the clearest light. For it is manifest to every observation, that the Maker, guide, and governor of the universe, must be always present in every part of this incomprehensible space; (he could not else have made, nor could he otherwise superintend, order, and direct, all the parts, operations, and influences of this stately fabric) which is impossible to conceive, of any but an infinite Being.

Besides, He that made the world, must also, of his free will and choice, have ordered and appointed the place of its residence; and nothing but his own pleasure could circumscribe
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it to these limits, or confine it to this particular space, in the boundless void; rather than any other. He must therefore himself be equal to all space, whether real or imaginary; that is, he must be an infinite being, whom *the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain*, as 1 Kings viii. 27. Which was the thing to be proved. And thus we see the immensity of that glorious being, that *sitteth upon the circle of the earth, that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain; and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in*, Isa. xl. 22.

I might here have urged the simplicity and uncompounded nature of God, as a further evidence of his infinity: But this would be to go out of the way of my text, which confines me to the consideration of the divine perfections, as visible in the works of creation; and I think what is said is sufficient upon this head. I therefore proceed.

VIII. The *unity of the godhead* is also *clearly seen from the works which are made.*

For if there were more gods than one, they could not be infinite; two infinities being a palpable contradiction: And if finite, they could not be the first cause of all things; as is before demonstrated.

Besides, If there be more gods than one, they must all be either supreme, subordinate, or co-ordinate. Two supreme beings is a contradiction in terms: for either one must be superior, or both equal; and therefore neither supreme. A subordinate god must be himself dependent, and could not have all things depend upon him; or, in other words, could not be the creator nor upholder of the world. It remains therefore, that if there be a plurality of gods, they must be co-ordinate, which is equally absurd: For were there several co-ordinate gods, they must either create the world conjunctly or separately; not conjunctly, for if they joined together in creating the world, they would all make but one first cause, and each severally but part of the cause; which being supposed, there could be no perfect being, and consequently no God: Nor could a plurality of gods make the world separately; there would then be no first cause of all, if each caused but a part of the world.

I might further urge the unity of God, from his necessary existence.—I have already demonstrated, that the first cause
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of all things must be eternally necessary: And nothing can be capable of plainer demonstration; for if there ever had been a time wherein he had not existed, he could have had no existence to eternity, unless we suppose a cause of the first cause, which is absurd. — Besides, if all things were created by him, he must necessarily be himself uncreated, and being uncreated he must necessarily be eternal: For what at any time did not exist, can never come into being without being created, either by itself or by something else. Now if we suppose God to have created himself, we attribute to him action before existence; which is the grossest absurdity. If we suppose him created by any thing else, we suppose a cause of the first cause, as before. He must therefore be eternally necessary; and consequently can be but one: For if it be possible that the world could be created by one efficient cause, (which cannot be doubted) there can be but one necessary cause of all things. Every thing else may be derivative and dependent, and therefore cannot be necessary. Whence it is certain there can be but one God, who (as I have already proved) must be a necessary being. — Thus we have clearest evidence of that truth, Deut. vi. 4. *The Lord our God is one Lord.* And of that 1 Cor. viii. 6. *But to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him.*

IX. It is moreover apparent from the works of creation, that this glorious God is an omnipotent Being. I have already proved, that the heavens and the earth, in all their amazing magnificence, curious frame, and regular order, sprung out of nothing, at the powerful command of the great Creator. Wherefore, since there is an infinite distance between perfectly nothing and any real being, there must be omnipotence employed in this glorious work. The united powers of every finite being would in vain endeavour to create from nothing the most despicable worm, or even a particle of sand. For (as I observed) there is an infinite and eternal opposition between mere nothing and the most inferior creature; and therefore the vilest insect, or smallest particle of dust, could not be brought from non-entity into being, but by an omnipotent arm. — What a surprising scene then do the heavens and earth afford us of the great Creator's power? What less than

an Almighty God could first find matter for an endless train of such vast bodies, and then compose the stately fabric!

And I might further observe, that the creation of the world cannot be the extent of the Creator's power: For if once possessed of creating skill and ability, he must always retain it; and therefore could (had he pleased) have spent millions of ages in creating new worlds, until their number had exceeded the utmost stretch even of an angel's thought.—And from this view of his omnipotence, it also appears, that he could (had it been his pleasure) have created a like number of worlds in a moment: For there can be no limits to Almighty power. Let us then dismiss this head, with Elihu's admiration upon a like occasion, Job xxxvii. 22, 23. *With God is terrible majesty. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power.*

X. The infinite wisdom of the Creator, is also clearly *manifest from the things that are made.*

We have already observed, that whatever perfection is found in the creature, must be first eminently in the Creator: For it is clearly evident, that what had its being and beginning from another, must have all the properties of its being from the same source. If we apply this to the present case, we shall find it necessary that he who has animated our dust and endued us with so much wisdom, must have more wisdom in himself than all the men in the world, "since all depend upon him, and can have no other ways of knowledge, or extent of power, than what he gives them." The same may be said with respect to all created wisdom in heaven and earth, which equally flows from the same fountain, who must therefore himself be infinitely wise.

The glorious art and contrivance in the admirable frame of nature, do likewise loudly proclaim the infinite wisdom of the Creator; while the whole, and every part, do so visibly conspire to answer the great ends of their being.—Should we confine our speculations to the most inferior parts of the creation only, how many marks of divine skill, that would non-plus the thoughts of the most sagacious enquirer, might be found in the least pebble! What a great variety of shapes, colours, smells, qualities, and uses, are there in the smallest

herbs or flowers, not to be imitated nor even fully understood by created wisdom! And how are they propagated by an unsearchable feminal virtue! How curiously formed, and admirably adapted to their several ends and uses, are the most contemptible insects! What industry, conduct, and seeming government, are there found with so inferior a creature as the bee, that even rivals the policy of princes courts! With what wonderful beauty are the smallest birds and beasts adorned! And with what apparent sagacity do they subserve the ends of their creation; especially in their own preservation, and the propagating their kind!—These, and such like contemplations, do sufficiently discover the infinite Wisdom that has thus ordered, and does thus superintend and direct all those minute and disregarded parts of the creation.

But if we continue our view, and lift up our eyes to the superior parts of the world, the scene will yet further open, and flash brightest conviction into our minds, of the *unsearchable wisdom of God.*

How came the parts of the earth to cohere together, and not separately fly in the boundless space? Who has given the *sea his decree*, bounded it by the shore, and said to its *proud waves; hitherto shalt thou go and no further?* Who has hung the *earth upon nothing*, and placed it in such due distance from the sun, that it is neither by too near approaches to that orb of fire scorched up and consumed, nor by a too remote station made a continent of ice? Who is *the father of the rain*, or *hath begotten the drops of the dew*, whereby the *earth is watered and replenished?* Whence are those amazing and innumerable orbs that spangle the sky, placed and kept at due distances, and whirled in their several courses, without interfering and dashing together, to the destruction of the world? Do not all these, and innumerable more wonders of nature concur, to proclaim that man even mad as madness itself, that can suppose any lower cause of these things than infinite Wisdom? especially if he considers the whole frame of this stately fabric, with the disposition of its several parts; together with that subordination, dependance, relation, and mutual society, which is in the whole, and which each have to other.

But we need not go so far from home to find the truth we are seeking; we being ourselves so bright a discovery of it.

If we consider our bodies, how wonderfully are they made! what astonishing art and skill appears in the variety of the parts, in their beauty, symmetry, and proportion, their connection, dependance, and use! Who can search out the wonders of this frame, or fully account for so much as the motion of a leg or finger? But if we reflect upon the wonderful operations and faculties of the mind, the surprize still grows upon us. The nature of the soul, with its powers of understanding, memory, will, &c. are beyond our search, and covered from our view with thick darkness, like their glorious Author.— Well may these and the like reflections strike us with astonishment.

And there are doubtless vastly superior marks of art and skill in the creation, which we know nothing of. How can we then but join with the Psalmist in his holy admiration of these things, in Psal. civ. 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all!*

XI. What hath been said under the last head, doth likewise clearly discover the Divine omniscience: And shew us plainly, that he that contrived and made, that does direct and govern this magnificent world with such order and regularity, must have all things present and future in his view at once.

For had not the whole plan of these amazing works, been before the Architect, he could not have contrived and disposed all the innumerable parts with such admirable glory, and surprizing harmony. And did not his omniscient eyes inspect every atom of the creation, and clearly behold the darkest recesses of nature, it would be impossible, that his providence could take care of the whole world, and all the minutest parts thereof, as we see it does. How else could they all subsist? And what else could keep them from destruction and confusion?—Nay, had not all things future been eternally naked and open to his all-searching eye, it would have been impossible, that he could have so disposed them all, that they should have for ever conspired in their own mutual good and preservation, and their Author's glory.—It is therefore the natural result of these speculations, in Psal. cxlvii 5. *Great is our Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite.*

I might still continue the thread of discourse, and, by neces-

fary deductions from the works of creation, find brightest evidence of all other Divine perfections, which we have any notion of.

I might clearly prove, that the Author of all created goodness, whether natural or moral, is himself infinitely good; that the Fountain of all created justice, is himself infinitely just; that he whose nature is highest perfection, cannot be chargeable with any defect (as all sin and immorality is), and must therefore be infinitely holy; and that he who has made, does so carefully preserve, and bountifully provide for all the parts of the world, is himself infinite Mercy and Love. But the time would fail me to particularly insist upon these things; and these and the like-consequences, are so natural and easy from what has been already observed, that they do not require to be largely insisted on.

I SHALL therefore now hasten to some *practical inferences* from the doctrine. And,

I. If there be a God of such infinite perfections, it is a natural inference, That he should be worshipped in a manner agreeable to his glorious nature.

This is a truth so plainly legible in the law of nature, that the most barbarous Heathen and savage Pagans have always assented to it; and it is even impossible for a rational mind to refuse an assent. Can we consider him as the Author both of our essence and subsistence, as the Fountain of all our mercies and comforts, upon whom we depend, in whom we live, and unto whom we are beholden for all things; and yet suppose we owe him no reverence or homage? Does not even nature itself teach us, *to look to the rock whence we are hewn? A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then he be a father, where is his honour? If he be a master, where is his fear?* Mal. i. 6. But to be more particular;

We are hereby instructed to manifest our dependance upon God, by praying to him.

If our life and breath are at his dispose; if all the good we want or hope for, is treasured up in him, and must flow from him; the very first principles of reason will teach us to repair to him for a supply of our wants; not only because we have no where else to go for any supplies, but because it is a

rational

rational acknowledgment of the Fountain of our mercies, to look to him for all our good; and to receive all as coming from his bountiful hand. This is an acknowledgment that a parent expects from his children, a prince from his subjects: and much more may the eternal Majesty expect it from such vile worms, and indigent creatures as we.—We should therefore come to him with a deep impression of our own nothingness: For what are such clods of animated dust, if compared to the immense Fountain of all glorious perfections? We should come to him, with a humble sense of our natural unworthiness. For besides our moral pollution (which I may hereafter have occasion to consider), we are but poor potsherds of the earth; but clay in the hands of the sovereign Potter, and can therefore have no claim of favour from him. We must come to him with a humble resignation and submission to his will: For he is an eternal Sovereign; and we at his absolute and uncontrolable dispose.

The ends of this proposed duty of prayer, are not to give God a new acquaintance with our circumstances and necessities, or to make any change in his counsels. No! there can be nothing hid from the flaming eye of his omniscience. And, touching his counsel, *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth.* But we should pray to him, that we may be ourselves fit recipients of his mercy: This being a direct means to keep us humble, and to awaken in us a sense of our indigent, helpless, depending state: It being likewise a means to keep us religious, to actuate our love to him, from whom we implore, and obtain all our good; and to incline us to live to him, as we live from him.

That prayer has a direct tendency thus to excite, and enliven our religious contemplations and affections, is self-evident. And it is plainly obvious to every man's reason, that he is not qualified for the receipt of mercy, that forgets both his God and his own soul; that regards neither the bounty nor the Benefactor; and that will no way testify his dependance upon God, nor his subjection to him. The very light of nature does therefore preach that doctrine, Psal. xcvi. 6, 7. *O! come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hands.*

If against this it be objected, that the glorious nature of God is so highly exalted above such poor worms of the dust as we, that we are too inferior creatures to be the objects of his care and regard:—This insinuation discovers thoughts altogether unworthy of such an omniscient, omnipresent, and infinitely perfect Being, who, without any pains or difficulty, inspects and orders every atom in the creation, takes care (as we may plainly see) of every worm and fly, arrays the *lillies of the field*, with their beautiful clothing, and provides food even for the *ravens of the valley*.—Were any thing below his notice, whence could it subsist? What could uphold it in being, or prevent its return to its original causes?

From what has been said, it further appears, That we should not only manifest our dependance upon God by praying to him, but our gratitude by thanksgiving and praise.

That gratitude is a natural debt to a benefactor, and that our thankfulness should be proportioned to the benefits received, are truths every where acknowledged. How then should our hearts and mouths be for ever filled with praises to the infinite Fountain of goodness; from whence so many streams of mercy are continually flowing to us, and from whom we are continually receiving such a variety and affluence of what is fit for our use, comfort, support, ornament, and delight!

Besides the wonders of redeeming love, and the mercies which refer to another life (which I hope to have a further occasion to consider), the good things of this world only, which we all enjoy, give us cause to rouse up our grateful resentments, in that language, Psal. ciii. 1, 2. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

I might further observe under this head, that the consideration of the Divine perfections, should make us most serious, hearty, sincere, and spiritual in all our religious devotions. It is most evident, that this omniscient eye cannot be flattered and deceived, with any formal shews and superficial pretences: For *he knows our thoughts afar off, searches our hearts and reins*; and has clearest views of our most inward motions and retirements of soul: Nor can he be pleased with our mock-shews of devotion, while we *flatter him with our lips, and lie*

to him with our tongues, and have our hearts far from him: No! God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and truth, John iv. 24. To conclude,

II. This doctrine teacheth us the last necessity that we are in, of an interest in the favour of this glorious God. Horror and surprize accompanies the very thought of being at odds with this dreadful Majesty; who has made us, does preserve us, and can crush us in pieces in a moment; or fill us with unutterable anguish, at his pleasure. Better would it be for us, that the whole creation should conspire our misery and ruin, than that *the God that made us, should refuse to have mercy upon us; and the Rock that formed us, should shew us no favour: For if God be for us, who can be against us?* It is therefore a case worthy of our most solicitous enquiry, what are the means of obtaining the favour of God? But the answer of this enquiry must be deferred to a further opportunity.

DEMONSTRATION

OF

The Apostate State of Man by Nature, and of the
Glorious Provision made for his Recovery by JESUS
CHRIST.

ROMANS v. 6.

*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died
for the ungodly.*

HAVING already demonstrated the being and infinite perfections of God, and from thence inferred our extreme necessity of an interest in his favour, I am now (according to my promise) to enquire into the way and means, of becoming favourites of this glorious Majesty: And in order thereto, to consider, Whether we are naturally in good terms with him: And if not, Whether he has made any provision for our reconciliation, and re-obtaining his lost favour. Both which considerations offer themselves, in a manner worthy of the Divine nature, and agreeable to human reason, in the words before us: Wherein we may note,

1. The fallen apostate state of mankind. *Christ died for the ungodly*, i. e. for such as were in an estate of distance from God, of enmity and opposition to him.

The text indeed gives us no light into the cause of this guilt and wo; but reason as well as revelation plainly dictates, that it is inconsistent with the merciful nature of our glorious Creator, and natural Lord, either to create us in an estate of sin and misery; or to reduce us to those wretched circumstances without just provocation: and therefore, that rebellion and

apostasy must necessarily be the source of this corruption and pollution, as we shall more particularly consider.

2. We may note the awful consequences of our apostasy. *We were without strength.* The original word here rendered *without strength*, is very emphatical, and represents us in most languishing, helpless, and distressed circumstances. It alludes to and is taken from the imbecility of those that are reduced to the last extremity, and brought to the brink of the grave, by sore sickness.

3. We may note the remedy provided for this distress; and the means of our recovery from this languishing helpless state: *Christ died for us.* When all human help failed, and we might have utterly despaired of recovery by any created power, then the glorious Son of God stepped in to our rescue, and purchased our deliverance with his own blood.

4. We may note the seasonableness of this remedy provided for us. *In due time Christ died, &c.* which must either refer to the time pre-ordained of God for this glorious deliverance, as some understand the words; or rather to the fitness of the season, wherein our blessed Redeemer undertook and accomplished our ransom.

The misery of the world at the time of Christ's appearing, by their universal depravation of manners, and by the deluge of idolatry, that covered the face of the earth; makes it appear to have been a fit season, for the glorifying the Divine compassion. And the union of the nations under the imperial government, made it a fit season to publish the salvation procured for them.

But for a more distinct handling the words, I shall consider them as consisting of these two Propositions:

I. That mankind is brought into a sinful, miserable, helpless state.

II. That our *Lord Jesus Christ* did in due time *die* for their deliverance out of this estate.

The method I propose to myself, in discoursing upon these Propositions, is to distinctly shew, that they are not only revealed truths, but also most consonant and agreeable to the light of reason: And then, as I pass along, make some brief reflections by way of Improvement.

PROP. I. That mankind is brought into a sinful, miserable, and helpless state.

This may be illustrated, by first offering some rational evidences of this awful truth; and then by enquiring into the cause or reason of it.

For evincing the truth of the Proposition, I shall offer these following considerations:

1. It is plain to every intelligent mind, that a rational creature may *sin against God*. Every one must, upon first thought, acknowledge, that our glorious Creator sustains a near relation to us as our common Parent, and the Author of our being, on which account he justly claims our love and reverence: And that he has an absolute sovereignty and dominion over us, as our Lord and King; whereby he is entitled to our subjection and obedience. If then, instead of that love and reverence which we owe to our heavenly Father, we set light by or despise any of his infinite perfections: Or if, instead of that obedience, which is due to this glorious King, we do those things which we know to be contrary to his will; we violate the first laws of nature, and sin against God. This is a plain case, and admits of no dispute.

The only difficulty before us is, how we shall know what is the will of God concerning us. If there be no law, there can be no transgression; and if God has given us no manifestation of his will, he cannot expect or require our obedience.

In answer to this objection, I must not take it for granted, that the scriptures are a divine revelation; that is yet to be proved. But must consider, whether we cannot by the light of nature, discover such manifestations of God's will and our duty, as will render our nonconformity thereto criminal and sinful.

And if we do but contemplate the perfections of the Divine nature, this will appear in the clearest light. For whatever is contrary to any of them, must be displeasing to God, and repugnant to his will; his own attributes being what he cannot but eternally and unchangeably love and delight in. To exemplify this, the light of nature enjoins the belief of one God alone; and thereby teacheth us, that he is the only object of properly Divine and religious worship: And consequently,

quently, that it is a violation of the law of nature to worship other gods; or that any idol of our imagination should be esteemed, loved, trusted, obeyed, or honoured as God.

Moreover, our own reason dictates to us, that God is himself infinite rectitude and justice; and therefore, that every act of injustice, whether it respects God or man as its immediate object, is contrary to his nature and will. - Thus likewise does God appear to the eye of reason, to be a Being of infinite goodness and mercy; whence it is manifest, that an imitation of this Divine perfection in beneficence, clemency, love, and charity is acceptable in his sight; while bitterness, wrath, hatred, cruelty, or any acts of unkindness, are as contrary to his will, as to his merciful nature.

By a particular reflection on these mentioned attributes, much of our duty towards God and man might be discovered. And by a survey of his other perfections, we might find further acquaintance with his will concerning us; and thereby further evidence, that we are capable of sinning against him. The same thing might be demonstrated by several other arguments; but I think few men in their right wits can call this into question.

What man will teach his neighbour, that treachery, fraud and violence are sinless and innocent? What parent will instruct his eldest son, that he may innocently, if he can secretly, take away his life to possess his estate? What prince will teach his subjects, that they are under no religious bond to obedience; but may, without sin against God, turn rebels, traitors, and regicides? "If man be under no duty to God, and if nothing be sin against him, what a creature would man be, and what a hell would earth be!"

Upon the whole, It is most evident, that there are such things in nature as virtue and vice, right and wrong; this is what our own consciences continually remonstrate, and what all nations have always agreed in. Whence that appears agreeable to the very first dictates of reason, in Gen. iv. 7. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*

2. We have all a sad experience, that our first and chief inclinations, are to those ways that are most repugnant unto the

holiness of the Divine nature; and to that rectitude that God reasonably expects from us.

As soon as ever we are capable of action, the leading affections and passions of the mind are manifestly irregular and vicious, the appetite exorbitant, and the whole bent of soul after what is most opposite to our duty and happiness: That if our tender age were without restraint and government, and a loose given to our natural inclinations; we should be worse than the *wild ass's colt*, and be authors of destruction to ourselves, and one another. With what care and pains must our first years be cultivated! With what perpetual instructions and admonitions must the seeds of virtue be sown in our minds! And with what diligence and vigilance must the poison-sprouts of vice and immorality be weeded up, in order to prevent our headlong progress in impiety towards God and man!

Thus we begin our course: And in our more advanced age, what combat does every thinking person find, between his reason and passions, whereby he is even distracted with this perpetual struggle and contest for victory! With what difficulty do we form our minds to any reverence of our glorious Creator, or conformity to his justice, goodness, or holiness! How difficult a task is it to regulate our appetites, or to hold the reins of our inordinate inclinations and desires!—This is what the heathen world have from the eldest ages observed in themselves; whereby they have been filled with great vexation and inquietude; and put upon vain enquiries, after means of composing these jarring principles in their minds; which have issued in this ancient and common complaint, *Video meliora, proboque, deteriora sequor*. Agreeable to that of the apostle, *The good I know, I do not; and when I would do good, evil is present with me*. These things lie open to every observer, whereby they cannot but discern, that *the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are evil continually*, as Gen. vi. 5.

3. We cannot but observe, that the greatest part of the world do, against the light of their own reason, live in courses of sin against God, and of disobedience to him.

How great a part of the world bow down to stocks and stones, worship the *best of heaven*, or lie prostrate at the altars of some vile pagods; while they *forget the God that*

that made them, and the Rock that formed them! And though custom or education may so darken their understandings, as to satisfy their minds in this stupid idolatry; yet their own reason (were that consulted) would certainly teach them the sin and folly of thus *worshipping and serving the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.*

And besides this superstition and idolatry, whereby the eternal Majesty is thus dishonoured, by the much greatest part of mankind; how does lust and passion get the victory of reason and principle, even in the most enlightened parts of the world! Whence else are the ambition and tyranny, the ravages, massacres, convulsions, and confusions, that render the earth an *Aceldama*? Or whence the enormous actions, and flagitious lives, the injustice and fraud, the malice and envy, the luxury, riot, and excess; or other like sinful and sensual pursuits, that the most of the world are chargeable with? Can the perpetrators of such impieties plead ignorance? Do not they sin against light, and against the frequent remonstrances of their reason and consciences? Yes certainly! *Though they know God, they glorify him not as God, but become vain in their imaginations, until their foolish hearts are darkened,* as Rom. i. 21.

4. It is evident that this promptitude to sin, flows from the corruption and pollution of our natures.

Whence can such corrupt streams proceed, but from a polluted fountain? And whence such a progress of impiety, but from a wicked and depraved nature? What reason can be assigned, why men should chuse irregular and sinful, rather than innocent and rational pleasures and satisfactions; and gratify their lusts at the expence of their comfort, health, reputation, estates, and every thing else that is pleasant and precious, as we see they do? Why do bold daring wretches, without any apparent prospect of pleasure or profit, with an effronted bravery, defy Heaven itself, profane the divine attributes, and curse their own souls? And why do they rush on in their sinful and irrational courses, against contrary convictions, and against all restraints, divine and human? What (I say) can be the cause of all this, but the pravity of our natures; and the cursed enmity of our hearts to God, and all that is good?

Though there needs no other argument to give us full assurance

urance of this sad truth; yet a particular view of the faculties, habits and dispositions of our souls, would give us further evidence, that *our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, as Jer. xvii. 9.

5. This state of sin and pollution, which we find ourselves in, must necessarily be a state of guilt and wo.

Sin in its formal nature is directly repugnant unto all the properties and perfections of God; and is the highest affront and indignity to him. It is a contempt and denial of his propriety in us, and dominion over us; as it is a refusing subjection to his known will.

It is a contempt of his goodness and mercy, in chusing base and brutish pleasures, before his favour; and refusing to be allured to his service, by all the sweet attractives of his gracious providence.—It is a horrid flight and disregard of his omniscience and omnipresence, that we dare sin in his very presence, and act contrary to him, though we know that our actions are open before him.—It is a daring defiance of his omnipotence, for such worms as we to oppose, as though we could make our party good against the God who made the world, and can make us fuel to his flaming vengeance, at pleasure.

It is a vile contempt of his holiness and purity, in preferring the pollutions of our own irregular appetites, before the rectitude of his nature.—In a word, it is a contempt of all his attributes, and direct enmity and rebellion against him.

From this contemplation it is most apparent, that we wretchedly deviate from the great end of our creation, both by the habits and acts of sin. For it is the height of stupidity to imagine, that infinite wisdom should make so noble a being for no higher purposes, than to contemn his attributes, spurn his authority, and maintain a course of opposition to him. And the same consideration lays open before us the guilt of a sinful state. For if rebellion and treason against an earthly sovereign be by all men voted so black a crime, as to involve the rebel in deepest guilt, and expose him to sharpest revenges; how much more criminal and guilty must he be, that maintains a rebellion against the King of kings, and lives in a course of open enmity and defiance both to his being and government! which we have seen to be our case.

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What kind or degrees of punishment, an offended sovereign will inflict upon such rebels, is not so easily discovered by the light of nature. But that we are justly exposed to punishment, is visible from the nature of our crimes. None calls in question the equity of penal rewards to traitors in the state: how much less can we reasonably expect to escape unpunished for our treason against Heaven! If it be justice in man to punish the delinquent, it must necessarily be so in God; who is the fountain of all created justice, and whose holy nature is the only pattern of our virtues and regular conduct. It is therefore but reasonable to expect, that those who prefer the ways and fruits of sin, to the favour of God, should be left to their unhappy choice, and be shut out of his favour for ever. They may not, they cannot suppose, that such guilty and polluted creatures, such enemies to God and holiness should be the objects of the Divine love and complacency; or be admitted to the favourable presence, and delightful fruition of a holy God. No! *He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, or to look upon sin with approbation.*—Thus we see, that the loss of God's favour, and thereby the loss of all happiness (which can only consist in his favour) is the natural and necessary result of our state of sin and enmity to him. And though we cannot discover by natural light, to what manner or measure of positive penalties our sins expose us: Yet we have greatest reason to expect and fear some terrible manifestation of God's righteous displeasure.

If it be objected against all this; that the contrary is evident, from the dispensations of Providence; it being a constant observation, that the most impiously wicked and profane are often in happy and flourishing circumstances, and seem to be the darling favourites of Heaven, while the more holy and virtuous are under greatest afflictions, and pressed with many calamities, as though they were the especial objects of God's wrath:—I answer, this objection does nothing militate against the awful considerations before us, but rather confirms them; for how dark and inexplicable soever the present dispensations of Providence may be, God is a God of justice; and the Judge of all the earth will do right. Whence it is a natural conclusion, from the present seeming inequality in God's dealings with us, that this life is not the place of rewards and punish-

punishments; but that there will be a future retribution, wherein these crooked things will be made straight, and the flourishing prosperity of wicked men will appear to be but a preparation for their ruin, and a fattening for the slaughter. We may reasonably conclude, that God will, first or last, discover the justice and equality of all his dispensations. And since this does not appear from the present face of providence, we may look for a future season, for the manifestation of his just aversion to sin and sinners; and for the execution of his deserved wrath upon them.

That we are made for a future state, will appear from the contemplation of our own natures: Whereby we may certainly find, that we have spiritual and immaterial substances within us, (as I have fully demonstrated in a former discourse) and that our souls being immaterial, must be likewise incorruptible, and naturally immortal; made to survive their earthly tabernacles, and to live and act when our bodies return to their dust.—Now, can it be imagined that God has made so superior a creature as man, endowed him with a rational and immortal soul, and with such elevations of mind, only to act a short part in this world, and to just propagate his kind, and then return to an eternal state of insensibility and inactivity? No surely! these low and mean views are altogether unworthy of infinite Wisdom. It is therefore evident from the immortal nature of our souls, and from the shortness of our continuance in this world, that we are here but in a state of probation; but candidates for another world, where we are like to meet with the rewards of our present behaviour, whatever it be. And what will be the reward of that sin and impiety, which we are all chargeable with, we have already seen.

Thus we discover our guilty miserable state by sin, that *God is angry with the wicked every day*, Psal. vii. 11. And that *there is destruction to the wicked, and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity*, Job xxxi. 3.

6. It is certain that we are naturally helpless, and *without strength* or skill, to recover ourselves out of this plunge.

We see ourselves in the pit, but cannot find the way out by our own power or wisdom. We have lamentable experience, that our nature is polluted, and all our faculties depraved, that our passions rebel against our reason; and that we

are continually sinning against God, and provoking him to anger. But which way shall we conquer our lusts, regulate our affections, and get reconciled to God? Here reason is nonplused, and our best rational enquiries fruitless, and in vain.

Here let the deist try his skill: Let him, without the assistance of revelation, draw up a perfect system of the laws of nature: Let him consult the means of restoring our lost innocency; and of keeping our affections and passions, under the government of religion and reason: Let him call in the help of all the philosophers of Greece and Rome, for his assistance in this arduous undertaking: And, in the conclusion, he will have but his labour for his pains, and continue in the same inextricable labyrinth.

This is apparent from the fruitless pains of all the wisest moral Heathen in this case; who, though all sensible of our pravity and misery, could never find out the cause nor cure. They have indeed, some of them, given excellent moral rules, for the government and conduct of human life. But then, these were all very defective in many essential articles; and their best systems have countenanced and encouraged, even the grossest and most unnatural impieties. But what light have any, or all of them, given in the present enquiry? What remedy have any of their schools proposed for our misery? What means to restore unto reason the empire of the mind, and to reduce the exorbitancy of the passions and appetites? What way have they contrived to shake off our guilt, and to re-obtain the Divine favour? *Hic labor, hoc opus est.* Here they have run themselves out of breath to no purpose, while every sect have proposed a contrary, or different scheme; and all have left the difficulty as they found it. And had all human wisdom been collected into one head, the case would have been the same. For *we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away,* Isa. lxiv. 6.

Having thus discovered our misery, we may next consider the cause of it, under this enquiry,——

Whence is it so, that mankind is thus brought into a sinful, miserable, and helpless state? To which I answer:

I. We could not at first come out of the hands of our holy Creator, in such a corrupt, polluted, and sinful state.

Had God at first created us in this state of defilement, he must have taken pleasure in our sin and pollution; and where then would have been his holiness? Had he at first made us with a natural necessity of being guilty and criminal, he must have been the author, as well as punisher of our guilt; and where then would have been his justice? Or had he been the original and necessary cause of our misery, where would have been his goodness and mercy? Therefore, to suppose God to be the author of that nest of sin and uncleanness, in our wicked hearts; the cause of our vile affections, ungovernable passions, and exorbitant appetites; and the fountain of all these poison-streams; is to attribute to him worse than the worst of human affections. It is implicitly to say, that he made us on purpose that he might delight himself in our misery: Which shocking blasphemy must be far from every imagination. Whence it appears, that *God made man upright, though we have sought out many inventions*, Eccl. vii. 29. And hence,

2. The state that we find ourselves in, makes the account of this matter, in the third of Genesis, very probable.

I shall not now concern myself with that debate, whether this story be literally, or allegorically to be understood: Be it which it will, it is a natural and rational supposition, that our first parents, through the power of temptation, were guilty of disobedience against God; and thereby, both for themselves and their posterity, lost the innocence and happiness of their first state.

It appears very likely, from the consideration of our present degeneracy, that we are the branches of a corrupt stock; and the offspring of rebellious parents. And let those that question this account of our apostasy, either assign some more probable cause of it; or for ever lie under the just imputation of obstinacy and unreasonableness.

Though we may meet with some difficulty, in reconciling the imputation of original sin, to the rectoral holiness and justice of God: Yet as much as may serve to our present purpose, and clear up the consideration now before us, may be set in a plain and easy light. It is not difficult to suppose, that God should punish an ungrateful rebel with the loss of all his original excellencies and perfections, both of body and mind. And it is a natural and familiar supposition, that a degenerate
stock

Rock will have degenerate branches; that the offspring will be like the parent; and the streams partake of the nature and qualities of the fountain.

Besides, God may justly impute the sin of Adam unto his progeny, by way of attainder; as when a rebel among men forfeits his estate and honours from himself, and his seed, to his offended sovereign. And this will be a more easy supposal, if we consider these two things, (1.) That we were all feminally in our first parents, and in that sense partakers with them in their transgression. And, (2.) That they acted as our public representatives, and therefore were to stand or fall for us, as well as themselves: Which being allowed, the difficulty vanishes. And I see nothing in the nature of the thing, that can make it incredible, that God as an absolute sovereign should constitute Adam the moral, as he was the natural head of all his posterity, to represent and act for them all, in what he did. We do not esteem it a hardship in our temporal affairs, to be equally obliged by what our representatives act in our name and stead, as if they were our own personal actions. Nor should we in the present case have thought it unjust, to have partook of the blessed fruits of Adam's obedience, had he stood. What cause then can we have to complain of the imputation of his disobedience in this public character?

After all, whether we can thoroughly reconcile this matter, to our own ways of thinking or not; we cannot find a more probable reason of our lost miserable circumstances, than that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, as in Rom. v. 12.

But whatever be the cause, we cannot doubt the malady. We have too sad experience of our misery, to call that into question: And since we see the house on fire, it does not so much concern us to anxiously enquire by what means the flame was kindled, as to consult a method to extinguish it.

The improvement therefore, that I would make of this proposition, is, That it is of infinite importance for us, to consult some way of obtaining a pardon of our sins, a sanctification of our natures, and a reconciliation unto God. Our present state is not to be continued in. It is a dreadful condition to be *God's enemies, a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* And *whither shall we flee for help?* From what quarter

shall we look for deliverance from the miseries we feel or fear? Will the Pagan religion afford us relief? We have already heard, that the best schemes of their wisest sages have been utterly insufficient to this purpose.

And a thinking person will hardly be persuaded, that the worship of a herd of vile deities, with rites as vile and detestable as the gods themselves; should be well-pleasing unto that *eternal Majesty*, who *will not give his glory unto another; nor his praise unto graven images.*

Shall we then repair for help unto the Mahometan religion, and consult the Alcoran in our present distress? Alas, in vain! For no wise man can trust in such a rhapsody of nonsense and confusion, and in such a medley of inconsistent, and absurd doctrines of religion and tyranny, twisted together, without some better evidence of its Divine authority, than the bare word of the voluptuous and ambitious author.

Besides, That book makes no pretences to shew a way how our sins can be pardoned, our natures renewed, and we re-instated into God's favour. Nor does it propose any other happiness, than a fool's paradise of sensual pleasures; most disagreeable to a virtuous and rational mind.

Whither shall we next go? Shall we consult our oracles of wit, and seek some rational scheme of religion and happiness, from our modern pagans, the Deists? These libertines can vainly boast of unprejudiced reason and science, as though *they were the men, and wisdom must die with them.* They can put out the eyes of conscience, and bravely scoff at revealed religion, as an idle dream, and the effect of a melancholy imagination, enthusiasm or priestcraft. But which of them has ever pretended to propose a method of our obtaining inward peace and purity, happiness here, and salvation hereafter?

Thus far our search has been vain and fruitless. And must we now yield the cause, and sit down in despair? By no means! We are miserable indeed, if we can find no end of our enquiries, no religion to trust in, no foundation to fix upon.

Let us then examine the Christian religion, and see if there be no more reasonable satisfactions to be found in that; whether that has made any adequate provisions for the recovery of fallen man, and for securing our present and future happiness. And our entrance into this enquiry, does immediately

diately bring us to the consideration of the second Proposition.

PROP. II. Our Lord Jesus Christ did, in due time, die for the deliverance of sinful man, out of his miserable and helpless state.

The glorious and eternal Son of God, beholding our apostate and perishing state, looked down with Divine compassion upon a miserable world, deluged in sin and guilt, and undertook their ransom. And that God might be just, in the pardon and justification of sinners, he is become their Surety; that so, by his bearing the punishment due to their sins, he might atone offended justice; and, by his sponsorial righteousness, he might purchase for them glory and happiness.

That this glorious Mediator might be qualified for this great undertaking; he was the eternal God, that so the dignity of his person might give sufficient merit to his obedience. And he likewise became man, like ourselves, that so he might be able to suffer the penalty due to our sins; and that satisfaction might be given to justice, by the same nature that offended. He was moreover both God and man, that representing both the parties at odds, he might mediate between them. — And since death, in the largest signification of the word, was the just and natural demerit of our sins, our almighty Saviour has, for our sakes, and in our stead, encountered this *king of terrors*, in his most terrible appearance, in all his pomp, with all his darts and poison. Thus hath he *tasted death for every man*; and *redeemed us unto God with his own blood*.

This is summarily the meaning of the words of our text, and of the proposition before us. And if this doctrine be true, it reflects a glorious light into our dark minds, plucks us out of the jaws of despair, and proposes a happy means of life and peace. It is therefore well worth our while to distinctly consider the verity of the Christian institution; and see whether its precious and comfortable doctrines may be confided in.

That I may assist you in this enquiry, I shall, at present, only offer you some strong probabilities on the side of Christianity; and then (if God permit), in some future discourses to that purpose, offer you full, plain, and ungainfayable evidence of these blessed truths.

The strong probabilities, that I would now take notice of, may be proposed under these two considerations :

I. That the Christian revelation, if true, is every way worthy of God.

II. That it every way answers the miserable circumstances of fallen man.

I am first then to consider, that the Christian revelation is every way worthy of God.

This consideration, if fully pursued, might discover to us, how all the divine attributes and perfections most gloriously harmonize, and shine forth with brightest lustre, in this way of our salvation by Jesus Christ. But the time before us will allow only some very brief hints upon this subject ; However, I would willingly say enough to establish you in the present truth ; and assist your contemplations upon this delightful theme.

This way of salvation appears worthy of God, in that herein was a glorious manifestation, and illustration of infinite goodness, mercy and love. An eternity is short enough to admire, adore, and praise the surprising wonders of redeeming love : For if we consider the objects of this mercy, poor apostate rebels ; there could be no motive but Divine compassion, for mercy to take place of justice, in the deliverance of such criminals from deserved wrath. If we consider the freeness of this love, not only without any obligation, or possibility of retaliation from us, but against highest provocations to the contrary ; it will appear infinite, like the glorious Fountain of it. If we consider the nature of that salvation thus procured for us, that it contains not only a freedom from sin and guilt, but a title to God's favour, and to an eternal state of glory and happiness : We may, with just admiration, cry out, *What is man that thou art thus mindful of him ?* But if we consider the Author and price of this salvation, that *God has so loved the world, as to give his dear Son for us*, and has redeemed us with his own blood ; the surprise still increases, and mercy appears in its highest exaltation. How then do all these considerations, together with the many others that might be proposed, give us cause, with ravished souls, to acknowledge, that *the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God in Christ, passeth knowledge*, as Eph. iii. 18.

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The bright display of infinite justice in our redemption by Christ, makes it also appear worthy of God. Were justice swallowed up of mercy (as it must have been, had God saved sinners without a satisfaction) we might reject the doctrine, as unworthy of an infinitely just and holy God. But since he has shewn himself inexorable in his demands of satisfaction, by requiring the utmost farthing of the Surety, that was due from the principal debtor; and by punishing his own dear Son with a bitter death, as the sinner's representative: *His work appears perfect, and all his ways judgment*, as Deut. xxxii. 4.

If it be here objected, that it cannot be just, to transfer the punishment from the guilty to the innocent:

I answer, That God, by right of his supreme jurisdiction, might relax the law, and transfer the penalty. And though justice requires full satisfaction, he might, in absolute sovereignty, accept it from a surety. True indeed, the Redeemer, as he was the Lord from heaven, was not liable to any constraint or compulsion, to this undertaking. But I see nothing either in the nature or law of God, that should make it unequal, to accept of full satisfaction from him, when voluntarily offered.

I acknowledge, that it would be unjust among men, to accept of the life of an innocent for a guilty person; because we have not the disposal of our own lives. But this nothing affects the present case, since our Lord had in himself, *power to lay down his own life, and power to take it up again*.

But I must hasten to observe, that

The most glorious manifestation of God's holiness and purity in this work of our redemption, makes it likely to be a Divine contrivance. Nothing could give a brighter discovery of God's implacable antipathy to sin, than the amazing sufferings of his own dear Son, when imputatively guilty. This discovers sin to be a weight that even infinite mercy could not bear, in that the blood of his well-beloved Son must be the only sacrifice to appease his displeasure against it; and that he could, without relenting, behold the bitter agonies of him, *with whom he was well pleased*, when he was made sin for us. This shews us, that he is *glorious in holiness*, Exod.

xv. 11.

The omnipotence of God does likewise appear in its highest

est perfection, in this glorious work. God's creating the world out of nothing, and his upholding and governing all things by the word of his power, are not greater evidences of omnipotence, than our redemption by his incarnate Son. The incarnation of Christ, and the union of the divine nature with the human, is such a miracle of power, as exceeds all finite thoughts, in their highest elevation. And the same almighty Agent is discovered in our Lord's miraculous conception of a virgin, without the help of man; in the triumphs of his cross; and the victory over all our spiritual enemies, obtained by his death; as well as by his resurrection from the grave, and his ascension into heaven. In a word, the whole transaction of our salvation by Christ, is a manifestation of omnipotent grace. But I may but hint at things; and shall only add,

The glories of the divine wisdom do also shine forth with brightest splendor in the work of redemption. The very projection of this scheme was beyond the capacity of any finite understanding. The method (though most reasonable and agreeable), is so deep and mysterious, that it could not have been the product of human invention: Which consideration alone, is enough to convince us of the divine original of the Christian institution. The end of this contrivance, *viz.* the exalting God's glory, and restoring man's happiness, was worthy of infinite counsel: And the means of accomplishing this vast design, could be adjusted only by God himself. — Infinite the wisdom! unsearchable the counsel! that took occasion from our sin, which was the highest opposition to the Divine perfections, to make all his attributes shine forth with brighter glory; hereby not only to bring infinite mercy and inflexible justice into the sweetest harmony; but to manifest both in greatest lustre, the one in punishing the sin, the other in pardoning and saving the sinner! Who but God could have found the means for *mercy and truth thus to meet together, and righteousness and peace to kiss each other?*

And we may, still with greater admiration, adore the miraculous contrivance for the reconciling God and man, by uniting the infinitely distant natures into one person; and thereby ordaining such a Mediator, who, by partaking of both natures, is interested in both parties; and so every way fit to

reconcile God to man, and man to God! But I must not enlarge upon this copious subject, which would take a large volume, to the distinct consideration of it; and a whole eternity, in the just admiration of it. The short glance we have already had of this contemplation, makes it appear, that *God hath herein abounded towards us, in all wisdom and prudence*, Eph. i. 8.

Thus I have, with all brevity, considered how the Christian revelation is worthy of God. I am now to observe,

II. That it every way answers the miserable circumstances of *fallen man*.

What could be more agreeable to the perishing circumstances of guilty condemned sinners, than the joyful tidings of pardon and salvation, of a deliverance from the depth of wo, and a title to *joy unspeakable and full of glory*; upon such easy and honourable terms? This justly recommends the Christian religion above all others, that ever were or could be contrived.

And if we take a view of the tenor and properties of this institution, we shall find it so adapted to the nature of man; to his various stations and relations in the world; to his comfort here and happiness hereafter; that as no other religion could ever claim like regards; on these accounts, so this above all others, appears to be of divine original.

The doctrines of the gospel are all holy and spiritual, agreeable to the ennobled nature and faculties of our souls. The precepts are most just and reasonable, directly tending to make us holy and happy, charitable and beneficent. The motives are most noble and sublime, fit to work upon our affections and passions, to deter us from sin, and inflame our desires after the reward of holiness.—Here the vices of pride, worldliness and sensuality; of injustice, fraud, persecution or oppression, fierceness or impatience, are justly condemned and prohibited; and a *flaming sword* brandished before us, to prevent our commission of these and such like sins.—Here we are taught self-denial, justice and mercy, brotherly love, unity, peace, and kindness one to another; with the most sweet and endearing attractives to such a blessed life.—Here we have most excellent rules, for order and government in the world; for the peace and stability of kingdoms and commonwealths, for the

restraining ambition and tyranny in the prince, and rebellion or sedition in the subject.—Here we may find choicest cordials and supports, under all the troubles and afflictions we can conflict with; and even against the fears and terrors of death itself. Here we have all rational pleasure and satisfaction indulged us, though the sinful cravings of our corrupt and vitiated appetites, are prohibited, as most hurtful and pernicious.—Here may our minds be spiritualized, and exalted to the highest elevation they are capable of in this life, and yet raised with expectations of higher perfections in the *world to come*.—In a word, the gospel-scheme is every way perfective of human nature, and calculated for our present and future happiness; and is therefore worthy to be esteemed the *wisdom of God, and the power of God*, as 1 Cor. i. 18.

Having thus seen some of the strong probabilities of the truth of Christianity; which cannot but reflect a convincing light, into the mind of every serious and impartial enquirer: I must defer the further demonstration of this truth, till another opportunity; and conclude my present discourse, with some brief practical inferences. And,

I. WE have cause, with raised affections, to adore and praise the infinite mercy of God, for revealing this glorious salvation to us in the gospel.

Life and immortality were purchased by the obedience of Christ; but they are brought to light by the gospel. And it would have been as well for us, to have had no salvation purchased, as none revealed. In both cases a thick cloud of despair had covered our souls, that we could never have seen through. But now, from the distinguishing mercy of God, *the Sun of righteousness hath arisen upon us; and the day spring from on high hath visited us.* The light of life blazes into our souls; and the way to heaven, like the *path of the just*, is as a *shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*: That we are under the most happy advantages possible, to secure an interest in this Saviour, and a title to the glories that will be revealed.

Let us but consider, how great a part of the world are yet groping in thick darkness, have utterly lost their way, in the mists of ignorance and error; and *are without God, without Christ,*

Christ, and without hope in the world: While the grace of God that bringeth salvation, having appeared to us, we are even lifted up to heaven by our privileges: And it will surely appear, that this special favour calls for special thankfulness; and loudly summons all the faculties of our souls, to be closely engaged in that enquiry, Psal. cxvi. 12. What shall I render to the Lord, for all these benefits towards me?

And if we yet further consider, how unworthy we are of such discriminating favour, it will give us cause to reflect upon these divine obligations with a rapture of soul. Had there been any thing in us, that could have been any incentive to this distinguishing mercy, it would have lessened the obligation: But there was nothing in us, more than in the darkest regions of the earth, to move God's compassion to us; or to excite him to *make known to us, the riches of the glory of this mystery, among the Gentiles.* Free sovereign grace only deserves the praise. And our ingratitude will be of the blackest dye, if these reflections do not make *the fire burn* in our breasts; and inspire us with most exalted sentiments, and thankful resentments of such special and signal mercies.

II. Let us, hence be exhorted, to make it our sedulous concern, to obtain an interest in this salvation, in such a wonderful way provided for us, and so freely tendered to us.

Let us with flaming ardour of soul, and with most undeniable importunity, wrestle with God for an interest in Christ by faith; that *he may become of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.* And that we, through him, may be *heirs to an inheritance with the saints in light.*

We should be awfully careful, that we do not perish from under the gospel, lest this enhance our guilt, and aggravate our future condemnation, that *light is come into the world, and we chuse darkness rather than light.*

A
DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION
FROM THE
PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LUKE xxiv. 44.

And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you; that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.

HAVING in our last discourse considered our apostate and miserable circumstances, and the hopes of recovery from this state of sin and guilt, by our Lord Jesus Christ: I am now to add to the strong probabilities then urged, some full and clear demonstrations of this precious truth, that *God has so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* For the proof of which, I shall first consider the clear evidence of this doctrine, from the Prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament; and then shew you how it is ratified by God himself, with the great seal of heaven; by the miracles, I mean, performed by Christ, and by others in his name.—The latter proposal must be deferred to a future opportunity: The former falls under present consideration, from the words of our text. In which we may note,

1. Something supposed and taken for granted, *viz.* that the scriptures

Scriptures of the Old Testament did prophecy of Christ; that the Messiah was written of in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms; which expressions, according to the Jewish mode of speaking, include all the sacred and canonical books of the Old Testament.

This was a truth so universally received among the Jews, both before and at the time of our Lord's incarnation, that it wanted neither illustration, nor confirmation.

2. We may note the Divine authority, and undoubted veracity of these prophecies of Christ. They must all be fulfilled.

These sacred prophecies, being the oracles of God, are founded on his truth and faithfulness, are immutable as God himself: and therefore cannot fail of accomplishment.

3. For the clearer understanding the words before us, we may note the end and design of our glorious Lord, in this argument, which was to confirm and establish the faith of his disciples in himself, as the hope of Israel, and the Saviour of the world.

This appears from the connection of these words with the foregoing context.—In the 37th verse, we find the disciples terrified and affrighted with our Lord's miraculous appearance among them; *supposing they had seen a spirit*. And we are told in the 41st verse, that their surprise not only continued, but was accompanied with incredulity and unbelief. Our Lord therefore, to obviate both their difficulties, first takes meat, and eats before them, to convince them that he was not a spirit; and then urges the present argument, as sufficient for ever to silence all their doubts and scruples, about the cause of his sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead. This argument he had before inculcated upon them, and now again leaves with them, as a standing confirmation of their faith, in that important article. The sum of which argument is this, that all the sacred writings (which could not fail of accomplishment) did unanimously predict the manner of life, the death, and resurrection of the Messiah. And that therefore they could have no room left for surprise or diffidence, with relation to him, in whom they had seen the accomplishment of all these prophecies: This being an attestation from God himself, of his Divine mission.

Or we may more summarily take up the words, in this

DOCTRINE, *That the accomplishment of the Old Testament Prophecies concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, is a sure evidence, that he is the Messiah.*

For the illustration of this observation, I shall endeavour to shew,

I. What a prophecy is.

II. How a prophecy may be said to be fulfilled.

III. That there were prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament, which are fulfilled. And,

IV. That the accomplishment of these prophecies, is a sure evidence, that Christ is the Messiah.

I. I am to consider, what a prophecy is.

I mean not in this enquiry, to consider the word in its full latitude, nor to take notice of the various acceptations it obtains in scripture: But briefly to shew, in what sense it is to be understood in the present argument. And, as it affects the case before us, I understand a prophecy to be a Divine prediction of future contingent events.—I call it a Divine prediction, because it is the sole prerogative of Omniscience, to foresee future contingencies: And it cannot come within the compass of any finite understanding, to foretel those things that have no foundation in nature, nor dependence on natural causes.—And I consider contingent events, as the only object of prophecy; because it requires, in ordinary, no prophetic spirit, to predict those events that are in themselves necessary, or that depend upon the nature of things.

But I need not insist upon this description, the case being plain, familiar, and universally agreed in. I proceed therefore,

II. To consider, how a prophecy may be said to be fulfilled. And,

1. A prophecy is sometimes said to be fulfilled, by way of accommodation only: When a prediction of one thing may, by reason of some eminent parity or similitude between them, be aptly accommodated to another.

In this sense the word fulfilled was in frequent use among the Jews; who, affecting to speak in scripture-language, would frequently mention the fulfilling of scripture, when they meant

no more by it, than a parity or agreement of circumstances, between the case considered, and the quoted text; or an example parallel to something foretold, or spoken of in scripture.

In this allegorical sense, the sacred penmen of the New Testament, do also sometimes speak of the fulfilling of prophecy, where there is no direct or literal accomplishment, nothing but an agreement, or accommodation of the event and prediction. Thus our Lord's return from Egypt is said to be *That it might be fulfilled, that was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my Son*, Matth. ii. 15. And thus the destruction of the young children by Herod, is said to be *a fulfilling of that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, in Rama was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, &c.* Whereas it is evident, that the first cited words of the prophet, did immediately refer to the deliverance of the children of Israel, from their Egyptian bondage, and the latter to their distress and anguish from the Babylonian carnage and captivity.

From this use of the word fulfilled, our modern infidels have, unreasonably enough, taken occasion of insult and triumph; thence insinuating the weakness or unfaithfulness of the evangelical historians. But a due consideration of the case will discover more of spleen, than argument, in these irreligious sneers. Was there any thing more common among the most famous Greek orators, than to adorn their discourses with flowers taken from Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, or other of their poets, when they never intended, nor could their auditors understand any more, than a bare accommodation of the citation to the matter treated of? Or is there any thing more common among ourselves, than to cite scriptures in this allusive manner, which have no direct or immediate reference to the subject-matter of the discourse? To exemplify this, it is consonant to the received modes of speaking, to call these unbelieving gentlemen, mocking Ishmaelites, or insulting Edomites; although those scriptures, Gen xxi. 9. and Psal. cxxxvii. 7. which are fulfilled in them, did not originally and primarily refer to Hobbs, Blount, Collins, or any of their admirers. And I must tell them that continue in their infidelity,
after

after such full and clear evidences of the truth of Christianity, as have been from time to time offered them; that there is fulfilled in them, what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. v. ver. 21. that they are *a foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not.* Though I do not think the prophet had them in view when he spoke those words.

2. A prophecy is more strictly and properly fulfilled, when a prediction, according to its direct meaning, and primary design and intention, meets with an exact and full accomplishment. And,

3. A prophecy may be said to be fulfilled, when it has a double accomplishment; and is completed both in the type and antitype, in the sign, and the thing thereby signified.

It has been indeed questioned by very learned and judicious men, whether any prophecies may, in strictness of speech, be said to have such a double reference: They rather suppose, that those prophecies that have been so understood, do look unto Christ, and him only: But then it must be acknowledged, that there is a sudden transition, from some other person or thing, unto the Messiah: And that two different events are predicted, in the same continued discourse. Thus was that prophecy in 2 Sam. vii. 12, 16. fulfilled, both in Solomon, and in one greater than Solomon. The promise to David in ver. 12, That "when his days were fulfilled, and he should sleep with his fathers; God would set up his seed after him, that should proceed out of his bowels; and establish his kingdom:" this was literally verified in Solomon: But then the promise in the 16th verse, That "his house and kingdom shall be established for ever, and that his throne should be established for ever;" though it might first refer to, could not ultimately terminate in Solomon; but pointed to a more stable and durable reign than his, even to an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away; and to a kingdom which shall not be destroyed. In this sense the Psalmist understands this promise, in Psal. lxxxix. 36, 37. *His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.* And, agreeably, from this prophecy, the tradition universally obtained among the Jews, that the Messiah must be the son of

David. Which interpretation we see justified by the event.

But I do not design to insist upon this head, my present purpose leading me to consider the accomplishment of prophecy, only in the second and strongest sense. In order to which, I proceed to observe;

III. That there were prophecies of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, which are strictly, literally, and exactly fulfilled.

The time before us will not allow, that I should enter into a distinct consideration of the multiplied prophecies of the Messiah, every where found in the Old Testament; and shew how they are verified in Christ. I shall therefore only consider four or five of those, that exactly point out the time of our Lord's coming, and then just take a cursory view of some of those predictions, that describe the circumstances of his appearing.

I begin with the blessing of dying Jacob to his son Judah, Gen. xlix. 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* It is generally allowed, even by the Jews themselves, that by Shiloh here, is meant the Messiah: And thus their three Targums expound it*. But there is not such a joint agreement among interpreters, in the meaning of the word *schebet* or *sceptre*. The modern Jews, in despite to Christ, do perversely understand it a rod of correction. But this is to do utmost violence to the whole scope of the context, which every way gives Judah the preference above the other tribes; and does not mark him out for special correction. And it equally militates against the event, which shews us, that Judah has not drunk so deep of God's fierce displeasure, as the other tribes; whose name and remembrance are long since blotted out from under heaven.— Besides, it is evident, that an emblem of dominion and government is hereby designed, from the following clause, *nor a lawgiver from between his feet*: For how, I pray, does a state of correction, debasement, and affliction, constitute them a legislature?

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But

* The Jerusalem Targum, that of Jonathan, and Onkelos.

But leaving these Rabbinical dreams and dotages; I must take leave to observe, that the generality of interpreters, have (I think) mistaken the meaning of this word, supposing, from the use of a sceptre in our times, that it must imply an ensign of royal or imperial power; and thence understand the prophecy, that a kingly dominion should remain in the hands of Judah, until the coming of Christ. But there are such objections in the way of this interpretation, that I cannot come into it: particularly, it seems very inaccurate, to speak of the sceptre's departing from him who never had it. Judah at this time had no kingly power, and therefore could not lose it. And the kingdom was so far from continuing in that tribe, from the time of the prophecy until the coming of Christ, that there was no royal authority in any of the tribe, for much the greatest part of the time: It commenced in David, and ended in Zedekiah. It not only ceased, but perished at the Babylonish captivity. For though there was a regal authority, after their return from Babylon, exercised by the Maccabees and Herod; yet the former were of the tribe of Levi, and the latter was an Idumean, and none of them of Judah's posterity.

I therefore chuse, with Mr Mede, to understand the word *sceptre* to signify, "not kingly dominion only; but any power "or majesty of government, under what form or name soever; "whereof a rod or staff was anciently the ensign. Whence "every tribe is called *schebet* (the word here used) as being "united together under one staff, or power of government. "The meaning, therefore, is not, that Judah shall never cease "from having a king, or being a kingdom; but that it should "not cease from being a state, a body politic, or common- "wealth, having a power of government or jurisdiction with- "in itself, until Messiah come." Thus Mr Mede. In favour of whose construction of this word *schebet* or *sceptre*, it is remarkable, that the word is not only frequently used for tribe, and particularly applied to every of the tribes of Israel, Numb. xiii. thereby not obscurely intimating, that it was such an ensign of government as pertained to each of the tribes: But it is also used in the sense I contend for, in this very context. Thus, verse 16th, *Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes (or sceptres) of Israel.* From which use of the word in

the 16th verse, it appears plain to me, that not only Dan, but each of the other patriarchs, then had the sceptre of judgment in their hands. And I cannot see that their was any other sceptre promised to Judah in the 70th, than to Dan in the 16th verse of this chapter. The difference between them consisted not in the formal nature of their government or dominion; but in the duration or continuance of it. They each had, according to this prophecy, their princes, rulers, judges, or heads of their tribes, for a long time after, even until the captivity of the ten tribes, when Dan lost his sceptre.

Now, if this interpretation be allowed me (as I cannot see why it should not) it is obvious to every eye, that this famous prophecy has had a literal, full, and perspicuous accomplishment. The sceptre never departed from Judah, until the coming of Christ. Even in the time of the Babylonish captivity, they yet had their lawgivers from between their feet; they being indulged the use of their own laws, when removed from their own land, as appears from Esther iii. 8. *And Haman said unto Ahasuerus, there is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king's laws.*

But how soon after the incarnation of our blessed Saviour, did Judah lose all authority; both their civil and ecclesiastical state being utterly subverted! And they, instead of swaying a sceptre, are become an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations.

And are not we ourselves, as well as the other Christian nations, a happy evidence of the *gathering the people* unto this predicted Shiloh, according to the prophecy before us?

Thus we have blazing evidence, that the patriarch Jacob did foresee Christ's day, and foretel both the time and consequence of his appearing in the world: And that this prediction is punctually and exactly verified in our glorious Saviour.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of another prophecy, which likewise precisely points out the time of the Messiah's manifestation: It is that in Dan. ix. 24, 25, 26 *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city; to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make re-*

conciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks. The streets shall be built again and the walls, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself. And the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war, desolations are determined.

Here is a plain prediction, that within the space of seventy prophetic weeks, or weeks of years, (that is 490 years, as the Jewish Rabbins themselves expound it) the great things determined upon the Jewish people and the holy City, should be accomplished, transgression finished, reconciliation made for iniquity, everlasting righteousness brought in, the vision and prophecy sealed up, and the Most Holy anointed. And within seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (that is 483 years) after the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, the Messiah should appear, and be cut off; but not for himself: and that after his death, the city and sanctuary should be destroyed, and the people given up to desolations. Now every one skilled in chronology, may see a most exact accomplishment of this prophecy.

Though we have not so plain and express direction, when to begin the seventy weeks, or 490 years; within which term, all those transactions relating to the Messiah were to be accomplished: We are plainly told, that the sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years, were to commence with the going forth of the commandment to restore, or to build Jerusalem; and to terminate at the excision, or death of the Messiah. Let us then begin this reckoning on the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus (the date of the decree for building Jerusalem, as appears from Neh. ii. 1.) and it will end on the thirty third year after Christ, the year of his death. Thus exactly did the event answer the prophecy, as to the time of his manifestation and crucifixion. And were not the predicted consequences of his coming, also most exactly fulfilled? Did not the Romans, the future people of this prince (as the 26th verse might

might be translated) destroy the city and sanctuary; and bring the determined flood of war and desolations on the Jewish state?

Never did face answer more exactly to face in a glass, than this prophecy and its accomplishment in our Lord Jesus Christ answer one another; that to refuse our assent to this glaring evidence, is not only stupidity, but obstinate blindness.—Even a Pagan Porphyry was long since so confounded with this prophecy, that he could, with all his learning and craft, find no other answer, but that it was spurious, and of a later date.

Another prophecy, which evidently foretels the time of our Saviour's appearing, may be found in Hag. ii. 7, 9. *And I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.* These words consist of a threefold prediction, (1) The convulsions and confusions that all nations were to be exercised with. (2) The appearance of the desire of all nations in the temple then building, whereby it should exceed the former temple in glory. And, (3) The peace that should be consequent upon the manifestation of the Prince of Peace. Now as to the first, none acquainted with history, is ignorant of the bright accomplishment of it, by the ravages and devastations made in the world, by Alexander and his followers; by the perpetual bloody wars and desolations, continued in the four kingdoms, that succeeded to, and stood up in the place of the great horn of that rough goat; and by the Romans, whose conquering sword at last brought them all into subjection.—And then, how soon after the end of this concussion of the nations, did the desire of all nations come into the temple; and by his sacred presence, make that house more glorious than the former, though it was in every thing else inferior to it! And as to the last of these predictions, how exactly was it fulfilled, in the peaceable reign of Augustus, wherein all nations seemed to have forgot their former fierceness and rage, as well as the use of their military armour!

Thus we are irresistibly constrained to acknowledge the accomplishment of this prophecy, in our Lord Jesus Christ, by
his

his coming at the very time here foretold, immediately after the sinking of all nations, during the continuance of the second temple; and in that remarkable time of universal peace,

A fourth famous prediction of the time of our Lord's incarnation, is that in Mal. iii. 1. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.* That this prophecy did relate to the Messiah, is clearly manifest by the titles and epithets here given him, *The Lord whom ye seek; the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.* And that it was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, is equally manifest, by his appearing in the temple, before the destruction of it, suddenly after the messenger, *viz.* John Baptist, was sent to prepare his way, by baptizing, preaching repentance, and warning the people to believe in him that should come after him. But this is so plain that I need not insist upon it.

I might here have also urged Nebuchadnezzar's dream, in Dan. ii. 31, — 46. as a prophetic indication of the time of the Messiah's appearing. By which is foretold, that after the expiration of the third, and during the subsisting of the fourth monarchy, a stone should be cut out of the mountain without hands, that should break the fourth or Roman monarchy to pieces, and become a great mountain, that shall fill the whole earth; or as the prophet expounds it, *a kingdom that shall never be moved.*—The exact verification of which prophecy is too obvious, to escape the notice of any observer. None that has but dipt in the Roman history can be ignorant, that our Lord did appear in the height and glory of that empire; that after his advent, the fourth monarchy did gradually moulder away, until it was utterly subverted, by the inundation of the Goths and Vandals; and that this stone, against all opposition from that kingdom of iron, has grown to a great mountain; and will (as we may surely conclude from this prophecy) in his own time, fill the whole earth. But the time before us will not allow me to particularly insist upon these things.

Before I proceed to the consideration of other prophecies of our blessed Saviour, I would here take liberty to observe, that
not

not only the Jews, but all the neighbouring nations, did, about the time of Christ's coming, entertain raised expectations of some glorious monarch, that should bring great revolutions upon the world. And from whence should they derive these notions; or whence form these expectations, but from these cited prophecies?—If it be alledged, that they might find these predictions in the books of the Sybills, the supposal adds force to our argument: For if these were really distinct prophecies, their accomplishment in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, is additional evidence to his Divine mission. But if these Sybilline prophecies were (as they are thought by very learned men to be) “a Jewish composition, designed to propogate the belief of the Messiah, and to prepare the way for his reception by the Gentiles; and called *Sybilline*, only from a Hebrew or Chaldee word of the same sound, which signifies to prophesy*.” This convinces us that these Divine oracles under consideration, were understood by the Jews before Christ, not only to refer to the Messiah, but to point out the very time of his manifestation.

That there were such expectations among the nations, about the time of our Lord's incarnation, is set in a clear light by many learned writers; particularly by the bishop of Coventry and Litchfield, † “No sooner (says he), was the kingdom of the Seleucides (one of the remaining branches of Daniel's third kingdom), extinguished by Pompey, in the person of Antiochus Asiaticus; but the Jews every where lifted up their heads, as if they saw the sign of their redemption in the dawnings of the fourth monarchy. Then rumours went about, no body knew how, (though indeed originally from the Jews), that nature was in pangs to bring forth a king for the Roman people. At which the frightened senate decreed the strangling of every child that should be born within that year; but their vain hopes of having that king in their own family, spoiled the execution of the decree; and so Augustus was suffered to live. Then Lentulus, thinking this to be the fatal year of the Roman government,

* See Bp. of Coventry and Litchfield's Defence of. Chris. p. 10, 11.

† Def. of Chris. p. 124, 125. I have not that book by me, and the short notes I took out of it when I read it, will not enable me to acquaint the reader from what authors he took this piece of history: I must therefore refer him to the book itself, for satisfaction.

“ vernment, and that he might be the man intended for the
 “ new empire, became principal in Cataline’s conspiracy.”
 Thus he.

To which I may add, that Josephus, in a base servile flattery to the emperor Vespasian, applies these prophecies to him, and says, “ That which chiefly excited the Jews to war, was
 “ an ambiguous prophecy found in the sacred books ; that at
 “ that time, some one within their country should arise,
 “ that should obtain the empire of the whole world*.” And Tacitus † and Suetonius ‡ two Roman historians report, that it was contained in the ancient books of the priests, (according to one), or in the fates, (according to the other), that one from Judea should at that time, (the time of Vespasian), obtain the dominion. Much more might be added, to shew the common expectation of the Messiah, about the time of Christ’s coming, both by the Jews, and also by the Gentiles now made acquainted with the scriptures, by the Greek translation of them.

But it is time I should return to the consideration of some other prophecies, that predict the circumstances and consequences of our Lord’s appearing.

It was foretold, that the *Messiah should be born of a virgin*, Isa. vii. 14. In the *town of Bethlehem*, Mich. v. 2. That he should reside in *Galilee*; and particularly in *Zebulon and Nephtali*, Isa. ix. 1. That he should enter *Jerusalem upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass*, Zech. ix. 9. That by his miraculous operations, the *eyes of the blind should be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame restored to the use of their limbs, and the dumb to their speech*, as Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. That he should appear in low, mean, and afflicted circumstances; *be despised and rejected of the Jews, be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*, Isa. liiii. 2, 3. That he should finally *be cut off, but not for himself*, Dan. ix. 26. And the particular circumstances of his death, with the opprobry and ignominy that attended it, were likewise foretold by the prophets. And I need not tell you from the evangelical historians, how all these circumstances of his life, and death, were exactly fulfilled in our Lord Christ.

I

And

* De Bell. Judaic. Lib. vii. Cap. 13.

† Hist. Cap. 13.

‡ In Vespasian. Cap. 4.

And as to the consequents of the Messiah's coming, it was prophesied, that after his death, the *Jewish sacrifices and oblations should cease, their holy city and sanctuary be destroyed; and they made desolate*, Dan. ix. 26, 27. That he should bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, who should come to his light, and see his righteousness and glory, Isa. xlii. 1. and lx. 3. and lxii. 2. Which were so visibly accomplished, in cutting off the natural branches of the olive-tree, and grafting the Gentiles into the same stock; that it must be wilful blindness, not to see it.

I might largely insist upon this subject, and shew you, that there is scarce any passage of the birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, or glory of our Saviour; or scarce any circumstance of the state of his kingdom here in the world; but what are particularly prophesied of in the Old Testament. But the time will not allow, nor does the case require, that I should enlarge upon this head. I therefore proceed to consider,

IV. That the accomplishment of these prophecies is a sure evidence, that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

I confess indeed, that the accomplishment of some single prophecies in our Lord Jesus Christ, is not convincing proof, that he was necessarily the person predicted, and pointed out by them. There were (for example) many others, beside Jesus of Nazareth in Judea, before the sceptre departed from Judah, who descended from the tribe of Judah, from the loins of Abraham and David, were born at Bethlehem, at the same time that the Messiah was to be expected, &c. But then, the united accomplishment of all these prophecies in our blessed Lord, renders the evidence clear and incontestable, that the characters of the Messiah, in the prophets, belonged to him, and him only. There was none but he, that with any colour could claim the characters of descending from Abraham, from Judah, and David; of appearing just 483 years after the decree for building and restoring Jerusalem; of being born of a virgin, in the town of Bethlehem; of working so many miracles; of dying and rising again; of setting up a spiritual kingdom, whereunto the Gentiles should be subjected; And all the many other prophetic descriptions of his person and government, too many to be here distinctly enumerated;

which all agreed to our Lord Jesus, and therefore (as I observed), prove him to be the Messiah. This will plainly appear, if we consider,

1. That the accomplishment of these prophecies is a clear and certain indication of their divine original.

Finite understandings can have no means of foreknowledge, but either conjectural, from the nature and reason of things; or by inspiration from him, who has all things present and to come in his omniscient eye. By one of these means therefore all the events we have been considering, must have been foretold; or else they were all a juggle and imposture. Mere conjecture they could not be; for what resemblance could be found, in all the face of nature, of an incarnate God; or what even obscurest hints of the time, manner, and consequences of his manifestation? Nor could they have been an imposture; for if so, they could not be justified by the event. We see them fulfilled; and thence are ascertained that they were prophetically foretold. We see that God himself acknowledges the prophecy, by its completion; which he would not have done, in justification of most audacious and impudent deceivers. The consequence therefore irresistably forces itself upon us, that these were the oracles of God. It is a just challenge, and reasonable argument, in Isa. xli. 22, 23. *Let them bring forth and shew us what shall happen. Let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them; and know the latter end of them: or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.*

I know of but one objection that can with any colour be offered against this arguing; which is, that diabolical predictions have often been fulfilled, as appears by the ancient oracles of the heathen, so frequently consulted; and so frequently verified by the event. In answer to which, I need not insist upon the craft and collusion used in those oracles; or the dark and doubtful meanings, in which they were usually delivered, seldom to be understood, but by the issue. But I allow it to be possible, (as the scripture also supposes it), Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. that God may, for the trial or punishment of a people, let the devil into an acquaintance with some of his future purposes. But then God is the author, though the de-

will be the communicator of these prophecies. God only reveals the event, though an accursed Balaam be the prophet. He, who adjusts all future things in his own breast, and whose sovereign pleasure and purpose make them possible, can only foresee what, how, or when they shall be. To ascribe a foreknowledge of future contingencies to the devil, is to place him in God's throne, and to give him the glory of the Divine perfections. But I proceed to consider,

2. That it is hence necessary, that all the characters of Christ in the Divine prophecies are true, since God can neither deceive, nor be deceived.

The accomplishment of these prophecies discovers their glorious Author; the author, their necessary truth and faithfulness. If they are of Divine original, they have a Divine veracity; and can no more be chargeable with falshood, or mistake in any instance, than God can deny or contradict himself.

Thus have we strongest and most unquestionable assurance from the holy prophets, that our Lord Jesus Christ, whom they have foreseen, and of whom they have so particularly foretold, is *the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*; that he is *God's own Son*; and *the man that is his Fellow*: that he is *Immanuel God with us, the Lord our righteousness*; and *the salvation of the ends of the earth*: And in a word, *that all things are fulfilled that were written in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him.*

I am aware that Porphyry's ancient objection may be urged against all this, that these prophecies were all written since the event; and so are indeed rather histories of what is past, than predictions of things to come. But this is absolutely impossible, the sacred books having been kept in the hands of the bitterest enemies of Christianity, (the Jews I mean), whose malice against Christ would not have allowed them, (had they been capable), to have conspired in such a forgery and interpolation.

Can it be imagined, that they would have devised these prophecies on purpose to have brought a perpetual infamy upon themselves? Could they thus frame weapons against their religion, and study the confusion of their own faces!—

Besides, if they had been willing, they could not have been able thus to have imposed upon the world. Had it been possible that all the Jews in the world, in their most distant dispersions, should have, to a man, combined in this undertaking; had they corrupted all their bibles; and not left one copy to detect the fraud, (which is unreasonable enough to suppose), this blessed book was in the hands of multitudes beside them; and every where dispersed among the Gentiles, especially in the Greek translation of it; who must also have been in the conspiracy, if any such thing had been done. In a word, the world must have conspired in this cursed imposture; and no copy of the Bible be left to bewray the villany; nor any man know how, why, or when it was done. But it is time we proceed to some improvement of the doctrine. And,

I. We hence learn, that as the foregoing prophecies of the Messiah are, by their accomplishment in our Lord Jesus Christ, a testimony from heaven that he is the predicted Saviour of the world; so likewise is the completion of his own predictions, an attestation unto and confirmation of his heavenly mission.

The Messiah was foretold to be *a Prophet like unto Moses, whom we should hear in all things*, Deut. xviii. 15. And our blessed Jesus has justified his claim to that character, by his many prophecies of future things, which have been so punctually verified. He not only discovered the most secret thoughts of mens hearts; and foretold the treason of Judas, while confined to his own breast, and perhaps before it was conceived in his mind: But also, particularly fore-shewed his own death, with the manner and circumstances of it, the time of his continuance in the grave, his resurrection, and glorious ascension. He promised to the apostles and others the gifts of the Holy Ghost; with his miraculous powers and operations. He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter abolition of the temple, with the preludes of that amazing desolation. And I need not be particular in shewing you the exact accomplishment of all these prophecies; nor have I time to consider the many prophecies in the New Testament, professedly received from him, and spoken in his name. I shall therefore select one only from among them the verification whereof is at this time visible to all the world: The prediction

prediction of antichrist I mean; the time of whose coming was foretold to be upon the downfall of the Roman empire, when that could no longer let, or restrain his tyranny, 2 Thef. ii. 7. The manner of his coming was to be with pride and arrogance, *exalting himself above all that is called God, and worshipped*; and yet under the guise of a minister of religion, sitting in the temple of God, and there strengthening his interest by *all power, and signs, and lying wonders*, 2 Thef. ii. 4, 11. The place of his residence was to be in a *great city*, built upon *seven mountains*; that is, in the city of Rome, which only answers this description, Rev. xvii. 9, 18. His reign was to be *tyrannical*, with horrible *persecution of the saints*, Rev. xiii. 7, and elsewhere. Now, who can help but see an exact accomplishment of these, and many other characters of antichrist, in the Pope and Roman papacy; and thereby a full evidence of our Saviour's omniscience, in foretelling these events?

II. Hence are we instructed in the Divine authority of the sacred scriptures.

The spirit of prophecy, which every where appears in them, must necessarily be the Spirit of God; who only (as we have heard) can be the Author of a true prophecy.

The Old Testament has this attestation to its verity and Divine original, it being throughout a continued series of accomplished prophecy. A great part of that blessed book consists, either of more direct, clear, and express, or more dark and allusive predictions, of the hope of Israel, and salvation by Christ.

Besides the more explicit prophecies of this great salvation, interspersed through almost every book of the Old Testament; what were all the typical persons, the typical actions and ordinances; and what the whole Mosaic institution, with the Levitical priesthood, rites and ceremonies; and especially their sacrifices, and bloody oblations; but types and shadows of our blessed Saviour, to keep alive their faith, hope, and desire of his salvation, before his coming? There are indeed some historical parts of this holy book, not properly prophetic: But these have also their reference unto Christ, and not only represent God's care, guidance, and government of his Church; but also shew us his faithfulness in securing the promised Seed, in the promised line; and in preserving the
tribes

tribes entire, that our Lord's descent might be, as was promised, from the loins of Abraham, the tribe of Judah, and the family of David.

Thus was a great part of the Old Testament an index, to point out the person of Christ, with the time, manner, end; and consequences of his manifestation. And the full and bright accomplishment of all these things, is not only a verification of the promises and prophecies; but a declaration from Heaven, that these *scriptures were given by inspiration of God*:

I might here also, as a further evidence that the Old Testament is indeed the word of God, consider the many other prophecies that had no special reference unto Christ. Such were the particular predictions of the vastly numerous posterity of Abraham; of the children of Israel's sojourning in Egypt; of the time of their continuance and state of bondage there; of their deliverance, return to Canaan, utter extirpating the inhabitants; and their flourishing circumstances during their obedience in that happy land. --Such likewise were the predictions of the ten tribes destruction; of the Babylonish captivity, with the term of its duration; of the circumstances of the Jews after their return, and of their desolation and dispersion, for their rejecting of Christ. --And such also were the numerous prophecies relating to particular persons, kingdoms, or countries; as well as the prophetic description of the four successive monarchies; and of the state of the world, during the continuance of each of them, and after the subversion of them all. There are, as you all know, innumerable accomplished prophecies of this kind, every where in the Old Testament, and therein innumerable evidences, that those holy books were the dictates of God himself.

The New Testament has likewise, from hence, surest confirmation of its truth and divinity; not only by the multiplied prophecies therein contained, many of which are fulfilled, and some are yet to be expected; but also by the glorious light reflected upon it, by the predictions of this new dispensation in the Old Testament. The Old Testament has foretold the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; the New Testament assures us that he is come, and has erected his spiritual kingdom, as was predicted of him. The Old Testament dispensation consisted of many types, shadows, and mystical ceremonies;

monies; the New Testament shews us how they were completed in Christ, the substance of them all. The Old Testament describes the time, circumstances, and manner of this new dispensation; the New Testament every way answers the description, as a copy the original, or a well drawn picture the face, in all the parts, features and lineaments.

Thus we see the Old Testament illustrated by the New, and the New confirmed by the Old, and both contrived by infinite Wisdom. For, it is impossible that any created understanding could devise and foresee so many and various representations of Christ and his kingdom of grace, all agreeing with the event, at such a distance from their completion? No surely! this must exceed the foresight of every created intelligence. Is it possible that the religion should not be of God, which has been predicted and confirmed, by a successive series of prophecy, from the very earliest ages of time; and joyfully beheld through the prospective-glass of the promises, by all the faithful, since man's first apostacy? No certainly! our infidelity would debase us below humanity.

III. Hence, from the accomplishment of past prophecies, we have greatest assurance, that those yet future shall be also fulfilled. For they have all the same glorious Author: all depend upon the same power and veracity.

From hence may we entertain certain expectations of that flourishing state of the Church, when antichrist shall be destroyed, by the spirit of Christ's mouth and the brightness of his coming; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, and all Israel be saved; when Christ shall have the heaven for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession: and when the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ."

From hence may impenitent sinners surely expect a swift approach of their dreadful and eternal wo. They may justly entertain trembling expectations of the accomplishment of those terrible predictions, of intignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; of *snare, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, for the portion of their cup: And of their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

From hence also may believers lay down their heads in the dust

dust with comfort, under a blessed prospect of *Christ's glorious appearing, to change their vile bodies, and fashion them like to his glorious body*: And from a view of that glorious reward, which, when he comes, he will bring with him. They may with courage encounter the king of terrors, and pass through the dark *valley of the shadow of death*, keeping their promised inheritance in view; and *looking to that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. They may joyfully make this echo to the promise of his coming, *Even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly*. Amen.

DEMONSTRATION

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

FROM THE

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,

BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION.

 ACTS ii. 22.

Ye men of Israel, here these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you; as ye yourselves also know.

THESE words directly lead us to the consideration of the last evidence proposed, for confirmation of the divine mission of our blessed Saviour. They were successfully urged by the apostle Peter, as an irrefragable argument of this important truth; and, if duly considered, cannot fail of yielding us also full and complete conviction of it.

For the right understanding the words, we may note in them,

1. A declaration of a matter of fact, *that God did work miracles, and wonders, and signs by Jesus of Nazareth.*

The apostle here considers our Lord Jesus Christ in his hu-

man nature only, according as he had appeared to the Jews, and was by their wicked hands crucified and slain: And thus, considered as a man, he could not be the author of these miraculous operations. These were (some of them) effects beyond the capacity, not only of men, but of angels; and therefore the necessary products of divine power and energy. Upon which account these miracles, wonders, and signs (words of like signification) are justly here ascribed unto the Deity, as the sole efficient; not exclusive of Christ, as the second person in the Godhead; but only as he was Jesus of Nazareth, or the man Christ Jesus.

2. We may note the end and design of this declaration, *viz.* To convince the audience, that our Lord Jesus Christ was by these miracles approved of God. [*Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, &c.*] Peter here takes the advantage of a vast concourse of people, convened from all quarters, to the feast of Pentecost, to preach a crucified Saviour; and by irresistible arguments, to convince them, that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the expected Messiah. This he evinces, first, by the accomplishment of prophecy, now surprizingly visible to them all, in the gift of tongues, newly conferred on the apostles and company: And then, as a concluding argument, urges the miracles of our Lord, as a declaration from God himself, of his heavenly calling; and as a testimony from Heaven, that the same Jesus whom they had crucified, was sent, authorized, and approved of God, and by him constituted both Lord and Christ.

3. We may note an appeal to the auditors themselves, as witnesses of the facts alledged, [*as ye yourselves also know.*] The argument was founded upon matters of fact; and was therefore more or less forcible, according to the truth or falsehood, notoriety or uncertainty of the facts on which it depended. If they were false or uncertain, the conclusion drawn from them must be very precarious; if true and publicly known, it must be most just and necessary. The apostle therefore concludes the argument with these words; thereby intimating, that it must needs be of irresistible force to them, who were themselves spectators of these miracles. But we may more particularly consider the argument, in speaking to this.

DOCTRINE, *That the miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, are a full and clear evidence, that he was approved of God, and had his mission from him.*

IN speaking to this doctrine, I propose this method :

I. To consider what a miracle is.

II. To prove, that there were real miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. To make it appear, that these miracles are full and clear evidence of Christ's divine mission, and that he was the promised Messiah.

I. Then, I am to consider what a miracle is.

And, for explaining the nature of a miracle, in the common theological sense of the word, I may observe to you, that a miracle has been ordinarily described, "An extraordinary operation of God in nature, either stopping its course, or producing some effects, that are above its laws and power. And it has been the received doctrine of divines, that the working of miracles is the sole prerogative of God himself. But some very learned men, who have lately written upon this subject, have justly found fault with this description; and made it evident, that a true miracle may be wrought by the instrumentality of angels. They therefore chuse thus to define a miracle, "a work effected in a manner unusual; or different from the common and regular method of Providence, by the interposition either of God himself, or of some intelligent agent superior to man; for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation to the authority of some particular person." But how just soever this description may be of miracles in general; yet there were certainly such miraculous works performed by our blessed Lord, as exceeded the powers of all the angels of light; and it is upon such operations only, that I shall put the stress of the present argument: And shall therefore, in illustrating the truth before us, consider "miracles as extraordinary and immediate operations of God; in producing effects, either contrary to, or different from the common course of nature and providence." I call them extraordinary and immediate operations of God; exclusive of all finite power: For, allowing that angels

may be able to work some true miracles; yet there are many of those operations, whereof we are now to treat, that are as much the peculiar prerogative of God himself, as the creation of the world; as we shall see more particularly hereafter.— I describe miracles to be effects contrary to, or different from the common course of nature and providence: For though the power of God is as much discovered in the ordinary works of nature and providence, as in those effects that are most contrary to, or different from their common course: Yet those only that are extraordinary, are properly miraculous; as they are evidences, that God suspends the common motions of nature, for some uncommon or extraordinary purpose.

II. I am to prove, that there were real miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ.

This may be fully confirmed by the following considerations:

1. The sacred writers report, that many such miracles were wrought by our blessed Saviour.

It would take up more than all the time before us, to particularly consider all these demonstrations of his mercy and power, recorded in the scriptures; and yet their number doubtless far exceeded the particular account of them: But were they more or fewer, if such as were the necessary productions of omnipotence, they will sufficiently serve the present purpose, and prove the point under consideration. I shall therefore select some few (and I need mention but a few) of those indisputable instances of the miraculous works performed by our Lord Jesus, both before his death, and after his resurrection; and recorded in the sacred writings.

We read John ii. 1, 2. of our Lord's honouring a wedding with his presence; and manifesting the glory of his omnipotence, by turning water into wine better than the natural blood of the grape. Now though it be possible, that created spirits might invisibly remove the water, and substitute wine in the place of it; yet the historian plainly intimates, that this was immediately done by our Lord's powerful word; and that it therefore was what no less than a creating power could possibly effect.

A like instance was his feeding *five thousand men, beside women and children, with five loaves and two fishes*: And *four thousand*

thousand men, beside women and children, with seven loaves and a few little fishes : And causing the bread to increase by being eaten, and the fragments to exceed the quantity of the loaves, at first set before the multitudes, Matth. xiv. 19. and chap. xv. 34. Though in this case, it may likewise be easily supposed, that an angel might invisibly bring a fresh supply of bread and fish, in the place of what was eaten ; yet the sacred story represents it as Christ's own immediate work, and therefore as a clear manifestation of his omnipotent power.

An equal evidence of his immediate and omnipotent agency, was his forcing the elements to acknowledge their sovereign Lord ; and the wind and sea to forget their tempestuous ruffle, and to become calm and quiet at his word, Mark iv. 39. Though it may be possible for created angels, to raise or lay storms ; yet this must necessarily be a work of time : and I can as easily conceive them capable of doing every thing, as of quieting the troubled air and sea, without the intervention of time or means ; and of making them instantaneously obedient to their command : As was the case before us, as appears from ver. 37. where we find the ship filled with water, and ready to sink by the impetuosity of the storm ; and they yet rescued from the brink of destruction, by an immediate calm.

I might add to this, his curing so many diseases, in their own nature desperate, without any visible means, but his own powerful word. And the multiplied instances of his casting out devils ; and even forcing the unclean spirits themselves to acknowledge and proclaim him the Son of God, as Matth. viii. 29.

But if any shall except against all these instances, as what might (for ought we know) be the agency of created spirits : There are others yet to be considered, that did certainly exceed the utmost stretch of angelic power. Such were his giving life unto the dead, and commanding their departed souls into their bodies, by the same powerful word by which they at first had their being. Thus he raised Jairus's daughter to life, to the just astonishment of the spectators, Mark v. 41. Thus he stops the mourning train, that were carrying the widow of Nain's son to the grave, and delivers him alive to his sorrowful mother, Luke vii. 14, 15. And thus he speaks
life

life into Lazarus, that had been four days dead, and was now corrupting in his grave, John xi. 43, 44. I might here also add the testimony borne to his heavenly mission, by the resurrection of many at the time of his crucifixion, Matth. xxvii. 52, 53. Though it be not expressly told us, that these were raised by his power; yet their resurrection was plainly done in honour to his sacred character, and an express declaration from Heaven that he was verily the Son of God.

But the greatest miracle at all was his own resurrection from the grave, which he assures us was performed by his own power, John x. 18. Which (if true) gives brightest evidence of his omnipotence; and that it was true is certain, in that God would never have justified a false pretender and impostor, by raising him from the dead: We have therefore a plain declaration from God himself, that Jesus Christ, our Lord, is the Son of God, with power, by his resurrection from the dead.

Upon the whole, It appears plain to me, that all the angels in heaven, or devils in hell, could not break the bars of the pit asunder, summon the dead from their graves, and cause them to reassume life and action. This must be the work of him only, who holds the keys of life and death in his hands.

But after all, were it admitted, that all these mentioned miracles might be performed by the interposition of angels; they are nevertheless God's seal, to justify Christ's person; and render his commission authentic. They were at least extraordinary works of providence, wrought in justification of our Lord's person and doctrine; and therefore a testimony from him, who either mediately or immediately governs all the wheels of providence, to that truth, which they were wrought in confirmation of; as we shall see more particularly hereafter.

It is true, that if these wonderful works were the agency of created spirits, they would not agree to the description of miracles, upon which I proposed to found the present argument. But then, there are multitudes of miraculous operations, professedly performed in the name, and by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, that do not, cannot lie open to any cavil or exception; and in which we have all the assurance of
 God's

God's immediate agency, that is possible to be obtained in any case whatsoever.

What I mean are the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, conferred not only on the apostles and other officers in the Church, but upon many (if not upon all) true believers, at the beginning of the gospel dispensation. The excellent author of *Miscellanea Sacra*, hath handled this subject with such strength and perspicuity, as to give infidelity a fatal wound, and lay it gasping at his feet. What I now propose is to just give you a few hints out of that admirable author, to convince you, that God has borne witness to Christianity, not only with signs and wonders, and diverse miracles (such as we have already treated of), but also with these gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Joel prophecies, in chap. ii. 28. "And it shall come to pass
"afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and
"your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men
"shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and
"also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those
"days, will I pour out my Spirit." And agreeably, John Baptist, Christ's forerunner, bare record, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove; and it abode upon him;
"and I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with
"water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the
"Spirit descending, the same is he which baptizeth with the
"Holy Ghost," John i. 32, 33. The material part of which record, the three other evangelists give us: Thus Matthew says of John Baptist, Matth. iii. 11. "I indeed baptize you
"with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me,
"is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear;
"he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." To the same purpose in Mark i. 8. and Luke iii. 16. Here are plain predictions of a prophetic spirit to be poured out upon all flesh; and of our Lord's baptizing his disciples with the Holy Ghost and with fire: But when should this be? Not while tabernacling here in the flesh, but after his ascension to the Father; as he himself assures his disciples, John xiv. 12. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth in me, the
"works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than
"these shall he do; because I go to my Father," ver. 16. "And
"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Com-
"forter,

“forter, that he may abide with you for ever,” ver. 26. “But
 “the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father
 “will send in my name, he shall teach you all things;
 “and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I
 “have said unto you.” Our Saviour adds, chap. xvi. 7.
 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you
 “that I go away: For if I go not away, the Comforter will
 “not come unto you: But if I depart, I will send him unto
 “you.” And after our Lord’s resurrection, he renews the
 same promise unto them, Luke xxiv. 49. “And behold, I
 “send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in
 “the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from
 “on high.” And, Acts i. 4, 5. “And being assembled toge-
 “ther with them, commanded them that they should not de-
 “part from Jerusalem: but wait for the promise of the Fa-
 “ther; which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John
 “truly baptized with water; but ye shall be *baptized with*
 “*the Holy Ghost*, not many days hence.” See also Mark xvi.
 17. John xx. 22.

Thus we have seen the prediction and promise of the gifts
 of the Holy Ghost. Let us next consider the accomplishment
 of these prophecies, which will appear in the clearest and
 strongest light, by reflecting upon the representation of this
 matter in the Acts and Epistles.

These gifts of the Spirit were communicated two different
 ways, either immediately, by the Holy Ghost’s falling upon
 them; or mediately, by the laying on of the apostles hands.
 Those who received the Holy Ghost in the former way, were
 said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, to have him “poured
 “out, or shed down upon them; or to be filled, or anointed
 “with the Holy Ghost.” See Acts xi. 15, 16. chap. ii. 23.
 and iv. 31. and x. 38. And probably none ever received the
 Holy Ghost in this immediate way, without the visible sym-
 bol of cloven tongues like as of fire. When the Holy Ghost
 did not so visibly descend, but was communicated by the im-
 position of hands, it is called the *giving and receiving the*
Holy Ghost, Acts viii. 15, 17, 18, 19. And the *ministring of*
the Spirit, Gal. iii. 5. And *impacting spiritual gifts*, Rom. i.
 11. I shall endeavour briefly to exemplify both these kinds

of inspirations or illuminations of the Holy Ghost, in some few instances.

The Holy Ghost is said to *fall* or to be *poured out* upon the disciples, but five times only. The first instance of this miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, was upon the apostles and their company. Acts ii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place: And suddenly there came a sound, as of a rushing mighty wind; and it filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire; and sat upon each of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This company, upon whom the Holy Ghost thus miraculously descended, were about an hundred and twenty men and women, as appears from chap. i. 14, 15. who are here said to be *all* with one accord in one place, when the Spirit fell upon them. [From the mixture of men and women in this inspired society, we may remark, as we pass along, the bright accomplishment of Joel's prophecy, that *the Spirit should be poured out upon the handmaids as well as servants of the Lord; and that daughters as well as sons, should prophecy.*]

The second instance of this kind was a new (and probably a like) effusion of the Spirit upon the same apostles and company, in answer to their prayer for *boldness* and courage, when they were brought before the council. Acts iv. 31. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and they spake the word of God with *boldness.*"

The third instance was in Saul, who (as a qualification for the apostleship, unto which he was designed) *was filled with the Holy Ghost*; Acts ix. 17. compared with chap. xiii. 9.

A fourth instance was in Cornelius and his household, who (that there might be no prejudice against admitting the profelytes of the gate, into the fellowship of the gospel) had the Holy Ghost poured out upon them, Acts x. 45, and *fell* upon them, as on the apostles and company at the beginning, chap. xi. 15.

The fifth and last instance of the effusion of the Holy Ghost,

without the imposition of hands, was on the first harvest of idolatrous Gentiles, that were converted to the Christian faith; which was at Antioch in Pisidia, Acts xiii. 16. *ad fin.* For it is said of them, verse 52, that they were *filled with the Holy Ghost*. And there is no mention of any imposition of hands to that purpose.

We are next to consider how the gifts of the Holy Ghost were received, in a more mediate way, by the laying on of the apostles hands. Under which head I shall only observe, that these miraculous gifts of the Spirit were conferred upon very many; and probably upon all true believers, wherever the apostles came. This will appear from these considerations:

Our blessed Saviour promised this success to the apostles ministry, that these signs shall follow them that believe: *In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, Mark xvi. 17, 18. And the apostle Peter promises the three thousand, Acts ii. 38. That upon their repentance and baptism, they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. And he likewise speaks of the Holy Ghost, as *given to them (i. e. to all them) that obey him*, Acts v. 32. Where he could not mean the sanctifying influences, but must intend these miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost: For the Holy Ghost is here spoken of, as a witness of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, whereof these gifts were an unquestionable evidence, (see Acts ii. 33.) But not the common sanctifying gifts of the Spirit: these could be no evidence at all of these truths unto others.

As soon as the Samaritans were converted by Philip, the apostles send Peter and John to them, that they might receive these gifts of the Spirit: *And they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost*, Acts viii. 14,—17. When Paul came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples there, he asked them (as a question of course, which he constantly proposed to all that he did not know), *Have ye received the Holy Ghost?* And finding they had not, *he laid his hands on them; and the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied*, Acts xix. 1,—6.

All the members of the church of Corinth, seem to have had these gifts in a very plentiful manner. They *spake with tongues, they prophesied, they interpreted*, 1 Cor. xiv. throughout. *Every one of them had a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation*, verse 26. And that these gifts were not peculiar to the Corinthians, but were at least frequent in other churches also, appears from 1 Cor. i. 7. where the apostle tells them, that *they came behind in no gift*. And from 2 Cor. xiii. 12. where he tells them, that they *were not inferior to other churches*, i. e. in these signs, wonders, and mighty deeds, the evidence of his apostleship among them, as appears from verse 11. Which plainly shews us that these gifts were in the other churches also, though not in a superior degree. The same thing appears from most of the other epistles to the churches, as may be seen from Gal iii 2, 5. Eph. i. 13, 17. 1 Thes. i. 5. and v. 20. 2 Tim. i 6, 14. Heb. vi. 4, 5. 1 Pet. i. 12. 1 John ii, 20. With too many other texts, to the same purpose, to be now distinctly enumerated.

These gifts of the Spirit, whereof I am treating, were sudden illuminations of the mind, whereby the recipients were instantaneously endued, with the knowledge of a vast variety of languages, Acts ii. begin. and chap. x. 46. With a large extensive knowledge of all needful doctrines of religion, whereby they were able to teach the mind of God clearly, and powerfully, Rom. ii. 10, 11, 12. and 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. With the gift of prophecy, whereby they could foretel future events, Acts xi. 28. and chap. xx. 23. And could discern the spirits of others, and tell the secrets of their hearts, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, 32. And also judge of the fitness of persons for peculiar service in the Church, Acts xiii. 1, 2. and 1 Tim. i. 18. They were frequently inspired with new revelations, 1 Cor. xiv. 30. With the gift of interpreting, as well as speaking foreign languages, 1 Cor. xiv. 27. With courage and fluency of speech upon all occasions, 1 Cor. i. 5. To all which, and many other gifts that might be mentioned, I may add, that some of these had the gifts of working miracles, and of healing diseases, as appears from 1 Cor. xii. 29, 30. And all the apostles were instrumental, by laying on of their hands, to impart these gifts to others, wherever they themselves came —

A more summary exemplification of these several gifts, may

be found in 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9, 10. *For to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues.*

Though these gifts of the Holy Ghost are sometimes in scripture distinguished from miracles, particularly in Heb. ii. 4. yet as they are elsewhere expressly so denominated, (see Gal. iii. 5. and 1 Cor. xii. 29.) so were they certainly, in their own nature, miracles of the highest kind, such as could not have been wrought by the united power and skill of all created spirits: For though we know not what power angels may have; yet we may certainly know, that it is the peculiar prerogative of the Father of spirits, so to enlarge the faculties of the soul of man, as to communicate those degrees of knowledge in an instant, which probably the most capacious mind could not contain; without these Divine inspirations; and which certainly the most sagacious of human beings could not obtain in an ordinary way, without spending his whole life in the closest application to those studies. No man living can conceive how so many arts and Divine sciences could be at once imparted to them, by any but him, who is the Author of our souls, and can enlarge their faculties as he pleases.

To exemplify this in two of these gifts, which seem to have been common to most of the first believers; the gift of tongues, and of prophecy. Was it possible for unlearned men and women, to instantaneously possess such a vast variety of languages, in such perfection, as to be able to use them with readiness and propriety, upon all proper occasions; without having their minds enlarged, and this knowledge communicated to them, by an infinite agent? Was it possible that any but he, who only foreknows all future events, could inspire these disciples with a spirit of prophecy, whereby they could foretell things to come? Or that any but he who knows the mind of the Spirit, and searches the heart and reins, could enable these to discern the spirits, and know the secret thoughts of other mens hearts? No surely! we may as well attribute

all the incommunicable perfections of God to a created being, as these miraculous gifts and operations.

Thus I have considered some of those miracles performed by our blessed Lord in his life, and by his power and authority after his crucifixion; which are an evident attestation from Heaven, not only to his Divine mission and commission, but to the whole Christian institution. But it is time I proceed to the consideration of some further evidences, that there were such miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The reporters of these miracles have all the marks of honesty, integrity, and honour.

The doctrines they taught, shew the innocence and divine excellencies of their faith. The unexampled pains and fatigues they underwent to propagate these doctrines, shew them sincere and in earnest in their profession; and make it evident, that they themselves both believed and practised what they taught to others: And the most spiteful and malicious of their enemies never did, and therefore we may be sure never could charge them with any impiety and immorality of life.

That they were eminent for their sanctity, as well as other extraordinary endowments, appears from their success. What irresistible charm so suddenly conquered the mighty opposition, and insuperable obstacles, in the hearts and lives of men, against the gospel? What torrent bore down those seats of luxury and voluptuousness, those sanctuaries of idolatry and devil-worship, that were subjected to the cross of Christ? How came so many people, cities, and countries, converted from the opinions and manners which they had embraced from their infancy, to those not only different, but contrary? The despised doctrine of the cross had no such charms in it, in the eye of carnal reason, as to produce such wonderful effects. The unlettered fisherman, by whose instrumentality this amazing change was wrought, had no advantage of military power, or of learned art and eloquence, to force them to submission. These things therefore loudly proclaim the innocency and sanctity of their lives, without which they could not have been regarded. Nay more than so, these things clearly evidence that the apostles and other disciples, had themselves miraculous gifts; and did confirm their doctrine by miraculous operations; without which seal of Heaven it would have been impossible

impossible to have persuaded so many to forsake their lusts and pleasures, their comfort, ease and safety, for a persecuted religion, and a crucified Saviour.

Thus we see that the witnesses were above reproach. And if we always allow for truth, what is confirmed by a number of faithful witnesses, we may well depend upon the joint testimony of such a number, who could all truly appeal to the world, that they had *renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness; nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, had commended themselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God,* as 2 Cor. iv. 2.

3. These miraculous works and spiritual gifts, reported by the sacred writers, were matters of fact, in which it was impossible that they themselves could be deceived.

Our Lord's miracles were not matters of speculation or science, wherein the understandings of the disciples might be imposed upon: but matters of fact, that came under the immediate cognizance of their senses; such as they could see, hear, and feel; and be ascertained of, by all possible means of certainty.—They were not dark and obscure performances; they were not done in a corner: but most visibly, in the open light, and view of the world; so that there could be no possible opportunity of legerdemain, juggle, or deceit.—They were not only some few, and doubtful, but multitudes of unquestionable miracles, repeated again and again, in view of the same persons, who daily waited on their Master, and saw his wonderful works.—Nor were these things done before some few ignorant, and brain-sick persons; but in the face of the world, before multitudes of all sorts (beside the twelve apostles, seventy disciples, and many others that followed our Lord) who all acknowledged the facts; though they were not all converted by them.—And, to sum up all, these same witnesses assure us, that they, and many others beside them, had themselves the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; and were employed in working the same or like miracles, in Christ's name, and by his power and authority.

And now, will it not out-do the utmost strength of imagination, to find out the means by which these witnesses could be deceived? Is it possible for any man to be more certain that he ever saw the sun, than these could be that they saw the

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the sick healed, the dead raised, their Lord expiring upon the cross, restored again to life, eating drinking and conversing familiarly with them forty days together, and ascending up to heaven before their eyes? Is it impossible to have greater assurance of any thing we do, or can do, than these could have, that they themselves, and multitudes beside them; had the gifts of languages, prophecy, and other miraculous powers; and did perform many miracles in the name of Christ? The apostles therefore justly refer to these means of knowledge, as sure evidences, that they could not be deceived in the doctrines they taught. 2 Pet. ii. 16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: but were eye-witnesses of his Majesty.* And 1 John i. 1. *That which—we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon; and our hands have handled of the word of life.*

4. As these witnesses were incapable to be deceived themselves, in the facts reported by them, so were they without any possible temptation to deceive others, by obtruding falsehoods of this kind upon the world.

The common springs of great actions lay altogether out of their way; and could be no motive to them, to impose upon mankind in this matter.—They could not hope for honour or worldly grandeur, by appearing at the head of a despised party; and by being of a sect every where spoken against. They could not make their court to princes and the great men of the world, by a religion which they all opposed and persecuted. They could not ingratiate themselves with the Jews, nor gain esteem and applause from them, by subverting their darling constitution, and charging the guilt of most precious innocent blood upon them. They could not expect honour and reputation from the Gentiles, by condemning their manners, decrying their religion, and vilifying their gods. No! they had nothing to expect from their doctrine of the Cross, but to be (like their Master) *despised and rejected of men*, and every where loaded with contumely and reproach, stripes and imprisonment. This indeed was what their Lord had foretold them; and in just expectation hereof they undertook his service.

And now let us see whether riches and wealth could be their incentive,

incentive, to publish these miracles, and preach a crucified Saviour. So far from it, that poverty and penury, distressing indigence and want of all things, were the necessary consequences of their extremely difficult and perillous travels through the world (to preach this doctrine), where they had nothing to depend upon for sustenance; but that Providence which giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens when they cry.

Or could a view to worldly ease and pleasure animate them to their undertaking? Could these be expected, by forsaking their country and kindred, by travelling from nation to nation, both by sea and land, and running upon the pikes of all difficulty and danger? Did they not know before-hand, as well as find by experience, that they should be hated of all men for Christ's name sake; and that in every city bonds and afflictions did abide them?

Upon the whole then, When we can find men in love with misery and ruin, when we can see men court poverty, and hugg contempt, fetters, and bonds; and prefer both a miserable life and death, to riches and honour, liberty and ease, then may we imagine that the apostles had some forcible motive to impose forgeries and lies upon us, in the case before us.

But what sets this matter in the clearest light is, that they sealed this testimony with their blood. Though it be possible that men may be martyrs for a false religion; yet it must be when they think the religion true, for which they die, and so are equally acted by the dictates of conscience, in their sufferings, as if it was indeed the cause of God. But now there were multitudes, who parted with their lives in confirmation of the Christian religion, that were themselves the coiners and forgers of the doctrine, if it was an imposture. They could not themselves be deceived (as I have already proved), and therefore their report must necessarily be true: Or else they must be charged with sacrificing their lives to confirm a lie of their own inventing; and a lie which the most exquisite torments could never cause any one of them to retract, or repent of. In a word, they must be supposed to part with all temporal comfort, with all worldly satisfactions, and even with life itself; nay, and even to destroy both body and soul

for ever, without any manner of reason or motive. And I am sure this is what every body must allow to be so repugnant to human nature, as to be altogether impossible.

Thus we have seen the strongest evidence of these truths, that any facts in the world were ever capable of: And have thereby stripped infidelity of all its armour; and found just satisfaction, that the apostles and other promulgators of the gospel have “approved themselves the ministers of God, in their
“patience; in their afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watchings, and fastings,” 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5.

5. The reported miracles were matters of fact; in which it was impossible that these historians could deceive the world at the time when their narratives were published.

Let us first consider this case, with respect to the miracles performed by our Lord, while tabernacling in the flesh. These (as we observed before) are said to be done most publicly and openly, in the eye of the world, before the most malignant and implacable enemies to Christ, who by all their vigilance and subtilty could not detect any deceit or imposture; nor did they charge the sacred story with falshood or forgery. The narratives were written in the place where the facts were said to be done, immediately after the performance of those wonderful transactions, when they were fresh in every body's memory; and when no body could be ignorant of their truth or falshood. Had therefore these histories been false, they must have been so far from gaining repute, and making proselytes, that they had been censured, confuted, and testified against, as the most wicked and impudent forgeries that ever the sun saw. They could not have been neglected or disregarded, as too mean and trivial for particular notice: For as they were themselves of greatest importance, so were they esteemed by the Jews (among whom these miracles were both acted and published) of too great moment and consequence, to be slightly overlooked. This appears by their fortified prejudice, flaming rage, and malicious opposition, both to the doctrine and publishers of the gospel. Whence it plainly appears, nothing but full conviction of the truth of these miracles, could silence all opposition, that not a dog should move his tongue against them.

But what very much strengthens this argument, is not only the adversaries tacit assent to these matters of fact; but their explicit attestation to some of them. Thus does Josephus, the Jewish historian, give us an epitome of the life, death, and resurrection of our Saviour, whom he acknowledges a worker of great miracles. Tacitus, the Roman historian, informs us also of the time and circumstances of his death; and Tiberius the Emperor, upon a letter from Pilate, informing him of the miracles, death, and resurrection of Christ, moved in Senate, that he might be numbered among their gods, which was rejected by the Senate, because the motion was not first from themselves*. I shall pass over many other remarks of the like kind; and only observe, that the Jews universally, from that time till now, have acknowledged the truth of these miraculous operations; and inform us of many of them, whereof there is no mention in the Gospels. They indeed sufficiently manifest their spite and malice against Christ, by ascribing (in a most ludicrous manner) his miraculous works, to wicked and unlawful arts: But the facts themselves they have never denied.

And now let us take a short view of the case, with respect to those miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which we have before treated. These, at the first effusion of the Spirit, are said to have been most openly manifested, in the view of "devout men, out of every nation under heaven," in a most public time, place, and manner: The whole world therefore had the advantage of discovering the fraud, and of contradicting the story, if this narrative had been false.—Besides, the apostle in almost all his epistles to the churches, not only mentions these gifts, as what they themselves had experienced, and were vested with: But frequently directs and exhorts them to a right use and improvement of them; which implies an appeal to the churches, that there were such gifts exercised among them. And what adds strength to the evidence is, that the apostle reproves the Romans and Corinthians for their pride and conceit about these gifts, which occasioned contentions and parties amongst them (see Rom. xii. 3,—8. and 1 Cor. xii, xiii, xiv. chapters). Now can it be imagined, that any

* See Baxter's *Saints Rest*, Chap. 4. Part II. where many testimonies of the adversaries to Christianity may be found.

any man in an epistle to a society, where there are heats and parties, would so particularly have directed them to the use, and so largely have reprov'd them for the abuse of such gifts, as they must all know were not in any of them? This were not only ridiculous conduct, but perfect distraction. And what yet further strengthens this evidence is, that the apostle puts the truth of his doctrine and his apostolical authority upon this proof, when some of the churches were in a great measure drawn away from his gospel, and preferred the Jewish false apostles, with their licentious doctrines, before him. This was evidently the case of the Corinthians and Galatians, and especially the former, unto whom the apostle urges this argument again and again in his first epistle to them: and shews them that if he was not an apostle to others, yet doubtless he was to them: *For (says he) the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord,* chap. ix. 2. What this seal or evidence of his apostleship was, appears from his second epistle, where he resumes the same argument, particularly in chap. xii. 12, 13. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds: *For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches?* And thus he puts the truth of his character and his gospel upon this single evidence. Gal. iii. 1, 2, 5. *O foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, &c. This only would I learn of you, received you the Spirit by the works of the law; or by the hearing of faith? He therefore that ministrereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Now can it be conceived, that the apostle would put the proof of the truth of his gospel, and his apostolical character, upon gifts of the Holy Ghost, conferred upon them by his instrumentality; and that in a dispute with false apostles, rivalling him in those churches, when there were no such gifts among them? Such a supposition is the height of absurdity. It was utterly impossible, that these churches could be imposed upon in this matter: And it was also impossible to impose upon the world about them, who had all imaginable advantages and opportunity to examine these facts, and to discover their truth or falshood*.

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* If any would see this argument more largely handled, they may read the forementioned *Miscellanea Sacra*, from which I have taken these last hints.

Upon the whole, It is as clear as the light, that the world was not, could not be imposed upon by these reports, when they were first published. Whence the apostle boldly makes that appeal to king Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 26. *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: For I am persuaded, that none of these things are hidden from him: For this thing was not done in a corner.*

6. We have also good assurance, that these narratives are handed down uncorrupted unto the present time.

The actions recorded by the sacred writers, were notably amous in the world, such as procured great revolutions and alterations in states; and even turned the world upside down, by the conversion of so many from superstition and idolatry, to the true worship of God. Whence they were worthy the critical notice of every one. The records have been kept publicly in all ages; and publicly preached by the ministers of Christ, which has given the most negligent enemy advantage to discover and detect any fraudulent depravation, or interpolation, had there been any such.

And what makes this clearer, multitudes of most bitter adversaries have in every age been converted to Christianity, who could not want means to discover any fraud of this kind; nor could they profess, and even suffer and die for a known falsehood.

Besides, the doctrine taught in this blessed book, rendered the professors of Christianity incapable to corrupt it: No less than eternal damnation is therein denounced against him that shall add or diminish one jot or tittle of the sacred canon. Should an angel from heaven teach any other doctrine than what is there taught, he is pronounced accursed. What temptation then could any have to vitiate these records, who kept them as their rule of life, and charter for future glory?

They that were friends to Christianity and believed the history of these miracles, could not corrupt them, on purpose to procure damnation to their own souls. They that were enemies to Christianity, and disbelieved these truths, would not corrupt them, on purpose to prepare armour against their own infidelity. From whence then could such a depravation come, when the interest both of friends and enemies was every way so strongly against it?

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But had any man, or society of men, never so earnestly desired, and never so artfully attempted such an interpolation, it must have been without success: For these records, in the very words of the sacred penmen, were immediately in the hands of multitudes of people, translated into various languages, and dispersed through all nations, which rendered it impossible for the world to be imposed upon, by such fraud and villany. It were easier to suppose, that a designing knave could corrupt our Magna Charta, frame a new body of laws for England, trump them upon us, and wheedle us into the belief, that these are and always have been the statutes of the nation; than to imagine the like corruption in these statutes of Heaven. For the statute-books are in the hands of but one nation only: the New Testament (as I observed) dispersed through the world, and found in every copy of it to agree, in attesting these miraculous facts.

Thus have we utmost certainty, that the accounts of these acts, now in our hands, are the uncorrupted writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. And thus do we see the promise hitherto fulfilled, that the *word of the Lord shall endure for ever, even that word which by the gospel is preached unto us*, 1 Pet. i. 25.

We are now prepared to consider,

III. That these miracles, which I have proved to have been wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, both before and after his passion, are a full evidence that he was approved of God, and had his mission from him.

This may be evinced by the following considerations:

1. These miracles are certainly the work of God himself; his direct agency is plainly visible in them.

If it be possible for any created beings to work a true miracle, yet such their agency must be always under God's controul: otherwise the infernal powers might interrupt the revolutions of nature, and bring the world into a chaos. Such miracles therefore, whosoever be the instrumental agent, must be acknowledged the works of God. God is himself as near to the effect when he useth instruments, as when he acts immediately without them. But I have put the present issue (as you heard before) upon such miracles only, as are the immediate effects of Omnipotence; that there can be no room
either

either for ignorance or malice, to raise any cavil in this case. If the facts are true (as I have already proved them to be), all the world must own, that the wonderful works which did shew forth themselves in our Lord Jesus Christ, were the mighty works of God; that those sacred gifts, which we have considered, were certainly Divine: And that these did as certainly discover God's immediate efficiency, as the works of creation. Whence it is certain, that our Lord Jesus had this approbation of the Deity, and this seal to his commission, that God did by him, and he by his apostles, perform such stupendous works, as justly amazed the world, and infinitely exceeded the power of all created angels. And it was therefore a just and natural inference, made by Nicodemus, John iii. 2. *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: For no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

2. It is contrary to the goodness and faithfulness of God to justify an impostor, or confirm a falsehood by miracles.

It is impossible that we should in this imperfect state, have better evidence, that any person or doctrine is from God, than these miracles are. By these we have visibly before our eyes, God's own immediate agency: We see the extraordinary display of his Omnipotent power; we certainly know that there is the immediate finger of God in these mighty works. And our Lord Jesus produces this seal of Heaven, as a voucher to his doctrine and authority: He declares himself to be the expected Messiah; and these surprising wonders are wrought to confirm it. He publishes, by his disciples, his resurrection from the dead; and his ascension into heaven, which are also confirmed by the same evidence. Both he and his disciples appeal to the senses of mankind, that he is indeed what he declares himself, the Son of God, and Lord of life and glory; and that he has indeed been *declared the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead.* God justifies the appeal from heaven, and gives the visible testimony of miracles, both before and after his crucifixion, that he is his *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.* Infidelity can therefore have no place of retreat. We must believe in this Saviour, or disbelieve the attestation of the God of truth. If we are deceived, the deceit is inevitable; and the best men in the world, who
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have the most sincere love to God, and despise whatever is desirable or terrible, for his sake and service, are deluded, in their most important concerns, by God himself. Now, can it be imagined, can we entertain the least thought, that infinite Holiness would thus justify a fraudulent imposture; that infinite Truth and Faithfulness would thus seal to a lie; and that infinite Wisdom and Goodness would thus give up the world to unavoidable error and delusion? No surely! To refuse this testimony, is not only stupidity and madness, that transforms men into brutes; but obstinacy and malice, not far distant from the nature of devils.

Thus we see two most faithful witnesses, the power and veracity of God, deposed to the truth of our Saviour's heavenly mission. Whence we must divest ourselves of reason and humanity, or yield to the irresistible force of our Lord's argument, John x. 37, 38. *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.* I may add to all this,

3. There is no religion under heaven, that can bring the attestation of miracles for its confirmation, but the Christian religion only.

Here all the patrons of infidelity may be challenged, to produce one instance, since the creation of the world, that looks any thing like a parallel to the case before us. Let them search all the histories of the Pagan deities; let them call in the help of the Alcoran, or what other legendary fables they please; and bring convincing proof of but one single miracle wrought in confirmation of any other doctrine.—I am sensible they can produce romantic and fabulous histories enough, that will discover the fruitful invention of the obscure deceitful authors; such as Philostratus's life of Apollonius Tyanæus, Mahomet's night-journey to heaven, and the infamous Popish Legends: But what attestation have they to the truth of these facts, and what to confirm our belief of them; but the bare reports of the unknown authors? Just as much as can be brought to prove the seventy years sleep of Epimenides, Lucian's true history, or any other idle romance.

If the wonders wrought by the Egyptian forcerers be here objected; the answer is easy. They were none of them miracles

racles of this superior kind, which we have now been considering: none of them necessarily discovered the immediate agency of Divine Omnipotence. Besides, they were immediately controlled by greater miracles, in which the magicians themselves were forced to acknowledge the finger of God: And therefore they were an attestation to nothing else, but Satan's impotent malice and shameful foil. God served himself of these wonders; thereby taking occasion to glorify his own superior power. And he might probably permit them for that very end. No man could be deceived by them, when there was such an obvious preservative. Upon the whole, I may sum up this evidence, by applying of that text to the present case, in John xv. 24. *If Christ had not done such works as none other man could do, we had not had sin; but now we have no cloak left for our sin of unbelief.*

Before I proceed to a particular application of this doctrine, I would here more particularly observe, that whatever has been said to verify the Divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, may equally serve to confirm the truth and heavenly original of the whole Christian religion. The doctrine, and the person of Christ, are authorized of God, by the same seal of Heaven. If the Lord Jesus be indeed the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind, his institutions must be worthy of his glorious nature and office. If the apostles, and other holy writers, were indeed commissioned and inspired of him, they were equally incapable to deceive us, in an affair of everlasting consequence.

If it be demanded, how can we be certain that the sacred penmen were Divinely inspired, in writing the New Testament? I answer, we have the same assurance of this, as of the matters of fact by them reported. They themselves attest it. They have proved themselves persons of probity and integrity. They could not be deceived in this matter, but must certainly know whether they were acted by a heavenly inspiration, or not. They could have no temporal inducement, to obtrude false doctrine, any more than false history upon us; but sealed both with their blood. And we have the same security, that both have been handed down uncorrupted to our times.

To all which we have this additional evidence, that God

declared from heaven his approbation of their doctrine, by the gifts of the Holy Ghost conferred upon them. Christ promised them this seal to their commission, that *the works that he did, they should do also; and greater works than these, when he was gone to the Father*, John xiv. 12. And that *he would send the promise of his Father upon them; and endue them with power from on high*, Luke xxiv. 49. Which promise was visibly verified to them. The Holy Spirit did (as was promised), descend from heaven upon them, and instantly invest them with the knowledge of various languages (so that they could speak them with their peculiar idioms and accents), and with the several other gifts, which we have before considered; whereby they were qualified to travel through the nations, and universally publish the glad tidings of salvation: And wherever they went, *they made the Gentiles obedient; by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God*, Rom. xv. 18, 19. They every where confirmed their doctrine, by leaving behind them some miraculous blessing, either upon the body, or mind, or both. Serpents were tamed, devils ejected, the sick healed, and the dead raised at their word. And we have the most unquestionable evidence of these facts, that we can have of any thing not done in our own sight, as you heard before. We are therefore constrained to give a full and entire assent to all the doctrines of Christianity, as *what God has borne witness to, both with signs and wonders; and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will*, Heb. ii. 4. But it is time we draw to a

CONCLUSION:

THIS doctrine teaches us what indispensable obligations we lie under, to a life of holy obedience to this precious Saviour, whom the Father hath sanctified, sent into the world, and thus incontestibly declared to be *his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased*.

I hope, what you have heard, has brought you, without any hesitation, to conclude with Philip, John i. 45. *We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph*. Whence you will all be ready to address our Lord, in the language of Nathaniel, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*. Bat

it concerns you also to consider, that *Christ came to save his people from their sins*, and not in them. He came to *redeem us from all iniquity; and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And the design of the gospel is, *to turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Christianity consists not merely in speculation, but in practice. We must not only give our assent to the truth of the gospel, but give up our hearts to Christ. The faith which he requires, is not a slight superficial belief, that he is the Redeemer of mankind; but such a faith as will form us into subjection and obedience to himself.

Do we believe that Jesus Christ is our only Saviour, what stupidity, what madness then is it, to reject or neglect him, and his tendered salvation; to retain our lusts and perish in them! Do we believe the truth of the gospel, and can we, notwithstanding, be deaf to all its gracious invitations; and despise all its promises and threatenings; as if they were mere fables? Are we lifted up to heaven by the exhibitions of so great a salvation; and shall we nevertheless cast ourselves down to hell, by wilfully refusing it, and preferring our sinful pleasures before it! This is not only to reproach our holy profession; but to bring such a degree of guilt upon our own souls, as will render us most inexcusable, and most aggravatedly miserable at last. Let us therefore, *that name the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* Let his throne be set up in our hearts, that all our faculties may bow down to him. Let us chuse him for our portion, seek an interest in him with importunate earnestness and diligence, depend upon him as *the Lord our righteousness*, and live to him with our whole hearts. If we thus come to him, he will in no wise cast us out: But otherwise, our most flourishing profession will not secure us from having our portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, in the day of retribution.

I am sensible, that there lies an objection yet in our way: Some may be ready to say, *How shall we know in what way to serve Christ to his acceptance?* There are so many particular sects and parties among professed Christians, each of whom censure and condemn the other, that we know not where to find rest for the soles of our feet; nor in which of these different paths to steer our course for heaven.

This objection, I confess, may procure trouble and difficul-

ty to some sincere and well-minded persons; as well as offence and scandal to them of a wavering and unsettled faith. I shall therefore spend the remaining time before us, in obviating this difficulty; and in giving you plain directions, how you may be infallibly secure of serving Christ acceptably here; and of inheriting the reward of a patient continuance in well-doing hereafter.

1. Then, labour to make sure of a true and lively faith in Jesus Christ.

No one, of whatever sect or party, ever did or ever will get to heaven, without a true unfeigned faith; nor will any true believer, however denominated, fall short of eternal life. Faith transforms the soul into the Divine nature; and God cannot be displeased with his own image, wherever it is. Our great concern therefore is, to fly to the blood of Christ for cleansing, and to his righteousness for justification; to lie at the footstool of his grace, with a humble sense of our own nothingness, and with importunate suits for the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby we may receive *Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him*. If we are chargeable with many mistakes, in matters not essential to salvation; yet, being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall appear *without spot and blameless, the sons of God without rebuke*, in the great day of trial. In that day it will not be enquired, who is of Paul? who of Apollos? or who of Cephas? But who is faithfully united unto Jesus Christ? And then shall the promise be certainly verified, in John iii. 16. That *whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life*.

2. Evidence the truth and sincerity of your faith, by a holy and heavenly life.

Faith without holiness is as a carcase without breath. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not (cannot) commit sin*, 1 John iii. 9. The allowed practice of any sin, either of omission or commission, is inconsistent with the quality and grace of a regenerate state. There is no middle between a saint and an unbeliever: So that to entertain hopes of our justification, and yet live an idle or sensual life, is to *compass ourselves about with sparks of our own kindling*, that will expose us at least to lie down in sorrow. The best means therefore to discover the sincerity of our profession, and the safety of our state, is to shew our faith by our works. If we are true believers, our

hearts are purified by faith : And if we are pure in heart, we shall see God. Let us then walk as becomes the gospel of Christ. *Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness, in the fear of God.* And God will approve himself no respecter of persons, but in every nation, and in every sect and party, *he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of him,* Acts x. 34, 35.

3. Embrace, and live upon those doctrines which tend most to debase yourselves, and magnify the free grace of God.

The whole of our salvation, from the first corner stone, unto its complete perfection in glory, is a continued series of infinite free grace. *By grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God,* Eph. ii. 8. Mercy must shine forth in its brightest glory, if such guilty rebels, as we, are saved, and such brands are plucked out of the fire of sin and hell. Wherefore, if we ever hope to find acceptance with our Lord Jesus Christ, we must come to him with an impressed sense, that we are *poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked,* that we deserve nothing but wrath ; and can do nothing that will entitle us to his favour. We must come to him both for power to serve him, and for a gracious acceptance of our services, for his own sake, and not for ours. We must remember that we are indigent beggars, that live only upon alms ; that we are criminal delinquents, that are kept from execution by mere sparing goodness ; and therefore, have our whole dependance upon Christ, to do all in us and for us ; *to be of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* In a word, we must not depend upon works of righteousness that we have done, or can do ; but *count all as loss and dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law ; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

It is remarkable, that most of the heresies that have ever sprung up in the church have some way or other exposed those fundamental articles of our faith and hope, the sovereignty of free grace in our sanctification, and the necessity of Christ's imputed righteousness, in order to our justification and acceptance with God. *But my soul, come not thou into their secret : mine honour, be not thou united to their assembly,* who thus depreciate the grace of God, and the satisfaction of Christ, and

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thus subvert the whole scope and design of the gospel. Let us avoid all such errors, as most dangerous shelves and quicksands, in our voyage to heaven, whoever profess them, and with what colours soever they are painted: And venture our salvation only upon unmerited mercy, hoping to be *justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. iii. 24.—Let Christ have all the glory of our salvation now, that we may hereafter join with those that shall ascribe *glory and dominion for ever and ever, to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and made us kings and priests, unto God and his Father.*

4. Religiously attend all the ordinances and institutions of Christ.

Let the word of Christ be your rule of worship, your directory in the service of God. Let it be your care to *keep the ordinances as they have been delivered to you* in the holy scriptures: And, while you adhere to this rule, be not ashamed to confess, that *after the way, which some call heresy, or schism, so worship you the God of your fathers.* It must be the character of every true Christian, that he endeavours to *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless*, Luke i. 6. Though the means of grace may want all that external pomp, beauty, or ornament, that will recommend them to a carnal eye, as worthy of special regard; yet how weak and foolish soever they may appear, they are the institutions of God, which he will therefore own and bless. *It has pleased God by the foolishness of his ordinances to save them that believe*, 1 Cor. i. 21. And we have no reason to hope for salvation in the contempt or wilful neglect of them. If we would find Christ, we must seek him where he walks, *in the midst of his golden candlesticks.* If we would inherit the blessing, we must *watch daily at Christ's gates, and wait at the posts of his doors.* Whoever pretend any other way to heaven, than this path of ordinances, which God has marked out for us, *after the first and second admonition reject them.*

5. Concern yourselves as little as possible with matters of doubtful disputation: But where you must be of a party, chuse the charitable side.

There will be different sentiments among Christians, as long as we are on this side Jordan. We shall not come to an exact unity in all articles of faith, until *that which is in part shall be*

be done away ; and we know even as also we are known. But cannot we bear with the different thoughts, as well as different complections of those that agree with us in the essentials of Christianity ; and *receive one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God ?* Have we no way to approve ourselves disciples of the Prince of Peace, but by wranglings, contentions, strife and debate ? This is a direct means to destroy all practical religion ; and wholly root out all serious vital piety.

It is true, we cannot ourselves be of two contrary persuasions. It is of necessity, that we part ways with those, in some disputed points, with whom we may agree in the main foundations of our faith and hope ; and with whom we hope to join in eternal anthems of praise. But how shall plain and weak Christians act in this case ? How shall they know with what party to join ? It is impossible that I should now descend to particular directions in this case ; I must therefore content myself with commending that general rule of the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 22. *Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* Never herd yourselves with those that are for cutting off all the Protestant churches, but themselves, from the fold of Christ ; nor expect to be saved by damning every body but yourselves.

Finally, Constantly and fervently commit your souls to the keeping and conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are liable to a thousand mistakes ; but we have a safe and sure Pilot, upon whom we may boldly depend. *If we commit our way to him, he will bring it to pass.* If he leaves us to lesser mistakes, he will save us from damning errors, unless our own sin and sloth put us out of his protection. We must therefore not only carefully and diligently try ourselves ; but with greatest earnestness and constancy, implore the directions of his Holy Spirit ; and wrestle with him by earnest prayer, that he will *search us and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting :* That he will *guide us by his counsel, and afterward bring us to glory.* And in that way, we may with courage conclude, with the apostle, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have trusted ; and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day.*

THE TRUE
SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINE
CONCERNING SOME
IMPORTANT POINTS
OF
CHRISTIAN FAITH;

PARTICULARLY,

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

REPRESENTED AND APPLIED

IN FIVE DISCOURSES.

By JONATHAN DICKINSON, A. M.
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WITH A PREFACE BY THE REV. THOMAS FOXCROFT.
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towards the angels, as towards ourselves; nor is this so particularly revealed to us in his word.—That I may give a clearer view of what I intend by this description, I shall consider the several parts of it something distinctly, with some evidences of the justice and propriety of each of them.—This is not the place to prove the truth of the proposition; and to offer the evidences of such a decree of God: But, upon the supposal of such a decree, to consider what it is necessary, from the nature and word of God, to understand by it.

I describe God's decree to be his eternal counsel. For though we have no adequate idea of eternity, nor of him *who inhabits eternity*; yet we must suppose, either that all God's determinations with respect to us were eternal, or that they had a beginning in time. If the latter, there must have been a time wherein God did not know, or did not conclude, what the future state of his creatures should be; which I think none dare suppose. We may not imagine the counsels of an infinite mind like our own, gradual and successive, temporary and mutable. This were to attribute to the glorious God a state of forgetfulness and inactivity, or doubtfulness and uncertainty, before he came to a result in his mind how he would be glorified in his works; which is infinitely unworthy of him.—Besides, we must consider of the decrees of God as of God himself decreeing; and consequently, if he himself be eternal, his decrees must likewise be eternal. To conceive of God's knowledge and will to be something distinct from his nature, is to suppose him a composition of parts and powers, which is altogether inconsistent with his being infinite; and if we consider these as the necessary result of his nature, they must be (as his nature is) eternal.—The special acts of God's purpose or counsel cannot indeed be considered as essential to God. His choosing Peter (for instance) to salvation, does not appear so necessarily to flow from his essence. He might have been the same God, if Peter had not been elected. But that will of God, by which Peter was chosen to salvation, does belong to his being; and must necessarily act from eternity, in that way which is most agreeable to all the perfections of his nature.—Thus, in whatever view we consider this case, the decree of God must be his eternal counsel: *He bath*

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from the beginning (i. e. from eternity) *chosen us to salvation,*
2 Theff. ii. 13.

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

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But we must by no means attribute any possibility of mistake either to the purposes or operations of God. From all which it is apparent, that the eternal counsels of God must be wholly resolved into this, *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*, Matth. xi. 26.—*Being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, Eph. i. 11.

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

I have described the decree of election, to be God's purpose to give grace and glory to the elect. And it is for want of a due attention to this, that so many objections have arisen in mens minds, against the doctrine now before us.—Should we conceive of the decree of God, as his unalterable determination to give eternal life to any particular persons, without giving them previous qualifications for it, this would plunge us into difficulties that we could not get out of.—If he absolutely determined the eternal salvation of any, whether they were prepared for it or not, where were his holiness? If he designed to save some, and leave others that would be equally meet subjects of his saving mercy, where were the rectitude of his moral government? If he purposed salvation to any, upon other terms or conditions than those proposed in the gospel, where were the truth of his word? But if we consider him as having no design to save any but gracious and sanctified persons; if we consider him as determining to give grace to

the elect, and thereby to make them meet for glory, all these difficulties vanish at once. And thus the scripture, thus the nature of the thing represents the case to us. *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*, Rom. viii. 29.—*God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*, 2 Theff. ii. 13. We have repeated assurance, from the whole tenor of the gospel, that repentance, faith, and new obedience, are necessary qualifications for eternal life; and if God has made these necessary to salvation, he eternally decreed that they should be so. He has not decreed one way of salvation in time, and another from eternity.—And how can any man obtain these gracious qualifications, unless God be pleased to give them? Or how can God be supposed to give them, if he had not eternally designed it; unless we suppose him to be acted by different, and even repugnant views, which were blasphemy to imagine? It is therefore most evident, that God did decree to sanctify the elect, in order to their glorification; to give them new hearts, that they might be fitted for future happiness; and to give them faith in Christ, and thereby an interest in his righteousness, that they might be entitled to it.—There is not (it is true) in God any first and last, any succession of purposes or contrivances: these are incompatible to an infinite mind, to whom all things are present at one view. But yet, though God did not first determine to give grace to the elect; and by a successive act of his will, decree to glorify them; he did by that one eternal act of his will decree to sanctify them, that they might thereby be made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light. And we must conceive of the decrees of God in this order, if we would have any right apprehensions of them.

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

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

To which I answer, that if this doctrine be true, there could be no election of any at all to eternal salvation. For God knows, and did eternally know, that none of us can ever obtain either faith or repentance, or other condition of salvation, unless he gives them. And a decree founded upon such conditions as can never be fulfilled, leaves the case hopeless and remediless forever. To suppose any chosen to salvation upon impossible conditions, is to suppose those designed for salvation in God's eternal counsel, whose perdition is absolutely necessary from that very decree: which is the height of absurdity.—If any should answer to this, that God might decree to give men ability to comply with these conditions, this supposal obviates the objection at once; and shews that the decree could not be conditional. For if God has absolutely decreed to sanctify the elect, he has absolutely decreed to save them; sanctification and eternal salvation being necessarily connected in the nature of things. If he has not absolutely decreed to sanctify them, he has not decreed to give them ability to be saved; for he knows they have no power to sanctify themselves; nor is there any possibility of salvation without sanctification.—If it should be yet further urged in this case, that God decreed to save those, that should duly improve those powers which they have in common with the rest of the world, and none but those, this would not help the case. For our grand impotency lies in our wills; and God knew from eternity, that none of us should ever have a will to comply with even these terms of salvation, unless he should *work in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure*.—From these premises it appears to me necessary, that the objects of the
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the decree of election must have been a certain number; and that there could have been no uncertain precarious conditions in God's eternal counsel. But since conditional decrees have been so warmly espoused, even by some men of figure in the learned world, it may be proper to consider this case yet more particularly.

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

That the foundation of these conditions cannot be *in God*; appears to me most certain, from the following considerations.—It is, I think, allowed by all that have any just idea of the divine perfections, that the will of God is his essence, or an essential principle of operation in him. God cannot be a composition of parts, powers, or properties; and therefore his will cannot be any thing distinct from his essence, consistently with his infinite nature, as I have observed before. From whence it follows, that to suppose any conditions of the will of God; or of the decree of God, (which is his will with respect to us) is to suppose conditions of the divine nature and essence: that is; that God may be or may not be what he is, upon certain conditions; which is too shocking to a serious mind, to need any animadversions.—Besides, if the eternal counsel of God was infinitely right, just and good, it could admit of no conditions: For infinite rectitude must always be invariably the same, whatever conditions can be supposed. There can be nothing better, and the counsels of God cannot be worse, than infinite rectitude. His counsel must therefore, without any conditions, be always the same; and the elect must be a certain and definite number.—I add to this, the absolute will of God is both the first cause, and the ultimate end of the salvation of the elect, as has been already considered. It must be the first cause; because their very being, their qualifications for salvation, and their salvation itself wholly depend upon his will; and had neither of them ever been, if he had not willed them. It must be his last end; because there was nothing eternally existing but himself; and a non-entity could not be an higher
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end and motive than his own will. There could be no future end and motive in his creatures superior to his will, since they all depended upon his good pleasure for their existence and all their valuable qualifications, as has been observed.—Now for the first cause of our salvation to be the absolute will of God; and yet that first cause to be conditional, is a contradiction in terms. To imagine any previous conditions to the will of God, is to suppose something prior to the first cause, which is likewise a contradiction. To suppose any subsequent conditions to the will of God, is to suppose the first cause to be precarious and uncertain, mutable and liable to the controul of some other cause; or, in a word, to be the first cause, and yet no certain cause at all, which is equally absurd.—And, if we consider the will of God as the last end of our salvation, the same absurdity will follow from the supposal of any conditionality therein. For if God's will be the last end, there can be no other end superior to it, that can controul or change it; that is, it can have no conditions. If God's ultimate end be conditional, it is because there may be some other motive greater than that, which may prompt him to change his mind; which supposes that there may be in God an end or motive higher than the highest, which is too gross an absurdity to meet with any entertainment.—Thus, I think, I have shewn, that if we have any reverent conceptions of the divine nature, we can find there no foundation for a conditional decree.

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

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

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

AFTER all, it must be acknowledged, although there can be no conditions in God's decrees, yet he has decreed, that the salvation even of the elect themselves shall be conditional; that they shall be saved upon the only conditions of their faith in Christ, and other corresponding graces: which conditions he has decreed to give them, that they may be meet for the salvation to which they are designed.—There is nothing more certain than that God has proposed these conditions of Salvation in his word to all that shall ever be saved; and it is from thence certain, that he decreed so to do; for his will is always the same. There are therefore conditions of the event, though there be no conditions of the decree: Nor is the event the less certain because of the conditions, since God has immutably

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decreed to give them also; to enable all the elect to believe to the salvation of their souls.—It may be perhaps for want of a due attention to this, that many are prejudiced against the doctrine of absolute decrees. Because they do not consider, that though the will of God in itself have no conditions; yet the *effects* of his will have conditions. There are even in the counsel of God conditions of our salvation, though none of our election. God has decreed to the elect necessary qualifications for salvation, without which they shall never obtain it. And so the secret and the revealed will of God are always and in all things the same.

Thus I have briefly shewn what we are to understand by the decree of election, upon the supposal of such a decree? And I have endeavoured to explain and confirm each part of my description.

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

1. It is necessary from the very first idea we have of an infinite God, that he is *Omniscient*.—The supposal of the least degree of ignorance in an infinite mind, is an affront to common sense. An infinite being, with but a finite knowledge, is the greatest contradiction. So that we must necessarily allow an omniscient God, or no God at all. This appears evident at the first view, and admits of no debate.—It must therefore be allowed, that all things future were eternally open to the view of this omniscient mind. He could not have been omniscient, if any thing present or future was from eternity unknown to him.—I shall not here concern myself with the debate among the schoolmen, how or in what manner all futurities were eternally present with God. That is a subject vastly

above the enquiry of such short-sighted creatures as we are; for *God is higher than heaven, what can we know!* We may safely, and must necessarily conclude, that the knowledge of God is equal to his infinite nature; and that he must consequently foreknow whatsoever shall come to pass, though we know not how. Thus far we go upon firm ground; a step further plunges us into an unfathomable depth.

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

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

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

To which I answer, that although the event be contingent with respect to us, while we do not certainly know whether we shall comply with these terms of salvation or not; it could not be contingent with respect to God, who from eternity did certainly know whether we should comply with these conditions or not; and therefore, did certainly know what the issue and consequence of our compliance or non-compliance would be.—God could not have been omniscient, if he did not eternally foreknow all the minutest circumstances of our whole conduct with their consequences, all our dispositions, affections, and conversations here in this world, as well as our eternal state in the world to come. He must have foreknown these events, as they would be in themselves, when they come to pass; and not as they would be to such short-sighted creatures as we are, before they come to pass.—These events will be no longer contingent or uncertain to us, when they are fully accomplished; and therefore could never be contingent or uncertain to God, who did from eternity as well foresee their full accomplishment, as the conditions on which they depended.

To conclude this head, if God did not eternally foreknow all events, and the accomplishment of all circumstances and conditions of events, with respect to all his creatures, it must be either from defect of knowledge in God, or from some ob-

struction or obstacle in the creature, that hid the event from the view of an omniscient eye. Not the former: *Let no such arrogancy come out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed,* 1 Sam. ii. 3. Not the latter: a finite being cannot controul an infinite nature; nor cast any obscurity in the way of infinite knowledge. It is in vain to seek deep to hide our counsel from the Lord. *If we say, the darkness shall cover us, even the night shall be light about him; yea, the darkness hideth not from him: but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to him,* Psal. cxxxix. 11, 12.—*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,* Heb. iv. 13.

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

2. It is also necessary that the eternal God be a *perfect* being; and that all the perfections of his nature should always concur in all his operations.—The holiness (for instance) and the goodness, the truth, the mercy, the justice, so likewise the knowledge and the will of God, do most necessarily agree together, in all his dispensations.—Some of God's attributes are indeed very different, and even contrary in their exercise upon the creatures. It is a vastly different thing to us, to be the objects of God's favour, or of his justice, wrath, and displeasure: That we must consider of some of the operations of God towards us, as the actings of one and not of another of his glorious attributes. Thus his bestowing salvation upon any, is an act of his grace, and not of his justice; and punishing any with eternal destruction, is an act of his justice, and not of his grace: Yet all his attributes must always unite and agree in his own infinite mind. His grace is not, in the instance mentioned, inconsistent with his justice, nor his justice inconsistent with his grace. There can be no contrariety, no opposition or repugnancy in the divine nature. This must not be supposed of an infinitely perfect being.—To suppose that God ever
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ceased in any one act to be holy, to be just, to be good and merciful, or to have every one of his essential properties in exercise, is to suppose that he ceased to be God. For he must be an omniscient God, a holy God, a merciful God, a just God, &c. at all times,—and in all instances, or be no God at all.—Whatever attributes or properties necessarily belong to the divine nature, are either essential to him, or else God may cease to be what he is, or be at one time what he is not at another. But this is what no man dare suppose. And if all the attributes or properties which necessarily belong to the divine nature, are essential to him, no one of them can ever be removed, not so much as in one instance, or one moment, without the destruction of his being.—To apply this to the case before us. The decree of election is not to be supposed an act of God's knowledge, separate and distinct from his other essential perfections: but an eternal act of his mind, wherein they all unitedly concur. If God did eternally foreknow the salvation of the elect, he did foreknow it in a manner agreeable to all his essential properties; and consequently, in a manner agreeable to his will, which is one of them.—Whatever difficulties there may be in our minds with respect to the eternal concurrence of God's will with his knowledge, relating to some things that either have or will come to pass, and were consequently the objects of his prescience; it is certain, that, in some way or other, their futurity was agreeable to his will, or else his knowledge and will would have been at disagreement, which may by no means be imagined. What is God's knowledge but God himself knowing? And what is God's will but God himself willing? To suppose these at disagreement, is therefore to suppose God at disagreement with himself, which is the highest blasphemy.

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

From all these considerations it is (I think) manifestly true, that God hath eternally known and eternally willed the whole future salvation of each individual heir of everlasting life and glory; and that their salvation, being founded upon the foreknowledge and will of God, is, like his glorious nature, necessary and infallible; which is the thing to be proved.—The salvation of the elect is *the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself*, Eph. i. 9.

3. It is also necessary, that an infinite God must be an *immutable* being; and that there cannot be in any of his perfections the least variation or possibility of change. All the counsels and purposes of God must have been from eternity infinitely

finitely wise, infinitely holy, and infinitely good; there can therefore be no possible reason why they should change, since there can be no change for the better; and we cannot suppose that infinite Wisdom should change his purposes without any reason for it.—Nor indeed is it possible that they should change or alter in the least instance or degree; such change necessarily implying that God would cease to be infinite. How can God be infinite, if he be in any respect what he was not before? unless we allow a different kind, or different degree of infinite being, which is absurd. *He is the Lord, he changes not,* Mal. iii. 6. *He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,* Heb. xiii. 8. *With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,* James. i. 17.

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

And now, what hinders our coming to a safe and certain conclusion, that God has decreed in his eternal purpose, *according to the good pleasure of his will*, to give grace and glory to a certain number of the children of men? I have proved from the very nature of God, that he must eternally, certainly, and infallibly foreknow the state of each individual heir of salvation; and be fully acquainted from eternity with the whole progress of their grace here, and their glory hereafter.—I have proved, that this foreknowledge of God was according to his eternal will and pleasure. It could not be disagreeable to, but in the order of our conceptions must be founded upon his will, since it would not have been, and consequently would not have been the object of his knowledge and foresight, if he had not willed it.—I have proved, that God's foreknowledge and will are, like all other perfections of his nature, immutable; and

and that they are the same now, and will be the same for ever, that they were from all eternity. And when these premises are put together, does the conclusion necessarily follow? Admitting these premises to be true (and I think I have proved that they are true), we must of consequence admit the truth of the proposition which was to be proved.

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

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

I begin with the consideration of that text in Rom. viii. 29, 30. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.—Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* In which words we find the foreknowledge of God, his predestination, the sanctification, justification, and eternal salvation of the elect, as so many links in an inseparable chain, necessarily connected together. And, of necessary consequence, we here find the truth of the proposition before us made most certain and evident.—If God did foreknow and predestinate the future state of every heir of salvation, if he does actually call, justify, and glorify every one that was foreknown and predestinated in his eternal counsel, then God has from all eternity elected a certain number to everlasting life, which is the thing to be proved. But the former is asserted in the text; and therefore the latter true.—I can here see no room for any plausible evasion. The words are plain, full, and pertinent to the purpose. To question the truth of the doctrine I am pleading for, is to question the truth of this sacred text.

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

Nothing can be clearer to the same purpose, than that in

Rom. ix. 23. *That he might make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.*—That this fore-preparation unto glory, here spoken of, was in God's eternal counsel, appears manifest from the instance of God's decree with respect to Jacob and Esau, from which the apostle draws the consequence here before us. It was *before they had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand*, verse 11.—That this preparation unto glory was an act of God's sovereign counsel, is strongly asserted in verse 15. *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.*—That it is an act of his eternal and unchangeable purpose, is asserted in the cited text. He actually makes known the riches of his glory, on all these vessels of mercy which he had, in his eternal purpose, afore prepared unto glory.—Were it even granted to the opposers of this doctrine, that the decree of God with respect to Jacob and Esau, from whence the apostle argues throughout this chapter, referred only to their temporal circumstances, it would nothing affect the cause. For if the apostle thought it to be just arguing from thence, to God's decree of making known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, we should think so too.

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

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

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

I have not hitherto been considering, nor attempting to remove the difficulties that lie in the way of this doctrine. But have only endeavoured to explain it; and to enquire into it's truth and certainty. It is soon enough to consider and solve the scruples that arise in our minds upon the supposal of any fact, when the fact itself is established and received. There is no occasion to exercise our minds with difficulties, about that which we have no reason to believe.—It is not therefore the question now before us, how can these things be? But whether this doctrine be the truth of God, or not? If it be evidently true, we must receive it for truth, whatever objections arise in our minds; and not reject it because we do not fully understand it.—If we suspend our assent unto every truth until all the difficulties concerning them are removed, we must remain sceptics as long as we live; and never fully consent to the being of God; nor even to our own being; for there will always remain insuperable difficulties with respect to both.—Here then we should make a pause; and review, without prejudice, the arguments which have been offered; and consider their force; and let our assent to this doctrine be as strong as the evidence of its truth. If it be founded upon the nature and word of God, there is no room to dispute it. If it be founded upon neither of these, there is no reason to believe it.

I do not speak this to discourage all proper and modest endeavours to obviate the difficulties, that may arise in our minds from the contemplation before us. For, though we cannot expect to search out and comprehend the perfections of God, so as to have a full and clear view of the eternal operations of his infinite mind: Yet we may find sufficient answers

swers to all the objections that can be thrown in the way, to satisfy a sober and humble enquirer after truth.

(3.) I shall now accordingly endeavour *to refute some of the chief of those OBJECTIONS, that lie in our way*; and I hope I shall at least be able to make it appear, that *there are no absurdities in the doctrine of absolute-decrees.*

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

This being a principal objection, upon which the most of the difficulties that are raised against this doctrine do very much depend, I shall be something particular in answering it.

And I would first ask of the objector, Whether he does not find himself at full liberty in all his actions? Let him look into the operations of his own mind; and enquire whether he has any force or constraint put upon his affections appetites or inclinations, in any case whatsoever; and whether he does not act voluntarily and spontaneously in all his moral conduct? I think every one will, in this case, answer in the affirmative. And what room can there then be for this objection?—He cannot perhaps see how this is consistent with an absolute decree. What then! must we dispute against a plain manifest fact, because we do not know how it can be? We cannot see how it is consistent with an immaterial spirit to have any relation to space; or to act upon matter. Must we therefore dispute the union of our soul and body, and the subjection of our bodily members to the dictates of our minds, because we cannot see the consistency of it? Are there not a thousand undoubted realities in the material world, wherein there are such apparent inconsistencies, as we cannot see through? must we therefore reject the greatest certainties, because we are but short-sighted creatures?—I think I have proved, from the infinite nature and perfections of God, that the decrees are

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certainly absolute, and without any possible conditions; and that the futurity of the decreed event must be certain and infallible. And yet we find by experience, that we are at full liberty and freedom, that we act in all our moral behaviour according to our own wills. And does not this consideration make it necessary, that the liberty of the creature is consistent with the decree of God, whether we can see through it or not?

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

If it be replied to this, That “it is a contradiction to suppose, that such a decree as makes mens salvation unavoidable and necessary, whether they will or no, is consistent with *liberty* and *freedom*; that this therefore cannot be argued even from the *omnipotence* of God; for God cannot perform contradictions or absurdities.”

I answer, who ever dreamed of such a decree as would make mens salvation thus unavoidable, or that will save them whether they will or no? I have shewn already, that God as well decreed to give grace, as to give glory to all the elect; and that their interest in Christ, with all the blessed consequences

ces of it, was decreed to be the object of their own free choice, and earnest pursuit; what they should freely choose, and diligently labour after, in all the methods of God's appointment; and in that way, and that only, obtain it. And this is so far from contradicting the freedom of the elect, that it fully establishes it. It is necessary, even from the decree of God, that they shall act freely and at full liberty, in choosing their own salvation, and *working it out with fear and trembling*.—Where then is the contradiction? Is it a contradiction, for any event to be infallibly necessary with respect to a rational being; and that being to be notwithstanding in a state of freedom? Is it not infallibly necessary for the saints in heaven to be everlastingly glorious and happy; and do not they nevertheless enjoy the perfection of freedom? Is it not infallibly necessary, that the glorious God shall be eternally infinite; and dare any man imagine, that God himself is not at full freedom and liberty, to act according to his own good pleasure?

If it be yet further urged, "That, according to this doctrine of the decrees, there is a necessity that the elect shall *will* the means of their salvation, since God has decreed to give them such a will; and the same necessary certainty, that those who are not elected shall *not will* the means of salvation. And is it not a contradiction, that either the one or the other should be in a state of *freedom*, since they cannot *will* the contrary to what they do."

In answer to this I must observe, that a power to *will*, or *not to will*, any particular object of choice, or a power to choose indifferently either the one or the other of two contrary objects, is so far from freedom, that it is utterly inconsistent with it; and is what cannot be predicated of any being that is perfectly free.—We could not be free agents, if we had not a power to will what appears to us, from our present view of things, most fit to be chosen; or if we had a power to will what appears to us from our present view of things unfit to be chosen. For either of these supposes the will itself to be the effect of some constraint from something without us; and not to be the result of our own understandings, affections, and appetites, as it always is in every free agent. This is equally true, whether our wills are always excited and acted by some
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apparent good, as has been generally supposed; or whether they are commonly acted by some present uneasiness, as has also been supposed; or whether by both of these.—Freedom therefore cannot be opposed to necessity. Every free agent must necessarily *will* what his understanding, appetites, and affections, represent to him the most fit object of choice; he cannot do otherwise. To suppose a power to do otherwise, is to suppose a power that is extrinsic to him, that must move his will as a clock or watch is moved; and is therefore utterly inconsistent with freedom.—If freedom consists in a power to *will* or not to *will* what appears to the mind in its present view of things the fittest object of choice, then the holy angels and glorified saints are not free: For they cannot help but *will* the glory of God, and their own holiness and happiness. Nay, the blessed God himself, upon this supposal, cannot be free: For he cannot do otherwise than eternally *will* the glorious perfections of his own excellent nature; he cannot *will* any event, the futurity of which is not some how agreeable to them.—Freedom therefore is only opposed to coercion or constraint. He that can act according to his own will, and do what he does—of choice, without any constraint, is therein free; though perhaps he may not be capable to do every thing that he would do, if it were in his power. Thus the merchant acts freely, who by his trade advances his estate but a hundred a-year, because he acts of choice, and is under no constraint, though he may probably desire to double the increase. And thus the believer acts freely, in his acceptance of Christ, and living to him; for that is according to his own will and choice, without any constraint; though he is not capable of all those gracious attainments which he desires. Thus likewise impenitent sinners act freely, because they act voluntarily, in all their sinful indulgences; though they may be incapable to obtain some particular sinful gratifications, which their lusts prompt them to. In a word, he that acts voluntarily, and without any compulsion or constraint, acts freely; and he that has a power so to do, is in a state of freedom and liberty: for freedom consists in nothing else. The freedom of a creature does not consist in a power to do every thing which he might choose to do (that seems to be the peculiar prerogative of God himself, and implies omnipotence), but in a power to act of choice

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

I know that it has been the common doctrine of divines, that the will of man has full freedom with respect to things natural; yet not in things spiritual; but that in these things it requires supernatural grace to move and influence it.—However, I cannot but think (with Mr. Lock) that it is a very inaccurate and obscure way of speaking, to attribute freedom, or want of freedom, to the will. The will being but a property or faculty of the mind, can no more than any other of our intellectual powers, be the subject of other properties or faculties.—Free agency implies personality, which I think no man applies to the will. On the contrary, every one will allow, that there is a great difference between an act, and an intelligent agent; and that it is the latter only, that can properly be the subject of freedom, or want of freedom. And therefore to attribute either of these to the will, is to make that the agent, or person, when it is indeed no more than a personal act, or the person acting in a way of choice:—the confusion of which is obvious, and has been too manifest by the multiplied impertinent debates upon this subject. I nevertheless fully agree with the meaning of these divines, if I understand them. I agree, that no man has a power to will the exercise of saving grace, and a life of holiness and piety, until the Spirit of God, by his supernatural influences, represents these to him as most fit to be chosen, and makes such a powerful impression upon his mind, as conquers his natural aversion, and excites him to will them.—It is evident, in every man's experience, that our natural propensity is to *evil, only to evil, and that continually*. But these things that are evil, appear in a false light to our carnal minds, especially to our appetites and affections, as things most fit to be chosen; and while they thus appear to us good and eligible, we could not be free, if we did not will them. While we act as rational and free agents, we must will and choose what appears to us from our present view of things most worthy our choice.

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And it is therefore because we are in a state of freedom, with respect to the affairs of a spiritual and moral nature, that we cannot habitually choose a gracious spiritual and heavenly life, until, by the powerful agency of Divine grace, we have such an habitual impression upon our minds, that overcomes our contrary inclinations, and represents such a life most worthy of our approbation and pursuit. Though we may sometimes want freedom and liberty in things natural, (A man in a dungeon cannot be said to be in a state of freedom) yet a rational creature, while such, can never want freedom in things spiritual and moral; since whatever he acts in those concerns, he acts voluntarily, and therefore freely.—It is true, indeed, that sinners may, in some sense, be said to be in bondage to their lusts: that is, they freely and willingly perform their base and fordid drudgery and cannot will to do otherwise while in an un sanctified state. Nothing but *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, can make us free from a chosen subjection to *the law of sin and death*.—The man is notwithstanding in a state of freedom, even in this vassalage of his affections. For, though a life of sin and sensuality is in itself of the nature of thralldom and bondage, the sinner does not esteem it so: But freely puts and keeps the yoke on his own neck. He does but what he wills to do, in his subjection to his lusts; and the believer does what he wills to do, in his subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ; both act freely though both are voluntary servants.—It is impossible, that a rational creature should act otherwise than freely, while he acts by counsel; whatever the decrees of God are concerning him.

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

ted. And consequently the freedom and liberty both of one and the other, are infallibly necessary even from the decrees of God. Which consideration alone might have been sufficient answer to this objection.

It may be further objected against this doctrine, That “if God has infallibly decreed to give grace and glory to a certain number of mankind, and to none but them, he is then a *respector of persons*; which is directly contrary to his word,” Acts x. 34.

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

Thus, in the quoted text, he is said to be *no respector of persons*, because *in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him*. As he is the Ruler and Judge of the world, he is equal and impartial in bestowing his rewards, according to his law and covenants of promise, which he has made the rule of his dispensations towards us. As he is a sovereign proprietor and benefactor, he bestows his benefits how and where he pleases, without being a *respector of persons*: for he is absolute master of his own favours.

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

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

It has been objected also against this doctrine, “That it cuts “the sinews of all endeavours to obtain salvation; and brings “*presumption* into the world. For if we are elected, we shall “be sure to obtain salvation, do what we will; and if not, “we shall be sure not to obtain it, do what we can. It is “therefore to no purpose to strive.”

In answer to which I would observe, That if this objection be just from the infallibility of God's eternal counsel and purpose, it is equally just from the infallibility of God's eternal foreknowledge. For the foreknowledge of God renders the event as certain and necessary, as his eternal counsel can do. What God did foreknow should come to pass, must certainly and infallibly come to pass; or else he could not have foreknown it, as has been considered before.—And now, let the objector consider whether he dare deny the omniscience of God, upon such kind of reasoning as this in the objection: Whether he dare venture to say, that God cannot be omniscient, that he could not foreknow all future events; for if he did foreknow our salvation, we shall be saved, do what we will; or if he foreknew that we shall not be saved, we shall not be sav-

ed, do what we can.—I presume, there are but few will venture so far as to deny the knowledge of God, from such vain imaginations of their own. How then dare they venture to deny the decrees of God, from such reasonings as prove a great deal too much, if they prove any thing at all, and which must be wholly impertinent, if they do not prove that God cannot be infinite?—This therefore shews, that the objection cannot be well grounded, how plausible soever it may appear, since it militates against the perfections of God, and even against his very being: for a God without omniscience is no God.

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

These things being considered, it will appear, the absolute decrees of God are so far from encouraging presumption, that they are in themselves a powerful argument to the utmost diligence and activity in the concerns of our souls and their e-

ternal safety.—If God has never decreed salvation to any man in any other way but this, may I hope to be saved in the neglect of this only appointed means to obtain it? Does it not concern me to be in earnest in this matter, since I am certain, from the nature and counsels, as well as from the word of God, that I must inevitably perish, unless I give up myself to Christ, and live to God in all holy conversation and godliness? In this way, I may make sure to myself that I was eternally chosen to salvation: But in the contrary way, my eternal perdition will be most certain and unavoidable. Does not therefore my eternity depend upon most active diligence to make my *calling and election sure*?

If we should consider this objection with a reference to the common affairs of life, it may perhaps set the unreasonableness and injustice of it in a fuller and clearer light.—We read, Job xiv. 5. *That our days are determined, the number of our months is with God, he has appointed our bounds that we cannot pass.*—Now, will any man argue from hence, that there is no occasion to eat or drink, or use any means for the support or preservation of his life: for if the continuance of his life be decreed, he shall live, do what he will; and if not, he shall die, do what he can? Does not every one see, that their lives are preserved; and consequently, that God decreed they should be preserved, by meat, drink, medicine, and other methods of support and sustentation; and that there is no decree will preserve them in the neglect of these? And do not they act accordingly?—Our secular affairs were certainly the objects of God's decrees, as well as the more important concerns of our souls eternal interest. *Even the hairs of our head are all numbered*, in the counsel of God. And will any man argue from hence, that there is no need to plow, or sow; that if God has decreed him a harvest, he shall have it, do what he will; if not, he shall have none, do what he can? Does not every one see, that the decree of God will not till the ground, sow the seed, nor bring them a crop, while they loiter away their time, and neglect their business? Do not all men see, that if God has decreed them a harvest, he has decreed that they shall obtain it in the use of the appointed means, and no otherwise; that if they do not sow, they cannot hope to reap? And do not they behave accordingly? How unreasonable then is this objection! How
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unreasonable a presumption would it be, for any to venture their eternity upon such an issue, as they dare not venture their lives or their estates upon !

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

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

We do see, in fact, that the whole race of mankind are fallen creatures; and that if any of them do obtain eternal life, they must be saved from a lost perishing condition. And it is consequently evident, that man was considered as a fallen creature, in God's eternal counsel; and that the elect were chosen to be saved from this lost undone state, which the fall has brought us all into.—Now, if fallen man was the object of God's electing love, he must be chosen to salvation in a way agreeable to all the perfections of the divine nature. Since therefore we find, from the word of God, that our salvation by the merits and mediation of Christ is the method, whereby God has provided to have *mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other*; we may safely conclude, that this is the way in which God eternally determined the salvation of the elect. In this way he has in time provided, and therefore eternally determined, *to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*; according to Rom. iii. 26.—We are accordingly told, that the crucifixion of Christ was *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, (Acts ii. 23.) *What his hand and counsel determined before to be done* (Acts iv. 28.): That the elect had *their names written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev. xiii. 8.); and that *their salvation is according to God's own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began*, 2 Tim. i. 9.

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

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

The marks and evidences of their election must, in ordinary, be found with all the elect; even in this life. *They are chosen in Christ, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love.*—I am not now considering the case of elect infants, who die in infancy. He who has told us, *of such is the kingdom of heaven*, knows how to give them a title to it; and does doubtless qualify them for salvation, by the sanctifying influences of his Spirit. Nor shall I venture to limit the Holy One of Israel, by determining (as some have done), that none can be converted in the last hours of their lives; and never have opportunity to evidence their election, to themselves or others, by a life of holiness. But as we may safely conclude, that this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with us, and that such conversions are always to us suspicious and doubtful; so we may certainly conclude, that in adult persons a holy life is the natural and (in ordinary cases) the necessary fruit and consequence of God's electing love.—He that has not been brought to submit to God, and walk humbly with the Lord, and to mourn for his sins, to hate and forsake them; he that does not *cut off his right hand or foot, and pluck out his right eye, if it offend him*; he that does not habitually watch over his heart and life, and hate every false way; that does not seriously and diligently attend all the ordinances of religious worship, and live in the exercise of every grace, and the practice of every duty, towards God and man; that does not after all lament the imperfections, which necessarily accompany his highest attainments in this imperfect state, and *look for*
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the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life; such an one (I say) has not the marks and characters of God's electing love upon his soul; nor sufficient grounds to conclude upon his interest in it.—He has no grounds indeed to conclude the contrary, because he is yet in his state of probation; and tho' he has not obtained, he may yet obtain the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of grace, that will both incline and enable him to live a life of holiness, and thereby evidence his election of God.—This however is to be received for an undoubted truth, that the will of God is always invariably the same; and that what he has revealed to be his will in his word, was his will from all eternity; and consequently, since God's word requires holiness, as the way to happiness, they who are a *chosen generation*, are also *an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should shew forth the praises of him that has called them out of darkness, into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

There is so little reason to fear, the decrees of God (when rightly considered) will prompt to a life of carelessness and security, wickedness and impiety, that they evidently have every way the strongest tendency to the contrary. They who, from sanctification, have no evidences of their election, had need use earnest diligence to obtain them: For (as I have already shewn) they can be obtained no other way; and they can have no grounded comfort, or reason to conclude either their election or salvation, while they live in a habit of wilful negligence or impiety.—They who have good evidences of their election, do not only live a life of holiness, in course, without which they cannot possibly have any such evidences; but they must necessarily, from the principles of their renewed nature, take pleasure and delight in a conformity to the whole will of God.—In a truly sanctified soul, *old things are passed away; and all things are become new*. The understanding, the will, affections and dispositions of the renewed mind are all spiritual; whence he cannot but approve, chuse, and delight in a new and spiritual life and conversation. *He is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that he should walk in them*, Eph. ii. 10.—Satisfying evidences of God's eternal love will fill the mind with admiring adoring thoughts of such distinguishing kindness; and be a continued source of love, thankfulness,

fulness, and obedience, in the soul that lives under the light of God's countenance. They who *know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, are thereby filled with all the fullness of God*, Eph. iii. 19.—*The love of Christ constraineth us*, I Cor. v. 14.

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

USE I. It is, I think, a natural inference from what has been said and proved, *That there is a certain number of mankind, who are not elected to eternal life, and who will of consequence, certainly fall short of it.*—I shall not here undertake the dispute, whether all that perish, are, by a positive and absolute decree of God, predetermined to a life of sin, and to eternal destruction for their sin. There has been such bold disputing on both sides of this question, and such bold consequences drawn from the ideas which both parties have entertained of the nature of God, that I cannot read those controversies without horror.—And what occasion is there for these over-curious enquiries? Cannot such poor dust, as we, be contented to acknowledge our ignorance of these unsearchable mysteries of the Divine nature? Methinks, the apostle's solemn reprimand might be sufficient to stop our mouths, and silence our confident metaphysical disputes about the operations of the mind of God, and the manner how his infinite perfections concur in the decree of reprobation, Rom. ix. 20. *Nay, but (O man) who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?*—As there is nothing more clearly revealed in the scriptures, nothing a more necessary deduction from the essential perfections of God (as I have shewn above), than God's absolute choice of a certain number to grace and glory, it is from hence certain, that the number of the elect can neither be increased nor diminished. Their number is no more capable of change, than the eternal counsel by which they are chosen. Thus the *foundation of God*, with respect to each individual of that chosen number, *standeth sure.*—So likewise, on the contrary, God's electing a certain number does necessarily imply his not electing of the rest, whose number must be equally certain to God; and therefore equally incapable of

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

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

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

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

I answer: If God's decrees were the *cause* of our sin and guilt, there might then perhaps be some foundation for this objection. But inasmuch as the decrees of God have no causality at all, either of the sin or perdition of wicked men; the objection is groundless.—Though we cannot fully understand the order and manner of the Divine counsels, with respect to

the perdition of those that are not chosen to salvation by Christ, but this (like the appearance in Ezekiel's vision) is *high and dreadful*: Yet we may certainly know, that God never decreed the destruction and perdition of any man, but for final continuance in sin. And we are likewise certain, that he cannot, by his decree, or any other ways, be the cause and author of that sin which he will finally punish. The former of these is certain from the word of God, where we are assured, that *the soul that sins shall die*; that *God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked*; and that he will eternally punish none but those, who, *after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*; and consequently that he decreed to punish none but such. The latter of these is certain from the nature of God, who is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*; and consequently cannot be the author of what his soul hates.—The sins of the reprobate are from Satan and their own hearts; their future punishment will be for the sins which they have voluntarily committed and impenitently continued in. The decrees of God have no hand in procuring either the one or the other. How then can we say, that *the way of the Lord is not equal*? Certainly it will appear in the conclusion, that *the Judge of all the earth hath done right*. He will be *justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges*.

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

The common occasion of the confusion of mens minds upon this subject is this. They do not distinguish between "the
"necessity

“ necessity or infallible certainty of the event from the decree of God, and God’s causing, compelling, or some way or other, bringing to pass that event by his decree.” But in the present case, there is an infinite difference between these two ideas. The former implies no more than the eternal operation of *God’s mind within himself* (if I may so speak), without any influence upon the creature, and utterly unknown to him. The latter supposes *God’s agency upon the mind of the creature*, inclining him to sin; and thereby constraining him to perish. The former is a necessary deduction from God’s infinite nature, as I have shewn: the latter is horrendous blasphemy, to be rejected with abhorrence.—There is no necessity to be supposed in this case from the decrees of God; but a necessity of infallibility: that is, that the event will be certain and cannot fail. But how does that imply any compulsion upon the creature, whereby the event is brought about; and he constrained to sin and perish? There is no connection between such necessity and constraint, as I have proved already. Men may act in this sense necessarily; and yet act most freely and voluntarily, without any compulsion.—They cannot be compelled by the eternal counsel of God, which could not act upon them infinite ages before they had any being: They cannot be compelled by God’s influencing them to sin: for *God cannot be tempted of evil; neither tempteth he any man*, Jam. i. 13. And why is not this sufficient to satisfy our minds? What occasion can there be for our perplexing ourselves with unnecessary difficulties; about the hidden and unsearchable counsel of God?

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

To this I answer: How comes it to pass, that they cannot comply with these proposals of the gospel? The decree of God

is no cause of their impotency, any more than it is the cause of their sin.—*God made man upright*, capable of obedience to his whole will concerning him; and his not decreeing to give him grace, is no cause of his wanting this primitive perfection. If God's not decreeing to give Adam persevering grace, was the cause of his apostasy, then the cause of his apostasy was in God himself; and God was the author of his sin: Which is blasphemy to suppose.—The cause therefore of our first apostasy, and of all the impotency flowing from it, is from man himself. And must God change his law, or retract his demands of obedience from us; because, by our own fault, we are become incapable of obedience? If a master in a morning command his servant his work till night, is the servant guiltless and unworthy of punishment, if he wilfully break his ax or spade, and thereby render himself incapable of obedience?—If God had left all the sinful progeny of Adam to perish in a graceless state, we should have had no cause to find fault: For he owed no grace to any of us. If he gives grace to some and not to others, he acts as a sovereign benefactor, that may do what he will with his own. If he require perfect obedience from an impotent creature, he requires no more than what is due to him by the law of nature; and the impotence of the creature being his fault, deserves punishment; and not the reward of sanctifying grace from God.—The sum of the matter then is, that God makes proposals of salvation indifferently to all. They that comply with them shall reap the benefit; and as for others, whether they are considered as impotent, that they cannot; or obstinate, that they will not comply, the fault is their own; and *God and his throne are guiltless*.—I have here, it is true, considered all mankind under the guilt of Adam's sin, which is a fact so clearly revealed in scripture, that it ought not to be called in question. See Rom. v. 12. and forward, Psal. li. 5. with many other places. And though it would be an impertinent digression, to endeavour an illustration of that point at present; I hope hereafter to attempt that also, if God shall give me ability and opportunity.

I add to this: God has decreed to give, even to the reprobate, *more* power and ability, than they will ever improve. God does in fact give, and therefore has decreed to give, even

to them, a *natural power* to consider of their sinful and dangerous estate and condition, to endeavour to mourn for their sins, to watch against them and reform them, to pray to him in some manner with diligence and constancy for the sanctifying influences of his blessed Spirit, to attend upon all the appointed means of grace, in order to obtain both grace and glory; and to endeavour to be sincere in all this. And none of them will be able to plead, in the day of Christ, that they went as far as they could, by their natural power, in a compliance with the will of God, and in seeking his gracious influences; and yet after all he denied them special grace.—It is true, that God knew from eternity that they would not improve these natural powers: But he also knew that it would be their *own fault*, that they do not improve them. Must not he offer them terms of salvation worthy of a rational creature, endued with such powers and faculties, because he knew that they would not embrace them? Do not they deserve perdition, that will not so much as endeavour to perform what obedience they are capable of? And is not this the case of every impenitent sinner?

Let us further consider where is the seat of this impotency, in those that are not chosen to salvation; that it is in their wills. *They will not come unto Christ, that they might have life*, John v. 40.—It cannot be said of any man, that he is truly willing to comply with the terms of salvation, to accept of Christ as offered in the gospel, to depend upon him only as the fountain of grace and life, and to live to him in the exercise of godliness and honesty; and yet that he wanted ability to live conformable to his will. For what is faith in Christ but the proper exercise of our wills? He that indeed chuses the Lord Jesus Christ for his saviour, his portion and confidence, has unfeigned faith in him. It is true, an unregenerate man cannot believe in Christ; that is, he cannot be willing to accept of him upon gospel-terms. Were he sincerely willing to comply with the proposals of the gospel, he would have actual faith in Christ.—What is repentance, but the exercise of our wills? He that rejecteth and renounceth all his lusts and idols, and chooseth a life of holiness, is a true penitent. The inability of a natural man to repent of his sins, consists especially in this, that he cannot be sincerely willing to forsake all his
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sins, and to live a life of holy obedience to God. The like may be said of all the graces of the Spirit.—Every rational creature is (while such) a free agent, in his whole moral conduct: and every free agent acts according to his own will. Let the sinner's impotency therefore be rightly denominated; and it must be called *obstinacy*. Let this objection be fairly represented; and it must stand thus: "How can God be sincere in the general offers of salvation in the gospel, when he foresaw from eternity an obstinate part of mankind, that *would* not by any means be persuaded to comply with them?" This is a just stating the case; and a bare stating it in this form is sufficient.

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

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

What a distressing consideration must it be to such who have once experienced the joy and peace of believing, if they had greater reason to fear a total apostasy from this happy state, than to hope for perseverance in it? And such must be their case, if their hope were not built upon this *sure foundation*. For if their stability depended upon any thing in themselves, upon their good purposes, promises, or designs of a religious life, how many thousand dangers would there be in the way? What a dreadful hazard would there be, that, by the strength of their own corruptions, the subtle and powerful temptations of Satan, the vanities of the world, the allurements of wicked men, or a gradual decay of their graces, they should *draw back unto perdition?*

But, on the contrary, what inexpressible comfort must it be to them, to consider, that the present influences of the Spirit of grace, which they experience in their own souls, are the pledge and earnest of their perseverance in grace, and of their eternal reward! And this is the necessary consequence of the doctrine I have been insisting upon. For he that has manifested his love to any of us by giving us sanctifying grace, has loved us with an everlasting love; and will certainly love us to the end.—Could such therefore but keep a just view of this comfortable doctrine before them, how would it fill their souls with even raptures of admiration and praise of the eternal distinguishing love of God! How would it quicken and invigorate them in their spiritual race, when they have such a clear prospect of the glorious *prize* before them? How would

would it strengthen them in all the rough encounters they may meet with, when they consider what a glorious Captain they fight under, and what assurance they have of *victory* in the conclusion? How would it endear the Lord Jesus Christ to them, *in whom* they are *chosen* to eternal life! How would it fill them with love to God and his service, when they consider him as a kind indulgent Father; and themselves (though most unworthy) as adopted *heirs* of the eternal inheritance! How would it fill them with a perpetual abhorrence of every sin, as vile ingratitude to such a bountiful Benefactor! How would it sweeten even death itself, when they consider it as an entrance into the *joy of their Lord*! And how would it prove a constant source of peace and contentment in all their trials; be their *song in the house of their pilgrimage*; and make the ways of *Wisdom* appear indeed *ways of pleasantness*; and all *her paths peace*!

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

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

There is something therefore before us of much greater importance than over-curious enquiries, abstract speculations, and distracting debates about the decrees of God. It is a vastly greater concern, to get some solid evidence of our own interest in God's *electing love*. O why are we not then in earnest in an affair of such everlasting consequence? Why does not this exercise our thoughts and care more than every thing else? Why does it not lie down and rise with us, and accompany us in the whole conduct of our lives? Can we rest contented in a dreadful uncertainty, whether we are like to be saved or damned to all eternity? Can we be contented while we have no grounds to conclude, that we must not spend a doleful eternity in weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, under the intolerable agonies of infinite vengeance?—Let us then *up and be doing*, and we may hope *the Lord will be with us*. There is no need to search into the archives of eternity to know our state. There is no need to say in our hearts, *Who shall ascend into heaven*, to bring us an account from thence, or *who shall descend into the deep*, to bring up one from thence? The evidence is *nigh us, even in our own hearts* and lives, conformed to the word of Christ. And if we do but follow these two *directions*, we cannot fail of obtaining it.

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

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

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

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

2. LET us make sure to ourselves, that we maintain an *habitual course* of holiness in heart and life; and this also will be a good evidence for us, that we were eternally chosen of God

to be heirs of everlasting salvation. If we are *chosen to salvation*, it is *through sanctification of the Spirit*, as I have particularly shewn already.—It concerns us therefore to make it sure to ourselves, that we maintain a strict watch over our hearts and lives, *exercising ourselves unto godliness, striving against sin*, and labouring to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*; that we are conscientiously careful to be found *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless*; that our *affections* are placed upon things *above*; that we have our *conversation in heaven*; and that we are diligently endeavouring to maintain a life of piety towards God, and righteousness towards men.—And in this way, though many disallowed imperfections will accompany our highest attainments, we may be assured, that *He who has given us his own Son*, and in him given us grace to love and serve him, *will with him also freely give us all things*.—*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: To whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

A

DISCOURSE

ON

ORIGINAL SIN.

ROMANS V. 12.

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

IT has been an ancient observation with respect to Original Sin, that there is nothing more familiarly known, nothing harder to be fully understood. The *being* of it, with its dreadful consequences, is but too evident to all the world. The *manner* how we came under the pollution and guilt of it, is more difficult to be rightly conceived. Many strong prejudices have therefore arisen in mens minds against it. Our natural pride and haughtiness is hardly brought to stoop to such a humbling and abasing consideration. And there are some apparent difficulties in the doctrine, which make some men imagine it inconsistent with the Divine perfections; and therefore unworthy to be received or taught.—But whatever opposition this may meet with, from these or other like reasons, it is clearly and fully revealed in the scriptures; and it is therefore certain, that the objections against it cannot be just, how plausible soever they may appear. As the whole tenor of the Bible every where considers, directs, and treats us as apostate sinful creatures; so the nature, manner, and consequences of our apostasy, are particularly described in sundry passages both of the Old and New Testament: But perhaps
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in none more fully, than in the words before us, with the following context. In these words we may note,

1. THE Apostle's design in introducing them in this place, represented by the illative word, *wherefore*.—That we may have a clearer view of this, we must recur to the foregoing verses of the chapter, where our being *justified by Christ's blood*, our being *reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, and our *receiving the atonement* by him, are particularly celebrated.—That this doctrine of our justification by the merits of Christ's death might not be matter of prejudice, it is here illustrated and explained by another doctrine more wonderful, which was notwithstanding always received for an undoubted truth.—Wherefore as it is on all hands allowed, that, by the imputation of Adam's sin, we are all become sinful and guilty before God; it cannot be thought strange, that, by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, we should be justified in his sight. If it be allowed to be just in God, to impute the guilt of our first parents sin to us, it may much more easily be supposed, that God may, from the riches of his grace, impute the merits of Christ's death to believers, without any appearance of injustice. *For if through the offence of one, many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*—This is plainly the scope of the apostle's argument in this context. From whence it appears, that the words of our text are not only to be allowed for a truth not controverted; but for a truth generally received in the apostolic times, in that they were here improved by the apostle, as a medium to illustrate and evince another doctrine by.—As it cannot be just arguing, to bring any thing for a medium to prove another by, unless it be more clear in itself, or at least more known and generally received; it is therefore necessary, that the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity was known and generally received by those to whom the apostle wrote; for it is not more clear in itself than the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers: But more difficult to conceive of. That being a display of justice, this of goodness and mercy; that an imputation of sin and guilt, this of merits and benefits. In that God acts as a Judge, whose conduct must be equal and
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right, according to the rules of justice;—in this as a gracious benefactor, who may be as good as he pleases.—It being therefore necessary, that this was a known and received truth, it also appears, that we are not mistaken in supposing this doctrine taught in the Old Testament; for from thence they must have learned it, unless they were particularly instructed in it by the inspired teachers of those times: And if this was the case, it must have been an ancient doctrine, though now more clearly revealed.

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

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

There is indeed another sense put upon the words under consideration, by a modern author *, who being loath to leave so clear a text in its full force against his opinion, has contrived this evasion; that by sin is here to be understood *mortality*, the cause being put for the effect: And that the apostle must intend no more by the words before us, than that all men are become mortal by Adam's apostasy.—But this construction not only appears inconsistent with the whole scope of the apostle's argument in this context: But it represents him as speaking incongruously, and impertinently. If this be the meaning of our text, it should be thus understood. “By one man *mortality* entered into the world, and death by *mortality*; and so death passed upon all men; for in him all are become mortal †.” And if by sin is to be understood *mortality*, it must be supposed to have the same meaning in the subsequent verses; for there can be no reason, why the apostle should annex new ideas to the same term, in the same continued

* Chubb. † Vid. Dr. Wigglesworth on the imputation of Adam's sin.

nued discourse, without giving his readers any notice of it. And consequently, he must in them also be chargeable with the greatest impropriety. Upon that supposal, we should understand the following context in this manner.

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

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

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

on the violation of that covenant; and consequently, nothing worse has been inflicted, than *death*. That death therefore, with which Adam was threatened in the first covenant, was all the misery consequent upon his fall; and all the occasion of Christ's undertaking our redemption; and must consequently imply more in it than natural *death*. And whatever was included in the threatening, from which Adam was redeemed by the promised Seed of the woman, is included in the word *death* in the text; for it is of that the apostle speaks. It is that *death* which *has passed upon all men: For in him all have sinned*. The apostle accordingly represents *the grace of God, and the gift by grace, by one Man Jesus Christ, and the grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*, as our redemption and recovery from this death, which is *through the offence of one*, and is the consequence of his *sin reigning* in the world: (In the 15th, 17th, and 21st verses in this chapter.)—This *death* must therefore imply, that our sinful nature, and sinful actions which flow from it, our state of condemnation, and exposedness to eternal misery, are the fruits of Adam's sin, as well as natural death; for from all these Christ came to redeem us.—I might also add, that this death implies in it our condemnation, as the apostle himself assures us, in the 16th and 18th verses of this chapter; and consequently must signify spiritual, as well as natural death. I think it is a clear case, that if by the *offence of one, judgment is come upon all men unto condemnation*, as the apostle asserts, there have worse effects of that offence come upon all men, than merely a state of mortality. We cannot be in a state of condemnation, unless we are spiritually dead.

4. OUR text sets before us the *occasion* of the universal sin, guilt, and misery, of the world of mankind. *By one man sin entered into the world*. It is allowed by every body, that Adam is the one man here intended; and that it was by him, that *sin entered into the world; and death by sin*. If it be enquired, how Eve comes to be excepted from having a hand in propagating this contagion to her miserable posterity, when she was *first in the transgression*: I answer, that it is probable that she may not be excepted, but *included*, in these words of

the apostle. She may be considered as belonging to Adam; and being as it were a part of him. The term *man*, may be a collective term, including both male and female, according to that, Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion, &c.* The like phraseology is frequently found in scripture.--But if otherwise, we must suppose, that as the covenant was made with Adam personally, though Eve was included in the prohibition; yet, she was not, as Adam was, considered in that covenant, to be the head and representative of a future posterity.

The greatest difficulty in these words before us, is to understand in what sense *sin* and *death* entered into the world, by this *one man*. In answer to which, it has been the common received doctrine of the Church of Christ, that as Adam was the natural, he was likewise constituted the moral head and representative of all mankind; and that the first covenant, with its sanctions, was made with him in that capacity and relation. He was therefore to stand or fall, not only for himself, but for all his posterity. Had he obeyed that single and easy precept given for his probation, he and all his progeny had been established in a state of life and happiness. But his disobedience to such an easy and reasonable command incurred the penalty threatened, both to himself and to all whom he represented.—That Adam is thus considered by the apostle in such a public capacity, as representing and acting for all his posterity, appears manifest from the whole scope of this context, in which he is every where compared to Christ; and the parallel run between them: And in which, sin and death are represented, as brought upon the world by Adam, in the same manner as the free gift of justification and life, are procured for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One, shall many be made righteous,* verse 19. To the like purpose also are the 15th, 18th, and 21st verses. Now, as it is confessed on all hands, that the Lord Jesus Christ represented us, and acted for us in his work of redemption, so it seems necessary to allow, in order to make the apostle's discourse pertinent and intelligible, that Adam is here considered, as representing us, and acting for us in his first transgression. In what else can the parity between his offence and Christ's righteousness consist; but in their

their being both public persons and representatives of others? Agreeable to this, the apostle, in 1 Cor. xv. 47. speaks of Adam as the *first* man, and Christ as the *second*; as if there never had been more than those two men in the world. But in what respect can we possibly imagine these two to include and comprehend the rest of mankind, unless they be considered as public heads and representatives of them?

It is certainly most clearly evident from this text, that we are some way or other become sinners by Adam's disobedience. And can this possibly be, but either merely by our descent from him in a way of generation; or by our being in him as our public head and representative. It cannot be true, that in the former sense we any more sinned in Adam, than in our immediate parents, and in each individual person of our progenitors; and therefore in that sense it cannot be true, that *by one man sin entered into the world; and death by sin*. For if sin and death are derived to us merely in a way of natural generation, they entered into the world not by one man only, but by more than ten thousand men. It must therefore necessarily follow, that sin entered into the world by this one man, as the legal head and representative of his whole race; and that what he did in that character was done for them all, as well as for himself.

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

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

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

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

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

That I may something illustrate this proposition, I shall endeavour

deavour to consider distinctly, What is the formal nature of this *original sin*; and shew, by the way, how we come to be guilty by it. Then I shall proceed to shew, how this appears to be the case of *all* the world of mankind.

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

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

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every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts only evil; and that continually!—Our first parents were created with a power of persevering in this state of righteousness and holiness. They were capable of a continued dependance upon the Fountain of their being and of their stability, who would never have deserted them, while they had continued to trust him. They were therefore capable of withstanding the strongest temptations; and of triumphing over the strongest efforts of hell itself; and consequently, of continuing in a perpetual state of holiness and happiness. Their yielding to the temptation, was not from a defect of power to resist: But from want of dependance upon him, in whom was their strength and sufficiency: And from an inadvertent hearkening to the crafty seducer. But how is the scene now changed! How impotent are we now become! How does every good thought even die in thinking; and every good disposition naturally languish and decay! How are we an easy prey to every temptation; and continually betrayed by our own lusts to the enemy, that lies in wait to destroy us! That even a sanctified person could not persevere in holiness, unless he were *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*—Thus we are all gone aside, we are all together become filthy, there is none that doth good; no, not one. *We have all like sheep gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.* Such is our pravity, such our impotency by the fall, that we cannot so much as accept of the remedy, that is in infinite mercy provided, without supernatural influences inclining and enabling us to do it. *No man can come unto the Son, except the Father draw him,* John vi. 44.

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

than the beasts that perish this privative part of original sin renders us all guilty in the sight of God.

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

No man that will view the circumstances of an apostate world, and consider the state of his own soul, can find room to doubt the universal influence of this contagion. — If we look into our own understandings, what darkness covers them! What ignorance of God and the things of God is seen, not only in the heathen world, where stocks and stones and inanimate things are worshipped, as the author of their being and happiness; but even in the most enlightened part of the world, where the *natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God! but they are foolishness unto him*; what error and mistake are we liable to, while many perish by believing strong delusions, many grope in the dark, not knowing in what way to walk; and all are liable to error, while clothed with mortality! What folly and madness are in the hearts of men, that they will by no means be persuaded to consider the things of their peace, and to consult and pursue their best interest: until their understandings are enlightened by the powerful influences of divine grace! — If we look into our wills, what opposition do we find there, to the love, fear and service of God! — How do all men naturally chuse the service of sin and Satan, and the vanities of time and sense, before the favour of God, and eternal happiness! How obstinate, how refractory are they in their sinful gratifications; notwithstanding all the terrors and dangers of which they have such a dreadful prospect! — If we consider our affections and appetites, how irregular, how vile do they appear to be! How little is God in the thoughts of carnal men! How far is he from being the object of their desire or delight! How disagreeable are all the perfections of his nature to their minds! How are the ways of godliness their averfation, that they cannot by any motives
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be prevailed with, to walk in them! How are their hearts glued to these perishing shadows! What base and sordid lusts do they gratify at all adventures! How impetuously do their appetites hurry them on in those pursuits, which they cannot but know to be repugnant to all their most valuable interests, both in this world and that to come! - If we consider our passions, how violent, inordinate, and ungovernable will they appear; how hard to be tamed, regulated, and kept under proper restraint! How do they often drive us, like a hurricane, against all the dictates of reason; and indeed against all our powers of opposition!—Again, if we consider our imaginations, how vain are their objects! How restless are they in their operations! How frisking, roving, and wandering from one vanity to another! How impertinently and unseasonably do they interrupt and hinder us, from any serious application to our more important concerns! How ready are they to run astray, after forbidden objects! How ready to receive sinful impressions; and even to set the whole soul on fire with their wicked suggestions!—In a word, whatever faculty of the soul comes into view, it appears to be altogether pollution and defilement. *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; nor indeed can be. They that are in the flesh, cannot please God, Rom. viii. 7, 8.—The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? Jer. xvii. 9.*

And this pollution does not only extend to our minds: But the members of our bodies too are all become instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The body is not only many ways a clog and hindrance to the soul, from making any progress in its spiritual concerns: But the bodily senses are the inlets to multitudes of those sinful disorders, with which the soul is defiled. So that the whole man is corrupted, and we want to be *sanctified wholly, in our whole spirit, and soul, and body. For we are all as an unclean thing: and our iniquities, as the wind, have taken us away, Isa. lxiv. 6.*

Now, that this state of pollution is a state of *guilt*, is manifest; because it is a constant violation of the law of nature. *God made man upright; and had therefore a just claim upon him, of a sincere intire and universal obedience. God had a just demand of his heart and affections, of his fear, love, com-*
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placency, and delight; as well as of an external conformity to the duties of natural religion. If therefore, instead of loving God, our hearts are full of enmity against him; and opposition to his holiness and other perfections of his nature: If, instead of choosing God for our portion, we prefer the world and our lusts before him: If, instead of spiritual and heavenly affections, our hearts are full of vanity and sensuality: If, instead of the religious exercises which nature itself teaches, these things are such a burthen, as to be either wholly neglected, or hypocritically performed: If, instead of that obedience, which is due from a creature to his Creator, we are serving divers lusts and pleasures: It is from hence most evident, that we are all become *guilty before God*. And that, in all these instances, I have been drawing the character of every un sanctified person, appears evident from what has been said above.—It is an impertinent plea, to say, That this depravity of our nature is what we cannot help; and therefore what cannot be our fault. For certainly there is a fault somewhere, that we are thus estranged from God and godliness, and thus in love with sin and vanity. None dare be so hardy as to impute this fault to a just and holy God; it must therefore lie at their own door; and we must be guilty, whatever are mens imaginations about it.

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

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

1. I think this is most evident from the experience of all the world.—We see, in fact, that this certainly is our case; and to debate it, is even to dispute against our senses, and against the clearest observations that we are capable of in any case whatsoever.—Does not every body see, that in our first actions there is no appearance at all of love to God or holiness; no spiritual affection, no promptitude or towardliness to any thing that is morally good; nor any thing of this nature to be introduced, but by great care, pains, and culture, all which meets with strongest opposition from a contrary bias. What then is become of the image of God, in which we were

at first created? Is it not most evident, that this is not only defaced, but utterly lost in our souls? — If we still extend our views further, that pollution of all our powers and faculties, which I have described, is a fact every where experienced and observed. What is the first propensity of our children, if they are suffered to follow their own inclinations without restraint? What courses do undisciplined youth chuse and pursue? How does their enmity to God, and their delight in sin and sensuality appear with a witness, if the reins are thrown on their necks, and they are set loose in the world, without education and government? By this we see their natural disposition; for that they follow. And there is no room to dispute what the fountain is, from whence these streams so naturally flow.—The deep root that these sinful dispositions have taken in our souls is obvious, from the impossibility of eradicating them, without the omnipotent agency of Divine grace. We every day see men go on in sinful courses, against all their valuable interests temporal and eternal, against the light of their own consciences; and even against frequent apprehensions of eternal damnation. We frequently see them wearing off all convictions, breaking through all purposes and promises of reformation, and venturing upon the *thick bosses of God's buckler*; though they cannot but know when they at all consider, that it is for their lives. And how strong and impetuous must those lusts be, that the fear of eternal damnation will not mortify and restrain! — If it be objected, that I am here only describing the case of the most profligate and abandoned part of mankind: I may demand, How came they to be thus profligate and abandoned, how came they by these corrupt and sinful inclinations, if their natures are not polluted and defiled? But I may even appeal to the experience of the most virtuous and religious of the children of men, whether they do not find a continued struggle with the same sinful affections and appetites, that are so visible in the lives of the more careless and secure: Whether they are not forced to maintain a continual warfare with their lusts, if they would live a religious life. And whence is it that *the flesh lusteth against the spirit; and the spirit against the flesh*; but from the remainders of those corruptions, that reign in the un sanctified? From thence it was, that the apostle himself found cause to

groan under this burthen; and to exclaim, as in Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the bondage of this death!*

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

2^d This also appears evident from the redemption of Christ. What can make the misery of our natural state more evident, than the infinite price expended for our recovery out of it? Did the glorious God contrive this wonderful method of salvation for us, when there was no necessity for it? Did the Lord Jesus Christ shed his own blood for a ransom of innocent creatures? Or was it not because that *we were without strength, that Christ died for the ungodly?* May we not thus judge, that *if Christ died for all, then are all dead?* As in 2 Cor. v. 14. Was not Christ's precious blood shed as a ransom for sin; and were not they therefore sinners, for whom the ransom was paid? Was not the Lord Jesus Christ *made a curse for us*; and does not that evidence, that we are all under the curse of the broken law? Was not the end of his death as a propitiation and atonement, to free us from condemnation; and does it not therefore follow, as he himself has told us, that *we are condemned already, while we do not believe on the only begotten Son of God*; and that *we are by nature the children of wrath?* In a word, Christ gave himself *a ransom for all*, either as innocent or guilty creatures. The former can hardly be supposed: there

there was no need to purchase pardon at so dear a rate, for those that did not want it. Whence it follows, that we are fallen guilty creatures, in that we are redeemed by the blood of God.

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

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

a hard master, to require impossible or unreasonable terms of his favour. He certainly at first gave us powers, equal to the obedience he required of us. And we must still retain the same capacity, unless we have lost it by our apostasy from God. If obedience to the law of nature was our reasonable service at first, it is so still. If it was at first easy to be performed, it yet remains so, if we have the same natural powers with which we were created. And why is it not as equal in God, to require of us the improvement of these natural capacities now, as at the first?—Nothing therefore can be more repugnant to the whole tenor of the gospel. Nothing more unreasonable, than this supposal. We must acknowledge ourselves to be apostate guilty creatures, or we can give no good reason for the infinite price of our redemption, the blood of Christ.

(3.) THAT we are all by nature in a state of sin and guilt, is *most frequently, clearly, and expressly* revealed to us in scripture.—It cannot indeed be declared in more strong, plain, and intelligible expressions, than what are found in our text and context. We have there an express dissertation upon the subject. The doctrine is there strongly asserted, and clearly illustrated.—But this is not the only evidence to be found in scripture, of the sad truth under consideration. The whole word of God considers us as fallen creatures, as being in a state of sin, pollution, and condemnation. And there is no way to avoid the force of the many full and plain texts to this purpose; but by strained and unnatural glosses and interpretations, upon words in themselves most familiar and easy to be understood. What can be plainer, than such texts as these? “I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,” Psa. li. 5. “The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born,” Psa. lxxviii. 3. “There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not,” Eccl. vii. 20.—“The heart is deceitful above things, and desperately wicked,” Jer. xvii. 9.—“We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. There is none righteous, no not one,” Rom. iii. 9, 10.—“For all have sinned; and come short of the glory of God,” Rom. iii. 23.—“For I know that in me, that is,

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“ in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,” Rom. vii. 18.—“ The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,” Rom. viii. 7.—“ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,” 1 Cor. ii. 14.—“ And were by nature children of wrath, even as others,—“ Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ,” Eph. ii. 3. 5.—“ We thus judge, that if one died for all, then are all dead,” 2 Cor. v. 14.—“ We know that the whole world lieth in wickedness,” 1 John v. 19.—Many more testimonies from the Spirit of God might be produced, to evince the truth of this proposition. But these are sufficient to satisfy every one, that is not prejudiced against the doctrine, and resolved not to believe it: And it is in vain to endeavour the conviction of such as these. I shall therefore proceed to the next general head.

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

I think I have proved, that we are by nature in a state of sin and guilt; and there must be some cause of these corrupt affections, appetites and passions, of this universal depravity of our natures; and corruption of all our powers and faculties. We must either have come thus imperfect and impure out of the hands of God at our first creation; or we must, some way or other, have lost our original righteousness. If the latter, no other supposal can carry equal probability in it, with this in our text, that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*.

To make way for a more distinct view of this case, it may be proper to consider, whether we could be at first created in the same state, in which we now find ourselves. And I think, this, upon enquiry, will be found most inconsistent with all the perfections of the Divine nature.—How could it be consistent with the holiness of God, to make a creature with prevalent enmity to himself, and love to sin and sensuality? Could a pure and holy God take delight in such ignorance and darkness, as naturally clouds our understandings; and alienates us from the life of God? Could he take pleasure in having all
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the powers of our souls most contrary to his own excellent nature; and in having us under the government and guidance of sinful dispositions, irregular affections, and turbulent passions? The great God must certainly be of *purer eyes than to behold iniquity; or to look upon sin with approbation.* And consequently, could not create us with such depraved souls; under the influence of such vile lusts and sinful appetites, as naturally reign in our hearts, and lead us away from God.— How could it consist with the goodness of God, to make a creature in a state of misery and calamity? Can it be supposed agreeable to infinite goodness, kindness, and compassion, to see us agonizing from our births to our graves, under the disorders of a vitiated soul, and the infirmities of a distempered body, to see us prompted by pride and ambition, lust and avarice, to destroy and devour one another; and to keep the world in convulsions and confusions, as it has always been? Could it be agreeable to him, to see so noble a being as man; the necessary subject of continual affliction in this world, that he might be thereby prepared for eternal torments in the world to come? This certainly cannot be supposed; and therefore it must not be imagined, that a good and gracious God did at first create us in this state of sin and misery.— Could it be agreeable to the justice of God, to make us under a natural necessity of sinning against him; and yet punish us for those sinful affections which he himself had given us; or for such sinful practices as are the necessary result of them? No surely, *the Judge of all the earth will do right.* He could not make us on purpose to delight himself in our misery.— From these considerations it must necessarily follow, that *God made man upright*; that our defection proceeds from some other cause; and what that is, I shall apply myself more distinctly to consider, by endeavouring to shew,—

1. How or in what way we become sinful and guilty, by the sin of Adam.

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

I. I am first then to shew, How or in what way we become sinful and guilty by the sin of Adam.—In order to which I shall observe,

That

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

That a promise of life is implied in this covenant upon condition of Adam's obedience, appears from the threatening of death in case of disobedience. The threatening must necessarily imply some evil, consequent upon his violation of that precept, that would not have otherwise happened. God's threatening death upon this single condition, does plainly suppose, that it was the only condition upon which it was to be feared and expected. For how could it be consistent with the justice, goodness, or even sincerity of God, to threaten Adam with death in case of disobedience, which would have been his lot, had he been ever so perfect in his obedience?—This threatening was certainly designed as a motive to obedience: which it could not be, if Adam had no good in expectation by continuing in his duty. And it was certainly unworthy of God, to raise his expectation of a benefit, which he should never partake of, had he complied with the terms on which he expected it.—This therefore appears plainly to be the case. Adam was, by the law of his nature, under a perpetual obligation to a conformity unto the known will of God, upon the penalty of receiving from him the just demerit of his disobedience against him. The demerit of such disobedience in any instance would have been death; for that, the apostle assures, is the *wages of sin*, Rom. vi. 23. But God was graciously

graciously pleased to put Adam upon a more limited and easy trial, in order to his establishment in a state of life and happiness. Had he continued obedient, and withstood this temptation, had he retained his integrity and overcome the attack of the seducer in this instance, he would have been no more in danger of apostasy from God; nor any more exposed to death or misery. In the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit, he was to die; and does not this necessarily imply a promise of life, if he did not eat of it all?

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

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

2. BY all the account we have of this matter in scripture, the *death* or *life* of our first parents and their offspring, was wholly put upon *their eating*, or *forbearing to eat of the forbidden fruit*.--The law of nature is not, that I know of, any where mentioned as a part of this covenant-transaction. The tenor

of this covenant in its first exhibition is, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* And accordingly, after the fall, God only demands of Adam, *Who told thee that thou wast naked! Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?* Agreeable to this, we find the sentence was inflicted upon Adam for this cause, without mention of any other. *Because thou hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake, &c.*—We have no knowledge of this transaction, but from the scriptures; no other representation of it, that I know of, in scripture. And what consequence must therefore follow? Here are two trees placed in the garden: Of the one he is forbidden to eat upon pain of death; of the other he might freely eat, and live for ever. By eating of the one he exposed both himself and posterity to perdition; by eating of the other he might have confirmed both himself and them in a state of life and peace. Did not therefore his happiness depend upon his conduct with relation to the fruit of these trees?

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

and the *lust conceived, that brought forth* the actual *sin*, which ended in their *death*. And it is remarkable, that God does not challenge them for these things, as violations of the law of nature; but as infractions of this particular covenant, by which they were to stand or fall.—In a word. God expressly made this the instance of their trial; the scripture mentions nothing more, and I know of no authority we have, to be *wise* in this case *beyond what is written*. The integrity of their nature would keep them from falling, where there was no strong temptation to overcome it. God did not permit, and therefore we are sure that he determined not to permit, any *other* prevalent temptation to assault them. They were not therefore exposed to fall, in any other instance. He threatened death upon condition of this disobedience: there was no other condition expressed in the threatening. They were challenged for this disobedience and no other, after their fall. Life was consequently promised upon condition of obedience in this instance; for this was the only condition of their establishment, that I find any where mentioned in the Bible.—Adam was put upon no other trial, that I know of, but this only; and this might have been as short as he pleased. For it is remarkable, that he had full liberty to eat of the *tree of life*; and it seems plainly hinted, in Gen. iii. 22. that if he had done so any time before his fall, immortal life would have been secured to him; that it seems left to his own choice, how long his probation should continue. It is therefore evident, that there was a promise of life in this covenant, inasmuch as there was a pledge and seal of his confirmation appointed, ready for him at any time before his apostasy: Though guarded and kept by a *cherubim*, and a *flaming sword* afterward. It is evident, that as according to this dispensation of astonishing grace and condescension, he was to expect death upon no other condition but the violation of this precept; so he was, on the contrary, to expect life upon the actual observance of it. This, though not directly, is however implicitly promised in this covenant recorded by Moses.

If, after all, any will suppose, as some have supposed, (tho', I confess, I do not know upon what foundation) that the observance of the law of nature was implicitly enjoined by this prohibition, both upon Adam and his posterity, as the condi-

tion of their escaping the death threatened; and that this prohibition of the *tree of knowledge* was but an additional injunction for the trial of their obedience: It must nevertheless be allowed, that God intended, and Adam understood, a conditional promise of life, in the threatening of death. If death was threatened only upon his disobedience, it certainly implies that it would not have been inflicted, if he had not disobeyed. By this threatening, death was made the wages of his sin; and neither the justice nor goodness of God can allow the righteous to receive the wages of the wicked.

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

It must be confessed, that the Mosaic account of this covenant between God and our first father, does not so evidently represent his posterity to be immediately concerned in it. But this also may be fully evinced from the following considerations:

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

dered as their head and representative in that first covenant.

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

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

I. THAT such a covenant with Adam would have been in itself *more likely to subserve the interests of mankind*, than for him and his posterity to have been left under the *law of nature*; and

and consequently what *all mankind* would have *chosen* for themselves, had they been then existing.

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

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

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

1. THAT "such a covenant with *Adam* would have been in itself more likely to subserve the *interest* and *advantage* of mankind, than for him and his posterity to have been left under the *law of nature*; and consequently what all mankind would have *chosen* for themselves, had they been then existing."—The condition of *Adam's* establishment in a state of life and happiness, was certainly much easier to be complied with, than the demands of the law of nature. It was much easier for him to refrain from eating a particular fruit in a garden, where there was so great a plenty and such a grateful variety of whatever could contribute to his support or delight, than for him to stand engaged in perpetual obligations, under a penalty, to perform an exact and perfect obedience to the law of nature. So that, with respect to *Adam* himself, the goodness of God was gloriously displayed, in bringing the terms of his life and stability so low.—And if we consider the case with respect to his descendants, it will appear every way their interest also, to have their safety put upon this issue.—There would have been the same manifestation of goodness to us, as to our first parents, if each individual of the human race could have had perpetual life and perfect happiness personally proposed to them, upon the same terms as they were to *Adam*; and consequently the goodness of God must be equally acknowledged, in joining their interest with his in that covenant-transaction.

This will appear, if we consider, that every one of *Adam's* posterity would have been perpetually under the strictest obligations of the law of nature, if they had not been included in this covenant. They must therefore, every one of them, be much more likely to fall, than *Adam* himself was; in that
their

their safety would have depended upon a much more extensive obedience.—Their obligations to the law, and their danger of violating it in some instance or other, would have been perpetual; and their stability would therefore have been for ever precarious and uncertain. Now, was it not better for them, that their confirmation in a state of continual life and peace, should depend only upon one such easy instance of obedience; than that each individual of them, left to act for himself, should be always exposed to the loss of God's favour, upon their violating any part of the law of God, and always uncertain of their future happiness?

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

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

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

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

From what has been said, it appears to have been, in the nature of the thing, much safer for us, and more to our advantage, to be represented in this covenant by our first parent, than for each one of us to have been left to act separately for ourselves. In short, some terms of confirmation were wanted.— Those proposed were as easy as could be desired.— Adam was in all respects more likely to have come up to these terms, than we could have been; and had he continued in his obedience (as there was the greatest reasonable prospect that he would have done), we should have perpetually acknowledged and adored the wisdom, equity, and goodness of God, in this contrivance to secure the holiness and happiness of mankind for ever.— Since therefore this transaction was in itself good, just, and reasonable, most worthy of God, and most likely to
 subserve

subserve our best interests, the event that has happened gives us no cause of complaint. God is just; and we are justly miserable.

To urge God's foresight of the event, as an argument against the justice and equity of this dispensation, is impertinent and unreasonable. The great God makes the perfections of his own nature, and not the conduct of his creatures, the rule and reason of his dispensations.—Since this method was, from the nature of things, needful for us, and most likely to secure our happiness, God was good and just in proposing it; whatever the event would be.—Besides, we have reason to suppose, God knew that the event would have been very much worse for us, than it now is, if we had each of us been left to stand or fall by the law of nature. God certainly knew how it would have been: And we have reason to conclude from all appearances, that it would have turned out to our still greater disadvantage.—We should have had no terms of confirmation; and therefore, at the best, should none of us have ever been removed beyond fear and danger.—The conditions of our enjoying God's favour would have been much more difficult; but the inducements to take heed to ourselves, nothing equal to what Adam was under.—Our exposedness to temptations would not have been, as his was, short and temporary: But of a perpetual continuance.—It is therefore the strongest probability, that God knew how in that case we should every one fall; and how much worse our state would then have been, than it now is, since in that way there could have been no room for the glorious remedy now provided.

2. IT should also be considered, "That we were all seminal-ly in Adam; and in that respect were all parties to this covenant."—I shall not here insist upon the philosophical speculations of some very great and learned men, who suppose that every individual of the human race were actually included in the loins of our parent, and were actually existing in miniature, as a part of him; and as such, partakers with him in his first transgression. Though these think, that they have carried their hypothesis higher than mere conjecture, and made it at least appear probable to be true; and if true, to be a solution of the greatest difficulties relating to the propaga-

tion of original sin: Yet, I think, we ought to have a more sure foundation, to build our faith of this important article upon. It may therefore be considered, whether the words of our text do not directly lead us to a view of the propagation, as well as imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. We are there informed, that *in him* (so in the Greek) *all have sinned*. And the same thing seems to be likewise illustrated from 1 Cor. xv. 22. *In Adam all died*. We were in him, it is true, as he was our moral or legal head and representative: And if we were only thus in him, we must with him be jointly concerned, and accountable for his conduct. But it is certain we were, if not personally, yet virtually in him, as our natural (as well as our legal) head; and this may probably be referred to in the texts now cited. We were in him, as the fruit is in the seed; as the sprouts are in the root; as Eve was in him, when one of his ribs; and were really derived from his essence.—Adam was guilty, totally and universally so: No part of him was innocent; but every part chargeable with the same guilt. And if we were then a part of him, as it is certain we were, we must have been so far guilty of his apostasy.—Let it therefore be supposed, that when the covenant was made with Adam (whereby he was to stand or fall, according to his eating or forbearing to eat of the forbidden fruit) we were all of us at that time a part of him; will it not hence follow, that the covenant was made with us, as well as with him; that it was made with every part of him; and that every part of him must partake of the consequences of his conduct *while in that state of trial*? This being supposed, it will not follow that his sin and guilt descends to us merely by natural generation, or that the sin of our immediate parents, as well as of our first parents, is imputable to us, as being a part of them. For, as Adam was but once, and none of his descendants were at all, in a state of trial for confirmation and establishment in original righteousness and happiness; so that covenant could be but once broken, either by himself or his posterity. We could not be guilty of original sin in Adam, but only when he himself was guilty of it by eating the forbidden fruit. We are guilty, not merely as descendants from Adam; but as being naturally, as well as legally, in him when he violated the first covenant.—We were (it is true) in the loins of our immediate

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

If it be objected, That our souls were not so much as semi-nally in Adam at all; and consequently not in this respect chargeable with his sin and guilt:—I answer, it would be proper for us to know something more about the time and manner of the union of our souls and bodies, before we decree too positively in this matter.—Whether our souls were all created in the beginning; whether the organized bodies of the whole human species were included, in miniature, in Adam's loins, and all their souls then united to them; whether the soul of each fœtus is immediately created and infused at the time of conception; or else united to the embryo in the mother's womb; or whether in some other unknown time and manner; these are things, which for my part I profess to know nothing about. And it is possible, that they who talk most boldly and confidently upon this subject, are really as ignorant of it as I am. And why should we grope in the dark, to remove difficulties out of our way, that we are not certain were ever in it? Thus much appears evident to me, that we were in the same sense in Adam's loins, and a part of him, when he violated the first covenant, as we now are his natural posterity. And as truly as we are his seed, descended from him, so truly did we in the same respect sin in him, when he fell. The
apostle

apostle tells us, Heb. vii. 10. That Levi was in the loins of his father Abraham, when Melchizedeck met him. And it is as true, that we were all in the loins of our father Adam, when he broke the first covenant.—But in how lax a sense forever this be allowed to be true, it serves to clear up the justice and equity of God in making us parties in that covenant, when we were branches in him, with whom the covenant was personally made. If it was equitable for God to covenant with him on his own behalf, it was equitable to covenant with him on ours also, who were a part of him; and so nearly concerned with him in that transaction.—Doubtless we should have thought it equal in God to make us joint partakers with Adam in the glorious consequences of his obedience, if he had stood. We should perhaps have thought it hard, if we, who were so nearly united to him, both by nature and interest, should have been secluded the blessed privilege; and put upon harder terms of happiness than he was.—And the equity of God's dispensation is the same, however the event turned out.—In a word, It was from the nature of the thing most agreeable, that we should be in Adam as our covenant-head, since we were in him as our natural head; that the streams should partake of the quality of the fountain, and the branches be of the same kind with the stock, from whence they sprung.

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

Let the case then be considered, and it will appear, that the obedience which God claimed of Adam in this instance of his

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

This then is the true state of the case; a complete and perpetual obedience to the whole law of nature was due to God by our first parents, as he was their Creator, and the Author of their being and powers.—Death was the just and natural penalty of their disobedience in any instance.—So far therefore as God lessened the obligation, he relaxed the penalty of their disobedience,—While, on the other hand, eternal life was infinitely more than could be claimed as a debt for the most perfect obedience; and therefore there was certainly astonishing grace and goodness in making it the reward of their refraining from the forbidden fruit. Thus we see how vast the disproportion appears, between the threatening and the promise annexed to this covenant.—The former was a debt by the laws of strictest justice; the latter an act of mere grace and goodness. The former would have been the just wages of sin, if there had been no threatening annexed to the command of God; the latter is what Adam could never have deserved for himself; and much less for his posterity.—In the former, God did as it were depart from his own right, and give

give up part of his just claim ; he might have demanded perfect, universal and eternal obedience, as the only condition of his favour ; and yet he promised perpetual life and happiness upon a single, temporary, and easy observance of his will. In the latter, God secured to Adam more than his right, infinitely more than he could have claimed by the laws of natural justice.—How then can we complain of the inequality of this dispensation, in which there is such a manifestation of condescending grace and goodness, as deserves our perpetual acknowledgment and admiration ! To all this may be added,

4. *That God has in infinite mercy made a glorious provision for our recovery, from the sad effects of Adam's apostacy.*—Our adversaries imagine it inconsistent with the goodness of God, that we should all perish on account of Adam's sin. But how could it be inconsistent with his goodness, to reward us according to our desert ? I think, I have made it appear, that the terms of that covenant with respect both to Adam and his posterity, were equal and right ; that there was no appearance of severity : but special manifestations of gracious condescension in that admirable dispensation. And what have we now to say for ourselves, why sentence should not be executed upon us, according to the tenor of the broken law ? Cannot God be good in the display of his justice ? Was it inconsistent with God's goodness, to take the forfeiture at the hands of the fallen angels ? Or would it have been any more contrary to his goodness, to have reserved us as he did them *in chains of darkness, unto the judgment of the great day* ?—But be sure all murmuring and complaint should be silenced for ever, when we consider what a reprieve was granted to such poor criminals at the bar of justice ; and when we consider, at what an infinite price our redemption from death and ruin was provided and purchased. Shall we complain, who are thus distinguished from the angels that fell, by the glad tidings of a Saviour ; while the fruit of their first disobedience was hopeless and remediless perdition ? Shall we complain, when God has had such compassion on our perishing circumstances, as to purchase our deliverance with the *blood of his own Son* ? Shall we complain, who have opportunity to be restored with so much greater advantage ; and to be partakers of so much greater
blessedness,

bleſſedneſs, than could have been hoped for from the law of nature? Here is grace, worthy of our higheſt gratitude; grace, that ſhall be admired, adored, and praiſed both by angels and men to all eternity.

Upon the whole then it appears, That ſome terms of confirmation in our original ſtate of happineſs were neceſſary for us; that the terms propoſed were moſt equal, eaſy, and good; that it was from the nature of the thing beſt for us, and what we ſhould have choſen for ourſelves if we had been then exiſting, that Adam ſhould repreſent us; and ſtand or fall for for us, as well as for himſelf; that we were in Adam, and a part of him, when he repreſented us in that covenant-relation: And it was therefore to be expected, from the reaſon of the thing, as well as from the tenor of the covenant, that the branches ſhould partake of the quality of the ſtock, from whence they ſprung; and that the good contained in the promiſe of this covenant was vaſtly more than proportional to the evil threatened. Is not all this ſufficient to quiet our minds; and make us ſilently and humbly acquieſce in this diſpenſation as moſt juſt and equal? It will certainly appear to be ſo, when we further conſider the infinite compaſſion that has *looked upon us in our blood; ſaid unto us, live;* and redeemed us from the demerit of our apoſtaſy by the blood of *God manifeſt in the fleſh.*

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

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

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

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

1. Then, as I have already shewn, it is a plain fact which cannot be reasonably disputed, that the temporal and spiritual penalty annexed to the first covenant, are inflicted upon all Adam's natural posterity.—It is open to every one's observation, that *the ground is cursed for man's sake, that in sorrow we eat of it all the days of our lives, that in the sweat of our face we eat our bread, until we return unto the ground.* And it is indisputably evident too, that we are naturally *dead in trespasses and sins*; and that we have hard hearts, corrupt affections, irregular appetites and passions, and a dreadful promptitude to the ways of sin and death. We can be no more certain of our being, than of this corruption of our natures, and this depravity of all the powers and faculties of our souls and bodies. That all this is the fruit and consequence of our original apostasy, I have largely shewn already.—If any should object, and say,
How

How can these things be? I answer, They are so by the Divine designation and appointment; and they are therefore certainly most equal and just. If all that has been said already, will not quiet the minds of objectors, this one consideration is sufficient to do it: That *God, whose ways are all judgment, who is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right*, has annexed these penalties to our first transgression; and he has inflicted them upon us; and therefore we are sure, that it is equal and right that he should do so.—Let it be further considered,

2. THAT *while we continue in this state*, which we are naturally in, we are utterly unqualified for eternal life.—It cannot be supposed that a God of infinite purity and holiness will admit polluted and sinful creatures into his immediate presence; and reward their sinful natures and practices, with the glories of the heavenly world. No! *He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; and cannot look upon iniquity*, Hab. i. 23. *If the heavens are not clean in his sight: But he chargeth the angels with folly, how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water!* Job xv. 15, 16.—But were it even supposed, that we could be admitted to this heavenly state with our natural corruptions and sinful affections, with that enmity to God and godliness, which we all experience in our unrenewed natures? What comfort could we find there? What comfort could the sensualist find, where there would be no objects to gratify the perpetual cravings of his sensual appetite? What comfort could be found in the enjoyments and employments of heaven, by those, to whom these spiritual exercises would be matter of eternal aversion? What comfort would be found in being eternally confined to such company, as is our burthen here; and would be for ever opposite and disagreeable to our natural dispositions and inclinations? To such as these, heaven itself would be a sort of hell; and even the glorious presence of God, an everlasting torment.—Whence it is apparent, that unless we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and have our corrupt nature sanctified, we cannot be *meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; for no unclean thing shall enter there.*—We are naturally impure
and

and defiled; and none but *the pure in heart shall see God*, Matth. v. 8. This brings me to observe,

3. THAT *all who live and die in that state of moral defilement which we are brought into by our original apostasy, must necessarily perish eternally.*—I have already observed, that such as these are not meet for the kingdom of glory. No! when they leave this world, *he that is unjust must be unjust still.* None but they that *do God's commandments, will have right to enter through the gates into the city of heaven.* Where then must they go? There is no middle state to be expected in the future world. Either heaven or hell, eternal happiness or eternal misery, must be the portion of all the children of men, when they have done with time. Whence it is evident, that our original sin exposes us to eternal death. We are accordingly represented in scripture, as being *by nature the children of wrath.* (Eph. ii. 3.) as being *condemned already,* and having *the wrath of God abiding on us,* whilst without an interest in Christ by faith, John iii. 18, 36.—We are plainly and positively informed, by our blessed Lord himself, that *except we are born again, except we be converted,* and brought out of that state of sin and death which we are naturally in, *we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God,* (John iii. 3. Matth. xviii. 3.) There is no salvation to be hoped for, unless *our old things pass away, and all things become new in our souls, unless we are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath fore-ordained that we should walk in them.*—This then is the sum of the matter. The sin of Adam has *reigned unto death;* for *the judgment was by this one man unto condemnation;* and *by the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation!* as in the 16th, 18th, and 21st verses of our context. It is therefore a sad and dreadful truth, and will certainly be found so in the conclusion, whatever imaginations men may entertain to the contrary, that our original sin is in itself sufficient to render us eternally miserable, if it be not washed away in the blood of Christ.

It may be here objected, “That God himself has cleared up
“the equality of his dispensations toward the children of men,
“by assuring us, that *the soul which sins shall die;* and that he will
“not charge sin upon any but them who commit it. How then

“ can it be *equal* with God to charge the sin of *Adam*, any
 “ more than the sin of others, upon those that never committed
 “ it, nor consented to it?”

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

I further add, to what has been said to clear up the equity of God’s dispensation toward us, That we do all of us naturally consent to Adam’s sin; and in that way also make it *our own*. There is none of Adam’s progeny but what are by nature prompted to, and thereby manifest their approbation of the like sins with those that our first parents committed. Did they call in question the truth of God’s word? And does not every un sanctified person daily do the same thing? Did they yield to the temptation of Satan? And does not every man in a natural state likewise do so continually?—Were they acted by pride and ambition to seek a more exalted station than God had placed them in? And are not the same aspiring views in the hearts of all men by nature? Are not we (as they were) influenced by irregular sensual appetites? And do not we continually violate God’s commands and prohibitions?—Thus we manifest our approbation of our first parents sin; and as it were act it over again. We are by nature of the same temper and disposition that they shewed in the commission of this sin. By a just construction, we may be said to be inwardly pleased with their disobedience: And are thereby *partakers with them in their iniquity*.—As our blessed Saviour threatened the scribes and pharisees and other leaders of the Jews, that *upon them should come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zecharias son of Barachias*, (Matth. xxiv. 35.) because they were influenced by the same
 cruel

cruel and bloody dispositions, and went on in the same methods of perfecting the saints of God with their wicked and malignant ancestors; and, by approving and imitating their sin, brought their guilt on their own heads. In the same manner are we all guilty of Adam's sin; and liable to the penalty of it. We are, upon the same account, as much chargeable with his apostasy, as these Jews were with all the blood shed from Abel to Zecharias.—If we did not personally commit that sin, we are naturally disposed to the same kind of disobedience; and are daily imitating, and thereby approving and making ourselves guilty of that first transgression.

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

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

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

all his father's sins, and considereth and doth not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live. But then, on the contrary, God has threatened those children, which imitate their parents sins, *that he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him,* (Exod. xx. 5.)—And the reason of the thing is obvious: The sin of their parents should have been a warning and admonition to them, to have watched against, and avoided their sinful courses. These should have been as a beacon to caution them against the rocks upon which their fathers have struck and perished. They should have deterred them from going on in the same way of destruction.—Had any of our parents fallen a sacrifice to human justice, for treason and rebellion against their prince, or had they brought any remarkable calamity upon themselves by their irregularities and misdemeanours; should we not improve it as a warning against imitating their example, lest we bring the same misery and ruin upon ourselves, as we have seen to fall upon our parents heads? And is there not much greater reason to avoid the paths of sin, in which any of us have seen our parents walk, to their eternal ruin in another world?—But if, instead of taking warning by their wicked life, we imitate and approve it; if we go on in the same courses of impiety which they lived in, and thereby justify their sinful conduct; we make ourselves partakers of their crimes; and, upon that account, deserve also to be partakers of their punishment.—It is accordingly offered as a reason of Belshazzar's ruin, that he saw his father's obstinacy, pride, and fall, and yet he his son had not humbled his heart, though he knew all this, (Dan. v. 22.)—And if we apply this to the present case, I have shewn already, that we all naturally imitate and approve the sin of our first parents; and are therefore all justly liable to the penalty. We are partakers of their guilt, and therefore deserve to share in the punishment of it.

I may also observe, that if this and other such texts of scripture were taken in the most unlimited sense possible; if it were, since the fall, in all cases and all instances true, that *the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father,* it would nothing affect the case before us. For no parents are considered now as the legal representers of their children, as transacting in a moral

ral capacity for them, and standing or falling in their place and stead; in the same sense as I have proved to be the case with respect to our first parents.—As Adam was set in a public capacity, he sinned as the covenant-head and representative of all his posterity; and for that reason his first transgression is imputed to us. But the following sins of his life were not imputed to us: The reason of this is (as I shewed above), because the original dispensation or probationary state Adam was put under, came to a period on his first sin and fall, so that he no longer acted in the capacity of a public person, our federal head and surety: Therefore none of his consequent sins were imputed to his posterity, any more than the sins of our immediate progenitors.—It will not therefore follow, that God doth not impute the guilt of our first parents' apostasy to their posterity, because he doth not punish us for the sins of our immediate parents; since the former acted in a public relation, but the latter act only in a private and personal capacity.

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

To this I answer, That greatest modesty becomes us in drawing any conclusions on this subject. We have indeed the highest encouragement to dedicate our children to Christ, since he has told us, *of such is the kingdom of heaven*; and the strongest reason for hope as to the happiness of those deceased infants, who have been thus dedicated to him. But God has not been pleased to reveal to us, how far he will extend his uncovenanted mercy, to others that die in infancy.—As, on the one hand, I do not know that the scripture any where assures us, that they shall all be saved: So, on the other hand, we have not (that I know of), any evidence, from scripture or the nature of things, that any of these will eternally perish.—All those that die in infancy, may (for ought we know), belong to the election of grace; and be predestinated to the adoption of children. They may, in methods to us unknown, have the benefits of Christ's redemption applied to them; and thereby be made heirs of eternal glory. They are (i is true), naturally under the guilt and pollution of original sin: But they may, notwithstanding this, for any thing that appears to the

the contrary, be renewed by the gracious influences of the Spirit of God; and thereby be made meet for eternal life. It therefore concerns us, without any bold and presumptuous conclusions, to leave them in the hands of that God, whose *tender mercies are over all his works*.

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

USE I. *This shews us the miserable perishing circumstances of all unconverted sinners; of all that continue in the state of pollution and guilt, that they are naturally in.*—It is a dreadful thing to be enemies to the living God, a fearful thing to fall into his hands. If the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion, how terrible is the wrath of the omnipotent God! How terrible will his eternal indignation be, to all those who are the miserable subjects of it! This is a thought that might justly surprize the securest sinner living. For *who can stand before his indignation, when his fury is poured out like fire; and the rocks are thrown down by him! What heart can endure, or hands be strong, when the Lord shall deal with them!* How shocking a thought must it therefore be, to consider the far greatest part of the world of mankind as obnoxious eventually to suffer the eternal displeasure of a just and almighty God!—All that live and die in a state of nature, are inevitably miserable for ever. Their original sin (as I have shewn), is sufficient to condemn them. They can never be admitted to heaven with that corruption and defilement, with that hardness of heart, and enmity to God, which they have derived from our first parents. And while they remain un sanctified, they are continually adding to this original weight dreadful loads of guilt, by their innumerable actual sins; and thereby increasing their misery, and exposing themselves to more amazing condemnation.—And is this a state to be continued in? Can men sleep secure, while the flames of infinite wrath surround them? Can they be content to *dwell with devouring fire; and to inhabit everlasting burnings?* Does it not infinitely concern every one, to meditate a deliverance from that undone condition, which they are naturally in; and to *flee for refuge,*

refuge, to lay hold upon the hope that is set before them? Is it not of infinite importance, that our hearts be changed, our natures renewed and sanctified; and we made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light?

Let men now dispute as artfully as they please, against the doctrine of original sin, let them flatter themselves with the goodness of their hearts, and the goodness of their state, till they lull their consciences asleep, and quiet their minds with the vain dream of safety and happiness: It will nevertheless appear in the conclusion, that *our carnal minds are enmity against God*; and can never, without a renewing sanctifying change, be admitted into his presence. — Of what vast consequence is it therefore, for every one to see and consider his state really as it is; and not cry peace to his soul, when God says, *there is no peace to the wicked!* How dangerous is it to live ignorant of our original sin and guilt! How dangerous to remain quiet and secure in a state of death; and not to be undeceived, until it is too late! — The doctrine I have been treating of, is not to be considered as a matter of mere speculation, that may, without prejudice to our souls, be indifferently either believed or rejected. The disease is too dangerous, to be carelessly neglected; and will certainly prove mortal to all that do not discover their misery and hazard, and repair to the great Physician of souls for a recovery from it. It would not do to dispute the malady, when the symptoms of death are upon our souls. — I cannot see how any man can be in the way of salvation, while insensible of his natural misery and sinfulness, while ignorant of the corruption of his mind and conscience, hardness of his heart, the obstinacy of his will, the vileness of his affections and appetites, the depravity of his passions, and the pollution of his whole soul. For how can he mourn after a pardon of the sin, that he neither sees nor feels? How can he in earnest seek a recovery from such a condition, as appears good enough already? To what purpose would it be, to endeavour to purify the streams, when the fountain is corrupt and polluted; to seek a reformation from particular sins, when the whole nature is sin and defilement, *the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint? verily the whole need not the physician; but they that are sick,* Matth. ix. 12. — It is therefore of the last necessity, for sinners to see the sinfulness and misery of
 their

their state by nature, to see that they are undone and perishing in their present condition, to have a lively impression of their dreadful danger, while enemies to God, and heirs of perdition; that this awakening prospect may make them in earnest repair to the fountain of grace and life.—If ever sinners are brought to a sincere repentance, they will be deeply humbled under a sense of their original sin and the corruption of their natures, as well as transgressions of their life. They will groan out David's complaint, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me;* and will, with the apostle, mourn after deliverance *from the body of this death.*—As for others that are sleeping secure in this perishing condition, they must quickly awake out of sleep; or be terribly convinced, that God is most just in imputing and punishing the sin of our first parents, when *every mouth will be stop't, and the whole world be judged in righteousness.*

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

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

1. MEDITATE much upon your present *mifery*, in all its aggravations.— I hope, what has been said may give you a rational conviction of the sad truth I have been treating of: But this is not sufficient to awaken your care and diligence. Multitudes that acknowledge this doctrine, do notwithstanding sleep on, in a fatal security, and perish for ever.—And this is like to be your case also, if you are not brought to such an awakening lively impression of your guilty perishing circumstances, as makes you cry out, with distress of soul, *What shall I do to be saved?* Labour, therefore, for a realizing affecting apprehension of your extreme misery, and dwell in a continued view of it. View your circumstances as they appear by the law of God, which thunders forth indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish against you. View them as they will appear when you come to die; and have nothing in prospect, but the dreadful effects of your sin and guilt; when *nothing remains but a fearful looking for of fiery indignation, ready to consume you*, except you repent and be converted. View them as they will appear, if you are found in your present state, *at the last day*, before the tribunal of your Judge, when, with horror and amazement, you must hear the terrible sentence, *depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. View them as they will appear to condemned sinners in the place of torment, when weltering in the flames of intolerable vengeance, without hope or help to all eternity. And let the dreadful view excite in you all possible endeavours to *flee from the wrath to come*, and secure the salvation of your souls.

2. LABOUR after a humbling sense of your utter *inability* to relieve and save yourselves.—Do not attempt this change of your heart and state in your own strength. Alas! you are *dead in trespasses and sins* (as you have heard before), and a naturally dead man is as incapable to revive himself and to re-

assume vital power and action, as you are to *create yourselves anew unto good works*. As you are not indeed naturally dead, you are therefore capable to attend upon the means of grace and life, in order to have the *good pleasure of God's goodness wrought in you, and the work of faith with power*. But then, as you are spiritually dead, you cannot, by any skill or strength of your own, change your hearts; nor do any thing that will give you a claim to have it done for you.

You must become *new creatures*: You must *be born again*: You must be *turned from darkness to light*; and *from the power of Satan unto God*: *The heart of stone must be taken out of your flesh*; and *a heart of flesh given you*; and, in a word, (as I observed before) *old things must pass away*; and *all things must become new in you*. And can it be in your own power to produce this wonderful change?—You must live in the exercise of *faith in the Son of God, without which it is impossible to please him*: You must live in the *love of God*; your *affections must be placed upon the things that are above*; you must be *spiritually minded*; and have *your conversations in heaven*. But is it possible to exercise these graces before you have them? Is it possible for you to beget them in your own souls, when all your powers, faculties, and affections are directly opposite to them? Or is it possible to deserve the blessing of this renewed nature from God; when your whole conduct is one course of enmity against him, and indignity to him? No! consider your case as it is. You are dead, and cannot help yourselves: You are guilty, and cannot deserve that God should help you. If you perish for ever, God is just; and you have no cause of complaint. And if God have mercy upon your soul, he will bring you to his footstool, with a most humble abasing sense of this your impotent and miserable, guilty and exposed state. He will bring you to be thus poor in spirit, if ever he gives you a title to the kingdom of heaven.

3. RESOLVE to cast your perishing souls upon the riches of the sovereign free *grace* of God in Christ.—You deserve to perish, and cannot help yourselves. Destruction and death are before you; and there is no remedy in your own power. What will you do? What course can you take? If you rest in your present condition, you are undone for ever. If you betake

betake yourselves to any sufficiency of your own, it will not help the case.—But here is your relief and encouragement: *With God there is forgiveness, that he may be feared; and with him is plenteous redemption. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came to save, even the chief of sinners.* If you are sensible of your lost estate, if you are burthened with the weight of your sin and guilt, if you are solicitously enquiring after a deliverance from the misery you feel and fear, the Lord Jesus Christ is inviting you *to come unto him; and in so doing he will give you rest.*—Resolve therefore to commit your souls to the righteousness of Christ for justification, to the influences of the blessed Spirit for conversion and sanctification; and rely only upon the riches of the free mercy of God in Christ, that the work of grace may be carried on in your souls with power, that you may be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

4. PERSEVERE in a constant and diligent attendance upon all the *means of grace*, in order to have this change wrought in you.—Though your deliverance from your miserable condition entirely depends upon the sovereign grace of God in Christ, which you can neither merit, nor have any claim to, by any thing you do, or can do: Yet you must *seek* it, if you would *find* it. You must *knock* at the door of mercy, if you would have it *opened* unto you.—It is God that must *sprinkle you with clean water, and make you clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols he must cleanse you: He must take away the heart of stone; and give you a heart of flesh: He must cause you to remember your own evil ways, and your doings that are not good; and to loath yourselves in your own sight, for all your iniquities and for all your abominations. Not for your sakes will he do this for you, be it known unto you: but for his holy name's sake. But yet he will be enquired of by you, to do this for you,* Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 37.—Be therefore found *watching at his gates; and waiting at the posts of his doors.* Be found seeking God in all the ways of his appointment, with the utmost earnestness and diligence. Whatever discouragements you meet with, resolve to persevere in your unwearied application to the infinite mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

Resolve that if *he slay you, yet you will trust in him*; that if you perish, you will perish at his foot. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Be not slothful in this business: but fervent in spirit, seeking the Lord. Thus, commit your ways to the Lord, trust also in him; and you may hope that he will bring it to pass.*

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

My beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.—Now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen.*

A
DISCOURSE
ON
CONVERSION.

EPHESIANS. ii. 4, 5.

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

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

1. A REPRESENTATION of our *state by nature*, in those words, *when we were dead in sins*. We are, by our apostasy from God, dead as to all the powers and faculties of our souls in their moral consideration: They are wholly pollution and sin; and naturally incapable of any thing that is spiritually good.—We are dead by a just sentence of the law of God. We are *condemned already*; and *the wrath of God abideth on us*. And we are not only spiritually; but eternally dead, by the execution of that terrible sentence upon our souls, if infinite mercy doth not step in to our rescue and deliverance; as I have observed in a former discourse.

2. HERE is set before us the great change, which by *conversion* is wrought on the soul? In that expression, *hath quickened*

us;

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

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

4. WE have the motive unto, or the *impulsive cause* of this change, suggested in those words, *God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us : by grace ye are saved*.— There could be no motive out of himself, nothing but his own infinite mercy, *love and grace*, to excite his kind regards to such poor guilty hell-deserving rebels as we are. Should he leave us all under the guilt of our sins and the damning power of our lusts, unto inevitable and remediless perdition, he would be most just ; and we most justly miserable. We should have no cause of complaint, if he should bestow no mercy upon any of us ; for he owes us none, we have nothing to claim but his just displeasure. What then but sovereign distinguishing grace, looks upon any of the fallen race of mankind while in their blood, and says unto them, *Live?* Why is one, more than another, partaker of these quickening influences ; but from the mere good pleasure of God's goodness ?

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

First,

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

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

I am then to consider,

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

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

i. Then

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

1. Then, if we consider the *first change* wrought in a sinner by the Spirit of God, it will appear to be no more than his bringing him to *realize his own miserable condition, and see it as it is.*—It is awfully certain, from the word of God, that every impenitent sinner is an enemy to God, under a sentence of condemnation, and an heir of hell and eternal misery. And it is equally certain, that the most of the world are easy and quiet, careless and secure in this dreadful state. No means that can possibly be used, will put the most of mankind upon a proper solicitude about their eternal welfare. The most awakening addresses, that can be made them in the name of the Lord, the most surprizing alarms of God's providence, the most pathetic and compassionate intreaties of their godly friends, have no effect upon them, to stop their career for hell and damnation. They will yet sleep upon the brink of the pit. They will yet *run upon the thick bosses of God's bucklers.* They will yet indulge their lusts, though they perish for ever.—And what is the source of this indolence, thoughtlessness, and security; but their want of a just view of their state and danger? Could they but realize these things, and see them *as they are*, they would sooner rush upon a drawn sword, or leap into a burning furnace, than farther incense the eternal Majesty against their souls, and venture upon everlasting damnation. But their misery is, that they have no feeling apprehension of these things. They consider them but as the rumbling of remote thunder; and as affairs of no special consequence to them: and thus they will consider them, unless the Spirit of God sets home the important concern upon their mind; and gives them a lively sense of what they are doing, and whether they are going.—But if once the blessed Spirit undertakes the work, he will make the long neglected, and slighted means of grace effectual to open their eyes, that they may see their state as it is. Though they could before sit under the most powerful ministry from year to year, without care, fear, or sensible apprehension of their danger: Yet now an ordinary sermon, or a particular passage in a sermon, which perhaps they had heard hundreds of times before without concern, shall awaken their sleepy consciences, and make them, with trembling and astonishment, cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?*—Why, what is the matter now? Whence is this

wonderful change? Why cannot the poor sinner do now as he was wont to do? Why cannot he go on in his mirth and jollity, in his worldly pursuits and sensual gratifications? What means this darkness and distress, this melancholy countenance and solemn concern? Is this the man, that lately laughed at preciseness; that bantered serious godliness, and ridiculed vital piety, as enthusiasm, or a heated imagination? Whence is he now as much an enthusiast, as any of those whom he lately derided and scoffed at? Whence is he now so afraid of hell and damnation, that could lately mock at fear; and laugh at the shaking of God's spear?—This wonderful alteration is wholly wrought by the almighty Spirit's impressing a lively view of what the secure sinner could have no feeling sense of before. Now he sees his sins, in their number, nature, and aggravations. Now he sees his danger; and thence feels that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* He sees it in such a view, that he can be no longer quiet and easy, in such a state of guilt and misery. But this (though open to every one's observation, and plainly visible from the word of God, and the nature of things) is what he never would have seen to purpose, unless the Comforter had been sent to *convince him of sin.* And the reason is assigned, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.* And Isai. i. 3. *Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider.*

2. IF we consider the case with respect to a sinner's *humiliation*, the Spirit of God works this also in the soul, by shewing him his state as it is; and by giving him a realizing sight of his *unworthiness* of Divine mercy, of his *spiritual impotency* and utter *inability* to help himself.—These are indeed truths plainly revealed in scripture, as well as necessary deductions from the light of nature. By both these it is clearly manifest, that we are guilty creatures, and thereby obnoxious to the wrath of God; that we are imperfect creatures, and therefore cannot fulfil the demands of the law of nature; much less can we make satisfaction for our past offences. But, though these things are in themselves evident as the light, they have no impression upon the minds of the generality of mankind.—Though deserving nothing but destruction and

death, they are as easy and secure, as though they had a title to God's favour, and a claim to eternal happiness.—Though utterly incapable to change their own hearts, or to deserve that God should do it for them, they are yet attempting their salvation *in their own strength*, if they attempt it at all; and, *being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.* Even those who are convinced of their guilt and danger, are usually struggling after deliverance in their own strength; and betaking themselves to some self-righteous refuge or other. And thus, in their highest attainments, will they continue to *compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling*, till the Spirit of grace, by his powerful influences, humble them at God's foot; and shew them that they are *poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked.* And how is this done, but by giving them a sight of their case as it is?—They had a doctrinal knowledge before, that they were sinful, guilty, helpless, and hopeless in themselves: But this had no special influence upon their affections, or their conduct. But when they have a *feeling* sense of this, it must bring them low. They now see their sin and guilt, that there is no resting in their present condition. They see the defects of their duties, that these cannot recommend them to God's favour. They see their own impotency, that they cannot take away the heart of stone out of their flesh; and give themselves a heart of flesh. They see the strict demands of God's law, that it is impossible to come up to them. They see the purity and holiness of God's nature, that he cannot look upon sin and sinners with approbation. They see that they have no capacity to help themselves, though they are utterly undone in their present condition. And what is the necessary result of a realizing sight of such a lost, helpless, perishing condition, but that (Psal cxxx. 3.) *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who should stand?* Or that (Neh. ix. 15.) *Behold we are before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee, because of this!* What should be the result of this prospect, but that they lie at God's footstool, as condemned malefactors, having nothing to plead, save unmerited and forfeited mercy, why sentence should not be executed upon them, to their eternal confusion!

3. IN the same manner, is a convinced sinner brought to a *solicitous inquiry after an interest in Christ*. This also is wrought in him, by a lively view of his case as it is.—We are all indeed from our earliest age, indoctrinated in this essential article of the Christian faith, that *there is not salvation in any other but Christ, and that there is no other name under heaven, and among men, whereby we must be saved*. And yet the most of the world are *whole, and need not the Physician*. They are more concerned about any thing else, than about an interest in Christ. It is beyond human art and means, to make them at all solicitous about this great salvation, though they know that their eternal welfare depends upon it.—And what can be the reason, that this *madness is in the hearts of men*? Can condemned perishing sinners be unconcerned, about the only method of escape from eternal damnation? Can they set more value by their lusts and pleasures, by the world and its vanities, and even by the merest trifles imaginable, than by Christ and his saving benefits? Can they rather choose to perish eternally, and to lose all the glories of the heavenly world, than to *come to Christ, that they might have life*? How astonishing soever this conduct appears, it is visibly the case of the world of mankind in general. And what reason can possibly be imagined of such unparalleled stupidity, but this, that they have not (they cannot have, while under the power of a blind and carnal mind) any realizing view of this great concern? Could they but see their case as it is, a condemned malefactor could as easily set light by a pardon, or a drowning man by deliverance, as these perishing sinners by an offered Saviour.—We accordingly find, that when the Spirit of God comes upon them with his illuminations, and opens their eyes to see their misery and impotency, they can be no longer careless about an interest in Christ. They can no longer make excuses; and *go their way, one to his farm; and another to his merchandize*. They can no longer amuse themselves with divers lusts and pleasures: and forget their necessity of Christ and his salvation. No! they have now nothing so much at heart, as the securing an interest in this blessed Saviour. Now this thought lies down and rises with them, *What must I do to be saved?* How shall I obtain an interest in Christ? now their distressed souls are groaning out these pathetic desires, *O for*

an interest in Christ! Let me have Christ, whatever I want! The world now, with all its blandishments, all its riches and glory, dwindles to nothing in the eyes of such a humbled sinner, when compared with this excellent and needed Saviour. I may appeal to every one that have been truly converted to God, at an age of observation, whether they have not experienced these things in their own hearts. And indeed these operations of the mind are so rational, that it would be, in the nature of things, impossible we should neglect a most active concern about an interest in Christ, if the eyes of our understanding were enlightened. But alas! *The light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.* We see, by experience, that men never do (never will) shew themselves thoroughly in earnest about this everlasting concern, till the Spirit of God *open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light*; and that when they are thus illuminated, they cannot do otherwise, This wonderful change in mens desires and pursuits, is a necessary consequence of Divine illumination, and of a just and reasonable view of things. Without this, they cannot attain it; with this, they cannot fail of it. To this therefore the apostle ascribes it, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*

4. IN the same manner also is the *actual conversion* of a sinner accomplished. In order to this, the Spirit of God gives him a realizing sight of the fulness and sufficiency that there is in Christ; and of his willingness and readiness to save him. The attainments before described, do not necessarily imply a saving conversion to God. Though these are the influences of the blessed Spirit, they are not his special and saving operations. The sinner is not brought into a state of favour with God, till he accepts a tendered Saviour upon his own terms. It is by *receiving him, that we have power to become the sons of God.* The first act of saving faith is that conversion, by which the sinner effectually turns from sin to God, passes from death to life, and becomes interested in Christ and all his saving benefits.—Now, which way is the sinner brought to this, but by an impressed lively discovery of things as they are?—By a lively

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

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

5. THE Spirit of God does likewise carry on the work of grace in a believer's *sanctification*, by continued views of spiritual things as they are.—By faith, the soul is united to the Lord Jesus Christ; and becomes one spirit with him. By faith, believers have an interest in all the benefits of Christ's redemption. They have thereby a claim to all the promises of the covenant of grace, and may safely and confidently depend upon the faithfulness of God, that *he will give them grace and glory*; that *they shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation*; that *he who hath begun a good work in them, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ*; that *he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for them all, will with him also freely give them all things*; and that, upon their believing in Christ, *out of their bellies shall flow rivers of living water*. And what way is this glorious work of grace carried on

in the soul, but by the continued assistances of the blessed Spirit to act reasonably; and to maintain a lively apprehension and impression of invisible realities? How comes the believer to hate every false way; but by a lively view of the vileness and unreasonableness of sinning against God? What excites him to live in the love of God; but a realizing impression of the excellency of his nature, the infinite value of his favour, and the endearing attractives of his goodness, kindness, and compassion? What makes him in love with holiness; but a sensible discovery of its internal beauty, and agreeableness to a reasonable being? How comes he to be weaned from the world; but by a true sight of its vanity, and utter insufficiency to satisfy the desires of an immortal nature? How come his affections to be placed upon the things above; but from a like discovery of the value and importance of things unseen and eternal? What is communion with God; but a just impression of what pertains to God and godliness? And what the evidences of God's favour; but a realizing sight of the actings of grace in our souls, and of the truth of the invitations and promises of the gospel? The extraordinary influences of the Spirit, in his immediate communications of light and joy to the believer, are but still a brighter discovery of things as they are.—In a word, In whatever aspect this case is considered, what I am pleading for, will, (I think) appear to be truth. The whole work of sanctification is carried on by illumination, and by the soul's being brought, through the influences of God's Spirit, to the exercise of knowledge and understanding; and to this the apostle ascribes it, Eph. i. 17, 18. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercy, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling; and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*

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

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

If it be objected, "That the *will* must be changed and re-
 "newed, as well as the understanding enlightened, in the con-
 "version of a sinner; that the Spirit of God *works in us both*
 "to *will and to do of his good pleasure*; and Christ's *people*
 "*must be made willing in the day of his power*:" This is readily granted.—But the question is, in what *manner* is the will changed; and how doth the Lord Jesus Christ bring the stubborn obdurate will of the sinner into subjection to himself? To this I answer, as before, By giving them a realizing affecting sight of things as they are.—It is impossible for a reasonable being to do otherwise than will what appears to be, in all circumstances, best for him, and most agreeable and desirable to him. Did therefore carnally secure sinners see things as they are; did they realize to themselves the folly and danger of their lusts, the misery of an unconverted state, their need of a Saviour, the excellency of Christ, the advantage of an interest in him, the benefits of a life of religion with respect both to this world and that to come: I say, did they see these things in a just and powerful light, their wills would necessarily be changed. They would no longer chuse the way of destruction and death, before the path of life and peace. They would no longer venture eternal damnation, rather than accept of happiness here and for ever.—We are not therefore to suppose, that the Spirit of God properly puts any force upon mens inclinations, when he changes their wills. The will admits no violence. He does but give them a true discovery, a realizing view, and powerful impression of what is best for them; and that necessarily determines their choice.—Let sinners, if they can, be willing to rush upon the pikes of God's displeasure; when the Spirit by strong convictions and illuminations gives them a full and clear sight of their sins, and of the flaming vengeance, that hangs over their guilty heads. Let them, if they can, refuse a tendered Saviour, when they are brought to see their extreme necessity of him, with his fulness, sufficiency, and readiness to save them. Or let them, if they can, choose the service of sin and Satan before

the service of God, when they have a feeling sense of the danger and misery of the one; and the excellency, desirableness, and safety of the other.—In a word, though men may have the greatest degree of doctrinal knowledge, in the things now treated of, understand them well, discourse of them rationally and distinctly; and receive them for truth, without any change of their wills and affections: Yet if, through the Spirit, they had any lively and affecting apprehensions of these unseen and eternal concerns, they must of necessity have an influence upon their hearts and lives, proportionable to the kind and degree of the light impressed on their minds. Though a notional knowledge of these things will serve no other purpose, but to leave the sinner the more inexcusable: yet, when the Spirit of God sets them home with power upon the soul, in their own proper light and evidence, this prospect cannot fail of a blessed effect.—But it is time I should proceed to consider,

II. *In what respect this quickening and sanctifying change is to be attributed to the rich mercy and grace of God.* And here let it be observed,

I. This is to be ascribed to the riches of Divine grace, with respect to the sovereignty of God, in distinguishing some from the rest of the world of mankind, in the application of the benefits of Christ's redemption to their souls.—There is nothing more visible to every observer, than the dreadful security and stupidity, neglect of Christ and salvation, chargeable upon the far greatest part of those who enjoy the best advantages for their eternal welfare. How sad and melancholly is the reflection, that such multitudes of those who are *lifted up to heaven* by their privileges, must yet be *cast down to hell*; and nothing that is or can be done for them, in the use of the best means whatsoever, will prevent their final and eternal ruin! And whence is it, that all the world, without difference, are not boldly going on in the same paths of destruction and death? Whence is it, that there are any of the race of Adam brought to see their danger, to enquire the way of salvation; and to betake themselves to Christ for refuge?—Is it from any superior natural powers, that they thus became wise to salvation? Constant experience shews us, that *God hath chosen the*

things of the world, to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty.—Is it from the enjoyment of better means and external advantages for their souls eternal interest? Do not we daily see, that, under the very same ordinances and providences of God, *one is taken and another left!*—Is it from their more innocent and regular lives and conversations? How often do we see scandalous and flagitious sinners savingly converted to God, when others, that are free from such gross pollutions, remain in unbelief, and live on in the neglect of Christ and his offered salvation? publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, when scribes and pharisees are shut out.—Is it from better education? Whence then is this difference in the children of the same family?—Is it from a better natural disposition? Alas! every unsanctified carnal *mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be.*—What cause then can this possibly be ascribed to, but that which is assigned by our blessed Lord, Matth. ix. 25, 26? *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent; and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* God is absolutely sovereign in the disposal of his own benefits. He bestows them when, where, and how he pleaseth. *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.—He makes known the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself.* Eph. i. 9.—What reason therefore have those that are effectually called, to admire and adore the infinite riches of the sovereign free grace of God to them, in distinction from so many others, that continue in their sin and guilt, in a state of death and perdition! *Who has made them to differ? What have they, that they did not receive?* What was there in them more than in others, that could excite the Divine compassion? Had they not the same corrupt nature, the same enmity to God, the same hardness of heart, the same (if not greater) degrees of sin and guilt, that are found in the unsanctified world? And has God *passed by them when in their blood, and said unto them, Live;* while such multitudes of others, as good by nature as they, are like to perish eternally? O the riches of the free distinguishing grace of God! *What manner of love hath the Father bestowed upon them, that they should be called the children*

of God! What cause have they now to begin the eternal anthem, *To him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!*

2. THE conversion of a sinner is a display of the rich mercy and free grace of God, on account of the *strong opposition* there is in the hearts of sinners to this change.—This opposition to vital piety is every where visible, in the unsuccessfulness of the means of grace, and in all the fruitless endeavours, that are used to persuade men to turn and live. All that can be done by the faithful ministers of Christ, will not prevail with a great part of mankind, so much as seriously to consider those concerns that are of infinite importance to their souls. And what but the enmity of their natures to God and godliness, can be the cause of this stupidity and insensibility? They have the same natural powers to consider their eternal interest, which the believer exercises to his everlasting advantage; and yet *they cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; but they are foolishness to them.* And whence is this impotency but from a fountain of enmity and opposition in their hearts?—They are strongly attached to their lusts and sensual gratifications; and therefore will not realize to themselves, that these will in the conclusion sting like a serpent; and bite like an adder. Their affections are glued to the world and its vanities; they therefore will not allow themselves any suitable and solemn reflections upon the shortness, the emptiness and vexation of these ensnaring amusements. They have a natural aversion to a spiritual and heavenly life; and therefore cannot dwell in the views of those things that are unseen and eternal; nor at the utmost proceed further, than to a *form of godliness*, without the power. The way of salvation by Christ is so contrary to the proud and self-righteous disposition of their souls, that they cannot see *any comeliness in him, that they should desire him.* They are so immersed in the affairs of time and sense, that they will not allow themselves leisure for any deliberate thought and concern about an eternal world.—Though they may be reasoned into an acknowledgement, that *this their way is their folly*, how quickly does the consideration

vanish ; and the sensual appetite recover its dominion ? Though they may be awakened to some temporary concern about their state, by the ordinances or providences of God ; such are the rooted prejudices in their hearts against a religious life, that *the dog soon returns to his vomit ; and the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*

In a word, They are under the dominion of sin, and the empire of Satan ; and as long as the strength of their own corruptions, in concert with all the powers of hell, can keep the palace, they will enjoy their lusts in peace. There must be one stronger than the strong man armed, to take from him the armour wherein he trusteth ; and divide the spoil.—This is manifestly the case of every unregenerate man. What a powerful work of Divine grace must it therefore be, to bear down this opposition, to bring these mad men to their reason ; and bow their souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ ! How wonderful is this grace of God, to exercise such compassion to their souls, while they are enemies both to him and themselves ! The mercy of God does herein shine with peculiar glory, that it not only enlightens the eyes of the blind ; but of those that are voluntarily and obstinately so, that do and will refuse a recovery, until he anoints them with his eye-salve, that they may see ! This will be the subject of the eternal admiration of the redeemed, that *when they were enemies, they were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,* Rom.

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3: THE riches of God's free grace appear in a sinner's conversion, in that none can have any *claim* to the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit, by any thing they can do.—If we consider the whole race of mankind, in our apostate circumstances, what was there in us more than in the angels that fell, to excite the Divine compassion ? What was there in us, that could incline the blessed Redeemer to take upon him, *not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham* ? Could guilt and pollution, could enmity to God, and vile sensual affections and appetites, intitle us to the favour of God, and the infinite love of the glorious Redeemer ?—If we consider the gospelized world, as distinguished from those that
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fit in darknefs and fee no light, but are perishing for lack of vision, whence is this difference? Were they not all the offspring of the same ungrateful rebel, all under the power of the same original corruption, and all in the same manner guilty before God? What therefore, but infinite free grace, has distinguished us from the darkeft corners of the earth?—If we consider this with respect to the elect of God, what out of God himself could be an eternal motive to choose them from the rest of the world, to be the heirs of eternal glory? What qualification has he seen in them, who were nothing but sin and defilement, to recommend them to his sanctifying and saving mercy? What have they done, or what can they do in their un sanctified state, that can give any title to the grace of God? *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* Can unbelievers entitle themselves to God's favour, while it is impossible they should please him?

If any should pretend, that God has promised to bestow sanctifying grace upon those that diligently seek it; that he has promised to those which *seek*, that they shall *find*; and to those, which *knock*, that the door of mercy shall be opened unto them:—I shall not dispute, whether these should be considered as promises made to un sanctified persons; or directions to be found in the way of life, and gracious encouragements to diligence in duty. For at present I cannot but think, that in which soever of these views such texts of scripture are considered, the consequence will be the same; and that if these are considered as promises, no unconverted sinner can so far comply with the condition, as to have a title to the benefit of such promises.—None can (I think) pretend, that these promises are made to an idle, slothful, and intermittent performance of duty. And will the mere powers of nature ever carry any man so far, as to be constant, fervent, and persevering in all the ways of known duty?—None can pretend, that these promises are made to an hypocritical performance of duty; to those that *flatter God with their lips, and lie to him with their tongues, while their hearts are far from him.* And can any un sanctified person be hearty and sincere, in all his religious performances?—None can pretend, that these promises are made to such who bring their lusts with them to God, in all their approaches before him. No surely! *If they regard iniquity in their*
their

their hearts, the Lord will not hear them. And is any un sanctified person capable to keep his lusts always in subjection; and to approach the presence of God with *a hatred to every false way*, when it is always true of them all, that *their heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?*—If it be here urged, That God has given a promise of grace to those who seek it as well as they can; and that they therefore have a claim to it, upon the terms of using their best endeavours to obtain it: I must yet observe, That no un sanctified person ever came up, even to these low terms. Can any of them pretend, that they have always gone as far as they could, in watching over their hearts, in keeping out of the way of temptation, in bridling their lusts, in attending upon all known duties, and in being serious and affectionate in their performance of them? If not, how have they a title to mercy, for doing as well as they can?—If it be further urged, That God has promised to overlook our imperfections; and to bestow grace upon us in the way of seeking it, notwithstanding the great defects of our duties: I enquire, Where is the promise to be found, that God will overlook the imperfections of Christless sinner? They are under the law, which *curseth every one, that continues not in all things to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. Christ has indeed purchased for believers, that their imperfect performances shall be accepted, through the merit of his atonement and intercession. But how does that affect the case of unconverted sinners, who have no interest in Christ, nor in the benefits of his redemption; and can therefore have no claim to mercy upon his account?—Upon the whole then, It is most evident, that the conversion of a sinner is of sovereign free grace; what God without injustice can deny to any man in the world; and what none have any right to by any possible qualification of their own. And every partaker of this unspeakable gift has cause, with highest admiration, to say as the apostle, *The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

If it be objected, “ That if this doctrine be true, it is in vain
 “ for unconverted sinners to seek for grace, since they have no
 “ claim to it when they have done all they can; and it is im-
 “ pertinent, to press the duties of religion upon them, when
 “ their utmost endeavours will give them no title to salvation.”

I answer, The apostle improves this argument the quite contrary way. Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* If God only can bestow grace upon us, we should be the more in earnest to obtain it from him. If we have no claim to mercy, we should the more humbly prostrate our souls at God's footstool, pleading for acceptance through the merits of the great Redeemer.—Would it be just reasoning in a condemned malefactor, because none but his offended sovereign can pardon his offence, relieve him from execution, and restore him to his forfeited favour, that therefore he will not petition him for it? Would it be just reasoning in a miserable beggar, because he must die and perish with hunger, if the rich man at whose door he lies, will not extend his undeserved charity to him, that therefore he will not ask an alms of him to save his life?—We are condemned malefactors, what need have we therefore to seek a reprove at the footstool of Divine grace, where it can only be hoped for! We are perishing with hunger, what need have we therefore to *repair to our Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare!* Were there but a mere possibility of mercy, it were sufficient incentive to the most active endeavours, since there is no hope of it in any other way.—God can bestow grace upon us, if he pleaseth. A word from him is sufficient to change our hearts, sanctify our affections, and qualify us for eternal salvation: and this is what all the angels in heaven, and men upon earth cannot do for us. *To whom then shall we go, but to him who has the words of eternal life?* Sinners do not know indeed that he will do this for them: but they do know that they must perish, if he does not bestow his salvation upon them; and they know nothing to the contrary but that they may obtain, if they seek it. They have now all the encouragement to seek, that any others have ever had, who have sought and obtained. And will they sit still and perish, because God is a sovereign Benefactor, that may do what he will with his own benefits?

I add to this, That God has given gracious invitations unto sinners, to seek the renewing and sanctifying influences of his blessed Spirit. *He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.* How many offers of mercy are made in the gospel,

pel, to every one without difference, that are found *watching at Christ's gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors*? If their own attainments will not give them a claim and title to sanctifying grace, they will yet put them in that way in which alone it is to be had, and in which they are encouraged to hope, that *their labour will not be in vain*.—They cannot indeed deserve it, do what they can: but is it not as well to receive it of sovereign mercy, as of merit? They cannot claim it on account of their own performances: but is it not as well to receive it on account of the merits of the great Redeemer? They may be (and it is best they should be) afraid, *lest they fail of the grace of God*: But if they have a heart to seek it in earnest, to seek it upon the terms proposed in the gospel, and to persevere in thus seeking it, they may hope that God will, for his own name's sake, though not for their sake, or for their duties and deservings, make good to them all the gracious words of encouragement given them in the gospel. What then stands in the way of their most active industry; but the *pride and naughtiness of their hearts*?—Should condemned rebels stand upon terms with their prince, in order to their acceptance of his pardon? Is it not enough that pardon is to be hoped for upon their petition, though they neither do nor can deserve it? If they will refuse to seek it upon the gracious offer, because they cannot claim it as due to them, let justice be done: They must receive the deserved reward of their rebellion and foolish contumacy. So if sinners will rather make their damnation sure, than seek and hope for mercy at the hand of God, upon such blessed encouragement as is given them in the gospel, they must even be left to their unhappy choice; they must be left to repent their madness when it is too late.

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

I have said something to this objection in a former discourse; and endeavoured to shew the impropriety of all the debates, with which the Church has been harassed, about the freedom or want of freedom in the *will* of man. The question ought not to be, whether the will be free? But whether the *man* be free; and whether the present doctrine does necessarily deny,

even to unregenerate men, full freedom, in all their moral conduct?—Having spoken so particularly to this case before, I need not enlarge upon it now. I shall therefore only propose a few queries to the Objector, which will (I think) be sufficient to illustrate the case. And,

1. I inquire, Whether an *irreligious* life does not appear most desirable to an un sanctified person; and whether he can refrain choosing such a life, while it does appear so? If it does not appear most desirable, why does he choose it? If it does appear most desirable, how can he decline choosing it, until he has another and better view of things? To choose what does not appear most desirable, or not to choose what does appear most desirable, is a contradiction in terms; and implies to *will* and *not to will*, at the same time, and in the same respect.

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

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

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

But

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

USE I. This teaches us the dreadful *danger* of placing any *confidence* or *dependence* upon any attainments of *our own*, for salvation.—*By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* What then will become of all those in the day of Christ, who sew together the fig-leaves of their own righteousness, to cover their nakedness; who, instead of repairing to, and depending upon the riches of God's free grace in Christ, are placing their confidence upon something of their own, for justification and salvation? These will all be found with the *hypocrites hope*, when it comes to the decisive trial.—If they can now quiet their consciences, or raise their hopes of happiness, from any qualifications in themselves; if they can now put such glosses upon the plain doctrines of grace in the gospel, as will gratify their proud self-righteous dispositions; yet the time approaches, when they will find (if they have not founded their hope upon God's free sovereign mercy and love in the great Redeemer), that they have *built upon the sand*; and therefore, that their hopes must *fall* in the stormy hour; and *great will be the fall thereof*.—Certain it is, that there is not, there cannot be, any danger at all in placing all our hope and confidence in the free unmerited mercy of God in Christ. But, on the contrary, the appeal may be made to the most resolute opposers of this doctrine, whether they be not capable of a mistake, in their opinions and conclusions on this most important concern. Can they pretend to infallibility? Are they certain that they cannot be deceived, when so many, as great and as good men as themselves, do (at least) imagine the greatest certainty, that they both see and feel their fatal delusion? And what will be the consequence, if they are too late *ashamed of their hope*? Is it not much safer to venture our eternity upon a foundation that cannot disappoint us, than to run the dreadful hazard of having a *deceived heart turn us aside*, and of *perishing with a lie in our right hand*?—If I have any knowledge of the gospel of Christ, or any acquaintance with the method of Divine grace in the conversion and sanctification of sinners, they who raise their expectations of happiness from any other

grounds than the sovereignty of God's free grace, as it has been described above, will find, in the conclusion, that they have *compassed themselves about with sparks of their own kindling*; and what they must receive at the hands of God, will be, *to lie down in sorrow*.—But with what inexpressible horror and confusion will these hypocrites be filled, when they too late discover the disappointment! How dreadful will the mistake appear, when they find it remediless, when there will be no rectifying the fatal error, no recovering the lost soul, no more seasons or means of grace left them for the reforming their deluded conduct! How terrible will their amazement prove, when they find that their false confidences are rejected, and have undone them to all eternity!—To have our hopes vanish and our expectations cut off, in things temporal (though many times accompanied with circumstances dismal enough), is but light and trivial, compared to an eternal disappointment. Who can imagine the dreadfulnes of being miserable for ever and ever!—Can the awful thought be entertained without horror and astonishment!

How dangerous therefore is the case of those, who depend upon their inoffensive practice and moral virtue, as the only foundation of their eternal hope? And yet this, I fear, is the case of too many, who live under gospel-light.—They either flatter themselves with their negative holiness, that they are not drunkards, not swearers, couzeners, openly profane, or the like; and thence boast, with the pharisee, Luke xviii. 11.) *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or even as this publican*.—Or else, they raise their expectations of happiness upon their outward positive conformity to the moral law; vaunting, with the young man in the gospel (Matth. xix. 20.), *All these things have I kept from my youth up*: Or satisfying themselves, with Saul (before his conversion), that they are, *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*, Phil. iii. 6.—But is this all our plea for eternal safety? How then is our case better than that of the moral heathen? *What do we more than they?* and are we not then *without hope* as much as they? *If righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain. Christ is become of none effect unto us, whosoever of us are justified by the law. We frustrate the grace of God, by going about to establish our own righteousness,*

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

How dangerous also is the case of those, who depend upon their external performances in religion and devotion, as what will give them a claim to eternal life? I have spoken something particularly to this before; and shall only add, that although duty is indeed the prescribed way of entering into life; and if ever we obtain salvation, we must seek it diligently in this way: yet, our best performances will not bring God in debt to us; nor lay him under any obligation to shew us favour.—They who attend duty, do well; but they who depend upon what they do, are among the proud in heart, whom God abhors, and dooms to destruction. If we do not bring our persons and services to the footstool of Divine grace for acceptance,

ance, through the merits of the Mediator's atonement, they will both be found as an *unclean thing*, in the day of Christ's appearance — Then we may plead, that *we have eat and drank in Christ's presence ; and that he has taught in our streets ; that we have prayed in our families and closets, read and meditated in his word, attended public ordinances, and the like ; and yet be the subjects of that terrible sentence, I tell you, I know you not whence you are, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, Luke xiii. 26, 27.*

In a word, How dangerous is the case of those who depend for salvation upon transient affections, convictions, or other inward experiences, consistent with reigning hypocrisy and unbelief.—Alas ! we may have a sense of the infinite defects of all our moral attainments, and of all our religious duties ; and yet *sacrifice to our own net, and burn incense to our own drag* : So, consequently, have all our hopes end in disappointment and confusion.—Such will be our case, if we depend upon our convictions and apprehensions of our guilt and danger. The greatest degrees of terror for our sins will not secure the awakened sinner from an eternal portion with Cain and Judas, if he rests short of a saving conversion to God ; and fails of becoming such a new creature, that *old things are passed away ; and every thing is become new in his soul.*—Such likewise will be our case, if we build our hope upon our legal repentance. Salvation is indeed promised to a sincere repentance : but every one that mourns for sin, or rather because there is a hell to punish sin, has not a claim to that promise. The greatest degrees of grief, under a sense of our sin and guilt, will prove but the earnest and foretastes of eternal horror ; unless it brings the soul to the blood of Christ for pardon, and ends in a renovation of our nature, a change both of heart and life.

The case will also be the same, if we depend upon a historical *faith*, for salvation. Many are ready to flatter themselves with vain expectations of happiness, upon such grounds as these, They believe the truths of the gospel ; they believe that Jesus Christ came to save sinners ; and that there is no salvation in any other : and therefore apply to themselves the promises made to believers, and delude their imaginations with a dream of future salvation. But alas, poor souls ! such a faith as this

is not only common to reprobates; but even to devils themselves; for *the devils believe and tremble*. Their persons and hopes must therefore perish together, unless they have a faith that receives the Lord Jesus Christ upon his own terms, depends upon him only for salvation, purifies the heart, works by love, and is accompanied with all the graces and fruits of the blessed Spirit. —The same may be said of those who depend upon their enlargements, affections, and good frames in religious duties, upon their sudden joy and comfort in their approaches to God, upon their imaginary zeal for God and godliness, and the like, without the quickening influences of the Spirit of God, enabling them to *receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and to walk in him*.

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

cation of their persons, through the merits of the Redeemer; and the sanctification of their nature, by the influences of the blessed Spirit. Let none therefore be discouraged; for God receiveth sinners, that are *poor and contrite, and who tremble at his word*. He invites to mercy the chief of sinners; and offers them, that *although their sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*, Isai. i. 18.

Are you burthened with a sense of your *guilt* and want of *pardon*? Plead the free grace of God, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for justification and for a freedom from wrath and condemnation. *You may be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, Rom. iii. 24. Come to Christ, for *there is no condemnation to him that is in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 1.

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

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

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

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

USE 3. *Finally*, Let every one see to it, that they have the *experience* of this rich mercy and free grace of God in their *conversion* and *sanctification*. To what purpose, as to you, will be the glad tidings of mercy and grace, if you should fail of an interest in it?—O take heed therefore, that you *receive not the grace of God in vain!* *Be not high-minded, but fear. Fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*—It will be dreadful indeed, to perish from under the gospel, to have these displays of God's infinite grace and love rise up in judgment against you in the day of Christ.—You have now the offers of grace: But a little while hence, all hope of mercy, all possibility of salvation will be past and gone for ever, if you turn a deaf ear to the present treaty. Therefore, 'to-day if you will hear his voice
' harden not your hearts, lest the judgment threatened be executed upon you, that because when Christ called ye refused,
' when he stretched out his hands, ye did not regard, he also
' will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish
' cometh upon you, then shall you call upon him; but he
' will not answer: you shall seek him early, but shall not find him.'

Let such of you as are in a state of carnal security, take heed lest you *sleep the sleep of death*, from whence there is no awaking. Take heed, that you do not quiet yourselves with delusive hopes, and live contented without such a sense of your

fin and danger, as may make you restless in your desires and endeavours to flee from the wrath to come. *O awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.* Labour to see your misery; meditate upon it; and cry to God to shew you your state as it is: That you may no longer be such a stranger to distress of conscience for sin, and to fear of the wrath of God.

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

To conclude, Let such of you as entertain *hopes of an interest in Christ by faith*, take heed that you do not content yourselves with a dead faith; nor rest short of the renewing, sanctifying, and quickening influences of the Spirit of God. Take up with no evidence of your converted state, until you have obtained a victory over your lusts, and got the dominion of sin subdued; until you are brought habitually to maintain a life of true and universal holiness; of piety towards God, and of righteousness and charity towards men. Labour to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, and by this *prove yourselves*. *Shew your faith by your works*: and, by a patient continuance in well-doing, *seek for glory, honour, and immortality*, that in the end you may inherit *eternal life*.—“Blessed are the pure
“in heart; for they shall see God: *But* without holiness no
“man shall see the Lord.—Every man that hath this hope
“in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—And hereby
“do we know that we know him, if we keep his command-
“ments.—In this the children of God are manifest, and the
“children of the devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness,
“is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. He
“that saith, I know Christ, and keepeth not his command-
“ments,

“ments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: But whoſo
“keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God
“perfected; hereby know we, that we are in him. And
“we know that the ſon of God is come, and hath given us
“an underſtanding that we may know him that is true:
“And we are in him that is true; even in his Son Jeſus
“Chriſt. This is the true God, and eternal life.—And they
“that know his name, will put their truſt in him.—Now
“grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the
“knowledge of God, and of Jeſus our Lord. *Amen.*

A
DISCOURSE
ON
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

ROMANS iii. 25.

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

THE glorious transaction of our redemption by Jesus Christ, is the just surprize and wonder of the reasonable creation. *The angels desire to look into these things; and man, who is immediately interested herein, has especial reason to adore the amazing love, that shines with such lustre in his deliverance from death and hell.—And what brightens the glory of this stupendous work, and gives us occasion of the highest exercise of gratitude, is the infinite price, by which our salvation is purchased. For thus saith the scripture, We are redeemed, not by corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. And God hath purchased his Church with his own blood. Thus the price of our deliverance bears proportion to the degree of our misery and guilt. When these were so aggravated, that all the angles in heaven were insufficient for our rescue; when no created wisdom could invent an effectual expedient; when no created power was equal to the vast design; God our Saviour looked, and there was none to help; and wondered, that there was none to uphold; he therefore himself interposed, and his own arm brought salvation. According to the appointment of*
God

God the Father, our Lord-Redeemer has undertaken to be a propitiation for us, that through faith in the merits of his blood, we may be interested in his righteousness, and obtain the *remission of our sins*; as we are instructed in the words of our text.

IN which we may note the following particulars

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

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

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

4. Here is pointed out to us the *means* or *method* of our getting actually interested in this propitiation: *Through faith in his blood.* It is through a believing acceptance of, and dependance upon the death and sacrifice of the Redeemer, that we are to partake

partake of the benefits of his atonement.—His satisfaction is sufficient for all; but actually applied and effectual to none but the believer.

5. We may note the blessed fruit and consequence of an interest in this propitiation of Christ: *The remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.* All the sins committed before justification, while God so patiently exercised his forbearing goodness to the guilty sinner, are fully remitted and for ever done away, through the merits of this atonement; upon the first exercise of a true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch that the sinner is at once reconciled to God, and instated in his favour.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If any will suppose, that our repentance would have been sufficient to have appeased the Divine displeasure, without any other satisfaction. I would ask them, how they can be certain of this? I would desire them to shew, what necessary connection there is between the sorrow of guilty rebels for their sins, and the favour of an offended God, without a satisfaction or atonement?—And I would inquire, whether they have this good news for the fallen angels? It would be such glad tidings, that I dare say, they have never heard since their first apostasy.—But were even this supposed, still I inquire, how that would afford any relief in our case? For we are naturally incapable of a true repentance, by any power of our own, as much as of making a strict and adequate atonement. We are too much in love with sin, to lothe and abhor it, as of ourselves. The habits of sin too intimately adhere to our souls, to be wholly subdued and forsaken by any attempts or resolutions of ours. And can we please God with a partial and insincere repentance, which is all we can pretend to? Can God be deceived; or will he be mocked? No surely! We can neither

ther discharge the debt already contracted; nor avoid running further into debt every day.

2. THIS also implies or presupposes, That Divine justice demanded *satisfaction* for our offences, in order to our reconciliation unto God.—I shall not undertake to determine, whether the punishment of sin be indispensibly necessary from the nature of God; and naturally results from his essential righteousness and purity, absolutely considered. It is indeed certain, that holiness and justice are essential perfections in God; *that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*; and that “his justice being infinite, it must be inflexible.” But, mankind not having adequate ideas of these Divine perfections, we may err in our reasonings and deductions from them.—However, I think we may safely affirm, that God’s requiring satisfaction for sin, is agreeable to his rectoral holiness and governing justice; and that, as he is the supreme Judge and Governor of the world, he justly requires sin should be punished; that by this he may illustrate and vindicate his own holiness, and convince the world, that the *righteous Lord loveth righteousness*; and that *the wicked his soul hateth*, (Psal. xi. 5, 7.) That by this he may testify his adherence to his own laws; and let the world see, *heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle shall pass from them*, (Matth. v. 18.) That by this he may discover the value he puts upon the obedience of his creatures; and shew that their *observance of his law is not a vain thing for them, because it is their life*, (Deut. xxxii. 47.) And that by this he may assert his own sovereignty; and the world may see, that *verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth*, (Psal. lviii. 11.) I might add, by this he also brandishes a flaming sword against the impiety of future transgressors; and discovers, that to *him belongeth vengeance and recompence*, (Deut. xxxii. 35.)—The truth of God does certainly make satisfaction for sin necessary. He threatened death as the consequence of the fall, (Gen. ii. 17.) And his word is immutable, like his infinite nature. Hath he said it, and will he not do it? What he has spoken, he is able also to perform; and, being the God of truth, will he not bring it to pass?—In a word, God’s actually requiring satisfaction for sin, is a fact abundantly confirmed in the scriptures; and therefore cannot

but be owned a reality. Among the multitudes of scriptures, that might be cited in this case, you may consider these that follow. *Exod. xxxiv. 7. That will by no means clear the guilty. Josh. xxvi. 19. He is an holy God, he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. Rom. iii. 5, 6. Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) far be it: For how then shall God judge the world? Which shews, that as God is Judge of the world, it is a righteous thing for him to take vengeance. Rom. iii. 29. To declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Which shews, that the satisfaction of Christ was requisite, in order to God's being just, in the justification of sinners; and that it would not have been agreeable to his justice, to have saved them without satisfaction. Rom. vi. 23. The wages of sin is death. This is so, both from the justice and law of God.*

3. THIS implies, that the blessed Redeemer undertook to represent poor guilty criminals; and to give himself a ransom for them. This is a doctrine discoverable only by revelation; and I can no ways explain it, but by shewing in what light the scriptures set this before us. And in those blessed oracles, God the Father is exhibited as admitting (by virtue of his supremacy in the dispensation of man's redemption) the transferring our sin and punishment to the Mediator; and accordingly, as sending him to undertake our salvation. Thus, *John iii. 16, 17. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his "only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should "not perish; but have everlasting life. For God sent not his "Son into the world, to condemn the world: but that the "world through him might be saved. Rom. viii. 3. For what "the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, "God (sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and "for sin) condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness "of the law might be fulfilled in us. 2 Cor. v. 21. For he "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we "might be made the righteousness of God in him. 1 John "iv. 9, 10. In this was manifested the love of God towards "us; because that God sent his only begotten Son into the "world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, "not that we loved God: but that he loved us; and sent his*

“ Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”—The scriptures also represent the Lord Jesus Christ, as freely and voluntarily consenting to undertake this great work; unto which he could be liable to no constraint. Mark x. 45. “ For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto: but to minister; and to give his life a ransom for many. John x. 17, 18. I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it again. Tit. ii. 14. Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity. Heb. x. 7. Then said I, Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.”—The scriptures do moreover set forth the Redeemer, in the quality of our Surety and representative, in this wonderful transaction. Heb. vii. 22. “ By so much, was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. 1 Pet. iii. 18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (that he might bring us to God), being put to death in the flesh; but quickened in the Spirit.” In which texts, the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ in our room and stead, is clearly and strongly expressed, in his *bearing our sins*; and *suffering for us*; and the like expressions are very numerous throughout the New-Testament.—I will only add, That the scriptures represent the sufferings of Christ, and his obedience unto the death, as a proper sacrifice and atonement for us, and as the purchase of our redemption. Isa. liiii. 10. “ When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed.” Eph. v. 2. “ And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us; and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour. Heb. iii. 17. That he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” See also 1 Cor. vi. 20. Tit. ii. 14. with many other passages to the same purpose, which frequently occur in the sacred pages.—Let men therefore strain their wits as much as they can, to put false glosses upon these and such like texts of scripture, there is nothing more certain, than

than that the proper satisfaction and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of the world, is, in the strongest, most plain and familiar terms, repeatedly asserted in the word of God. If we have any regard at all to the way of salvation proposed in the gospel, we must expect redemption through the alone merits of his life and death; and depend upon him as our ransom, as the *propitiation for our sins*, and the *Lord our Righteousness*.

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

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

himself responsible for us; but Christ having a more absolute and sovereign disposal of his own life, than any man can have of his estate, he might as freely offer it, and God the Father as justly accept it, in satisfaction for our sins, as any man can be accepted as surety for another man's debt.

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

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

4. CHRIST'S being a propitiation for us does also imply, That *God did accept of the passive obedience of Christ (together with his active) as sufficient satisfaction to the demands of justice.* Jesus Christ hath "made reconciliation for the sins of the people, Heb. ii. 17. And he has reconciled the world to God, that their trespasses are not imputed, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. Thus "peace is made with God, and we reconciled to him by his cross, the enmity being slain," Eph. ii. 15, 16. So that the imputation

imputation of the obedience of Christ, does fully and perfectly acquit the believer from the guilt of sin, the empire of Satan, the curses of the law, and the damnation of hell. God has received satisfaction from the Surety; and therefore will demand no more from the principal debtor.

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

Now of the things which I have spoken, this is the sum.—That by our first apostacy we have violated the fundamental laws of nature; have been traitors and rebels to the Sovereign of the world; have plunged ourselves into guilt; debased and polluted all the noble faculties of our souls; and separated between our God and us; whereby we are not only become guilty, but impotent and helpless.—That the supreme Governor of the world, willing to assert the infinite purity and holiness of his nature, and his eternal and immutable antipathy to sin and sinners, has testified the value he puts upon his righteous laws, and upon the observance of them; has vindicated his sovereign dominion, and the truth of his threatenings; and has set before the rational world the dreadful consequences of rebelling against him; by insisting upon a satisfaction to his offended justice.—That when we were utterly incapable to make atonement, by any thing less than eternal sufferings, the great God, as supreme Judge and Arbitrator of his own laws and affairs of government, was pleased, of his infinite goodness and compassion, so far to relax the threatening, as in our stead to accept of a surety, in the person of his dear Son; who was, with his own voluntary consent, appointed by the Father to work out our redemption, by taking upon him our sin and guilt, bearing our punishment, and fulfilling the law for us, and thereby purchasing our acquittance from death and hell, and recovery to life and happiness. The blessed fruit of his mediation is, that *there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ*

Christ Jesus; but whoſo hath the Son, hath life, life everlaſting.

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

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

1. It is ſometimes deſcribed, as an *aſſent* of the mind to the goſpel-revelation of Chriſt. Thus, Mark i. 15. “Repent ye; and believe the goſpel: So, 1 John v. 1. Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt, is born of God. And, Rom. x. 9. If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus; and ſhalt believe in thine heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.” In theſe and many other like paſſages of ſcripture, a ſaving faith is propoſed as an act of the underſtanding; and as an aſſent unto, or belief of the truth of the goſpel.

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

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

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

If we (for example) consider faith as an assent to the gospel-revelation concerning Christ (which, by the way, is the primary signification of the word *faith*), it will necessarily include in it a *consent* to what we believe; and an *affiance* in him, on whom we believe. For this assent, or *belief of the truth*, must be supposed such a strong and thorough persuasion as will have a proper and effectual influence upon our minds. A mere doctrinal belief, or speculative opinion cannot be recommended in scripture as a saving faith. And this being supposed, that we have a firm realizing belief, and a lively impression, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, that his righteousness imputed to us is the only ground of our justification, that without this we must inevitably perish, and that he is both able and willing to save us; it will necessarily excite in us earnest desires after an interest in him, after union and communion with him, and bring us to place our hope and confidence in him only for salvation.—We may have (as most of the professing world have) a disciplinary or notional belief of the truth of the gospel, that will produce no proper effect upon our souls; but will leave us, against the conviction of conscience, to neglect an offered Saviour, indulge our lusts, and perish in them. But though such a *dead faith* will profit us nothing, yet we cannot but esteem the Lord Jesus Christ to be precious, we cannot but choose him for our portion, and depend upon him to do all in us and for us, if we have lively and clear impressions of the truth of what the gospel reports concerning him. Though a careless, indifferent, or unsteady assent unto the gospel-revelation, will not bring us off from our lusts and sinful pleasures, from our own righteousness and self-sufficiency, to receive Christ and depend u-

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pon him: yet a full realizing and hearty assent to this, will bring us to consent to the offers of the gospel, and to place our confidence in the only object of our hope. Thus we see, that this first description of faith includes the other two; and if we distinctly consider them also, we shall find the same conclusion.

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

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

Faith in Christ is such an assent to the Christian revelation, as brings us heartily and fully to receive him as he is therein exhibited to us, and to depend on him only for salvation upon gospel-terms. Here let it be distinctly observed,

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

Unto this assent it is necessary, that we have a *knowledge* of the doctrines of the gospel and of the way of salvation there-

in proposed. *How shall they call upon him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?* Rom. x. 14. Faith always follows the understanding; and cannot go before it. It is impossible to believe, strictly and properly, what we do not in some respect understand. We may indeed, in the general, believe that to be truth, the special nature of which we neither understand, nor believe. We may (for instance) believe the doctrine of the Trinity to be an undoubted truth; though we can neither understand, nor believe the particular *modus*, or manner how the Divine Being is one in three, and three in one. In such cases, we can believe no more than what our understanding represents to us, from the word of God, as reasonable and credible.—This being applied to the present case, makes it evident, that they who remain grossly ignorant of the doctrine of Christ, and the method of salvation proposed in the gospel, cannot concur in it, nor comply with it. Ignorance here slays men in the dark; and makes them incapable of any benefit by an offered Saviour. We must therefore first know all that is really necessary to be believed. Upon which account knowledge is sometimes in scripture put for faith. Thus, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* And 1 Cor. ii. 2. *For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.* Though men may be capable of faith in Christ, without brightness of parts, or eminent degrees of knowledge, either in polemical or systematical divinity, as it is called; yet it is needful, that they be acquainted with the principal doctrines of Christianity, (such as relate to the one only Mediator, Jesus Christ, his person, offices, and benefits, his incarnation, life, sufferings, and death, his resurrection, ascension, and intercession; and such as relate to their own lost estate, and necessary dependance upon his righteousness and grace for justification and life) in order to their believing in Christ.

Moreover, it is also needful, that we heartily receive this revelation for *divine truth*, when we do understand it. It is necessary, that *we receive it not as the word of man; but (as it is in truth) the word of God*, in order that it should *effectually work* in us, as *in them that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. 13.—It is not

sufficient to believe this from the bias of *education*, or because we have been early and all along taught these doctrines. Alas! We should have been likely to have had the same faith in Mahomet, if we had been as early and constantly instructed in the Alcoran.—It is not sufficient to have an *implicit* belief of these truths, to take them upon trust from any man or society of men whatsoever; this is to depend upon other mens faith, and have none of our own.—It is not sufficient *inconsiderately* to take these things for granted, without making particular and due enquiry; this may possibly amount to opinion, but not to faith.—Nor is it sufficient to give a *cold* and *unactive* assent to the gospel, though founded upon the best evidence, and most rational argumentation: For this will not effectually convince us of our absolute necessity of Christ, nor of his sufficiency to supply all our wants.—But we must *receive the testimony of God concerning his Son*; and assent to the gospel-report as the truth of God, as that upon which our eternal welfare depends, and as that which we are above all things in the world concerned about.—If it be objected, That this will yet fall short of true faith; that the devils themselves give as firm an assent to the truth of the gospel as we can do, *They believe and tremble*. I grant, that a bare assent to the gospel, separately considered, if never so steady, and strong, and rational, is not a saving faith; but yet it is always an essential part of it: though faith (as I before observed) has more implied in it. Which brings me to consider,

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

This necessarily supposes, that we have an *impressed sense of our necessity of an interest in Christ*. Sinners are but hardly brought to embrace an offered Saviour. The most of the world are quiet and secure in a state of guilt, without any just apprehension of their danger; and without any serious concern about the welfare of their immortal souls. These go their way *to their farms and merchandize*; and excuse themselves

selves from coming to Christ: They have something else to do.—And as to others, that are under some conviction of their sin and danger, they are readier to fly to any other refuge, than the Saviour Christ, and to quiet their consciences with their good purposes or performances: Until they are brought to see, that *in vain is salvation hoped for, from the hills and from the multitude of mountains*; that they have no where to go for salvation, but to Christ alone, *for he and he only hath the words of eternal life*. These two things are essentially necessary to a true faith in Christ; a lively sense of our own emptiness, and inability to help ourselves; and a like sense of the sufficiency of Christ to relieve us. By the former, we discover the last necessity of some remedy; beyond what we can possibly provide for our distressed souls: By the latter, the only door of hope is set open to us; and by both, we are made willing to comply with the blessed proposals of life and peace in the gospel, and submit to the terms whereon they are offered.—While sinners can think themselves *rich and increased in goods, and that they have need of nothing*, they will set no special value by an offered Saviour. They must see themselves *wretched and miserable, and poor; and blind, and naked*, before they will repair to him, for *gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich*; for *white raiment, that they may be clothed*; and for *eye-salve, that they may see*. And this is the great reason of the unsuccessfulness of gospel-ordinances, and of the unperfuadableness of the greatest part of the world to come unto Christ, that they might have life. They are insensible of their undone miserable state, while at a distance from him: *The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick*. They can rest quiet in their present attainments; and will therefore look no further. They will never come to Christ, till they are first brought to utterly despair of all help in themselves.—And when they are even brought to this, it will have no better effect, than to fill them with horror and amazement, unless they have also a discovery that there is help to be had; that there is hope for their souls, from the sufficiency of redeeming love. But when they have both these discoveries, they cannot but see their necessity of Christ; and whatever else they want, they cannot but be willing to receive him upon any terms.

Moreover, this receiving of Christ does also suppose our

complying with him as our King as well as our Saviour. It is true, that sinners, under a sense of their misery and danger, do in the first place desire salvation from the *wrath to come*, of which they have awful apprehensions; and therefore repair to Christ for deliverance. But this is only a legal work: If they rest here, they will never be interested in Christ and his saving benefits. A true evangelical faith excites an earnest desire of salvation from the power and pollution of sin, as well as from guilt and danger. The believer desires Christ to *save him from his sins*; and not in them: he desires that Christ may reign in his heart, and that his whole man, in all its powers, may be subjected to him.—There is no man willing to perish; *destruction from God* would be a terror to the worst of men, if realized: and, since they know that there is no way of salvation but by Christ, they desire by him a salvation from hell; yet, however, it is with a reservation of their lusts and sinful pleasures, which they cannot part with.—But this is very far short of a genuine saving faith, which receives a *whole Christ*, with our *whole heart*; Christ in all his offices, as well as with all his benefits; the grace of Christ for our sanctification, as well as his righteousness for our justification. As a true penitent looks upon his sins as his greatest burthen, and groans after deliverance from the pollution and dominion of them: So the true believer values an interest in Christ upon this account, that he may break the yoke, and destroy the empire of his lusts; that *the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, may make him free from the law of sin and death*.—Thus *faith* receives Christ as our Prince and Saviour. And this is the constant language of a true faith, *Isai. xxxiii. 22. The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.*

I add to this, that it is also necessary unto a receiving of Christ, that we must earnestly *endeavour*, in the use of all appointed *means*, to *obtain* an interest in him upon his own terms. If ever we receive Christ at all, it must be in that way. We are not to wait in an idle unconcernedness, for the operations of the Holy Spirit to compel us to come to Christ: No, but with a humble sense of our own impotency, and with a dependance on the Spirit of grace, we must seek and strive, and lay ourselves out with unwearied diligence, in the methods of duty prescribed

prescribed in the gospel, to obtain an interest in Christ and his salvation. Receiving of Christ is indeed a metaphorical expression, that connotes an active acceptance; and it would be an abuse of it, to imagine from it that we are to sit still, without care or pains, until this glorious gift be thrust into our hands: But we must put ourselves into the way where it is offered, if we ever hope to receive it. And it may be depended upon, that Christ will never bestow himself upon any, but those who are first brought to think an interest in him worth seeking after. He is said to *walk in the midst of his golden candlesticks*, (Rev. i. 13.) thereby intimating, that he is to be found in the way of his own ordinances. And we are directed, if we would find him, *to go our way forth, by the footsteps of the flock*, (Cant. i. 8.); that is, in the way in which all true believers have sought, and in which they have found communion with him. In this way we must seek an interest in Christ. In this way we must seek grace to receive the Lord Jesus Christ; and in this way we must exercise that grace, when we have obtained it. If we be partakers of Christ at all, it must be by an active reception; by a faith accompanied with earnest, diligent seeking him in the ways of God's appointment: For the neglect of duty is not a receiving, but a rejecting of Christ; and a practical declaration, that *we will have none of him*, that *we will not have this man to rule over us*.—The act of faith by which we receive the Lord Jesus Christ, is indeed distinct from the duties of religious worship; but as faith must be obtained in a way of duty, so it is necessarily productive of a life of duty, in all that have it. The faith therefore which I am describing, though in its nature distinct from diligence in duty, yet implies this as necessary, both to its being and operations.—And thus I am prepared to take notice of the other thing contained in the description of this grace.

3. THAT *faith* in Jesus Christ does also imply a *depending upon him*, and *him only*, for salvation. That is, it implies a believing in him, as the *Author of our eternal salvation*, as the *Lord our righteousness*, as the *Fountain of life*, and of all our grace. It implies, that we look to him, to do all in us, and
all

all for us, and that we bring both our persons and services to God in his name, pleading the merits of his cross, and his perfect righteousness, as our only title to the Divine favour.

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

Our depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ does also suppose, that we actually and sincerely *place all our hopes* of acceptance with God, upon what he hath *done and suffered for us*. We are by our sins become guilty before God, and under a sentence of condemnation; and the blood of Christ is the only atonement, to expiate this guilt, and to free us from the damning power of the law.—We have forfeited all title to future happiness; and Christ's *obedience unto the death* is the only purchase of our eternal salvation, by which we may hope for it, or lay claim to it.—Now, a saving faith is such an effectual apprehension of this, as causes us to disclaim all other pretensions to God's favour, to *make mention of Christ's righteousness*

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

If any should now enquire, What place is there for good works, if we are to have all our dependance upon what Christ has done and suffered for us? I answer, We must depend upon him in the way of a carefulness to maintain good works, (Tit. iii. 8.) And we can safely depend upon him in no other way. All other dependance, exclusive of this care of exemplary living, is not faith, but presumption. For faith without works is dead. Though we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law, (Rom. iii. 28.); yet the faith, by which we are justified, is never (in case of opportunity), without the deeds of the law, though in truth animated by gospel-motives, and springing from evangelical principles. They that have faith unfeigned dwelling in them, will live godly in Christ Jesus.—Faith alone justifies, by receiving and depending upon the righteousness of Christ for justification. But the faith which justifies is never alone: For being thereby united to Christ,

as a *branch to the vine*, we shall *bring forth fruit, much fruit, whereby our heavenly Father is glorified*. It is a sanctifying faith, as well as justifying.

Thus I have endeavoured briefly to set in view the nature and properties of a true saving faith. I have shewn, that the essence of a true faith consists in an hearty assent to the gospel-revelation concerning Christ, in an hearty consent to the gospel-offer of Christ, his offices and benefits; and in an hearty dependance upon what Christ has done and suffered for us, as the ground of our pardon and justification, and the price of eternal salvation.—I have shewn, that our assent to the gospel-revelation supposes a sufficient knowledge of the way of salvation therein revealed; for faith must follow the understanding, and cannot go before it; and that it supposes a reception of this revelation for Divine truth, when we do understand it; for our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.—I have shewn, that our consent to the gospel-offer, or our receiving of Christ upon gospel-terms, supposes such a sense of our necessity of an interest in Christ, as makes us earnestly desire, and cheerfully comply with any terms of obtaining it; for we shall never accept an offered Saviour upon his own terms, as long as we can do without him; that it supposes we accept him as our King, as well as our Saviour; for he must save us from our sins, and not in them; and it supposes that we receive him in the use of means, and not in the neglect of them; for the neglect of duty is a practical rejection of Christ.—I have shewn, that our dependance upon Christ supposes that we renounce all confidence in ourselves, in any thing we do or can do; for he will be a complete Saviour, and the alone Saviour, or none at all; and that it supposes, we place all our confidence in his active and passive obedience; for *he is the Lord our Righteousness*; and *in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*.

And now I am prepared to consider,

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

1. *Negatively*, That faith does not reconcile us to God, considered *subjectively*, or as it is our own act. The act of believing is no more a condition of our justification, than the act of repenting, or the exercise of any other grace or duty.—There are no works of righteousness, which we have done, or can do, that will save us, whether they be considered as our legal, or evangelical righteousness.—Our legal righteousness, or deeds of the law, cannot save us; because they cannot atone for our past offences; nor can they in any instance come up to the demands of the law; but in every thing fall short of the perfection thereby required.—Nor may we imagine, that our evangelical righteousness, or obedience to the gospel, can save us; because that would be to place merit in our repenting and believing; and to set our faith in the room of Christ's obedience, which is the only price of our justification.—Though we are said to be justified by faith, we are no where said to be justified for it. This act of ours (as well as all others) is very imperfect; and accompanied with much sinful unbelief at the best; therefore stands in need of pardon itself, and so cannot possibly merit our salvation. But now, I would say *affirmatively*,

2. *Faith* justifies us, as it is the instituted *means* of our obtaining an *interest* in what Christ has done and suffered for us: *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, Rom. x. 10. We are espoused to Christ by faith, and in this way his benefits are dispensed to us.—The Lord Jesus Christ has performed a perfect obedience for us (as I have particularly shewn above), and has purchased salvation for all that are interested in that obedience. He has done and suffered all that the law required of us.—He has fully answered its penal demands. He has been *made sin for us, who knew no sin*. He has borne our sins in his own body upon the cross. He has undergone the wrath of God (as well as of men and devils), for our sakes, that he might propitiate an offended God; and pay the debt, which our sins had contracted.—He has obeyed the whole preceptive part of the law; been perfect in his compliance with all its commands, and fulfilled all righteousness; that he might entitle us to the eternal inheritance, and purchase salvation for

us.—And all this he has done in the capacity of our Surety. It is in our name, place, and stead that he has wrought out this perfect righteousness. An interest in him does therefore invest us with this righteousness, and make it as much ours, and pleadable by us, as if it had been in fact personally performed by ourselves.

Now, it is by *faith* that we obtain an actual interest in him, and so are clothed upon with his righteousness; and in that respect we are justified by *faith*.—The gospel proclaims the happy tidings of Christ, and redemption; *faith* assents to, and entertains this blessed proclamation. The gospel makes a free tender of purchased salvation, to sinners, sensible of their need of it, and willing to accept it; *faith* complies with the offer, and readily embraces a tendered Saviour.—The gospel proposes Christ's righteousness, and that only, for our justification; *faith* makes us *esteem all things but loss and dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him*.—The gospel requires a life of holy obedience unto God, as a proper fruit and evidence of faith, as a testimony of our acceptance of this offered Saviour, and our gratitude to him. Unfeigned faith produces the happy effect, wherever it is. Faith purifies the heart, and works by love. So that faith is in every thing a compliance with what the gospel requires to the constituting and determining us justified persons.—*Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth*. He that is once brought to *live by the faith of the Son of God*, is no longer under the law, but under grace: no longer considered as in Adam, by whose disobedience he was made a sinner; but as in Christ, by whose obedience he is made righteous. And thus faith brings us pardon and salvation, as it unites us to Christ, interests us in his perfect obedience, and makes his righteousness ours. Whence *the righteousness of God is said to be revealed from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 17. And we are told, that *the righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe*, Rom. iii. 22.

3. *Faith* has the promise of Christ's continual *intercession* for us.—Our highest attainments in faith and holiness, are accompanied with many imperfections: *In many things we all offend*. And as we are daily chargeable with new sins, we stand

in daily need of renewed pardon and justification; upon which account *Jefus Chrift, the Righteous*, is represented as *our Advocate with the Father*, to procure this for us; and to bestow it upon us, 1 John ii. 1. The apostle puts an emphasis on Christ's intercession, Rom. viii. 34. *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* Now, being interested in Christ by faith, we have an interest in his intercession: and by the efficacy of his intercession, the believer obtains a renewed pardon of his daily transgressions, and a confirmed pardon of all his trespasses. We have, through faith renewedly exercised, a claim to have all our new sins pardoned, and blotted out, by a fresh application of Christ's blood, and imputation of his righteousness. The believer is made *accepted in the beloved*: and, by virtue of his advocacy, the prayer of faith receives an answer of peace.—*Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them,* Heb. vi. 25.

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

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

condemnation, that light is come into the world, and you have chosen darkness rather than light; because your deeds are evil, (John iii. 19.) You have the revelation of this salvation; and the continued offers of it, upon most easy and honourable terms. You have it pressed upon you, by repeated inculcation, in the ordinances of the gospel; and how aggravated will your guilt be, if you set light by this precious Saviour, and reject his salvation! O that neglectful sinners might therefore be awakened out of their security, to see their misery and danger, before it be too late; before *the things of their peace are hidden from their eyes*; and before the offers of salvation thro' faith in Jesus Christ, be for ever over! O foolish unbelievers, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you! O the astonishing folly of Christ-despisers and gospel-neglecters; who, notwithstanding you are brought in view of the heavenly Canaan, will after all perish in the wilderness; and have your final lot assigned you among hypocrites and unbelievers! O how can you rest thus contented in an estate of unbelief, until you provoke God to swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest! Had you not better accept the Saviour now, than to have him your angry Judge at last, and reject you with a *verily I know you not!* Had you not better hearken to the offers of mercy now, than to have the gospel itself, and all the ordinances of salvation you have ever enjoyed, rise up in judgment against you, to aggravate your condemnation! But, alas! till your eyes are opened, to see your sin and danger, *you will not come unto Christ, that you might have life*: You will rather run the venture of eternal perdition, than accept of this precious Saviour and his great salvation, though so freely offered.—This seems to be the case of the greatest part of the gospelized world. And they must be left to the consequences of their unhappy choice. They must find, by sad experience, the dreadful effects of *neglecting so great salvation*, before they will receive conviction.

USE II. Let all be exhorted to make it their concern to obtain a true faith in Jesus Christ, by which alone they can be justified in the sight of God.—What has been said already, gives

gives full evidence, that this is an affair of everlasting importance, a concern that your eternity depends upon; and that you may expect to *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*, or *mourn bitterly*, with the sharpest accents of horror and agony, according to your compliance with, or rejection of this gospel-exhortation. It is founded on scripture-calls and precepts, enforced with the most solemn and affecting sanctions, both of promises and threatenings.—You have many examples, both to encourage and to warn you.—You are invited to be *followers of them, who through faith and patience do inherit the promises*. And to a care of *obtaining like precious faith with them*, you are strongly excited, by the endearing attractives of Christ's infinite love, in his giving himself for and to his people. *I therefore beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God our Saviour; that you come unto Christ as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious*.—To this you are also most awfully warned by the awakening alarms of your guilt and danger. *Take heed therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*. It is high time to fly from the impending storm, to this hope set before you. Be prevailed with to take hold of this instruction, and not let it go, but to keep it; *for it is your life*.

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

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

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

And labour to *exercise* faith in Christ. Though you cannot work this grace in yourselves; yet if ever you obtain it, you yourselves must use and exercise it. The principle is from God; but the act must be your own. If God bring you to exercise this grace, you must be *made willing in the day of his power*, and act with your free consent. *This is his commandment*, the great command of the gospel, *that you should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*. It is therefore your duty to believe, and by consequence to labour to believe in Christ: And if God gives you the grace to do so, it will be by quickening and strengthening you in the way of your prayers and your endeavours. Labour therefore to comply with the gracious offer and call of the gospel, to see your perishing condition without Christ, and to realize his ability and readiness to help and save you. Contemplate his infinite excellencies and complete sufficiency for you; and endeavour (looking to God for his gracious assistance) to choose Christ for your Saviour and portion, to prefer an interest in him above all the world, to rely upon him as the Author of your eternal salvation, and to plead his righteousness before God as your only claim to mercy. In a word, Endeavour to accept him upon his own terms: And be earnest with God in your continual supplications, for *grace to help you*, that you may indeed *receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him*. Though you are *without strength*, yet *through Christ strengthening you*, you *can do all things*: And you should attempt, in his strength, to do what otherwise you are utterly insufficient for.

USE III. Let all be exhorted to utmost care and caution, that they be not *deceived* in this momentous affair; and that they do not take up with a *false* and *counterfeit faith*, which will issue in a fatal and eternal disappointment of all their expectations.—Multitudes have been, and we may be deceived; and it is impossible to imagine the confusion that will cover us, if we are too late convinced of our mistake, and ashamed of our hope.

See that you evidence to yourselves the sincerity of your
faith,

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

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

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

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

Finally, Evidence the sincerity of your *faith*, by an habitual *subjection* of soul to the Lord Jesus Christ, and fervent *applications* unto him, to work in and for you the good pleasure
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of his will. Commit the whole concern of your salvation to him. Look to him in a way of constant, earnest prayer and active diligence, for all supplies of grace. Whatever darkness, whatever deadness, whatever afflictions, or temptations you may meet with, still repair to him, that you may *obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need, that of his fulness you may receive even grace for grace.* You cannot trust too little to yourselves; nor too much to him, in the way of duty. Resolve therefore, constantly to come, empty and self-insufficient, to him; and *open your mouth wide, that he may fill it.* If you thus *believe in him, you shall never be confounded.* I conclude with those words of the apostle, 1 John iii. 21,—24. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”

A

DISCOURSE

ON

P E R S E V E R A N C E.

ROMANS viii. 30.

— *Whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

THIS brief clause is the last link of that golden chain, which extends from everlasting to everlasting, and connects a past and future eternity. It takes its rise in God's *foreknowledge* and eternal *purpose* of grace to the elect; and reaches through their *vocation* and *justification* on earth, unto their eternal *glorification* in heaven. It shews us the inviolable connection between the decree of God, and the progressive execution of it, in our present preparation for, and final admittance to everlasting glory. And as we are here assured, that *the counsel of the Lord shall stand*, firm as his own being, and without any variation or shadow of turning; so we are equally assured, that where God's eternal counsel is manifested in our effectual calling and justification, by consequence our eternal salvation is also manifest and certain. The *perseverance* of the saints, through faith unto salvation, is here founded upon the same immutable certainty with the purpose and decree of God. As all *whom he did predestinate*, shall be certainly called; not only by the outward invitations of the gospel, but by the inward powerful influences of the blessed Spirit, whereby they shall be brought to a hearty compliance with gospel-

offers: so they whom he thus *calletb*, he as certainly *justifieth* through Christ's righteousness imputed to them, and received by faith: And being thus *justified*, they shall, with the same certainty, be also *glorified*.

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

First, What we are here to understand by our being *justified*.

Secondly, How it appears, that all who are justified, shall be also *glorified*.

Finally, Make some practical improvement.

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

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

I consider *justification* as a gracious *sentence of God*: And so the apostle considers it in the 33d verse of our context, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth*.—Justification is a forensic term; and signifies the sentence of a judge, whereby an accused or condemned person is discharged from the imputation of guilt, or the infliction of punishment; and whereby he is pronounced just, and accepted as such.—Thus, in the present case, the person justified has a gracious sentence passed upon him in a judiciary way. The great Law-giver and Judge of the world pronounces his absolution, and acknowledges him to be in his favour and friendship, accepted as righteous in the court of heaven.—*Sanctification* and *justification* are carefully to be distinguished. That is a *qualitative*, this a *relative* change: That is a change of our *moral* state, nature and disposition; but this a change of our

our covenant-state, law-condition and character, in reference to God: That is an *incomplete* change, defective as to the degree at present; but this a *full* and *perfect* one: That is a change by the operation of the Holy Spirit, *within* us; this, by the declaration of the sovereign Judge, *without* us.—Justification is also to be distinguished from the approving sentence of our own *conscience*. For conscience-misguided, may acquit, when God condemns: The man may vote himself *rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing*, whom yet this supreme Judge pronounces *wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked*. So, on the other hand, conscience may condemn, when God acquits. The man may *walk in darkness and see no light*, whom yet this supreme Judge invites to *trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God*. The justifying sentence then is that of God, and not of conscience. *It is God, that justifieth*: Herein following his own revealed will, the external rule of justification, and not always accompanying it with the internal testimony of his Spirit in our conscience. The Divine sentence may be actually pronounced, and yet not sensibly perceived by the soul on which it is passed.

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

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

By our being justified on account of Christ's *satisfaction*, at or upon our *believing*, is to be understood, that we are pardoned and accepted with God *through the righteousness of Christ* imputed to us, and reckoned ours in the construction of redeeming mercy, upon our *receiving Christ by faith*; and not before. Hence it is said in our context, *Whom he called, them he also justified*. And hence *the righteousness of God is said to be revealed from faith to faith*, (Rom. i. 17.) Our first actual participation in the righteousness of Christ, is upon the Spirit's first working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling: The continued application of it, and renewed benefit by it, is upon the continued existence and renewed exercise of the same faith. And thus *the just shall live by faith*; that is, they are in a state of life and peace with

with God, from their union to Christ by faith: *He that hath the Son hath life.* The justification of life commences with their being made partakers of Christ; and Christ dwells in their heart by faith. It is through faith, that they are interested in the benefits of his redemption; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. All pretences therefore to eternal justification are superseded, as unscriptural and unreasonable.—The believers justification, it is true, was determined in God's eternal counsel, and in the covenant of redemption; and so likewise was his sanctification and his future glory. But will any pretend, that we were sanctified or glorified from all eternity? Neither can they, with any better shew of reason, pretend to an eternal justification. These all stand on the same foot, as to the decree of God, and the promise in Christ; and may be said in their causes to be eternal, though neither of them so in themselves; but are events that fall within the compass of time, as to their actual accomplishment. That justification imports a real event in time, coming to pass at or upon believing, and not before, is evident from those scriptures, which speak of it as a future consequence: *By his knowledge SHALL my righteous Servant justify many.—By the obedience of one SHALL many be made righteous.—That righteousness MIGHT BE imputed unto them also.*—All that hold mankind to be *children of wrath by nature*, do confess such an imputation of sin in time, as is utterly inconsistent with justification from eternity. If the curse of the law be a real thing, and not imaginary, then the justification that reverses and removes it, must be what takes place in time, and must be acknowledged a transaction in time, as real as the condemnation it stands in opposition to. In short, the elect, as well as others, before their vital union to Christ by faith, are in a state of actual condemnation; and therefore, while so, most certainly cannot be in a state of actual justification. It is, without any distinction of persons, always true, that “He who believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,” John iii. 18.—But in believing, the soul *passes from death to life*, by virtue of a perfect righteousness revealed and applied to him, which he actually had not before his believing. *Man believeth unto righteousness* (Rom. x. 10.), unto the obtaining and possessing of

of it. Faith is the means of receiving *the gift of righteousness*. No unbeliever is in the possession and enjoyment of it. A man is personally justified no otherwise than by Christ and his righteousness applied.

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

Our *justification* does likewise imply an *acceptance* of our persons, as perfectly *righteous* in the sight of God. Though God knows, that numberless spots and blemishes cleave to the brightest performances, that the best of the children of men are capable of in this life; and that their very tears want washing in the blood of Christ: yet the believer's faith interests him in all that Christ has done and suffered for him; and clothes him in that *white raiment*, which covers all his sins, *that the shame of his nakedness doth not appear*.—His inherent personal righteousness is full of flaws and imperfections; but his Surety's righteousness, which he hath received by faith, is absolutely perfect and complete. This being
imputed

imputed to him, he is accepted by God on this account; and in this his justifying righteousness, the pure eyes of Divine justice can see no defect. For *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth*, Rom. x. 4. —Hence such are said to be *made accepted in the beloved*, Eph. i. 6.

Justification must be also considered as including a title to everlasting life, a full right to the whole of salvation, with eternal glory.—*Being now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved from wrath thro' him*, Rom. v. 9.—and v. 21. *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* This is most undoubted, that these must either be heirs of eternal life, or heirs of eternal destruction. But how can the latter be supposed of those who are interested in Christ, reconciled to God, and favourites of Heaven? Can it be supposed, that those whom Christ has purchased with his blood, those to whom he has applied the merits of his cross and benefits of his redemption, shall fall short of the purchased possession? Are they drawn to Christ by the powerful influences of the divine Grace? Are they united to him by a lively faith? Are they accepted of God, as his children and friends? Are they dear to him; and does he tender *them as the apple of his eye*? Are they *renewed in the spirit of their minds*; and *made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light*? And shall any such, after all, spend a dreadful eternity in amazing anguish and horror, among devils and damned spirits? How monstrously inconsistent is the supposition, and how contradictory to the whole tenor of the gospel! John v. 24. “*Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*”—Justification is a final and perfect absolution from sin and the curse; and invests us with an actual and complete right to positive happiness for ever. Hence the pardoned man is pronounced the *blessed* man, Rom. iv. 6. “*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*”—Who is wise, will observe and understand these things.

Now, if any should surmise and object, That true believers

may fall away from grace, dissolve their union to Christ, lose their near relation to God, and provoke him to cast them off for their apostasy; our text assures us of the contrary. For *whom he justified, them he also glorified.*—This brings me to the other thing proposed to consideration.

II. *How it appears, that all who are justified, shall be also glorified.* And here let it be remarked,

1. This appears from the *immutability* of God's eternal counsel.—We read, *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his,* (2 Tim. ii. 19) *If God has chosen them to eternal life, his counsel shall stand; and he will do all his pleasure.* If he has not chosen them to eternal life, how came they by the qualifications for it? Are not these the fruits and consequences of electing love? “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified.—He hath chosen us in Christ; that we should be holy.—He hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” Now, if he has predetermined these qualifications as the means of salvation, if he has connected the means and the end together in his eternal purpose, as the scripture assures us that he has, it then follows, that all those *whom he has justified, them he will also glorify*: there must otherwise be a change of purpose in God, which were blasphemy to suppose.

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

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

Not the latter. For *him that cometh unto Christ, he will in no wise cast out,* (John vi. 37.) *He that believeth in him, shall*

not perish; but have everlasting life, (John iii. 16.) This is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given to Christ, he should lose nothing; but should raise it up again at the last day, John vi. 39.

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

I might add to this, that we are exhorted (2 Pet. i. 10.), *to make our election sure*. Which must intend, that we make it sure to ourselves, or make ourselves sure of it: for as to the decree of God, or the final event, these are in themselves as sure already as they can be made. We can contribute nothing to the immutability of the Divine counsel or certainty of the future issue.—This exhortation does therefore suppose, that an inward conscioufness and assurance of our election is attainable in this life: it would otherwise be unreasonable and impertinent to press it upon us. And if there be a certainty of our *election* attainable, it must necessarily follow, that all true believers shall certainly *persevere* to the end. For how can I be sure of my *election* by any possible qualification, if my *salvation* be not with the same certainty connected to such qualification, as it is to the eternal decree of God?—I may be sure, that I am now interested in Christ by a lively faith; but I cannot be sure, that I am *chosen* to eternal salvation, or shall ever obtain it, but from a certainty of my *perseverance* in my present state of safety.—This argument may be thus summed up. All that are *electèd*, shall certainly be *saved*; and all that have a true *faith* in Jesus Christ are certainly *electèd*: for by this only we can *make our election sure*. From hence the conclusion is necessary, that all who have a true *faith* in Jesus Christ; shall be *kept by the power of God, to salvation*. Or, in other words, that the saints shall persevere in grace; and *all whom God hath justified, he will also finally glorify*.

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

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

Can it consist with the *justice* of God, to accept of a vicarious satisfaction for all our sins, and in consequence of that to give us a discharge from sin and guilt in our *justification*; and yet to require *personal* satisfaction from us, in our everlasting punishment? Will he accept of the full price of our eternal inheritance from our Surety, and yet refuse us the possession? Will he give us a right to eternal life upon Christ's account; and yet finally exclude us from it? Our Lord assures us, it cannot be—"My sheep hear my voice: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish: neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," John. x. 27, 28.

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

It should be here remembered, that our Lord Jesus Christ has purchased the *means*, as well as the *end*, for all that believe in him: not only *eternal life*, but also continued supplies of renewing *grace*, whereby they shall be made *meet* for it. This is certainly purchased for *some* believers. Whence do they else obtain persevering grace, if not from this fountain? And if for some believers, why not for *all*? Unless the faith of some gives them but a partial interest in Christ's redemption.—It cannot be doubted, but that some believers do in fact *persevere*, through grace and strength received from the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can it be doubted, but that Christ has *purchased* that grace and strength for them, which he bestows upon

upon them. Now, every justified person is either interested in *all* the redemption purchased by Christ ; or only in *part* of it.—If any are interested but in *part* of it, they are but partly justified, which is too great an absurdity to be supposed.—If they are interested in *all* the redemption of Christ, upon their believing in him, they partake of all the spiritual blessings, that any others are entitled to ; and consequently *persevere* to eternal salvation.

And thus the case is accordingly represented in the scriptures. Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. “ Christ also loved the Church, “ and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse “ it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not “ having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ; but that it “ should be holy and without blemish.”—Tit. ii. 14. “ Who “ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniqui- “ ty ; and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good “ works.”—Heb. x. 14. “ For by one offering he hath perfected “ for ever, them that are sanctified.” By which texts and many others that might be cited, it appears, that Christ has purchased sanctifying and persevering grace for believers. From whence they may confidently draw this comfortable conclusion, that they are “ begotten again to a lively hope, “ by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an in- “ heritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, “ reserved in heaven for them, who are kept by the power “ of God, through faith unto salvation.” 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5.

3. THIS is likewise evident from the tenor of the *gospel-co-
venant*.

As the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased persevering grace for believers ; so God hath, in a way of covenant, obliged himself to bestow it upon all such. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. “ Al- “ though my house be not so with God ; yet he hath made “ with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and “ sure.”—Isai. lv. 3. “ I will make an everlasting covenant, “ with you, even the sure mercies of David.”—Isa. lxi. 8. “ I “ will direct their work in truth ; and I will make an ever- “ lasting covenant with them.”—Jer. xxxii. 40. “ And I will “ make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not “ turn away from them, to do them good : but I will put my
N n 2 “ fear

“fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”—Ezek. xxxvii. 26, 27. “Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant—Yea, I will be their God; and they shall be my people.”—Heb. viii. 10. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be unto them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”—By these cited scriptures, we see the tenor of the covenant of grace. It is a *covenant everlasting and sure*; a covenant, that *he will not turn away from them to do them good, that he will put his fear in their hearts, that he will put his laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts; and* (what is full to the purpose) a covenant, that *they shall not depart from him.*

And, agreeable to the tenor of this covenant, we have repeated assurances in scripture, that believers actually shall be preserved through all difficulties, dangers, and temptations, to the heavenly kingdom. Thus, Psal. xxxvii. 28. “For the Lord loveth judgment; and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.”—John iv. 14. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.”—Mat. xviii. 14. “Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”—Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?—I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. xi. 29. “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”—1 Cor. i. 8, 9. “Who shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”—2 Thess. iii. 3. “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil.”—2 John 2. “For the truth’s sake which dwelleth

“ dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.”—From these, and multitudes of such like scriptures, it is most apparent, that God has by covenant, by his immutable promise, and the gracious encouragements of his word, secured the confirmation, establishment, and final *perseverance* of true believers.

And is he not “ faithful that has promised? Will he not “ guide them by his counsel; and afterward bring them to “ glory? Will he not strengthen them? Will he not help “ them? Yea, he will uphold them by the right hand of his “ righteousness.”—Believers may certainly and safely depend upon the faithfulness of God; for his *promises are all yea, and all amen in Christ*. They may depend upon it, that their “ whole spirit, and soul, and body shall be preserved blame- “ less, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: for faithful “ is he that calleth them, who also will do it,” 1 Theff. v. 23, 24. Verily if his covenant be not with day and night, if he hath not appointed the ordinances of heaven, then will he alter the word that is gone out of his mouth, and suffer his faithfulness to fail, in regard to the covenant of grace and promise of eternal salvation to believers.

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

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

By the *intercession* of Christ for believers (I think) is unitedly and universally understood, his pleading the merits of his blood, and applying the benefits of his redemption, for the increasing or renewing their graces, for the renewing their pardon and justification, and for their final confirmation and establishment. It is his *appearing in the presence of God for them*, his pleading the causes of their souls in the court of Heaven,

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

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

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

Thus we read, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, “By whom also we have access into this grace, wherein we stand; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. For if
“ when

“ when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the
 “ death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be
 “ saved by his life. And not only so; but we joy in God
 “ through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received
 “ the atonement,” Rom. v. 1, 2, 10, 11.—“ Now the God of
 “ peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing,” Rom.
 xv. 13.—“ Our consolation also aboundeth by Jesus Christ,”
 2 Cor. i. 5.—“ And the peace of God, which passeth all under-
 “ standing, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ
 “ Jesus,” Phil. iv. 7.

Now let it be considered, What joy and peace can the be-
 liever possibly obtain, or entertain, from the clearest evidences
 of his *justification*, if he has no *promise* to rest upon, that he
 shall *continue* in his present happy state; and has consequently
 before him a dark and distressing prospect of final apostasy,
 and eternal perdition, as possible to happen to him, and as
 certain in case a merciful God do not *uphold him by his free
 Spirit!*—If it be answered, That he may find peace and com-
 fort from the supporting *hope*, that in a way of diligent duty
 he shall from time to time obtain *new supplies* of grace; and
 be finally established in the possession of his inheritance: I
 would enquire, what *foundation* he has for such a supporting
 hope, as will afford him joy and peace in believing?

Can he found it upon his own good frames, and present pur-
 poses, or resolutions? This were to set his foot upon a quick-
 sand—*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.* Alas! he
 knows by experience, that his *heart is deceitful above all things,
 and desperately wicked.* He knows, that he has an alluring
 world, a tempting devil, and the contagious examples and en-
 ticements of wicked men to deal with: and if that be all his
 encouragemet, the probability is every way against him; there
 is a much greater prospect of his final apostasy, than of his per-
 severance. This therefore can afford him no peace. He can-
 not rejoice in this gloomy and dismaying view of his case.—
 Where then can he found his hope?

Can he found it upon the *grace of God*, as being sufficient
 for him? This would indeed afford him peace and comfort, if
 he had any promise to build upon. But alas! according to the
 opinion I am opposing, his present faith gives him no security
 of future grace. God has not promised (and therefore the be-
 liever

liever cannot conclude), that he shall not yet be left to a hard heart and a reprobate mind, to final security and impenitence. All his expectations of future supplies of grace may (for ought he knows) be vain presumption. And what joy or consolation can flow from thence? What *peace* can he find in *believing*; when he has no encouragement, but what belongs to the unbeliever as much as to him?

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

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

In fine, How can the believer have *the peace of God which passeth all understanding, to keep his mind and heart*, without a well-grounded hope of eternal salvation? How can he have such a hope, without any security of his continuance in a state of safety, either from his own qualifications, or from a Divine promise? Indeed, how can he possibly have any such security, while actually always liable to a final apostasy?—It therefore appears to me, that, by this opinion, the believer must be left comfortless; and the scriptures I have cited, with a great many others of the like kind, must be wholly unintelligible.—But blessed be God, there be many, who, from happy experience, can *set to their seal, that God is true, from a lively hope, a hope that maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them.*

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

In *answer* to this, it must be remembered, That it is not the present inquiry, what *kind or degree of declension* from a life of vital piety, is consistent with a justified state; but whether any justified person will *finally* apostatize. Let it therefore be considered, whether any of the instances mentioned in the objection, or any other that can be mentioned, will necessarily produce this conclusion, that a man may fall finally away from a true lively faith in Jesus Christ, and from a state of favour with God, and so perish eternally. This must be proved; or the objection is nothing to the purpose.—But I think there is no instance in the Bible, will support that conclusion. The instances commonly brought by our adversaries, are the falls of such believers, who are now glorified saints in heaven: and they are therefore exceedingly impertinent to the present purpose. How does it appear, that true believers may finally apostatize, because some true believers have fallen into sin, who did *not* finally apostatize?—That *the righteous may fall seven times, and rise again*, is what I make no doubt of. But that the true believer may finally miscarry, is what I could never see proved from any instance on scripture-record.

And as for the plea from *our own observation*, it proves nothing but the shortness of our sight, and our incapacity to search mens *hearts*. Among the apostles there was a Judas; who (though a devil) was not discerned by his fellow-disciples, till his open treason proclaimed his hypocrisy. And there will always be *foolish virgins* (among the wife), who will never be distinguished by their companions, till that mid-night cry is heard, *Behold, the Bridegroom cometh*.

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

In *answer* to this, my designed brevity will not allow a dis-

tinct consideration of the several texts quoted by our adversaries to this purpose. I shall only in general observe, That I know of no text in the Bible, which supposes a *total and final apostasy* from a saving faith in Christ, or from a justified state.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I answer; The objection is founded upon an ignorance of the nature and properties of a true justifying *faith*. A true faith *purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world*. No man therefore can, upon good grounds, take the comforts of a justified state; but from a consciousness of these fruits of faith, the purity of his heart, and sanctity of his life. So that this doctrine (whatever abusive application may be made of it) has no direct tendency to licentiousness. But it is so far from this, that nothing is, or can be, such a constant source of real vigorous Christianity and vital piety, as the manifestations of the love of God to our souls, and the evidences of his favour. And it may be certainly determined, that such persons cannot be in a justified state, upon whom the imaginary evidences of God's favour have a contrary effect.

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

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

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

Do they hope, from designs and expectations of *future* repentance and faith in Christ? At this rate, why may not every impenitent sinner in the world, entertain the same hope, upon the same grounds? But what reason can any man have, to expect an interest in Christ *hereafter*, that neglects him *now*? Such cannot expect it, from a prospect of *better* dispositions in *themselves*: For a continuance in a Christless state will make their hearts worse, certainly not better; it will harden rather than soften them.—They cannot expect it, from the *grace of God*. For he has no where suspended the offer of his grace to them, upon condition of their future acceptance of it. Surely the neglecting, abusing and affronting his grace, is not the way to obtain it.

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

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

With what compassion should we therefore look upon a poor stupid presumptuous generation of men, who are crying *peace and safety to themselves*, while walking in the *imaginings of their own hearts*; and quieting their consciences with hopes of heaven, without experience of a work of grace in their souls.—Alas, how vast is the number of such self-deceiving hypocrites!

How

How great a part of our people every where, are thus weaving the *spider's web*; and are like to perish *with a lie in their right hand*! How very few, that have a rational well-grounded hope of appearing at the right hand of Christ, when he comes! And where will all the rest appear, at the great and terrible day of the Lord!—

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

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

Such Christians, as have had special manifestations of the love of God to their souls, are liable to peculiar darkness and distress, when they have lost those sensible views of God's gracious presence.—The time was, when they could clearly discover some lively exercise of the graces of the Holy Spirit; but now their souls are covered with darkness and deadness. They cannot find those vigorous actings of faith and love, which heretofore have warmed and comforted their hearts. The sacred flame now seems almost extinguished.—The time

was, when they were greatly refreshed by their intercourse with Heaven; in the duties of religious worship. Then they could say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: *but now* their beloved has withdrawn himself, and is gone; their souls cleave to the dust;" and they cannot quicken them.—The time was, when they could have such lively impressions of the things unseen and eternal, as carried them above the world and its vanities, sweetened their expectations of death, and made them *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*: but now their prospect is dark, their faith weak, and their hope almost cut off. This is ready to plunge them into the *Psalmist's* discouragements and complaints—"Will the Lord cast off for ever? And "will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"

But remember, poor soul, that those whom Christ loves, he *loves to the end*. Though you cannot and ought not to sit down contented in such a state; yet you may be supported with this comforting conclusion, "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus.—Who is he that condemneth those for whom Christ has died; or who shall separate them from the love of Christ?" Your Father, which gave you to Christ, *is greater than all*; and none shall pluck you out of your Father's hands. He has promised, that *he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, (Heb. xiii. 5.) And he will be as good as his word. Trust in him therefore, with humble courage and confidence. Resolve, with holy Job, *if he slay me, yet will I trust in him*. Be content to follow him in the dark. If you can find comfort no where else, do as the *Psalmist* did in your case: "Call to remembrance the song you have had in the night." Say of your doubtings and darkness, "This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." I will support my soul with the manifestations of the love of Christ, that I have heretofore experienced: and I will renew my pursuit of these blessed manifestations; I will still *follow hard after him*, until I find him.—In this way you will, first or last, know by happy experience, that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

But perhaps you are afraid, that you may meet with such *shocking trials*, as will be too hard for you. You may be afraid, that you may meet with *persecution* for the cause of Christ, and, like faint-hearted soldiers, you shall quit the field. Or you may be afraid, that you shall be terrified and dismayed with the approach of *death*; and dishonour your profession by your terrors and despondings.—If this be your case, check your unbelief, and say, with the Psalmist, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul! Why art thou disquieted within me! Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.” Though you have no strength nor sufficiency of your own to depend upon, is not the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God, a sufficient refuge for your distressed soul? Trust him—“The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms. As thy days, so shall thy strength be. When thou passest through the waters, he will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee: for he is the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.” He has been often tried in such distresses; and never yet failed those that uprightly believed and trusted in him. This therefore may be your constant support, that he is faithful who has promised; that “all things shall work together for good, to them which love God, to them which are called according to his purpose.”

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

Instead of encouraging yourselves in a life of carelessness, sensuality, and security, from the doctrine before us, the improvement of it should be the quite contrary way.—If *perseverance* be the certain consequence of a justified state, then *apostasy* in any from the profession and practice of Godliness is a sad evidence, that such have never indeed attained to that safe and happy state. Every degree of declension should therefore awaken you to the greatest watchfulness over your hearts and lives, to the greatest diligence in duty, and to the most earnest

earnest and importunate applications to the throne of grace, for the incomes and influences of the blessed Spirit, to excite, quicken, and invigorate you in the ways of God.

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

Instances of the imperfections of the children of God, are left on sacred record, to comfort those whose hearts are right with God, and are following hard after him, notwithstanding their darkness and infirmity: but not designed to encourage the careless and secure in their declensions and apostasies. “Thou standest by faith; be not therefore high minded, but fear. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Press on, with earnest and constant diligence, “toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:” Always considering, that those, all those, and none but those, “who endure to the end, shall be saved.”

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

The Witness of the SPIRIT.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT NEWARK IN NEW-JERSEY,

MAY 7. 1740.

WHEREIN IS DISTINCTLY SHEWEN,

In what Way and Manner the SPIRIT himself
beareth Witness to the Adoption of the Chil-
dren of God.

On occasion of a wonderful Progress of Converting
Grace in those parts.

By JONATHAN DICKINSON, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ELISABETH-TOWN, NEW-JERSEY.

*Gal. iv. 6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his
Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

The Second Edition Printed at Boston in the Year 1743.

T H E

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD

T O T H E

ADOPTION OF HIS CHILDREN.

ROMANS viii. 16.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

EVERY individual person of this numerous audience that are here before the Lord, are going into an eternal state, where they must be unspeakably happy, or intolerably miserable, throughout an endless and unchangeable duration. Such of my hearers as have a saving interest in Christ by faith, and are *created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that they walk in them*, have an undoubted title to *the inheritance of the saints in light*; and shall certainly spend a blessed eternity, in the enjoyment of what *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man*. But they who are in a state of impenitence and unbelief, under the power of their lusts, and guilt of their sins, are all of them heirs of eternal perdition; and, if they continue in their present state, must eternally lament their dreadful condition among devils and damned spirits, where *the smoke of their torments must ascend for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night*. Since therefore we are all candidates for heaven or hell, for eternal salvation or eternal damnation; and our state must be quickly fixed beyond possibility of change or alteration for ever; it is of infinite concernment, that we do not deceive ourselves in an af-

fair of such unutterable consequence, and that we be not ashamed of our hope, when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake,

But what security can we obtain, that may be safely depended upon, in this state of darkness and ignorance, temptation and imperfection? How shall our foundation be so laid, that we may with joy and comfort expect the last decisive trial? The words of our text are an answer to this demand. They set before us a clear and safe evidence of our good estate; and shew us how we shall know *what is the hope of our calling, and what is our title to the riches of the glory of an inheritance with the saints.* We are safe, if we have *the Spirit itself witnessing with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* This therefore we are concerned to seek, with a most earnest and assiduous application. Without this we should by no means content and satisfy ourselves, since there is so much depending upon it.

Let me then endeavour to assist you in the pursuit of this blessed attainment, by considering the following things:

I. What we are to understand by *the Spirit itself.*

II. How the Spirit *beareth witness with our spirit*, that we are the children of God.

Under which head, I shall take occasion to consider, whether all the children of God have a clear and satisfying evidence of their adoption. And then,

III. Conclude with some improvement.

I. Then, I am to consider, what we are to understand by *the Spirit itself.* To this I answer in one word,

We are hereby to understand the Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable Trinity; the same God, in all the perfections of his infinite nature, with the Father and the Son.—I may here remark, That the words before us might be more properly rendered, *the Spirit himself.* For this is not only agreeable with the original; but more directly leads our minds to contemplate the personality of the blessed Spirit, here spoken of. It is he himself, that is the eternal God, that is of the same nature and essence with the other persons of the Godhead, who must work all the good pleasure of his goodness in our souls, who must begin and carry on the work of grace in us, if ever we are sanctified; and he himself also must give us

the

the comforting view of his own gracious operations; must confirm and establish us, by enabling us to see the evidence of this gracious change, if ever we find *joy and peace in believing*.

II. I am to consider how the Spirit himself *bearth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*.

Now, that I may set this in a clear light, it will be proper to observe to you, that there are two ways by which the Holy Spirit beareth this witness with the spirit of a believer: The one ordinary, mediate, and common to the most, if not all true believers; the other extraordinary, immediate, and less common, even to those that are the sincere children of God. It may be proper to consider each of these distinctly.

I. Then, the *Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, in a more ORDINARY and MEDIATE WAY, that we are the children of God*.

I shall mention some of those ordinary means and methods, by which the Spirit witnesseth our adoption; and by which we may obtain the most clear and satisfying evidences of it.— And here,

(1.) I shall observe, that one of the ordinary means, by which the Spirit beareth witness in our favour, is the *word of God*. The blessed book of God contains the immediate dictates of his Holy Spirit—*All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect*, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Whatsoever therefore is written in the divine oracles, is witnessed by the Spirit himself; for he is the author of them. And we must receive nothing as the *witness of the Spirit*, which is not agreeable to this sure and infallible standard, and only sufficient rule of faith and practice. By this rule we must try our state, and all our qualifications for future glory. By this rule we must discover all sorts of false confidences and vain hopes in ourselves and others—*If any man, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you, let him be accursed*. If any man pretend to any qualifications, experiences, or spiritual impressions, as necessary to our comfort and safety, which are not consonant to, or warranted by these oracles of truth, we have no business to regard them

them or take any notice of them. This is a caution well worthy of our special attention in these present times. As the Spirit of God has been in a glorious manner displaying his power and goodness, in exciting a solemn inquiry after the way of salvation, in many of our people in these parts of the world, we must not wonder if the adversary should sow tares among the wheat. We must not be stumbled at it, if we meet with some pretensions to spiritual influences, which want a new bible for their justification. *We must not believe every spirit: but try the spirits, whether they be of God,* 1 John. iv. 1. And how shall we try them, but by the word of God? This we know to be the witness of the Spirit himself; and thence we also know, that whoever *speaks not according to this word, it is because they have no light in them,* Isa. viii. 20.— We have no cause to be distressed by any new lights, or new pretences, that are not to be found in the Bible; nor any cause to quiet ourselves with any imaginary attainments, which are not there represented as the sure marks and characters of a child of God. If the Spirit of God does, by the scriptures, witness in our favour, we are out of danger of miscarrying. If he there witnesseth against us, we can have no grounded hope of salvation, whatever pretences we may make, whatever experiences we may boast of.

2. I MAY further observe to you, that another ordinary and mediate way, by which *the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit,* is his *sanctifying and renewing influences* upon our hearts. If we are *renewed in the spirit of our mind*; if *old things are passed away, and all things are become new* in our souls; if we have *put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created us*; we have then the *witness of the Spirit himself* to our adoption. Such a change as this cannot be the production of any created power; but must be the powerful operation of the *Spirit himself*, and is a better witness in our favour, than if an angel from heaven should testify to us our title to the kingdom of God. I would here therefore take liberty to be something distinct and particular, in setting before you what are these sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit, by which he beareth witness that we are the children of God.

(1.) One thing wrought in the heart of a sinner, in order to his conversion to God, is a *conviction of his sin and misery*, and a *deep impression of his dangerous perishing circumstance*, whilst an enemy to God, and an heir of eternal perdition.— While sinners are in an estate of carnal security, they will not *know* and consider *the things of their peace*, they will not endeavour to *flee from the wrath to come*, nor to *lay hold on the hope set before them*. No means will prevail with them, no arguments will persuade them to *come to Christ, that they might have life*. This is a sad truth, open to our continual observation and experience. We see a poor secure world going on boldly in the paths of destruction and death, notwithstanding all the terrors of the law of God, notwithstanding all the faithful warnings of the ministers of Christ, and all the shocking dispensations of providence. What an astonishing thought is this! Can rational creatures cast themselves down the dreadful precipice with their eyes open! Can they run upon the flaming sword, when it is brandished before their breasts! Can they venture upon hell and eternal damnation, without care or fear! When seriously considered, it seems impossible: and yet it is obvious to every observer, that this is the conduct of the far greatest part of the world of mankind; and it will continue to be the conduct of every unconverted sinner, until the Spirit of God opens their eyes, sets their danger in view, and awakens them out of this stupid and dead state. It is accordingly the first operation of the blessed Spirit, in order to a sinner's sanctification, *to convince him of sin*, John xvi. 8. This he sometimes does more *suddenly*; and by a more *forcible impression*, filling the soul with the greatest agony and distress, from the most lively views of his aggravated sins, and of the amazing wrath of God. This alarms all the powers and passions of the soul, *pricks the poor sinner to the heart*, with St Peter's hearers (Acts ii. 37.); causeth him to *tremble*, with the jailor (Acts xvi. 29.); to *tremble and be astonished*, with Saul at his conversion (Acts ix. 6.)—But in others these convictions are more *gradually* brought on; and with *lower degrees* of terror and amazement. These have such a sense of their sin and danger, as makes them in earnest enquire *what they shall do to be saved*, though they do not approach so near to desperation, from the astonishing prospect of their dreadful deserts

deserts. Some sinners agonize *long* under these distresses, before they can find rest in Christ. Others are *sooner* brought to act faith in him; and to the comfortable evidences of it. But all must hereby be brought to such a discovery of their guilt and misery, that they can no longer rest in their present condition; nor be easy without an interest in Christ and the favour of God.

And now, my brethern! It is your business to consider, whether you have had this *witness of the Spirit with your spirit*, or not. If you have been thus awakened out of your carnal security, you have the testimony of *the Spirit himself*, that he has begun a good work in you. It is true, that this is no certain evidence of a sanctifying change. Many have been brought thus far, that have worn off these impressions; and returned to folly, like *a dog to his vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*. And it therefore infinitely concerns you to take care, that you do not *begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh*; that you do not *quench the Spirit of God*; and cause him to withdraw, and leave you to your former security and stupidity. But as for such of you that have had no experience of these awakening influences of the blessed Spirit, the case is at once determined against you. There needs no other evidence, that you are yet in your sins, and under a dreadful sentence of death and condemnation.

(2) Another method of the Spirit is by his *humbling and soul-abasing* influences.—A sinner must be brought out of himself, or he will never fly to Christ for refuge, and receive him upon his own terms. Convictions will awaken him to a solemn concern about his state; will drive him to duty, and produce a reformation of his external behaviour. But it is too common that these attainments quiet the conscience, and procure peace to the soul, short of an interest in Christ, and a real sanctifying change of heart and life. But if the Spirit of God carry on his work to purpose, he will bring the convinced sinner to see the infinite defect of all his performances and of all his attainments, of all his duties, reformations, promises, religious frames, and moral carriages, and of all he does or can do, to render him acceptable to God. He will bring him to see, that he is undone, and cannot help himself; and that he is utterly unworthy, that God should help him.

He will bring him to see, that it is a wonder of God's patience that he is out of hell; and that it will be a wonder indeed of sovereign free grace, if such a polluted guilty rebel finally escapes eternal ruin. He will bring him to lie at God's footstool, as a guilty condemned malefactor with the halter about his neck, having nothing to plead in his own favour, nothing to depend upon, but abused and forfeited grace and mercy.—Convinced sinners commonly struggle a great while to get out of their distresses, by some *self-righteous attempt* or other. One while they will make *promises*, and take up resolutions to watch their hearts, and to reform their lives; but alas! they find their hearts are an inexhaustible fountain of corruption, which they cannot cleanse; their lusts get the victory over all their good designs and strongest resolutions. Then they will be ready to *fly to duty*, and perhaps add new duties to their old courses; and hope by these to recommend themselves to God. But here also their confidence withers away; they find so much deadness and dulness, so many sinful thoughts and straying affections in their best performances, that they cannot hope for safety from this refuge. In this distress, they will perhaps be ready to flatter themselves with safety from their *convictions*, from a sense of their vileness and misery. They vainly hope that such distress for their sins, such sorrow and mourning, such earnest desires of deliverance from their guilty perishing state, will move God to pity and relieve them. But alas! this bed also will be found too short to stretch themselves upon. The blessed Spirit will still make them sensible that their convictions, legal terrors, and sense of their own vileness and sinfulness, will no more serve to justify them in the sight of God, than their resolutions, their reformations or their duties. And what shall they do in this case? They now see that there is *no refuge*, but CHRIST only; and to him they would therefore repair, were it not for the same *self-righteous* principles still obtaining in them. They would commit their souls to Christ for salvation; but they cannot think he will receive such poor guilty sinful creatures as they are: They have hard hearts, and corrupt affections. They have not been sufficiently convinced of their sins, or not sufficiently humbled: They have not the necessary qualifications for coming to Christ and believing in him; and are therefore yet striving

in their own strength to obtain some preparations, some fitness of soul for coming to Christ. But the Spirit of God will not leave those he designs for mercy, in these unhappy toils. He will shew them, that they are not to hope, that the case will ever be better, by any thing they do or can do; that they neither have, nor ever will have any *qualifications* at all to *recommend* them to Christ; that it is in vain to strive with their own hearts, in vain to work in their own strength, or with a dependence on creature-helps—*In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, or multitude of mountains.* He will shew them, that they justly deserve to perish; and cannot help themselves: that if ever they come to Christ at all, they must come as they are, *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*; that if ever he saves them, he must have all the glory; and that the whole of their salvation must be ascribed to the riches of his infinite free grace and sovereign mercy, to helpless, unworthy, perishing sinners.

If my hearers would now *apply* this to *themselves*, it may shew them, whether they have this *witness of the Spirit*, in their favour, or not. If you are thus humbled, and brought to the foot of God's sovereign grace; if you have had this discovery of your own spiritual impotency, of your desert of God's wrath, and of your just exposedness to perish, notwithstanding all your own refuges that you can possibly betake yourselves to; it is the *Spirit himself* that has thus humbled you. It is he that has knocked all your false foundations from under your feet, and has given you this humbling view of your lost condition. And though the greatest degree of humiliation alone is not a sufficient evidence of a saving conversion to God, it is however the *witness of the Spirit himself* of such a good work begun in your soul, without which you could never be saved; and by which there is a hopeful prospect, that you will be brought to give up yourselves to Christ, and depend upon his righteousness only for justification and eternal salvation: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of God. The hungry shall be filled with good things, while the rich are sent away empty. He will deliver the needy, when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." But how lamentable, how dreadfully dangerous is the state of those, of whom it may be
said,

said, that *they are not bumbled unto this day!* Whatever attainments these may have, whatever confidence they may entertain, they will quickly be convinced, that their hopes are built upon the sand, and must fall before the approaching tempest.

(3.) I proceed to shew you, in the next place, that the *Spirit of God* does, in an especial manner, *bear witness* to our adoption, by working in us *a lively faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. We read in Gal. iii. 26. that *we are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ*. If therefore the sense of our indigent helpless and hopeless estate in ourselves, which I have described, brings us to look to the fulness and sufficiency, that there is in Christ, to receive him upon his own terms, as revealed in the gospel, and to depend upon him only as the *Author of our eternal salvation*; we have therein good evidence of a glorious change wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and that *we are the children of God*; for we are such *by faith in Jesus Christ*.

This, my brethren, is the great concern, this the grand point that we should be especially careful to clear up to ourselves. If this foundation be well laid, we are happy for ever: But a mistake here is the eternal loss of our immortal souls. Have we been brought to yield our unfeigned assent to gospel-truths, and our unfeigned consent to gospel-terms, and to *live by the faith of the Son of God*? Have we been brought to "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh?" Have we "esteemed all things as loss and dung, in comparison of Christ, that we may be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith?" Have we valued an interest in Christ above all the world; and chosen him for the portion of our souls? Have we received the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices, and for all his benefits? Have we depended only upon the influences of his blessed Spirit, to renew, sanctify, and quicken us; and upon his righteousness alone, to justify us in the sight of God? Have we submitted to him as our Lord, as well as our Saviour; is his throne set up in our hearts; and do all the powers of our souls bow down to him? Do we desire him as our Saviour from future sin, as well as from past

guilt; from the pollution and dominion, as well as from the damning effects of our lusts? In a word, Do we depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ, to be *of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption?* Do we depend upon him to do all in us, all for us; and to be all to us? And do we constantly, in the solemn practice of all religious duties, thus commit our souls to him as the *Lord our righteousness*; and as the only foundation of our hope for eternal salvation? Do we lament the imperfections of our faith, and all the actings of unbelief in our hearts; and do we repair to this great Advocate to intercede for us, and cover the defects of our graces and services, as well as of our persons?

Happy beyond comparison is he, who, upon an impartial trial, can find these operations of a saving faith in his soul. It is the *Spirit himself* that has, "according to his abundant mercy, begotten him again to a lively hope;" and he has a witness from heaven to his adoption and justification; a witness that cannot possibly deceive him. He may depend upon it, that "He which hath begun this good work in him, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." The match is concluded between Christ and his soul. He may look upon this precious Saviour as his own for ever.

(4.) I must yet further go on to shew you, that *the Spirit witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the children of God, by working in us a true sincere love to God.*

Alas! *Our carnal minds are enmity against God*; and this enmity will remain and reign in the heart of every unbeliever, until the Spirit of God by his powerful influences, renews the sinner's nature, sanctifies the affections, and enables the soul to live in the love of God. And whenever this change is wrought in us, we have thereby "the witness of the Spirit himself," to the safety and goodness of our state and hope. Let us make sure of this; and the case is plain. All darkness and doubts will vanish before the clear shining of this evidence, *Faith working by love.*

If, upon a strict inquisition into our own hearts, we can find, that we sincerely admire and adore the glorious perfections of God's excellent nature; and uprightly endeavour universal conformity to his imitable properties; and, in particular, that we endeavour to be *holy, as our Father which is in heaven is holy:*

If we esteem *God's favour as life*, and *his loving-kindness as better than life*: If we love what God loveth, and hate what he hateth: If we love his ordinances, and delight in drawing near to him: If we delight in communion with God, and cannot content ourselves with an empty ordinance, without God's special presence with us therein: If we are greatly uneasy, when he hides his face from us; and the *light of his countenance* is the greatest joy, satisfaction, and comfort of our souls: If our imperfections and sins are our burthen, peculiarly because dishonourable to God, because against such love and compassion as he has manifested to us, and because of the base ingratitude we are therein chargeable with: If we have much at heart the flourishing and prosperity of his kingdom and interest in the world, and exert ourselves with diligence in our respective stations to promote it: If herein we labour to glorify our heavenly Father, by bearing much fruit: If we love his image, wherever we see it; and manifest our abiding in his love, by a constant endeavour to keep his commandments: In a word, If we cannot rest contented with our defects and imperfections in any of these instances, but greatly lament them before God, and mourn all our want of conformity to him, all our want of affection and devotion to him, and all our want of communion with him: Then we may conclude we have the witness in ourselves, that we are the children of God.—Can these things be the productions of nature? Can these be streams flowing from that fountain of enmity to God, which we have formerly experienced in our own hearts? No, it cannot be! The Spirit himself has wrought these gracious affections and dispositions in our souls. And he thereby gives an incontestable evidence of our renewed natures.—*If we love him, it is because he has first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19.

O that all my hearers could, upon good grounds, take the comfort of what has been said!—But alas! there is just cause to fear, that the greatest part of them are *lovers of themselves*, and not of God; lovers of their lusts and sinful pleasures; lovers of the world; neglecters of godliness; or, at the best, but formal professors: and therefore, whatever their hopes and expectations are, they can have *no part or lot in this matter*. These do not *love the Lord Jesus Christ*; and therefore must be Anathema Maranatha, accursed when the Lord comes,

1 Cor. xvi. 22.—Oh how different are these two sorts of persons; and how very different ought their views and expectations to be!

(5.) I must furthermore proceed to shew you, That the *Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit*, to our adoption, and to our interest in the favour of God, by giving us a *love to his children*.—We read, 1 John iii. 14. *We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren*. This cannot imply, that a natural affection to the children of God, because of any relation to them, or any personal friendship, or because of their kindness to us, their good neighbourhood, or the like, is an evidence of our sanctification. Nor, on the other hand, does it imply, that, as an evidence of our adoption, we must love or approve the faults and mistakes, the errors and imperfections of those whom we esteem the children of God. But it implies, that if we love the persons, and especially the gracious qualifications of those whom we have reason to conclude the children of God, for his sake: if we love the image of Christ wherever we see it, or wherever we think we see it (for there can be no infallible certainty in this case) if we love the brethren as brethren, love their company, love communion and fellowship with them in religious exercises; and love an imitation of them, labour after a conformity to them in their graces, their piety, and virtuous demeanour; it is a witness for us, that we are born of God. The Spirit himself has wrought these gracious affections in us.

We were naturally in love with sinners; and how comes it to pass, that their sinful practices and their sinful company and fellowship are become so grievous and burdensome to us? On the other hand, we are naturally full of enmity to the gracious attainments, spiritual dispositions, and religious lives of the saints; and how come they to be so delightful to us now? How come they to be our only chosen companions? How come they to appear to us the only excellent ones of the earth? How come we not only to love their persons, but their piety; and to be transformed into the like spiritual affections, dispositions, and conversations, which were before so contrary to us? Is it not most evident, that this change is from the Spirit himself; and that he himself does hereby bear witness, that we are among the children of God, having the same sanctified habit of soul, that we so highly value and esteem in them:

them: This certainly must be the case; and they that find these qualifications in themselves, should take the comfort of them; while others (poor souls!) are like to spend their eternity with such companions as are most agreeable to them now, but will prove their tormentors in the end.

(6.) I go on to add, That the *Spirit beareth witness with our spirit*, by giving us, through faith, a victory over the world; and by making us spiritually minded. We are naturally of the earth, earthy; and we mind earthly things. Our cares, thoughts, and affections are chiefly exercised about, and in a great measure limited to, the affairs and interests of time and sense. This we have found by experience. And is it otherwise with us now? Does the world shrink to nothing in our sight, when compared with the favour of God, and the concerns of a future state? Do we look, not to the things which are seen and temporal; but to those things that are unseen and eternal? Are heavenly things the subjects of our principal care and concern, of our chief affections, meditations, and pursuits? Are these the first and the last with us? Do we endeavour so to use the world, as not to abuse it; and to have our conversation in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it our chief concern to secure a better world than this; and to lay up a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life? Do we take more delight in the service of God, than in the pleasures of sense; and when others are saying, *Who will shew us any good!* do we rejoice more in the light of God's countenance, than they do when their corn, and wine, and oil increase? Whence then comes this great and wonderful change? The answer is prepared for us: It is because we are risen with Christ, that we seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. It is because we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, that we set our affections on things above; and not on things on the earth, (Col. iii. 1, 2, 3.) It is the Spirit himself that has thus raised us above sensible and worldly views; and he thereby beareth witness for us, that to be thus spiritually minded is life and peace, (Rom. viii. 6.)

And now, my brethren! if you can find, upon a serious and impartial search into your own hearts, that you have thus by faith overcome the world, that you thus mind the things of the Spirit,

Spirit, and that, in the midst of your worldly incumbrances and necessary concerns, your hearts and affections are raised above the world and its enjoyments; if you can find, that you are out of your element while necessarily intangled with worldly things; this is a good evidence of a work of grace, and you may expect the acceptance and approbation of your Judge; when those who mind earthly things, will have their end destruction, and will receive a dreadful conviction, that they have so “loved the world, and the things of the world, *as that the love of the Father was not in them.*”

(7.) I must once more subjoin, That the *Spirit beareth witness with our spirit*, by being in us a *spirit of supplication*.—Prayer is the very breath and vital air of a child of God. No sooner is Saul converted, but the next news is, *Behold, he prayeth!* He doubtless had prayed oft as a Pharisee before; but now as a Christian. He might before have offered many formal and hypocritical prayers to God; but now he prays in faith and sincerity. And thus every one that is truly converted to God, employs himself with a special diligence and delight in this duty of prayer. He prays, not only to quiet his conscience; but that in this delightful ordinance he may have *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. He prays, that he may thereby get more victory over his corruptions, more evidences of God’s favour, more of the gracious influences of God’s Spirit; and be ripened for more near, intimate, and eternal communion with God. Real saints cannot content themselves with a bare performance of the external duty. They cannot (as before their conversion) quiet themselves by *flattering God with their lips, and lying to him with their tongues, when their hearts are far from him*. But they *follow hard after God; their hearts burn within them, and pant after God, the living God*; after his gracious presence with them in the duty. And though they often find occasion to complain of the deadness of their hearts, and the wandering of their thoughts and affections in their nearest approaches to God. This is their greatest burthen, and gives them pain and distress, like a bone out of joint. This will quicken them to more earnestness and diligence in their addresses to God. In this case *their desire is before God, and their groaning is not hid from him*, that when their souls
thus

thus cleave to the dust, he would quicken them according to his word.

And now, my dear friends! Is this your case? Have you this delight in prayer? Have you these holy ends in performing it? Can you call God for your *witness, that you serve him with your spirit* in this ordinance? Are your affections engaged, and your graces exercised, in your applications to the throne of grace?—Do your enlargements in the duty afford you the greatest comfort, above all earthly satisfactions; and is your want of such enlargements the grief and burthen of your soul?—Are you humble, as well as spiritual, in your addresses to God? Do you come to him with deep impressions of your own nothingness; and with high apprehensions of the fullness and sufficiency that there is in Christ? Do you mourn for, loath and abhor that pride and selfishness, that is ready to creep into this duty, even in your most watchful periods?—Does *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, begin and end, and run through the duty?—In a word, Do you *lift up holy hands in prayer, and pray without ceasing; not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?*—Happy are those souls, who have truly experienced such vital prayer. This is not a production of nature; but proceedeth from *the Spirit himself*. It is from the *Spirit of adoption*, that they are thus able to cry, *Abba, Father. The Spirit helpeth their infirmities; for they know not what they should pray for as they ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26.—But then, on the contrary, to what purpose are the dead, dull, and hypocritical prayers of those that rest in a mere round of duty; and raise their hopes of salvation from their superficial performances? *When these spread forth their hands, God will bid his eyes; and when they make many prayers, he will not hear*, Isa. i. 15.

Thus I have, in some particular instances, set before you, how the Spirit himself beareth witness to our adoption, by his ordinary sanctifying operations.—I pretend not to have made a compleat enumeration.

But you will now perhaps be ready to inquire, *How shall we know that we are not deceived?* Many have flattered themselves in their own eyes, imagining themselves possessed of these at-

tainments, when really they had them not; and we are as liable to be deceived as others. What therefore shall we do, that we may not be fatally and eternally ashamed of our hope?—I answer, You must not only seriously, impartially, and frequently examine yourselves, whether you have these characters of the children of God in your souls; but must depend upon the Spirit himself to give you the evidences of it. For he must not only work these qualifications in your souls; but also give you the happy discovery that they are there, and keep you from a fatal mistake about them. To him therefore you must repair, with most earnest and constant application, in such language as that, Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24. “Search me, O God, and “know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if “there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way “everlasting.”—And now I am prepared to say, in the next place,

2. THE Spirit of God doth sometimes bear witness in a more IMMEDIATE and EXTRAORDINARY way, to the adoption of his children.—But here, I must confess, I am at once nonplussed, in any attempt to describe the unspeakable light and joy, that flows from this wonderful “love of God shed abroad in the “heart of a believer by the Holy Ghost. This is a new name written, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it, Rev. ii. 17. As no idea of sensible objects can possibly be communicated to those that have not the proper senses to perceive them; so neither can any just conceptions of this *fellowship of the Spirit*, this *joy of the Holy Ghost*, be communicated to any but those that have experience of it in themselves or at least, spiritual capacities fitted hereto.—Thence it is, that some persons, from enthusiastic heats, from working up their animal affections and passions, or else from diabolical delusions, have pretended to these immediate influences of the Spirit of God, where the consequence has evidently shewn, they have been strangers; that have never intermeddled with these Divine joys.—This witness of the Spirit is nevertheless distinguishable from any counterfeits, or false pretences whatsoever, not only by its own light, which dispels all doubts and darkness of the soul, and gives it an earnest and foretaste of its future blessedness: But it may be also distinguished by the
concomitant

concomitant graces of the Holy Spirit. If the person, thus significantly favoured of God, has before experienced the ordinary influences of the grace of God, uniting him to Christ by faith, renewing his nature, enlightening his mind, and sanctifying his heart; if this blessed experience humbles the soul at God's foot, in an abasing sense of his own vileness and unworthiness, and in an adoring view of God's distinguishing mercy and love to such a base and worthless worm; if this "purifies the heart, "and purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God;" if this mortifies remaining lusts, makes the affections more spiritual and heavenly, excites more ardent breathings after the eternal inheritance, and kindles a greater zeal for the glory of God, as the highest end; and if this be attained in a way of duty, according to the scriptures, and if it makes the word precious, and all the ordinances of God more pleasant to the soul; if it increases devotion to God, and benignity to men: I say, if the case be thus with any, he hath doubtless *the witness of the Spirit himself*, and may well rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—But all pretences to this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, which are not accompanied with these gracious dispositions of mind, and this holy conduct of life, are false and counterfeit, and are like to end in a dreadful disappointment.

BUT before I dismiss this head, I must remember my promise; and take time briefly to consider, *Whether all the children of God have a clear and satisfying evidence of their adoption, and whether the evidence of a sanctified state be absolutely necessary to the truth of grace.*

In answer to this I would first observe, That the influences of the Spirit of God upon our souls are in themselves sensible or perceptible operations; that they may certainly be felt and perceived by all that have had them.—It is impossible (for instance), for any person, at an age of observation, to be ignorant of his convictions, if he has been brought out of a state of carnal security, and had any lively impressions of his guilt and danger.—It is impossible but he must feel the humbling sense of his own unworthiness, impotence, and desert of God's wrath, if ever he has been brought out of himself to the foot-

stool of God's sovereignty—It is impossible but he must know the actings of his own mind, when he has exercised repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.—It is impossible but he must know the comforts which he has enjoyed, if he hath found peace in believing.—And it is impossible but he must know the fruits of his faith and hope, in the mortification of his lusts, and the renovation of his heart and life. These things are (I think) certain, even to demonstration. How vain therefore is the confidence, and how false the peace, of those that experimentally know nothing of these things, and who have never felt the agency of the Spirit of God, “creating them anew in Christ Jesus!”

But all this notwithstanding, there are doubtless many that have really felt all these Divine influences in their souls, who remain nevertheless *uncertain of their conversion*.—Sometimes the humbling views of their own unworthiness make them jealous, and afraid to apply those comforts to their souls, that belong to them, and that would result from the manifest marks of grace; which they could not but see and own, did they not think such glad tidings were too good news for them, and what they dare not entertain themselves with.—Sometimes the actual prevalence of their corruptions darkens all their hopes; and they are ready to imagine their imperfections inconsistent with a state of grace. They know how hard it is to distinguish between the remains of sin in the children of God, and the reign of sin in refined hypocrites; hence they are afraid of being deceived; and therefore dare not conclude in their own favour. They know that there is an eternity depending; and if they are deceived, it may prove an eternal disappointment.—Sometimes a sense of the deceitfulness of their own hearts renders all their evidences doubtful to them; and makes them afraid peremptorily to conclude upon what they even see and feel. They cannot but acknowledge, that they have experienced what looks like grace in their souls: But their hearts being so deceitful, they dare not trust them. Others have been deceived; and they are equally liable to the same mistakes that have ruined so many others; and they dread to think what would become of their souls for ever, if *a deceived heart should turn them aside, and they should be found*
with

with a lie in their right hand.—Sometimes the frequent returns of deadness and dulness in duty, keep them under a sort of bondage. They are afraid whether this can be consistent with a sanctified state; and are therefore afraid, that what they have experienced, has been but counterfeit grace.—Sometimes the temptations of Satan give them much disquietment, and cast a dreadful gloom over them.—Sometimes a melancholy habit of body keeps the believer under an unhappy course of darkness and fear, and prompts him unreasonably to argue against himself.—Sometimes one and sometimes another of these difficulties arise in the case of a sincere Christian; and perhaps all of them together, with many others of the like kind, may conspire to darken his evidences, and bring him into a most uncomfortable suspense about his spiritual state.—God exercises an adorable sovereignty in this matter; and dispenses light or darkness, joy or sorrow, to his dearest children, with an uncontrollable liberty, as may be most for his own glory.

Whoever therefore teach such doctrine, that every converted person must necessarily know he is converted, and will enjoy the light of God's countenance, while walking uprightly, I conceive, they do "offend against the generation of God's children," go contrary to the constant doctrine of the most eminent Protestant divines, from the Reformation to this day, and contrary to the blessed oracles of truth.—How sad, how dark, and melancholy does Heman represent his case, in Psalm. lxxxviii. throughout? How does he complain, that his "soul was full of troubles; that he was laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps; that God's fierce wrath went over him; and his terrors had cut him off;" and the like? And this was not a sudden or short desertion; but "he had been thus afflicted and ready to die from his youth up." Now, why may it not be as well supposed, that true believers may in these days meet with the same trials? To whom but such doubting believers is that exhortation given (Isai. l. 10.), "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Christ came "to deliver such, who, through fear
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“ of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.” Heb. ii. 15. “ Read also to the same purpose the beginning of the 32d, with the beginning of the 38th and the 77th, Psalms ; and it will appear that many “ which sow in tears, shall “ reap in joy ; and they who go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves “ with them,” according to Psa. cxxvi. 5, 6.

BUT it is time I should make some more particular APPLICATION of what you have heard. And,

I. This teaches us the *folly* of those, that content themselves without clear and sure evidences of their sanctification and adoption. The most of our professors seem to be easy and quiet with a general hope of salvation, without any special evidences of their title to it. They seem to suppose, that assurance is not attainable, or at least that it is not attainable by them ; and therefore satisfy themselves with expectations of acceptance with God, they do not know why. But consider (I intreat you, my dear brethren) what the consequence will be, if you are mistaken. What comfort will it be to you, if in the day of judgment you should be found at the *left hand* of Christ, to say, “ I expected better things than this ; alas ! “ I never thought it would have come to this ; I am dreadfully “ disappointed.” What comfort will it afford you, to plead at that bar, that you have “ eaten and drank in Christ’s presence, “ and that he has taught in your streets,” if you must then be rejected of your Lord, and meet with that dreadful repulse from him, “ I tell you, I know you not whence you are, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity !” Luke xiii. 27. Can you be easy and secure, when you do not know but you must be damned to all eternity ; when you do not know but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, under the unutterable anguish of God’s terrible indignation, must be your eternal portion ! Would you be satisfied with no better security of a title to your houses and lands ? Can you, in these cases, be contented with a general hope, that no body will take them from you, while you do not know that you have any claim that will secure your possession ? And are not your souls and your eternity (my dear friends) of infinitely more consequence

quence and concern, than these vanishing treasures, which must perish with the using? O why (dear souls!) why will you rest in such a dreadful uncertainty? What may be, may not be; and there is infinite danger, that your present uncertainty of salvation will issue in an absolute certainty of your missing heaven, and falling into eternal perdition.

2. THIS shews us the *dreadful* and *amazing condition* of all those, who cannot but know, that they have never yet experienced the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God in their souls. Without breach of charity, I am afraid, that this is the state of the greatest part of this numerous audience. I would appeal to your own consciences; and summon them, in the name and fear of God, to deal impartially with you, and to determine whether this be not truly your case. And if it be, what an astonishing case is it! Do you know that you are yet in your sins, that you are under the power of Satan, under the condemnation of the law, under the wrath of the eternal God; and under a dreadful exposedness to the horrors of his infinite and eternal vengeance? Do you know, that there is but a step between you and death, between you and the fire that shall never be quenched? Do you know, if you should be suddenly snatched out of the world in your present condition, that there would be no hope, no help, no possibility of recovering your lost soul to all eternity? And can you sleep in such a state as this? Can you rest secure when you are *condemned already*, and *the wrath of God abideth on you*? What are your hearts made of! *Who hath bewitched you*, that you can thus venture upon *the thick bosses of God's buckler*? Is damnation so light a matter; that you can fearlessly rush upon it? "Can your hearts endure, or your hands be strong, when the Lord shall deal with you? O consider this, you that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces; and there be none to deliver! Awake, you that sleep; and arise from the dead, that Christ may give you light!"

3. I WOULD improve this subject by way of earnest *exhortation* to every one, to apply yourselves, with the utmost concern and industry, in all possible endeavours to obtain this *witness of the Spirit himself*, that you are the children of God.

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O my brethern, be intreated to *give diligence, to make your calling and election sure!* How much comfort and unspeakable joy would this blessed attainment afford your souls! How would it fill you with admiring and adoring views of the love of God in Christ Jesus to you! How would it quicken you in your spiritual course, mortify your corruptions, render all the ordinances of God delightful to you; all the ways of Wisdom pleasantness and all her paths peace! What safety, as well as comfort, would redound to your souls, from your being thus *sealed by the blessed Spirit, unto the day of redemption!*—Attend therefore to the following directions and advices:

1. TAKE it for granted, that this witness of the Spirit is *attainable*. Others have attained it: And why may not you, as well as others? If you do not obtain this blessed privilege, the fault must be in yourselves. Be not therefore discouraged in the attempt; but press after it with hope and unfainting expectation. God would not have made it your duty to seek the witness of your adoption, if such assurance were not to be hoped for. I am afraid, that many lose this blessed privilege and comfort, by giving up the case as hopeless, and sitting down in despair.

2. IF you would obtain this *witness of the Spirit*, strive for it in *all the ways of God's appointment*. In this case it is eminently true, that *the diligent hand maketh rich*. If you are slothful and remiss, you must expect to be dark and doubtful about your state. But *up and be doing*; and you may hope that *the Lord will be with you*. Be in earnest, attending upon all the means of grace and life; and wrestle with God, with insatiable desire and importunity, that he would *lift up the light of his countenance* upon your souls; and give you the *Spirit of adoption*. And be not discouraged, if you do not presently find success; but still *follow on to know and seek the Lord*.

3. BE constant in solemn *self-examination*. Make it a daily business to *examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith*. Search and try whether you have these gracious influences of the

the Spirit in your soul, or not. Set apart time on purpose. You will do well to take the help and assistance of some good book, that most plainly and clearly sets the genuine marks of the new creature before you; and to your self-examination join fervent prayer, that God would graciously shew you your state as it is. In this way a truly sanctified person will be like to discover that he is such.

4. BE very *watchful*. Watch over your hearts, your thoughts, and affections. Watch over your conversations. Watch over your duties. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.* Watch lest the prevalence of your corruptions, the formality of your duties, the deadness of your spirits, and the decay of your graces, intercept the light of God's countenance, and leave your souls in darkness and distress.

5. LABOUR to evidence the *truth of grace* in your hearts, by the *present exercise of it*. Thus, for instance, if you doubt the sincerity of your *repentance*, go roundly to work with your soul: Labour now to get it under the power of conviction, and a thorough humiliation: Review your sins, both of nature and practice: Confess them to God with shame and sorrow; cry for pardon and cleansing in the blood of Christ: Resolve against them, and renounce them for ever: And be importunate with him who is exalted at God's right hand for that end, that he would give you *repentance unto life*.—If you doubt the sincerity of your *faith*, endeavour now to commit your soul to Christ, to come empty-handed to him, and to depend upon him only for justification and life. Endeavour to see the fulness and sufficiency there is in him; and so cheerfully venture your soul and your eternity in his hands.—If you doubt the sincerity of your *love* to God, endeavour now to raise your affections to him; and to make it sure to yourselves that you love him, by your love to his ordinances and to his people, by your seeking communion with him, by your studying a conformity to his will, and by your imitating of him as dear children. In this road, you gain ground by going it over again.

FINALLY, *Acknowledge* the evidences of your gracious state so far as you *see* them. As, on the one hand, you should be aw-
S f fully

fully careful not to take up with false appearances and counterfeit graces, lest you be ashamed of your hope: So, on the other hand, you must take care not to deny God the glory, and yourselves the comfort, of his gracious operations in your souls. Do not conclude, by a false humility, that this *witness of the Spirit* is a privilege too great and good for you to pretend to; and that you dare not flatter yourselves with having such peculiar and distinguishing attainments: but rather let this blessed discovery inflame your souls to the highest elevations of gratitude, love, and praise; and now begin the joyful song, that shall be your eternal employment,—*To him that has loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father:*

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen:

THE
NATURE AND NECESSITY
OF
R E G E N E R A T I O N,
CONSIDERED IN A
S E R M O N

FROM JOHN iii. 3.

Preached at Newark, in New-Jersey, Jan. 19. 1743.
At the Meeting of the Presbytery there.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

Some REMARKS on a Discourse of Dr Waterland's,

ENTITLED

*Regeneration stated and explained, according to Scrip-
ture and Antiquity.*

BY JONATHAN DICKINSON, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ELISABETH-TOWN. NEW-JERSEY.

Rev. iii. 11. *Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no
man take thy crown.*

First Printed at New-York in the Year 1743.

To the READER,

THERE needs no apology for the publication of the following Sermons; the vast importance of the subject, renders a discourse of this kind always seasonable; though perhaps it may be thought by some, that no apology can be sufficient, for the ensuing remarks upon an author of so great name and character, as Dr Waterland. But as I have endeavoured to approve myself unto God, in that undertaking, I can patiently bear any of those invectives that may be expected, from the gentlemen of contrary sentiments.—I am as fully persuaded, that the cause I am defending is the cause of God, as I am that the scriptures are the word of God. If I believe the one, I must believe the other; if it be possible to understand the meaning of the most plain, familiar, and express words that can be spoken.—The souls of men are therefore nearly concerned in this matter; and the ministers of the gospel loudly called upon, vigorously to exert themselves, that they may prevent, if possible, the defection that is already begun in several parts of the land, upon account of this great article of Christianity. If this be not a sufficient reason for this undertaking, I have none to give.

I do not intend, by these remarks, merely a refutation of Dr Waterland's book, but of his principles also, by whomsoever espoused. I have therefore been larger upon some points, than would have been necessary in answer to that discourse; and either wholly passed over, or but briefly touched upon, some other very erroneous principles, that do not so immediately enter into the merits of the cause.—What I aim at is, to furnish the reader with armour from the word of God, not only against the dangerous doctrines contained in that discourse; but also against any other attack of the like kind, from any other quarter. And I hope he may be sufficiently secured, by duly attending to what is said in the following sermon and remarks.

I have thought myself called, to make these animadversions upon Dr Waterland's discourse in particular; partly because it

is industriously handed about in several parts of the country, to make profelytes; and partly because the subject is the most concisely and plausibly handled in that discourse, of any that I have met with.

I expect to be censured, for expressing so much confidence and assurance in the case before us, in opposition to men of so great name, on the other side of the question; as if I was arrogating infallibility to myself: But I have this to say in my defence, though I am far from supposing myself infallible; yet I do not think it a just reason to run into scepticism, and to doubt of the certainty of some of the plainest and most important truths in the word of God; because I am fallible and liable to mistake. I am not willing to make a compliment of such an essential article of practical godliness, upon which our eternity immediately depends, to any persons, of what name or character soever; or to appear wavering or uncertain about it, that I may avoid this censure; and bespeak the character of a modest writer.

Besides, I must either entertain this confidence and assurance, or suppose, at least, a possibility of truth, in some of the greatest absurdities in the world.—I must either be confident that I am right, or else suppose a possibility,—

1. That all the texts of scripture which I have cited, both from the Old and New Testament, with others of the like kind, which speak of being sprinkled, washed, or cleansed with water, do all immediately refer to water-baptism; or else,—

2. I must suppose, that these words in John iii. 5. and Tit. iii. 5. must be understood of water-baptism; though no other scriptures exactly parallel to them are so to be understood; and though I cannot imagine any reason from the words themselves, or from the nature of things, why it should be so.

3. I must suppose it possible, that every baptized person, has all the properties and characters ascribed to the new birth, in the scriptures, or else,—

4. I must suppose, that some persons are truly regenerate in their baptism, and will never want any other regeneration, who have not the characters given of the new birth in scripture; nor ever will have without a reformation or renovation. This I think is plainly taught by Dr Waterland (p. 30.) And this,

this, if I mistake not, is plainly to teach, that a man may be regenerate and not regenerate at the same time. These things I must suppose; or else,—

5. I must suppose, that the scriptures speak of two different kinds of regeneration, as qualifications for the kingdom of God; the one baptismal, which may be without holiness; the other a change of heart, necessarily productive of a holy life. That is, in other words, that holiness of heart and life is the necessary fruit of regeneration; and yet is not necessarily found in all that are truly regenerate.

These, and other such like absurdities, mentioned in the following discourse, I must suppose; or else I must retain my confidence, that I am not liable to mistake in the present case.—There is no other choice before me.—I have therefore chosen the safest and surest side of the question, which I hope, through the grace of God, to stand to; and, according to my poor ability, to defend, as long as I can hold a pen in my hand.

The subject has naturally led me to use the same manner of reasoning, more than once, upon different occasions, in the ensuing remarks; and I had rather be censured for using needless repetition, than to fail of giving my reader conviction of the dreadful danger of the doctrine which I oppose:

I have no favour to ask of the reader, on account of any inaccuracies in the manner of performance, or the style.—If this attempt be blessed of God, to convince poor unregenerate sinners of the infinite mischief that will follow a mistake in this great concern; and to put them upon proper solicitude, to lay such a foundation of hope, that they may finally enter into the kingdom of God; my end is obtained.—And whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I hope for acceptance from him, whose interest I have consulted, and endeavoured to promote.

THE
NATURE AND NECESSITY
OF
REGENERATION.

JOHN iii. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

THESE words were occasioned by a visit made to our blessed Saviour, by Nicodemus, a ruler among the Jews, who being convinced, by the miraculous works which Christ had wrought, that he was divinely inspired, was probably now enquiring of him the way of salvation. This answer seems therefore to be given, to obviate all his false apprehensions and vain hopes of acceptance with God, by any outward privileges or performances; and to shew him, that there must be a great change wrought in the heart of every one, that would be a partaker of the future glory. Such a change as is of the nature of a *new creation*; and may be aptly compared to being *born again*. Our Lord assures him, by a repeated asseveration, (thereby to awaken his most serious attention), that this change is so absolutely necessary, that without it, no man shall ever *see the kingdom of God*.—This doctrine was taught Nicodemus, not as a concern peculiar to himself, but as what equally referred to all men, without distinction. It therefore as much affects us as it did him, and is of the greatest import-

ance to us all, since no less than our eternal welfare depends upon it. Let us then consider,

1. What we are to understand by *the kingdom of God*, which no unregenerate man can ever see.
2. What we are to understand by being *born again*, without which we cannot see the kingdom of God.
3. Whence this change, which our Saviour here speaks of, is called a *new birth*. And,
4. Whence it is so, that the unregenerate *cannot see the kingdom of God*.

I. I am first then to consider, what we are to understand by the kingdom of God, which an unregenerate man cannot see.

I must here observe, that there is a twofold interpretation of these words, (*the kingdom of God*) according to the different sense, in which they are elsewhere used in scripture.

1. Some understand them to signify the *kingdom of grace*; or that spiritual kingdom, which our Lord was erecting here in the world. In that sense, we are to consider them as being of the same tendency, as if our blessed Saviour had said to Nicodemus, you come to me as to a *teacher sent from God*; and seem willing to become one of my disciples and followers; and to be a member of my spiritual kingdom. But I assure you this cannot be, while you remain in your present state. None can be acknowledged as real members of that spiritual and heavenly kingdom which God is now setting up, who have not experienced so great a change of heart, as may be aptly called a *new birth*.

The words being thus understood, plainly shew, that we cannot be Christians indeed, we cannot be vital members of Christ's mystical body; nor partakers of the saving benefits of his redemption, whilst unregenerate. But,

2. I chuse to understand the words of *the kingdom of glory*. And in that view, they are to be considered, as if our blessed Lord had said to Nicodemus, You seem desirous to know how you may secure a title to the heavenly glory; and it is therefore necessary immediately to inform you, that it is not your high birth, nor external privileges; it is not your conformity

to the ceremonial law; nor your acknowledging me to be a *teacher sent from God*, that will entitle you to that glory and happiness: But I would have you receive it as a most certain and important truth, that no man can ever be partaker of that glorious inheritance, except he first experience so great a change of heart and life, as will be like coming into a new world; and may be fitly compared to his being *born again*. In this sense the following scriptures are necessarily to be understood: Mark ix. 47. *It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.* Luke xiii. 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God; and you yourselves thrust out.* So likewise ver. 29. with Acts xiv. 20. and many other places.

This interpretation of these words appears most agreeable, because Nicodemus (how ignorant soever of the *new birth*), seems to have understood what our Lord meant by the *kingdom of God*; and to be affected with the danger of coming short of it. Whereas, if our blessed Saviour had spoken to him of his spiritual kingdom in this world, he could not have understood him; but would have been at as great a loss to have found out his meaning in this, as in the other part of his discourse. In this sense therefore Nicodemus did understand the words; and in this sense, our blessed Lord designed that he should understand them. For in the other sense, he could have known nothing at all of their meaning.—Besides, it was probably his concern for an interest in *the kingdom of glory* (and not of *the kingdom of grace*, which he knew so little about) that prompted Nicodemus to this conference with our blessed Saviour. To this concern, if not to some previous question about the way of salvation, our Lord accommodates his answer; and shews him the necessary qualifications for that eternal salvation, he was solicitous about.

But the consequence is the same, whether we fix upon the one, or the other of these interpretations: For they who cannot be members of *the kingdom of grace*, can never be partakers of *the kingdom of glory*. We must be qualified for that state; or utterly unqualified for this.—This awakening lesson is therefore taught us by both these explications, that without *regeneration* there can be no salvation. We must become new
creatures,

creatures, or perish eternally. An awful thought! O that it were duly considered and laid to heart, by a stupid generation of men, who live at ease and security in a state of nature, and consequently in a state of wrath and perdition! This is a thought that must have its influence upon them; either now, while they have a day of grace; or hereafter, when they experience the truth of these words, by their exclusion from *the kingdom of God*. I proceed to consider,

II. What we are to understand by being BORN AGAIN, without which we cannot see the kingdom of God.

To illustrate this point, I shall first give a general description of this important change, and then particularly consider the several branches of that description.

Regeneration is a new, spiritual, and supernatural principle; wrought by the Spirit of God in all the faculties of the soul, inclining and enabling unto the exercise of a life of faith in Christ; and new obedience to God. To be more particular—

1. I consider regeneration as being a *new principle*. And thus the scripture considers it: It is accordingly called *the seed of God*, 1 John iii. 9.; *the new man*, Col. iii. 10.; *the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 4.; and *the incorruptible seed*, 1 Pet. i. 23. All which expressions plainly signify a new principle of action.—Our original apostasy, has brought such an universal depravation upon all the faculties of the soul, that the *whole head is seek*; and *the whole heart faint*, the whole nature guilt and defilement, all the affections and passions alienated from the life of God; and *the carnal mind enmity unto him*. What therefore but corrupt streams, can flow from such a poisoned fountain? How can they that are in the flesh, ever please God? How can they that are dead in trespasses and sins, perform any vital actions? *Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries, or the vine figs? So can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh. Either make the tree good; that the fruit may be good; or the tree will be corrupt, and his fruit corrupt.* There is a natural necessity, that all the actions of an unregenerate person, should partake of the quality of those carnal sinful dispositions and affections, from whence they flow. And there is the same necessity, that we be *renewed in the spirit of our minds*; and obtain a new source and spring of action; or, as

our Lord expresseth it, *a new treasure of the heart*, in order to our living acceptably to God here, or enjoying him hereafter. — There can be no kind or degree of moral behaviour, no external acts of obedience, no appearances of piety and devotion accepted of God, while our hearts are estranged from him — *The Lord looketh on the heart*. And what is the heart of an unregenerate man? The scriptures tell us it is *deceitful above all things; and desperately wicked*, Jer. xvii. 1. Whence it is of last necessity, that *a new heart be given us; and a new spirit put within us*, in order to our *walking in God's statutes; and keeping his judgments to do them*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. It is of necessity, that we are *created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works*, if we would *walk in them*, Eph. ii. 10. It is of necessity, that *God puts his laws in our minds; and writes them in our hearts*, in order to his being our God; and *we his people*, Heb. viii. 10. — *Let no man my brethren, deceive you with vain words*. You must not only have a new external conversation; but a new vital principle, if you would be the children of God indeed. You must be *quickened, who are dead in trespasses and sins*. You must *bear the voice of the Son of God and live*; and partake of that *life, which is the light of man*. You must *put off the old man; and put on the new man, which after God, is created in knowledge and true holiness*; or else you are never like to see the kingdom of God.

2. I describe *regeneration* to be a spiritual and supernatural principle. And thus likewise doth the scripture describe it. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit*, John iii. 6. *Of his own will beget he us*, James i. 18. This change is wrought by *the exceeding greatness of his power; and according to the working of his mighty power*, Eph. i. 19. I know that there are some, that call themselves Christians, who pretend that this change is the effect of moral suasion only: and that it is only through the prevalence of outward means upon their minds, that men are excited to become new creatures, by the improvement of their natural abilities, in the exercise of moral virtues, and religious duties. That (according to them) the whole work of *regeneration* and progressive sanctification, is but the improvement of those powers, which are given in common to all that enjoy the ordinances of the gospel. Though they will in words acknowledge our want of Divine assistance, in order to this change, they seem to allow no more of the peculiar and immediate influences

fluences of the blessed Spirit, in this great concern, than in the common and ordinary occasions of life. How loath are poor proud worms, to give God the glory, of his glorious free grace and Divine operations! How willing to think well of themselves; and therefore to slight and reproach all those experiences of the Divine power upon the soul, which they themselves are unacquainted with!—But how doth the scriptures, how doth most clear and evident experience represent this case to us?—Are we not by nature spiritually *dead*? (Eph. ii. 1.) Can a dead man, by the force of any persuasion, be prevailed upon to reassume his life and vital actions? Are we not naturally *without strength*? (Rom. v. 6.) And can the force of persuasion prevail with an enfeebled cripple, or an enervated paralytic, to arise and walk? Are we not naturally *blind*? (2 Cor. iv. 4.) And can the power of persuasion enable a blind man to open his eyes and see? Are not our minds naturally, not only enemies; but *enmity* itself unto God? (Rom. viii. 7.) And can mere persuasion change all the powers, faculties, and dispositions of the mind from enmity to friendship, from hatred to love; and from an habitual opposition to godliness, unto a delight in the ways of God? Are we not naturally polluted and guilty creatures? (Rom. iii. 12.) And can any methods of mere persuasion, bring a clean thing out of an unclean; or bring a guilty rebel into an estate of innocence, or into peace and favour with God? How vain are such pretences! How inconsistent and absurd must they appear to any man, who believes the doctrine of original sin, as it is taught us by the scriptures and our own experience!—By this view of the case, we may plainly see, that there must be a supernatural and Divine energy exerted, in this *new creation*. We must be *made willig in the day of Christ's power*, (Psal. cx. 3.) *God must work in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure*, (Phil. ii. 13.) It is a great and wonderful change that *regeneration* makes, too great for all the men upon earth, or angels in heaven to effect; and is therefore ascribed to the same *mighty power, which was wrought in Christ, when he was raised from the dead*, (Eph. i. 20.)—This truth is not only confirmed to us by the word of God; but by our continued observation and experience. Do not we daily see the unsuccessfulness of all attempts to persuade men to turn and live? Do not we daily see what becomes of all

all the good purposes and resolutions, which men take up in their own strength; and wear off again as soon as the din of conscience is out of their ears? And do not we see how effectual the work proves, when God himself undertakes it? How sudden and unexpected it often is in its beginning; and how permanent in its blessed effects and fruits? How then doth it concern us all, to maintain a deep impression of our own impotence, to lie at the foot of God's sovereign grace, to ascribe the whole glory of this great work to his mere good pleasure and almighty power; and to experience this supernatural change in our hearts. For it will certainly be found in the conclusion, that none but those who are *born again*, by the special influences of supernatural omnipotent grace, shall ever *see the kingdom of God*.

3. I have considered this *new birth*, to be a principle wrought in us, by the immediate influences of God's *holy Spirit*. And thus likewise it is considered by the word of God. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, (John. iii. 5, 6, 8.) It is the Spirit that giveth life, (2 Cor. iii. 6.) We are changed into the Divine image, by the Spirit of the Lord, (2 Cor. iii. 18.)*—It is true, this work is sometimes ascribed unto the Father. *No man can come unto me, except it (the power) were given unto him of my Father, (John. vi. 5, 6.)* And it is sometimes ascribed unto the Son: *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, (Psal. cx. 3.)* And it is necessarily true, that each person in the Godhead is the author of every work of God; because each person is the same Divine nature; and therefore the same undivided principle of operation. But the order of operation among the distinct persons of the Trinity, follows the order of their subsistence. The foundation or fountain of all grace to mankind, is the love of God the Father; the meritorious or procuring cause of all grace, is Jesus Christ our Saviour; and the application of all special grace to our souls, is by the Holy Ghost.—So that when this work of *regeneration* is ascribed to the Father, we must remember that *he quickeneth us by his Spirit, Rom. viii. 7.* When it is ascribed unto the Son, we must also consider, that he works this glorious change, *by sending the comforter to convince of sin, of righteousness, and*
of

of judgment, John xvi. 7, 8. And that the whole work of our sanctification, whether initial in our *regeneration*, or progressive in the consequences and fruits of it, is by the *Holy Ghost*. *Being sanctified by the Holy Ghost*, Rom. xv. 16.

If it be enquired, in what manner the Holy Spirit operates, in procuring this change? I answer, the manner of his operations are, like his glorious nature, infinitely above us. *These things of God knoweth no man; but the Spirit of God*. But if this be considered, with respect to the influence that his operations have upon our minds, the change is wrought by illumination. *He shines into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him*, Col. iii. 10. *It is with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, that we are changed into the same image*, 2 Cor. iii. 18.—The Spirit of God dissipates the darkness and stupidity of the mind, and gives such a lively reallizing and sensible view of Divine things, as proves a principle of spiritual life and operation; and actuates all the powers and faculties of the soul, unto a conformity to God; as I have more particularly considered elsewhere. The operations therefore of the blessed Spirit, in our new creation, are, in their effects upon our souls, always sensible and discernible; and always felt by all that have them; though it be with many, the greatest difficulty to distinguish their quality; and to know whether they are, or are not of a saving efficacy.

This then is of vast concernment to every one of us, that we do experience the operations of the blessed Spirit upon our hearts: That we have such a feeling impression of our guilt, misery and impotence, as makes us reject all confidence in the flesh: That we have such a sensible view of the excellency and sufficiency of Jesus Christ, as inclines us to receive him upon his own terms; such a view of the glorious perfections of the Divine nature, as prompts us to love God above all; and to trust our souls in his merciful hands; such a discovery of the beauty of holiness, as inclines us to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness; and such a lively apprehension of the eternal world, as makes us *look not to the things which are seen and temporal; but to the things which are unseen and eternal*.—However men may deceive themselves with their re-
formations

formations and moral attainments, *if they have not the Spirit of Christ, they are none of his.*—But of this more particularly under the next head.

4. I have described *regeneration*, as being a new principle, in all the powers and faculties of the soul. Thus also is the *new creature* described in the scriptures. *Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17.—If this were considered with respect to each of the intellectual powers, it will be found that they are all become new, when this change is wrought in the soul.

Thus, with respect to the understanding, it is not only enlarged by *regeneration*; but renewed. Whence we read, 1 John v. 20. *The Son of God is come; and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him.* Implying, that we had no *understanding* whereby we could know him before. So likewise we are told, that *the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling*, Eph. i. 18. Without this illumination, *the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. There is therefore a new and Divine light shining into the soul, in *regeneration*, enabling us to see things in another manner, than we ever did or could do before; and giving us a more sensible apprehension of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the concerns of the eternal world, than we could before attain to. As I have already observed.

In consequence of this, the will is also renewed. And the person that before *saw no form nor comeliness in Christ, that he should desire him; and therefore would not come to him that he might have life*, has, by *regeneration*, such a discovery of his own necessities and Christ's excellencies, as bows his will to the obedience of Christ, to a hearty compliance with the gospel offer.—The person who before was obstinately bent upon the gratification of his lusts and idols, who *loved strange gods, and after them would go*, has, by his new birth, such a discovery of the evil of sin, as makes him renounce his lusts and idols with abhorrence; and groan after deliverance from their remaining power and tyranny. The person, who before would venture soul and body, time and eternity, rather than maintain a life of religion, and a close walk with God; has, by this wonderful

change, such a discovery of the pleasantness and peace, that are to be found in the ways of wisdom, that he prefers a life of piety and communion with God, to all the profits of the world; and pleasures of sense. Thus are we *made willing in the day of Christ's power.*

I must add, the *affections* also are renewed, when this change is wrought in the soul. They who are *risen with Christ, have their affections set upon the things that are above, where Christ Jesus sits at the right hand of God, Col. iii. 1, 2.*

They have *new desires.* Though they were before for *fulfilling the desires of the flesh*, they are now above all things desirous of the favour of God, of an interest in his Son, the graces of his Spirit: and a continued progress in faith and holiness, until made meet for the final gratification of all their desires, in the enjoyment of God for ever. It is the language of a regenerate soul, in Psa. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee.*

They have *new delights.* Though they before delighted in their lusts and pleasures, mirth and vanity, they now *delight in the law of the Lord, after the inward man, Rom. vii. 22.*

They have *new joys.* Their temporal acquisitions are no more the principal matter of their rejoicing; but they *rejoice in God's salvation; and in the hope of his glory.* This is the subject of their chiefest joy, when they find themselves in a truly joyful frame. They *rejoice in Christ Jesus, without confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3.*

They have *new hopes.* They have renounced their former vain confidences; and can no longer build their hopes upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness, religious attainments, purposes or promises; but they now hope, not from what they do or suffer for Christ, but from what he has done and suffered for them; not from their promises to him, but from his promises to them. *Christ Jesus is their hope, 1 Tim. i. 1. Christ in them is their hope of glory, Col. i. 27.*

Their appetites are renewed, that the covetous miser is no longer like the horse-leach, *crying, Give, give,* no longer eagerly seeking great things for himself; but labouring to content himself with the disposals of Providence, he is *seeking*

those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right-hand of God, (Col. iii. 1.) And thus the epicure is brought to refrain his inordinate pursuit of sensual pleasure, the drunkard to abhor his cups; and the unclean person his lascivious lusts. For *they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts*, Gal. v. 24.

Their *passions* are likewise renewed. That they no longer indulge *the fruits of the flesh, which are hatred, variance, emulations, wrath and strife*; but live in the exercise of *the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness and meekness*, Gal. v. 20, 21.

The bent and bias of their thoughts, and their habitual course of *meditation*, is changed and become *new*. They are no longer *carnally minded, which is death*; but *spiritually minded, which is life and peace*, (Rom. viii. 6.)—So great a change does regeneration always make, in the whole soul! These blessed fruits of this new vital principle, are all of them experienced, in a greater or lesser degree, by every one that is born of God. Let no man therefore delude his soul with airy dreams of a safe state, until he has had some experience of this change, in every particular instance.—What a pity it is, that any of you should *feed upon ashes*, entertain a deluded hope; and at last *be found with a lie in your right hands!*—What a pity, that you who have now such glorious advantages in your hands, should at last be shut out of the kingdom of heaven.

5. I have described *regeneration*, as a new principle, inclining and enabling the soul to the exercise of faith in Christ. And thus likewise do the scriptures consider it: *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself*, (1 John v. 1, 10.) *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God*, (John i. 12, 13.)—Faith in Christ is the first motion, or vital act of the new creature, the first grace which is exercised in the renewed soul. Though regeneration be considered, as being in order of nature previous to faith; yet in order of time, they are always together. The same time that the eyes of the soul

are opened, they look to Jesus, as the author of our eternal salvation. The same time that this new creature is formed, it lives; and acts faith in the Son of God. Whence we are said to be *created in Christ*, (Eph. ii. 10.) i. e. to be immediately united to him by faith, at our new creation. Upon this account, the *new birth* and *faith* in Christ are spoken of in scripture, as mutually implying each other.—The Divine light which shines into the soul in regeneration, not only gives a feeling apprehension of our own lost and perishing condition: But such a view of Christ's readiness to save; and his abundant fulness to supply all our wants, as constrains us to consent to the gospel offer; and encourages us to trust all our interests in his hands. This discovery, brings the soul to a hearty assent to the truth of the gospel, a cheerful consent to the terms of the gospel; and a steady reliance upon Christ, as the only foundation of our hope.—It brings the soul to receive him in all his offices; as our prophet to teach and guide us by his council; as our priest to atone for our offences, and to be our righteousness before God; as our king to sanctify our souls, and to rule and reign in our hearts.—It brings the soul to receive him, notwithstanding any difficulties that may attend the Christian life; and to submit, not only to wear his yoke; but to take up his cross and follow him.—This receiving of Christ unites us to him, as the branch is united to the vine. Whence, by a vital union to this stock, we receive future supplies of life and nourishment from him; and are enabled to live in the exercise of all the graces of the Spirit of God; and to *glorify our heavenly Father, by bringing forth much fruit*. By these new supplies received from Christ, the believer *walks by faith; and not by sight*, (2 Cor. v. 7.) *And the life which he now lives in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God*, Gal. ii. 20.

Thus it appears to be of last consequence to every one, to have this witness in himself, that he is born of God. For *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 5. *He that believes not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16.—With what solemn care and sollicitude should we then see to it, that we build our eternal hope upon no other foundation than the Lord Jesus Christ, that we fly for refuge to this hope set before us, that we heartily comply with the offer he makes of himself and his saving be-

nefits; and are found in him, not having on our own righteousness which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: It will be amazing beyond all apprehension, to be found among unbelievers in the day of Christ; and with them to be shut out of the kingdom of God.

6. I consider *regeneration* as a principle of *new obedience* to God. And thus likewise doth the scriptures consider it: *He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as he is pure,* (1 John iii. 3.) *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God,* (verse 9.)—It is a false and groundless calumny, to represent this doctrine under consideration, or the professors of it, as opening a door to licentiousness, or *encouraging men to sin, that grace may abound.* The case is quite otherwise. And this principle of which I speak, is a continued source of vital piety, a living fountain of holiness both in heart and life. He that is born of God, hates every false way, maintains a strict watch over his affections, appetites, passions, words and actions, cuts off his right hand and foot; and plucks out his right eye, when they offend him, maintains no reserve of secret and darling lusts; but abhors and rejects them all, and groans under the burthen of his remaining corruptions, with such language as that, (Rom. vii. 24.) *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*

He that is truly regenerate, watches at Christ's gates; and waits at the posts of his doors. He conscientiously endeavours to be found in a sincere and acceptable performance of every known duty; and to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. For he has inclined his heart to keep God's statutes always, even unto the end, Psal. cxix. 112.

He that is born of God, is of a kind, charitable, forgiving and beneficial spirit towards his neighbour; and has a peculiar love of complacency to all, of whatever denomination, that appear to be the children of God. *By this we know, that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death,* 1 John. iii. 14.

He that is born again, is a man of strictest justice and honesty, in all his dealings, and will by no temptation be led into the practice of violence, or known fraud and deceit towards his

his neighbour; knowing that *God is the avenger of all such*,
1 Theff. iv. 6.

He that is *born again*, endeavours to fill up every relation, with duty; and to demean himself in each station he sustains, whether sacred, civil, or domestic; and in each circumstance of life, whether superior, inferior, or equal, as becomes the excellent religion he professes; and the vocation by which he is called.—In a word, he *herein exercises himself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God; and towards man*, (Acts xxiv. 16.)—It is true, there will a great deal of sinful imperfection accompany his highest attainments; but this is his grief and burthen. This is what he neither does, nor can approve and indulge.

These, my brethen, are the characters of every child of God; and they who have them not, whatever pretences they may make to religion, whatever progress they may make in shews of devotion, whatever internal experiences they may pretend to, are yet in a state of death; and heirs of eternal destruction and misery. For *whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God; nor he that loveth not his brother*, 1 John iii. 10.—From whence it appears, with the strongest evidence, that without these marks of the regenerate state, *you cannot see the kingdom of God*.—I now proceed to consider,

III. Whence it is, that the change under consideration is called a *new birth*; or a being *born again*. To illustrate this, I shall briefly take notice of a few particulars, wherein the propriety of this mode of speaking will evidently appear.

1. It may be called a *new birth*, because it brings a person into a new state of existence. As the birth of an infant brings it into a new world; and into a state in every respect altogether new: So, in the case before us, *regeneration* is the renewal of the whole soul; and therefore brings a man, in all spiritual respects, into a new kind or state of being. On this account, it is called in scripture the *new creature*; or the *new man*. Not that we are to suppose, there is hereby given us any other powers or faculties of the soul, than we had before; but that those powers which we had before, are made spiritually new. It is not a natural; but a moral and spiritual new
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birth. He that was before in a state of guilt, has now, by *regeneration*, his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience. He that was before under the damning sentence of the law, shall now no more enter into condemnation. He that was before a child of wrath, is now at peace with God; and made nigh by the blood of Christ. He that was before altogether pollution and defilement, is now washed and sanctified, in the name of our Lord Jesus; and by the Spirit of our God. And, in fine, He that before was of his father the devil, is now a child of God; and belongs to his household and family. O blessed change! Blessed are they of the Lord, who are the subjects of it! This is coming into a new world indeed; and may well be called being *born again*.

2. It may be called a *new birth*, as it brings a person into a new capacity for spiritual action. As the birth of a child gives it the power to exercise the proper functions of life; and enables it to breathe, to cry, to eat and drink, to move; and successively, in their time and order, to perform the several operations for which it was made: So this *new birth* (as I have already observed) gives us a capacity to exercise the several graces; and to perform, in a spiritual manner, the several duties of the Christian life. Whilst unrenewed, we are no more capable of the exercise of grace, than the child unborn is of natural operations. *Without me* (says Christ) *ye can do nothing*, (John xv. 5.) But when regenerate and united to Christ, we can act from a new principle, from new motives, in a new manner, and to a new end; and are enabled to *walk in newness of life*, (Rom. vi. 4.) Whence we are said to be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, (Eph. ii. 10.) Our works before could not please God, (Heb. xi. 6.) But now they are *accepted in the beloved*, (Eph. i. 6.) Thus then we are *born again*, as we are brought, *through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience*, (as 1 Pet. i. 2.)

3. It is called a *new birth*, as it makes us heirs of an eternal inheritance. As the king's eldest son is born an heir to his crown: So as soon as we are *children we are heirs: heirs of God; and joint-heirs with Christ*, (Rom. viii. 17.) thus are we said to be *begotten* (or as it is in the original, *to be born*) again, *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away*, (1 Pet. i. 3.)—O how great is the dignity, how glo-

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rious the privilege and hope, of all that have experienced this change! *Beloved, now we are the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,* 1 John iii. 2.

4. This change may be called a *new birth*, with respect to its instantaneous production. As it is true in every moment of time, that a child either is, or is not born: So it is equally true, in every moment of a man's life, that he is either in a regenerate, or in an unregenerate state. Whatever opposition this may meet with in the world, there can be no demonstration in Euclid more evident than this truth. It is impossible but that every man in the world, must always, every moment of his life, be either converted or unconverted, a believer or an unbeliever, a child of God or a child of the devil. There is no medium. And one of these is certainly, at this instant, the state and condition of every one of my hearers. *Ye are not in the flesh; but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. But if ye have not the Spirit of Christ, ye are none of his,* Rom. viii. 9.

5. It may be called the *new birth*, with respect to our being altogether passive in its production. As the infant has no hand at all, no manner of agency or efficiency, in his own birth: So in the present case, though we have a great deal to do, that we may be found in the way, in which we may hope to have this change wrought in us; yet the change itself is God's own immediate efficiency, the display of his almighty power, in which we can have no active concurrence. As in the creation of the world, the creature could have no hand in giving being to itself: So in *regeneration*, we can have no hand in making ourselves *new creatures*. This demands our most serious attention; and should have such an influence upon our minds, as will bring us to the foot of God's sovereign grace. For let poor potsherds of the earth, contend as much as they will with their Maker, they will yet find it true, that *it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth; but in God that sheweth mercy,* Rom. ix. 16.—I am now,

IV. To give the reasons why it is so, that the *unregenerate cannot see the kingdom of God*. And I shall briefly observe,
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That it is so, in an especial manner, for these two reasons following:

1. Because these can have no righteousness to justify them in the sight of God. They have no faith in Christ; and are therefore *condemned already*, John iii. 18. And how can they atone for their innumerable sins; and expiate the mountainous load of guilt that lies upon their souls? How can they procure the favour of God; and get into an estate of reconciliation and friendship with him? How can they purchase a title to the eternal inheritance? There is sin enough cleaves to their best duties, to increase their debt to Divine justice; and to widen the breach between God and them. All they can do, is therefore very far from purchasing the favour of God; or giving them a claim to his salvation. There is nothing can answer the demands of justice, but the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ; and this they have no interest in. They have not received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith; and therefore can have no power to become the sons of God. They consequently remain (and while unregenerate they must remain) in a state of enmity to God. And will God admit his enemies into his kingdom? No! such as these are to expect that terrible sentence, from the mouth of their Judge, Luke xix. 27. *Those mine enemies, that would not I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.*

2. Because they are utterly unqualified for that glorious kingdom. That is a kingdom, where *no unclean thing shall enter*. What has a swine from a miry sty, to do in a prince's palace, or a more filthy and polluted soul in the palace of the King of kings?—God is a holy God, heaven is a holy place, the saints and angels are forever exercised there in the most holy employments. There is therefore no room for unrenewed and un sanctified souls.—Besides, the unregenerate are altogether incapable of the blessedness of the heavenly world. There is nothing there to gratify their carnal desires: Nothing, but what is so contrary to the dispositions of their souls, that it would render them miserable if it were attainable. We must therefore all of us be renewed, and become holy in heart and life, if we would ever be admitted to the perfection of holiness, in the kingdom of God. For the decree will quickly

bring forth. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still,* Rev. xxii. 11.

I now proceed to make some practical reflections, upon what has been said. And,

1. This administers matter of conviction, and of most awakening concern, to much the greatest part of the professing world, in that it is visibly and undoubtedly true, that there are but few of the numerous professors of Christianity, that have ever entered into this straight gate which leads to the kingdom of God. There are but few among those who enjoy the greatest privileges, and entertain enlarged hopes of salvation, that have been *born again*, and thereby *made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light*. As this is true of the gospelized world in general, so may it be presumed to be also true with respect to those who are now here before the Lord. And can such of you, my brethren, enjoy peace and security, who are yet in such a state and condition, as to be under the guilt of sin, the wrath of God, the tyranny of Satan, and the empire of death and hell!—I have shewn you the nature and necessity of the *new birth*. I have proved the whole to you from that standard of all truth, *the word of God*. I have not been pleading for a sect or party. *I have not handled the word of God deceitfully*; but have endeavoured *the manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God*. And now I can with confidence testify to you, that the *new birth*, which I have described, is *the true grace of God, in which you must stand*.—The doctrine I know is exceeding repugnant to mens carnal minds; and therefore meets with greatest opposition. But it is the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, a doctrine which he will vindicate when you and I must stand before his tribunal. Well then, dear souls! consider what prospect you have of the heavenly inheritance. You hope to be saved. But have you experienced the *new birth*, as it has been described to you? I summon your consciences, in the name and fear of God, to give an impartial answer to this demand. You have heard the several properties and characters of this saving change. Now then look into your own hearts, and see if you can find them there. If not, how dreadful is your state, how exceeding great is the danger of your being shut out of the kingdom of heaven for ever! And can

you still *sleep upon the top of the mast of a ship!* Can you still *cry, Peace, peace, when sudden destruction is ready to come upon you, as travail upon a woman with child, whence you cannot escape!* Be *astonished, O ye heavens, at the security and stupidity of such a generation as this!* *What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon the Lord, if so be that God will think upon thee, that thou perish not!* *Awake thou that sleepest; and arise from the dead, that Christ may give thee light,* Eph. v. 14.

2. This shews us the dreadful mischief of being misguided by a deceitful ministry; and thereby obtaining hopes of heaven, without this saving change, which is (by the verdict of our Lord himself) of the last necessity to all, that would ever attain to that blessed inheritance. The last perilous times are come, wherein *many false prophets are gone out into the world.*—What opposition does the faithful preaching of this most important doctrine meet with, even from those who, by the most sacred bonds, are set for the defence of it. What danger appears before us from our formal Laodiceans, who would quiet mens consciences with a mere form of godliness, without the power. And some of these would even put poor sleepy sinners into a vain dream of their having already received a *baptismal regeneration*; and thence encourage their hopes of a safe state, merely from their morality, or (as it is expressed by a late author) from there being upon the improving hand, in gaining ground of their vices and passions. And thus, the necessity of the converting and the renewing influences of the blessed Spirit; and of a vital union to Christ by faith, begins to be left out of our creed; and sinners are flattered with an imagination of safety, without experiencing either the one or the other. But with respect to such teachers as these, I must warn you in the apostle's language, 2 Tim. iii. 5. *From such turn away.*

Beware of any preachers or books that ascribe any sufficiency to yourselves; or that would lessen your apprehensions of your lost, undone, guilty, perishing, impotent, and helpless state by nature.—For you are *by nature children of wrath,* Eph. ii. 3. You are *all under sin,* Rom. ii. 9.; and *all without strength,* Rom. v. 6. And you must *humble yourselves* under a deep sense of this, *if you would be exalted,* Luke xviii. 14.

Beware of any teachers that would lessen your apprehensions

signs of the freeness and sovereignty of the Divine grace. For God is absolutely sovereign in the donation of his own favours; and if he bestows special grace upon any, it is *even because it so seemed good in his sight*, Matth. xi. 26. And you must come to a feeling sense that you lie at his mercy, before you have this great change wrought in you.

Beware of those teachers that speak against; and especially those that ridicule and banter experimental religion. For the change I am treating of is a sensible change (as I have observed before), and the operations of the Spirit of God are sensible operations. And you must therefore never content yourselves (lest you delude your souls with a vain hope), until you have sensible discoveries of Christ's sufficiency; and of your hearty compliance with the gospel-offer, until you experience the fruits of the blessed Spirit in your heart and life; and until your *experience begetteth hope*, Rom. v. 4.; and you *thereby know that he abideth in you, by the Spirit which he hath given you*, 1 John iii. 24.—It is from compassion to your precious souls, that I give you warning of these things; and testify to you, that (let men say what they will) your eternal interests are immediately concerned. And this you must be convinced of first or last.

You may perhaps object, that you are prejudiced against these doctrines by some pretenders to them, who seem to place their religion in certain degrees of heat and flame, in imaginary impulses, raptures, and extasies; who seem to *think highly of themselves, and to despise others*; and who are in the practice of such a censorious judging of others, as is directly repugnant to the rules of the gospel.

I wish there were no grounds for this complaint. It must be acknowledged and lamented, that there has been too much of this kind among us, that has given an occasion to the adversaries of special grace to triumph. It seems very much owing to this, that, instead of the joyful tidings which we have lately had, of many *enquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards, our souls are now exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease; and with the contempt of the proud*.—But is this a reasonable objection against the doctrines you have heard? Will you reject the doctrines because men have abused them? Because some, influenced by a warm ima-

gination, have run into one extreme, will you run into the other, to your eternal perdition?—*I beseech you, brethren, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled by any attempts of the little foxes that spoil the vines. Let no man beguile you of your reward, neither by frustrating the grace of God, as if righteousness came by the law; and so Christ is dead in vain: nor by intruding into those things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind.*

3. Here is matter of comfort and encouragement to those who have experienced this great change; and have, by the power of Divine grace, been *renewed in the Spirit of their minds*. These are the persons who shall *see the kingdom of God*. What reason have they therefore to *live to the praise of the glory of his grace, whereby they are accepted in the beloved*. You know, my dear brethren, that there has a great change passed upon your souls; and you cannot but acknowledge, that you have had some experience of all those characters of a regenerate state, which you have heard the description of; though perhaps you may yet meet with difficulties in your way, that make you doubt your state, and walk in darkness.

You may be surpris'd with a review, of the greatness and aggravations of your past sins. But have you not sincerely mourned for them all, and renounced them without reserve? Cannot you truly say, that they are the matter of your greatest abhorrence; and that you would not commit them again for all the world? Do not you long and groan after a deliverance from sin?—Do then that honour to the Redeemer's blood, as to depend upon it for cleansing from all your sins. Do that honour to God's infinite grace, as to depend upon it, that *where your sins have abounded, his grace shall abound much more*, 1 John i. 7. Rom. v. 20.

You may be afraid, whether you have saving interest in Christ. But have you not felt your lost perishing condition? Have you not earnestly desired an interest in Christ? Have you not seen, that there is safety in him and no where else? Have you not rejected every other confidence; and endeavoured to commit your souls to him? Trust then, with cheerfulness and courage, to his gracious promise, that he *will in no wise cast you out*. Clear up your doubts by a present consent to the
gospel

gospel-offer, and a steady dependance upon him for salvation: For *his grace is sufficient for you*, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

You may be surprized with your remaining disallowed corruptions and imperfections. But are not these your greatest burthen; what you watch, strive, and pray against? Let them then humble, but not discourage you: For you have *an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*, 1 John ii. 1.

You may be greatly discouraged with the deadness, formality, and distraction, that you sometimes find in your duties. But do not you also sometimes find the comforts of communion with God; earnestly desire and endeavour it, when you cannot obtain it; and groan under the burthen of your formality and hypocrisy, when you cannot help them? Remember then, that your duties, as well as your souls, are washed in precious blood; and being offered upon the *golden altar*, they will *come up as incense before God*, Rev. viii. 3, 4.

Be animated by all your difficulties to greater *diligence*, in *making your calling and election sure*. Give glory to God for the graces of his Spirit, which you have experienced. Let your experience keep up your hope, and consider it as the pledge and earnest of your future inheritance.

4. I conclude with a word of exhortation to every one, to make it their great care and business, not to *fail of the grace of God*; lest, to their unspeakable confusion, they at last fall short of his kingdom and glory.—What arguments can I use to press this momentous concern upon you? You have heard that you must experience this change, or inevitably perish. And can you be fearless and careless under such a dreadful prospect? Can you be contented to be shut out of the kingdom of heaven at last? Can you be contented to have all the means of grace you enjoy, and all your opportunities to make your peace with God, prove an addition to your guilt and future misery? Can you be contented to see your neighbours and acquaintance, who have lived under the same advantages and means of grace with you, *sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God*; and you yourselves *shut out*? Can you be contented to have the nearest and dearest godly friends you have in the world, glorify God's justice in your eternal ruin, while you are weltring in the unquenchable flames; Can you be contented to lose the blessed society of the

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the glorious God, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the holy angels, and of glorified saints, for the execrable company of the devil and his angels?—*Consider these things, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces when there will be none to deliver.*—Well! my poor unregenerate friends, what conclusion will you come to? Must I, after all I can say, find you at the left hand of Christ at last?—I would fain hope, that I may prevail with some of you to come to a present resolution, to *fly for refuge to the hope set before you.*

Let me then intreat you, to realize your misery and danger. Set apart some time every day to meditate upon the vast number and aggravations of your sins, the dreadful weight of your guilt, the terrible wrath of an angry God, which hangs over your heads; and the amazing eternity which you are hastening into. Meditate these things, till they excite in you a serious, earnest, and lasting enquiry after an escape from the wrath to come. For indeed, poor souls, *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,* Heb. x. 31.

Let me intreat you to give up your false *hope*. You hope to be saved; but how many are there that either know no reason of their hope, or else build their expectations upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness. But why will you hold fast that hope which must end in eternal despair, if it be a little longer entertained.—There is no *hope* will stand by you, but what is built upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and the infinite riches of God's free grace and love. And you have no claim to this hope without an interest in Christ by faith, and access to the grace of God through him: For it is *Christ in you, that is your hope of glory,* Col. i. 27. *And you must, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith,* Gal. v. 5.

Let me nevertheless intreat you to strive in earnest, in the use of all means; and not to give way to desponding and despairing apprehensions of your case. There is yet hope in Israel concerning this thing. I am not advising you to give up all *hope* of salvation, when directing you to renounce your false *hope*; but only to quit your expectations of salvation in your present state; and from your own attainments. Despair would be the greatest dishonour to God, and ruin to your own souls, that you can be chargeable with. Take encouragement

couragement therefore, to exercise the most earnest, active, and vigorous application to the throne of grace, in all the appointed means of life: For *he that ploweth, may plow in hope*. You have as much encouragement to hope for mercy in such a way of duty, as any unconverted man in the world ever had. None of these ever had any other refuge to fly to but the free grace of God in Christ, and that door stands open for you also. *Strive therefore to enter in: For God hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain*, Isa. xlv. 19.

Let me intreat you to be earnest with God, for the special influences of his blessed Spirit. Cry earnestly and constantly to God, that he would fulfil the good pleasure of his goodness in your souls. You cannot procure a saving change in yourselves; and it is in vain to attempt it in your own strength. Be therefore importunate with God, that he will *quicken you by his Spirit dwelling in you*, as Rom. viii. 11.

To conclude, Look to it that you do not take up your rest short of a sensible experience of the Divine life in your souls. Do not content yourselves, till you feel the actings of faith in Jesus Christ, a hatred of sin, a love to God and godliness, a life of spiritual mindedness; and the comforts of communion and fellowship with God. Do not rest till you have lively views of the eternal world, and an active engagement of soul in the pursuit of it. Do not rest until you get more and more victory over your corruptions, and more and more delight and enlargement in your spiritual course. Thus, *laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you, run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.—To him be glory and dominion for ever.* Amen.

R E M A R K S

ON A DISCOURSE OF DR WATERLAND'S,

ENTITLED

Regeneration stated and explained, according to Scripture and Antiquity.

HAVING, in the preceding sermon, something distinctly considered the nature and necessity of Regeneration, there will be no occasion to take particular notice of all that is exceptionable in Dr Waterland's discourse upon that subject. I shall therefore endeavour no more than briefly to shew in the general, that the foundation upon which he builds his hypothesis is false and deceitful; that his doctrines are erroneous and dangerous, and his arguments weak and inconclusive. For this is sufficient to rescue those from the perilous delusion who have a just value for their immortal souls, without making any special remarks upon many particular errors, strongly asserted, without any other evidence than the great name and character of the author.

The discourse I am considering is the substance of two sermons, preached from Tit. iii. 5. *Not by works of righteousness, which we have done; but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

The Dr interprets *the washing (or laver) of regeneration in this text, of water-baptism, as (he tells us) the ancients always did; and the rules of true criticism require, (p. 2.)*; and understands *this latter part of the text to be nearly parallel to those words of our Lord, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, (p. 4.)*

In considering this case, I shall first give my reasons why I cannot understand either of these texts of a baptismal regeneration; and then proceed to shew, that, if they are to be understood as referring to water-baptism, they will prove no foundation

dation for the doctrines Dr Waterland pretends to build upon them.

To begin with that in Tit. iii. 5. Why may not the *washing of regeneration* be here understood of the first conversion of a sinner, whereby he is (as it were in a laver) cleansed from the former pollution and defilement of his sins; and the *renewing of the Holy Ghost* be understood of a progressive sanctification; or else the latter clause be considered as exegetical of the former, shewing us, that *the washing-of regeneration* is by the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*? The Dr tells us that *the rules of true criticism require*, that it should be otherwise understood. But certain it is, that the rules of true criticism do not require that numerous places of scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New, parallel to the words before us, should be understood in the sense he pleads for: But, on the contrary, make it necessary that they must be understood in the view which I now propose. To exemplify this, that text in Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. must necessarily be understood according to my interpretation of the words under consideration; and cannot, by any rational and modest construction, be forced into the Dr's scheme. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and make you clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them."—In these words it is plainly visible, that by *sprinkling with clean water* must be understood the first change made by conversion and regeneration; that change by which *a new heart is given*, and *a new spirit put within* the happy recipients of it; and *the stony heart taken out of their flesh*, and *a heart of flesh given them*. This then is *the washing of regeneration*. And is not God's "putting his Spirit within them; and causing them to walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments and do them," a progressive work of sanctification; or *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*?—I cannot see any appearance of reason why those words, in Tit. iii. 5. may not be interpreted, as these so apparently parallel to them must be interpreted.—If indeed this were the only place in scrip-

ture, where *washing* with water, and the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, were to be understood in the sense I plead for, the case were more disputable; but a distinct view of this matter will plainly shew us, that the like phraseology has this constant and invariable meaning throughout the bible. Thus, for instance, in Isa. xlv. 3. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Isa. lii. 15. "So shall he sprinkle many nations." Psal. li. 7, 10. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." John xiii. 8. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." 1 Cor. vi. 11. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Heb. x. 22. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Many other texts to the same purpose might be cited; but it is needless to enlarge.

If it be required, why this metaphor of sprinkling or washing with water is so constantly used to represent our *regeneration*, or that new principle whereby we are brought to the exercise of faith in Christ, and to a life of holiness, I answer, There is such a lively resemblance between the washing away our external defilement with water, and the purifying our hearts from internal pollution by faith in the blood of Christ, as renders this way of speaking most pertinent, plain, and familiar. And accordingly, the apostle, in the ninth chapter to the Hebrews, particularly shews us, that all the legal purifications among the Jews were types and prefigurations of the blood of Christ, by which (when received by faith) *our consciences are purged from dead works to serve the living God*.

Another reason why I cannot understand the Doctor's text in the sense which he pleads for is, because *regeneration*, or the *new birth*, is so very often spoken of in scripture, without any reference to water-baptism; and consequently ought in like manner to be understood in the words before us. Thus John i. 13. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Gal. iv. 29. "But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." 1 Pet. i. 23. "Being

“ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.” 1 John iii. 9. “ Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1 John v. 4, 18. “ For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world.—We know that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not.” In all which texts, where the *new birth* is expressly mentioned, there is not the least appearance of any reference to water-baptism. And this will further appear to be the case, if we take notice of several passages of scripture, where the same thing is spoken of in different terms. For instance, To be *begotten of God* gives us the very same idea with *regeneration*, or the *new birth*; and is not only used in the very same sense, but is the very same word in the original, wherever it occurs. 1 John v. 18. “ We know, that whosoever is born of God, sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” 1 Pet. i. 3. “ Hath begotten us again to a lively hope.” Jam. 1. 18. “ Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.” 1 John v. 1. “ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him that is begotten of him.”—It must also be allowed, that those texts of scripture which speak of our being *created anew*, or becoming *new creatures*, or *new men*, must signify the very same thing with being *born again*, or *born of God*, since both the one and the other are metaphors used to the same purpose, with a design to represent our being brought into a new state, as then (in a spiritual sense) beginning to exist, or to have life. And if all such passages of scripture were distinctly considered, not one of them will be found to have the least reference to *baptism*. To exemplify this—We read, 2 Cor. v. 17. “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” Gal. vi. 15. “ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but the new creature.” Eph. ii. 10. “ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Col. iii. 10. “ And have put on the new-man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.”

Now, upon this view of the case what manner of reason can be assigned, why the *washing of regeneration* must signify *baptism*? Must it be so, because the word *washing*, or *laver*, must be literally understood, and necessarily carries the idea of *water* in it? We find, by many instances of the like use of the same way of speaking in scripture, that this conclusion can by no means be justified. This expression therefore, must not be taken in a literal, but in a metaphorical and spiritual sense. —Must it be so, because the nature of the thing does suppose and require this interpretation? This supposal also appears to have no foundation, as has been fully and clearly exemplified. —If therefore it be a good rule to interpret scripture by scripture; if we are ordinarily to find out the meaning of a particular text of scripture, by the constant and invariable use of the same manner of diction in other parts of the bible, this notion of a *baptismal regeneration* has no foundation at all in the word of God.

If we should proceed to compare the characters of the new birth, in those scripture passages which I have cited, with Dr Waterland's account of it, we shall find still further evidence of his misinterpretation of the text in question. For instance,

To be *born of God*, in the scripture account of it, implies that vital principle whereby we are enabled to believe in Jesus Christ: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, "is born of God," 1 John v. 1. But, in Dr Waterland's account of it, a man may be regenerated, *who receives baptism (like Simon Magus suppose) in hypocrisy or impenitency; when pardon and grace, and all gospel privileges, are conditionally made over to them, tho' not actually applied, by reason of their disqualifications,* (from p. 27. to p. 30)—That is, in plain terms, he may be regenerated without any actual application of any of the saving graces of the Spirit of God. And, on the other hand, faith in Jesus Christ is (according to him) so far from being an evidence of regeneration, that a man may have faith in Christ before he is born of God. *Preventing grace* (says he) *must go before, to work in the man faith and repentance, which are qualifications previous to baptism.* These he calls *the first and lowest degrees of renovation,* (p. 13.) He again tells us, that *an adult, coming to baptism fitly prepared by*
faith

faith and repentance; and afterwards persevering to the end— He is not yet (before baptism) buried with Christ into death, nor planted in the likeness of his resurrection; nor indeed clothed with the baptismal garment; and therefore, in strictness, he is not a member of Christ, nor a child of God, (p. 20, 22.)

In the scripture account of regeneration, “whoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not,” 1 John iii. 9, 18. But, in the Dr’s account, a man that is regenerated may be so far from having the seed of God REMAIN in him, and from keeping himself, that the wicked one shall not touch him, that *he may revolt from God, either for a time or for ever, (p. 12.)*

In the scripture account of *regeneration*, it is wrought in the soul by the word of God, as the ordinary means by which we are brought into the new life. “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth,” Jam. i. 18. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God,” 1 Pet. i. 23. But in the Dr’s account of it, *the Holy Spirit, in and by the use of water-baptism, causes the new birth, (p. 3.)*

Moreover, from the scripture account of this change, the happy partaker of it lives a life of holiness and new obedience. “He sinneth not. He overcometh the world. He lives in the love of God and his brethren. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. He is created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that he should walk in them;” as appears from the texts before cited. But, on the contrary, the Dr supposeth that *the regenerate may finally fall from grace, (p. 18. in the margin.)* And that such as have been savingly regenerated may *fall away by desertion and disobedience; and that a person once savingly regenerated may afterwards lose all the salutary use of it, (p. 26.)* And that those may be regenerated *who receive baptism (like Simon Magus suppose) in hypocrisy and impenitency, (p. 27.)*

The Reader is now to judge which of these two representations of the case is right, and to chuse which of them he will believe. Whether the scripture account, which declares all believers

believers in Christ to be *born of God*, or the Dr's account of this matter, who supposeth a man may be *born of God* without faith in Christ, and that a man may have faith and repentance before he is *born again*; the scripture account, which represents *regeneration* as an abiding principle, or the Dr's, which supposes the regenerate may revolt from God, either for a time, or for ever. He may chuse whether he will believe the scripture representation, that the word of God is the ordinary means of *regeneration*, or the Dr's supposal, that this is wrought by *baptism* only: the scripture representation, that the regenerate are a holy people, or the Dr's supposal, that they may be apostates, hypocrites, and impenitent. He must judge whether this be not sufficient evidence, that the Dr *knew not what he said, nor whereof he affirmed*; that he has laid his foundation upon the sand, and that his superstructure must necessarily sink with it.

Upon the whole then, We may safely conclude, that the *washing of regeneration* in the Dr's text, does not, cannot signify *baptism*; because wherever the like methods of speaking are found in scripture, they necessarily have a quite different meaning; because *regeneration* is so often mentioned in scripture, without the least reference to *water-baptism*; and because the characters which the scripture gives, and those which the Dr gives of the new birth, are directly opposite and inconsistent.

Since I wrote this, I happened occasionally to meet with Dr Doddridge's excellent sermons on *regeneration*; and finding there a paragraph most apposite to the present purpose, I could not forbear transcribing it. "Now I have shewn you (says he) "from a variety of scriptures, under the former heads, that "every one whom the sacred oracles represent as *born of God*, "receiveth Christ, overcometh the world, and sinneth not. "But it is too plain that these characters do not agree to every "one that is baptized; and consequently it evidently follows, "that every one that is baptized is not of course born of God "or regenerate; and therefore, that baptism is not scripture re- "generation. I think no mathematical demonstration plainer, "or more certain than this conclusion. And therefore, what- "ever great and ancient names may be urged on the other side "of the question, I shall rest the matter here, without lead-
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“ing you into the nicities of a controversy so easily decided.”

I now proceed to consider, whether our blessed Lord speaks of a *baptismal regeneration* in John iii. 5.—And here it must be premised, that all the reasons already assigned, why the other text cannot be understood in this sense, are equally conclusive in the present case. All the scriptures, which I have cited, do as directly serve to illustrate the meaning of this, as of the other text. And all the scripture characters of the new birth, are as applicable here as they be there. To be “born of water, and of the Spirit,” is the same thing, with “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;” and as I have made it appear, that the latter does not signify a *baptismal regeneration*; it thence also appears, that the former can have no such signification. I shall however consider some further reasons, why “being born of water and the Spirit” cannot be understood in the sense the Dr contends for.

1. If being born with water in this text signifies baptism, then there are none in any case whatsoever, who die unbaptized, that shall ever obtain salvation. The exclusion of all who are not “born of water and of the Spirit,” is peremptory, and without any limitation. Our Lord strongly asserts, that these “cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” And now, will any of the Dr’s admirers venture to teach, that all infants who die in the womb, at the birth, or at any time before there be opportunity to obtain the ordinance of baptism for them, will be eternally shut out of the kingdom of heaven? Will they venture to teach, that such adults as are truly penitent for their sins, and true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall eternally perish for being providentially deprived of the opportunity of being baptized? Will they venture to teach, that every unbaptized person whatsoever, under whatever disadvantages of education, in whatever place of abode Providence has fixed his habitation, how impossible soever it may be for him to obtain this ordinance, shall not, notwithstanding the sincerity of his repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and notwithstanding his holy and heavenly conversation, and hearty desire of baptism, be eternally shut out of the presence of God.—And yet this cruel and uncharitable doctrine, is the necessary consequence of their interpretation

interpretation of this text. But, blessed be God, these are not the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ. He teaches us indeed, that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mark xvi. 16. But the negative part of that proposition is limited to the unbeliever only. "He that believes not shall be damned." Though he makes no promise of salvation to the despiser, or wilful neglecter of this ordinance; yet he does not denounce damnation to all who are necessarily deprived of this precious privilege.—And accordingly, the apostle Peter instructs us, that it is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh," by the water of baptism, "that saveth," 1 Pet. iii. 21. It cannot therefore be the want of this, without contempt or neglect, that will damn us.—From these considerations, we may then safely and certainly conclude, that the text does not speak of a baptismal regeneration; the consequence of such an interpretation being too frightful and unmerciful to be allowed or supposed.

2. Another reason against assigning this meaning to the words before us is, our Saviour's upbraiding Nicodemus for his ignorance of these things. *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* ver. 10.—What things does our Saviour mean?—Does he upbraid him for not knowing the necessity of his compliance with the gospel ordinance of baptism; and his being regenerated by the Spirit, in the use of that ordinance? How should a master in Israel know these things, which he had never read or heard of before?—This therefore cannot be our Lord's meaning. But, if we allow the construction of these words which I am pleading for, the reproof will appear most natural and reasonable. It was indeed a shame for a master in Israel to be ignorant of that birth of water and of the Spirit, which is so often spoken of by the prophets. It was a shame for Nicodemus to be ignorant of the necessity of being sprinkled with clean water, and made clean; of having God's Spirit put within him, that he might walk in God's statutes, and keep his judgments and do them.

Dr Waterland seems to have been apprehensive of this objection; and, in order to obviate it, tells us, that *the name, or the notion, probably was not altogether new in our Lord's time. For the Jews had been used to admit converts from heathenism into the Jewish church, by a baptism of their own; and they*

called admission or reception of such converts, by the name of regeneration or new birth, as it was something like bringing them into a new world, (p. 5.)

He does not indeed tell us what it is that he founds this conjecture of his upon, that we also might judge whether the name or the notion was probably not altogether new in our Lord's time. But admit that this was not only probably but certainly fact, what is it to the purpose? For how could a master in Israel know, that because heathens were washed with water, when admitted as converts from heathenism into the Jewish church, that therefore a Jew must be baptized, in order to his entering into the kingdom of heaven? How could he know that our blessed Lord would *improve the notion* (as Dr Waterland says he did) *by the addition of the Spirit; and enlarge the use of the rite, by ordering that every one, every convert to Christianity, every candidate for heaven, should be baptized?* (p. 7.) It is plain, that his being a master in Israel, would acquaint him with none of these things; and therefore, that this could not be our Lord's meaning, if we allow any propriety in this his reproof of Nicodemus.

3. Another reason why this text cannot be understood as signifying a baptismal regeneration is, our Lord's interpretation of his meaning, in the sixth verse of this context, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Whereby he plainly shews us, that it was a spiritual birth he spake of; and they were spiritual persons who had obtained it. Now, could Dr Waterland pretend, that all who were baptized, and so (according to his construction of the debated text,) were *born of water and of the Spirit*, were truly spiritual persons? No! he could not but acknowledge, that there are some of these (like Simon Magus) in a state of hypocrisy and impenitency. And it is visibly and lamentably true, that the far greatest part of the baptized, who (according to him) are all *born of water and of the Spirit*, have no claim at all to the character of spiritual persons.

These things put together, make it appear to me, equal to demonstration, that our Lord Jesus Christ had no reference to baptism in these words under consideration. We may not suppose that he positively pronounced all such incapable of the kingdom of God, who are, by his holy providence, denied

the opportunity of enjoying baptism.—We are certain, that he would not upbraid Nicodemus for his ignorance of what it is impossible he should have been acquainted with.—We are certain, that all baptized persons are not truly spiritual; and yet our Lord assures us, that the birth he speaks of has that transforming efficacy upon those that experience it, as to make them all such.—These texts are therefore safe in our hands, notwithstanding all endeavours to wrest them from us. And these two which I have now considered, are the only texts in the bible, which can, with any appearance of plausibility, be urged in favour of the Dr's hypothesis. How many there be that do, in the strongest terms, contradict this scheme has been already considered.

But after all, should we allow that both these texts have a reference to baptism. Should we allow, that being *born of water* and *the washing of regeneration* are to be understood of baptism. These texts will prove no foundation for the doctrines which Dr Waterland, and the episcopal clergy among us (who seem generally to be of his way of thinking) pretend to build upon them.

Be it then supposed, that the ordinance of baptism is here referred to, in both these texts, it can in neither of them imply any more, than the pledge, sign, seal, or token of our regeneration. It cannot imply that regeneration itself always accompanies this ordinance; and that all who are *baptized* are *born again*. If we allow this sense of the words, we thereby suppose, that to *born of water* is to receive baptism as a pledge or sign of our being cleansed from our pollution, by the divine influences of the Spirit of God, and of our thereby becoming new creatures, and as it were born a-new. And thus baptism may be called the *laver of regeneration*, as it is a pledge and sign of our being cleansed by regeneration, as it were in a laver. In both cases, the sign must be (by this interpretation of the words) put for the thing signified, as being a lively emblem and representation thereof.—This is a way of speaking commonly and frequently used in scripture. Thus we read of the covenant of circumcision, Acts vii. 8.; *i. e.* that covenant, whereof circumcision was a sign and seal. Thus likewise we read of Christ our passover, 1 Cor. v. 7.; *i. e.* Christ the substance and antitype, signified and represented by
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the passover. Thus we also read of the circumcision of the heart in the Spirit; *i. e.* that renovation of heart by the Spirit, whereof circumcision was the sign and seal. In like manner, our Lord Jesus Christ is called *the Lamb of God, our sacrifice, &c.* to shew us, that all the legal oblations referred to, and terminated in him. And if the texts before us have any relation at all to baptism, they must be understood in this sense, and no other, for the following reasons:

1. Because there is no necessary connection between *baptism*, and our being *born of the Spirit*.—Simon Magus was rightly and duly baptized, and yet had *no part or lot in that matter*; but was *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity*, Acts viii. 21, 23. I have already shewn, that the characters of the new birth belong to but very few of the baptized world. All discourse therefore of a spiritual birth, with relation to these who live and die in a carnal state, is but a medley of inconsistency and contradiction.—Should we suppose, with Dr Waterland (p. 28, 22.), that *the Holy Spirit has, some way or other, a hand in every true and valid baptism*; that *the Holy Spirit is in some sort offered to all that receive Christian baptism*; that *the Holy Spirit consecrates and sanctifies the waters of baptism, giving them an outward and relative holiness*; and that *the unworthy are by their baptism put into an external Christian state*. What is all this to their being born of the Spirit? What is this to those characters of the *new birth*, that have been particularly recited from the sacred oracles? *Baptism* cannot therefore be the *new birth*; because it is a fact, too notorious to be disputed, that the most of those who are *baptized* were never *born of the Spirit* at all, never had any of the characters of a regenerate state; and consequently, this ordinance can be no more than the sign, pledge, or seal of *regeneration*.

2. *Regeneration* is an act of God's sovereign grace; the product of his mere good pleasure and Almighty power. Whatever means he is pleased to make use of, in bringing about this blessed change, yet the change itself is by his own immediate agency, without the help of any other concurring cause in its production: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born

“of the Spirit,” John. iii. 8. We are “born, not of the will of man, but of God,” John i. 13. “Of his own will begat he us,” Jam. i. 18. We are “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” Eph. ii. 10. No man then can have more agency in the *new birth*, than in the generation of the wind, the execution of the divine will, or the creation of a new world. This Dr Waterland acknowledges—*No man (says he) regenerates himself at all, that is, he has no part in the regenerating act (which is entirely God’s) whatever he may have in the receptive. And if in this sense only it be said, that he be purely passive, it is good and sound doctrine,* (p. 17.) I therefore insist upon it, that this good and sound doctrine does utterly subvert his whole scheme. If man can have no hand in the regenerating act, but that is entirely God’s; and man can have a hand in *baptism*, it is then certain that *baptism* is not the regenerating act, nor can, in any sense, be called *regeneration*; but as it is an outward sign, seal, or token of it. I see no possibility of an answer to this, but either by retracting the Dr’s concession now cited, and endeavouring to prove, directly contrary to the above cited scriptures, that *regeneration* is not an act of God’s prerogative and sovereignty; and that man may concur, and have a hand in it. Or else, by endeavouring to prove that man does not concur, and has no hand at all in the administration of *baptism*; but this also is God’s peculiar prerogative, and a work of his immediate power. Here then the matter must rest.

It will not at all help the case, to say, with Dr Waterland, that *the unworthy are by their baptism put into a Christian state, otherwise they would be mere Pagans still,* (p. 29.) If this be granted, what follows? What necessary connection is there between a visible and external Christian state, and *regeneration*? None at all, as I have particularly shewn before. And I now enquire, how they are brought into the Christian state? Are they *God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*? Are they *born, not of the will of man but of God*? No! they are yet unrenewed—They are yet in *hypocrisy and impenitency*. They have had no more than a change of their external relation—A change that depends upon the will of man; and how then can they be properly said to be *born again*? How can their *baptism* be any more than an external sign,

sign, or seal of that spiritual change which they have had no experience of.

What is the regenerating act, according to the Dr, *with respect to God almighty, but admission or adoption into sonship, or spiritual citizenship?* (p. 11.) And what is this adoption or sonship, with respect to a great part of those that partake of it, but the *consecration of the waters of baptism, to an outward and relative holiness, and a consecration of the persons also, in an outward and relative sense, whether good or bad, by a sacred dedication of them to the worship and service of the whole Trinity*; by which they are brought into an external Christian state, (p. 28, 29.) This is all the regeneration that the Dr himself supposes, with respect to a great part of the baptized world. And all this does (upon his scheme) depend upon the will of man: For it is what always accompanies every true and valid baptism, though administered to the hypocrite, impenitent, and unworthy, as appears from his 28th, 29th, and 30th pages. And consequently, this regenerating act is always as much at the choice of every man, good or bad, as it is at his choice whether he will, or will not be baptized.

In a word, The regenerating act (upon this hypothesis) is nothing but *baptism* itself. For it enters into the definition of *baptism*, that the *water have an outward relative holiness*; and that the baptized person be brought into an external *Christian state*. The outward consecration of the water, and the administration of the ordinance, in the name of the sacred Trinity, necessarily imply both these things. The whole question therefore is, whether man does, or does not concur in the ordinance of baptism.—The *Holy Spirit* (he tells us) *has a hand in every valid baptism*. What hand? None at all in the case before us, but to make the ordinance valid. There is no real change wrought in such an impenitent hypocrite. No relative change, but what he may chuse or refuse at pleasure.

I cannot forbear taking notice, upon this occasion, of a manifest blunder and contradiction in the Doctor's scheme. *Regeneration* (he tells us) *is the work of the Spirit in the use of water, that is the work of the Spirit singly; for water does nothing, is no agent at all,* (p. 16.) *It is a change from the state natural into the state spiritual, a translation from the curse of Adam into the grace of Christ,* (p. 11.) And again, *the Holy Spirit*

Spirit translates them (infants) out of a state of nature, to which a curse belongs, into a state of grace, favour, and blessing; this is their regeneration, (p. 24.) And yet those adults may be regenerated, who have never had any work of the Spirit upon their hearts, never been translated into the grace of Christ; but are yet in *hypocrisy and impenitency, (p. 27.)* And those infants may be regenerated, where renovation has no place at all for the time being, (p. 13.); and consequently, they are not translated at all into a state of grace, favour, and blessing.—He again tells us, that in the case of adults, regeneration and renovation must go together, otherwise the regeneration is not a salutary, nor a complete regeneration, (p. 19.) And yet (as I have so often observed) he allows, and endeavours to prove, that such adults as have been baptized are *born of water and of the Spirit*, though they have no renovation at all, but are in a state of *hypocrisy and impenitency*.—His admirers would have done well to have reconciled these contradictions, before they had been so active in propagating his dangerous doctrines.

3. I will add this further evidence to the point before us, that the apostle assures us, that “neither circumcision avail-
 “eth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but the new creature,” Gal. vi. 15. By which it appears, that, notwithstanding the enjoyment of any ordinances, the *new creature* or the *new birth* may be wanting, and our privileges avail us nothing at all. The same thing is confirmed by the Apostle Peter, with respect to baptism in particular, 1 Pet. iii. 21. “The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not
 “the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a
 “good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus
 “Christ.” That is, as one of the greatest divines that our nation has ever bred* has paraphrased these words, “The
 “outward administration of this ordinance, considered materi-
 “ally, reacheth no further but to the washing away the filth
 “of the flesh, but more is signified thereby. There is deno-
 “ted in it, the stipulation of a good conscience toward God,
 “by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; or a conscience
 “purged from dead works to serve the living God, Heb. ix.
 “14. And quickened, by virtue of his resurrection, to holy
 “obedience,” see Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. By these texts it is
 evident,

* Dr Ower, Pneumatologic, p. 120.

evident, that *baptism* is not the *new creature*; and that it saves us only as it is a pledge and sign of a renewed conscience, and of our being quickened, by virtue of Christ's resurrection, unto newness of life. Or, in other words, it is not properly in any respect *regeneration* itself, but the outward sign, pledge, or token of it. Which was the thing to be proved.

By what has been said, I think it is clearly manifest, that if these texts under consideration are even allowed to have a reference unto *baptism*, this cannot be supposed in any other sense, than as *baptism* is an outward sign, seal, pledge, or token of *regeneration*; and not properly in any respect the *new birth* itself. For how can that, strictly speaking, be the new birth, or any part of it, which is enjoyed by multitudes who have no one scripture character of the regenerate state? How can a person be said to "be born, not of the will of man but of God, to be God's workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus;" and to be born of God's mere good will and pleasure by this ordinance, which depends upon the will and pleasure of man? How can *baptism*, in strictness and propriety of speech, be the *new creature*, when we may enjoy all ordinances without being *new creatures*? How can *baptism* in itself avail to our *regeneration*, when no ordinance will avail any thing without regeneration, or the new creature? How can the washing away the filth of the flesh be regeneration, without what is signified thereby; a renewed conscience, and a conformity to the resurrection of Christ in a renovation of our lives? I must needs say, they are bold enough who dare venture their eternity upon the Dr's scheme, after such evidence as this against it.

Thus I have given my reasons against the Dr's interpretation of these scriptures; and must now attend to what he has to say in favour of it.

His principal argument for this construction of the words is this, *One thing is certain, that the ancients took in baptism into their notion of regeneration. A learned writer has proved at large, that both the Greek and Latin fathers, not only used that word for baptism; but so appropriated it also to baptism, as to exclude any other conversion or repentance not considered with baptism, from being signified by that name, (p. 8.)*

To which I answer, That though I do not pretend to vie with the

the Dr in the knowledge of antiquity ; yet I cannot but presume, from what little acquaintance I have with the doctrines of the ancients, that they generally understood these texts to signify *regeneration* in no other sense than I have now last explained them. And what strengthens my presumption is, that some of his own quotations plainly carry this sense with them ; and particularly that from St Augustine, whom he has cited in confirmation of his doctrine,* expressly shews us his sense of this matter, that *the water* (of baptism) *externally shews forth the sacrament of grace ; and the Spirit internally operates the benefit of it.*—The fathers, some of them, did indeed (as was their usual method of speaking) use very strong and hyperbolical expressions upon this subject, which would almost lead one into the apprehension, that they held even the Popish opinion of the necessity of the sacraments, and of their conferring grace *ex opere operato*, by their own proper virtue. But then, when we find them on set purpose declaring their sentiments of this matter, denying the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation ; and calling baptism *obsignatio fidei*, and *sigillum fidei*, *the sign and seal of faith*, one would hope to have found a key to these rhetorical flourishes †.

But it signifies but very little, what was the opinion of the fathers in this case. We have the bible as well as they, and as good advantages to understand the meaning of it as they had. And it is as well known, by all that are any thing acquainted with antiquity, that they held many such ridiculous opinions as would now expose a man to the contempt and scorn of the world, if he should make a profession of them. To exemplify this, in an instance something parallel to the case before us. Some of them explained that text, John. vi. 53. “ Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,” to be understood of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper ; and thence argued the necessity of infants partaking of that ordinance in order to their salvation ; and they accordingly fed them with the consecrated

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elements.

* *Aqua igitur, exhibens forinfecus sacramentum gratiæ, et Spiritus operans intrinfecus beneficium gratiæ, solvens vinculum culpæ, reconcilians bonum nature, regenerant hominem in uno Christo, ex uno Adamo generatum.*

† *Vide Willot’s Synoptis Baptismi. From p. 556. forward.*

elements. “Sine Christi carne et sanguine, (saith St Augustine*) nec parvuli vitam habere possunt, in semetipsis. “Without the flesh and blood of Christ, neither can infants have “life in themselves.” And thence it was the custom of those times to give that sacrament unto infants, as the same father tells us. “Parvulis adhuc et infirmis, stillantur quædam de “sacramentis †. Some part of the sacrament is instilled or “dropt into the mouths of young and tender children.”—I would now ask the Dr’s admirers, whether this argument from the fathers is good and conclusive? If not, why is it urged? If it be, why do not they administer the Lord’s supper to infants? Why are the fathers pressed into their service when they think they will serve their turn, and rejected when they differ in sentiments from them?

Another argument the Dr uses, to support his interpretation of these scriptures, is this, That *there is no instance, no example in scripture, of any exhortation made to Christians to be born anew, but to be reformed only, or renewed in the inward man,* (p. 32.)

To this I answer, That one good reason why there is no more exhortations found in the New Testament unto professed Christians to obtain a regenerate state, or to be born again, is, because they to whom the books in the New Testament were immediately directed, were considered by the inspired writers as being generally Christians indeed, who had already experienced, and therefore could not now want a first conversion unto God. And it is observable, that the apostles, in their epistles to the churches, addressed them as being truly regenerate; and accordingly, they directed their epistles “to the “beloved of God, called to be saints,” Rom. i. 7. “To them “that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,” 1 Cor. i. 2. “To all the saints which are in all Achaia,” 2 Cor. i. 1. “To the saints which are at Ephesus,” Eph. i. 1. “To the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi,” Phil. i. 1. “To the saints and faithful brethren in “Christ, which are at Colosse,” Col. i. 2. “To the church “of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father, and in the “Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Thes. i. 1. “To the elect, according to the foreknowledge of God,” 1 Pet. i. 2. “To them

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* See Cont. 2 Epist. Prelog. Lib. 4.

† c. 4. in Psal. 64.

“that have obtained the like precious faith with us,” 1 Pet. i. 1. &c. It is remarkable, that the apostle Paul, in his introduction to every one of his epistles to particular churches, salutes them as saints, his epistle to the Galatians only excepted. Of these Galatians “he was afraid, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain,” Gal. iv. 11. “He stood in doubt of them,” verse 20. For these therefore he “travailed in birth again, till Christ were formed in them,” verse 19.; or until they were *born again*, which is the fruit of travailing in birth, and the plain meaning of having *Christ formed in them*. Here then is a clear instance of the necessity of regeneration in professed Christians, whatever Dr Waterland alledges to the contrary. I grant, indeed, with him, that *this is not favourable to the notion of a second regeneration*, (p. 33.) But it is favourable to the notion of the necessity of a first *regeneration*, even in nominal Christians; and shews the apostles concern for such, that they might now be *born again*, since he was afraid his former travail in birth for them had proved in vain.

And I must further observe, that though the apostles, in their epistles to the churches, considered them as Christians, yet they frequently put them in mind of the importance of their being so indeed, as well as in profession; and to that end represented to them the necessity of the *new birth*, either in express terms, or in words that fully implied it. Thus, Eph. iv. 24. “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Eph. v. 14. “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.” 2 Cor. v. 17. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” Gal. vi. 15. “In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but the new creature.” In all which texts, the *new man*, a *resurrection from the dead*, or the *new creature* (expressions every way synonymous to the *new birth*, as I have shewn above) are proposed, as necessary to our eternal safety. And the same necessity of the *new birth* to professed Christians, is apparent from sundry texts of scripture before cited. For it is by this that such get a victory over their sins, 1 John iii. 9. By this that they are brought to believe in Jesus Christ, 1 John v. 1.; to live in the love of God and their neighbour, 1 John iv. 7.; to overcome the world, 1 John v. 4.; to conquer

quer the temptations of Satan, 1 John v. 18.; and, in a word, by this they have a lively hope of future glory, 1 Pet. i. 3. By all which we may see, that the Dr's observation is founded upon a manifest mistake, is false in fact, and would have been impertinent, if never so true.—To conclude this head, Does not our blessed Lord himself, in as strong terms as can be spoken, assure us, that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?” John iii. 3. But he spoke this to Nicodemus, and *Nicodemus was a Jew*, (p. 14.) What then? Was it spoken to Nicodemus only? Are not the words an indefinite and unlimited proposition, which equally respects the whole race of mankind, without any restriction, exception, or limitation? Certainly there is none will find himself exempted, when it comes to the great decisive trial, by whatever imaginations he may at present delude himself.

It may be expected, that I should say something to the distinctions the Dr makes between *regeneration* and *renovation*. But it is sufficient in general to observe, that if the notion of a *baptismal regeneration*, be a mere figment, without any scripture foundation at all (as I think I have clearly proved), then all the distinctions which he makes, with relation to a *baptismal regeneration*, are but distinctions about a non-entity; and therefore merely fictitious impertinencies.

To this I shall only add, that though it were right to suppose that the *renovation* in his text implies a progressive work of sanctification, as well as to suppose this to be different from the new birth, or first saving change, it will no ways follow, that regeneration is not also a saving renovation; but even this supposal makes it necessarily appear to be so. We are renewed by being born again; and from this new principle (put into exercise by the Spirit of God) flows a continued renovation or sanctification. “The new man is after God created in righteousness and true holiness,” Eph. iv. 24. And thence it is, that “he that is born of God sinneth not, and cannot sin;” but “purifieth himself as God is pure; because this seed of God remaineth in him.”

I shall pass over the many exceptionable passages in this discourse, leaving the reader to determine the fate of the superstructure, by the foundation upon which it is built, which I hope he has by this time a pretty full and clear view of. And

so I shall proceed to some brief remarks upon some part of the improvement he makes of the doctrine, which has been considered.

He begins with this reflection, *that it is very improper language at least, to call upon those that have been once regenerated in their infancy, who have had their new birth already at the font, to be now regenerated, or to bid them expect a new birth,* (p. 31, 32.) But is it so very improper language, to call upon those to be now regenerated, who have neither been regenerated in their infancy, nor in any succeeding part of their lives, who have indeed enjoyed the sign and seal of regeneration at their baptism, but are strangers to the thing signified; and are yet dead in trespasses and sins?—That this is the sad case of much the greatest part of professing Christians, is but too visible from the whole tenor of their lives and conversations. And must we leave them to go on securely in the paths of destruction and death? Must we not call upon them to “awake out of their sleep, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give them light?” Must we, in a scornful manner, be told, that *such application might properly be directed to Jews, Turks, Pagans, or such nominal Christians as have cast off their water-baptism,* (p. 31.) How much does it concern the ministers of the gospel, the more earnestly and constantly to use *line upon line, and precept upon precept,* to inculcate this most important point upon their people, when such attempts are made to lull them asleep, in a dangerous and fatal security. And how much does it concern our people in general, to “hold fast the faithful word, as they have been taught:” and to “be no more children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,” to the loss of their precious and immortal souls.

The Dr *proceeds, in the next place, to observe, how very mischievous it is many ways* (to call upon professed Christians to be regenerated), *and therefore, that it cannot be looked upon as a mere verbal business, or an innocent misnomer.* To which it is sufficient answer, that this is the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, as I think I have fully proved; and therefore, whatever mischievous consequences men may pretend to draw from it, the mischief does not flow from the doctrine itself, but from the abuse of it.

Among some other instances of the mischievous consequences,

ces, which he imagines from this doctrine, he mentions, and chiefly insists upon this, *that many—may be apt to go in quest of what they call impulses or inward feelings of the Spirit, which commonly are nothing more than warm fancies, towering imaginations, and self-flattering presumptions,* (p. 36.)

If by feelings of the Spirit, he means feeling or sensibly discerning the operations of our minds, excited by the influences of the Spirit, this is so far from being a warm fancy, or towering imagination, that it is necessarily experienced by every true Christian. It is impossible, from the nature of things, to be otherwise. Can a man possibly be under conviction of sin, under the exercise of repentance for sin, of faith in Christ, of love to God, or of spiritual mindedness, and not be sensible of these operations of his own mind? And does not the scripture expressly ascribe all these gracious exercises of the mind to the influences of the Spirit of God? So that all the graces of the Spirit of God, wrought in the heart of an adult person, are always sensibly felt, though the quality of them are not always distinctly known. And I must add, that no one that has a true love either to his God or to his own soul, will be bantered out of the necessity of experimental piety, by opprobrious invectives, and reproachful characters; but will “be-
“ware that no man spoil him, through philosophy and vain
“deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the
“world, and not after Christ.”

But if by impulses and feelings of the Spirit, be intended raptures, extasies, visions, and enthusiastic inspirations. I leave all pretenders to these things, to the Dr's discipline, and only add a paragraph or two out of Dr Owen upon this head*.
“The work of the Holy Spirit (says he) in regeneration,
“doth not consist in enthusiastic raptures, extasies, voices, or
“any thing of the like kind. It may be, some such things
“have been, by some deluded persons, apprehended, or pre-
“tended to; but the countenancing any such imaginations, is
“falsely and industriously charged on them, who maintain the
“powerful and effectual work of the Holy Spirit, in our re-
“generation.” And again, “such apprehensions, for the most
“part, are either conceptions of distempered minds and dis-
“composed fancies, or delusions of Satan, transforming him-
“self

* Pneumatologia, p. 186, 188.

“felf into an angel of light, which the doctrine of regeneration ought not to be accountable for.”

That Dr Waterland may do his buſineſs effectually, he next proceeds to enter a caveat againſt *the marks and tokens of regeneration*. *Thoſe* (ſays he) *that firſt began to talk in this way (and who have long been dead) might be pious and well-meaning men, but they were not very happy in the uſe of their terms, or in the choice of their marks,* (p. 42.) Theſe marks, he tells us, *may be prudently thrown aſide, as human invention.*—But who were theſe pious well-meaning men, whoſe ignorance the Dr complains of, but the moſt eminent of the reformed clergy, in the early and pureſt times of the Reformation? Happy had it been for the church of England, if all her ſucceeding clergy had as well underſtood, and as faithfully taught the marks of a regenerate ſtate, as many of thoſe excellent men did, which he thus complains of.—Into what a ſad and languiſhing ſtate is practical godlineſs reduced in that church, where ſuch doctrines as this paſs current, and the marks of converſion are conſidered as *having a tendency to perplex ſome, and to deceive others; and therefore prudently to be thrown aſide, as things of human invention,* (p. 43.)—What! are theſe of human invention? How then does the Dr bring in our bleſſed Lord and the apoſtle Paul, as giving the marks of a converted ſtate, (p. 43, 44.) And why does the Dr himſelf run into the practice of theſe things of human invention, by giving marks of *a renewed heart and mind? What marks* (ſaith he) *ſhould a man pitch upon to ſatisfy himſelf in that caſe, but a good conſcience? Or what marks to ſatisfy others, but a good life? And again, if we ſincerely endeavour to do the beſt we can, and are daily gaining ground of our vices and our paſſions, and finding ourſelves, after the ſtricteſt examination, to be upon the improving hand, then may we comfortably believe, that our regeneration abides ſalutary and entire, and that we are in a ſtate of ſalvation,* (p. 44.)—Why (I ſay) did the Dr practice theſe things of human invention? The reaſon probably was, that he thought himſelf ſecure, from *perplexing ſome, or deceiving others,* by ſuch marks as theſe. And indeed there is no reaſon to fear his giving any perplexity to the conſciences of ſecure finners, by ſuch an opiate. But oh that there was as little reaſon to fear his deceiving multitudes of poor unregenerate creatures,

to their eternal ruin!—Here is a mark, by which a man may conclude himself *in a state of salvation*, without having ever been *wearry and heavy laden* with his sins; though it is such whom Christ invites to *come to him for rest*, Mat. xi. 28. Without feeling himself sick, though it is such to whom Christ is the physician, Mat. ix. 12. Without any repentance for his sins, though they *who do not repent shall surely perish*, Luke xiii. 3. Without any true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, tho' *he that believes not shall be damned*, Mark xvi. 16. Without any humility, or sense of their unworthiness and impotence, though *God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble*, Jam. iv. 6. Without any *spiritual mindedness*, though that be necessary to *life and peace*, Rom. viii. 6. Without a victory over the world, though *they that love the world and the things of the world, cannot have the love of the Father in them*, 1 John ii. 15. Without any *love to the brethren*, or the children of God, though *by this we are to know that we are passed from death to life*, 1 John iii. 14. Without a careful attendance upon the duties and ordinances of religion, though we are directed thus to seek, if we would find, and knock if we would have the door opened, Mat. vii. 7, 8. Without having old things pass away, and every thing become new; though all that are in Christ Jesus, are thus new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 17. And, in a word, without having *Christ in him*, which every one must have, *except he be a reprobate*, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. All that is proposed, is to be daily gaining ground of our vices and of our passions, and in this to be upon the improving hand.—If this be a sufficient mark of safety, why may not all the moral heathen be in a state of salvation, as well as such pretenders to Christianity? They have in this the better of them, that they are unbaptized, whereas these, by their empty profession, daily break through all the bonds of their baptismal covenant, and thereby greatly aggravate their guilt and misery.—It infinitely concerns all the professors of Christianity to see to it, that they have better evidences of a saving conversion to God than this comes to, otherwise, however they are daubed with untempered mortar at present, they will not stand the trial of the great day. It will in that day be found what they have got by it, who are deserting our communion, through prejudices conceived against the doctrines of special grace, and
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the necessity of *regeneration*, in order to their future safety ; and have joined themselves to another, where they seem to hope they shall find a wider gate, and a broader way to eternal life. Pity it is, that such as these cannot foresee the consequence of their dangerous mistake, before it is too late. In order to this, let them seriously reflect upon the the following *corollaries* from what has been said :

Coroll. 1. It appears from the foregoing discourse, that the *regeneration* described in scripture, and the *regeneration* described by some of our episcopal clergy, are two distinct things, which differ specifically, and are directly repugnant in their nature and properties.—This is not a distant and far fetched consequence, but what naturally and necessarily flows from the premises, and may be received with as full assurance as we can have in any case whatsoever. I know men may wrangle perpetually; and, by the power of words, make the most desparate case look something plausible. But I know also, that as contradictions can never be reconciled, so it is impossible, in the present case, to make the *regeneration* described by some of our episcopal clergy, to be the same with that described in scripture, without making it appear on both parts true, that all who are born of God are true believers ; and some that are born of God may *neither have faith nor repentance* ; that all who are born of God do not sin, and cannot sin ; and some who are born of God may be *in impenitency and hypocrisy* ; that all who are born of God may have his seed remaining in them, that they cannot sin ; and some that are born of God may not have his seed remain in them, but *may finally fall from grace*, with sundry more inconsistencies, before considered particularly. This then is no longer a matter of speculation, but of utmost certainty, that they mean one thing and the scripture another by *regeneration* ; and that these are as much two things, and as truly distinct and different, as any two things in the world.

Coroll. 2. From hence it further appears, that we *cannot see the kingdom of God*, in consequence of these principles espoused by some of our episcopal clergy. How harsh soever the consequence may be supposed, it is nevertheless infallibly certain.

Our Lord assures us, that without regeneration we *cannot see the kingdom of God*.

What these gentleman call *regeneration*, is not the *new birth*

which our blessed Saviour means, and which the scripture describes; and therefore not the new birth, by which we must be prepared for the kingdom of God, and without which we can never enter into it, as I have fully proved.

Their principles teach, that there is no other *regeneration* necessary, than what they describe as above.

The scripture teaches us, that the properties and characters of that *regeneration*, which is absolutely necessary in order to our entering into the kingdom of God, are essentially distinct and different from the properties and characters of that regeneration which they describe; whence it necessarily follows, that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God in consequence of their principles.

By this it appears of what consequence it is to be set right in this matter.—I would not be here misunderstood, as though I determine all such incapable of the kingdom of God, who hold the doctrine which I oppose. No! I doubt not but some of these may have experienced in their hearts, what they oppose in their heads; and be practically acquainted with what they are in speculation prejudiced against. But these must get to heaven, in a way very distant from their principles, under the dreadful disadvantage of a powerful bias to incline them the wrong way.

Coroll. 3. It thence also further appears, how much safer it is for our people to hold fast the form of sound words which they have heard, in this important point, than to venture upon a change to these schemes of our episcopal clergy.—It must be observed, that I am not now speaking of the discipline or ceremonies of the Church of England, whatever objections may lie against them; but of this great article of our faith and hope, which is thus subverted by some of their clergy.—Were it possible they should be in the right, our profession is nevertheless safe. We are baptized, in obedience to our Lord's command, as well as they, and have therefore as fair a claim to *baptismal regeneration* as they can have; and are besides seeking for *regeneration*, distinct from *baptism*, to qualify us for the kingdom of God. Here then can be no danger, if we act up to our principles, and experience what we judge necessary to our salvation. But then, if our sentiments are right, (which I hope by this time I have a claim to suppose) what will be

come of them, who have no other, and who seek no other, than a *baptismal regeneration* to qualify them for the kingdom of God.

Thus I have made some brief remarks, upon what I esteemed of the most dangerous tendency in Dr Waterland's discourse of *regeneration*, hoping, that by the Divine blessing, it may be of some usefulness, for reclaiming some who have been too soon led away from their steadfastness; for establishing others in the faith once delivered to the saints; and for impressing upon the minds of our people in general, the last necessity of their experiencing a greater change, than the most of them have yet experienced, if they would ever enter into the kingdom of God.

A DISPLAY OF GOD'S SPECIAL GRACE.

I N

A FAMILIAR DIALOGUE,

BETWEEN

A MINISTER AND A GENTLEMAN OF HIS CON-
GREGATION,

ABOUT

The Work of God, in the Conviction and Conversion of Sin-
ners, so remarkably of late begun, and going on in these
American parts.

WHEREIN

The objections against some *uncommon appearances* amongst us
are distinctly considered, Mistakes rectified, and the Work
itself particularly proved to be from the HOLY SPIRIT.

WITH

An Addition, in a second Conference, relating to fundry An-
tinomian principles, beginning to obtain in some places.

BY JONATHAN DICKINSON, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ELISABETH-TOWN, NEW-JERSEY.

First Printed at Philadelphia, in the Year 1743.

THE ATTESTATION.

HE must be a *stranger in Israel*, who has not heard of the uncommon religious appearances in the several parts of this land, among persons of all ages and characters.

This is an affair which has in some degree drawn every one's attention, and been the subject of much debate both in conversation and writing. And the grand question is,—*Whether it be a work of God, and how far it is so?*

The most serious and judicious, both ministers and Christians, have looked upon it to be, *in the main*, a genuine work of God, and the effect of that effusion of the Spirit of grace, which the faithful have been praying, hoping, longing, and waiting for; while, at the same time, they have looked upon some circumstances attending it, to be from natural temper, human weakness, or the subtlety and malice of Satan permitted to counter-act this Divine operation.

But here rightly to distinguish is a matter of no small difficulty; and requires both a scriptural knowledge of, and an experimental acquaintance with *the things of the Spirit of God*.

Mr Edwards' discourse, concerning *the distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God*, has met with deserved acceptance, and been of great use.—The following performance, by another Dear and Reverend Brother in a different part of the country, is also, in our opinion, exceeding well adapted to serve the same design, *viz.* to help people to judge of the present work, whether and how far it is of God; and to remove those prejudices, which may keep them from owning it to the honour of God, and from coming under the power of it to their own salvation.

Here the reader will see the ordinary work of the Spirit of grace, in applying the redemption purchased by Christ to particular souls, judiciously described, in several distinct parts of it, *conviction, conversion, and consolation*: The necessity of regeneration and faith in order to final salvation, and the necessity of conviction and humiliation in order to these, clearly evinced
from

from the reason and nature of the thing, as well as the method God has established in his word: Mistakes, which might prove fatal and undoing, carefully guarded against: And very safe and suitable directions given to one who is awakened to that enquiry, *What must I do to be saved?*—

Whoever takes up this book and reads, has as it were in his hands a *glass*, in which he may behold what manner of person he is; whether a natural or renewed man, a hypocrite or a found believer.

The form in which it appears is *dialoguesical*; in the manner of a conversation carried on by persons under borrowed names; which makes it not the less pleasant, entertaining, and instructive. It is a method the best suited of any to answer the design: For this way of instruction is the most easy and familiar; engages the attention more closely, strikes the mind more directly, and gets the nearest access to conscience; which the reader will easily discern to be the special aim of the Author, whose name would have been a sufficient recommendation of the work, had he thought it proper to have prefixed it to a performance of this kind.

But in the want of that, as many of us as have had the pleasure to read it in manuscript, do, with freedom and satisfaction, recommend it to those into whose hands it may come; and them to the blessed influences of the Divine Spirit in the reading of it. And if particular persons, while they are reading it, would as it were place themselves in the room of the *Inquirer*, in the conversation thus represented, with an open mind and a serious disposition, the important things which are the subject of it, might, by the blessing of Christ, be brought so close and home to them, as to put them into something of a like frame with that which the two disciples were in, while they conversed with the risen Saviour in their way to Emmaus, who said afterwards one to another, “did not our hearts
“ burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and
“ while he opened to us the scriptures?”

And, in recommending this book to the world, we would be understood as owning, and bearing a public testimony to what is called the present work of God in this land, as it is here stated and distinguished (separate from those disorders, errors, and delusions, which are only the unhappy accidents
sometimes

sometimes accompanying it), to be such a glorious display of the Divine power and grace, as may well raise our wonder, excite our praises, and engage our prayers for the preservation and progress of it.

May the children of God then unite in that prayer, *Let thy work appear more and more unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!*

Boston, Aug. 10. 1742.

BENJAMIN COLEMAN.

JOSEPH SEWALL.

THOMAS PRINCE.

JOHN WEBB.

WILLIAM COOPER.

THOMAS FOXCROFT.

JOSHUA GEE.

A PREFATORY ATTESTATION.

WE, whose names are under written, with pleasure embrace the present occasion, to give a joint and public testimony to the reality and truth of the late revival of religion in this land; or to what is called generally and justly the *work of God*.

If any should enquire what we mean by the work of God? We think the judicious Author of the following Dialogue, has given a plain and pertinent answer to this enquiry, which we declare our high approbation of.

A work of conviction and conversion spread not long since in many places of these provinces, with such power and progress as even silenced, for a time, the most malignant opposers; they were then either afraid or ashamed openly to contradict such astonishing displays of the Divine almightiness, in alarming multitudes of secure sinners out of their fatal stupor, and exciting in them the utmost solicitude about the everlasting concerns of their souls, many of which gave us a rational and scriptural account of their distress, and afterwards of their deliverance from it, agreeable to the method of the gospel of Christ. Their comforts as well as sorrows appeared, by all the evidences we can have of such things, to be agreeable to scripture and reason.

It affects us to think how poor souls flocked to the dear Emanuel, the blessed Lord Jesus, as doves to their windows! What multitudes, in our religious assemblies, trembled, like the jailor, under the apprehensions of God's dreadful vengeance! And how many melted into the softest contrition, or were transported into joy and praise, while they beheld the amiable glories of redeeming grace and love? And these sensations have been followed in many by a gospel conversation. What affectionate affection have in many been excited to the King of saints? What tender concern have they expressed for the honour of God's name, and the good of his kingdom? What bowels of pity have they had over the perishing souls of others?

thers? And, what tenderness and circumspection has appeared in the course of their behaviour? In short we are fully persuaded that we have had all that evidence of the reality of a work of God among us, which can be reasonably expected in the present state of things, since miracles have ceased. What if there were some things exceptionable in the conduct of some of the instruments and subjects of this work, is this so strange an incident in a state of imperfection, as to give us ground of surprize or prejudice against the whole work?

But here we must observe, that divers false reports have been invented and spread industriously, both by word and writing, in order to blacken the characters of several ministers, whom God has been pleased, of his pure goodness, to honour with success; and other charges against their conduct have been invidiously aggravated beyond their proper foundation, and set in a false light; and some of the subjects of this work have been doubtless treated in the same manner.

It is shocking to think that any should dare to oppose a work attended with such commanding evidence as has been among us, we would beseech all such to consider solemnly the following paragraph, of the Rev. Mr ROBE, minister of the gospel in Kilsyth, in Scotland, his preface to his narrative, which is as follows, *viz.* “ Lastly, I seriously beg of any who
 “ are prejudiced against this dispensation of God’s extraordi-
 “ nary grace, and look upon it as delusion, that they’ll shew
 “ themselves so charitable and good, as direct me and other
 “ ministers what we shall answer distressed persons of all ages,
 “ who come to us, crying bitterly that they are lost and un-
 “ done, because of unbelief and their other sins — *What shall*
 “ *we do to be saved?* And as a young girl about twelve, who
 “ had been in distress for some time, called for me to a sepa-
 “ rate place in a house where I was, and asked me with great
 “ sedateness, What shall I do to get Christ? Shall we tell them
 “ they are not Christless and unconverted, when we evidently
 “ see many of them to be such? Shall we tell them that their
 “ fears of the wrath of God is all but delusion? And it is no
 “ such dreadful thing as they need to be much afraid of it.
 “ Shall we tell persons, lamenting their cursing, swearing,
 “ Sabbath-breaking, and other immoralities, that it is the devil

“ that makes them now see these evils to be offensive to God,
 “ and destructive to their souls? Shall we tell them, who, un-
 “ der the greatest uneasiness, enquire at us what they shall do
 “ to get an interest and faith in Jesus Christ, that Satan is de-
 “ luding them, when they have or shew any concern this way.
 “ In fine, Shall we pray, and recommend it to them to pray to
 “ God that he would deliver them from such delusions? It
 “ would be worse than devilish to treat the Lord’s sighing and
 “ groaning prisoners at this rate; and yet such treatment is a
 “ natural consequence of reckoning this the work of the devil,
 “ and a delusion.”

We think that our Reverend and ingenious Brother Mr Jonathan Dickinson, of Elizabeth-Town, in New-Jersey, who is the author of the following Dialogues, has, with much judgment and solid reasoning, therein baffled the common cavils of opposers against the work of God, and answered the objections of the scrupulous. We cannot but highly approve of his description of the nature and necessity of conviction, and establishing it upon the impregnable basis of scripture and reason. His account of regeneration, faith, and consolation, is likewise exactly agreeable to our sentiments.

We likewise concur with our Reverend Author, in his reasonable effort against Antinomian errors, expressed in his second Dialogue; and declare to the world, that we believe and maintain that sanctification is the evidence of our justification, and indispensably necessary to eternal salvation; and that assurance is not essential to faith, but only a separable fruit of it. Yet we agree with the Reverend and very judicious Mr Flavel, in his Sacramental Meditations on Eph. i. 13. who speaketh thus, *viz.* That “ though all believers are not sealed at
 “ one and the same time, yet there are few, if any, believers
 “ but do meet with one season or other in this life, wherein
 “ the Lord doth seal them.” By which sealing, he tells us before, in the same discourse, he understands the Spirit’s giving a sure and certain testimony to the reality of that work of grace he hath wrought in our souls, and to our interest in Christ and the promises thereby, satisfying our fears and doubts about our estate and condition. And we apprehend, the Author of the aforesaid Dialogue with Libertinus, is consistent here-
 with,

with, in what he says about manifestation, persuasion, and assurance, which he uses as synonymous terms, as appears from the 99th page, et alibi.

We do therefore heartily recommend the following succinct, nervous, and judicious composition, to the impartial consideration of mankind; and cannot but judge that there is sufficient light and argument in it, to convince all that are not under the power of a corrupt bias and unreasonable prejudice, of the truth and certainty of the matters contained therein.

O may the God of truth and holiness arise and plead his own cause, and grant his successful smiles to this performance, and others of the like nature and tendency, that, notwithstanding the present gloom of unjust reproach, contempt, and opposition cast upon, and made against the work and servants of God, it may be revived in the midst of the years, among us and elsewhere.

And here we cannot but declare our great satisfaction with the concurring suffrage of those reverend and worthy gentlemen, of a superior and distinguished character (whose names are mentioned in the preceding preface), to the blessed work of God in this land.

We rejoice, and give glory to God, that in this day of blasphemy, rebuke, and insult, he is pleased to raise up witnesses in divers parts of the world to appear for his cause, by public attestations and defences, amongst whom we would mention, with due honour and respect, the Reverend Mr Edwards of Northampton in New-England, in his sermon upon the distinguishing marks of the work of the true Spirit; and in his late book, entitled, "Some thoughts concerning the revival of religion in New-England, and the way it ought to be acknowledged and approved, in five parts." Likewise the Reverend Mr Robe, in the aforesaid preface and narrative. And the Reverend Mr Alexander Webster of Edinburgh, in his book, entitled, "Divine influence the true spring of the extraordinary work at Cambuslang, and other parts of the west of Scotland."

Before we conclude, we think it necessary to advertise the Reader of this particular; namely, that though the Reverend Author of the ensuing Dialogues, did not think it proper to

prefix his name to the first edition of them; yet, being now asked, he allows his name to be mentioned in this second edition; but we must not longer detain the Reader from the performance itself: We therefore conclude, and remain his friends and servants, in Jesus Christ,

Philadelphia, *June* 1. 1743.

GILBERT TENNENT.
WILLIAM TENNENT.
SAMUEL BLAIR.
RICHARD TREAT.
SAMUEL FINLEY.
JOHN BLAIR.

A DISPLAY OF GOD'S SPECIAL GRACE.

IN A PLAIN AND

FAMILIAR DIALOGUE,

BETWEEN

A MINISTER AND A GENTLEMAN OF HIS CON-
GREGATION,

ABOUT

The work of God, in the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, so remarkably of late begun and carried on in these American parts.

A MINISTER being visited by a Gentleman of his Congregation, their conversation turned upon the religious appearances, which are at present such matter of speculation and discourse.—This conference having proved so very serviceable to that gentleman, it is hoped, that, if communicated to the world, it may not fail of some usefulness to others also, in these times of general debates and searchings of heart, about the way of salvation. I shall therefore endeavour, as faithfully as I can, to set the substance of that conversation in view—with its happy effects; representing the persons concerned under the borrowed names of *Theophilus* and *Epinecius*.

The Dialogue proceeded in the following manner:

THEOPHILUS. You have doubtless heard the joyful tidings from several parts of the country, of the great *revival of religion*, of the numerous convictions, and (as we hope) saving conversions to God, among persons of all ages and characters, as well as most different moral qualifications. You cannot but have heard of the serious and awful concern among multitudes of every sort, about the salvation of their souls; how ministers have been quickened and revived; secure and sensu-
ful

sual persons awakened; formalists and self-deceivers detected and undeceived; sincere Christians comforted and strengthened; and how, even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, *Christ has perfected praise*.—I hope you will join with me in adoring and magnifying the name of God, for this wonderful display of his power and grace.

EPINETUS. “I am afraid either to speak or think any thing that may be derogatory to the free grace of God; or that may reflect any dishonour to his blessed Spirit: And yet I cannot but acknowledge, that many of the late appearances are matter of stumbling to me; and very dissonant to the apprehensions I have hitherto entertained of religion.—I am therefore glad you have introduced this discourse, that I may have opportunity to propose my difficulties; and that you may obviate them; and give me satisfaction, if you can.”

THEOPH. I shall cheerfully endeavour, according to my capacity, to consider and answer your objections, if you will be pleased to propose them separately; and to lay aside all prejudices against the truth and the evidences of it, that may be laid before you.—This last condition I have the greater reason to insist upon, because your eternal interest does immediately depend upon it; and a love to your own soul should divest you of all prepossessions, in an affair of such infinite importance.

EPINET. “I acknowledge, Sir, that your conditions are just and reasonable. And I hope my conduct will convince you, that I am not willing to lose my soul, by a tenacious adherence to my own sentiments; a fond opinion of my present safety; or a wrangling humour and disposition.—I shall therefore endeavour modestly to propose my objections; and impartially to attend to your answers.”

THEOPH. Be pleased then to propose your first objection, that it may be distinctly considered.

EPINET. “I first object against those *frights* and *terrors*, that so commonly abound, not only among ourselves, but in several parts of the country.—Can it be supposed, that a merciful God should take pleasure in the melancholly dejections, soul-distresses, and desponding fears of his creatures?

—I must

—I must confess, I have a very different idea of the Divine nature.”

THEOPH. No, Sir, it cannot be supposed that God takes pleasure in the misery of any of his creatures, *as such*. But it must be supposed agreeable to the Divine goodness, to deliver his reasonable creatures from their misery, in a method agreeable to their rational nature. And that this is applicable to the case before us, may perhaps appear evident to you, if you will be pleased to answer me to a few questions.—And I first enquire, Whether we are not all of us, whilst unconverted, *sinful and guilty* creatures in the sight of God?

EPINET. “Most certainly!—*Both Jew and Gentile are all under sin; and the whole world are become guilty before God.*”

THEOPH. I enquire again, Whether all that remain in this state of sin and guilt, are not under a sentence of *condemnation* by the law of God?

EPINET. “This must also be granted—*He that believeth not is condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on him.*”

THEOPH. Is not every unbeliever liable every moment, to have this sentence of condemnation executed upon his soul?

EPINET. “That cannot be denied: For we *know not at what hour the Son of man will come, whether at evening, at midnight, at cock-crowing, or in the morning.*”

THEOPH. Is it possible for any man to be easy and secure under a sensible impression that he is an enemy to God, an heir of hell and damnation; and that he may be, for ought he knows, before to-morrow morning, among devils and damned spirits, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone?

EPINET. “But has not every one a refuge to fly to? Is not Jesus Christ freely offered in the gospel?”

THEOPH. 'Tis certainly impossible to have too high apprehensions of the riches of gospel-grace, of the wonders of redeeming love, or of the readiness of the Lord Jesus Christ to save the worst of sinners, upon gospel-terms.—But I must yet enquire of you, what those terms and conditions are, upon which the Lord Jesus Christ and his saving benefits are so freely offered in the gospel?

EPINET. “The blessed Saviour freely offers himself and his glorious salvation to all who will believe in him, and live to him.”

THEOPH.

THEOPH. But do all men believe in Christ, and live to him?

EPINET. "No!-- *All men have not faith.*"

THEOPH. Has any man a natural power to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and thereby to obtain an interest in him and his offered salvation?

EPINET. "No!-- Our Lord himself assures us, that *no man can come unto him, except the Father draw him.*"

THEOPH. Does God the Father actually draw every man to Christ, give them a lively faith in him, and a title to his salvation; or has he any where promised, that he will do so?

EPINET. "No!-- *He has hiddden these things from the wise and prudent; and revealed them unto babes.—To some it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others it is not given.*"

THEOPH. This then is the case of a convinced sinner. He has a sensible view, that he is by *nature a child of wrath*; that he is guilty of numberless sins, both of omission and commission; that he is by the law of God sentenced to eternal condemnation, and liable every moment to have the dreadful sentence executed upon him, to his everlasting ruin.—He has hitherto withstood the offers of salvation in the gospel, which dreadfully aggravates his guilt and misery.—He finds himself incapable to comply with the gracious proposals of salvation by Jesus Christ; and has therefore no claim to the comforts of them. Though God can, if he pleases, give him this power, he has no security that God ever will.—He knows, that if he dies in his present state, he has nothing before him but a *fearful expectation of fiery indignation, which shall consume him*. And whether he shall ever obtain a saving change is to him dreadfully uncertain. He may die suddenly in his guilt and pollution. He may return (as many others have done) *like a dog to his vomit*, to final security and impenitence; or he may deceive himself with a false hope, and be found too late with a lie in his right hand.—In a word, He has utmost certainty of a most dreadful damnation, if he dies in his present condition; and, at the best, but an uncertainty whether he shall escape the eternal wrath of an angry God. And now, judge you, whether a reasonable being can possibly avoid a

distressing concern, upon a realizing apprehension of such an amazing state of guilt and danger.

EPINET. "I confess myself something surprized with this representation of the case. — You have set it in such a light as I never before saw it. — It will be dreadful indeed, if it should prove my own case. — But yet I cannot apprehend how convictions and terrors are any way conducive to a recovery from this state and condition, be it ever so difficult and dangerous. — Faith in Christ is the only remedy; and what is more opposite to faith than these desponding fears?"

THEOPH. The Lord grant that you and I may *take heed to ourselves, that our hearts be not deceived*; and not cry *peace* to our souls, when God says *there is no peace for us!* It certainly concerns us solemnly to consider an affair of such vast importance. — I would therefore desire you to tell me, what you understand by that *faith* in Jesus Christ, which you mention as the only remedy for a guilty condemned sinner.

EPINET. "I understand faith in Jesus Christ to be a receiving him, and resting upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel."

THEOPH. Well now, can any man *receive the Lord Jesus Christ upon gospel-terms*, while he prefers the world, his lusts, and sensual gratifications before him?

EPINET. "No! — *If any man come to Christ; and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be his disciple.*"

THEOPH. Do you think that the gospelized world in general have such a value for Jesus Christ, as to prefer an interest in him to their most darling lusts, their dearest relations; and even to their own lives?

EPINET. "No! — The contrary to this is most visible, in the multitudes that go on in their sensual pursuits; and *will not come unto Christ that they might have life.*"

THEOPH. What do you think is the reason, that no means will prevail upon these sensual worldlings, to consider the interests of their immortal souls; or to set any suitable value by a precious Saviour?

EPINET. "I know of no reason, but their blockish stupidity."

THEOPH. That is, they have no feeling sense of their sin

and danger; and therefore no active desire of a deliverance from it. They have no lively apprehension of their necessity of an interest in Christ; and therefore no proper solicitude to obtain it.—They are in love with their lusts and idols; which must be more embittered to them, before they can be willing to part with them.—Their carnal mind is enmity to God and godliness; and they cannot submit to the yoke of Christ, until the yoke of sin and Satan more sensibly galls their necks, and appears an intollerable burden to them.—Their sensual pleasures and gratifications appear more desirable and delightful to them, than an interest in Christ and a life of holiness and piety. They cannot therefore help but choose them, as preferable to the salvation proposed in the gospel, until an awakened conscience discovers to them their misery and folly, makes them feel themselves perishing with hunger; and thereby puts them upon a proper concern about returning to their Father's house.

EPINET. “Does not every body know the danger of a sinful life; and the misery of a Christless state, without these convictions and awakenings, frights and surprisef.”

THEOPH. They who are brought up under gospel-light, have a doctrinal knowledge of these things; but no feeling sensible impression of them. We see, in fact, how many persons of knowledge and capacity there be, who have all their lives had the great things of their eternal peace inculcated upon them in the ministry of the gospel, who yet live and die as if they had no souls to be saved or damned, no future retribution or eternal world before them. We see, in fact, that among those who have a sufficient speculative knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, the drunkard follows his cups, and the adulterer his wanton and unclean lusts; though they cannot but acknowledge, that these are the paths of destruction and death. But then, on the contrary, how many instances (thru' the great goodness of God) have we lately seen, of a thorough reformation of these sinful courses, of an earnest enquiry after an interest in Christ, of an hearty acceptance of an offered Saviour; and of a holy and religious life, among those, who by strong convictions have been brought to a sensible impression of the great concerns of an eternal world!—In short, It is impossible to be otherwise, but that the secure sinner must indulge

his

his lusts while they remain so pleasant to him, and he feels no danger in their gratification; and that he must reject a tender Saviour, whilst he does not realize his own perishing circumstances and want of salvation.—And, on the other hand, it is impossible to be otherwise, but that a convinced sinner must be in earnest enquiring after the way of salvation, while he feels his danger, misery, and necessity of an interest in Christ.

EPINET. “Do you then suppose that none are brought to believe in Christ, without such previous convictions and awakening concern as you speak of?”

THEOPH. Awakened sinners pass through very different degrees of conviction, preparatory to their faith in Christ.—But I cannot see how any person, that is arrived to an age of rational consideration and choice, can receive the Lord Jesus Christ upon gospel-terms, till he is at least brought to some sensible apprehension of the misery of his present state, and of his absolute necessity of a Saviour. Be you, Sir, yourself judge in this case.—Can any man be in earnest enquiring after a Saviour from a state of sin, guilt and misery, which he is insensible of?

EPINET. “That is a plain contradiction.”

THEOPH. Can any man in earnest flee from dangers which he neither sees nor fears?

EPINET. “No!—that is manifestly inconsistent.”

THEOPH. Can any man be willing to accept of Christ upon his own terms; and to forsake all for him, while he sees no necessity of an interest in him; but prefers his lusts and idols before him?

EPINET. “This likewise is a manifest contradiction.”

THEOPH. Can any man receive Christ for his Lord, while he is cheerfully and delightfully living in the service of sin, Satan, and the world?

EPINET. “No certainly!—*No servant can serve two masters, who have direct contrary commands.*”

THEOPH. Well then, by your own concession, it is necessary, from the nature of things, that preparatory to an actual reception of Christ, a sinner must have some impressed sense that he is in a state of sin, guilt, and misery; and that he is in danger of the wrath to come. He must have such a discovery of the evil and deadly nature of his sins, as will cause him to

prefer an interest in Christ, and the great salvation, to his most darling lusts and idols; and chuse the service of Christ before the service of sin, Satan, and the world. And what inducement can such a person possibly have, to give this preference to the service of Christ, but either love to him or fear of danger? Love to Christ he cannot have: For that is the consequence of faith, and can never go before it. This must therefore be the product of fear, of such fear as is effective of this wonderful change in the frame and disposition of the soul.—And now, having thus allowed the premises, can you deny the conclusion, that such degrees of conviction as will excite a proper solicitude about deliverance from deserved wrath, are a necessary preparation to a reception of Christ by faith?

EPINET. “I do not see what answer can be given to the evidence you have offered upon this head.”

THEOPH. If we consider this case in another view, you will find the same conclusion follow.—A saving faith, according to your own description, does as well imply *a depending upon Christ for salvation*, as receiving him upon gospel-terms; and can any man be brought to this without previous convictions of his lost and undone state? I would here also take liberty to ask you a few questions, to which I only desire a considerate and candid answer.—And I would first enquire, whether the most careless and secure of our gospel-sinners could be so easy and quiet as they appear to be, if they expected to live and die in their present state of sin and guilt?

EPINET. “No! They cannot but know that they are at present in the paths of death and hell. And *sinners in Zion would be afraid, fearfulness would surprize the hypocrite*, if they really expected to dwell with devouring fire; and to inhabit everlasting burnings.”

THEOPH. By what do you suppose they ordinarily quiet their consciences, in such a state as this?

EPINET. “By purposes of future repentance and reformation”

THEOPH. And is it not a contradiction, to depend principally, if not wholly, upon purposes of future repentance and reformation; and yet to *rest upon Christ alone for salvation*?

EPINET. “It seems so.”

THEOPH.

THEOPH. Could these persons possibly quiet their consciences with these good purposes, if they did not suppose themselves capable to fulfil them; or, at least, if they did not expect by their duties to obtain that capacity?

EPINET. "No! I think not."

THEOPH. It is therefore evident, that a secure world cannot possibly rest upon Christ alone for salvation, while their security itself supposes that they are depending upon their own capacity to exercise, or at least to obtain the grace they hope for; and consequently, that they must be brought out of that security, before they can savingly believe in Jesus Christ: Or in other words, that convictions must precede their conversion to God.—But I go on to enquire, By what means sinners usually quiet their consciences, when they upbraid them for particular sins, either of omission or commission; or set the guilt and danger of their state before their eyes?—You are sensible that there is nothing more common, than for persons to wear off such lashes of conscience, and return again to former calmness and serenity of mind. And how do you suppose this is done?

EPINET. "You expect, I see, that I should now relate my own experiences in this case: For I cannot but be a stranger to the operations of other mens minds. I will therefore inform you something of the exercise of my own soul, in the case you propose.—Though (I thank God) I have been kept from gross enormities, and have had a good reputation for religion among men; yet I frequently feel the accusations of conscience, both for the neglect or careless performance of duty, and for the many sinful imperfections of my life. These awaken me to resolutions, through God's grace, that I will be more diligent and conscientious in the performance of duty, that I will maintain a more watchful and careful regard to my heart and life, that they may be regulated according to the gospel of Christ: And I cannot but hope that God will, for Christ's sake, accept my duty and repentance; and not impute my sin to me."

THEOPH. What you represent as your own case, is common to multitudes besides yourself. And indeed, Sir, I should be guilty of greatest unfaithfulness, if I did not tell you, that all this is far short of any good evidence of a state of safety.—In
your

your purposes and endeavours to reform and regulate your duties and conversation, you do well: But while you raise your hope of acceptance with God upon this foundation, you are building upon a quick-sand. You expect your duties and repentance will be accepted for Christ's sake, before you clear it up to yourself that you are interested in Christ, and have a claim to his intercession. Has Christ purchased for you the power to atone for your sins by your duties, your good resolutions, and reformations; or is this agreeable to your description of faith? Are endeavours to pacify an offended God by your performances, consistent with your resting upon Christ alone for salvation?—It is plain, from this account of your case, that, instead of depending upon what Christ has done and suffered for you, your dependance is upon what you do, or intend to do for him—You are by nature *dead in trespasses and sins*; and how can your duties and good purposes revive you?—You owe ten thousand talents to Divine justice; and will your resolutions of future obedience pay the debt?—You have (if Christless) no title to salvation; and will you purchase the eternal inheritance with your own performances?—Allow me to proceed as before; and ask you a few questions upon this case of yours, as you have represented it.—Have you ever sensibly felt the sinfulness of your nature, the hardness of your heart, and your natural enmity to God and godliness?

EPINET. “Truly, Sir, though I be not ignorant of this, I dare not say that I have had a sensible and feeling impression of it.”

THEOPH. How can you then depend upon Christ for salvation, when you have no feeling sense of your want of a Saviour, nor what that salvation is you are to depend upon him for.—Permit me yet to enquire, Have you had a sensible apprehension of your just desert of God's wrath; and of your utter unworthiness that he should ever bestow mercy upon you? Or, to use St Paul's expression, has the law come with such power, that *sin has revived and you died*?

EPINET. “I have always known this to be truth, that I am by nature in a state of guilt; and altogether unworthy of God's mercy.”

THEOPH. So do the very worst of men, and even the devils themselves.

themselves.—But if you have no more than a doctrinal knowledge of this, how can you depend upon Christ alone for salvation, when you have not so much as felt that you are not already safe? How can you depend upon Christ to save you from the wrath to come, when you have no realizing apprehension of your being exposed to that tremendous wrath? What sort of salvation can such a person depend upon Christ for?—I must yet take leave further to enquire of you, whether you have ever been feelingly sensible, that your highest attainments in religion are not only *loss*, as being imperfect and unequal to the demands of justice, but *dung* (a polluted thing) through the sinfulness that attends them, and the guilt thereby contracted?—You are sensible from whose experience I take this enquiry. And have you ever been able to say as St Paul did in this case?

EPINET. “I cannot say that I have.”

THEOPH. How then have you *won Christ, been found in him*, and depended only upon *the righteousness which is of God by faith*, while you yet have on *your own righteousness which is of the law*; and have never yet realized to yourself the infinite defects of all you are and can do? O Sir, if you had a just view of the best duties, and the best frames and purposes that you could ever boast of, you would be deeply sensible, that the defect and sinfulness that accompany them, might justly condemn both you and them.—Bear with me once more, if I proceed to enquire, Have you given up all hopes and expectations of obtaining a victory over your corruptions, of obtaining a more spiritual habit and disposition of soul, and a more acceptable performance of religious duty; or even any good qualification whatsoever, by your most earnest and active endeavours, until you are united to Christ, and derive all gracious supplies from him?—Has this view of your impotence brought you, in a way of most diligent duty, to lie at God's foot as a guilty helpless sinner, that has no claim to mercy, resolving never to rest until you are interested in him, and are thereby renewed in the spirit of your mind? Let your conscience impartially answer to these enquiries; for you may assure yourself, that it is impossible, from the nature of things, to depend upon Christ for salvation; and, at the same time, to maintain a reserved expectation of obtaining gracious qualifications

cations by your own endeavours. This, in other words, is to depend *only* upon Christ; while you depend *partly* upon yourself for sanctification. And yet it is equally impossible to depend upon Christ at all, in any other way than a course of diligent duty: For by neglecting this, you practically reject him and his offered salvation.

EPINET. "You seem, Sir, to have forgot the subject we were upon.—How does all this prove the necessity of those soul-distresses, of which we were discoursing?"

THEOPH. No, Sir, I have not forgot the subject of our discourse. I will now leave it to you to judge, whether it is possible for any man to be feelingly sensible of the sinfulness of his nature, and the enmity of his heart to God, of his utter unworthiness of God's favour, of the infinite defects, and even of the guilt and pollution of his highest attainments in religion, whilst Christless; and of his own impotence and utter inability to help himself, or ever make his case better by any power of his own; and yet, under a sense of all this misery, to remain secure and easy.—Judge you, whether it be not absolutely necessary, that this view must put any reasonable being under distress, proportionable to the impression of these things upon his mind; or whether it does not appear, from what has been said, to be an inconsistency, for any man to believe in Christ, before he has had some sensible impression of these things.

EPINET. "What necessity is there of such a sensibility of these things as you speak of? Is it not sufficient, that we know them and act accordingly?"

THEOPH. Have we not to do with an omniscient God, a God that *searcheth the hearts and the reins*, a God that demandeth our *hearts*; and requireth *truth in our inward parts*? And can our hearts be in those things which we have no impression of? Be not deceived, God will not be mocked with lifeless pretences. He will bring us indeed (and not in speculation only) to lie at his foot, and bow to his sovereignty, before he will *reveal his Son to us*. He will bring us sensibly, and not doctrinally only, to see our own lost and undone state, to renounce our own confidences, and to fly to Christ for refuge.—If we have but a notional and not real humiliation and faith, we must likewise obtain a notional and not real salvation.

[It was observed, that upon this discourse, the gentleman changed countenance, fetched a deep sigh, and sat some considerable time silent, in a musing posture.—After which he proceeded as followeth.]

EPINET. “ You have (I confess) given me rational evidence of a sort of natural necessity of convictions and spiritual distresses, preparatory to our receiving of Christ by faith.— But how does it appear these convictions are the *operations of the Spirit of God*; or that they are any more than the mere exercise of our natural passions ?

THEOPH. I do not suppose, that the Spirit of God does in this case put any new appetites or passions into our souls ; but, that he quickens and actuates our natural passions, to a rational and proper exercise.—And that this is his work, that these convictions are produced by his almighty energy, is manifest from many considerations ; and especially from this, that our Lord Jesus Christ has promised to send the *Comforter* for that very end, *that he may reprove (or convince) the world of Sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*, John xvi. 8.

EPINET. “ Do not you think that any man may, by close meditation upon the amazing terrors of God's law, and application of them to himself, raise these distressing apprehensions in his own mind ?”

THEOPH. It is an evident observation, that the secure world in general will not closely meditate upon their danger. They will not be persuaded, by any attempt of their ministers or godly friends, to realize their misery and danger ; and to renounce their lusts. They will not be awakened by the most powerful preaching, nor by the most terrible dispensations of providence, till God takes the work into his own hands ; and then the slightest means are made effectual, the alarm is at once raised and continued in the soul of the most secure and abandoned sinner.—It is further observable, that if such sinners do force themselves upon some consideration ; and do thereby prick their consciences, and awaken some resolutions of reformation ; their good purposes are (like the principle from whence they flow) but unsteady, transient, and short lived. They fall again before the next temptation ; and then, perhaps,

will have a new concern revived. Thus they repent and sin, and sin and repent.—Thus multitudes go on, and will go on, against the dictates of their reason and conscience, until they have a new and more powerful impression than they can raise merely by their own consideration. And does not this make it evident, that this work is from the Spirit of God, when it procures such an effectual and lasting change, as no purpose, promise, resolution, or endeavour, flowing from the mere power of nature, could ever procure?

EPINET. “How shall we distinguish between mere rational convictions, and those which (as you suppose) proceed from the Spirit of God?”

THEOPH. Temporary convictions may proceed from the Spirit of God. Sinners may *quench the Spirit*, and so provoke him to withdraw his influences. But we may be certain that those convictions are from him that are powerful and lasting, that embitter the sinner's lusts to him, that put him upon a most earnest and active care about his eternal interests, that empty him of his self-sufficiency, and cause him, with diligence, to *fly for refuge to the hope set before him*.—From whence should these proceed but from the blessed Spirit of God? They are not the productions of *nature*; for that is enmity against God. And there never was one instance yet seen, of any man's producing these effects by the power of his own good purposes or resolutions, as I have observed before.—They do not proceed from the *devil*; for he is not such an enemy to his own interest, as thus to drive men from his service *into the kingdom of God's dear Son*.—The change often appears powerful and wonderful; and therefore must proceed from a powerful and wonderful agent.

EPINET. “We often see men wearing off the greatest impressions, and returning again to sensuality; which is a prejudice against this doctrine.”

THEOPH. It is no just cause of prejudice: For though men may *quench the Spirit*, and provoke him to withdraw, as I observed before; yet how many are there in whom we see a wonderful, sanctifying, and lasting change, who are and continue to be *new creatures* in all spiritual respects? And does not the greatness and duration of this change fully declare the glorious author?

EPINET.

EPINET. "How comes it to pass that we hear so much of these things of *late*, which former times and ages knew so little about?"

THEOPH. This question makes way for two further evidences, that the Spirit of God is the glorious author of this work. *First*, I must inform you that the fact is quite contrary to your supposal.—Read all the most famous authors upon practical godliness, from the beginning of the Reformation, and you will find that they teach the same doctrines which I have now insisted on.—Read the narratives of particular conversions, not only in the scriptures, but in all the preceding ages of the Church, and in all the most distant countries and nations, and you will find that the work has always been carried on in mens hearts, in a method substantially the same with what I have described, by the same progress of convictions and humiliations.—And how could this possibly be, unless it proceeded from the same blessed author? For there could be no conspiracy, collusion, or endeavours of imitation, in persons so far removed from, and so unacquainted one with another.—And, *secondly*, Whence is it that we hear of so much of these things now, but from the more plentiful effusion of the blessed Spirit?—Whence is it that this blessed work has spread so extensively, far and near, among young and old; and there are so many crying out under the burden of their sins, and so earnestly enquiring after the way of salvation?—Is not human nature the same now that it used to be?—Whence is it that the ordinances, that were before but as a dead letter, do now make such a lively impression? Certainly *this is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes.*

EPINET. "How do we know that these convictions are any thing more than the natural effects of those pungent and terrifying addresses, from some warm and zealous ministers, which we lately hear off?"

THEOPH. I readily allow, that a short temporary surprize may be this way excited; but then this effect could last no longer than the cause operates. This only could never produce a real effectual lasting change.—I also allow, that God deals with mankind as with reasonable creatures; and when he designs this change in the hearts of any, he will provide and bless some suitable means to effect it. If he save us, it will be in the way of his

own appointing.—But can you yourself imagine, that the most pungent address of any teacher under heaven, can, in a natural way, produce those effects that are frequently seen among us?—Consider, I beseech you, the natural state of carnal men. *They are dead in trespasses and sins*: And can a plain discourse of the most zealous preacher, how pungent soever, awaken these dead men to such a lively lasting concern about their souls, that they can rest no more until they find rest in Christ?—They are blind and ignorant, they have no just apprehensions of their own deplorable condition; of the way of salvation provided for them; or of the glorious excellency of an offered Saviour. And will this enlighten their minds to a lively view of, and acquaintance with the things of their everlasting peace?—They are proud and self-righteous: And will this lay them in the dust, and bring them to renounce all their own attainments, duties, false hopes, and refuges?—They have a natural enmity and opposition to this change: And will this so suddenly conquer their aversion to a life of godliness, their love to their lusts, ease, and security; their natural rooted inclinations to sensual pursuits, and their habitual custom in sin?—Will this cause them to lay aside all their prejudices, beloved lusts, fleshly interests and endearments?—They have strong and mighty opposition to conquer: And will this overcome all the craft and power of Satan? Will it constrain them to forsake all their pleasures, worldly pursuits, merry company, and alluring expectations, for their present melancholly, fearful, pensive life? Will it fortify them against all the persuasions of their carnal acquaintance, against the banter and reproach of their old companions, and against the doubts and misgivings of their own unbelieving hearts? Could any of the orators of Greece or Rome produce such effects as these upon their hearers?—If this be a natural effect, what is the reason that it was produced no sooner, upon those who have heard so many scores of sermons, as pungent and awakening as that which at last proved successful? And what is the reason that it has not a like effect upon others, naturally as capable of impression, and as well prepared to receive it, as those who are thus suddenly, thoroughly, and powerfully awakened?—In a word, The apostle himself assures us, that *the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man*; and that *neither is he*
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that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth: But God that giveth the increase. Let who will oppose the work, or deny to God the honour of it, I shall be awfully careful not to ascribe that to poor worms, which is manifestly (as the apostle speaks) the working of God's mighty power.

EPINET. "Though I cannot reply to the evidence you have given, that this work is indeed from the agency of the Spirit of God; yet it still remains a great difficulty in the way of this, that we hear nothing of the extraordinary progress of convictions, and of what you call conversions to God, but only under the ministry of those *warm preachers*, who directly calculate their addresses to awaken the passions of their hearers, and to put them into frights and surprizes."

THEOPH. Your intelligence has been very defective; or else your prejudice against these things has called off your attention from some of the most surprizing instances of God's power and grace, that have been heard of since the apostolic times.—If you reflect upon the *first fruits* of this extraordinary and mighty work of God's special grace, in the conversions in Hampshire county (Massachusetts-Bay), whereof there is so judicious a narrative published to the world, it will be a sufficient answer to this objection. Do not you know, and do not we all know, that the ministers there, under whose instrumentality that work was carried on, are calm, sedate, and judicious men, unto whom the greatest adversaries of this wonderful work of God could never pretend to impute the least tincture of enthusiasm or irregular heat? And if we overlook all the other astonishing instances of this nature, and attend to the last refreshing accounts we have of the like general progress of converting grace, at York, Portsmouth, and other places to the eastward of Boston*, does it not appear, that no natural cause has had the least hand in making a difference between these places and others?—The ministers there, are some of our grave, solid, rational men, and yet the powerful energy of the Spirit of God, has been as remarkably manifested there as any where else.—Every objection is therefore now fully silenced; and, give me leave to say, you must be obstinately blind, or acknowledge that *this is the finger of God*.—O take heed, when
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* This was wrote before the work remarkably spread in many other towns, which now might be added.

God is in this extraordinary manner manifesting himself to us, when the Lord Jesus Christ is in these wonderful works revealed from heaven amongst us, that you be not found *fighting against God*—*Beware lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets, behold, ye despisers! and wonder and perish.* My friend, beware lest you *reject the counsel of God against yourself.*

EPINET. “Methinks if these convictions were so necessary as you suppose, we should have more *examples* of them; and more *directions* about them in *scripture*, than I can at present remember.”

THEOPH. Do not you remember, how there were three thousand at once pricked in their heart from St Peter's preaching; and driven, by their distress, to that enquiry, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Do not you remember the conversion of Saul, and of the jailor; and their trembling and astonishment under a sense of their sin and guilt? Do not you remember that it is promised, that when God *pours out his Spirit upon us, we shall remember our own evil ways, and our doings that were not good; and shall loath ourselves in our own sight, for our iniquities and abominations?* (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.)—Do not you remember, that our Lord pronounces those *blessed that are poor in spirit, that mourn, that hunger and thirst after righteousness; and that weep?* (Matth. v. 3. Luke vi. 21.)—Do not you remember, that an awakening sense of our guilt and unworthiness is recommended to us, in the story of the *publican?* (Luke xviii. 13.)—Do not you remember the parable of the *prodigal son*, who was brought to see himself *perishing with hunger*, before he thought of *returning to his father's house*; and brought to approach his father's presence with a most humbling apprehension, that he had *sinned against Heaven and in his sight, and was no more worthy to be called his son?* (Luke xv.)—Do not you remember, that sinners are exhorted to *break up their fallow ground*, (Jer. iv. 3.); to *rent their hearts, and not their garments, and turn unto the Lord their God*, (Joel ii. 13.); to *awake out of their sleep and arise from the dead, that Christ may give them light?* (Eph. v. 14.)—Do not you remember *what carefulness* was wrought in the *Corinthians*, *what cleansing of themselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what revenge?* (2 Cor. vii. 11.) You certainly cannot forget what I but just now shewed you, that our blessed

blesſed Saviour promiſed to ſend the Comforter to this very end, that *he ſhould convince the world of ſin*; nor can you forget that our Lord *came, not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance*, Matth. ix. 13.—But the time would fail me, ſhould I enter upon a particular detail of the many paſſages of ſcripture to the ſame purpoſe.—What has been ſaid is ſufficient to convince you, that the ſcriptures are not ſo ſilent in this caſe, as you ſeem to inſinuate. And it concerns you and I to take care, that *our hurt is not healed ſlightly*; and that we do not *ſay, Peace, peace, when there is no peace*, according to that Jer. viii. 11.

EPINET. “Well, Sir, I muſt confeſs that I have had no experience of theſe things; and am therefore afraid I have hitherto built my hopes upon the ſand!”

THEOPH. The Lord make theſe your fears introductory to a more ſure foundation of ſolid hope and laſting comfort.

[Upon this the gentleman made a conſiderable pauſe; and appeared very thoughtful. But after a while ſeemed ſomething to recover himſelf, and proceeded.]

EPINET. “If convictions, according to your representation of them, are allowed to be a neceſſary preparation to converſion, I am yet incapable to account for ſome wonderful things that I have lately heard of.”

THEOPH. What things do you refer to?

EPINET. “One thing is, the *crying out* of conſiderable numbers at a time, under a real or pretended *fright*, whereby the congregation is put into confuſion, the miniſter’s voice drowned; and every one’s mind called off from their devotions, to attend to theſe exclamations.—Theſe things I have ſeveral times ſeen myſelf; and, I confeſs, they are and cannot but be matter of ſtumbling to me.”

THEOPH. Do not you think perſons may have ſuch *ſudden and powerful impreſſions* of their guilt and danger made upon their minds, that they cannot refrain from theſe outward and audible expreſſions of their inward agony and diſtreſs?

EPINET. “This may poſſibly be the caſe with ſome; but I cannot think you will pretend that all theſe *out-cries* are of a Divine original.—I have known ſome of thoſe that have been noted and famous for repeated exclamations in public, whoſe future

future conversations have not given the best evidence in their favour."

THEOPH. And have you known *none* of those that have thus openly expressed their distressing concern, who, by their future conduct, have manifested a *lasting change*, both in their hearts and lives?

EPINET. "I must acknowledge, that there are a considerable number of whom I am obliged to make that charitable conclusion—A number that I am personally acquainted with, who were before careless, secure, and even profligate persons; but, from the time of these public *exclamations*, have reformed their former sensual lives, and appear to be serious, devout, and truly religious."

THEOPH. This then must make it evident that their *convictions* are from the *Spirit* of grace, for the reasons I have before assigned; if their *inordinate passions* be allowed to flow from their own infirmity.

EPINET. "But what shall we say of those *others*, of whom I spake before?"

THEOPH. According to what light I at present have in this affair, from what observations I have myself had opportunity to make when I was lately abroad, and from what informations I have had about these things, I have been ready to come into the following conclusions.—I first take it for granted, that the *power* and *grace* of God have remarkably appeared upon some of these occasions. The sanctifying and abiding effects of some of these convictions do loudly and manifestly declare, that they proceed from God himself.—Yet I cannot help but conclude, that there has been a great deal of *human infirmity* sometimes discovered in this case. Perhaps *some* of those, who have thus openly proclaimed their distress, might have put a greater *restraint* upon their passions, if they had, with the utmost care and pains, endeavoured it.—Nay, I have been informed, that some have supposed it their *duty* thus openly to give *vent* to the agonies of their mind, lest they should *quench the Spirit of God*. And if some of our ministers have given too much encouragement to these *exclamations*, this circumstance of the work (on that supposition) will not appear so wonderful.—And it may, besides, probably have happened, that *some* who have (through the influence of the

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Spirit) been so deeply affected with a sense of their sin and misery, that they really could *not* refrain these public exclamations, have thereby so alarmed the softer passions of many others, as to excite them (from a natural *sympathy*) to break forth in like *cries* and *groans*, though they have had no other special impressions upon their minds. I think I have seen something of this kind myself. And it cannot be wonderful, if such as *these* should discover themselves to be but *stony-ground hearers*.—And if any should be so prodigiously wicked, as to *counterfeit* these degrees of conviction from mere *ostentation*, and a desire to be esteemed religious, as they find others have been for the same reason, this also would add to this kind of appearances. But *charity hopeth all things*.

EPINET. “This representation of the case doth (I confess) appear to be just and satisfactory.”

THEOPH. You must then allow, that none of these unusual appearances are any just prejudice against the necessity of convictions, preparatory to our saving conversion.

EPINET. “That is true; but there are *other* appearances, that have been no less surprizing, and are more of a stumbling-block to me, than those already mentioned.”

THEOPH. What do you mean?

EPINET. “When I was at ——— while Mr ——— was preaching, I saw some of the hearers first *tremble*, like paralytic persons, or rather like persons shaken with a violent ague; and then some of them fell upon the ground in a *swon*, and lay for some time under considerable *convulsive* motions. — These things raise strange ideas in my mind.”

THEOPH. I have not seen any of these things myself; and am not therefore so capable to form a judgment about them. It may be safest for you and I to suspend our judgment of them, till we see what fruits and consequences appear.—On the one hand, God *can* (if he pleaseth) make as powerful impressions upon mens minds by his *Spirit*, as he did upon Paul's by a *light from heaven*, that shall suddenly and forcibly *cast them to the ground*.—But, on the other hand, as this has not been his *usual* dispensation, I do not know that we have any warrant to *expect* such things, nor to conclude from these *agitations*, separately considered, that they necessarily are, or are not, the consequences of the operations of God's Holy *Spirit*.—

Sudden and great *surprizes* may produce strange effects upon the *animal* œconomy; whether with, or without any due impressions of *sin*. But (as I have shewn you before) a *bare* surprize will never raise sinners from their state of spiritual death, and procure a *sanctifying* change in their hearts and lives. If this therefore be the consequence of these unusual appearances, give God the glory; for the work is certainly from him. If the excess of terror and passion be allowed to flow from *human infirmity*; yet the change itself, in its whole progress, whether considered as preparatory or saving, can proceed from nothing else (as I have before proved to you) but from *the working of almighty power, whereby God is able even to subdue all things to himself*.—But then, on the contrary, we may safely suspect this to be no more than a natural surprize, or at most but a temporary conviction, when there is no lasting good effect thereby produced.

EPINET. “I do not know what to say to these things. For my part, I do not understand them.”

THEOPH. But cannot you leave these things to God and time to discover; and, in the mean while, make it your earnest and solemn business to obtain those *gracious qualifications*, that you are certain you must obtain, or perish for ever?

EPINET. “The Lord give me a heart to comply with your advice. I am sure it is high time to look about me; and well may destruction from God be a terror to me, if I have not yet taken the first step towards salvation, as I am awfully afraid that I have not.”

THEOPH. It is indeed of infinite importance for every one to see to it, that their hope for eternity is well founded; and to be now in earnest *striving to enter in at the strait gate*, while the *day of visitation* lasts. And in order to this, it is of great concern, that the mind be wholly freed from all prejudices against the methods of converting grace.

EPINET. “That the present conference may have that happy effect upon my mind, as to remove all the prejudices that I have heretofore entertained, and give me a just view and apprehension of things, I shall take the freedom to propose some further difficulties, from these late appearances, which I do not know how to solve; hoping for the continuance of your friendly assistance.”

THEOPH.

THEOPH. I shall rejoice in being any way serviceable to your best interests. Be pleased therefore to propose your difficulties.

EPINET. "I cannot understand those *excessive joys*, which many of our late converts manifest in a very extraordinary way and manner.--Some seem to be acted with the most *rapturous* exults; while others, under the same comfortable and delightful apprehensions, fall into a syncope, and faint away, remaining for some time under a prostration of bodily strength."

THEOPH. Can a *wearry* and *heavy-laden* sinner possibly do otherwise than *rejoice*, upon his obtaining good *evidences* of an *interest in Christ*, and the *favour of God*; and thereby his freedom from the dreadful burthen of guilt, and the amazing apprehensions of the wrath of God, with which his soul was so greatly oppressed? Does not the apostle accordingly tell us, that *being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*?

EPINET. "But the text you mention, speaks nothing of those *extatic* joys, which have lately been so much talked of."

THEOPH. If that text does not speak of such extraordinary joy, there are many other texts of scripture that do particularly speak of this also: Such as that, (1 Pet. i. 8.) *In whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*. And that, (Eph. i. 13, 14.) *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of your inheritance*.--You certainly cannot have seen or heard of any thing of this kind, superior to *joy unspeakable* and full of *glory*. And it is equally certain, from the nature of things, that nothing can exceed the *earnest*, first-fruits, or fore-tastes of the future *inheritance*.--You must therefore acknowledge, that the scriptures do speak of *joys* as eminent, both for kind and degree, as any of those instances can be, which you refer to.

EPINET. "How then does it come to pass that we have heard nothing of this kind *heretofore*? Were there no Christians in the world till *now*?"

THEOPH. This question is founded upon a false and mistaken supposition.--These *joys* have been experienced by ve-

ry many of the children of God, in *all ages and dispensations* of the Church. And I have met with former instances of this kind, more eminent and remarkable than any of a late date, that I have heard of.—It must indeed be supposed, that in this happy time of a more general effusion of the blessed Spirit, instances of this kind will be more numerous; and these experiences more *freely spoken of*.

EPINET. “Then you suppose these joys to proceed from the immediate influences of the Spirit of God.”

THEOPH. Be pleased to read Rom. viii. 15, 16. and try whether you yourself can dare to think otherwise, than that it is the *Spirit of adoption*, whereby believers can so joyfully cry, *Abba, Father*; and that this proceeds from the *witness of the Spirit himself with our spirits, that we are the children of God*.

EPINET. “It seems to me an invincible *objection* against this, that some have experienced these self-same rapturous joys, whose future *conversations* have not exhibited the *fruits of the Spirit*; and have been very far from evidences of their good state.—Can it be supposed that the Spirit of God will witness to the adoption of proud, dishonest, and worldly persons?”

THEOPH. How do you know that these have experienced the same kind of comfort, the self-same joys that others speak of?—These *joys of the Holy Ghost* are certainly incommunicable to any who have not themselves had the experience of them; or, as the apostle expresseth it, they are *unspeakable*: They are *a new name written, which none can know but they that have it*.—Some persons, alas! may (from animal impressions, or from diabolical delusions) imagine that they have these *feelings of the Spirit*; and be lulled asleep, in their carnality and security, by this vain dream.—In this way the devil plays a sure game—and, no doubt, often *transforms himself into an angel of light* to this end, that he may keep people secure, by an imaginary experience of a state of safety. He never acts more like a devil, nor is he in any shape more to be feared, than in this plausible disguise

EPINET. “How then shall we distinguish the feelings of the blessed Spirit from animal impressions, or diabolical delusions?”

THEOPH. Though I have told you before, that these divine

vine experiences are incommunicable, inexpressible to those who are strangers to them, yet there may be a certain and safe distinction made between the one and the other by these following rules :

First, False and delusive joys never do, but the unspeakable joy and comfort of believers always does flow from good evidences of a justified state.—The Spirit of God never does set his seal to a blank ; nor cause persons to rejoice, they do not know why, or for what.—They therefore, who depend upon their joys, as the only evidence of a justified state, are always deceived : But they whose rejoicing flows from good evidences of a justified state, are never deceived.—In those who are Christians indeed this is the order : They are first justified by faith, and have peace with God ; and thence rejoice in hope of his glory.—Should I congratulate you upon your accession to the government of this province, it might fill you with sudden joy, from your imaginary promotion : But as this rejoicing had no foundation, it must quickly end in disappointment and vexation. But should I bring to you the king's letters patent, vesting you with that dignity, your joy would be rational and grounded. The application of this to the present case is easy and familiar. And then again.—

EPINET. “ Pardon me, Sir, if I take liberty to interrupt you, that I may (before you proceed further) enquire whether this distinction of yours (which I acknowledge to be most just and scriptural) does not necessarily conclude against most of those sudden transporting joys of which we are treating. For how can these flow from good evidences of a justified state, which are such quick transitions from greatest darkness and distress ? ”

THEOPH. Do not you think that the Spirit of God can make a quick discovery of Jesus Christ to the most dark and distressed soul ; and enable him to give a speedy, hearty, and sensible consent to the gospel-offer ? Suppose the case to be (as it frequently is), that a person is at least under a most uncomfortable *suspence* with respect to his state -- He sees many dark symptoms upon his soul, and is filled with awful jealousy of the event ; if not under greatest agony from a dreadful expectation

tation of eternal misery. In the time of this thick darkness, the Spirit of God shines with a *surprising light* into the soul, discovers the fulness and sufficiency of Christ, and his readiness and willingness to save all that come to him, enables the poor trembling soul heartily and willingly to *accept* this precious Saviour upon his own terms; and to *feel* that he does so. By this means he finds *joy and peace in believing*. Now, in this case, his rejoicing is founded upon the most sensible evidence of a true faith in Christ; though perhaps there may be but little or no discernible distance of time, between his acting faith in Christ and this ravishing fruit of it. The continuance or renewal of this *joy* in believers is, in like manner, accompanied with such outgoings of the soul to Christ, and such a *shedding abroad of the love of God in their hearts*; as carries its own evidence with it. They have *reason* to rejoice, or else it would be a fallacious and absurd *joy*.

EPINET. "This explanation of the case removes the difficulty beyond my expectations.—You will now be pleased to proceed to give the *other distinctions* you were about to propose, between the soul-deluding joy of the hypocrite, and these sealings of God's holy Spirit."

THEOPH. I would (*Secondly*) observe, that the joy of the hypocrite tends to *exalt* his spirit, and lift him up with a high opinion of *himself*; it causes him, like the *pharisees* of old, to *think himself righteous, and to despise others*: But the joy of the true believer does always exceedingly *humble* his soul, and lay him low, under a deep sense of his vileness and unworthiness. It fills him with admiring and adoring thoughts of the wonderful distinguishing grace of God to such a guilty and polluted creature as he is. And,

Thirdly, The joy of the hypocrite tends to *security*, and to more negligence, slothfulness, and formality in duty: But the joy of the true believer has an *animating and quickening* influence upon him, in all the duties of a religious life. It causes him heartily to love, and diligently attend all the ordinances of God, and to *mount up with wings as the eagle, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint*.

Fourthly, The joy of the hypocrite leaves him under the *dominion* of his *lusts*, more careless of his heart and life, more bold and confident in the commission of sin, from an apprehension

sion of the safety of his state: But, on the contrary, the joy of the true *believer* causeth him to *loath himself for all his iniquities and abominations*; and, from a principle of love to God, to be more careful to approve himself to him, and more fearful of offending him. In a word, These ravishing and transporting influences of the blessed Spirit are always a happy source of habitual *spiritual-mindedness*, of *holiness* towards God, and *righteousness* towards man: For *the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.*

EPINET. "Are we not in great danger of *mistake* in the application of these rules?"

THEOPH. I see no great danger of mistake by those who will *seriously* and *impartially* attend to them. For, on the one hand, can the *devil* himself delude any soul by good evidences of a justified state, and by the exercise of a lively faith? Or will he endeavour, by these transporting comforts, to make any man walk humbly with his God, to quicken him in his spiritual walk, to imbitter his sins to him, and make him more watchful over his heart and life, and more spiritual and heavenly in his whole conversation? This cannot be. *Such joys* therefore must always be acknowledged to be the fruits of God's blessed *Spirit*, and the manifestation of his love to the soul. And, on the other hand, it is impossible that the *Spirit* of God should delude men with false, groundless, or unreasonable comfort and joy, or lead them, by his divine influences, to pride, self-opinion, and vanity of mind; and to hypocrisy and formality, boldness and security in sin. *This joy* therefore, however rapturous and extatic, can be no other than a dangerous and fatal delusion.

EPINET. "I cannot but acknowledge, that you have given a just and reasonable solution of my difficulties in this case; and yet these things are what I have no *sensible* apprehension of: But, alas! that is what you cannot help me to. You have convinced me, that nothing but the powerful influences of the blessed Spirit of God can beget a saving change in me, or give me the comforts of it, if I had it. And how should I expect to know any thing about this joy and comfort, when I am afraid I know nothing else as I ought to know, and have yet laid no *foundation* for rejoicing! However, since we have begun upon these subjects, I will take liberty to be further
troublesome

troublesome to you, in proposing one or two more of the difficulties I have had on my mind from the late appearances, if your patience will hold out."

THEOPH. Indeed, Sir, there is no resting with safety in such a state as you apprehend your own to be. Certain it is, that you are either a child of God or his enemy; either an heir of heaven or hell; either in a converted state, or upon the borders of eternal destruction. You cannot be insensible that this is not a trifling affair, but that it infinitely concerns you to see to it, that you be not too late *ashamed of your hope*. I thought it my duty to use this freedom with you, and hope you will accept it (as I am sure it is designed) for an act of kindness and friendship. As for the other difficulties you speak of, I hope your proposing them will not be unserviceable to either of us; and I shall therefore be heartily willing to contribute what I can towards their removal.

EPINET. "I confess there is something else of greater importance for me, than to be finding fault with other mens conduct. But I have grounds to hope, from what I have already experienced, that this conference may serve to make my own path more plain before me; and therefore I shall proceed to inform you, that I cannot understand the new method of discoursing about religious *experiences* in all companies, and upon all occasions, so very freely and commonly."

THEOPH. I hope you are not against mens improving their opportunities together, in conversing upon religious subjects, and in endeavours to assist and quicken one another in the way to the kingdom of God—*They that fear the Lord, speak often one to another, and God keeps a book of remembrance; and they shall be his, in the day when he binds up his jewels.*

EPINET. "There may sometimes be occasion for such discourse, when Christians meet together: But do you suppose, that religion should *always* be the turning point of conversation."

THEOPH. I acknowledge we may be called by business, or out of civility to others, and sometimes merely for the diversion of our own minds, to discourse upon other subjects.—But as religion is infinitely the most important concern, so it should certainly be most upon our hearts; and then it would also be most upon our lips: For *out of the abundance of the*

heart the mouth speaketh. And it is indeed the scandal of professors, that they spend away their social opportunities in worldly, vain, trifling discourse; as if they came into the world for no other end, but merely to amuse themselves and one another. But would they duly consider, that *for every idle word they speak, they must give an account in the day of judgment,* they would be more careful to follow that advice, Eph. iv. 29. *to have their communications such as is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* And that advice, Col. iv. 6. *Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt.*—It is most evident, from the importance of religious concerns, from the infinite value of our own souls and the souls of our neighbours, as well as from the plain directions of the word of God, that we should improve our occasions of conversing together, ordinarily and chiefly, in religious discourse.

EPINET. “What if we fall into the company of such, to whom this discourse would be most burthensome and disagreeable?”

THEOPH. The apostle's exhortation, Heb. iii. 13. is a sufficient answer to that question: *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*—The more irreligious any person is, the more should his perishing soul be pitied; and the more need has he to be awakened, and excited to flee from the wrath to come.—There may indeed be some open, abandoned, and profane scoffers at religion, to whom our Lord's direction is applicable, in Matth. vii. 6. *Give not that which is holy unto dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine.* But then, they should be notoriously such, before we give over our charitable attempts for their recovery.

EPINET. “The Lord forgive me the horrible mispense of all my past opportunities in society! Perhaps you have purposely gone aside from the case I proposed, that you might reprove me for sinning away so much time, in idle impertinent conversation; and I must own there was good reason for it.—But what I desired your observations upon was, the practice of many of our new converts, who are for discoursing of their own experiences and attainments in religion, and examining others, upon almost every occasion of conversation.”

THEOPH. You will acknowledge that there may be occasions to communicate our religious experiences one to another; and that it is at least sometimes a duty to do so.—The scriptures seem to require this of us: We should *comfort them which are in any trouble, with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*, 2 Cor. i. 4.—We should *comfort ourselves together, and edify one another*, 1 Theff. v. 11. On some we should have *compassion, making a difference*; and others we should *save with fear*, Jude 22, 23.

EPINET. “I doubt not but that there are proper occasions for these things. But does it not too much favour of ostentation, to be so commonly speaking of our own religious attainments, as though we were recommending ourselves for examples and patterns to others?”

THEOPH. There is (I confess) great danger, not only of apparent, but of real ostentation, and spiritual pride, by making our Christian experience the ordinary topic of conversation.—Christians themselves have unhappy remains of *vanity* and pride in their hearts, which are too apt to be elated, and blown up by every representation of their own excellencies. For which reason they should be very cautious of pouring oil upon that fire, which is so apt of itself to blaze.—They are also under the strict and curious inspection of the carnal *world*, who are always ready to take occasion of *prejudice*, from every imaginary appearance of pride or self-exaltation. This should therefore excite their caution, lest they bring a reproach upon the operations of God's Holy Spirit; and cause the good ways of the Lord to be evil spoken of.—And what is as much to be feared as either of the things now mentioned, is the danger of tempting and promoting some pretenders in religion to exceed the truth in the narrative of their attainments, and to recommend themselves to their company, by speaking of experiences which they have never had, when these are made the common subject of discourse.

EPINET. “What then are the *proper occasions* for communicating our spiritual experiences to one another?”

THEOPH. When persons are in *darkness* and distress about their *state*, it is needful that they should *make their case known* to their minister, or some faithful experienced Christian, that they may obtain that assistance, comfort, or counsel, which
 their

their condition requires. For how can we *comfort those in trouble* (as directed, in 2 Cor. i. 4. forecited) if they do not make their trouble known?—When a convinced offender is so distressed with the burden of some *particular sin*, or with some particular darkness and difficulty relating to his *conduct*, that he can find no means to ease his mind, or quiet his conscience, he should in this case also make his difficulty known; and *seek direction* from his minister, or some faithful friend, that his wounded conscience may be safely healed. Here that rule takes place, Jam. v. 16. *Confess your faults one to another; and pray one for another.*—Moreover, when the imparting our experiences, whether we be applied to or not, may be likely to alleviate the agonies of any wounded and distressed souls, it is then proper to let *such* know, how we ourselves have conflicted with the *like* darkness, trials, or temptations; and to endeavour to *comfort ourselves together*, and help them (if possible) to *the same comforts wherewith we have been comforted of God*; according to the forecited 1 Thess. v. 11. and 2 Cor. i. 4.—Furthermore, when by conversing with any, we find them building their hope upon a false foundation, it may be seasonable to let them know how we ourselves have formerly been under the same dangerous deceit; and how, by the power of Divine grace, our feet have been plucked out of the fatal snare. This is a likely means to *save them by fear, pulling them out of the fire*, according to that in Jude 23. This is the course the apostle took to detect the self-deceivers, Phil. iii. 4, &c.—I may also add, that intimate Christian friends may profitably improve occasions to assist, comfort, and quicken one another, by mutual communications of religious experiences: For *as iron sharpeneth iron, so may a man this way sharpen the countenance of his friend*, Prov. xxxvii. 17. Upon the whole, I think that an ordinary and common discoursing of our spiritual experiences, except upon such occasions as I have mentioned, is not so likely to promote the interests of religion; at least without the utmost guard against those indiscretions, which the too frequent and familiar practice of it may tend to betray us into.

EPINET. “I cannot but highly approve what you have said upon this subject: But there is one thing you have not yet spoken to; and that is, a *claim to examine and admonish* all they

meet with, that some men seem to pretend to. I would be glad to hear what *rules* and *directions* you think proper in that case also."

THEOPH. You have now imposed upon me a very difficult task. It is here scarcely possible to suit directions to every particular case.

EPINET. "Are we then, in this case, under no rule for our guidance?"

THEOPH. We are under the general rule of *charity* to our neighbour; and, as to the particular application of that rule, *wisdom is profitable to direct*: And these following methods may be observed.—We should always enter upon discourses of this nature in the most *tender*, *kind*, and *obliging* manner possible, that we may insinuate ourselves into the affections, and not ruffle the passions of those with whom we converse. Thus did our Lord himself by the seven churches of Asia, as you may see in his epistles to them.—We should endeavour to describe the danger, and to detect the sins and delusions of some men, in a more general and distant manner, without special application to them; when we have reason to conclude, that they would not bear personal examination and admonition. Thus we may, without offence, in the most strong and pointed manner, address the consciences of such men as would be prejudiced and affronted by a personal address. This method (you know) the apostle Paul took with Felix; and left his own conscience to make the application, Acts xxiv. 25. We should likewise take care, not too *bluntly* and *abruptly*, without a proper introduction; nor *unseasonably*, in the midst of conversation or business; much less imperiously, in a way of challenge or demand, to examine any man as to his religious experiences, lest we bring contempt upon ourselves and our profession.—But yet it is doubtless our duty, upon proper occasions, in a kind affectionate manner, to discourse our neighbour upon his religious state and attainments, so that the rule be therein attended, Rom. xv. 2. *Let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good, to edification.*

EPINET. "If I do not too much intrude upon your time and patience, I would still propose one of my principal objections against the conduct of many of our late converts, which has proved a special matter of prejudice and stumbling to me."

THEOPH.

THEOPH. Be pleased, Sir, to speak freely, without complaint or restraint. I am yet ready to contribute what I can to your satisfaction.

EPINET. "What I refer to, is that *judging* and *cenfuring* fpirit, which fo much obtains among us. I cannot fee how thefe can be (as they pretend) converted perfons and Chriftians indeed, who fo openly and avowedly *judge their brethren; and fet at nought their brethren.*"

THEOPH. Hold, Sir—*Wherein thou judgef another thou condemneft thyfelf; for thou that judgef doft the fame thing.*—You are complaining of others for cenforioufnefs; and, in the fame breath, you cenfure and judge them as unconverted perfons; or, in other words, for mere hypocrites. Do not you know who has directed to *firft caft the beam out of thine own eye, that thou mayeft fee clearly to caft the mote out of thy brother's eye?*

EPINET. "Sir, I accept your reproof; and heartily thank you for it. I fee that the fault is on both fides, by which thefe diftances and alienations of mind are kept up among profefors of religion.—But though I have carried my cenfure too far, even till I have fallen into the fame fault myfelf; yet you muft nevertheless own, that this judging and cenfuring fpirit is what the *fcriptures* every where condemn."

THEOPH. There is nothing more certain, than that the fcriptures do repeatedly, and in the ftrongeft terms, condemn our judging and cenfuring one another.—It may therefore be proper to confider *what that fin is*, which the fcriptures fo often testify againft. In order to which, I would enquire of you, whether you think it an unlawful judging and cenforioufnefs to determine of a vifibly *loofe fcandalous* and *profligate* perfon, that he is in an unconverted ftate; and as fuch, an heir of deftruction and death?

EPINET. "No! That is a clear cafe—*The unrighteous fhall not inherit the kingdom of God; and the tree is known by its fruits.*"

THEOPH. Is it finful cenforioufnefs to conclude, that fuch who are open *defpifers of vital piety*, and neglecters of God's *worship*; who do not pray in their families, or attend public ordinances; who vifibly abhor all *religious converfation*, and oppofe all that promote it, are yet in a carnal ftate?

EPINET.

EPINET. "Some parts of this question do (I confess) most sensibly affect me: You have brought the matter home to my own case. But though I thereby condemn myself, I think this also must be answered in the negative: For *God is a rewarder of none but those who diligently seek him; and they who forsake him* (much more they who despise him) *will be cast off for ever.*"

THEOPH. May we not lawfully judge such men to be insincere and in an unconverted state, who *rest* in an *outward* profession, in their *moral* honesty, or *religious* duties, without any experience of a *regenerating* change, or of a *lively faith* in Christ?

EPINET. "It is doubtless true, that there be such who have a *name to live*, when they are dead; and have a *form of godliness*, without the power. And it can be no censoriousness to determine of such as these, in general, that they are hypocrites and in a carnal state.—But what business have we to make the application to particular persons? Can we judge mens hearts; or know what are, or are not, the secret transactions between God and their souls?"

THEOPH. Suppose I were discoursing with any man about his religious experiences and attainments; and found good reason to conclude, that he rested in a mere *form of godliness*, and was thereby in danger of eternal perdition; do not *charity* and compassion to his precious soul oblige me to tell him my *fears*, with the reasons of them, that I may (if possible) prevent his *perishing with a lie in his right hand*?—To give you a more sensible apprehension of what I mean: Suppose, from the account you have given of yourself in the present conversation, I have reason to conclude, that you are yet a stranger to the *power of godliness*, am I not obliged, in duty to God and faithfulness to you, to set your danger before you?

EPINET. "I believe both these questions should be answered in the affirmative."

THEOPH. Well then, there may be occasion to represent to *particular* persons our *fears* of their resting in a mere form of godliness.—And pardon me, Sir, if, out of a tender regard to your eternal interest, I am obliged to tell you, that I cannot but think the occasion is now before me. I am awfully afraid, from your utter unacquaintedness with the methods of

Divine

Divine grace in a sinner's conversion, that you have never yet experienced that change, which you certainly must experience, or never enter into the kingdom of heaven. This, Sir, is the greatest kindness to you that I am at present capable of; and I hope you will accept it accordingly.

EPINET. "Sir, you surprize me. Though my conscience was before laying the same charge against me, your faithful dealing (for which I heartily thank you) has revived and quickened its accusations; and my mind is grown very uneasy, that I am not so fit for further discourse.-- But it may not be unserviceable to me, to hear your particular sentiments upon the present subject. It may perhaps further remove those sinful prejudices, that I am sensible I have entertained.-- As you have already shewn who are not guilty of sinfully judging one another: Be pleased also to shew what this sin is, which the scriptures so much condemn, and who may be said to be guilty of it."

THEOPH. The Lord grant, that your present concern may end in well-grounded comfort and peace!--As for my sentiments, upon the subject under consideration, I shall offer them in the following particulars:

1. There is no doubt to be made but that there has been utterly a fault among us, in the censoriousness, and reproachful aspersions, that have been so commonly observed and complained of, in so many parts of the country: Nor can it be doubted, by any that have read the New Testament, that this is a very great sin, destructive of Christian charity, injurious to our neighbour's reputation, productive of divisions and animosities; and of prejudices in mens minds against the professors, and even the profession of vital piety: And therefore very provoking unto God.--But then it concerns us, that we ourselves may avoid this sin, which we so justly condemn in others, charitably to conclude, that some of these act with good views, though upon mistaken principles; and that they have a zeal for God therein, though it be not according to knowledge.

2. They who adventure to censure the state of such, who are of a regular and blameless conversation, friends to a religious life, and careful observers of the ordinances of God, without any special acquaintance with their religious experiences,

ences, are guilty of this sin. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth,* Rom. xiv. 4. *Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart,* 1 Cor. iv. 5.

3. They who publish and proclaim abroad their fears and apprehensions of regular and blameless professors, that they are but formalists and hypocrites, though they may suppose they have good grounds for their fears, are, notwithstanding, guilty of that judging, which the scriptures condemn; for they hereby *set at nought their brother,* contrary to Rom. xiv. 10. *And speak evil of their brother, and judge their brother, and thereby speak evil of the law, and judge the law, they are therefore not doers of the law, but judges,* James iv. 11. These apprehensions, if such we have, should either be *concealed* in our own breasts; or else (if we have opportunity for it) privately, charitably, and affectionately communicated only to the *person concerned*, for his best good and advantage.

4. They who, with rigour, roughness, and asperity, in dealing with any persons of a regular conversation, do admonish them of their *formality*; and they who, in a *positive, haughty* manner determine their present state and future danger; these are likewise guilty of this sin. For herein also they *are not doers of the law, but judges*; and hereby they *put a stumbling-block, and occasion to fall, in their brother's way,* contrary to Rom. xiv. 13. They hereby irritate mens passions, prejudife them against the persons and profession of their admonishers; and inflame the enmity of their carnal mind to the power of godliness.

5. When men run into these methods of judging those ministers of the gospel, who are visibly *well-qualified* for the ministry, and have visibly *conducted* themselves well in the discharge of their sacred trust, they are more aggravatedly guilty of this sin; by prejudicing people against their minister; and thereby making them slight the ordinances of the gospel, to the great danger of their precious souls. This is to direct violence to that admonition, 1 Tim. v. 19. *Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses*; and

to that exhortation, Phil. ii. 29. *Hold such in reputation.*— Upon the whole, They who have been guilty in any of these instances, have great reason for a particular and deep repentance; and for a solemn care to reform their future conduct. For, whatever thoughts they may now entertain, they must quickly stand before that Judge, who will let the world see the honour he puts upon his word; and the regard he expects from all who profess his name, to the rule which he has given them.—Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured, according to my capacity, to answer your demands in this instance also.—Are there any other difficulties before you, which you desire should be considered?

EPINET. “I should be something gratified by hearing your opinion of the practice which has very much obtained of late, of positively *determining* the *conversion* of particular persons; and even of declaring to their faces, that they are in a converted and safe state; though perhaps, in some of those instances, there has been but a very short time to observe this great change.—These things have stumbled me. But I am afraid, whether I have not been acted more by prejudice, than by a proper concern for the interests of religion, in my opposition to them.”

THEOPH. You must own, that these operations of the blessed Spirit, whereof we have been discoursing, are, in their own nature, sensible impressions; which may be discerned by those who are the happy subjects of them. They therefore, who have had a convincing and humbling sense of their sin, guilt, and impotency; who have been thereby driven to despair of help from any refuges of their own; who, in this their extremity, have had a discovery of the sufficiency and willingness of the Lord Jesus Christ to save them, and have betaken themselves for refuge to this hope set before them; such may be capable to exhibit in some measure these their experiences, with the comforts which flow from them, to others; and thereby give good reason to hope, that the power of God's *special grace* has indeed passed upon their souls. And if, in any late instances, this change has appeared very *sudden* and surprising, there is the clearer evidence of the *almighty* efficiency, by which it is wrought; and the greater resemblance of the first conversions in the Christian Church.

EPINET. "Do you then suppose it proper, in this case, to inform such persons, in *strong* and *positive* terms, that they are now converted to God, and become heirs of eternal glory; and to *publish* and proclaim the same thing abroad to the world?"

THEOPH. *Man can look* no further than to the outward appearance; the Lord only looketh on the heart. We are not therefore to assume the Divine prerogative, by pretending to any certainty, even in the most comfortable and promising appearances of this kind. They who have made the highest pretences this way, have met with instances enough to confute and shame their confidence; and to humble them for their own claim to any thing of an exact spirit of discerning. It is enough for us to go as far in this case as the apostles themselves did ordinarily pretend to; and to say, as in 1 Pet. v. 12. *By Sylvanus a faithful brother, as I suppose.* Besides, this confident determining his state may prove very mischievous to the supposed convert. Our mistaking his case, and yet positively decreeing in his favour, may lull him asleep in a dangerous security; and he will find but little cause to thank us for our confidence, when all his expectations are *eternally* cut off.

[On this occasion, the gentleman seemed to be in very great perturbation of mind. He wept,—and sat a good while silent; but at last, in a sort of agony, he vented these abrupt expressions.]

EPINET. "O Sir, you do not know with what force your last words struck my mind. *Eternal* disappointment! O ETERNITY! *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings!*—Dear Sir, can you advise a poor self-deceiving hypocrite, how shall I escape the dreadful, the eternal consequence of my self-deceit! O what a dream, what a delirium have I been in, to expect salvation by Christ without an interest in him!"

THEOPH. You know, Sir, what advice the *apostle* gave to one, who was in the like case as you seem to be now in: *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and thou shalt be saved.*

EPINET. "But you have already convinced me that this is not in my power; this depends upon the sovereign agency of the Spirit of God, of that blessed Spirit whose operations I have opposed and slighted; and he may justly now reject me, and leave me for ever under the guilt of my innumerable sins;

as I have so long withstood, and upon every occasion spoke against his divine influences.—It is certain, I cannot help myself; and I am afraid he will now leave me in my distress, *to call upon him and receive no answer, to seek him early and never find him.*”

THEOPH. I rejoice to see you *despairing* of all help in *yourself*; but take heed that you do not despair of the infinite mercy of God, and of the infinite merit and compassion of the glorious Redeemer.—Go to God in prayer; labour sensibly to acknowledge the sin of your nature, and the sins of your practice, with their special aggravations. Lament before him this particular sin, that seems to fasten upon your conscience at this time.—Acknowledge your guilt, and desert of his wrath; acknowledge your impotence, and utter inability to help yourself; and that you lie at his mercy.—Cast yourself at his foot, and beseech him, with importunate ardour of soul, that he will *draw you to Christ*.—And endeavour to *look to Jesus Christ*, as a Saviour sufficient for you, how numerous, how great, and aggravated soever your sins are; and how dark and difficult soever your case is, or can be. And hold on in this way, whatever your success appear to be.

EPINET. “I am an old man, an old sinner, and despiser of mercy. I am afraid it is too late.”

THEOPH. It is indeed too late to rest any longer in your *security*, or to *put off* the concerns of your soul, and reject the offers of mercy any more. But, blessed be God! *Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!* God has waited long upon you, and has not taken the forfeiture at your hands; but is, by your present concern, giving you a happy evidence that your day of grace is not yet past.—O, therefore, now *fly for refuge to take hold of the hope that is set before you. There is yet hope in Israel concerning this thing.*

EPINET. “If I am saved, it will be one of the greatest displays of Divine grace that ever was known.—Well! I will lie at the footstool of God's infinite mercy: If I must perish, I will perish there!”

THEOPH. A good conclusion! If the Lord assist you to keep this resolution, your case will be very hopeful.

EPINET. “Sir, I heartily thank you for all your kindness

and faithfulness to me ; and intreat your prayers for a poor guilty worthless wretch.—It is now grown late, and I must (though with reluctance) bid you farewell.”

THEOPH. Sir, a good night to you!—It is my duty to pray for you, that God would carry on his work in your heart, enable you to bring your weary and heavy-laden soul to Christ ; and not leave you to wear off these impressions until you find rest in him. May the God of all grace shew you his mercy, and visit you with his salvation !

EPINET. “ Amen ! Amen ! ”

THE SECOND CONFERENCE.

THE next day, after the conversation before recited, the minister having occasion of a long journey, was about a month absent from home. And the first day after his return, he was again visited by the same gentleman, who, with a chearful countenance, addressed him in the following manner :

EPINET. “ Sir, you are welcome home, I am heartily glad to see you.—I had always a great value for you ; but much greater now than ever before. I can now more feelingly say, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace ; and bring glad tidings of good things !* ”

THEOPH. Sir, I rejoice to see you. As you have been very much upon my mind since your last visit, I have earnestly longed to know the effect of that concern which you then expressed about your eternal interests.

EPINET. “ If I be not again deceiving myself, God has been wonderfully gracious to one of the greatest of sinners. And, notwithstanding my long abuse of mercy, and opposition to the operations of his blessed Spirit,—

[Upon the uttering of these last expressions, the gentleman was flopt by his tears ; and for some time incapacitated to finish

nish what he began to speak : but at length, suppressing his passions, he proceeded.]

—Notwithstanding (I say) my enormous guilt, a merciful God has, I hope, even in my old age, made some manifestations of his love in Jesus Christ to my soul.”

THOPH. If you have indeed experienced a saving change, you are laid under the highest obligations of gratitude to the special, distinguishing, and sovereign mercy of God ; and have reason eternally to magnify and praise the riches of that grace by which you are *accepted in the beloved*.—Will you be pleased to favour me with a general narrative of the methods by which you were brought to this comfortable conclusion?

EPINET. “I left you last with a sort of a resolution, that I would lie at the footstool of God's mercy ; and determined, if I must perish, to perish there. And accordingly, I retired to my closet as soon as I came home ; and attempted to pour out my distressed soul to God. But alas ! my mind was nothing but horror and distress. The sins of my past life, even from my earliest youth, were set in order before my eyes. I could not look to God, but as to a provoked Judge. The ideas of eternal destruction seemed to interrupt every confession of sin, and every petition for mercy ; and, in short, the whole performance was a mere medley of distraction and confusion. Inasmuch, that the small gleam of comfort, which flowed from the fore-mentioned resolution, was now quite lost. For what hope could I entertain from such lip-service to an omniscient God ! I retired to my bed ; and there lay, tossing to and fro, until the dawning of the day.—I spent the following day in fasting and prayer, with but little better success.—I examined my conduct towards men, in all the dealings of my life, as particularly as I could ; and resolved upon restitution to all whom I had wronged, in every instance that I could remember. But this bed also was too short for me to stretch myself upon.—I saw that these things, though necessary duties, would never appease the Divine justice, and atone for my sins ; nor purchase the favour of God.—I sometimes endeavoured to comfort myself with resolutions of a more strict and watchful life : And sometimes endeavoured to look to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation ; but was sensible that I could not act
faith

faith in him.—I spent a great part of my time, for the first fortnight, in acts of devotion; and yet found my heart as hard as a stone. I could excite no affection or passion but fear, in any of my approaches unto God.—I was now ready to conclude my case hopeless: That I was left of God; and that my day of grace was past.—In this extremity I retired to my closet, and was enabled, with a more feeling sense, to confess my utter unworthiness of mercy; and was filled with admiration at the patience of God towards me, that I was yet out of hell. I saw that I could not help myself; and did not deserve that God should help me. I concluded the duty with a sort of resignation of myself into his hands. I acknowledged that I lay at his mercy; if he would grant me an interest in Christ and his salvation, it would be to the eternal glory of his great name: But he would be most just, if he should cast me off for ever. I resolved to leave the case with him, however he would be pleased to deal with me; and this something eased my mind, and put me into a more calm and quiet frame.”

THEOPH. You speak of a *calm* in your mind, that followed this submission. Did you now conclude yourself in a safe state?

EPINET. “No, Sir, but my *hopes* were something revived; and my *desires* after *Christ* were more than proportional to my hopes.—O (thought I) that I could obtain an interest in CHRIST! How much is an interest in him to be preferred to all the world; I could not then envy the magnificence or grandeur of the great men of the world.—I saw this world to be what it is, a bubble, a nothing, when compared to an interest in Christ.”

THEOPH. And how did you at last obtain satisfaction in that important point?

EPINET. “After some days spent in such ardent desires after an interest in Christ, accompanied with such endeavours as I was capable of, I happened to read Luke vii. 41, 42. *There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty; when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?*—This gave me a surprizing view of the freeness of redeeming love; and the readiness of our
 blessed

blesſed Saviour to pardon and ſave all ſuch finners that come to him, without diſtinction or difference, the greateſt as well as the ſmalleſt.—With what a full and convincing light, and with what inexpressible ſatiſfaction, could I now behold that there was ſafety for my poor guilty trembling ſoul in Chriſt! —I thought, if I had a thouſand ſouls I could venture them all with him. Though my ſins were ever ſo many and great, he would frankly forgive them all. The efficacy of his blood was ſufficient for any ſinner under heaven; and therefore ſufficient for me.—I found myſelf joyfully willing to accept this Saviour upon any terms; to do, be, or bear whatever he called and enabled me to. Theſe delightful operations of my mind ſtopt the progreſs of my reading for ſome conſiderable time. At length I undertook to read the remaining part of the chapter, and when I came to the 48th verſe, *And he ſaid unto her, Thy ſins are forgiven*, a powerful impreſſion accompanied the reading thoſe words, as if they had been ſpoken to me in perſon.—How did this fill me with wonder and joy! How did my ſoul cry out, Lord, what am I! Whence this aſtoniſhing mercy to ſo vile a wretch! O how *in me has the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhewed forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them that ſhould hereafter believe on him!* But I cannot deſcribe to you the raviſhing ſatiſfaction of the remainder of that day, and the whole ſucceeding night.—Since that time, my joyful views of the love of God are ſenſibly remitted: but my comfort remains; and I ſtill find ſuch delight and enlargement, in all the duties of religion, as I never experienced before.—This is a brief and imperfect representation of my caſe; and I deſire you would deal freely and impartially with me, in giving me your opinion of it.”

THEOPH. My opinion will ſtand you in but little ſtead.—If you had a certificate from all the miniſters in the world, it would not be accepted at the bar of your final Judge. Or if they all decree you a hypocrite; and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt accepts and approves you in the great day, you will be ſafe enough.—I cannot however but hope, that I have cauſe to join with you in praifing God for this work of grace, which he has wrought in your ſoul. May the ſucceeding fruits of the bleſſed Spirit convince us both, that our hopes are well grounded. If it be indeed a ſaving change (as I hope it is),

it will have a happy and abiding effect upon your heart and life; by which your hope and comfort may be further confirmed. I am glad to find you so chearfully and delightfully trusting your soul in your Redeemer's hands. But remember, that you are not always to expect sun-shine and fair weather. You must prepare for a storm; and resolve, through grace, that whatever temptations or corruptions you may encounter, you will yet keep your heart fixed, trusting in the Lord.—Have you met with no rub in your way, since your first comfort?

EPINET. “Yes, Sir, I fell into company the last night with a gentleman who vehemently exclaims against our ministers, and the doctrines they teach; which put me into some little confusion. But I chose to avoid any disputation with him; and urged him to meet me here to-day, which he promised to do, and I expect him every minute.

[Just as these words were spoken, the person mentioned knocked at the door, who being introduced with usual salutations, the following short dialouge ensued; in which this gentleman will be represented under the borrowed name of LIBERTINUS.]

THEOPH. I suppose this may be the gentleman you referred to, in your discourse just now.

EPINET. “Yes, Sir. He is come to let you know the objections he has against *your ministry*, and the *doctrines* you teach.”

LIBERTINUS. “Upon this gentleman's request, I promised the last night, that I would make the same *objections* to your face, that I then made to him against you (and other carnal ministers, who were leading poor souls blindfold in the way of darkness and misery), upon condition that you will patiently hear what I have to say.”

THEOPH. Sir, If I am, as you represent me, a *carnal* minister, who am leading sinners in the way of destruction, it is high time I should hear, and good reason I should patiently hear my danger; and chearfully submit to be led out of it. I shall therefore attend, in the character of a *learner*, to what instructions you are pleased to give me.

LIBERTIN. “You show your *legal* spirit, by teaching sinners

ners the necessity of *preparations* for their coming to Christ; and not directing them to come immediately, without delay."

THEOPH. Be pleased to give me some particular directions, that I may know how to conduct myself for the future.— And I first desire you would tell me what you mean by *coming to Christ*?

LIBERTIN. "I mean receiving him by *faith*."

THEOPH. Should we direct sinners to come to Christ, and receive him by faith, before they *understand* the way and terms of salvation proposed in the gospel?

LIBERTIN. "No! You should instruct them in these things; and then exhort them to come to Christ: For *how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard*."

THEOPH. What should we exhort them to come to Christ for?

LIBERTIN. "To save them from their sin and misery."

THEOPH. Should we exhort them to come to Christ to save them from their sin and misery, without any *sense* that they are sinful and miserable?

LIBERTIN. "That is impossible, and a contradiction."

THEOPH. Should we direct them to come to Christ, and receive him, with an apprehension and expectation that they can save themselves; and have no need of a special interest in the Redeemer?

LIBERTIN. "No! You should teach them their necessity of an interest in Christ; and exhort them to come immediately."

THEOPH. Should we teach them to come immediately to Christ, and to receive him by faith, without any *desires* of an interest in him?

LIBERTIN. "We should come to him for desires to receive and trust him."

THEOPH. We should then teach men to come to Christ *against* their wills, and to believe in Christ, that he may make them *willing to believe* in him!—should we teach men to bring *their own righteousness* with them, when they come to Christ? and to expect salvation from him for their own sake, for their duties, their good purposes, or performances?

LIBERTIN. "You had not need (I dare say) to teach them

any more *legal* doctrines than you do. This legality of yours is what I am now finding fault with."

THEOPH. Should we teach men to come to Christ, and to receive him, *before* they see any *safety* in so doing, and while they dare not venture their souls in his hands?

LIBERTIN. "Why do you ask such questions! You know that receiving Christ by faith implies trusting in him, and depending upon him."

THEOPH. Here then are six different *preparatives*, which you acknowledge necessary to our receiving Christ by faith. By your own concessions, a sinner must first understand the way and terms of salvation.—He must be sensible of his sinful and miserable state—He must see his impotency, and necessity of an interest in Christ—He must have such desires of an interest in Christ, as make him willing to accept him upon his own terms—He must renounce all other hopes and confidences. And he must see such safety in believing in Christ, as will enable him readily to venture his eternal interests in his hands. Now then, what doctrines do we teach, but what you yourself are forced to allow necessary to be taught? We are as earnest with sinners to believe immediately in Christ as you can be; and therefore admonish them to cry earnestly to God, that he would remove all hindrances out of the way; and enlighten, persuade, and enable them to believe, that they may be saved. We exhort them to look to Christ *immediately*; but not with their eyes *shut*—We call upon them to give Christ *immediate* entertainment in their souls; but we advise them, in order to get it, to get the doors of their hearts *opened*, which are barred against him; that so *he may come in and sup with them, and they with him*. We call upon them to use all appointed means, to *awake out of their sleep, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give them light*.

LIBERTIN. "Poor deluded soul! I see you have not been *taught of God*."

THEOPH. Though you find me unteachable in this point, be pleased to proceed in your instructions; and see if you cannot find better success hereafter.

LIBERTIN. "You teach, that men may be true *believers* and yet not *know* that they have saving faith; and, on the contrary, that they may have a joyful *persuasion* they are interest-

ed in Christ; and yet be *unbelievers*. Thus you give men *hopes* of salvation, who want the very *essence* of saving faith; and would throw uncomfortable *scruples* into the minds of those unto whom *God speaks peace*."

THEOPH. Then you suppose *manifestation*, or a persuasion of our *justified* state, belongs to the *essence* of a saving faith:

LIBERTIN. "Most certainly! Can men believe and not know it? Is not faith an exercise of the mind? And can any man be ignorant of the operation of his own mind?—Can any man believe in and depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as his Saviour, and not be persuaded of the truth and certainty of it? Or will the Spirit of God ever give men this joyful persuasion, when there is nothing in it?"

THEOPH. Does not *faith* in Jesus Christ consist in our *receiving* him upon gospel-terms?

LIBERTIN. "Receiving Christ is certainly (as I told you before) the scripture-definition of saving faith—*To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name,*" John i. 12.

THEOPH. Which is *first* in order? Our *act*, in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ; or the *evidence* that we have received him?

LIBERTIN. "It is certain that there can be no evidence of an airy nothing. The act must needs precede the evidence of that act. That cannot be evidently true, which is not really true at all. But what do you mean by this question?"

THEOPH. Doth it not then follow, that we must *have faith* before we *know*, or have *evidence* that we believe in Christ; since we cannot know we have, consequently that *manifestation* is not of the essence of faith?

LIBERTIN. "There is but a very short *distance* of time between our receiving Christ, and the evidence that we have received him."

THEOPH. Suppose that there were but a *minute's* distance. If true *faith* can exist one single moment without *manifestation*, it may, for the same reason, exist a thousand. If persuasion of our good estate be *necessary*, and *essential* to true faith, then it cannot exist *one* minute without it. If this be not essentially necessary to true faith, it *may* (though I do not think it ordinarily does) exist always without it.—I do not see how this

comes short of demonstration: You must certainly fall under the power of conviction.

LIBERTIN. "Demonstration! It is nothing but quibble. I see no force in it to convince."—

THEOPH. Let me then enquire further into this matter.— Do you suppose that *all* true believers *always* have the *manifestations* of God's love, and clear *evidences* of an interest in Christ?

LIBERTIN. "No! They may be under desertions—God may *hide his face*, and *they may be troubled*. There may be such, *who fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant, who yet walk in darkness and see no light*. But they have then no faith in *exercise*."

THEOPH. Are there not such as have had those *evidences* and *manifestations*, which we are speaking of, who are afterwards, the greatest part of their lives, in *darkness* and doubt about their state.

LIBERTIN. "This is notoriously true; but how comes it to be so, but from such *teachers* as you are, and from such *doctrines* as you teach?"

THEOPH. However it comes to pass, you allow it to be fact. And what *class* must we rank these in, while in these dark and doubting frames? Are they believers, or unbelievers?

LIBERTIN. "I have told you before, they are believers under desertion. They have the habit of faith, but are under a suspension of the exercise of it."

THEOPH. Suppose they should die in this dark and doubting frame, what would their eternal state be?

LIBERTIN. "That is clear: *Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies*."

THEOPH. The sum of your present instruction then is this: That there may be true believers, who (while such) may want the very essence of a saving faith.—They may, the greatest part of their lives, have the habit of faith without the exercise of it; and be all this while wholly destitute of what is absolutely necessary to the very being of true faith. They may die in this state, true believers, without the essence of faith; and be eternally glorified.—Do not you think
it

it high time, that a carnal ministry and an ignorant world should be enlightened by such instructions as these !

We will now, if you please, consider the other part of your charge against the carnal ministry you complain of; and see whether we are so guilty as you suppose, by preaching that men may have a joyful persuasion that they are interested in Christ, and yet be unbelievers.—I would then enquire, whether we must conclude such a persuasion to be a saving faith, if it should puff a man up with pride and vanity of mind; and cause him, like the Pharisees, to think himself righteous, and to despise others; or, like those in the prophet, to say, *Stand by thyself; come not nigh me; for I am holier than thou.*

LIBERTIN. “That cannot be: But if it were supposed, all that can be inferred from it is, that they have imperfection accompanying their faith.”

THEOPH. That this can be is too evident from unquestionable fact, open to every body’s observation.—And you are to remember, that I am not enquiring whether these persons have true faith; but whether this persuasion of an interest in Christ be essential to a true faith. If so, this pride and vanity does not only accompany their faith, but is the effect and fruit of it—It directly flows from what you call saving faith, as the immediate cause of its production.—Suppose this persuasion be but a part of the description of saving faith; yet, according to you, it necessarily belongs to the description, and is of the essence of faith; and thence it follows, that it is faith itself (what belongs to its nature and essence) that is the immediate cause of haughtiness and pride.—But I forget that I am the learner. What if some persons, who have this persuasion, should live sinful sensual and scandalous lives; are they notwithstanding true believers?

LIBERTIN. “They will not live such lives; they will love holiness. But if they did live as you suppose, they, being interested in the redemption of Christ, cannot fail of salvation.”

THEOPH. The world has had too many evidences, that men may entertain this comforting and delightful persuasion of an interest in Christ, and yet live most profligate and abandoned lives. Was not this the case of the Ranters, Muggletonians, Seekers, Familists, &c.? There are many now living amongst

us,

us, who have not forgot the mad freaks of the infamous *Cass* and *Banks*, with their followers. And who could have a stronger persuasion of an interest in Christ than they had? How did they frequently go about the streets, in a sort of rapture, crying, Joy, joy!—Was this, their joyful satisfaction and persuasion of their interest in Christ, a true faith or not?

LIBERTIN. “Poor man! You have had no experience what this satisfactory and joyful persuasion of an interest in Christ means; or else you would not have imagined this people to be capable of it.”

THEOPH. Be pleased then to give me some further information about it.—Is our receiving Christ, and our personal persuasion of an interest in him the same thing? Or are they not?

LIBERTIN. “I cannot say they are altogether the same thing: For the receiving a gift, and knowing that I do receive it, are two different things; though they accompany one another, and cannot be separated.”

THEOPH. Is it not possible for a man to deceive himself, by a strong persuasion of his having received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, when in reality he has not? May he not *think himself something when he is nothing*? Did not Judas, did not the five foolish virgins, and the church of Laodicea, deceive themselves?—And will not all that live and die in such self-deceit necessarily perish?

LIBERTIN. “This cannot be denied.”

THEOPH. The sum then of the present instruction you give me is this: That the persuasion, which you say is essential to a true saving faith, may be productive of pride and vanity of mind; and may consist with a scandalous and profligate life:—That it is not the same thing with receiving Christ, or with saving faith; but may, and sometimes does deceive men to their eternal destruction: And yet, that all who have this persuasion are actually interested in the redemption of Christ, and cannot fail of eternal salvation.—This, it seems, is the doctrine you would direct us to teach to our people.

EPIN+T. “I think, Sir, you have sufficiently exposed this gentleman’s opinion. You would now oblige me, if you would give us your own thoughts upon the subject under consideration.”

THEOPH. I acknowledge the truth of what he says, that
faith

faith is the exercise of the mind; and that every man may know the operations of his own mind: But it does not follow from thence, that every man must know whether he be or be not a true believer. Though we cannot but be conscious to the actings of our minds, and feel them operate; yet we may not certainly know what is the exact quality of those operations, and whether our faith be saving and true or not.—The believer may sensibly feel such exercises of mind, as look very much like true faith; and yet, through the darkness of his understanding, the prevalence of temptation, or fear of presumption, he may be awfully jealous, that this is but a counterfeit grace, which may leave him exposed to disappointment and confusion. Alas! it is to be feared that thousands deceive themselves in this most concerning case, by taking the resemblance for the reality; and hence we may well dread being cheated by mere appearances.

It must also be acknowledged, that clear, distinct, and satisfying evidence of the exercise of faith is not only attainable; but is what has been actually attained by many of the children of God, to their unspeakable consolation; and is what should and will be earnestly pressed after by every true believer. He that can content himself without assurance, does thereby evidence that he has hitherto rested short of true faith. A true believer cannot willingly be at a dreadful uncertainty what his eternal state is like to be, but will *give diligence to make his calling and election sure. Manifestation* is absolutely necessary to the *comfort*, though it be not necessary to the *safety* of a child of God. It is necessary to the *joy* of faith, though not to the *being* of faith. But, this notwithstanding, it must be remembered that it is our acceptance of Christ (and not our persuasion that we have received him) which *gives us the power, the privilege, to become the children of God*, John i. 12. It is Christ's righteousness, and not our evidence of an interest in it, that is the matter of our justification before God—*We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. iii. 23. Accordingly, our safety is founded upon our trusting in Christ, and committing our souls to him; and not upon the satisfaction we have in our minds about it. Eph. i. 12. *That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.* 2 Tim. i.

12. He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day. Whence it follows, that the joy and peace which is commonly found, first or last, in a greater or lesser degree in all true believers, is not faith in Jesus Christ; but a fruit or consequence of faith, and the discovery of it to their own consciences. After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13. What a dreadful train of consequences will follow, from the supposition that faith consists in a satisfactory persuasion of our good estate! If so, then our justification must depend upon our frames; and be as mutable as our comfort. For how often soever we want this persuasion, we are unbelievers; and while such, in a state of condemnation, John iii. 18.—If so, then tempted, deserted, or melancholly believers can have no possible means of comfort or relief. Those who walk in darkness and see no light, can no ways be encouraged to trust in the Lord, and to stay themselves upon their God, as directed in Isa. l. 10.—If so, the most secure and presumptuous self-flatterers are in the safest state: And how then can that be true, that he who thinketh himself something, when he is nothing, deceiveth himself! Gal. vi. 3.—If so, the church of Laodicea was in the exercise of a true faith, when she said, *I am rich and increased with goods; and have need of nothing*, Rev. iii. 17.—If so, there can be no occasion for the apostle's exhortation, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith*. For we can be always certain whether we have a satisfying persuasion of our own good estate, or not. Nor is there any occasion to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, as we are exhorted 2 Pet. i. 10. For what diligence can be wanting, to know what is the settled and satisfying persuasion of our own minds?—In fine, If so, there is no means left to detect confident self-deceivers, or to recover bold presumptuous sinners out of their dangerous soul-destroying mistakes. Insomuch, that I do not know what doctrine can have a directer tendency to the destruction of multitudes of poor sinners than this has.

LIBERTIN. “These consequences shew the darkness of your own mind.”

THEOPH. Well! What further instructions have you to give, that may enlighten my dark mind?

LIBERTIN. “You are so rooted in your prejudices and erroneous

aneous principles, that it will be to no purpose to talk to you any longer."

EPINET. "Be pleased then, for my sake, to proceed according to the promise you made me the last night."

LIBERTIN. "One of those *legal* doctrines which I then did, and still do object against is, That men are put upon *evidencing* their justification by their *sanctification*. This is like lighting up a candle to see the sun. By this they are looking to their own attainments, and not to Christ's righteousness, for hopes of salvation."

THEOPH. Do not you acknowledge that a life of holiness is absolutely necessary to salvation; and that *without holiness no man can see the Lord*?

LIBERTIN. "I told you before, that believers *will* be holy."

THEOPH. Does it not therefore follow from thence, that those who will *not* be holy, are not *true* believers? Do you yourself suppose, that any man may justly esteem himself a child of God while he lives in the service of sin and Satan?

LIBERTIN. "God will not impute sin to his children. *He has laid upon CHRIST the iniquities of us all*; and he will not lay them upon *them* too."

THEOPH. I thought that the Lord Jesus Christ had not come to save men in their sins; but to *redeem them from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*: And consequently, that none have their iniquities laid upon Christ, but those whom he saves from the *power* and dominion, as well as the *guilt* and punishment of sin.—Pray, sir, answer me directly—Can any man *have this hope in Christ, that doth not purify himself even as he is pure*? And, on the contrary, shall not *the pure in heart* certainly *see God*; and *he that orders his conversation aright* partake of his salvation?

LIBERTIN. "I acknowledge that these are the very words of the scripture; but *you* do not understand them, *you wrest the scriptures*."

THEOPH. Is it not certainly true, that *he who doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*? And, on the contrary, is it not also true, that *he who sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*? And that *he who committeth sin is of the devil*?

LIBERTIN. "I acknowledge that this also is scripture language."

THEOPH. Do not the scriptures make *committing*, or the not *committing* sin the distinguishing mark, by which the *children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil?*

LIBERTIN. "It does, I confess."

THEOPH. Well, is there any other evidence, that would give us a comfortable claim to the character of God's children, if this were wanting?

LIBERTIN. "Yes; if this should be wanting, *the witness of God's Spirit with our spirits, that we are his children,* is a better evidence in our favour than this."

THEOPH. Which way shall we know, that we have the *witness of God's Spirit*; and are not deceived, as many pretenders to it have certainly been?

LIBERTIN. "*He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.* He feels it, he knows it."

THEOPH. So said the *Ranters, Muggletonians, and Familists*, before mentioned. But both they and you must excuse me from believing, that the Spirit of God witnesseth with your spirits, contrary to his witness in his word.—Where he is a witnessing Spirit, he is also a sanctifying Spirit—*They who live in the Spirit, do also walk in the Spirit, Gal. v. 25.*

LIBERTIN. "Thus blind men may undertake to judge of colours, as you adventure to speak evil of things you understand not."

THEOPH. Shall we then *sum* up your instructions upon this subject?—You cannot deny but that the scriptures make holiness absolutely necessary to salvation; that no one can *have this hope, who doth not purify himself, as Christ is pure*; that every one that hath this hope, doth thus purify himself; that he who *doth righteousness is righteous*; and that *they who live in sin have not seen him, neither known him*; and that this is the light by which the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. You cannot but acknowledge that all this is the very word of God. And yet you will hold, that we must *not* evidence our justification by that which God himself has told us is a sure mark and evidence of it; and without which he has assured us, that we are not in a justified state. We must not make it manifest to ourselves whose children

dren we are, by that which God himself has told us is the proper manifestation of it.—And what is the reason why we must not try ourselves by this rule? Because 'this were "to light up a candle to see the fun. We may have a better and clearer evidence." What, without this! An evidence that may consist with a course of finning! And may, with the greatest assurance, be pretended to by men of most profligate and abandoned lives! Let these but impute their presumptuous confidence to the Spirit of God, and call it his *witnessing with their spirits*; and their state is safe!—You tell us indeed, that they who have this witness, *will not sin*: But what if they should!—I conclude you will answer, with a famous *Rabbi* of the present day, "That we must not mind sin any more than a fly." What sort of doctrines are these! I hope our people are better instructed by their carnal ministers (as you are pleased to stigmatize us) than to receive such carnal, such dangerous, and mischievous principles as these are.

LIBERTINE. "Poor soul! I pity you and your deluded followers: But I see it is to no purpose to talk any more with you; and therefore must bid you farewell."

THEOPH. I hope, Sir, you will not go away disgusted. I have designed no personal incivility or disrespect in any thing I have said.—But if you are resolute to go, I heartily wish you well.

EPHRAIM. "I see he is ruffled: He is gone away in a pet. But though he is gone, I hope you will for my sake more particularly clear up the subject before us; and shew how far we may depend upon *internal manifestation* of the love of God, as an evidence of our safety; and how far we ought to look to our *sanctification* for the comfort of a justified state."

THEOPH. You may remember I said something to this in our former conference. To which I will now add; It is doubtless true, that the believer may, in such a feeling and sensible manner, exercise faith in Christ; he may have such a clear discovery of his sufficiency, so heartily comply with the gospel call, so firmly depend upon the promise; and have all this so clearly manifested to himself by the Spirit of God, that he can at that time no more doubt of it than of any other operations of his own mind. But then it must be remembered, that these sensible impressions are but transient things. He may lose them; and if the Spirit of God withdraw his

comforting influences he certainly will lose them, and not so much as retain a lively idea of the transporting comforts which he then had. And what shall he do now? Whither shall he betake himself for support?—He remembers indeed, that he has had comfort and joy; but this prop is now knocked from under him. He goes forward, but it is not there; and backward, but he cannot perceive it.—Besides, many have pretended to the same experience, and to the same assurance that he has formerly had, who are evidently self-deceivers. And how shall he know that he is not himself likewise in a most dangerous mistake, but by the fruit of the Spirit in his heart and life? These therefore must be considered as the *ordinary* and *standing* evidences in his favour.

If he maintains an habitual course of vital and true holiness, he thereby clears up his interest in Christ: For from him only, the head of influences, this sanctifying change in the man must proceed. If he has not a principle of holiness in his heart, and is not careful to be practically holy in his life and conversation, he cannot *belong to Christ*, or *be his disciple*, he can have no interest in Christ; for *Christ came to save his people from their sins*.---And if we yet further consider this case; how many true believers are there, who may never have experienced such clear, ravishing, and unquestionable *manifestations* of the love of God to their souls? And which way possibly can such evidence their justification, but by their *sanctification*? They sometimes doubt whether their *faith* (taken under an abstract examination) be sincere and genuine: But they may perhaps find beyond doubt their sorrow for and hatred of all sin, their love to holiness, and their unfeigned endeavours of conformity to God in all things. They find the purifying effects of faith. By this, therefore, they may safely conclude their state good. They may safely conclude themselves to be *in Christ Jesus*; *because old things are passed away, and all things are become new in them*.—In fine, Sanctification is in itself a good evidence for us, but where that is wanting, we can have none at all.

EPINET. “I must acknowledge, Sir, you have set this matter in a clear and convincing light. -Oh! What wild schemes this gentleman entertains! We had several other such doctrines taught us in conversation with him the last night.

Particularly,

Particularly, that we are justified from eternity; that the law is not a rule of life for believers; that God *sees no sin* in his children, how imperfect soever, and the like."

THEOPH. The Lord graciously prevent the spreading of such dangerous contagion.--What, *justified* before we had a being! Pardoned, before we sinned! Acquitted from guilt, before we were guilty! Why not sanctified and glorified too from eternity? Is it not true of all who *believe not, that they are condemned already*? Are they justified from eternity, and yet condemned for their unbelief?--What, the law not a rule of life to believers! Have they then no rule to walk by! Are they under no obligations to obedience? Nay, are they not even under greater obligations, from the special love of God manifested to them? *Do we then make void the law by faith? God forbid! Yea we establish the law.*--What, does God *see no sin* in his children! Are we not expressly told, that *the thing which David did displeased the Lord*? 2 Sam. xi. 27. Do not believers sin against greater obligations? And are not therefore their sin especially displeasing to God? Alas, What dreadful work would those strange doctrines make in the world, if men should be generally acted and influenced by them? The Lord deliver us from such loose and dangerous principles!

EPINET. "A good petition! And now, Sir, I heartily thank you for your renewed pains with me and kindness to me.--I hope I shall have occasion to praise God to all eternity for my acquaintance and conversation with you.--The Lord requite to you this work and labour of love!"

THEOPH. May God be with you, my friend? And grant you continued experience of the sanctifying, quickening, and comforting influences of his blessed Spirit; that you may go on *your way rejoicing, may glorify God* on earth, and at last *enter into the joy of your Lord* in the heavenly world.

EPINET. "I thank you, dear Sir, for these your friendly wishes; and beg the favour of a daily remembrance in your intercessions at the throne of grace.--Sir, I wish you a good night."

THEOPH. *God forbid, that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you!*--I also desire your prayers for me.--My love to all at home.

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REFLECTIONS

UPON

MR. WETMORE'S LETTER

IN DEFENCE OF

Dr WATERLAND'S DISCOURSE

OF

REGENERATION:

WITH A

VINDICATION

OF THE

RECEIVED DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION;

And plain Scripture-evidence, that the notion of BAPTISMAL
REGENERATION is of a dangerous and destructive tendency.

BY JONATHAN DICKINSON, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT ELISABETH-TOWN, NEW-JERSEY.

2 Tim. i. 13. *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*

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REFLECTIONS

UPON

MR WETMORE'S LETTER

IN DEFENCE OF

Dr WATERLAND'S DISCOURSE OF REGENERATION.

REGENERATION being by our blessed Lord himself determined to be of absolute necessity to all that would ever enter into the kingdom of God, it must be acknowledged to be of vast consequence to have a right apprehension, as well as a sensible experience of this great change, upon which our eternal interest does so immediately depend. By this consideration, I was sometime since excited to publish a discourse upon *the Nature and Necessity of Regeneration*; and to annex some remarks upon a treatise of Dr Waterland's upon that subject, which was industriously handed about the country, and seemed to threaten the seducement of many of our people from the *faith once delivered to the saints*, in that most important concern.

The Rev. Mr Wetmore has thought fit to undertake the defence of Dr Waterland's scheme, in a pamphlet entitled, *A Letter occasioned by Mr Dickinson's Remarks upon Dr Waterland's Discourse of Regeneration*: He does not indeed pretend, that his discourse is an answer to my Remarks. He might probably foresee how very poor an appearance such a pretence would make in the title-page, when all my arguments against his scheme are wholly overlooked in the treatise; and not so much as an attempt made to answer any one of them. He tells us, that "all which appeared needful, by way of answer to the poison of this confident performance of Mr Dickinson, is to shew, that believing the doctrines this author so highly faults the clergy of the church of England,

“and particularly Dr Waterland, for teaching, as they are in reality taught, cannot possibly be any prejudice to any man, in respect of his hope and comfort here, or his happiness in eternity.” (p. 6.)

I am not therefore called to vindicate my Remarks upon Dr Waterland; this author gives me no occasion or opportunity for it. My arguments against the Dr's discourse are yet unanswered, and (for ought that appears in this letter of Mr Wetmore's) are altogether unanswerable. But it seems our author has this satisfaction, that he supposes his doctrines (whether true or false) “cannot possibly be any prejudice to any man, in respect of his hope and comfort here, or his happiness in eternity”—That is, he thinks his doctrines true, and would be willing to prove them so; and though he cannot answer the arguments against them, he has this to recommend them to our acceptance, that the belief of them will do us no hurt, if it does us no good.—I think, he does not pretend to prove any special advantage, that can follow from the entertainment of his principles. It is (it seems) sufficient to his purpose, to shew that they are not injurious and mischievous.—We need not then be very solicitous about coming into his sentiments; nor filled with any anxiety lest our side of the question should prove a mistake, since there is so little danger of an error on that hand. If *baptism* be *regeneration*, we are as safe as the gentlemen who oppose us; being regenerated as well as they. But if it should prove otherwise, and by resting upon our baptism we should fall short of that new-birth, which is absolutely necessary to all who would see the kingdom of God; it is obvious what the consequence of such a fatal mistake must be.—It is therefore open to every man's view, which side of the question it becomes a wise man to take, where there is such infinite danger on the one hand, and none at all on the other. And this will appear in a yet stronger light, when I have shewn (as I hope to do in the sequel) that this gentleman can produce no good evidence at all, either of the truth or the safety of his principles.

I SHALL first endeavour to consider, Whether a mistake in this doctrine be so *innocent* and *indifferent* as Mr Wetmore would represent it.

I shall

I shall then take some brief notice of the objections he is pleased to make against some expressions of mine, in my Remarks upon Dr Waterland.

And next proceed to consider the *State of the question* as represented by this author: And then *answer the arguments* he brings in support of his opinion.

First, I am to consider, Whether a *mistake* in this doctrine be so *innocent* and *indifferent*, as Mr Wetmore would represent it.

He demands whether “it can be any prejudice to such as truly believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and live in obedience to the gospel-precepts, that they think verily, and so declare, that they were born again when they were baptized?” (p. 8.)

I must answer this question in the affirmative. For though the danger of this doctrine does not so much, and so immediately affect true believers and sincere penitents as others; yet it may prove very injurious to them also.—Their supposing that they were *regenerated* at their *baptism*, may make them inattentive to, and insensible of the great and gracious change wrought in their souls at their regeneration; and prevent that *peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, that access by faith into the grace wherein they stand, that rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and that glorying in tribulations*, which the apostle tells us are consequent upon our *justification by faith*, (Rom. v. 1, 2, 3.) and may render their lives exceeding dark and uncomfortable, though their state be safe.—Besides, this may prevent their discharge of several duties which they owe to God; such as giving him the *praise due to the glory of his grace, by which they are accepted in the beloved, their rejoicing in Christ Jesus, their crying, Abba, Father; and their serving him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of their lives*.

But the great and (I may justly say) the infinite mischief, that is done by this principle, is to unbelievers and impenitent sinners. Multitudes of these seem to quiet their consciences with a vain apprehension of their regenerate state, and to cry peace to themselves, while walking in the imagination of their

their own hearts. They may be sensible, perhaps, of the finfulness and irregularity of their present conduct; but they keep their consciences asleep, with their good purposes and designs, with their legal repentance and dead faith, with their lifeless devotions, and temporary reformations; and thus live and die strangers to that vital change, without which our blessed Saviour assures us, we can never see the kingdom of God.— It is not therefore (as Mr Wetmore supposes) “the only question, whether a bare opinion, that baptism is regeneration, will exclude men from the kingdom of heaven, that believe in Jesus Christ; and, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world?” (p. 8.) But it is a question of vastly greater concernment, whether they who by a vain dream of a baptismal regeneration quiet their consciences in an unconverted state, are not laying a foundation for mourning at the last, and lamenting the destructive error when it is too late?

But we are told, that “such a mistake (if it were indeed a mistake) would not render any man incapable of doing every thing that the holy scriptures require as the condition of salvation.” (p. 8.)

To which I answer, He that hath no other *regeneration* than his *baptism*, is incapable (while in his present state) of doing any thing which the scriptures require, as the terms of salvation. He is indeed capable of the external duties of religion; and thereby of being in the way of the blessing, and wherein only he may hope for the influences of God's sovereign grace, which he can neither deserve nor claim by any thing he does or can do. He is capable of an external reformation, and of a careful endeavour to live a life of morality: But by these things he can never answer either the penal or preceptive demands of that law, which curses him for the least imperfection of his obedience, and for his *not continuing in all things written therein to do them*. He is *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1. He is *in an estate of enmity to God*; and cannot please him, Rom. viii. 7, 8. He is *a child of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. In a word, he cannot believe in Christ, without being born of God, 1 John v. 1. And without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6. This is evidently the case of every unregenerate soul: And
thence

thence it is, that he who is not *born again* cannot see the kingdom of God, John iii. 3.—How dreadful then must the disadvantage be, for sinners to be ignorant of the danger and misery of their state, of their necessity of a vital change, and of their impotence and utter inability to make this great and infinitely important change in their own hearts! Of what unspeakable importance is it, that such as these should awake out of their pleasing dream; that they may meditate an escape from the wrath to come; and being sensible of their undone and miserable state, they may be brought to the footstool of God's sovereign mercy!—How dreadful will the issue be, after they have flattered themselves with their vain imaginations of a regenerate state; and of their capacity of doing every thing, which the scripture requires as a condition of their salvation, to find that a *deceived heart* has turned them aside, and that they have a lie in their right hand!—Though it be possible for men to experience a work of grace in their hearts, (as I doubt not some have done) even under the prejudice of this mistake; yet they will not be likely to be very solicitous about that necessary change, while they delude their souls with an apprehension, that they have had it already; and therefore not very likely to be in the way of obtaining that grace, by which they may be capable of complying with the scripture-terms of salvation.

Had I esteemed this to be a mere *logomachy*, or verbal controversy (as it seems this gentleman does), I should not have provoked him to have spent so much time and pains for nothing, but to vindicate the acceptation of the word *regeneration*; nor should I now mispend my time in so vain and fruitless a controversy. But it is notorious, and open to every one's observation, that the patrons of baptismal regeneration are avowed opposers of the doctrines of special grace, and of those experiences of a new living principle of spiritual action, which (if I have any understanding of the gospel of Christ) are absolutely necessary to our eternal safety. These things are treated by them with reproach and contempt, under the characters of *Cant*, *Enthusiasm*, *Fanaticism*, and the like, as is abundantly exemplified by this author; and it is no more than what this principle of theirs naturally leads them to. By supposing all those texts of scripture, which speak of the necessity of the *new birth*, the *new creature*, the *new man*, &c. refer

to baptisin only, they easily (with Dr Waterland and Mr Wetmore) suppose, that a sincere endeavour to do the best they can, and to be daily gaining ground of their vices and passions, is all the change necessary to a state of favour with God.—I cannot therefore but conclude, that while I am impleading this error of theirs, I am endeavouring to defend one of the most important articles of our faith and hope; and endeavouring to pluck poor unwary souls out of a snare that may prove most destructive and ruinous to them.

I AM, in the next place, to take notice of his *objections* against some expressions in my Remarks.

He insinuates, That “my great aim was to possess my credulous readers with groundless prejudices against, and aver- sions to the clergy of the church of England:”—And complains of my “warning my hearers [as in page 346. of this volume], in the apostle’s language, 2 Tim. iii. 5. *From such turn away,*” (p. 1.)—In the place he refers to, I admonished my hearers against the ministry of such, who would quiet mens consciences with a form of godliness, without the power; who would put poor sleepy sinners into a vain dream of having already received a baptismal regeneration; who would encourage their hopes of a safe state, merely from their morality; and who leave the necessity of the converting influences of the blessed Spirit, and of a vital union to Christ by faith, out of their creed; and flatter sinners with an imagination of safety, without experiencing either the one or the other.—Now then let the appeal be made to the world of mankind, whether his finding such fault with this address, and his applying these characters to the “clergy of the church of England,” do not abundantly justify what I have above observed, with respect to the great importance of our stedfast adherence to the doctrine of regeneration, as it has been generally received in the Protestant churches. I must therefore be so far from giving satisfaction to this gentleman, as to the matter of this complaint, that I must renew my exhortation, to all who have any value for their eternal interests, to turn away from such doctrines as tend to satisfy their minds, and give them hopes of salvation, without the experience of a new and living principle of grace in their hearts.

He

He complains, that "I represent the great importance (of the doctrine I plead for) with as strong a claim to infallibility, as the Pope himself," (p. 4.) Because I deduced this corollary from full (and I think, unanswerable) proof, That baptism is not that *regeneration* which the scriptures make necessary to salvation, *viz.* "From hence it appears, that we cannot see the kingdom of God, in consequence of these principles espoused by some of our Episcopal clergy. How harsh soever the consequence may be supposed, it is nevertheless infallibly certain."

Upon this he exclaims,—“I find we need not go to Rome for infallibility: Behold and admire!” But what cause of this tragical exclamation? Can any thing be more infallibly certain, than a consequence justly deduced from premises truly and fairly stated? Let him therefore, if he can, first shew what defect there is in the premises, before he exclaims against the conclusion. If this be what he dare not attempt, he must yet allow me to suppose that conclusion to be infallibly certain.

But he flouts at the expression, and seems to suppose it incongruous and ridiculous to speak of seeing the kingdom of God, in consequence of principles espoused and professed. “This (he tells us) is a low discovery for an infallible doctor.”—I would enquire of this gentleman, whether they who shall finally see the kingdom of God, will not be saved in consequence of their believing the scriptures to be the word of God; our blessed Saviour to be the Son of God; and holiness to be necessary to eternal happiness; and whether all practical godliness, both of heart and life, be not in consequence of these principles? Or, to speak directly to the present purpose, whether a proper concern about, and endeavour to obtain a new birth, or saving conversion unto God, be not in consequence of our believing the necessity of that great and important change? Or, on the contrary, whether security, carelessness and negligence about obtaining the renewing influences of the Spirit of God, are not too commonly seen, in consequence of a disbelief of the necessity of converting and regenerating grace?—If these things are so, men may be saved or perish in consequence of the principles they espouse and profess. If not, there are no principles, that we can profess or practise

practise upon, which will have any influence upon our eternal salvation.

But he “ would fain know, if seeing the kingdom of God “ can be said infallibly to be in consequence of believing any “ doctrine whatsoever, without obedience to the will of God.” (p. 4.) I answer, No, by no means. But I can tell him, that speaking impertinently will always be the infallible consequence of changing the question in debate. He might have remembered, that I had fully proved to him, that obedience to the will of God was the necessary fruit, or (if he pleases) the infallible consequence of our being born of God. On the contrary, Dr Waterland and this gentleman teach us, that a man may be born of God, while he remains an impenitent hypocrite, and lives in a course of sin. Now then, the question fairly stated between him and me is this: Seeing regeneration is, by the suffrage of our blessed Lord himself, absolutely necessary in order to our seeing the kingdom of God, and we have such different principles with respect to the nature of this change; which of those principles has the directest tendency towards the kingdom of God, *that* which supposes *obedience* to the will of God, both in heart and life, a necessary fruit and consequence of regeneration; or *that* which supposes the regenerate may finally live and die in *disobedience* and *impenitence*?—We both agree, that regeneration is absolutely necessary to salvation; but we vastly differ with respect to the necessary consequences of that regeneration upon the hearts and lives of men.—He supposes, that this regeneration which is so absolutely necessary to salvation, may leave men finally impenitent and wicked; while I insist upon it, that it must be always accompanied with all the graces of the blessed Spirit, and must always bring forth the fruits of holiness and new obedience: And I have shewn him, that our blessed Lord and his apostles do abundantly insist upon the same thing: To which he has not seen cause to make any reply.

Mr Wetmore again, as it seems, with a very indecent heat of spirit, complains of my enquiring why the moral heathen may not be in a state of salvation, as well as such pretenders to Christianity, that have no other marks of the new creature, than those given us by Dr Waterland, *viz.* “ Sincerely to endeavour to do the best they can; and to be daily gaining

“ground of their vices and passions; and to find themselves, after strictest examination, to be upon the improving hand.” — Upon this he cries out, “What sound is this to Christian ears, from the mouth of a pretended Christian infallible teacher? Behold the effect of sectarian liberty! How much does Christianity suffer by the mad zeal of enthusiasts?” — But would not less heat and better argument have done his business full as well? — I have shewn him, that these characters may be found in those who have never been weary and heavy laden with their sins; who have never had any true repentance for sin; who have never had any saving faith in Christ Jesus; who have never had humility, spiritual-mindedness, or victory over the world; who have never had old things pass away, and all things become new; and, in a word, who have never had Christ in them, without which they must be reprobates. — Why then should Mr Wetmore be so very angry at this, without giving any reason at all of his vehement exclamation? — If the moral heathen are as capable as others, “sincerely to endeavour to do the best they can;” if they may be and have been sometimes “daily gaining ground of their vices and passions;” and if they may “find themselves, after the strictest examination, to be upon the improving hand:” Then the moral heathen may have such marks of a state of salvation, as the Doctor assures us are sufficient; and the Christian, which the Doctor there describes, has no better marks of a converted state, than a moral heathen may attain to. — Let Mr Wetmore take what advantage he can of this reasoning: I can foresee but one answer he or any man else can give; and that is such an one as he has already given. However, he should have remembered, that it is such an one, as Michael the archangel would not give even to the devil, when disputing about the body of Moses.

But the professed Christians in the question, were *baptized*. — If so, I must again make my former remark; and observe, that if they have no more Christianity, than these gentlemen make the evidence of a converted state, their Christianity and their baptism will but aggravate their guilt. For, how much greater the obligations be, they are under to be Christians in-

deed, so much the greater will their guilt be, if they rest short of a saving change.

Nothing is more certain, than that the scriptures do require other qualifications, in order to our inheriting the kingdom of God, than Dr Waterland and Mr Wetmore have made the marks of a converted state. Besides "gaining ground of our vices and passions, and being upon the improving hand," they do require an illumination of our *understandings*, Eph. i. 18.; a renovation of our *affections*, Col. iii. 2.; a subjection of our *wills* to the Lord Jesus Christ, Psal. cx. 3.; and a captivating our very *thoughts* unto the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. They do require *faith* in Jesus Christ, Mark xvi. 16.; sincere *repentance*, Acts iii. 19. *love* to God above all things, Mat xxii. 37.; *spiritual mindedness*, Rom. viii. 6.; *victory* over the world, 1 John v. 4.; a being *renewed* in all the faculties of our souls, Eph. iv. 23.; the *fruits of the Spirit* in our hearts and lives, and a *walking in the Spirit*, Gal. v. 22, 25.; and, in a word, that Christ *be in us* by his image and influence, if we would not be reprobates, 2 Cor. xiii. 5.—And I think it equally certain, that a man may have those marks of a safe state given by the Dr and Mr Wetmore; and yet have none of these graces, influences, and fruits of the Spirit. A moral heathen is therefore as capable of the marks given by these gentlemen, as a nominal Christian who is destitute of those scripture marks I have mentioned.—There is nothing in the nature of things, nothing in the Christian institution, that renders it impossible, or improbable, for a heathen to attain to what is proposed by these gentlemen, as the marks of conversion, in the same manner, and in the same degree, as any professed Christian in the world is capable of, who has no higher attainment than these under consideration.—Whence it follows, either that baptism alone, without any religious attainments but what are common with us to the moral heathen, will intitle a man to salvation; or else, that the baptized Christian will be more inexcusable in the day of judgment, than the moral heathen, on account of his violating his baptismal covenant.

Thus we may see how little cause this author had for his repeated wrathful exclamations; and how great cause every

one has, who would secure the eternal safety of his immortal soul, to be fearful of embracing the dangerous doctrines taught by these gentlemen; and of satisfying his mind with no higher attainments in religion, than what may be found among the heathen themselves, while he rests short of all those graces and internal spiritual qualifications, which the word of God makes necessary to our future happiness and glory.

Mr Wetmore proceeds to complain of my uncharitableness; and spends some pages in the declamatory style, in praise of charity, and in severe censures upon those whom he calls *uncharitable*, (p. 10, &c.)—But whence this heat? I have endeavoured to prove, and I think I have fully proved, that what these gentlemen call *regeneration*, is not the *new birth* which our blessed Saviour declares necessary to salvation, and which is particularly described in the word of God; and therefore not the new birth by which we must be prepared for the kingdom of God. And if this be uncharitableness, I must still remain just so uncharitable, till I can obtain a very different view of this case from what I can find in my bible.—Is it uncharitableness, to assert the truth of those doctrines, taught by our blessed Lord himself, and by his inspired apostles? Thus uncharitable must we necessarily be towards some people or other, in retaining any one essential article of the Christian faith.—Would it not therefore have been much more to the purpose, if this gentleman had considered the arguments brought, and the many texts of scripture alleged in proof of my point, than thus to confute them all in the lump, by passionate exclamations?—But he seems conscious to himself, that this could not be done; or, at least, that he would but in vain attempt it: We might else have expected something of that kind in this his undertaking.—If he thinks it can be done, I do now intreat him (whilst in his charitable frame) out of mere compassion to such *poor deluded people*, as he is pleased to style us, (p. 12.) distinctly to consider and answer the arguments I have brought against his principles. We shall else still conclude, that our adherence to the doctrines fully and plainly taught in the Divine oracles, may be justified, though he is pleased to call us uncharitable.

Well, Whether I am in the due exercise of *charity* or

not, we may reasonably expect our author will exemplify this excellent grace to us, at least while he is writing so fine a panegyric upon it. Let us then look and see what a mighty *charitable* disposition he has manifested towards those who differ from him in the subject of the present debate.—“Whatever they may pretend as to holiness (says he), *the way of peace they have not known*, (p. 11.)—They are disturbers of church and state, and promote strife, and variance, and confusions in all societies; which is a shrewd sign their opinions, which they think themselves so wise in being tenacious of, are not the true wisdom from above; but such as St James tells us, are *earthly, sensual, devilish*, (p. 12.)—“Factious men, who pervert the scriptures, and wrest them (as St. Peter expresses it) to their own destruction, (p. 18.)—“Which no man can do (*that is, no man can find the marks of grace truly in himself*) that lives in a state of schism and uncharitable separation from the communion of that national church, of which he ought to be a peaceable member,” (p. 39.)—Had I imitated this reverend author, in the numerous rhetorical flourishes of the like kind, which his discourse abounds with, I could not have harangued with a very good grace upon the necessity of *charity*; but must have exposed myself to that just admonition of our blessed Saviour, Matth. vii. 3.

Another very heavy complaint, much insisted on against me, is, that I have said, the ancient *Fathers* held many such *ridiculous opinions*, as would now expose a man to the contempt and scorn of the world, if he should make a profession of them.

This is a fact so notoriously open to every one's observation, who has any acquaintance with antiquity, that there is but very little room for this author's fine harangue, to prove the fathers the only interpreters of scripture: And as little room for Mr Wetmore to press them all into his service, in support of the opinion he is now pleading for.

But that I may take off the odium, which he is endeavouring to bring upon me, by his passionate appeal to the populace upon this subject, I will give a few instances, which have a special reference to the present debate, out of the many which might have been produced, to shew how criminal foe-

ver Mr Wetmore represents that saying of mine, it is nevertheless strictly and ungainfayably true.

Our author tells us, that “this change (*regeneration*) is wrought by the operation and influence of God’s Holy Spirit, in and with the application of water, according to Christ’s institution,” (p. 27.)—But what say the ancient fathers upon this point? Hear two of them, which were truly ancient.—Tertullian, directly contrary to Mr Wetmore’s hypothesis, declares, “Not that we obtain the Holy Spirit in the baptismal waters; but being cleansed in water by the angel, we are prepared for the Holy Spirit.”—“Then comes the laying on of hands, to invite the Holy Spirit by that benediction.”—“And thus the angel, who presides at baptism, makes way for the coming of the Holy Spirit, by that cleansing from our sins which our faith obtains, being plighted to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”—“Then being gone out of the water, we are anointed to the blessed unction, according to the custom under the priesthood, with an horn of oil*.”—To the same purpose that of Cyprian, “If a man could be baptized out of the church, according to the faith of heretics, and yet obtain remission of sins, he could, according to the same faith, obtain also the Holy Spirit; and there would be no need that hands should be laid on him, that he might receive the Holy Spirit †.”—Here is fully represented, not only the practice, but the opinion of antiquity upon the subject in debate. Mr Wetmore supposes that we obtain the Holy Spirit in baptism. The ancients supposed that we did not obtain the Holy Spirit in baptism; but by the imposition of hands, and the anointing which with them immediately succeeded baptism. So that if they supposed them born of water by baptism, they supposed them born of the Spirit afterward.—Now, it is offered to this gentleman’s choice to give up which he pleases; either his favourite opinion, which he so stiffly contends for, or his lofty and extravagant panegyric upon the ancient fathers.—Evident it is, that if his opinion be true, their sentiments and practice were not only inconsistent, but ridiculous too.

I shall proceed to consider some other of their customs, in
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* De Baptism. C. 5, 6, 3.

† Epist. 73. ad Jub.

the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, as represented by Tertullian. "As we are going into the water" (says he) we protest there, as we did also before that in the church, in the presence of the bishop, that we renounce the devil and his pomp and angels. Then we are dipped three times, answering somewhat more than what our Lord has determined in his gospel. Being thence received of God as his children, we taste a mixture of milk and honey; and from that time, for a week together, we forbear the ordinary use of the bath. The sacrament of the eucharist, which was appointed by our Lord at a meal-time, and given in charge to all, we receive in our assemblies before day; and only from the hands of the bishop. We make oblations for the dead; and for their martyrdom on a stated day yearly. We reckon it unlawful to fast, or to worship kneeling on the Lord's day; and all the while between Easter and Whitsunday, we take great care, that none of our wine or our bread should fall to the ground. In the beginning of any business, going out, coming in, dressing, washing, eating, lighting candles, going to bed, sitting down; or whatever we do, we sign our foreheads with the sign of the cross*."

Now what will Mr Wetmore say to these things? What is the cause, that he does not believe and practise according to this ancient pattern? Have I not now a fair occasion to turn his own artillery upon him; and to observe to him, that "when he boldly intrudes his novel interpretations of scripture, I think I offer him good reason when I tell him, that the fathers of the Christian Church, men of piety and sense, and such as would sacrifice their very lives for the honour of Christ, had a different opinion, and a different practice from his!" (p. 18.)—Let him then keep to this rule, let him make the ancient fathers his pattern in the case before us; let him dip children three times, when he baptizes them. After baptism, let him give them to taste of a mixture of milk and honey; then lay hands on them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; and proceed to anoint them with oil; let him administer the Lord's supper before day; make oblations for the dead once a year; declare it unlawful to fast,

* De Coron. C. 3.

or to worship kneeling on the Lord's day, all the time from Easter to Witsunday; and be conscientiously scrupulous, not to suffer a piece of bread, or a drop of wine to fall to the ground, during that time: Let him cross himself in the beginning of any business, as going out, coming in, dressing, washing, eating, lighting candles, going to bed, &c. And let the world about him be admonished, not to call these things ridiculous: For they were the opinions and practices of the ancient fathers; and "such points in the purest ages of Christianity, we may reasonably imagine were well sifted; and what the mind of the apostles themselves was in such points, would be sought and preserved with care." (p. 17.)

I had before instanced in an opinion and practice, which generally obtained among the ancients, *viz.* their administering the Lord's supper to young infants. This they supposed absolutely necessary to salvation, from their odd construction of that text, John vi. 53. This principle and practice obtained at least as early as Cyprian's time*; and continued long in use in the Church.—What Mr Wetmore's sentiments are about it is hard to determine. He makes a long apology for it. But should he come into this practice, he would not only be esteemed erroneous, but ridiculous too, even by his own party, as well as ours.

I might alledge many more particulars, which would abundantly justify that saying of mine, which he so loudly complains of. But what I have already said is not only sufficient for that purpose; but also to shew, that Mr Wetmore himself will be determined by the judgment of the fathers no further than they agree, or he imagines they do agree with him in sentiment. I shall therefore dismiss this subject, but with one remark more.

I have before shewn him, that though the ancients may frequently speak of our being regenerated by baptism; yet they seem to mean no more by it, than that baptism is an outward sign, seal, pledge or token of regeneration; and not properly in any respect the new birth itself. They put the sign for the thing thereby signified; it being a seal and representation thereof. This appears to be their meaning, by their denying the absolute

* Vid. Serm. de Lapfis, Sect. 20

solite necessity of baptism to salvation: and their so frequently calling baptism the sign and seal of faith. And I may now add to what I then observed upon this head, that if we allow Augustine to interpret his own meaning, and the meaning of others who used the same language, they could intend no more by baptismal regeneration than is here supposed. He, speaking of the Jewish sacraments, observe, "When the sacraments were common to all, the grace, which is the virtue of the sacraments, was not common. Even so now, the laver of regeneration is common to all; but the grace by which the members of Christ are regenerated with their Head, is not common to all*." It was a noted distinction with him, between a sacrament and the matter of a sacrament; and he tells us, "We must always distinguish the matter from the sign, lest we transfer that to one which belongs to the other †."—Now, if we understand the ancient fathers in this sense, in which, by the common suffrage of learned men, they ought to be understood, and in which St Augustine certainly is to be understood, if we will allow him to explain his own meaning, all Mr Wetmore's high pretences from the fathers will come to nothing. We may even venture to understand the scriptures for ourselves, without any danger from that quarter.

I shall take notice of but one complaint more against me, which is, that I am "one of that sort, who are famous for infant-damning opinions; and, if my sort of regeneration be necessary for every one that gets to heaven; and my six marks the characters of every child of God; and without those marks no seeing the kingdom of God, as I assert (page 341.), What will become of infants dying in the womb, at the birth, or any time before they are capable of experiencing my marks?"—But how have I made myself famous for *infant-damning* opinions? Has any thing that I have ever written, preached, or spoke, given the least handle for such an accusation! I challenge this gentleman to produce so much as the shadow of an instance of this kind, to justify his charge.—But

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"without

* In Psal. 72.
Lib. 4. Cap. 14. Sect. 15. where much of this nature is cited from this father.

† De Baptism. Parvul. Vid. Calvini institutiones,

‘ without those six marks there is no seeing the kingdom of “ God, and *infants* are not capable of experiencing those marks.” —The six marks he speaks of are, (1.) A new principle; (2.) That this principle be spiritual and supernatural; (3.) That this be wrought by the immediate influence of the Spirit of God; (4.) That this principle extends to all the powers and faculties of the soul; (5.) That it is a principle which inclines and enables the soul to the exercise of faith in Christ; and, (6.) That it is a principle of new obedience to God. I would now inquire of this gentleman, What is it that renders infants incapable of such a new principle in their souls; and of being thus renewed in the spirit of their minds, by the influences of the Holy Ghost? —If they are not capable of actually believing and holy living, yet are they not capable of that principle, from whence these shall proceed when they come to the exercise of reason? And does not even Dr Waterland himself seem to allow this capacity to infants? “ They are (says he) capable of being savingly born of water and the Spirit; and of “ being adopted into sonship, with what depends thereon: For “ though they bring no virtues with them, no positive righteousness; yet they bring no obstacle or impediment,” (p. 23.)

Certain it is, that infants are capable of the renewing influences of the Spirit of God, and of having a new *principle* in their souls; or they are incapable of the kingdom of God. For I think no one can pretend, that they shall be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, under the guilt, pollution, and dominion even of original sin. And now who is justly most famous for *infant-damning* opinions: He that supposes them incapable to be renewed and qualified for the kingdom of God; or I, that suppose them capable subjects both of grace here and of glory hereafter?

BUT it is high time, That I should now proceed to the next thing proposed, which was to consider the *state of the question*, as represented by this author. And, that I may give the reader a proper view of the case, I will place his sentiments in one column, and the doctrine of our blessed Saviour and his apostles in another, that the opposition may be most open to every one’s observation.

Mr Wetmore's Principles.

“Sonship is God’s grant;
“and the person adopted no
“more but a recipient, and
“merely passive. But this is
“not by any new creation of
“any principle or faculty in
“the soul of the regenerate, as
“Mr. D——a imagines; but
“something indeed specifically
“different from what he seems
“to fancy,” (p. 23.)

into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.—And if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ, Gal. iv. 6, 7. See also 2 Cor. v. 17.

“It [*Adoption or Regeneration*] is only the grant or
“bestowment of a favour or
“grace,—which is done by
“the sacrament of baptism;
“in which men may be ac-
“tive, and exert their will
“and choice, in what relates
“to the qualifications on man’s
“part; and complying with
“the conditions, on which
“God has promised to grant
“such a favour,” (p. 23.)

“They are regenerated in
“this sense of the word, as it
“is used metaphorically, to
“signify a great change made
“in the state and circumstan-
“ces of the person, upon whom
“God bestows the dignity
“and privilege of sonship in
“Christ Jesus. I do not mean
“any inward change wrought,
“upon the faculties of the
“soul.” (p. 24.)

Opposite Texts of Scripture.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood; nor of the will of the flesh; nor of the will of man; but of God, John i. 12, 13. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God, Rom. viii. 14. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son

That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, John iii. 6. Being born again, not of corruptible seed; but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, 1 Pet. i. 23. Of his own will begat he us, James i. 18. The wind bloweth where it listeth; and we hear the sound thereof; but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whether it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit, John iii. 8.

Whatsoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, 1 John iii. 9. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him, Col. iii. 10.

“What

Mr Wetmore's Principles.

“What we may affirm is,
 “that whosoever is born again,
 “he is said to be so on ac-
 “count of some influence of
 “the Holy Spirit, by whom
 “all sanctification and blessing
 “is derived to the creature.
 “(p. 28.)—And if the water
 “used is so sanctified, as to
 “serve any holy and religi-
 “ous purpose whatsoever;
 “that sanctification must be by
 “the Holy Spirit's influence
 “—If it be only to render the
 “water sacramental; that is,
 “to consecrate it,” (p. 29.)

“*He that believes and is*
 “*baptised shall be saved.* We
 “may understand here no
 “more than to be received
 “into Christ, his body or
 “Church, with a right to such
 “privileges as belong to that
 “society.—And therefore e-
 “very one that is made a
 “member of this society, is
 “taken out of that wretched,
 “miserable, guilty state they
 “were in before; estranged
 “from God, and liable to his
 “curse; thus a child of wrath,
 “as St Paul says, all are by
 “nature, Eph. ii. 3. but by
 “baptism brought into a state
 “of favour in Christ; and
 “thus quickened and saved,”

(p. 29.)

Opposite Texts of Scripture.

According to his mercy he
saved us, by the washing of
regeneration, and RENEWING
of the Holy Ghost, which he
shed on us abundantly, through
Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit.
iii. 5, 6. That which is born
of the Spirit is spirit, John iii.
6. We know, that whosoever
is born of God, sinneth not;
but he that is begotten of God,
keepeth himself, and that wick-
ed one toucheth him not, 1 John
v. 18.

Therefore we are buried with
him by baptism into death, that
like as Christ was raised up
from the dead, by the glory of
the Father, even so we also
should walk in newness of life.
For if we have been planted to-
gether in the likeness of his death,
we shall be also in the likeness
of his resurrection. Knowing
this, that our old man is crucifi-
ed with him, that the body of
sin might be destroyed, that
henceforth we should not serve
sin; for he that is dead, is
freed from sin, Romans vi.
4,—7.

Mr Wetmore's Principles.

“ This is agreeable to reason, that when persons in a natural state, guilty and polluted, are admitted into a covenant of favour and friendship with God, their former guilt must be removed by a gracious free pardon, (p. 29, 30.)—This benefit seems to be applied to all, that by baptism are made members of Christ's body, (p. 30.)—Nor does there appear to me any absurdity in supposing baptism to seal remission of former guilt, even where the person is unworthy, and makes his profession hypocritically,”———
(p. 31.)

“ Only as pardon is a free act of grace and mercy, I do not see why God may not bestow that, as well as many other blessings in this world, upon those that do not deserve them.—Those that have received forgiveness of God, and yet continue wicked, may expect his severity will be increased against them at the day of judgment,” (p. 31.)

Opposite Texts of Scripture.

He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him, John iii. 18, 36. For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing; nor uncircumcision; but a new creature, Gal. vi. 15.

That will by no means clear the guilty, Exod. xxxiv. 7. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, Rom. ix. 29. Whom he justified, them he also glorified, Rom. viii. 30. Whosoever is born of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not, 1 John v. 18. Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not; whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him; neither known him, 1 John iii. 6.

I may even challenge this gentleman to form any propositions more directly contradictory one to another, than these doctrines of his are to the scriptures I have placed in opposition to them. This therefore must be a sufficient admonition

to every one who hath a reverential regard to the sacred standard of our faith and practice, and any value for the salvation of his soul, to take heed of such principles, so directly repugnant to the oracles of truth.

Can it possibly be true, that adoption is not by any new creation of any principle in the soul of the regenerate; but something specifically distinct; and yet all that have power to become the sons of God, have received the Lord Jesus Christ; are born not of the will of man but of God, are led by the Spirit of God, have the Spirit of his Son in their hearts, are heirs of God through Christ; and are *new creatures*, having old things passed away, and all things become new in them?—Can it possibly be true, that regeneration is only a favour or grace done by the sacrament of baptism; and yet that all the regenerate are spiritual persons, and born of an incorruptible seed?—Can it be true, that men may be active, and exert their wills and choice in regeneration; and yet, they be born not of the will of man, but of the will of God, of his own will and nothing else; even as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth?—Can regeneration be without any inward change; and yet all the regenerate be so changed, that they cannot commit sin; but have the seed of God remaining in them, and are renewed after the image of him that created them?—May we be said to be born of the Spirit, while partakers of no farther Divine influence than what consecrates the water, and renders it sacramental; and yet the renewing of the Holy Ghost, being made spirit or spiritual, and being made free from sin, and keeping ourselves that the wicked one toucheth us not, should be the necessary characters of all who are born of God?—Are we to understand no more by the salvation consequent upon faith and baptism, than to be received into the church, and to have a right to such privileges as belong to that society? Is this to be taken out of that wretched guilty state that we were in before, while children of wrath; and yet all who are truly partakers of this salvation, consequent upon faith and baptism, must be not only buried with Christ by baptism into death; but walk in newness of life, have their old man crucified, the body of sin destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin; and they so dead as to be freed from

from sin?—Can the impenitent hypocrite have all his former guilt done away by baptism; and yet be condemned already, under the wrath of God, and his baptism avail nothing, without faith that works by love; and the new creature?—May men receive forgiveness of God at their regeneration; and yet continue wicked, to their greater condemnation at last, when God will by no means clear the guilty; but determines to glorify all whom he pardons and justifies; and when they are born of God, do keep themselves from the wicked one, they abide in him; they do not sin, if they have ever seen him or known him?—When the greatest contradictions can be reconciled, when light and darkness, truth and error, can be proved to be the same thing, then, but not till then, can this gentleman's doctrines be proved conformable to the word of God.

I shall next proceed to consider the arguments brought by Mr Wetmore to confirm these his notions of *regeneration*. He observes, that “this figurative way of description, alluding to a birth, is applied to more cases than one in holy scripture, which Mr Dickinson does not seem to have a just apprehension of; but applies all texts of this nature to one thing only, which he will have called regeneration, and allows that term to be used for nothing else; nor any other expressions that have any affinity to it,” (p. 19.)

This is but an artful changing the question. Had he spoke to the purpose, he should have shewn us, that *regeneration*, being *born again*, *begotten of God*, or *born of God*, being *created anew*, or *made new creatures*, being *born from above*, or *born of water and the Spirit*, are expressions applied to more cases than one in holy scripture. For he knows, or should know, that this is the point before us; and not whether some allusions may be found in scripture to a natural birth, in a different view from what I am pleading for.—If no such instances can be found, and these expressions do retain one invariable meaning through the whole word of God, all his reasonings upon this head are altogether impertinent; and therefore, all the instances he assigns to confirm that argumentation are wholly foreign to the business before him.—Suppose it true, that “a change from sorrow to joy is illustrated by a birth in scripture;” suppose the “term children of God is used with respect to the resurrection;” suppose great “streights and difficulties

“ faculties are described by a like metaphor ; and that the children of Israel were truly God’s people, in this metaphorical sense,” as this gentleman takes pains to prove, (p. 19, &c.) What conclusion will these premises afford him? How will it follow from thence, that to be regenerate, to be begotten, or born of God, to be new created, or a new creature, to be born from above, or to be born of the Spirit, may signify no more than to be *baptized*, when it cannot be proved that these expressions are ever once used in that sense ; or that they, any where in the Bible, have any other meaning than what I have assigned them ?

But “ the word regeneration is always used in a metaphorical sense, except when used to signify the resurrection ; and all those expressions of being begotten of God ; and born of God ; and born from above ; and whatever else seems to infer a new birth, are figurative ; and can mean no more than the production of some great change or alteration, which may bear some analogy, in a figurative way of speaking, to that change that passes upon the state of an infant, when it first comes into the world, or is produced by generation.”

Well, what then? Will it thence follow that all the most distant allusions to a birth, or creation, must be understood in the same sense with these strong and emphatical expressions under consideration ; because both the one and the other are metaphorical?—He tells us, that “ great streights and difficulties are described by a like metaphor.” (p. 20.) Will it therefore follow, that affliction is regeneration ; and that every one under suffering circumstances is regenerated? How then does regeneration signify baptism only, (as he so strenuously endeavours to prove) if it signifies any thing else, as well as baptism? How will this reasoning serve his cause, any better than ours, when it is directly calculated to undermine both the one and the other? But the comfort is, that it is altogether impertinent and inconclusive.—There is not the least appearance of a consequence in this arguing, that because some distant allusions to a *birth*, a *creation*, &c. are used in scripture, without any determinate signification, for very different events ; that therefore the terms *new birth*, *new creation*, &c. which are never used in scripture but with one determinate signification, and for one event only, are to be understood in the same

loose and uncertain sense.—Our blessed Saviour and his inspired apostles have limited the use of these expressions to one most important event, upon which they assure us that our eternal interests do most immediately depend; and it is therefore too bold an undertaking, to endeavour to represent them as being of such ambiguous and uncertain signification.—Of what mischievous consequence must it be to the souls of men, to interpret scripture after such a manner! There is something spoken of, as absolutely necessary to our seeing the kingdom of God. But what is it that is required? Mr Wetmore teacheth us, that it may signify “a change from sorrow to joy,” it may “signify the resurrection,” it may “signify great streights and difficulties,” it may “signify being in covenant with “God:”—But there is no determinate idea to be annexed to it; and yet it does signify *baptism*. Now (if this reasoning should be received) what dreadful danger must we be in of taking up with any thing, or nothing, instead of what is required of us, as absolutely necessary to our eternal salvation!

As for the texts of scripture cited by him to this purpose, there are but two of them which have any reference at all to the subject before us. These only I shall therefore consider.

The first text alledged by him, which has any relation to the present debate, is Mat. xix. 28. *Ye that have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit, &c.* He supposes the regeneration in this text, to express the general resurrection, (p. 19.); but assigns no reason why it should thus be understood.—There can be nothing more natural and easy, than to understand this text according to the common and received interpretation given to it. They followed Christ in the regeneration of sinners to himself; and in his bringing the Church into a new and spiritual state: Or they followed him as his children, that were indeed born to him by the influences of his Holy Spirit.—This is the sense, which the word regeneration, and the other synonymous terms every where obtain in scripture. This is the most natural interpretation of the text before us, the sense which first offers to the mind, and makes the text most familiar and intelligible; and he neither does, nor (I believe) can give any reason at all, why we should here change the received interpretation of the word.

The other text he cites is, 1 Pet. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* From which he argues, “ St Peter does not say we are begotten to this hope “ by a new creation in our souls, as Mr Dickinson would “ describe regeneration, or God’s begetting us; but in a “ quite different manner, viz. by the resurrection.”—To which it is sufficient answer, that St Peter does not say, that we are not begotten to this hope by a new creation, or the creation of a new principle in our souls. And I am sure, that such a new principle in our souls is so far from being inconsistent with our entertaining a lively hope from the resurrection of Christ, that it is the only foundation from which such a lively hope can proceed.—The words are plain and familiar, and at the very first view represent to us the sense I am pleading for; and are accordingly so understood by all the commentators I have read upon the text. *God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us;* that is, he hath given us a new and Divine principle of life, whereby we can entertain a *lively hope*, from the consideration of *Christ’s resurrection from the dead.*

Upon the whole then, He can find no one text in the bible, where regeneration or the other expressions of the same significance; are used in any other sense than that which I am pleading for.—But, on the contrary, we are assured, by a variety of full and clear testimonies from the Divine oracles, that no man can have these characters applied to him, but what has indeed experienced the renewing influences of the Divine grace.—*We know (says the apostle) that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* It therefore never can be true in any case whatsoever, that any man can be born of God; and continue in sin; or be begotten of God, and not keep himself from a subjection to the wicked one. The apostle assures us, that he knows it is otherwise. And that gives us a better view of the true meaning of the debated expressions, than all the unscriptural imaginations and surmises of Mr Wetmore and his brethren. See likewise to the same

purpose I John iii. 9. Eph. iv. 24. I John v. 4. *cum multis aliis.*

Hitherto Mr Wetmore has been only clearing his way for a more full and direct proof of his point, which we are now to expect. But having said so much already, before he comes directly to the business before him, he thinks it proper to proceed in a most brief and compendious way.

“All that will therefore be necessary (says he) to determine this whole controversy with Mr Dickinson, is to shew that such a change of state and relation is made in Christian baptism, that the persons baptized are truly said to receive the privilege to be called the children of God, according to the acceptation of that phrase both in the Old Testament and New; and that this change is wrought by the operation and influence of God’s Holy Spirit, in and with the application of water, according to Christ’s institution,” (p. 24.)

Is this “all that is necessary to determine this whole controversy?” Then it seems there is no necessity of answering, nor indeed of taking any notice at all of the clear and full scripture-evidence brought against his hypothesis; the gentleman might probably think that was too hard a piece of work, or would take him up too much time. He therefore chooses a more concise and easy method of dispatching his business, lest the tedious task of answering arguments would have quite spoiled the plausibility of his harangue.

Is it sufficient, “to shew that the persons baptized are truly said to receive the privilege to be called the children of God?”—But how becomes it sufficient to shew one thing, when his business was to prove another of a very different nature?—The point in debate between him and me is, whether *baptism* be *regeneration*. What he attempts to prove is, that professed Christians may, in some sense or other, be called the children of God. By the same argument he may as well prove, that all orphans are regenerate; for *a Father of the fatherless is God in his holy habitation*, Psal. lxxviii. 5. And that all men every where are regenerate; for *there is one God and Father of all*, Eph. iv. 6. That the holy angels are regenerate; for they are called the *sons of God*, Job xxxviii. 7. And that even the Gentiles, who were neither circumcised nor baptized, were regenerate; for these were called God’s sons and daughters,

ters, Isa. xliii. 6. *Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.* Is it because Mr Wetmore could say nothing at all to the purpose, that he thus seriously undertakes to prove a point quite foreign and impertinent to the matter in debate?—As God is the Father and Creator of the universe, all creatures are *his offspring*, Acts xvii. 28, 29; and all intelligent beings, whether holy angles, men, or devils, may in this sense be called his children.—As God is pleased to bring some part of mankind into a nearer external relation to himself, by their spiritual privileges and covenant obligations, these may, in a more appropriate sense, be called his children, or the children of his covenant. But what is this to *regeneration*?—Are they all, who in these respects are called the children of God, so *born of the Spirit*, that they are *spirit*, or spiritual*? Are they so freed from sin, that they cannot commit sin †? Have they all overcome the world ‡? Are they all begotten to a lively hope §? Does the seed of God remain in them ||? Do they all keep themselves that the wicked one toucheth them not ¶? Are they all created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, that they walk in them**? These, all these, are the necessary and actual characters of every regenerate person. And if they are not (as certainly they are not) the real characters of all, that in some sense or other are called the children of God in scripture; then this reasoning of his is the height of impertinence.

But to be *regenerate*, or to be the *children of God*, is the same thing, (p. 23.)—I answer, they are just so much the same thing, as to be regenerate, or to be in heaven, is the same thing. Both adoption and eternal salvation are the consequence of *regeneration*; and therefore cannot be the same thing. As natural generation precedes sonship, and cannot for that reason be the same thing with it; so *regeneration* does, in order of nature, precede *adoption*; and cannot for that reason be the same thing with it.

What then will become of Mr Wetmore's two propositions, by which alone he endeavours to establish his doctrine of *baptismal regeneration*? Suppose it true, that “such a change of state and relation is made in Christian baptism, that the per-

3 O 2

“ sons

* John iii. 6. † 1 John iii. 9. ‡ 1 John v. 4. § 1 Pet. i. 2.

|| 1 John iii. 9. ¶ 1 John v. 18. ** Eph. ii. 10.

“sons baptized are truly said to receive the privilege, to be called the children of God:” Suppose it is also true, that “this change is wrought by the operation and influence of God’s Holy Spirit, in and with the application of water, according to Christ’s institution:” it is all no more to the purpose, than if he had undertaken to prove any other propositions whatsoever. And yet this is all the evidence which he pretends to offer in confirmation of his principles; and upon which he would have men run the venture of an exclusion from the kingdom of God.—It would be to mispend my own and my readers time, to take any distinct notice of the method he uses to illustrate and confirm his propositions; since both the propositions and their illustration are such an egregious trifling, and wandering away from the subject in debate.

I therefore proceed to take some notice of his *corollaries*.

He first infers, That “it will appear very natural to understand the washing of regeneration, Tit. iii. 5. to mean baptism; especially considering, what is predicated of it there is expressly predicated upon baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21.; that it now saves us, according to our Saviour’s promise, Mark xvi. 16. *He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.* This being then the most natural and obvious interpretation, which, according to the best rules of interpreting scripture, should always be received, when such interpretation is neither contrary to reason, nor any other text of scripture,” (p. 34.)—Had Mr Wetmore quite forgot that I had largely proved, from a great variety of scripture testimony, that this interpretation is both contrary to other texts of scripture, and to reason too? And is it not something diverting, to see him with a grave countenance take that for granted, and draw his consequences from it as a *postulatum* not to be disputed, which is so largely disproved in the discourse he is animadverting upon, without taking any notice of the evidence brought against him?—Let us however attend to his reasoning.

It will appear (he tells us) very natural to understand *the washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5. to mean *baptism*, especially considering, that what is predicated of it there, is predicated of *baptism* 1 Pet. iii. 21.—Well then he allows, that being

ing *saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, is predicated of *the laver of regeneration* in Tit. iii. 5. His words can have no other meaning; for there is nothing else predicated of *the laver of regeneration* in that text. Whence it follows, that all who are *regenerated* are *saved* by the renewing of the Holy Ghost: For if this be predicated of regeneration, it is applicable to all who are regenerated. It is therefore an inevitable consequence, that if all who are *baptized* are *not saved* by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, then all who are *baptized* are *not regenerated*; and therefore, that *baptism* is *not regeneration*.—I cannot foresee what answer Mr Wetmore can give to this. He cannot pretend, that all *baptized* persons are *saved* by the renewing of the Holy Ghost; for he allows that there are some that come in hypocrisy, and are wicked after baptism, who may be considered as Exotics, (p. 30.) Which characters are just as contrary to the renewing of the Holy Ghost as light and darkness, God and Belial. There cannot be a greater solecism, than to speak of wicked hypocrites being (while such) renewed by the Holy Ghost.—But perhaps he intended to represent no more, as predicated of *the laver of regeneration*, than being *saved*. Let him however remember, that the salvation spoken of in the cited text, is *by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*; and he has no authority to separate what God has joined together.

But salvation is predicated of *baptism*, 1 Pet. iii. 21.—By this he must doubtless intend, that all who are baptized are *saved*; for what is predicated of *baptism* is applicable to all the *baptized*. If therefore—being *saved*—means the same thing in this text as it does in Tit. iii. 5. then all that are *baptized* are *renewed by the Holy Ghost*; which is not only most notoriously false in fact, but contrary to his own concessions.—If being *saved* does not mean the same thing in this text as in Tit. iii. 5. then this text is most impertinently cited, to prove that *baptism* is meant by *the laver of regeneration*, and is nothing at all to his purpose: For how can the use of the same words in one text, shew us how they are to be understood in another, where they are used in a very different sense, and with a very different design? How can being *saved* without the renewing of the Holy Ghost, signify the same thing with being *saved* by the renewing of the Holy Ghost?—This text
therefore,

therefore, in what sense soever he understands it, is far from justifying his interpretation of the *laver of regeneration*.

The words of this text are, *The like figure whereunto, baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* In these words are several things worthy of particular notice. It is observable, that the bare administration of this ordinance of *baptism*, or the application of water, here called the *putting away of the filth of the flesh*, doth not save us. Whence it follows, that this ordinance may be administered to those who are no way partakers of the salvation here spoken of. For there are some baptized who have no gracious qualifications; but are in hypocrisy and impenitence (as our author himself allows), and therefore have nothing but the outward application of the ordinance. There is no reason to suppose these to be partakers of any Divine blessing with the ordinance, who do but mock God in their attendance upon it: These therefore are not saved by it.—It is further observable from this text, that those whom *baptism saves*, are such in whom is the answer of a good conscience towards God; which (according to Mr Wetmore's own interpretation of these words, p. 8.) implies “to profess faith “and repentance; and promise future obedience to God, with “a good conscience; i. e. honestly and sincerely,” They therefore who do not act sincerely, but come in hypocrisy (as he allows some may do), are not saved by *baptism*; because they want the qualification of a good conscience, to which, as a necessary mean, this text ascribes the salvation here spoken of. It is moreover observable from this text, that they whom *baptism saves*, are saved by efficacious grace, or virtue derived from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whence it follows, that they who have no interest in the benefits proceeding from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but are excluded by their unbelief, impenitence, and hypocrisy, are not saved by *baptism*.—Upon the whole then, It is most clearly and unquestionably evident from this text, that *baptism* is not the *laver of regeneration*. If the *laver of regeneration* saves all the partakers of it, *by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, and *baptism* does not save all that partake of it, *by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*; if it saves none but those who have a good conscience, and have experienced the power of Christ's resurrection, then *baptism* is not

the laver of regeneration.—I hope this gentleman will no more pretend to press this text into his service, till he has removed these difficulties out of the way.

His second *corollary* is, “That it will appear the most genuine and easy interpretation of John iii. 5. *Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, to understand the baptismal regeneration I have described,*” (p. 14.) This he endeavours to confirm by two arguments. The first is taken from verse 10. *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* Whence he argues: “The ground of our Saviour’s question to Nicodemus must necessarily be a known practice among the Jews, of near affinity to that of which he spoke; and such a practice was known among them.”—I might here enquire of him, how he proves that such a practice was known among the Jews as *baptizing* profelytes; and calling them *new born*, or regenerate? Was there any institution in the Levitical law, upon which such a practice was founded? If not, can it be supposed that our blessed Saviour would do so much honour to an human invention and tradition (if there had been that tradition among them), as to put so much stress upon it:—Or can he so much as prove, that this practice had ever obtained among the Jews in our Saviour’s time? The authorities he pretends to bring, are much too late to prove any such thing; and what he cites from them is nothing to his purpose. If they called profelytes *new born*, or *new born infants*, what is this to *baptism*, of which they say nothing at all? Or how does this prove that they esteemed *baptism* to be *regeneration*? In short, the whole notion (as far as appears by any thing brought either by Dr Waterland or by Mr Wetmore, in confirmation of it) is but a mere chimerical fiction.—But suppose it true, suppose that such a practice was known among the Jews as *baptizing* profelytes, and calling them *new born*, or regenerated; how could Nicodemus know by this the necessity of Christian *baptism*, an ordinance not yet instituted, nor ever heard of in the world? How could he know, that because heathens were washed with water when admitted profelytes into the Jewish church, that therefore a Jew must be baptized in *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, if he would ever enter into the kingdom of God our Saviour? How could he know, because profelytes to the Jewish church were

were baptized with water; that therefore, they who would hope for salvation according to the Christian dispensation must be *born of water and of the Spirit*?—It is most certain, that Nicodemus, though a master in Israel, could know none of these things; and it is therefore certain, that our Saviour did not, could not mean Christian *baptism*, in the text before us.—This matter is largely and particularly cleared up in my remarks on Dr Waterland; to which I refer the reader for further satisfaction. But Mr Wetmore has rather chosen to overlook all that is there said against this trifling notion, as unworthy of his regard, than to undergo the drudgery of answering it.

Another argument he brings, to confirm his interpretation of this text, is taken from the 12th verse of this chapter. *If I tell you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* From whence he argues: “To be born again of water and the Spirit, are called “earthly things, as the lowest gospel-mysteries—which it is “much more natural to apply unto baptism, than the other “sense of regeneration.”

But why may not the other sense of *regeneration* be called an *earthly* thing; that is, what can be represented in an easy and familiar manner, and exemplified by common and well known similitudes; and what was plainly represented and explained in the Old Testament? Why (I say) may it not in these respects be called an *earthly* thing, in comparison of those sublime and heavenly doctrines, taught in the remaining part of this discourse of our Lord's with Nicodemus? Such as *his coming down from heaven, and being in heaven at the same time*, ver 13. His being *lifted up* upon the cross, that *believers* in him might have *eternal life*, ver 14, 15. His being the *Son of man in heaven*, ver. 13.; and yet the *only begotten Son of God* here upon *earth*, ver. 16.—And such is the *eternal life*, to be obtained by all that *believe* in him; and the *condemnation*, that all *unbelievers* are already under, ver. 18. These are plainly the things here compared, by the denomination of *earthly* and *heavenly things*. This text therefore is nothing to Mr Wetmore's purpose.

His third *corollary* is, “That a persevering piety and virtue, “by the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, must be add-

ed to regeneration, to qualify men for the final happiness of "Christ's kingdom." Under this head he has some very useful admonitions, with which I heartily concur: But lest his reader should fall into some dangerous mistakes, with respect to the important truths therein represented, I shall take leave to add a few things, which are absolutely necessary, in order to procure and secure this persevering piety, which he recommends.

1. It is *necessary*, for those who would obtain a principle of piety, to be emptied of themselves; and to have a sensible feeling impression of their own impotence and misery. It is necessary, that they should have a realizing view, that they *are by nature children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3.; that *their carnal minds are enmity to God*, Rom. viii. 7.; that while they remain *in the flesh*, in their original and natural state, *they cannot please God*, Rom. viii. 8. And that they therefore, as guilty perishing sinners, lie at God's mercy, and cannot by their own power help themselves.—It is therefore dreadfully dangerous for any to imagine, that "baptism seals the remission of their former guilt, though they make their profession hypocritically;" as taught by this author; (p. 31.) and that those baptized persons, who "want a covenant claim to eternal happiness, do not want to be regenerated, but reformed;" as we are taught by Dr Waterland; (p. 11, 12.)

2. It is *necessary*; for those who would persevere in piety and virtue, that they obtain a new living principle of grace in their hearts by *regeneration*; otherwise, whatever streams there may be, without a living fountain to supply them, they must quickly dry up. It is necessary, that *they be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works; that they may walk in them*, Eph. ii. 10. It is necessary, that they *put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of him that created them*, Col. iii. 10. It would be very dangerous for them to suppose, that "by baptism they are brought into a state of favour in Christ, and thus quickened and saved;" as Mr Wetmore teaches (p. 29.) and that "this is not from any new creation of any principle in the soul of the regenerate; but something indeed specifically different from it;" as he also teaches, (p. 23.)

3. It is *necessary*, in order to their obtaining this principle,

that they depend only upon God's free and sovereign grace, remembering that such guilty unworthy sinners can have no claim to mercy, that they are *clay in the hands of the potter*, that God *will have mercy on whom he will have mercy*, Rom. ix. 18, 21.; and that if ever they are partakers of his salvation, it will only be *because it has so seemed good in his sight*, Matth. xi. 26. It is necessary that they should for this reason be in earnest, in *working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that works in them, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 12, 13.—It will be very dangerous for them to suppose, with this gentleman, that “a good conscience and a good life, comprise all the requisites to a comfortable hope,” (p. 7.) Or that if we “sincerely endeavour to do the best we can; and are daily gaining ground of our vices and passions; and, after strictest examination; find ourselves upon the improving hand, we are in a state of salvation,” (p. 5.) For God will bring all to his foot, to depend only upon his sovereign grace in Christ, whom he makes partakers of his saving mercy.

4. It is *necessary*; that besides active diligence in duty, believers firmly depend upon the gracious promises of the covenant, for persevering grace; that they depend upon it, that *whom God hath called, he hath also justified; and whom he hath justified, he will also glorify*, Rom. viii. 30.; that *nothing shall separate them from the love of Christ*, ver. 35.; that *none shall be able to pluck Christ's sheep out of his hands*, John x. 28.; that *he will never leave them nor forsake them*, Heb. xiii. 5.; but they shall be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1. 5.—This is necessary, in order to keep up their hope, to invigorate their duties, to fill them with thankfulness to God for the unspeakable gift of his grace, and to enable them to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.—It is therefore very dangerous to teach, with Dr Waterland, that “all Christian blessings may be forfeited and finally lost, if a person revolts from God, either for a time or for ever; and then such a person is no longer in a regenerate state, or a state of sonship, with respect to any saving effects,” (p. 11, 12.) And it is equally dangerous to teach, with Mr Wetmore, that men may be “admitted into a covenant of favour and friendship
“ with

“with God, have their former guilt removed by a gracious
“and free pardon; and yet be finally impenitent,” (p. 31, 32.)

5. It is *necessary*, that they who have this hope in them, should feel the *power of the divine grace* in their hearts; and find, by *examining themselves*, that *Christ is in them*, and they not reprobates, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. They should know that they abide in him, by the Spirit which he hath given them, 1 John iii. 24. They should find that they are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them, Rom. viii. 9. And they should have that *experience which worketh hope, which will not make ashamed*, Rom. v. 4, 5. How very dangerous is it therefore to teach, with Dr Waterland, that “the marks of a renewed heart and mind have a tendency to perplex some, and to deceive others; and therefore may prudently be thrown aside, as things of human invention.” (p. 42, 43.) Or to teach, with Mr Wetmore, that “we may properly be said to be children of hope, or begotten to hope; as those that enjoy great advantages to know God, and the way to be happy, are called *children of light*.” (p. 21.)

I would intreat all, who have any value for their souls, to consider these things, not as mere matters of speculation; but as affairs of highest importance to their eternal welfare. I would intreat them, that they be not soon shaken in mind; but that they continue in the faith, grounded and settled; and that they be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which they have heard.

It may be expected, that, before I conclude, I should make up the account with this angry gentleman, with respect to the very rough and abusive treatment, I have met with in this discourse of his. But as personal matters do not at all affect the debate between us, and such invectives ordinarily recoil upon the author himself, doing very little harm to those against whom they are levelled, I shall wholly pass them over; and conclude with my hearty prayer to God, that both he and his readers may so be *born of water and the Spirit*, and so experience the effects of *regenerating* grace in their hearts, as to be qualified for, and finally be partakers of the glory and blessedness of the *kingdom of God*. Amen.

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