

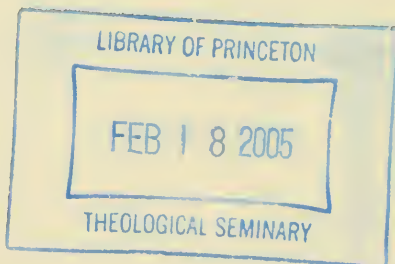
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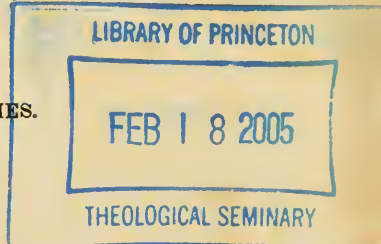
THE  
COMPLETE WORKS  
OF THE  
REV. ANDREW FULLER:

WITH A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,  
BY  
ANDREW GUNTON FULLER.

REPRINTED FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION; REVISED, WITH ADDITIONS,

BY  
JOSEPH BELCHER, D.D.

IN THREE VOLUMES.  
VOL. II.



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GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS—CONTROVERSIAL PUBLICATIONS.

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THE  
GOSPEL ITS OWN WITNESS;  
OR,  
THE HOLY NATURE AND DIVINE HARMONY  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION  
CONTRASTED WITH THE  
IMMORALITY AND ABSURDITY OF DEISM.

---

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

EARL OF ROCHESTER.



## P R E F A C E.

THE struggle between religion and irreligion has existed in the world in all ages; and if there be two opposite interests which divide its inhabitants, the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, it is reasonable to expect that the contest will continue till one of them be exterminated. The peaceful nature of Christianity does not require that we should make peace with its adversaries, or cease to repel their attacks, or even that we should act merely on the defensive. On the contrary, we are required to make use of those weapons of the Divine warfare with which we are furnished, for the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The opposition of the present age has not been confined to the less important points of Christianity, nor even to its first principles: Christianity itself is treated as an imposture. The same things, it is true, have been advanced, and as frequently repelled, in former ages; but the adversaries of the gospel of late, encouraged it should seem by the temper of the times, have renewed the attack with redoubled vigour. One of their most popular writers, hoping to avail himself of this circumstance, is pleased to entitle his performance *The Age of Reason*. This writer is aware that flattery is one of the most powerful means of gaining admission to the human mind; such a compliment, therefore, to the present age, was doubtless considered as a master-stroke of policy. Nor is Mr. Paine less obliging to himself than to his readers, but takes it for granted that the cause for which he pleads is that of reason and truth. The considerate reader, however, may remark, that those writers who are not ashamed to beg the question in the title-page are seldom the most liberal or impartial in the execution of the work.

One thing which has contributed to the advantage of infidelity, is the height to which political disputes have arisen, and the degree in which they have interested the passions and prejudices of mankind. Those who favour the sentiments of a set of men in one thing, will be in danger of thinking favourably of them in others; at least, they will not be apt to view them in so ill a light, as if they had been advanced by persons of different sentiments in other things as well as in religion. It is true, there may be nothing more friendly to infidelity in the *nature* of one political system than another; nothing that can justify professing Christians in accusing one another merely on account of a difference of this kind, of favouring

the interest of atheism and irreligion: nevertheless it becomes those who think favourably of the political principles of infidels to take heed, lest they be insensibly drawn away to think lightly of religion. All the nations of the earth, and all the disputes on the best or worst modes of government, compared with this, are less than nothing and vanity.

To this it may be added, that the eagerness with which men engage in political disputes, take which side they may, is unfavourable to a zealous adherence to the gospel. Any mere worldly object, if it become the principal thing which occupies our thoughts and affections, will weaken our attachment to religion; and if once we become cool and indifferent to this, we are in the high road to infidelity. There are cases, no doubt, relating to civil government, in which it is our duty to act, and that with firmness; but to make such things the chief object of our attention, or the principal topic of our conversation, is both sinful and injurious. Many a promising character in the religious world has, by these things, been utterly ruined.

The writer of the following pages is not induced to offer them to the public eye from an apprehension that *the Church of Christ is in danger*. Neither the downfall of popery, nor the triumph of infidels, as though they had hereby overturned Christianity, have ever been to him the cause of a moment's uneasiness. If Christianity be of God, as he verily believes it to be, they cannot overthrow it. He must be possessed of but *little faith* who can tremble, though in a storm, for the safety of the vessel which contains his Lord and Master. There would be one argument less for the divinity of the Scriptures, if the same powers which gave existence to the antichristian dominion had not been employed in taking it away.\* But though truth has nothing to fear, it does not follow that its friends should be inactive; if we have no apprehensions for the safety of Christianity, we may, nevertheless, feel for the rising generation. The Lord confers an honour upon his servants in condescending to make use of their humble efforts in preserving and promoting his interest in the world. If the present attempt may be thus accepted and honoured by Him, to whose name it is sincerely dedicated, the writer will receive a rich reward.

*Kettering, October 10, 1799.*

\* The powers of Europe (signified by the ten horns, or kings) into which the Roman empire should be divided, were to give their kingdoms to the beast. They did so, and France particularly took the lead. The same powers, it is predicted, shall hate the whore, and burn her flesh with fire. They have begun to do so; and in this business also France has taken the lead. Rev. xvii. 12, 13, 16—18.



## INTRODUCTION.

THE controversies between believers and unbelievers are confined to a narrower ground than those of professed believers with one another. Scripture testimony, any further than as it bears the character of truth, and approves itself to the conscience, or is produced for the purpose of explaining the nature of genuine Christianity, is here out of the question. *Reason* is the common ground on which they must meet to decide their contests. On this ground Christian writers have successfully closed with their antagonists; so much so that, of late ages, notwithstanding all their boast of reason, not one in ten of them can be kept to the fair and honourable use of this weapon. On the contrary, they are driven to substitute dark insinuation, low wit, profane ridicule, and gross abuse. Such were the weapons of Shaftesbury, Tindal, Morgan, Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon; and such are the weapons of the author of *The Age of Reason*. Among various well-written performances, in answer to their several productions, the reader may see a concise and able refutation of the greater part of them in *Leland's Review of the Deistical Writers*.

It is not my design to go over the various topics usually discussed in this controversy, but to select a single one, which, I conceive, has not been so fully attended to but that it may yet be considered with advantage. The *internal evidence* which Christianity possesses, particularly in respect of its holy nature and Divine harmony, will be the subject of the present inquiry.

Mr. Paine, after the example of many others, endeavours to discredit the Scriptures by representing the number of hands through which they have passed, and the uncertainty of the historical evidence by which they are supported. "It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us," he says, "whether such of the writings as now appear under the names of the Old and New Testament are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them; or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up."\* It is a good work which many writers have undertaken, to prove the validity of the Christian history, and to show that we have as good evidence for the truth of the great facts which it relates as we have for the truth of any ancient events whatever.† But if, in addition to this, it can be proved that the Scriptures contain internal characteristics of divinity, or that they carry in them the evidence of their authenticity, this will at once answer all objections from the supposed uncertainty of historical evidence.

Historians inform us of a certain valuable medicine called *Mithridate*, an antidote to poison. It is said that this medicine was invented by Mithridates, king of Pontus; that the receipt of it was found in a cabinet, written with his own hand, and was carried to Rome by Pompey; that it was translated into verse by Damocrates, a famous physician; and that it was afterwards translated by Galen, from whom we have it.‡ Now, supposing this medicine to be efficacious for its professed purpose, of what account would it be to object to the authenticity of its history? If a modern caviller should

\* Age of Reason, Part I. pp. 10, 11.

† Chambers's Dictionary, Art. Mithridate.

‡ Lardner, Simpson, and others.

take it into his head to allege that the preparation has passed through so many hands, and that there is so much hearsay and uncertainty attending it, that no dependence can be placed upon it, and that it had better be rejected from our *materia medica*,—he would be asked, *Has it not been tried, and found to be effectual; and that in a great variety of instances?* Such are Mr. Paine's objections to the Bible, and such is the answer that may be given him.

This language is not confined to infidel writers. Mr. Locke speaks of what he calls "traditional revelation," or revelation as we have it, in such a manner as to convey the idea that we have no evidence of the Scriptures being the word of God, but from a succession of witnesses having told us so.\* But I conceive these sacred writings may contain such *internal* evidence of their being what they profess to be, as that it might, with equal reason, be doubted whether the world was created by the power of God, as whether they were written by the inspiration of his Spirit; and if so, our dependence is not upon mere tradition.

It is true, the Scriptures having been conveyed to us through the medium of man, the work must necessarily, in some respects, have been humanized; yet there may be sufficient marks of divinity upon it to render it evident, to every candid mind, that it is of God.

We may call the Mosaic account of the creation a tradition, and may be said to know through this medium that the heavens and the earth are the productions of Divine power. But it is not through this medium only that we know it; the heavens and the earth carry in them evident marks of their Divine original. These works of the Almighty speak for themselves, and in language which none but those who are wilfully deaf can misunderstand: "Their sound is gone forth throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." Were any man to pretend that its being a matter of revelation, and to us merely traditional revelation, that God made the heavens and the earth, and therefore that a degree of uncertainty must necessarily attend it, he would be reminded that the thing itself carried in it its own evidence. Let it be candidly considered whether the same may not be said of the Holy Scriptures. They will *admit* of historical defence, but they do not require it. Their contents, come through whose hands they may, prove them to be of God. It was on this principle that the gospel was proclaimed in the form of *testimony*. The primitive preachers were not required by Him who sent them to prove their doctrine in the manner in which philosophers were wont to establish a proposition; but to "declare the counsel of God," and leave it. In delivering their message, they "commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

It is no objection to this statement of things that the Scriptures are not embraced by every man, whatever be the disposition of his mind. This is a property that no Divine production whatever possesses; and to require it is equally unreasonable, as to insist that for a book to be perfectly legible it must be capable of being read by those who shut their eyes upon it. Mr. Paine holds up the advantages of the book of nature in order to disparage that of Scripture, and says, "No deist can doubt whether the works of nature be God's works." An admirable proof this that we have arrived at *the age of reason!* Can no *atheist* doubt it? I might as well say, No Christian doubts the truth of the Scriptures: the one proves just as much as the other. A prejudiced mind discerns nothing of Divine beauty either in nature or Scripture; yet each may include the most indubitable evidence of being wrought by the finger of God.

\* Human Understanding, Book IV. Chap. XVIII.

If Christianity can be proved to be a religion that inspires the love of God and man; yea, and the only religion in the world that does so; if it endues the mind of him that embraces it with a principle of justice, meekness, chastity, and goodness, and even gives a tone to the morals of society at large; it will then appear to carry its evidence along with it. The effects which it produces will be its letters of recommendation, written, "not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Moreover, if Christianity can be proved to be in harmony with itself, correspondent with observation and experience, and consistent with the clearest dictates of sober reason, it will further appear to carry in it its own evidence; come through whose hands it may, it will evince itself to be what it professes to be—a religion from God.

I will only add, in this place, that the Christianity here defended is not Christianity as it is corrupted by popish superstition, or as interwoven with national establishments, for the accomplishment of secular purposes; but as it is taught in the New Testament, and practised by sincere Christians. There is no doubt but that, in many instances, Christianity has been adopted by worldly men, even by infidels themselves, for the purpose of promoting their political designs. Finding the bulk of the people inclined to the Christian religion under some particular form, and attached to certain leading persons among them who sustained the character of teachers, they have considered it as a piece of good policy to give this religion an establishment, and these teachers a share in the government. It is thus that religion, to its great dishonour, has been converted into an engine of state. The politician may be pleased with his success, and the teacher with his honours, and even the people be so far misled as to love to have it so; but the mischief resulting from it to religion is incalculable. Even where such establishments have arisen from piety, they have not failed to corrupt the minds of Christians from the simplicity which is in Christ. It was by these means that the church, at an early period, from being the bride of Christ, gradually degenerated to a harlot, and, in the end, became the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. The good that is done in such communities is not *in consequence* of their peculiar ecclesiastical constitution, but *in spite* of it; it arises from the virtue of individuals, which operates *notwithstanding* the disadvantages of their situation.

These are the things that afford a handle to unbelievers. They seldom choose to attack Christianity as it is drawn in the sacred writings, and exemplified in the lives of real Christians, who stand at a distance from worldly parade, political struggles, or state intrigues; but as it is corrupted and abused by worldly men. Mr. Paine racks his imagination to make out a resemblance between the heathen mythology and Christianity. While he is going over the ground of Christianity as instituted by Christ and his apostles, the resemblance is faint indeed. There are only two points in which he even pretends to find an agreement, and these are formed by misrepresenting the Scriptures. "The heathen deities were said to be *celestially begotten*; and Christ is called *the Son of God*.\* The heathens had a *plurality* of deities, even twenty or thirty thousand; and Christianity has reduced them to three." It is easy to see that this is ground not suited to Mr. Paine's purpose: he therefore hastens to corrupted Christianity; and here he finds plenty of materials. "The statue of Mary," he says, "succeeded the Statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints. The mythologists had gods for every thing. The Christian mythologists had saints for every thing. The church became as

\* To give a colour to this statement, he is obliged to affirm a most palpable falsehood, that only Gentiles believed Jesus to be the Son of God.

crowded with the one as the pantheon had been with the other; and Rome was the place of both."\* Very true, Mr. Paine; but you are not so ignorant as to mistake this for Christianity. Had you been born and educated in Italy, or Spain, you might have been excused in calling this "the Christian theory;" but to write in this manner with your advantages is disingenuous. Such conduct would have disgraced any cause but yours. It is capable, however, of some improvement. It teaches us to defend nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus. It also affords presumptive evidence in its favour; for if Christianity itself were false, there is little doubt but that you, or some of your fellow labourers, would be able to prove it so; and this would turn greatly to your account. Your neglecting this, and directing your artillery chiefly against its corruptions and abuses, betray a consciousness that the thing itself, if not invulnerable, is yet not so easy of attack. If Christianity had really been a relic of heathenism, as you suggest, there is little reason to think that you would have so strenuously opposed it.

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## PART I.

### THE HOLY NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION CONTRASTED WITH THE IMMORALITY OF DEISM.

THE greatest enemies of Christianity would still be thought friendly to morality, and will plead for it as necessary to the well-being of mankind. However immoral men may be in their practice, and to whatever lengths they may proceed in extenuating particular vices, yet they cannot plead for immorality in the gross. A sober, upright, humble, chaste, and generous character, is allowed, on all hands, to be preferable to one that is profligate, treacherous, proud, unchaste, or cruel. Such, indeed, is the sense which men possess of right and wrong, that, whenever they attempt to disparage the former, or vindicate the latter, they are reduced to the necessity of covering each with a false guise. They cannot traduce good *as good*, or justify evil *as evil*. The love of God must be called *fanaticism*, and benevolence to men *Methodism*, or some such opprobrious name, before they can depreciate them. Theft, cruelty, and murder, on the other hand, must assume the names of *wisdom* and *good policy* ere a plea can be set up in their defence. Thus were the arguments for the abolition of the slave trade answered, and in this manner was that iniquitous traffic defended in the British parliament. Doubtless there is a *woe* hanging over the heads of those men who thus called *evil good, and good evil*; nevertheless we see, even in their conduct, the amiableness of righteousness, and the impossibility of fairly opposing it.

\* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 5.

## CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIANITY REVEALS A GOD GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS ; BUT DEISM, THOUGH IT ACKNOWLEDGES A GOD, YET DENIES OR OVERLOOKS HIS MORAL CHARACTER.

THERE are certain perfections which all who acknowledge a God agree in attributing to him ; such are those of wisdom, power, immutability, &c. These, by Christian divines, are usually termed his *natural* perfections. There are others which no less evidently belong to Deity, such as goodness, justice, veracity, &c., all which may be expressed in one word—*holiness* ; and these are usually termed his *moral* perfections. Both natural and moral attributes tend to display the glory of the Divine character, but especially the latter. Wisdom and power, in the Supreme Being, render him a proper object of admiration ; but justice, veracity, and goodness attract our love. No being is beloved for his greatness, but for his goodness. Moral excellence is the highest glory of any intelligent being, created or uncreated. Without this, wisdom would be subtlety, power tyranny, and immutability the same thing as being unchangeably wicked.

We account it the glory of revelation that, while it displays the natural perfections of God in a way superior to any thing that has been called religion, it exhibits his moral excellence in a manner peculiar to itself. It was with good reason that Moses affirmed, in behalf of Israel, “Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges.” The God, or Rock, of Israel is constantly described as a Being “glorious in holiness,” and as requiring pure and holy worship : “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth.” “The Lord our God is holy.” “Holy and reverend is his name.” “Glory ye in his holy name.” “And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” “He is of purer eyes than to behold evil ; and cannot look on iniquity.” “A God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and right is he.” Is any thing like this to be found in the writings of the ancient heathens ? No. The generality of their deities were the patrons of vice, and their worship was accompanied with the foulest abominations that could disgrace the nature of man. Justice, benevolence, and veracity were not considered as necessary in any part of their religion ; and a large proportion of it consisted in drunkenness, lewdness, and the offering up of human sacrifices.

The object of Christian adoration is Jehovah, the God of Israel ; whose character for holiness, justice, and goodness, is displayed in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel in a more affecting light than by any of the preceding dispensations. But who or what is the god of deists ? It is true they have been shamed out of the polytheism of the heathens. They have reduced their thirty thousand deities into one ; but what is his character ? What attributes do they ascribe to him ? For any thing that appears in their writings, he is far from the holy, the just, and the good, as those of their heathen predecessors. They enjoy a pleasure, it is allowed, in contemplating the productions of wisdom and power ; but, as to holiness, it is foreign from their inquiries : a holy God does not appear to be suited to their wishes.

Lord Bolingbroke acknowledges a God, but is for reducing all his attributes to *wisdom* and *power* ; blaming divines for distinguishing between his physical and moral attributes ; asserting that “we cannot ascribe goodness and justice to God, according to our ideas of them, nor argue with any certainty about them ; and that it is absurd to deduce moral obligations

from the moral attributes of God, or to pretend to imitate him in those attributes.”\*

Voltaire admits “a supreme, eternal, incomprehensible Intelligence,” but passes over his moral character.†

Mr. Paine says, “I believe in one God, and no more;”‡ and in the course of his work ascribes to him the natural perfections of *wisdom* and *power*; but is very sparing in what he says of his moral excellence, of his being the moral Governor of the world, and of man’s being an accountable creature. He affects, indeed, to be shocked at the impurity of the ideas and expressions of the Bible, and to feel for “the honour of his Creator, in having such a book called after his name.”§ This is the only passage, that I recollect, in which he expresses any concern for the moral character of God, and whether this would have appeared, but for the sake of giving an edge to reproach, let the reader judge.

How are we to account for these writers thus denying or overlooking the moral character of the Deity, but by supposing that a *holy* God is not suited to their inclinations? If we bear a sincere regard to moral excellence, we shall regard every being in proportion as he appears to possess it; and if we consider the Divine Being as possessing it supremely, and as the source of it to all other beings, it will be natural for us to love him supremely, and all other beings in subserviency to him. And if we love him supremely on account of his moral character, it will be no less natural to take pleasure in contemplating him under that character.

On the other hand, if we be enemies to moral excellence, it will render every being who possesses it unlovely in our eyes. Virtuous or holy characters may indeed command our *respect*, and even *admiration*; but will not attract our *affection*. Whatever regard we may bear to them, it will not be on account of their virtue, but of other qualities of which they may be possessed. Virtuous characters may be also wise and mighty; and we may admire their ingenuity, be delighted with their splendour, and take pleasure in visiting them, that we may inspect their curiosities; but, in such cases, the more things of a moral nature are kept at a distance, the more agreeable will be our visit. Much the same may be said of the Supreme Being. If we be enemies to moral excellence, God, as a holy Being, will possess no loveliness in our eyes. We may admire him with that kind of admiration which is paid to a great genius, and may feel a pleasure in tracing the grandeur and ingenuity of his operations; but the further his moral character is kept out of sight, the more agreeable it will be to us.

Lord Shaftesbury, not contented with overlooking, attempts to satirize the Scripture representations of the Divine character. “One would think,” he says, “it were easy to understand that provocation and offence, anger, revenge, jealousy in point of honour or power, love of fame, glory, and the like, belong only to limited beings, and are necessarily excluded a Being which is perfect and universal.”|| That many things are attributed to the Divine Being in a figurative style, speaking merely after the manner of men, and that they are so understood by Christians, Lord Shaftesbury must have well known. We do not think it lawful, however, so to explain away these expressions as to consider the Great Supreme as incapable of being offended with sin and sinners, as destitute of pleasure or displeasure, or as unconcerned about his own glory, the exercise of which involves the general good of the universe. A being of this description would be neither loved nor feared, but would become the object of universal contempt.

It is no part of the imperfection of our nature that we are susceptible of

\* See Leland’s Review, Let. XXIII.

† Ignorant Philosopher, Nos. XV. XVI. XVII.

‡ Age of Reason, Part I. p. 1.

§ Ibid p. 16. || Characteristics, Vol. 1. § 5.

provocation and offence, of anger, of jealousy, and of a just regard to our own honour. Lord Shaftesbury himself would have ridiculed the man, and still more the magistrate, that should have been incapable of these properties on certain occasions. They are planted in our nature by the Divine Being, and are adapted to answer valuable purposes. If they be perverted and abused to sordid ends, which is too frequently the case, this does not alter their nature, nor lessen their utility. What would Lord Shaftesbury have thought of a magistrate who should have witnessed a train of assassinations and murders, without being in the least *offended* at them, or *angry* with the perpetrators, or inclined to take *vengeance* on them, for the public good? What would he think of a British House of Commons which should exercise no *jealousy* over the encroachments of a minister; or of a king of Great Britain who should suffer, with perfect indifference, his just authority to be contemned?

“But we are *limited* beings, and are therefore in danger of having our just rights invaded.” True; and though God be unlimited, and so in no danger of being deprived of his essential glory, yet he may lose his just authority *in the esteem of creatures*; and were this to take place universally, the whole creation would be a scene of anarchy and misery. But we understand Lord Shaftesbury. He wishes to compliment his Maker out of all his moral excellences. He has no objection to a god, provided he be one after his own heart, one who shall pay no such regard to human affairs as to call men to account for their ungodly deeds. If he thought the Creator of the world to bear such a character, it is no wonder that he should speak of him with what he calls “good humour, or pleasantry.”\* In speaking of such a Being, he can, as Mr. Hume expresses it, “feel more at ease” than if he conceived of God as he is characterized in the Holy Scriptures. But let men beware how they play with such subjects. Their conceptions do not alter the nature of God; and however they suffer themselves to trifle now, they may find in the end that there is not only a God, but a *God that judgeth in the earth*.

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## CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIANITY TEACHES US TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD, AND TO DEVOTE OURSELVES TO HIS SERVICE; BUT DEISM, THOUGH IT CONFESSES ONE SUPREME BEING, YET REFUSES TO WORSHIP HIM.

IF there is a God he ought to be worshipped. This is a principle which no man will be able to eradicate from his bosom, or even to suppress, but at great labour and expense. The Scriptures, it is well known, both inculcate and inspire the worship of God. Their language is, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” “Give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him all the earth.” “Give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people.” “Glory ye in his holy name:

\* Characteristics, Vol. I. § 3.

let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face evermore."

The *spirit* also which the Scriptures inspire is favourable to Divine worship. The grand lesson which they teach is *love*; and love to God delights to express itself in acts of obedience, adoration, supplication, and praise. The natural language of a heart well affected to God is, "I will call upon him as long as I live." "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

Is it thus with our adversaries? They speak, indeed, of "true and fabulous theology," and of "true and false religion;" and often talk of "adoring" the Supreme Being. But if there be no true religion among Christians, where are we to look for it? Surely not among deists. Their "adorations" seem to be a kind of exercises much resembling the benevolent acts of certain persons, who are so extremely averse from ostentation, that nobody knows of their being charitable but themselves.

Mr. Paine professes to believe in the equality of man, and that religious duty consists in "doing justice, loving mercy"—and what? I thought to be sure he was going to add "walking humbly with God." But I was mistaken. Mr. Paine supplies the place of walking humbly with God, by adding, "*and endeavouring to make our fellow creatures happy.*"\* Some people would have thought that this was included in doing justice and loving mercy; but Mr. Paine had rather use words without meaning than write in favour of godliness. "Walking humbly with God" is not comprehended in the list of his "religious duties." The very phrase offends him. It is that to him, in quoting Scripture, which a nonconductor is to the electrical fluid: it causes him to fly off in an oblique direction; and, rather than say any thing on so offensive a subject, to deal in unmeaning tautology.

Mr. Paine not only avoids the mention of "walking humbly with God," but attempts to load the practice itself with the foulest abuse.† He does not consider himself as "an outcast, a beggar, or a worm;" he does not approach his Maker through a Mediator; he considers "redemption as a fable," and himself as standing in an honourable situation with regard to his relation to the Deity. Some of this may be true, but not the whole. The latter part is only a piece of religious gasconade. If Mr. Paine really thinks so well of his situation as he pretends, the belief of an hereafter would not render him the slave of terror.‡ But, allowing the whole to be true, it proves nothing. A high conceit of oneself is no proof of excellence. If he choose to rest upon this foundation, he must abide the consequence; but he had better have forborne to calumniate others. What is it that has transported this child of reason into a paroxysm of fury against devout people? By what spirit is he inspired, in pouring forth such a torrent of slander? Why is it that he must accuse their humility of "ingratitude," their grief of "affectation," and their prayers of being "dictatorial" to the Almighty? "Cain hated his brother. And wherefore hated he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Prayer and devotion are things that Mr. Paine should have let alone, as being out of his province. By attempting, however, to deprecate them, he has borne witness to the devotion of Christians, and fulfilled what is written in a book which he affects to despise, "Speaking evil of the things which he understands not."

To admit a God, and yet refuse to worship him, is a modern and incon-

\* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 2.

† Ibid. p. 21.

‡ Ibid. Part II. near the end.



sistent practice. It is a dictate of reason as well as of revelation, "If the Lord be God, worship him; and if Baal, worship him." It never was made a question, whether the God in whom we believe should receive our adorations. All nations, in all ages, paid religious homage to the respective deities, or supposed deities, in which they believed. Modern unbelievers are the only men who have deviated from this practice. How this is to be accounted for is a subject worthy of inquiry. To me it appears as follows:—

In former times, when men were weary of the worship of the true God, they exchanged it for that of idols. I know of no account of the origin of idolatry so rational as that which is given by revelation. "Men did not like to retain God in their knowledge; therefore they were given up to a mind void of judgment; to change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things; and to defile themselves by abominable wickedness."\* It was thus with the people who came to inhabit the country of Samaria after the Israelites were carried captives into Assyria. At first, they seemed desirous to know and fear the God of Israel; but when they came to be informed of his holy character, and what kind of worship he required, they presently discovered their dislike. They pretended to fear him, but it was mere pretence; for every nation "made gods of their own."† Now gods of their own making would doubtless be characterized according to their own mind: they would be patrons of such vices as their makers wished to indulge; gods whom they could approach without fear, and in addressing whom they could "be more at ease," as Hume says, than in addressing the one living and true God; gods, in fine, the worship of whom might be accompanied with banquetings, revelings, drunkenness, and lewdness. These, I conceive, rather than the mere falling down to an idol, were the exercises that interested the passions of the worshippers. These were the exercises that seduced the ungodly part of the Israelitish nation to an imitation of the heathens. They found it extremely disagreeable to be constantly employed in the worship of a *holy* God. Such worship would awe their spirits, damp their pleasures, and restrain their inclinations. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should be continually departing from the worship of Jehovah, and leaning towards that which was more congenial with their propensities. But the situation of modern unbelievers is singular. Things are so circumstanced with them that they cannot worship the gods which they prefer. They never can fail to discover a strong partiality in favour of heathens, but they have not the face to practise or defend their absurd idolatries. The doctrine of one living and true God has appeared in the world, by means of the preaching of the gospel, with such a blaze of evidence, that it has forced itself into the minds of men, whatever has been the temper of their hearts. The stupid idolatry of past ages is exploded. Christianity has driven it out of Europe. The consequence is, great numbers are obliged to acknowledge a God whom they cannot find in their hearts to worship.

If the light that has gone abroad in the earth would permit the rearing of temples to Venus, or Bacchus, or any of the rabble of heathen deities, there is little doubt but that modern unbelievers would, in great numbers, become their devotees; but seeing they cannot have a god whose worship shall accord with their inclinations, they seem determined not to worship at all. And, to come off with as good a grace as the affair will admit, they compliment the Deity out of his sovereign prerogatives; professing to "love him for his giving them existence, and all their properties, without *interest*, and without subjecting them to any thing but their own nature."‡

\* Rom. i.

† 2 Kings xvii. 29.

‡ Ignorant Philosopher, No. XXIV.

The introduction of so large a portion of heathen mythology into the songs and other entertainments of the stage sufficiently shows the bias of people's hearts. The house of God gives them no pleasure; but the resurrection of the obscenities, intrigues, and Bacchanalian revels of the old heathens affords them exquisite delight. In a country where Christian worship abounds, this is plainly saying, 'What a weariness is it! Oh that it were no more! Since, however, we cannot introduce the worship of the gods, we will neglect all worship, and celebrate the praises of our favourite deities in another form.' In a country where deism has gained the ascendancy, this principle is carried still further. Its language there is, 'Seeing we cannot, for shame, worship any other than the one living and true God, let us abolish the day of worship, and substitute in its place one day in ten, which shall be devoted chiefly to theatrical entertainments, in which we can introduce as much heathenism as we please.'

Mr. Hume acknowledges the *justice* of considering the Deity as infinitely superior to mankind; but he represents it, at the same time, as very generally attended with unpleasant effects, and magnifies the advantages of having gods which are only a little superior to ourselves. He says, "While the Deity is represented as infinitely superior to mankind, this belief, though altogether just, is apt, when joined with superstitious terrors, to sink the human mind into the lowest submission and abasement, and to represent the monkish virtues of mortification, penance, humility, and passive suffering, as the only qualities which are acceptable to him. But where the gods are conceived to be only a little superior to mankind, and to have been many of them advanced from that inferior rank, we are more at our ease in our addresses to them, and may even, without profaneness, aspire sometimes to a rivalry and emulation of them. Hence activity, spirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues which aggrandize a people."\* It is easy to perceive, from this passage, that though Mr. Hume acknowledges the *justice* of conceiving of a God infinitely superior to us, yet his *inclination* is the other way. At least, in a nation the bulk of which will be supposed to be inclined to superstition, it is better, according to his reasoning, and more friendly to virtue, to promote the worship of a number of imaginary deities, than of the one only living and true God. Thus "the fool saith in his heart, No God!"

The sum of the whole is this: Modern unbelievers are deists in theory, pagans in inclination, and atheists in practice.

If deists loved the one only living and true God, they would delight in worshipping him; for love cannot be inoperative, and the only possible way for it to operate towards an infinitely glorious and all-perfect Being is by worshipping his name and obeying his will. If Mr. Paine really felt for "the honour of his Creator," as he affects to do,† he would mourn in secret for all the great wickedness which he has committed against him; he would lie in the dust before him, not merely as "an outcast, a beggar and a worm," but as a sinner, deserving his eternal displeasure. He would be glad of a Mediator, through whom he might approach his offended Creator; and would consider redemption by his blood, not as "a fable," but a Divine reality, including all his salvation, and all his desire. Yea, he himself would "turn devout;" and it would be said of him, as of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth!" Nor would his prayers, though importunate, be "dictatorial," or his grief "affected." On the contrary he would look on Him whom he had pierced, and mourn, as one mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. But these

\* Dissertation on the Natural History of Religion, § 10.

† Age of Reason, Part I. p. 16.

are things pertaining to *godliness*; things, alas for him! the mention of which is sufficient to inflame his mind with malignity, and provoke him to the most outrageous and abusive language.

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### CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD OF MORALITY IS ENLARGED, AND FREE FROM IMPURITY; BUT DEISM CONFINES OUR OBLIGATIONS TO THOSE DUTIES WHICH RESPECT OUR OWN SPECIES, AND GREATLY PALLIATES VICE WITH REGARD TO A BREACH EVEN OF THEM.

PERSONS who profess the strictest regard to the rule of duty, and carry the extent of it to the highest pitch, may, it is allowed, be insincere, and contradict by their practice what they advance in their professions. But those whose ideas of virtue are low and contracted, and who embrace every opportunity to reconcile the vices of the world with its sacred precepts, cannot possibly be accounted any other than its enemies.

That which the Scriptures call *holiness, spirituality, &c.*, as much surpasses every thing that goes under the names of morality and virtue among unbelievers as a living man surpasses a painting, or even a rude and imperfect daubing. If, in this controversy, I have used these terms to express the Scriptural ideas, it is not because, in their ordinary acceptation, they are equal to the purpose, but for the sake of meeting unbelievers upon their own ground. I have a right, however, to understand by them those dispositions of the mind, whatever they be, which are *right, fit, or amiable*; and, so explained, I undertake to prove that the morality and virtue inculcated by the gospel is enlarged and free from impurity, while that which is taught by its adversaries is the reverse.

It is a distinguishing property of the Bible, that all its precepts aim directly at the heart. It never goes about to form the mere exterior of man. To merely external duties it is a stranger. It forms the lives of men no otherwise than by forming their dispositions. It never addresses itself to their vanity, selfishness, or any other corrupt propensity. You are not pressed to consider what men will think of you, or how it will affect your temporal interest; but what is right, and what is necessary to your eternal well-being. If you comply with its precepts, you must *be*, and not merely *seem to be*. It is the heart that is required, and all the different prescribed forms of worship and obedience are but so many modifications or varied expressions of it.

Is any thing like this to be found in the writings of deists? No. Their deity does not seem to take cognizance of the heart. According to them, "There is no merit or crime in intention."\* Their morality only goes to form the exterior of man. It allows the utmost scope for wicked desires, provided they be not carried into execution to the injury of society.

The morality which the Scriptures inculcate is summed up in these few words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself." This single principle is competent to the government of all intelligent nature. It is a band that would hold together the whole rational creation, and diffuse peace, order and happiness wherever it existed.

\* Volney's Law of Nature, p. 18.

If mankind loved God supremely, there would be no idolatry upon earth, nor any of its attendant abominations; no profaning the name of God, nor making a gain of godliness; no opposing, corrupting, perverting, nor abusing the truth; no perjuries, nor hypocrisies; no despising of those that are good; no arrogance, ingratitude, pride, nor self-complacency under the smiles of providence; and no murmuring, heart-rising, sullenness, nor suicide under its frowns. Love would render it their meat and drink to fear, honour, and obey him, and induce them to take every thing well at his hands.—And if they loved their fellow creatures as themselves, for his sake, there would be no wars, rivalships, antipathies, nor breach of treaties between nations; no envyings, strifes, wrongs, slanders, duels, litigations, nor intrigues between neighbours; no flattering complaisance nor persecuting bitterness in religion; no deceit, fraud, nor overreaching in trade; no tyranny, venality, haughtiness, nor oppression among the great; no envy, discontent, disaffection, cabals, nor evil-devisings among common people; no murders, robberies, thefts, burglaries, nor brothels, in city or country; no cruelty in parents or masters; no ingratitude nor disobedience in children or servants; no unkindness, treachery, nor implacable resentments between friends; no illicit connexions between the sexes; no infidelities, jealousies, nor bitter contentions, in families; in short, none of those streams of death, one or more of which flow through every vein of society, and poison its enjoyments.

Such is the principle and rule of Christian morality; and what has deism to substitute in its place? Can it find a succedaneum for love? No, but it proposes the love of *ourselves* instead of the love of God. Lord Bolingbroke resolves all morality into *self-love*, as its first principle. “We love ourselves,” he says, “we love our families, we love the particular societies to which we belong; and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind. Like so many different vortices, the centre of all is self-love.”\* Such also are the principles of Volney.

Could this disposition be admitted as a proper source of moral action, the world would certainly not be wanting in morality. All men possess at least the *principle* of it, whether they carry it to the extent which Lord Bolingbroke proposes or not; for though some may err in the choice of their end, and others in the means of obtaining it, yet no man was ever so wanting in regard to himself, as intentionally to pursue his own injury. But if it should prove that to render self-love the source of moral action is the same thing as for every individual to treat himself as the Supreme Being, and therefore, that this principle, instead of being a source of virtue, is the very essence of vice, and the source of all the mischief in the universe, consequences may follow of a very different complexion.

To subordinate self-love I have no objection. It occupies a place in the Christian standard of morality, being the measure of that love which we owe to our fellow creatures. And as the universal love which we owe to them does not hinder but that some of them, by reason of their situation or peculiar relation to us, may require a larger portion of our regard than others, it is the same with respect to ourselves. Our own concerns are our own immediate charge; and those which are of the greatest importance, such as the concerns of our souls, undoubtedly require a proportionate degree of attention. But all this does not affect the present subject of inquiry. It is our *supreme*, and not our subordinate regard, that will ever be the source of action.

I take it for granted that it is the intention of every good government, human or Divine, to *unite* its subjects, and not to set them at variance. But

\* Posthumous Works, Vol. V. p. 82.

there can be no union without a common object of regard. Either a character whom all love and venerate, or an end which all pursue, or both, is that to a community which a head-stone is to an arch; nor can they keep together without it. It is thus that the love of God holds creation together. He is that lovely character to whom all holy intelligences bear supreme affection; and the display of his glory, in the universal triumph of truth and righteousness, is that end which they all pursue. Thus united in their grand object, they cannot but feel a union of heart with one another, arising from what is common to every other voluntary union—a congeniality of sentiments and pursuits.

But if our supreme affection terminate on ourselves, and no being, created or uncreated, be regarded but for our own sakes, it is manifest there can be no union beyond the sphere in which other beings become voluntarily subservient to our wishes. The Supreme Being, if our plan do not comport with his, will be continually thwarting us; and so we shall be always at variance with *him*. And as to created beings, those individuals whom we desire to be subservient to our wishes, having the same right, and the same inclination, to require that we should be subservient to theirs, will also be continually thwarting us; and so we shall always be at variance with *them*. In short, nothing but an endless succession of discord and confusion can be the consequence. Every one setting up for pre-eminence, every one must, of course, contribute to the general state of anarchy and misery which will pervade the community. Such is, in fact, the state of this apostate world; and but for Divine Providence, which for wise ends balances all human affairs, causing one set of evils to counteract the influence of another, and all to answer ends remote from the intention of the perpetrators, it must be overset by its own disorders.

To regard every other being, created or uncreated, only for our own sakes, is supreme self-love; and, instead of being a source of virtue, is itself abominable, and the source of all the mischief and misery in the universe. All the evils just enumerated are to be traced to this principle as their common parent; nor is there any ground of hope that it will ever produce effects of a different nature. Some persons have talked much of “self-love *ripening* into benevolence.” Had it been said *malevolence*, it had been nearer the truth; for it is contrary to all experience that any thing should change its nature by becoming more mature. No, a child in knowledge may discern that, if ever genuine benevolence exist in the breast of an individual, or extend its healing wings over a bleeding world, it must be by the subversion of this principle, and by the prevalence of that religion which teaches us to love God supremely, ourselves subordinately, and our fellow creatures as ourselves.

To furnish a standard of morality, some of our adversaries have had recourse to *the laws of the state*; avowing them to be the rule or measure of virtue. Mr. Hobbes maintained that *the civil law was the sole foundation of right and wrong*, and that *religion had no obligation but as enjoined by the magistrate*. And Lord Bolingbroke often writes in a strain nearly similar, disowning any other sanction or penalty by which obedience to the law of nature is enforced than those which are provided by the laws of the land.\* But this rule is defective, absurd, contradictory, and subversive of all true morality. First, It is grossly *defective*. This is justly represented by a prophet of their own. “It is a narrow notion of innocence,” says Seneca, “to measure a man’s goodness only by the law. Of how much larger extent is the rule of duty, or of good offices, than that of legal right! How

\* Works, Vol. V. p. 90.

many things are there which piety, humanity, liberality, justice, and fidelity require, which yet are not within the compass of the public statutes!\*" Secondly, It is *absurd*; for if the public statutes be the only standard of right and wrong, legislators in framing them could be under no law; nor is it possible that in any instance they should have enacted injustice. Thirdly, It is *contradictory*. Human laws, we all know, require different and opposite things in different nations, and in the same nation at different times. If this principle be right, it is right for deists to be persecuted for their opinions at one period, and to persecute others for theirs at another. Finally, It is *subversive of all true morality*. "The civil laws," as Dr. Leland has observed, "take no cognizance of secret crimes, and provide no punishment for internal bad dispositions or corrupt affections. A man may be safely as wicked as he pleases on this principle, provided he can manage so as to escape punishment from the laws of his country, which very bad men, and those that are guilty of great vices, easily may, and frequently do evade."

Rousseau has recourse to *feelings* as his standard. "I have only to consult myself," he says, "concerning what I ought to do. All that I *feel* to be right is right. Whatever I *feel* to be wrong is wrong. All the morality of our actions lies in the judgment we ourselves form of them."† By this rule his conduct through life appears to have been directed; a rule which, if universally regarded, would deluge the world with every species of iniquity.

But that on which our opponents insist the most, and with the greatest show of argument, is *the law and light of nature*. This is their professed rule on almost all occasions, and its praises they are continually sounding. I have no desire to depreciate the light of nature, or to disparage its value as a rule. On the contrary, I consider it as occupying an important place in the Divine government. Whatever may be said of the light possessed by the heathen, as being derived from revelation, I feel no difficulty in acknowledging that the grand law which they are under is that of nature. Revelation itself appears to me so to represent it; holding it up as the rule by which they shall be judged, and declaring its dictates to be so clear as to leave them *without excuse*.‡ Nature and Scripture appear to me to be as much in harmony as Moses and Christ; both are celebrated in the same Psalm.§

By the *light of nature*, however, I do not mean those ideas which heathens have actually entertained, many of which have been darkness, but those which were presented to them by the works of creation, and which they might have possessed, had they been desirous of retaining God in their knowledge. And by the *dictates of nature*, with regard to right and wrong, I understand those things which appear, to the mind of a person sincerely disposed to understand and practise his duty, to be *natural, fit, or reasonable*. There is, doubtless, an eternal difference between right and wrong; and this difference, in a vast variety of instances, is manifest to every man who sincerely and impartially considers it. So manifest have the power and Godhead of the Creator been rendered, in every age, that no person of an upright disposition could, through mere mistake, fall into idolatry or impiety; and every one who has continued in these abominations is *without excuse*. The desire also which every human being feels of having justice done to him from all other persons must render it sufficiently manifest, to his judgment, that he ought to do the same to them; and, wherein he acts otherwise, his conscience, unless it be seared as with a hot iron, must accuse him.

\* In Leland's Advantages and Necessity of Revelation, Vol. II. Part II. Chap. III. p. 42.

† Emilius, Vol. I. pp. 166—168.

‡ Rom. ii. 12—16; i. 20.

§ Psal. xix.

But does it follow from hence that revelation is unnecessary? Certainly not. It is one thing for nature to afford so much light in matters of right and wrong, as to leave the sinner without excuse; and another to afford him any well-grounded hope of forgiveness, or to answer his difficulties concerning the account which something within him says he must hereafter give of his present conduct.

Further, It is one thing to leave sinners without excuse in sin, and another thing to recover them from it. That the light of nature is insufficient for the latter, is demonstrated by melancholy fact. Instead of returning to God and virtue, those nations which have possessed the highest degrees of it have gone further and further into immorality. There is not a single example of a people, of their own accord, returning to the acknowledgment of the true God, or extricating themselves from the most irrational species of idolatry, or desisting from the most odious kinds of vice. Those nations where science diffused a more than ordinary lustre were as superstitious and as wicked as the most barbarous, and in many instances exceeded them. It was, I doubt not, from a close observation of the different efficacy of nature and Scripture, that the writer of the *nineteenth Psalm*, (a Psalm which Mr. Paine pretends to admire,) after having given a just tribute of praise to the former, affirmed of the latter, "*The law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the soul.*"

Again, It is one thing for that which is natural, fit, or reasonable, in matters of duty, to approve itself to a mind *sincerely disposed to understand and practise it*, and another to approve itself to a mind of an opposite description. The judgments of men concerning the dictates of nature are greatly influenced by their prevailing inclinations. If under certain circumstances they feel prompted to a particular course of conduct, they will be apt to consider that incitement as a dictate of nature, though it may be no other than corrupt propensity; and thus, while the law of nature is continually in their mouth, their principles, as well as their conduct, are a continual violation of it. How was it that, notwithstanding the light of nature shone around the old philosophers, their minds, in matters of morality, were dark as night, and their precepts, in many instances, full of impurity? Did nature inspire Plato to teach the doctrine of a community of wives; Lycurgus to tolerate dexterous thieving; Solon to allow of sodomy; Seneca to encourage drunkenness and suicide; and almost all of them to declare in favour of lewdness? No, verily; it is a perversion of language to call the principles of such men the dictates of nature: they are unnatural and abominable, as contrary to reason as to religion.

It is true, what is called nature by modern infidels is not quite so gross as the above, but it falls very little short of it. So far as relates to the encouragement of theft, and perhaps of unnatural crimes, they would disavow; and for this we are indebted to Christianity; but as to fornication and adultery, they are not a whit behind their predecessors. Lord Herbert, the father of the English deists, and whose writings are far more sober than the generality of those who have come after him, apologizes for lewdness, in certain cases, as resembling thirst in a dropsy, and inactivity in a lethargy.† Lord Bolingbroke unblushingly insinuates that the only consideration that can reconcile a man to confine himself by marriage to one woman, and a woman to one man, is this, that nothing hinders but that they may indulge their desires with others.‡ This is the same as accusing the whole human race of incontinency, and denying that there is any such thing as conjugal

\* See Leland's Advantages and Necessity of Revelation, Vol. II. pp. 147, 50, 59, 210, 213.

† Leland's Review, &c. Vol. I. Let. 1.

‡ Works, Vol. V. p. 167.

fidelity; a plain proof that, whoever was clear of this indecent charge, Lord Bolingbroke was not. Mr. Hume, who has written a volume on the principles of morality, scruples not to stigmatize self-denial as a "monkish virtue;" and adopts the opinion of a French writer, that "adultery must be practised if we would obtain all the advantages of life; that female infidelity, when known, is a small thing, and when unknown, nothing." These writers will, on some occasions, descant in favour of chastity, as being conducive to health and reputation; but on others they seldom fail to apologize for the contrary, and that under the pretence of indulging the dictates of nature. Yet the same things might be alleged in behalf of oppression, revenge, theft, duelling, ambitious war, and a thousand other vices which desolate the earth: they are practices which men, placed in certain circumstances, will feel themselves prompted to commit; nor is there a vice that can be named but what would admit of such an apology.

Finally, It is one thing for the light of nature to be so clear as to render idolatry, impiety, and injustice inexcusable; and another thing to render the *whole will* of our Creator evident, and that in the most *advantageous manner*. If a person, possessed of only the light of nature, were ever so sincerely desirous of knowing God; or grieved for the sins of which his conscience accused him; or attached to the holy, the just, and the good; or disposed to obey his Creator's will if he did but understand it; though he should be in no danger of confounding the dictates of nature with those of corrupt propensity; yet he must labour under great disadvantages, which, allowing they might not affect his eternal state, yet would greatly injure his present peace and usefulness. To illustrate this remark, let us suppose the inhabitants of a province to throw off the government of a just and lawful prince. Being once engaged, they may feel themselves impelled to go forward. They may choose new rulers, and use all possible means to efface every sign and memorial of the authority of their ancient sovereign. They may even labour to forget, and teach their children to forget, if possible, that there ever was such a character in being, to whom they owed allegiance. Yet, after all, there may be certain traces and memorials of his government which it is not in their power to efface. Yea, there may be continued instances of forbearance and clemency, which, in spite of all their efforts, will bear witness of his goodness and just authority over them. Thus it was that God, while he "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, nevertheless left not himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But as the memorials of just authority, in the one case, though sufficient to leave the rebellious without excuse, would not contain a *full* expression of the prince's will, nor be conveyed in so *advantageous* a manner as that in which he treated his professed subjects; so the light afforded by the works of nature and the continued goodness of God, in the other, though sufficient to leave the world without excuse, does not express his *whole will*, nor convey what it does express so *advantageously* as by revelation. And as an individual, residing in the midst of the rebellious province, whose heart might relent, and who might long to return to his allegiance, would be under inexpressible disadvantages, so it must necessarily be with a heathen whose desire should be towards the God against whom he had sinned.

The amount is, that modern unbelievers have no standard of morals, except it be their own inclinations. Morality with them is any thing, or nothing, as convenience requires. On some occasions they will praise that of Jesus Christ; but ere we can have time to ask them, Why then do you not submit to it? they are employed in opposing it. Attend to their general



declamations in favour of virtue, and you will be ready to imagine they are its warmest friends; but follow them up, and observe their exposition of particular precepts, and you will be convinced that they are its decided enemies, applauding in the gross that which they are ever undermining in detail.

By the foolish and discordant accounts which these writers give of morality, it should seem that they know not what it is. Every new speculator is dissatisfied with the definition of his predecessor, and endeavours to mend it. "Virtue," says Lord Shaftesbury, "is a sense of beauty, of harmony, of order, and proportion, an affection towards the whole of our kind or species." "It is," says Lord Bolingbroke, "only the love of *ourselves*." "It is every thing that tends to preserve and perfect man," says Volney; and as "good reputation" has this tendency, it is, in his account, "a moral good."\* "It is whatever is *useful* in society," says Mr. Hume; and as "health, cleanliness, facility of expression, broad shoulders, and taper legs" are of use, they are to be reckoned among the virtues. To this might be added a *large portion of effrontery*, as the last-named writer assures us (it may be from his own experience) that "nothing carries a man through the world like a true, genuine, natural impudence."† Mr. Paine brings up the rear, and informs us, "It is *doing justice, loving mercy, and . . .* endeavouring to make our fellow creatures happy." O Paine! had you but for once suffered yourself to be taught by a prophet, and quoted his words as they stand, you would, undoubtedly, have borne away the palm; but you had rather write nonsense than say any thing in favour of *godliness*.

It is worthy of notice, that, amidst all the discordance of these writers, they agree in excluding the Divine Being from their theory of morals. They think after their manner; but "God is not in all their thoughts." In comparing the Christian doctrine of morality, the sum of which is *love*, with their atheistical jargon, one seems to hear the voice of the Almighty, saying, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge? Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man."

The words of Scripture are spirit and life. They are the language of *love*. Every exhortation of Christ and his apostles is impregnated with this spirit. Let the reader turn to the twelfth chapter to the Romans, for an example, and read it carefully; let him find, if he can, any thing, in the purest part of the writings of deists, that is worthy of being compared with it. No; virtue itself is no longer virtue in their hands. It loses its charms when they affect to embrace it. Their touch is that of the cold hand of death. The most lovely object is deprived by it of life and beauty, and reduced to a shrivelled mass of inactive formality.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CHRISTIANITY FURNISHES MOTIVES TO A VIRTUOUS LIFE, WHICH DEISM EITHER REJECTS OR ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE.

So long as our adversaries profess a regard to virtue, and, with Lord Bolingbroke,‡ acknowledge that "the gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity," they must allow those to be the best principles which furnish the most effectual motives for reducing it to practice.

\* Law of Nature, p. 17.

† Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, Sec. 6, 7, 8. Essays Moral and Political, Essay III. p. 15.

‡ Works Vol. V. p. 188.

Now there is not a doctrine in the whole compass of Christianity but what is improvable to this purpose. It is a grand peculiarity of the gospel that none of its principles are merely speculative; each is pregnant with a practical use. Nor does the discovery of it require any extraordinary degree of ingenuity; real Christians, however weak as to their natural capacities, have always been taught, by the gospel of Christ, that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world."

Ancient philosophers have taught many things in favour of morality, so far at least as respects justice and goodness towards our fellow creatures; but where are the motives by which the minds of the people, or even their own minds, have been moved to a compliance with them? They framed a curious machine, but who among them could discover a power to work it? What principles have appeared in the world, under the name either of philosophy or religion, that can bear a comparison with the following? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Be ye therefore followers (or imitators) of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour." "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy:—be of one accord, of one mind." "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God!" "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

These are motives by which Christians in every age have been induced to

practise that morality which, while writing against Christianity, Paine, Bolingbroke, and many others, have been compelled to applaud. But the far greater part of them are rejected by deists; and what will they substitute, of equal efficacy, in their place? The love of Christ constraineth *us*; but what have they to constrain *them*? Will self-love, or the beauty or utility of virtue, answer the purpose? Let history and observation determine.

It may be alleged, however, that deists do not reject the *whole* of these important motives; for that some, at least, admit the doctrine of a *future life*, which, with the acknowledgment of one living and true God, may be thought sufficient for all the purposes of morality.

That the doctrine of a future life is of great importance in the moral system is allowed; but the greatest truth, if dis severed from other truths of equal importance, will be divested of its energy. As well might a hand dis severed from the body be represented as sufficient for the purposes of labour, as one or two unconnected principles for the purpose of morality. This is actually the case in the present instance. The doctrine of a future life, as held by Christians, has stimulated them to labour and suffer without intermission. From a "respect to this recompense of reward," a kingdom has been refused, where the acceptance of it would have interfered with a good conscience. Yea, life itself has been sacrificed, and that not in a few, but in innumerable instances, where it could not be retained but at the expense of truth and uprightness. But is it thus among deists? Does the doctrine of a future life, as held by them, produce any such effects? When was it known, or heard, that they sacrificed any thing for this or any other principle of a moral nature? Who among them ever thought of such a thing, or who expected it at their hands?

But this is not all: There is such a connexion in truth, that, if one part of it be given up, it will render us less friendly towards other parts, and so destroy their efficacy. This also is actually the case in the present instance. Our adversaries do not cordially embrace even this truth; but, on the contrary, are continually undermining it, and rendering it of no effect. Lord Herbert, it is true, considered it as an essential article of natural religion; and it was his opinion that he could scarcely be accounted a reasonable creature who denied it; but this is far from being the case with later deistical writers, the greater part of whom either deny it, or represent it as a matter of doubt. Some of them disown every principle by which it is supported, and others go so far as to hold it up to ridicule, labouring withal to prove the hope of it unfriendly to the disinterested love of virtue. Volney, in his *Law of Nature, or Catechism for French Citizens*, says nothing about it. Paine just touches upon it in his *Age of Reason*, by informing us that "he *hopes* for happiness beyond this life;" but as happiness has its counterpart, and stands upon the general doctrine of *retribution*, he is afraid to say he *believes* it. It must be reduced to a mere matter of "probability," lest the thought of it should damp him in his present pursuits, and render him "the slave of terror."\* Bolingbroke, though he acknowledges its antiquity, and great utility in promoting virtue, yet represents it as a "mere invention of philosophers and legislators," and as being "originally an hypothesis, and which may, therefore, be a vulgar error." "Reason," he says, "will neither affirm nor deny a future state." By this the reader might be led to expect that this writer was neither for it nor against it; yet the whole of his reasonings are directed to undermine it.† Hume, like the writer last mentioned, acknowledges the utility of the doctrine, but questions its truth. He would not have people disabused, or delivered from such a prejudice, because it would free

\* *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 1. Part II. pp. 100, 101.

† *Works*, Vol. V.

them from one restraint upon their passions. Any person who should undertake this work, he allows, would be a bad citizen; yet he might, for aught he knows, be a good reasoner.\* Shaftesbury employs all his wit and satire in endeavouring to raise a laugh at the very idea, representing the heathen world as very happy till Christianity arose, and teased them about an hereafter. "A new sort of policy," he says, "which extends itself to another world, and considers the future lives and happiness of man rather than the present, has made us leap beyond the bounds of natural humanity, and, out of a supernatural charity, has taught us the way of plaguing one another most devoutly."†

Lord Shaftesbury's wit may very well be passed by, as being what it is: in connexion with the foregoing quotations, it suffices to show us what efficacy the doctrine of a future life, as held by deists, may be expected to possess. But this writer is not contented with railery: he must also attempt to *reason* against the doctrine; contending that it has a pernicious influence on the morals of men; that it is a mercenary principle, and opposed to the disinterested love of virtue, for its own sake. "The principle of self-love," he observes, "which is naturally so prevailing in us, is improved and made stronger by the exercise of the passions on a subject of more extended interest: and there may be reason to apprehend that a temper of this kind will extend itself through all the parts of life. And this has a tendency to create a stricter attention to self-good and private interest, and must insensibly diminish the affection towards public good, or the interest of society, and introduce a certain narrowness of spirit, which is observable in the devout persons and zealots of almost every religious persuasion."‡

This objection, the reader will recollect, is in direct contradiction to the principles of Bolingbroke, and, it may be added, of Volney, and other deistical writers, who maintain self-love to be the origin of virtuous affection. Some Christian writers, in answering it, have given up the doctrine of disinterested love, allowing that all religious affection is to be traced to the love which we bear to ourselves, as its first principle. To me, this appears no other than betraying the truth, and ranking Christianity with every species of apostacy and false religion which have any time prevailed in the world. A clear idea of the nature of self-love, if I mistake not, will enable us to determine this question, and to answer the deistical objection without rendering Christianity a mercenary system.

Every man may be considered either singly or connectedly; either as a being by himself, or as a link in a certain chain of beings. Under one or other of these views every man considers himself, while pursuing his own interest. If the former, this is to make himself the ultimate end of his actions, and to love all other beings, created or uncreated, only as they subserve his interest or his pleasure: this is private self-love: this is mean and mercenary, and what we commonly understand by the term *selfishness*. But if the latter, there is nothing mean or selfish in it. He who seeks his own well-being in connexion with the general good seeks it as he ought to do. No man is required directly to oppose his own welfare, though, in some instances, he may be required to sacrifice it for the general good. Neither is it necessary that he should be indifferent towards it. Reason, as well as Scripture, requires us to love ourselves as we love our neighbour. To this may be added, every man is not only a link in the chain of intelligent beings, and so deserving of some regard from himself, as well as from others, but every man's person, family, and connexions, and still more the concerns of his soul, are, as it were, his own vineyard, over the interests of which it

\* Philosophical Essays, p. 231. † Characteristics, Vol. I. p. 18. ‡ Ibid. Vol. II. p. 58.

is his peculiar province to exercise a watchful care. Only let the care of himself and his immediate connexions be in subserviency to the general good, and there is nothing mercenary in it.

I need not multiply arguments to prove that the doctrine of *rewards* does not necessarily tend to encourage a mercenary spirit, or that it is consistent with the disinterested love of virtue. Lord Shaftesbury himself has acknowledged this: "If by the hope of reward," he says, "be understood the love and desire of virtuous enjoyment, or of the very practice or exercise of virtue in another life, the expectation or hope of this kind is so far from being derogatory to virtue, that it is an evidence of our loving it the more sincerely, and for its own sake."\* This single concession contains an answer to all that his lordship has advanced on the subject; for the rewards promised in the gospel are all exactly of the description which he mentions. It is true they are often represented under the images of earthly things; but this does not prove that, in themselves, they are not pure and spiritual. That there is nothing in them adapted to gratify a mercenary spirit, the following observations will render plain to the meanest capacity:—

First, The nature of heavenly enjoyments is such as to admit of no monopoly, and consequently to leave no room for the exercise of private self-love. Like the beams of the sun, they are equally adapted to give joy to a world as to an individual; nay, so far is an increase in the number of the participants from diminishing the quantum of happiness possessed by each individual, that it has a tendency to increase it. The interest of one is the interest of all, and the interest of all extends to every one.

Secondly, The sum of heavenly enjoyments consists in a holy likeness to God, and in the eternal enjoyment of his favour.† But holy likeness to God is the same thing as "the very practice or exercise of virtue," the hope of which, Lord Shaftesbury acknowledges, "is so far from being derogatory to it, that it is an evidence of our loving it the more sincerely, and for its own sake." And as to the enjoyment of the Divine favour, a proper pursuit of this object, instead of being at variance with disinterested affection, clearly *implies* it; for no man can truly desire the favour of God as his chief good, without a proportionate esteem of his character, and that for its own excellency. It is impossible that the favour of any being whose character we disapprove should be sought as our chief good, in preference to every other object in the universe. But a cordial approbation of the Divine character is the same thing as a disinterested affection to virtue.

Thirdly, The only method by which the rewards of the gospel are attainable, faith in Christ, secures the exercise of disinterested and enlarged virtue. No man has any warrant, from the Scriptures, to expect an interest in the promises of the gospel, unless he cordially acquiesce in his mediation. But to acquiesce in this is to acquiesce in the holy government of God, which it was designed to glorify—to feel and acknowledge that we deserved to have been made sacrifices to Divine displeasure—to forego all claim or hope of mercy from every selfish consideration; and be willing to receive forgiveness as an act of mere grace, and along with the chief of sinners. In fine, to acquiesce in this is to be of one heart with the Saviour of sinners, which, our adversaries themselves being judges, is the same thing as to be filled with devotedness to God and benevolence to men; and this, if any thing deserves that name, is true, disinterested, and enlarged virtue.

It is very possible that the objections which are made by this writer, as well as by Mr. Paine and others, against the doctrine of *rewards*, as being servile and mercenary, may, after all, in reality be against their *counterpart*.

\* Characteristics, Vol. II. pp. 65, 66.

† 1 John iii. 2; Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

It does not appear to be "the hope of happiness beyond this life" that excites their disgust, though the nature of the Christian's happiness might be disagreeable to them; but the fear of being "called to account for the manner in which they have lived in this world." This it is which even the daring author of *The Age of Reason* cannot endure to consider as a certainty, as the thought of it would render him "the slave of terror." Yet, as though he would not have it thought that the dread of futurity rendered him afraid of believing it, he alleges another reason: "Our belief, on this principle," he says, "would have no merit, and our best actions no virtue."\* In order then to our actions being virtuous, it is necessary, it seems, that we be under no law but that of our own inclination; and this will be loving virtue *for its own sake*. This is at once shaking off the Divine authority; which, if it could be accomplished, might be very agreeable to some men; and if with this they could get fairly rid of a judgment to come, it might be still more agreeable; but, alas, if they should be mistaken!

It is a fact that the passions of hope and fear are planted in our nature by Him who made us; and it may be presumed they are not planted there in vain. The proper exercise of the former has, I conceive, been proved to be consistent with the purest and most disinterested love; and the same thing is provable of the latter. The hope and fear against which these writers declaim are those of a slave; and where love is absent, these, it is granted, are the only effects which the doctrine of rewards and punishments will produce. But even here they have their use. Terror is the grand principle by which vicious minds are kept in awe. Without this their licentiousness would be intolerable to society. It is not, however, for the mere purpose of restraint that threatenings are exhibited, but to express the displeasure of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, and his resolution to punish them. Some are hereby taught the evil of their ways to a good purpose, and all are fairly warned, and their perseverance in sin is rendered inexcusable.

Before our adversaries object to this, they should show the impropriety of human laws being accompanied with penalties. Let them furnish us with a system of government in which men may be guilty of crimes without fear of being called to account for them, and in which those who are enemies to virtue are to be governed by merely the love of it. If it be improper to threaten sinners, it is improper to punish them; and if it be improper to punish them, it is improper for moral government to be exercised. But if it be thus in the government of God, there is no good reason to be given why it should not be the same in human governments; that is, there is no good reason why servants, unless they choose to do otherwise, should not disobey their masters, children their parents, and private individuals in a state be continually rising up to destroy all just authority.

The above may suffice to ascertain the weight of Lord Shaftesbury's objections to the doctrine of rewards; and now I shall take the liberty to retort the charge, and attempt to prove that the epithets "narrow and selfish," which he applies to the Christian system, properly belong to his own.

In his "Inquiry concerning Virtue," contained in the second volume of his "Characteristics," though he allows it to consist in our being proportionably affected towards the whole system to which we bear a relation, (p. 17,) and acknowledges that this world may be only a part of a more extended system, (p. 20,) yet he studiously leaves out God as the head of it. Among all the *relations* which he enumerates, there is no mention of that between

\* *Age of Reason*, Part II. pp. 100, 101.

the creature and the Creator. His enlarged and disinterested scheme of morality is at last nothing more than for a creature to regard those "of its own kind or species." Not only is all gentleness, kindness, and compassion to inferior creatures left out, but the love of God is not in it. On the contrary, it is the professed object of his "Inquiry" to prove that virtue, goodness, or moral excellence, may exist without religion, and even "in an atheist" (p. 6). In short, it is manifest that it is the love of God, and not self-love, to which his love of virtue, *for its own sake*, stands opposed. That for which he pleads is the impious spirit of a child who, disregarding his father's favour, pays no attention to his commands *as his commands*; but complies with them only on account of their approving themselves to his own mind. But this is no other than self-will, which, instead of being opposed to self-love, is one of its genuine exercises.

"Our holy religion," says this sneering writer, "takes but little notice of the most heroic virtues, such as zeal for the public and our country."\* That Christianity takes but little notice of what is commonly called *patriotism* is admitted; and if Lord Shaftesbury had been free from that "narrowness of mind" which it is his intention here to censure; yea, if he had only kept to his own definition of virtue—"a regard to those of our own kind or species;" he would have taken as little. By the public good, he evidently means no more than the temporal prosperity of a particular country, which is to be sought at the expense of all other countries with whom it happens, justly or unjustly, to be at variance. Christianity, we acknowledge, knows nothing of this spirit. It is superior to it. It is not natural for a Christian to enter into the antipathies, or embroil himself in the contentions of a nation, however he may be occasionally drawn into them. His soul is much more in its element when breathing after the present and future happiness of a world. In undertakings, both public and private, which tend to alleviate the miseries and enlarge the comforts of human life, Christians have ever been foremost; and when they have conceived themselves lawfully called, even into the field of battle, they have not been wanting in valour. But the heroism to which they principally aspire is of another kind; it is that of subduing their own spirit, doing good against evil, seeking the present and eternal well-being of those who hate them, and laying down their lives, if required, for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Such is the "narrow spirit" of Christians; and such have been their "selfish pursuits." But these are things which do not emblazon their names in the account of unbelievers. The murderers of mankind will be applauded before them. But they have enough; their blood is precious in the sight of the Lord, and their names are embalmed in the memory of the upright.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO REJECT THE GOSPEL WILL NOT BEAR A COMPARISON WITH THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO EMBRACE IT.

No books are so plain as the lives of men, no characters so legible as their moral conduct. If the principles of a body of men will not bear this criterion, we may expect to hear them exclaim against it as unfair and uncertain; but when they have said all, they will endeavour to avail themselves

of it, if possible. It is thus that the virtues of idolators are the constant theme of deistical panegyric; and all the corruptions, intrigues, persecutions, wars, and mischiefs which of late ages have afflicted the earth, are charged to the account of Christians. It is thus that Christian ministers, under the name of *priests*, are described as mercenary, designing, and hypocritical; and the lives of hectoring profligates praised in comparison of them.\* In short, it is thus that Christians are accused of fanaticism, affectation, ingratitude, presumption, and almost every thing else that is mean and base; and men are persuaded to become deists, with an assurance that, by so doing, they will live more consistently and morally than by any other system.†

But let us examine whether these representations accord with fact. Is it fact that the ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome were virtuous characters? It is true that, like the deists, they talked and wrote much about virtue; and if the latter may be believed, they were very virtuous. "They opposed each other," says Voltaire, "in their dogmas; but in morality they were all agreed." After loading each of them with encomiums, he sums up by affirming, "There has been no philosopher in all antiquity who has not been desirous of making men better."‡ This is a very favourable report; and, if well founded, the writer of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans must not only have dealt largely in calumny, but must have possessed the most consummate effrontery, to address such an Epistle to the citizens of Rome, who from their own knowledge must have been able to contradict him. There are other reports, however, of a very different complexion.

It is no part of my design to enter minutely into this subject; nor is it necessary. Many able writers have proved, from the most authentic sources of information, that the account given of the heathens by the apostle is not exaggerated. An extract or two from their writings will be sufficient for my purpose.

"Epictetus bids you 'temporize, and worship the gods after the fashion of your country.'§ Pythagoras forbids you to 'pray to God, because you know not what is convenient.'|| Plutarch commends Cato Uticensis for killing himself amidst philosophic thoughts, with resolution and deliberation, after reading Plato on the immortality of the soul.¶ Cicero pleads for self-murder. Herein he was seconded by Brutus, Cassius, and others who practised it. Many of their learned men applauded their opinion and practice. Seneca thus pleads for it: 'If thy mind be melancholy and in misery, thou mayst put a period to this wretched condition: wherever thou lookest, there is an end to it. See that precipice! there thou mayst have liberty. Seest thou that sea, that river, that well? liberty is at the bottom of it: that little tree? freedom hangs upon it. Thy own neck, thy own throat, may be a refuge to thee from such servitude; yea, every vein of thy body.'\*\*

"We may find in the heathen philosophers customary swearing commended, if not by their precepts, yet by the examples of their best moralists, Plato, Socrates, Seneca, and Julian the emperor; in whose works numerous oaths by Jupiter, Hercules, the Sun, Serapis, and the like, do occur. In the same manner we see the unnatural love of boys recommended.†† Aristippus maintained that it was 'lawful for a wise man to steal, commit adultery, and sacrilege, when opportunity offered; for that none of these actions were naturally evil, setting aside the vulgar opinion, which was introduced into the world by silly and illiterate people,—that a wise man

\* Hume's Essays Moral and Political, Essay XXIV. † Age of Reason, Part I. p. 21.

‡ Ignorant Philosopher, p. 60.

§ Diog. Laërtius.

\*\* De Ira, Lib. iii. Cap. 15, p. m. 319.

¶ Enchiridion, Cap. 38, p. m. 56.

† Plutarch's Life of Cato, near the end.

†† Juvenal Satir. II. ver. 10.



might publicly, without shame or scandal, keep company with common harlots, if his inclinations led him to it.' 'May not a beautiful woman be made use of,' he asks, 'because she is fair, or a youth because he is lovely? Certainly they may.'\*\*

If, as Voltaire asserts, it was the desire of these philosophers to make men better, assuredly they employed very extraordinary means to accomplish their desire.

What are the lives recorded by Plutarch? Many of them, no doubt, entertained a high sense of honour, and possessed a large portion of patriotism. But was either of these morality? If by this term be meant such dispositions of the mind as are right, fit, and amiable, it was not. Their sense of honour was not of that kind which made them scorn to do evil; but, like the false honour of modern duellists, consisted merely in a dread of disgrace. It induced many of them to carry about them the fatal means of self-destruction; and, rather than fall into the hands of an adversary, to make use of them. And as to their patriotism, generally speaking, it operated not merely in the preservation of their country, but in endeavours to extend and aggrandize it at the expense of other nations. It was a patriotism inconsistent with justice and good-will to men. Add to this, that fornication, adultery, and unnatural crimes were common among them.

As to the moral state of society among heathens, both ancient and modern, we may have occasion to consider this a little more particularly hereafter. At present I would inquire, Is it fact that the persecutions, intrigues, wars, and mischiefs of late ages are to be charged to the account of Christianity?

With regard to *persecution*, nothing is more common with our adversaries than to lay it wholly at our door. They are continually alleging that the heathens all agreed to tolerate each other till Christianity arose. Thus writes Shaftesbury,† Hume,‡ Voltaire,§ Gibbon,|| and Paine.¶ That the heathen tolerated each other before the introduction of Christianity is allowed; and they did the same after it. It was not against each other that their enmity was directed. In the diversity of their idols and modes of worship there were indeed *different administrations*, but it was *the same lord*; whereas, in the religion of Jesus Christ, there was nothing that could associate with heathenism, but every thing that threatened its utter subversion.

It is allowed also that individual persecution, except in a few instances, commenced with Christianity; but who began the practice? Was it Jesus that persecuted Herod and Pontius Pilate; or they him? Did Peter, and James, and John, and Paul set up for inquisitors, and persecute the Jews and Romans; or the Jews and Romans them? Did the primitive Christians discover any disposition to persecute? By whom was Europe deluged with blood in ten successive persecutions during the first three centuries? Were Christians the authors of this? When the church had so far degenerated as to imbibe many of the principles and superstitions of the heathen, then indeed it began to imitate their persecuting spirit; but not before. When Christ's kingdom was transformed into a kingdom of this world, the weapons of its warfare might be expected to become carnal, and to be no longer, as formerly, *mighty through God*.

The religious persecutions among Christians have been compared to the massacres attending the French revolution in the times of Robespierre. The horrid barbarities of the latter, it has been said, by way of apology,

\* Diog. Laërtius, Vol. I. p. m. 165, 166. See in Millar's History of the Propagation of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 63—65.

† Characteristics, Vol. I. p. 18.

§ Ignorant Philosopher, p. 83.

¶ Age of Reason, Part II. Preface.

† Essay on Parties.

|| History of Dec. Chap. II. p. 29.

“have not even been equal to those of the former.” If deists may be allowed to confound Christianity and popery, I shall not dispute the justness of the comparison. There is, no doubt, a great resemblance between the papal and the infidel spirit; or rather they are one. Both are the spirit of this world, which is averse from true religion. The difference between them is but as that between the wolf and the tiger.\* But those who reason thus should prove that the reformers in religion have been guilty of excesses equal to those of the deistical reformers in politics. Were there any such assassinations among the protestants towards one another, or towards the papists, as have been wantonly committed by infidels? It is true there were examples of persecution among protestants, and such as will ever remain a dishonour to the parties concerned; but those which affected the lives of men were few in number compared with those of the other, and these few, censurable as they are, were not performed by assassination.

Mr. Paine affirms that “all sects of Christians, except the Quakers, have persecuted in their turn.” That much of this spirit has prevailed is too true; but this assertion is unfounded. I could name more denominations than one whose hands, I believe, were never stained with blood, and whose avowed principles have always been in favour of universal liberty of conscience.

But let us inquire into the principles and spirit of our adversaries on this subject. It is true that almost all their writers have defended the cause of liberty, and levelled their censures against persecution. But where is the man that is not an enemy to this practice, when it is directed against himself? Have they discovered a proper regard to the rights of conscience among Christians? This is the question. There may be individuals among them who have; but the generality of their writers discover a shameful partiality in favour of their own side, and a contemptuous disregard of all who have suffered for the name of Christ. While they exhibit persecution in its deservedly infamous colours, they as constantly hold up the persecuted, *if found among Christians*, in a disadvantageous point of view. Mr. Hume allows that “the persecutions of Christians in the early ages were cruel,” but lays the blame chiefly on themselves;† and all through his *History of England* he palliates the conduct of the persecutors, and represents the persecuted in an unfavourable light. The same may be said of Gibbon, in his *History of the Decline of the Roman Empire*; of Shaftesbury, in his *Characteristics*; and indeed of the generality of deistical writers. Voltaire, boasting of the wisdom and moderation of the ancient Romans, says, “They never persecuted a single philosopher for his opinions, from the time of Romulus, till the popes got possession of their power.”‡ But did they not persecute Christians? The millions of lives that fell a sacrifice in the first three centuries after the Christian era are considered as nothing by Voltaire. The benevolence of this apostle of deism feels not for men if they happen to be believers in Christ. If an Aristotle, a Pythagoras, or a Galileo suffer for his opinions, he is a “martyr;” but if a million of French protestants, “from a desire to bring back things to the primitive institutes of the church,” endure the most cruel treatment, or quit their country to escape it, they, according to this writer, are “weak and obstinate men.” Say, reader, are these men friends to religious liberty? To what does all their declamation

\* The resemblance between popery and infidelity is pointed out with great beauty and energy in a piece which has appeared in some of the periodical publications, entitled, “The Progress of the Moderns in Knowledge, Refinement, and Virtue.” See Theological Magazine, Vol. I. No. V. p. 344; Evangelical Magazine, Vol. IV. p. 405.

† Essay on Parties in general.

‡ Ignorant Philosopher, pp. 82, 83.

against persecution amount but this—that such of them as reside in Christianized countries wish to enjoy their opinions without being exposed to it?

Till of late deists have been in the minority in all the nations of Europe, and have therefore felt the necessity of a free enjoyment of opinion. It is not what they have pleaded under those circumstances, but their conduct when in power, that must prove them friends to religious liberty. Few men are known to be what they are till they are tried. They and protestant dissenters have, in some respects, been in a similar situation. Of late, each in a different country have become the majority, and the civil power has been intrusted in their hands. The descendants of the puritans in the western world, by dispensing the blessings of liberty even to Episcopalians, by whose persecutions their ancestors were driven from their native shores, have shown themselves worthy of the trust. But have the deists acted thus in France and other countries which have fallen into their hands? It is true we believe them to have been the instruments, in the hand of God, of destroying the papal antichrist; and in this view we rejoice: howbeit they meant not so. If we judge of their proceedings towards the catholics in the ordinary way of judging of human actions, which undoubtedly we ought, I fear it will be found not only persecuting, but perfidious and bloody in the extreme.

I am not without hope that liberty of conscience will be preserved in France; and if it should, it will be seen whether the subversion of the national establishment will prove, what the advisers of that measure without doubt expected, and what others who abhorred it apprehended—the extinction of Christianity. It may prove the reverse, and issue in things which will more than balance all the ills attending the revolution. These hopes, however, are not founded on an idea of the just or tolerant spirit of infidelity; but, so far as human motives are concerned, on that regard to *consistency* which is known to influence all mankind. If the leading men in France, after having so liberally declaimed against persecution, should ever enact laws in favour of it, or in violation of the laws encourage it, they must appear in a most disgraceful light in the opinion of the whole civilized world.

Not only persecution, but *unjust wars*, *intrigues*, and other mischiefs, are placed to the account of Christianity. That such things have existed, and that men who are called Christians have been deeply concerned in them, is true. Wicked men will act wickedly by whatever name they are called. Whether these things be fairly attributable to the Christian religion, may be determined by a few plain inquiries.

First, Did these evils commence with Christianity, or have they increased under its influence? Has not the world, in every age with which history acquaints us, been a scene of corruption, intrigue, tumult, and slaughter? All that can plausibly be objected to Christianity is, that these things have continued in the world *notwithstanding* its influence; and that they have been practised in as great a degree by men calling themselves Christians as by any other persons.

Secondly, Are those who ordinarily engage in these practices real Christians, and do our adversaries themselves account them so? They can distinguish, when they please, between sincere and merely nominal Christians. They need not be told that great numbers, in every nation, are of that religion which happens to prevail at the time; or, rather, that they are of no religion.

Thirdly, Have not the courts of princes, notwithstanding Christianity may have been the professed religion of the land, been generally attended by a far greater proportion of deists than of serious Christians; and have not public measures been directed by the counsels of the former much more than by those of the latter? It is well known that great numbers among

the nobility and gentry of every nation consider religion as suited only to vulgar minds; and therefore either wholly absent themselves from worship, or attend but seldom, and then only to save appearances towards a national establishment, by which provision is made for the younger branches of their families. In other words, they are unbelievers. This is the description of men by whom public affairs are commonly managed, and to whom the good or the evil pertaining to them, so far as human agency is concerned, is to be attributed.

Finally, Great as have been the evils abounding in nations professing Christianity, (and great they have been, and ought greatly to be deplored,) can unbelievers pretend to have given us any hope, at present, of the state of things being meliorated? It is true they have talked and written much in this way, and many well-wishers to the human race have been disposed to give them credit. But it is not words that will prove any thing. Have they *done* any thing that justifies a hope of reformation? No; they themselves must first be reformed; or rather, to use an appropriate term of their own, *regenerated*. Far be it from me that, in such a cause as this, I should write under the influence of national prejudice, or side with the enemies of civil and religious freedom; but I must say there never was a representation more necessary than that which was given in an Address from the Executive Directory of France to the Council of five Hundred, about the beginning of the year 1796. In this address they "request the most earnest attention of the Council towards adopting some measure for the *regeneration* of the public morals." This is the regeneration wanted, and which, having rejected Christianity, they may be ever seeking, but will never be able to obtain. They may continue to revolutionize as long as a party shall be found that wishes for an increase of power, and perceives an opportunity of gaining it; and every party in its turn may talk of "saving liberty;" but never will they be *free indeed* until they are emancipated in some good degree from the dominion of vice; and never will this be effected but by a knowledge of evangelical truth.

The friends of legitimate liberty have deeply to regret that, under that revered name, has been perpetrated almost every species of atrocity; and that not only towards individuals, but nations, and nations the most peaceable and inoffensive, whose only crime was that of being unable to resist. Liberty has suffered more from the hands of infidels, amidst all their successes and declamations, than from its professed enemies; and still it bleeds beneath their wounds. Without entering into political disputes, I may safely affirm that, if ever the nations of the earth be blessed with equal liberty, it will be by the prevalence, not of the pretended illuminations of infidel philosophy, but of that doctrine which teaches us "to do unto others as we would that others should do unto us."

Finally, Mr. Paine affirms that men, by becoming deists, would "live more consistently and morally than by any other system." As to living more *consistently*, it is possible there may be some truth in it; for the best Christians, it must be allowed, have many imperfections, which are but so many inconsistencies; whereas, by complying with this advice, they would be uniformly wicked. And as to their living more *morally*, if Mr. Paine could coin a new system of morals, from which the love of God should be excluded, and intemperance, incontinency, pride, profane swearing, cursing, lying, and hypocrisy exalted to the rank of virtues, he might very probably make good his assertion.

Mr. Paine professes to "detest the Bible on account of its obscene stories, voluptuous debaucheries, cruel executions, and unrelenting vindictiveness."\*

\* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 12.

That the Bible relates such things is true; and every impartial history of mankind must do the same. The question is, whether they be so related as to leave a favourable impression of them upon the mind of a serious reader. If so, and if the Bible be that immoral book which Mr. Paine represents it to be, how is it that the reading of it should have reclaimed millions from immorality? Whether he will acknowledge this, or not, it is a fact too notorious to be denied by impartial observers. Every man residing in a Christian country will acknowledge, unless he have an end to answer in saying otherwise, that those people who read the Bible, believe its doctrines, and endeavour to form their lives by its precepts, are the most sober, upright, and useful members of the community: and, on the other hand, that those who discredit the Bible, and renounce it as the rule of their lives, are, generally speaking, addicted to the grossest vices; such as profane swearing, lying, drunkenness, and lewdness. It is very singular, I repeat it, that men, by regarding an immoral book, should learn to practise morality; and that others, by disregarding it, should learn the contrary.

How is it that, in countries where Christianity has made progress, men have almost universally agreed in reckoning a true Christian, and an amiable, open, modest, chaste, conscientious, and benevolent character, as the same thing? How is it, also, that to say of a man, He rejects the Bible, is nearly the same thing, in the account of people in general, as to say, He is a man of a dissolute life? If there were not a general connexion between these things, public opinion would not so generally associate them. Individuals, and even parties, may be governed by prejudice; but public opinion of character is seldom far from truth. Besides, the prejudices of merely nominal Christians, so far as my observation extends, are as strong against those Christians who are distinguished by their devout and serious regard to the Scriptures as against professed infidels, if not stronger. How is it then to be accounted for, that, although they will call them fanatics, enthusiasts, and other unpleasant names, yet it is very rare that they reckon them immoral? If, as is sometimes the case, they accuse them of unworthy motives, and insinuate that in secret they are as wicked as others, either such insinuations are not seriously believed, or if they be, the party is considered as insincere in his profession. No man thinks that genuine Christianity consists with a wicked life, open or secret. But the ideas of infidelity and immorality are associated in the public mind; and the association is clear and strong; so much so, as to become a ground of action. Whom do men ordinarily choose for umpires, trustees, guardians, and the like? Doubtless they endeavour to select persons of intelligence: but if to this be added *Christian principle*, is it not of weight in these cases? It is seldom known, I believe, but that a serious intelligent Christian, whose situation in the world renders him conversant with its concerns, will have his hands full of employment. Ask bankers, merchants, tradesmen, and others, who are frequently looking out for persons of probity to occupy situations of trust, in whose hands they would choose to confide their property? They might object, and with good reason, to persons whose religion rendered them pert, conceited, and idle; but would they not prefer one who really makes the Bible the rule of his life to one who professedly rejects it? The common practice in these cases affords a sufficient answer.

How is it that the principles and reasonings of infidels, though frequently accompanied with great natural and acquired abilities, are seldom known to make any impression on sober people? Is it not because the men and their communications are known? How is it that so much is made of the falls

\* It is said of a gentleman lately deceased, who was eminent in the literary world, that in early life he drank deeply into the free-thinking scheme. He and one of his companions,

of Noah, Lot, David, Jonah, Peter, and others? The same things in heathen philosophers, or modern unbelievers, would be passed over without notice. All the declamations of our adversaries on these subjects plainly prove that such instances with us are more *singular* than with them. With us they are occasional, and afford matter for deep repentance; with them they are habitual, and furnish employment in the work of palliation. The spots on the garments of a child attract attention; but the filthy condition of the animal that wallows in the mire is disregarded, as being a thing of course.

The morality, such as it is, which is found among deists, amounts to nothing more than a little exterior decorum. The criminality of *intention* is expressly disowned.\* The great body of these writers pretend to no higher motives than a regard to their safety, interest, or reputation. Actions proceeding from these principles must not only be destitute of virtue, but wretchedly defective as to their influence on the well-being of society. If the heart be towards God, a sober, righteous, and godly life becomes a matter of choice; but that which is performed, not for its own sake, but from fear, interest, or ambition, will extend no farther than the eye of man can follow it. In domestic life it will be but little regarded, and in retirement not at all. Such, in fact, is the character of infidels. "Will you dare to assert," says Linguet, a French writer, in an address to Voltaire, "that it is in philosophic families we are to look for models of filial respect, conjugal love, sincerity in friendship, or fidelity among domestics? Were you disposed to do so, would not your own conscience, your own experience, suppress the falsehood, even before your lips could utter it?"†

"Wherever society is established, there it is necessary to have religion; for religion, which watches over the crimes that are secret, is, in fact, the only law which a man carries about with him; the only one which places the punishment at the side of the guilt, and which operates as forcibly in solitude and darkness as in the broad and open face of day." Would the reader have thought it? These are the words of Voltaire.‡

Nothing is more common than for deistical writers to level their artillery against the *Christian ministry*. Under the appellation of *priests*, they seem to think themselves at liberty to load them with every species of abuse. That there are great numbers of worldly men who have engaged in the Christian ministry, as other worldly men engage in other employments, for the sake of profit, is true; and where this is the case, it may be expected that hunting, gaming, and such kinds of amusements, will be their favourite pursuits, while religious exercises will be performed as a piece of necessary drudgery. Where this is the case, "their devotion must be feigned, and their seriousness mere hypocrisy and grimace." But that this should be represented as a general case, and that the ministry itself should be reproached on account of the hypocrisy of worldly men, who intrude themselves into it, can only be owing to malignity. Let the fullest subtraction be made of characters of the above description, and I appeal to impartial observation whether there

of the same turn of mind, often carried on their conversations in the hearing of a religious but illiterate countryman. This gentleman, afterwards becoming a serious Christian, was concerned for the countryman, lest his faith in the Christian religion should have been shaken. One day he took the liberty to ask him, Whether what had so frequently been advanced in his hearing had not produced this effect upon him? "By no means," answered the countryman, "it never made the least impression upon me." "No impression upon you!" said the gentleman, "why, you must know that we have read and thought on these things much more than you had any opportunity of doing." "O yes," said the other, "but I knew also your manner of living: I knew that, to maintain such a course of conduct, you found it *necessary* to renounce Christianity."

\* Volney's Law of Nature, p. 18.

† Linguet was an admirer of Voltaire, but disapproved of his opposition to Christianity. See his Review of that author's Works, p. 264.

‡ In Sullivan's Survey of Nature.

will not still remain in only this particular order of Christians, and at almost any period, a greater number of serious, upright, disinterested, and benevolent persons, than could be found among the whole body of deists in a succession of centuries.

It is worthy of notice that Mr. Hume, in attempting to plunge Christian ministers into the mire of reproach, is obliged to descend himself, and to drag all mankind with him into the same situation. He represents ministers as "drawn from the common mass of mankind, as people are to other employments, by the views of profit;" and suggests that "therefore they are obliged, on many occasions, to feign more devotion than they possess," which is friendly to hypocrisy.\* The leading motive of all public officers, it seems, is to aggrandize themselves. If Mr. Hume had accepted of a station under government, we can be at no loss, therefore, in judging what would have been his predominant principle. How weak, as well as wicked, must that man have been, who, in order to wound the reputation of one description of men, could point his arrows against the integrity of all! But the world must forgive him. He had no ill design against them, any more than against himself. It was for the purpose of destroying these Philistines, that he aimed to demolish the temple of human virtue.

Nor is his antipathy, or that of his brethren, at all to be wondered at. These are the men who, in every age, have exposed the sophistry of deists, and vindicated Christianity from their malicious aspersions. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that they will always be considered as their natural enemies. It is no more a matter of surprise that they should be the objects of their invective, than that the weapons of nightly depredators should be pointed against the watchmen, whose business it is to detect them, and expose their nefarious practices.

After all, Mr. Hume pretends to respect "*clergymen*, who are set apart by the laws to the care of sacred matters;" and wishes to be understood as directing his censures only against *priests*, or those who pretend to power and dominion, and to a superior sanctity of character, distinct from virtue and good morals.† It should seem, then, that they are *dissenting* ministers only that incur Mr. Hume's displeasure: but if, as he represents them, they be "drawn to their employment by the views of profit," they certainly cannot possess the common understanding of men, since they could scarcely pursue an occupation less likely to accomplish their design. The truth is, Mr. Hume did not mean to censure dissenting ministers only; nor did he feel any respect for clergymen set apart by the laws. Those whom he meant to spare were such clergymen as were men after his own heart; and the objects of his dislike were truly evangelical ministers, whether churchmen or dissenters, who were not satisfied with *his* kind of morality, but were men of holy lives, and consequently were respected by the people. These are the men against whom the enmity of deists has ever been directed. As to other priests, they have no other difference with them than that of rivalry, wishing to possess their wealth and influence, which the others are not always the most willing to relinquish. In professing, however, to "respect" such clergymen, Mr. Hume only means to flatter them, and draw them on to a little nearer alliance with his views. Respect is excited only by consistency of character, and is frequently involuntary. A clergyman of loose morals may be preferred, and his company courted, but *respected* he cannot be.

As to those ministers against whom Mr. Hume levels his artillery, and against whom the real enmity of his party has always been directed, there is not a body of men in the world, of equal talents and industry, who receive

\* Essay on National Characters, Note.

† Essays Moral and Political, Essay XII. pp. 107, 108, Note.

less, if so little, for their labours. If those who have so liberally accused them of interested motives gained no more by their exertions than the accused, they would not be so wealthy as many of them are.

Compare the conduct of the leading men among deists with that of the body of serious Christian divines. Amidst their declamations against priestly hypocrisy, are they honest men? Where is there ingenuousness in continually confounding Christianity and popery? Have these workers of iniquity no knowledge? "No," say some, "they do not understand the difference between genuine and corrupted Christianity. They have never had opportunity of viewing the religion of Jesus in its native dress. It is popish superstition against which their efforts are directed. If they understood Christianity, they would embrace it." Indeed! And was this the case with Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Hume, or Gibbon? or is this the case with Paine? No; they have both seen and hated the light; nor will they come to it, lest their deeds should be made manifest.

It may be thought, however, that some excuse may be made for infidels residing in a popish country; and this I shall not dispute as it respects the ignorant populace, who may be carried away by their leaders; but as it respects the leaders themselves, it is otherwise. The National Assembly of France, when they wished to counteract the priests, and to reject the adoption of the Roman catholic faith as the established religion, could clearly distinguish between genuine and corrupted Christianity.\* Deists can distinguish between Christianity and its abuses, when an end is to be answered by it; and when an end is to be answered by it, they can, with equal facility, confound them.

Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Woolston, Tindal, Chubb, and Bolingbroke are all guilty of the vile hypocrisy of professing to love and reverence Christianity, while they are employed in no other design than to destroy it. Such faithless professions, such gross violations of truth, in Christians, would have been proclaimed to the universe, by these very writers, as infamous desertions of principle and decency. Is it less infamous in themselves? All hypocrisy is detestable; but I know of none so detestable as that which is coolly written, with full premeditation, by a man of talents, assuming the character of a moral and religious instructor. Truth is a virtue perfectly defined, mathematically clear, and completely understood by all men of common sense. There can be no haltings between uttering truth and falsehood; no doubt, no mistakes, as between piety and enthusiasm, frugality and parsimony, generosity and profusion. Transgression, therefore, is always a known, definite, deliberate villany. In the sudden moment of strong temptation, in the hour of unguarded attack, in the flutter and trepidation of unexpected alarm, the best man may, perhaps, be surprised into any sin; but he who can coolly, of steady design, and with no unusual impulse, utter falsehood, and vend hypocrisy, is not far from finished depravity.

The morals of Rochester and Wharton need no comment. Woolston was a gross blasphemer. Blount solicited his sister-in-law to marry him, and, being refused, shot himself. Tindal was originally a protestant, then turned papist, then protestant again, merely to suit the times; and was at the same time infamous for vice in general, and the total want of principle. He is said to have died with this prayer in his mouth, "If there be a God, I desire that he may have mercy on me." Hobbes wrote his *Leviathan* to serve the cause of Charles I., but, finding him fail of success, he turned it to the defence of Cromwell, and made a merit of this fact to the usurper, as Hobbes himself unblushingly declared to Lord Clarendon. Morgan had no regard

\* Mirabeau's Speeches, Vol. II. pp. 269—274.



to truth, as is evident from his numerous falsifications of Scripture, as well as from the vile hypocrisy of professing himself a Christian in those very writings in which he labours to destroy Christianity. Voltaire, in a letter now remaining, requested his friend D'Alembert to tell for him a direct and palpable lie, by denying that he was the author of the Philosophical Dictionary. D'Alembert, in his answer, informed him that he had told the lie. Voltaire has, indeed, expressed his own moral character perfectly in the following words. "Monsieur Abbe, I must be read, no matter whether I am believed or not." He also solemnly professed to believe the catholic religion, although at the same time he doubted the existence of a God. Hume died as a fool dieth. The day before his death he spent in a pitiful and affected unconcern about this tremendous subject, playing at whist, reading Lucian's Dialogues, and making silly attempts at wit, concerning his interview with Charon, the heathen ferryman of hades.\*

Collins, though he had no belief in Christianity, yet qualified himself for civil office by partaking of the Lord's supper. Shaftesbury did the same; and the same is done by hundreds of infidels to this day. Yet these are the men who are continually declaiming against the hypocrisy of priests! Godwin is not only a lewd character, by his own confession; but the unblushing advocate of lewdness. And as to Paine, he is well known to have been a profane swearer and a drunkard. We have evidence upon oath that "religion was his favourite topic when intoxicated;"† and, from the scurrility of the performance, it is not improbable that he was frequently in this situation while writing his "Age of Reason."

I shall conclude this catalogue of worthies with a brief abstract of the "Confessions of J. J. Rousseau." After a good education in the protestant religion, he was put apprentice. Finding his situation disagreeable to him, he felt a strong propensity to vice—inclining him to covet, dissemble, lie, and at length to steal—a propensity of which he was never able afterwards to divest himself. "I have been a rogue," says he, "and am so still sometimes, for trifles which I had rather take than ask for."‡

He abjured the protestant religion, and entered the hospital of the Catechumens at Turin, to be instructed in that of the catholics; "for which in return," says he, "I was to receive subsistence. From this interested conversion," he adds, "nothing remained but the remembrance of my having been both a dupe and an apostate."§

After this he resided with a Madame de Warrens, with whom he "lived in the greatest possible familiarity." This lady often suggested that there would be no justice in the Supreme Being, should he be strictly just to us; because, not having bestowed what was necessary to make us essentially good, it would be requiring more than he had given. She was, nevertheless, a very good catholic, or pretended at least to be one, and certainly desired to be such. If there had been no Christian morality established, Rousseau supposes she would have lived as though regulated by its principles. All her morality, however, was subordinate to the principles of M. Tavel (who first seduced her from conjugal fidelity by urging, in effect, that *exposure* was the only crime); or rather, she saw nothing in religion that contradicted them. Rousseau was far enough from being of this opinion; yet he confessed he dared not combat the arguments of the lady; nor is it supposable he could, as he appears to have been acting on the same principles at the time. "Finding in *her*," he adds, "all those ideas *I had occa-*

\* The last two paragraphs are taken from Dr. Dwight's excellent Discourses on "The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy."

† See trial of T. Paine at Guildhall, for a Libel, &c., p. 43.

‡ Confessions, London Ed. 1796, Vol. I. pp. 52, 55, 68.

§ Vol. I. pp. 125, 126.

*sion for*, to secure me from the fears of death and its future consequences, I drew confidence and security from this source.”\*

The writings of Port Royal, and those of the Oratory, made him half a Jansenist; and, notwithstanding all his confidence, their harsh theory sometimes alarmed him. A dread of hell, which, till then, he had never much apprehended, by little and little disturbed his security, and had not Madame de Warrens tranquillized his soul, would at length have been too much for him. His confessor, also, a Jesuit, contributed all in his power to keep up his hopes.†

After this, he became familiar with another female, Theresa. He began by declaring to her that he would never either abandon or marry her. Finding her pregnant with her first child, and hearing it observed, in an eating house, that *he who had best filled the Foundling Hospital was always the most applauded*, “I said to myself,” he tells us, “since it is the custom of the country, they who live here may adopt it. I cheerfully determined upon it without the least scruple; and the only one I had to overcome was that of Theresa; whom, with the greatest imaginable difficulty, I persuaded to comply.” The year following a similar inconvenience was remedied by the same expedient; no more reflection on his part, nor approbation on the part of the mother. “She obliged with trembling. My fault,” says he, “was great; but it was an error.”‡

He resolved on settling at Geneva; and on going thither, and being mortified at his exclusion from the rights of a citizen by the profession of a religion different from his forefathers, he determined openly to return to the latter. “I thought,” says he, “the gospel being the same for every Christian, and the only difference in religious opinions the result of the explanation given by men to that which they did not understand, it was the exclusive right of the sovereign power in every country to fix the mode of worship, and these unintelligible opinions; and that, consequently, it was the duty of a citizen to admit the one, and conform to the other, in the manner prescribed by the law.” Accordingly, at Geneva, he renounced popery.§

After passing twenty years with Theresa, he made her his wife. He appears to have intrigued with a Madame de H——. Of his desires after that lady, he says, “Guilty without remorse, I soon became so without measure.”||

Such, according to his own account, was the life of uprightness and honour which was to expiate for a theft which he had committed when a young man, and laid to a female servant, by which she lost her place and character.¶ Such was Rousseau, the man whom the rulers of the French nation have delighted to honour; and who, for writing this account, had the vanity and presumption to expect the applause of his Creator. “Whenever the last trumpet shall sound,” says he, “I will present myself before the sovereign Judge, with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, Thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I, Power eternal! Assemble round thy throne the innumerable throng of my fellow mortals. Let them listen to my confessions; let them blush at my depravity; let them tremble at my sufferings; let each in his turn expose, with equal sincerity, the failings, the wanderings of his heart; and, if he dare, aver—I was better than that man.”\*\*

\* Vol. II. pp. 88, 89, 103—106.

† Part II. Vol. I. pp. 123, 154, 155, 183, 187, 315.

‡ Vol. I. pp. 311, 378.      § Vol. I. pp. 155, 160.

¶ Vol. II. p. 127.

§ Part II. Vol. I. pp. 263, 264.

\*\* Vol. I. p. 1.

## CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIANITY HAS NOT ONLY PRODUCED GOOD EFFECTS IN THOSE WHO CORDIALLY BELIEVE IT, BUT HAS GIVEN TO THE MORALS OF SOCIETY AT LARGE A TONE, WHICH DEISM, SO FAR AS IT OPERATES, GOES TO COUNTERACT.

No man walks through life without a rule of some kind, by which his conduct is directed, and his inclinations restrained. They who fear not God are influenced by a regard to the opinions of men. To avoid the censure and gain the applause of the public, is the summit of their ambition.

Public opinion has an influence, not only on the conduct of individuals in a community, but on the formation of its laws. Legislators will not only conform their systems to what the humours of the people will bear, but will themselves incline to omit those virtues which are most ungrateful, and to spare those vices which are most agreeable.

Nor is this all: so great is the influence of public opinion, that it will direct the conduct of a community against its own laws. There are obsolete statutes, as we all know, the breach of which cannot be punished: and even statutes which are not obsolete, where they operate against this principle, have but little effect; witness the connivance at the atrocious practice of duelling.

Now if public opinion be so potent a principle, whatever has a prevailing influence in forming it must give a decided tone to what are considered as the morals of a nation. I say *to what are considered* as the morals of a nation; for, strictly speaking, so much of the love of God and man as prevails in a nation, so much morality is there in it, and no more. But as we can judge of love only by its expressions, we call those actions moral, though it is possible their morality may only be counterfeit, by which the love of God and man is ordinarily expressed. If we perform from some other motive those actions which are the ordinary expression of love, our good deeds are thereby rendered evil in the sight of Him who views things as they are: nevertheless, what we do may be equally beneficial to society as though we acted from the purest motive. In this indirect way Christianity has operated more than any thing that has been called by the name of religion, or by any other name, towards meliorating the state of mankind.

It has been observed, and with great propriety, that, in order to know what religion has done for an individual, we must consider what he would have been without it. The same may be said of a nation, or of the world. What would the nations of Europe have been at this time if it had not been for the introduction of Christianity? It cannot reasonably be pretended that they would have been in any better situation, as to morality, than that in which they were previously to this event; for there is no instance of any people having, by their own efforts, emerged from idolatry and the immoralities which attend it. Now, as to what that state was, some notice has been taken already, so far as relates to the principles and lives of the old philosophers. To this I shall add a brief review of the state of society among them.

Great praises are bestowed by Plutarch on the customs and manners of the *Lacedemonians*. Yet the same writer acknowledges that *theft* was encouraged in their children by a law, and that in order to "sharpen their wits, to render them crafty and subtle, and to train them up in all sorts of wiles and cunning, watchfulness and circumspection, whereby they were more apt to serve them in their wars, which was upon the matter the whole

profession of this commonwealth. And if at any time they were taken in the act of stealing, they were most certainly punished with rods, and the penance of fasting; not because they esteemed the stealth criminal, but because they wanted skill and cunning in the management and conduct of it.\* Hence, as might be expected, and as Herodotus observes, their actions were generally contrary to their words, and there was no dependence upon them in any matter.

As to their *chastity*, there were common baths in which the men and women bathed together; and it was ordered that the young maidens should appear naked in the public exercises, as well as the young men, and that they should dance naked with them at the solemn festivals and sacrifices. Husbands also were allowed to impart the use of their wives to handsome and deserving men, in order to the producing of healthy and vigorous children for the commonwealth.

Children that were deformed, or of a bad constitution, were *murdered*. This inhuman custom was common all over Greece; so much so that it was reckoned a singular thing, among the Thebans, that the law forbid any Theban to expose his infant, under pain of death. This practice, with that of procuring abortion, was encouraged by Plato and Aristotle.

The unnatural *love of boys* was so common in Greece that in many places it was sanctioned by the public laws, of which Aristotle gives the reason; namely, to prevent their having too many children. Maximus Tyrius celebrates it as a singularly heroic act of Agesilaus, that, being in love with a beautiful barbarian boy, he suffered it to go no further than looking at him and admiring him. Epictetus also praises Socrates, in this manner: "Go to Socrates, and see him lying by Alcibiades, yet slighting his youth and beauty. Consider what a victory he was conscious of obtaining! What an Olympic prize! So that, by heaven, one might justly salute him, Hail, incredibly great, universal victor!" What an implication does such language contain of the manners of those times!

The Romans were allowed by Romulus to destroy all their female children except the eldest: and even with regard to their male children, if they were deformed or monstrous, he permitted the parents to expose them, after having shown them to five of their nearest neighbours. Such things were in common use among them, and were celebrated upon their theatres.

Such was their *cruelty* to their slaves, that it was not unusual for the masters to put such of them as were old, sick, and infirm into an island in the Tiber, where they left them to perish. So far did some of them carry their luxury and wantonness as to drown them in the fish-ponds, that they might be devoured by the fish, to make the flesh more delicate!

*Gladiatory shows*, in which a number of slaves were engaged to fight for the diversion of the multitude till each one slew or was slain by his antagonist, were common among them. Of these brutish exercises the people were extremely fond; even the women ran eagerly after them, taking pleasure in seeing the combatants kill one another, desirous only that they should fall genteelly, or in an agreeable attitude! They were exhibited at the funerals of great and rich men, and on many other occasions. So frequent did they become, that no war, it is said, caused such slaughter of mankind as did these sports of pleasure, throughout the several provinces of the Roman empire.

That odious and *unnatural* vice, which prevailed among the Greeks, was also common among the Romans. Cicero introduces, without any mark of disapprobation, Cotta, a man of the first rank and genius, freely and fami-

\* Plutarch's Morals, Vol. I. p. 96.

liarily owning, to other Romans of the same quality, that worse than beastly vice as practised by himself, and quoting the authorities of ancient philosophers in vindication of it. It appears also, from Seneca, that in his time it was practised at Rome, openly and without shame. He speaks of flocks and troops of boys, distinguished by their colours and nations, and affirms that great care was taken to train them up for that detestable employment.

The religious rites performed in honour of Venus, in Cyprus, and at Aphac, on Mount Libanus, consisted in lewdness of the grossest kinds. The young people, of both sexes, crowded from all parts to those sinks of pollution; and filling the groves and temples with their shameless practices, committed whoredom by thousands, out of pure devotion.

All the Babylonian women were obliged to prostitute themselves once in their lives, at the temple of Venus, or Mylitta, to the first man that asked them; and the money earned by this means was always esteemed sacred.

*Human sacrifices* were offered up in almost all heathen countries. Children were burnt alive by their parents, to Baal, Moloch, and other deities. The Carthaginians, in times of public calamity, not only burnt alive the children of the best families to Saturn, and that by hundreds, but sometimes sacrificed themselves in the same manner, in great numbers. Here in Britain, and in Gaul, it was a common practice to surround a man with a kind of wicker-work, and burn him to death, in honour of their gods.\*

In addition to the above, Mr. Hume has written as follows:—"What cruel tyrants were the Romans over the world, during the time of their commonwealth! It is true they had laws to prevent oppression in their provincial magistrates; but Cicero informs us that the Romans could not better consult the interests of the provinces than by repealing these very laws. For in that case, says he, our magistrates, having entire impunity, would plunder no more than would satisfy their own rapaciousness; whereas, at present, they must also satisfy that of their judges, and of all the great men of Rome, of whose protection they stand in need."

The same writer, who certainly was not prejudiced against them, speaking of their commonwealth in its more early times, further observes, "The most illustrious period of the Roman history, considered in a political view, is that between the beginning of the first and end of the last Punic war; yet, at this very time, the horrid practice of *poisoning* was so common, that, during part of a season, a prætor punished capitally, for this crime, above *three thousand* persons in a part of Italy, and found informations of this nature still multiplying upon him! So depraved in private life," adds Mr. Hume, "were the people, whom, in their history, we so much admire."†

From the foregoing facts we may form some judgment of the justness of Mr. Paine's remarks. "We know nothing," says he, "of what the ancient Gentile world was before the time of the Jews, whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations. As far as we know to the contrary, they were a just and moral people, and not addicted, like the Jews, to cruelty and revenge, but of whose profession of faith we are unacquainted. It appears to have been their custom to personify both virtue and vice by statues and images, as is done now-a-days by statuary and painting; but it does not follow from this that they worshipped them any more than we do."‡

Unless heathens, before the times of the Jews, were totally different

\* The authorities on which this brief statement of facts is founded may be seen in Dr. Leland's *Advantages and Necessity of the Christian Revelation*, Vol. II. Part II. Chap. III. IV., where the subject is more particularly handled. See also *Deism Revealed*, Vol. I. pp. 77, 78.

† *Essay on Politics a Science.*

‡ *Age of Reason*, Part II. pp. 39, 40.

from what they were in all after-ages, there can be no reasonable doubt of their worshipping a plurality of deities, of which images were supposed to be the representations. Mr. Paine himself allows, and that in the same performance, that prior to the Christian era they were "idolators, and had twenty or thirty thousand gods."\* Yet, by his manner of speaking in this place, he manifestly wishes to insinuate, in behalf of *all* the heathen nations, that they might worship idols no more than we do. It might be worth while for this writer, methinks, to bestow a little more attention to the improvement of his memory.

With respect to their being "just and moral people," unless they were extremely different before the time of the Jews from what they were in all after-ages, there can be no reasonable doubt of their being what the sacred writers have represented them. If those writers have said nothing worse of them than has been said by the most early and authentic historians from among themselves, it will be easy for an impartial reader to decide whether heathens have been "calumniated and blackened" by the Jewish writers, or the Jewish writers by Mr. Paine.

But it is not by the state of the *ancient* heathens only that we discover the importance of Christianity. A large part of the world is still in the same condition, and the same immoralities abound among them which are reported to have abounded among the Greeks and Romans.

I am aware that deistical writers have laboured to hold up the modern as well as the ancient heathens in a very favourable light. In various anonymous publications, much is said of their simplicity and virtue. One of them suggests that the Chinese are so "superior to Christians, in relation to moral virtues, that it may seem necessary that they should send missionaries to teach us the use and practice of natural theology, as we send missionaries to them to teach them revealed religion."† Yea, and some who wish to rank as Christians, have, on this ground, objected to all missionary undertakings among the heathen. Let us examine this matter a little closely.

Almost all the accounts which are favourable to heathen virtue are either written by the adversaries of Christianity, and with a design to disparage it, or by navigators and travellers, who have touched at particular places, and made their reports according to the treatment they have met with, rather than from a regard to universal righteousness. An authentic report of the morals of a people requires to be given, not from a transient visit, but from a continued residence among them; not from their occasional treatment of a stranger, but from their general character; and not from having an end to answer, but with a rigid regard to truth.

It is worthy of notice, that the far greater part of these representations respect people with whom we have little or no acquaintance, and therefore, whatever the truth may be, are less liable to contradiction. As to China, Hindostan, and some other parts of the world, with whose moral state we have had the means of acquiring some considerable degree of knowledge, the praises bestowed on them by our adversaries have proved to be unfounded. From the accounts of those who have resided in *China*, there does not seem to be much reason to boast of their virtue. On the contrary, their morals appear to be full as bad as those of the ancient heathens. It is allowed that they take great care of their outward behaviour, more perhaps than is taken in any other part of the world besides—that whatever they do or say is so contrived that it may have a good appearance, please all, and offend none—and that they excel in outward modesty, gravity, good words, courtesy, and civility. But, notwithstanding this, it is said that the sin against nature is

\* Age of Reason, Part II. p. 5.

† Christianity as old as the Creation, pp. 366, 367.

extremely common—that drunkenness is considered as no crime—that every one takes as many concubines as he can keep—that many of the common people pawn their wives in time of need, and some lend them for a month, or more, or less, according as they agree—that marriage is dissolved on the most trifling occasions—that sons and daughters are sold whenever their parents please, and that is frequently—that many of the rich, as well as the poor, when they are delivered of daughters, stifle and kill them—that those who are more tender-hearted will leave them under a vessel, where they expire in great misery—and, finally, that notwithstanding this they all, except the learned, plead humanity and compassion against killing other living creatures, thinking it a cruel thing to take that life which they cannot give. Montesquieu says, “The Chinese, whose whole life is governed by the established rites, are the most void of common honesty of any people upon earth; and the laws, though they do not allow them to rob or to spoil by violence, yet permit them to cheat and defraud.” With this agrees the account given of them in Lord Anson’s *Voyages*, and by other navigators—that lying, cheating, stealing, and all the little arts of chicanery abound among them; and that, if you detect them in a fraud, they calmly plead *the custom of the country*.\* Such are the people by whom we are to be taught the use and practice of natural theology!

If credit could be given to what some writers have advanced, we might suppose the moral philosophy and virtuous conduct of the *Hindoos* to be worthy of being a pattern to the world. The rules by which they govern their conduct are, as we have been told, “Not to tell false tales, nor to utter any thing that is untrue; not to steal any thing from others, be it ever so little; not to defraud any by their cunning, in bargains or contracts; not to oppress any when they have power to do it.”†

Very opposite accounts, however, are given by numerous and respectable witnesses, who do not appear to have written under the influence of prejudice. I shall select but two or three.

Francis Bernier, an intelligent French traveller, speaking of the *Hindoos*, says, “I know not whether there be in the world a more covetous and sordid nation.—The Brahmins keep these people in their errors and superstitions, and *scruple not to commit tricks and villainies so infamous*, that I could never have believed them, if I had not made an ample inquiry into them.”‡

Governor Holwell thus characterizes them: “A race of people who, from their infancy, are utter strangers to the idea of common faith and honesty.”—“This is the situation of the bulk of the people of Hindostan, as well as of the modern Brahmins: amongst the latter, if we except one in a thousand, we give them over measure. The Gentoos in general are as degenerate, superstitious, litigious, and wicked a people as any race of people in the known world, if not eminently more so; especially the common run of Brahmins; and we can truly aver that, during almost five years that we presided in the Judicial Cutchery Court of Calcutta, never any murder, or other atrocious crime, came before us, but it was proved, in the end, a Brahmin was at the bottom of it.”§

Mr., afterwards Sir John, Shore, and governor general of Bengal, speaking of the same people, says, “A man must be long acquainted with them before he can believe them capable of that barefaced falsehood, servile adulation, and deliberate deception, which they daily practise.—It is the business of all, from the Ryott to the Dewan, to conceal and deceive; the

\* See Leland’s *Advantages and Necessity of Revelation*, Vol. II. Part II. Chap. IV.

† Harris’s *Voyages and Travels*, Vol. I. Chap. II. § 11, 12.

‡ *Voyages de Francois Bernier*, Tome I. pp. 150, 162, et Tome II. p. 105.

§ Holwell’s *Historical Events*, Vol. I. p. 228; Vol. II. p. 151.

simplest matters of fact are designedly covered with a veil, through which no human understanding can penetrate.”\*

In perfect agreement with these accounts are others which are constantly received from persons of observation and probity, now residing in India. Of these the following are extracts:—“Lying, theft, whoredom, and deceit, are sins for which the Hindoos are notorious. There is not one man in a thousand who does not make lying his constant practice. Their thoughts of God are so very light, that they only consider him as a sort of plaything. Avarice and servility are so united in almost every individual, that cheating, juggling, and lying are esteemed no sins with them; and the best among them, though they speak ever so great a falsehood, yet consider it no evil, unless you first charge them to speak the truth. When they defraud you ever so much, and you charge them with it, they coolly answer, *It is the custom of the country.*—In England, the poor receive the benefit of the gospel, in being fed and clothed by those who know not by what principles they are moved. For when the gospel is generally acknowledged in a land, it puts some to fear, and others to shame; so that to relieve their own smart they provide for the poor: but here (O miserable state!) I have found the pathway stopped up by sick and wounded people, perishing with hunger, and that in a populous neighbourhood, where numbers pass by, some singing, others talking, but none showing mercy; as though they were dying weeds, and not dying men.”†

Comparing these accounts, a reader might be apt to suppose that the people must have greatly *degenerated* since their laws were framed; but the truth is, the laws are nearly as corrupt as the people. Those who examine the *Hindoo Code*‡ will find them so; and will perceive that there is scarcely a species of wickedness which they do not tolerate, especially in favour of the Brahmins, of which order of men, it may be presumed, were the first framers of the constitution.

Let the reader judge, from this example of the Hindoos, what degree of credit is due to antichristian historians, when they undertake to describe the virtues of heathens.

From this brief statement of facts it is not very difficult to perceive somewhat of that which Christianity has accomplished with regard to the general state of society. It is by no means denied that the natural dispositions of heathens, as well as other men, are various. The Scriptures themselves record instances of their amiable deportment towards their fellow creatures.§ Neither is it denied that there are characters in Christianized nations, and those in great numbers, whose wickedness cannot be exceeded, nor equalled, by any who are destitute of their advantages. There is no doubt but that the general moral character of heathens is far less atrocious than that of deists, who reject the light of revelation, and of multitudes of nominal Christians who abuse it. The state of both these descriptions of men, with respect to unenlightened pagans, is as that of Chorazin and Bethsaida with respect to Sodom and Gomorrah. But that for which I contend is the effect of Christianity upon *the general state of society*. It is an indisputable fact, that it has banished gross idolatry from every nation in Europe. It is granted that, where whole nations were concerned, this effect might be accomplished, not by persuasion, but by force of arms. In this manner many legislators of former times thought they did God service. But whatever were the means by which the worship of the one living and true God was at first

\* Parliamentary Proceedings against Mr. Hastings, Appendix to Vol. II. p. 65.

† Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Mission, No. II. p. 129; No. III. pp. 191, 230; No IV. p. 291.

‡ Translated from the Shanscrit, and published in 1773.

§ Gen. xxiii.



introduced, it is a fact that the principle is now so fully established in the minds and consciences of men, that there needs no force to prevent a return to the old system of polytheism. There needs no greater proof of this than has been afforded by unbelievers of a neighbouring nation. Such evidently has been their predilection for pagan manners, that had the light that is gone abroad among mankind permitted it, they would at once have plunged into gross idolatry, as into their native element. But this is rendered morally impossible. They must be theists or atheists; polytheists they cannot be.

By accounts which from time to time have been received, it appears that the prevailing party in France has not only laboured to eradicate every principle of Christianity, but, in one instance, actually made the experiment for restoring something like the old idolatry. A respectable magistrate of the United States,\* in his Address to the Grand Jury in Luzerne county, has stated a few of these facts to the public. "Infidelity," says he, "having got possession of the power of the state, every nerve was exerted to efface from the mind all ideas of religion and morality. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, or a future state of rewards and punishments, so essential to the preservation of order in society, and to the prevention of crimes, was publicly ridiculed, and the people taught to believe that death was an everlasting sleep."

"They ordered the words 'Temple of Reason' to be inscribed on the churches, in contempt of the doctrine of revelation. Atheistical and licentious Homilies have been published in the churches, instead of the old service; and a ludicrous imitation of the Greek mythology exhibited, under the title of 'The Religion of Reason.' Nay, they have gone so far as to dress up with the most fantastic decorations a common strumpet, whom they blasphemously styled 'The Goddess of Reason,' and who was carried to church on the shoulders of some Jacobins selected for the purpose, escorted by the National Guards and the constituted *authorities*. When they got to the church, the strumpet was placed on the altar erected for the purpose, and harangued the people, who, in return, professed the deepest adoration to her, and sung the *Carmagnole* and other songs, by way of worshipping her. This horrid scene—almost too horrid to relate—was concluded by burning the prayer-book, confessional, and every thing appropriated to the use of public worship; numbers, in the mean time, danced round the flames with every appearance of frantic and infernal mirth."

These things sufficiently express the inclinations of the parties concerned, and what kind of blessings the world is to expect from atheistical philosophy. But all attempts of this kind are vain: the minds of men throughout Europe, if I may for once use a cant term of their own, are too *enlightened* to stoop to the practice of such fooleries. We have a gentleman in our own country who appears to be a sincere devotee to the pagan worship, and who, it seems, would wish to introduce it; but, as far as I can learn, all the success which he has met with is to have obtained from the public the honourable appellation of *the Gentile priest*.

Whatever we are, and whatever we may be, gross idolatry, I presume, may be considered as banished from Europe; and, thanks be to God, a number of its attendant abominations, with various other immoral customs of the heathen, are, in a good measure, banished with it. We have no human sacrifices; no gladiatory combats; no public indecencies between the sexes; no law that requires prostitution; no plurality or community of wives; no dissolving of marriages on trifling occasions; nor any legal murdering of children, or of the aged and infirm. If unnatural crimes be committed

\* Judge Rush.

among us, they are not common; much less are they tolerated by the laws, or countenanced by public opinion. On the contrary, the odium which follows such practices is sufficient to stamp with perpetual infamy the first character in the land. Rapes, incests, and adulteries are not only punishable by law, but odious in the estimation of the public. It is with us, at least in a considerable degree, as it was in Judea, where he that was guilty of such vices was considered as a *fool in Israel*. The same, in less degrees, may be said of fornication, drunkenness, lying, theft, fraud, and cruelty: no one can live in the known practice of these vices, and retain his character. It cannot be pleaded in excuse with us, as it is in China, Hindostan, and Otaheite, that "such things are the custom of the country."

We freely acknowledge, that if we turn our eyes upon the great evils which still exist, even in those nations where Christianity has had the greatest influence, we find abundant reason for lamentation; but, while we lament the evil, there is no reason that we should overlook the good. Comparing our state with that of former times, we cannot but with thankfulness acknowledge, *What hath God wrought!*

I can conceive of but one question that can have any tendency to weaken the argument arising from the foregoing facts; viz. *Are they the effects of Christianity?* If they be not, and can be fairly accounted for on other principles, the argument falls to the ground; but if they be, though Shaftesbury satirize, Hume doubt, Voltaire laugh, Gibbon insinuate, and Paine pour forth scurrility like a torrent, yet honest men will say, "An evil tree bringeth not forth good fruit: if this religion were not of God, it could do nothing."

If there be any adequate cause, distinct from Christianity, to which these effects may be ascribed, it becomes our adversaries to state it. Meanwhile, I may observe, they are not ascribable to any thing besides Christianity that has borne the name of *religion*. As to that of the ancient heathens, it had no manner of relation to morality. The priests, as Dr. Leland has proved, "made it not their business to teach men virtue."\* It is the same with modern heathens; their religion has nothing of morality pertaining to it. They perform a round of superstitious observances, which produce no good effect whatever upon their lives. What they were yesterday, they are to-day; "No man repenteth himself of his wickedness, saying, What have I done!" Nor is it materially different with Mahometans. Their religion, though it includes the acknowledgment of one living and true God, yet, rejecting the Messiah as the Son of God, and attaching them to a bloody and lascivious impostor, produces no good effect upon their morals, but leaves them under the dominion of barbarity and voluptuousness. In short, there is no religion but that of Jesus Christ that so much as professes to "bless men by turning them from their iniquities."

Neither can these effects be attributed to *philosophy*. A few great minds despised the idolatries of their countrymen; but they did not reform them; and no wonder; for they practised what they themselves despised. Nor did all their harangues in favour of virtue produce any substantial effect, either on themselves or others. The heathen nations were never more enlightened as to philosophy than at the time of our Saviour's appearance; yet, as to morality, they never were more depraved.

It is Christianity, then, and nothing else, which has destroyed the odious idolatry of many nations, and greatly contracted its attendant immoralities. It was in this way that the gospel operated in the primitive ages, wherever it was received; and it is in the same way that it continues to operate to the

\* Advantages and Necessity of Revelation, Vol. II. p. 38.

present time. Real Christians must needs be adverse to these things, and they are the only men living who cordially set themselves against them.

This truth will receive additional evidence from an observation of the different degrees of morality produced in different places, according to the degree of purity with which the Christian religion has been taught, and liberty given it to operate. In several nations of Europe, popery has long been established, and supported by sanguinary laws. By these means the Bible has been kept from the common people, Christian doctrine and worship corrupted, and the consciences of men subdued to a usurper of Christ's authority. Christianity is there in prison, and antichristianism exalted in its place!—In other nations this yoke is broken. Every true Christian has a Bible in his family, and measures his religion by it. The rights of conscience also being respected, men are allowed, in religious matters, to judge and act for themselves; and Christian churches are formed according to the primitive model. Christianity is here at liberty; here, therefore, it may be expected to produce its greatest effects. Whether this does not correspond with fact, let those who are accustomed to observe men and things with an impartial eye determine.

In Italy, France, and various other countries, where the Christian religion has been so far corrupted as to lose nearly all its influence, illicit connexions may be formed, adulterous intrigues pursued, and even crimes against nature committed, with but little dishonour. Rousseau could here send his illegitimate offspring to the foundling hospital, and lay his accounts with being applauded for it, as being *the custom of the country*. It is not so in Britain, and various other nations, where the gospel has had a freer course; for though the same dispositions are discovered in great numbers of persons, yet the fear of the public frown holds them in awe. If we except a few abandoned characters who have nearly lost all sense of shame, and who by means either of their titles or fortunes on the one hand, or their well known baseness on the other, have almost bid defiance to the opinion of mankind, this observation will hold good, I believe, as to the bulk of the inhabitants of protestant countries.

And it is worthy of notice, that in those circles or connexions where Christianity has had the greatest influence, a sobriety of character is carried to a much higher degree than in any other. Where there is one divorce from among protestant dissenters, and other serious professors of Christianity, there are, I believe, a hundred from among those whose practice it is to neglect the worship of God, and to frequent the amusements of the theatre. And, in proportion to the singularity of cases, such is the surprise, indignation, and disgrace which accompany them. Similar observations might be made on public executions for robbery, forgery, tumults, assassinations, murders, &c. It is not among the circles professing a serious regard to Christianity, but among its adversaries, that these practices ordinarily prevail.

Some have been inclined to attribute various differences in these things to a difference in *national character*; but national character, as it respects morality, is formed very much from the state of society in different nations. A number of painful observations would arise from a view of the conduct and character of Englishmen on foreign shores. To say nothing of the rapacities committed in the East, whither is our boasted humanity fled when we land upon the coasts of Guinea? The brutality with which millions of our fellow creatures have been torn from their connexions, bound in irons, thrown into a floating dungeon, sold in the public markets, beaten, maimed, and many of them murdered for trivial offences, and all this without any effectual restraint from the laws, must load our national character with everlasting infamy. The same persons, however, who can be guilty of these

crimes at a distance, are as apparently humane as other people when they re-enter their native country. And wherefore? Because in their native country the state of society is such as will not admit of a contrary behaviour. A man who should violate the principles of justice and humanity here would not only be exposed to the censure of the laws, but, supposing he could evade this, his character would be lost. The state of society in Guinea imposes no such restraints; in that situation, therefore, wicked men will indulge in wickedness. Nor is it much otherwise in our West India islands. So little is there of Christianity in those quarters, that it has hitherto had scarcely any influence in the framing of their laws, or the forming of the public opinion. There are, doubtless, just and humane individuals in those islands; but the far greater part of them, it is to be feared, are devotees to avarice, to which, as to a Moloch, one or other of them is continually offering up human victims.

Vicious practices are commonly more prevalent in large and populous cities than in other places. Hither the worst characters commonly resort, as noxious animals to a covert from their pursuers. In places but thinly inhabited, the conduct of individuals is conspicuous to the community; but here they can assemble with others of their own description, and strengthen each other's hands in evil, without much fear of being detected. Christianity, therefore, may be supposed to have less effect in the way of restraining immoral characters in the city than in the country. Yet even here it is sensibly felt. Though the metropolis of our own nation abounds with almost every species of vice, yet what reflecting citizen will deny that it would be much worse but for the influence of the gospel? As it is, there are numbers, of different religious denominations, who constantly attend to public and family worship, who are as honourable in their dealings as they are amiable in domestic life, and as liberal in their benefactions as they are assiduous to find out deserving cases. The influence which this body of men have upon the citizens at large, in restraining vice, promoting schemes of benevolence, and preserving peace and good order in society is beyond calculation. But for their examples, and unremitting exertions, London would be a Sodom in its guilt, and might expect to resemble it in its punishment.

In country towns and villages it is easy to perceive the influence which a number of serious Christians will have upon the manners of the people at large. A few families in which the Bible is daily read, the worship of God performed, and a Christian conversation exemplified, will have a powerful effect. Whether characters of an opposite description regard their conduct, or not, their consciences favour it. Hence it is that one upright man, in a question of right and wrong, will often put to silence a company of the advocates of unrighteousness; and that three or four Christian families have been known to give a turn to the manners of a whole neighbourhood.

In fine, let it be closely considered whether a great part of that sobriety which is to be found *among deists themselves* (as there are, doubtless, sober characters among deists, and even among atheists) be not owing to Christianity. It has often been remarked, and justly too, that much of the *knowledge* which our adversaries possess is derived from this source. To say nothing of the best ideas of the old philosophers on moral subjects being derived from revelation, of which there is considerable evidence, it is manifest that, so far as the moderns exceed them, it is principally, if not entirely, owing to this medium of instruction. The Scriptures have diffused the light, they have insensibly imbibed it; and finding it to accord with reason, they flatter themselves that *their* reason has discovered it. "After grazing," as one expresses it, "in the pastures of revelation, they boast of having grown fat by nature." And it is the same with regard to their sobriety. So long

as they reside among people whose ideas of right and wrong are formed by the morality of the gospel, they must, unless they wish to be stigmatized as profligates, behave with some degree of decorum. Where the conduct is uniform and consistent, charity, I allow, and even justice, will lead us to put the best construction upon the motive; but when we see men uneasy under restraints, and continually writing in favour of vices which they dare not openly practise, we are justified in imputing their sobriety, not to principle, but to the circumstances attending their situation. If some of those gentlemen who have deserted the Christian ministry, and commenced professed infidels, had acted years ago as licentiously as they have done of late, they must have quitted their situation sooner; and were they now to leave their country and connexions, and enter into such a state of society as would comport with their present wishes, their conduct would be more licentious than it is.

On these principles that great and excellent man WASHINGTON, in his farewell address to the people of the United States, acknowledges the necessity of religion to the well-being of a nation. "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity," he says, "religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it be simply asked, Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in the courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion.—Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of a peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Upon the whole, the evidence of this chapter proves not only that Christianity is a living principle of virtue in good men, but that it affords this further blessing to society, that it restrains the vices of the bad. It is a tree of life whose fruit is immortality, and whose very leaves are for the healing of the nations.

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## CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTIANITY IS A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS TO INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY, BUT DEISM LEAVES BOTH THE ONE AND THE OTHER WITHOUT HOPE.

THOUGH the happiness of creatures be not admitted to be the final end of God's moral government, yet it is freely allowed to occupy an important place in the system. God is good, and his goodness appears in having so blended the honour of his name with the felicity of his creatures, that in seeking the one they should find the other. In so important a light do we consider human happiness, as to be willing to allow that to be the true religion which is most adapted to promote it.

To form an accurate judgment on this subject, it is necessary to ascertain wherein happiness consists. We ought neither to expect nor desire, in the present life, such a state of mind as wholly excludes painful sensations. Had we less of the exercises of godly sorrow, our sacred pleasures would be fewer

than they are ; or were we unacquainted with the afflictions common to men, we should be less able to sympathize with them, which would be injurious, not only to society, but to ourselves, as it would deprive us of one of the richest sources of enjoyment.

Mr. Hume, in one of his Essays, very properly called *The Sceptic*, seems to think that happiness lies in having one's inclinations gratified ; and as different men have different inclinations, and even the same men at different times, *that* may be happiness in one case which is misery in another. This sceptical writer, however, would hardly deny that in happiness, as in other things, there is a false and a true, an imaginary and a real ; or that a studied indulgence of the appetites and passions, though it should promote the one, would destroy the other. The light of nature, as acknowledged even by deists, teaches that self-denial, in many cases, is necessary to self-preservation ; and that to act a contrary part would be to ruin our peace and destroy our health.\* I presume it will be granted that no definition of happiness can be complete which includes not peace of mind, which admits not of perpetuity, or which meets not the necessities and miseries of human life.

But if nothing deserves the name of happiness which does not include *peace of mind*, all criminal pleasure is at once excluded. Could a life of unchastity, intrigue, dishonour, and disappointed pride, like that of Rousseau, be a happy life ? No ; amidst the brilliancy of his talents, remorse, shame, conscious meanness, and the dread of an hereafter, must corrode his heart, and render him a stranger to peace. Contrast with the life of this man that of Howard. Pious, temperate, just and benevolent, he lived for the good of mankind. His happiness consisted in "serving his generation by the will of God." If all men were like Rousseau, the world would be abundantly more miserable than it is ; if all were like Howard, it would be abundantly more happy. Rousseau, governed by the love of fame, is fretful and peevish, and never satisfied with the treatment he receives : Howard, governed by the love of mercy, shrinks from applause, with this modest and just reflection, "Alas ! our best performances have such a mixture of sin and folly, that praise is vanity, and presumption, and pain to a thinking mind." Rousseau, after a life of debauchery and shame, confesses it to the world, and makes a merit of his confession, and even presumptuously supposes that it will avail him before the Judge of all : Howard, after a life of singular devotedness to God, and benevolence to men, accounted himself an unprofitable servant, leaving this for his motto, his last testimony, "Christ is my hope." Can there be any doubt which of the two was the happier man ?

Further, If nothing amounts to real happiness which admits not of *perpetuity*, all natural pleasure, when weighed against the hopes and joys of the gospel, will be found wanting. It is an expressive characteristic of the good things of this life, that "they all perish with the using." The charms of youth and beauty quickly fade. The power of relishing natural enjoyments is soon gone. The pleasures of active life, of building, planting, forming schemes, and achieving enterprises, soon follow. In old age none of them will flourish, and in death they are exterminated. "The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator," all descend in one undistinguished mass into oblivion. And as this is a truth which no man can dispute, those who have no prospects of a higher nature must often feel themselves unhappy. Contrast with this the joys of the gospel. These, instead of being diminished by time, are often increased. To them the soil

\* Volney's Law of Nature, p. 12.

of age is friendly. While nature has been fading and perishing by slow degrees, how often have we seen faith, hope, love, patience, and resignation to God in full bloom! Who but Christians can contemplate the loss of all present enjoyments with satisfaction? Who else can view death, judgment, and eternity with desire? I appeal to the hearts of libertines and unbelievers, whether they have not many misgivings and revoltings within them; and whether, in the hour of solitary reflection, they have not sighed the wish of Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

The following extract from a letter of a late nobleman, of loose principles, well known in the gay world, and published as authentic by a respectable prelate, deceased, will show the dreadful vacancy and wretchedness of a mind left to itself in the decline of life, and unsupported by Christian principle.—"I have seen the silly round of business and pleasure, and have done with it all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which in truth is very low; whereas those who have not experienced always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare; but I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of the ignorant audience. When I reflect on what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I cannot persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry of bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look on all that is past as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions, and I do by no means wish to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation that most men boast? No, sir, I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that time is become my enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey."

"You see," reflects the worthy prelate, "in how poor, abject, and unpitied a condition, at a time when he most wanted help and comfort, the world left him, and he left the world." Compare these words with those of another person, who took his leave in a very different manner: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing." It is observable that even Rousseau himself, though the language certainly did not become his lips, affected in advanced life to derive consolation from Christian principles. In a letter to Voltaire he says, "I cannot help remarking, sir, a very singular contrast between you and me. Sated with glory, and undeceived with the inanity of worldly grandeur, you live at freedom, in the midst of plenty, certain of immortality; you peaceably philosophize on the nature of the soul; and if the body or the heart be indisposed, you have Tronchin for your physician and friend. Yet with all this you find nothing but evil on the face of the earth. I, on the other hand, obscure, indigent, tormented with an incurable disorder, meditate with pleasure in my solitude, and find every thing to be good. Whence arise these apparent contradictions? You have yourself explained them. You live in a state of enjoyment, I in a state of hope; and hope gives charms to every thing."\*

\* Works, Vol. IX. p. 336.

Finally, If nothing deserves the name of happiness which *meets not the necessities nor relieves the miseries of human life*, Christianity alone can claim it. Every one who looks into his own heart, and makes proper observations on the dispositions of others, will perceive that man is possessed of a desire after something which is not to be found under the sun—after a good which has no limits. We may imagine our desires are moderate, and set boundaries, beyond which we may flatter ourselves we should never wish to pass; but this is self-deception. He that sets his heart on an estate, if he gain it, will wish for something more. It would be the same if it were a kingdom, or even if all the kingdoms of the world were united in one. Nor is this desire to be attributed merely to human depravity, for it is the same with regard to knowledge: the mind is never satisfied with its present acquisitions. It is depravity that directs us to seek satisfaction in something short of God; but it is owing to the nature of the soul that we are never able to find it. It is not possible that a being created immortal, and with a mind capable of continual enlargement, should obtain satisfaction in a limited good. Men may spend their time and strength, and even sacrifice their souls, in striving to grasp it, but it will elude their pursuit. It is only from an uncreated source that the mind can drink its fill. Here it is that the gospel meets our necessities. Its language is, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.” “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” “He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” How this language has been verified, all who have made the trial can testify. To them, as to the only competent witnesses, I appeal.

It is not merely the nature of the soul however, but its depravity, whence our necessities arise. We are sinners. Every man who believes there is a God, and a future state, or even only admits the possibility of them, feels the want of mercy. The first inquiries of a mind awakened to reflection will be, how he may escape the wrath to come—how he shall get over his everlasting ruin. A heathen, previously to any Christian instruction, exclaimed in the moment of alarm, “What must I do to be saved?”\* And several Mahometans, being lately warned by a Christian minister of their sinful state, came the next morning to him with this very serious question—*Keman par hoibo?*—“How shall we get over?”† To answer these inquiries is beyond the power of any principles but those of the gospel. Philosophy may conjecture, superstition may deceive, and even a false system of Christianity may be aiding and abetting; each may labour to lull the conscience to sleep, but none of them can yield it satisfaction. It is only by believing in Jesus Christ, the great sacrifice that taketh away the sin of the world, that the sinner obtains a relief which will bear reflection—a relief which, at the same time, gives peace to the mind and purity to the heart. For the truth of this also I appeal to all who have made the trial.

Where, but in the gospel, will you find relief under the innumerable ills of the present state? This is the well-known refuge of Christians. Are they poor, afflicted, persecuted, or reproached? They are led to consider Him who endured the contradiction of sinners, who lived a life of poverty

\* Acts xvi. 30.

† Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Missionary Society, No. IV. p. 326.



and ignominy, who endured persecution and reproach, and death itself, for them; and to realize a blessed immortality in prospect. By a view of such things their hearts are cheered, and their afflictions become tolerable. Looking to Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, they run with patience the race which is set before them.—But what is the comfort of unbelievers? Life being short, and having no ground to hope for any thing beyond it, if they be crossed here, they become inconsolable. Hence it is not uncommon for persons of this description, after the example of the philosophers and statesmen of Greece and Rome, when they find themselves depressed by adversity, and have no prospect of recovering their fortunes, to put a period to their lives! Unhappy men! Is this the felicity to which ye would introduce us? Is it in guilt, shame, remorse, and desperation that ye descry such charms? Admitting that our hope of immortality is visionary, where is the injury? If it be a dream is it not a pleasant one? To say the least, it beguiles many a melancholy hour, and can do no mischief; but if it be a reality, what will become of you?

I may be told that, if many put a period to their lives through unbelief, there is an equal number who fall sacrifices to religious melancholy. But, to render this objection of force, it should be proved that the religion of Jesus Christ is the *cause* of this melancholy. Reason may convince us of the being of a God, and conscience bear witness that we are exposed to his displeasure. Now if in this state of mind the heart refuse to acquiesce in the gospel way of salvation, we shall of course either rest in some delusive hope, or sink into despair. But here it is not religion, but the want of it, that produces the evil; it is unbelief, and not faith, that sinks the sinner into despondency. Christianity disowns such characters. It records some few examples, such as Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas; but they are all branded as apostates from God and true religion. On the contrary, the writings of unbelievers, both ancient and modern, are known to plead for suicide, as an expedient in extremity. Rousseau, Hume, and others have written in defence of it. The principles of such men both produce and require it. It is the natural offspring of unbelief, and the last resort of disappointed pride.

Whether Christianity or the want of it be best adapted to relieve the heart, under its various pressures, let those testify who have been in the habit of visiting the afflicted poor. On this subject the writer of these sheets can speak from his own knowledge. In this situation characters of very opposite descriptions are found. Some are serious and sincere Christians; others, even among those who have attended the preaching of the gospel, appear neither to understand nor to feel it. The tale of woe is told perhaps by both; but the one is unaccompanied with that discontent, that wretchedness of mind, and that inclination to despair, which is manifest in the other. Often have I seen the cheerful smile of contentment under circumstances the most abject and afflictive. Amidst tears of sorrow, which a full heart has rendered it impossible to suppress, a mixture of hope and joy has glistened. “The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” Such have been their feelings, and such their expressions; and where this has been the case, death has generally been embraced as the messenger of peace. *Here*, I have said, participating of their sensations,—“here is the patience and the faith of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.—Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

From individual happiness, let us proceed to examine that of *society*.

Let us inquire whether there be any well-grounded hope of the future melioration of the state of mankind, besides that which is afforded by the gospel. Great expectations have been raised of an end being put to wars, and of universal good-will pervading the earth, in consequence of philosophical illumination, and the prevalence of certain modes of civil government. But these speculations proceed upon false data. They suppose that the cause of these evils is to be looked for in the ignorance, rather than in the depravity of men; or if depravity be allowed to have any influence, it is confined to the precincts of a court. Without taking upon me to decide which is the best mode of civil government, or what mode is most adapted to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, it is sufficient, in this case, to show that wars generally originate, as the apostle James says, in the lusts, or *corrupt passions*, of mankind. If this be proved, it will follow that, however some forms of government may be more friendly to peace and happiness than others, yet no *radical* cure can be effected till the dispositions of men are changed. Let power be placed where it may, with one or with many, still it must be in the hands of men. If all governments were so framed as that every national act should be expressive of the real will of the people, still, if the preponderating part of them be governed by pride and self-love rather than equity, we are not much the nearer. Governors taken from the common mass of society must needs resemble it. If there be any difference at the time of their first elevation to office, owing, as may be supposed, to the preference which all men give to an upright character for the management of their concerns, yet this advantage will be balanced, if not overbalanced, by the subsequent temptations to injustice which are afforded by situations of wealth and power.

What is the source of contentions in common life? Observe the discords in neighbourhoods and families, which notwithstanding all the restraints of relationship, interest, honour, law, and reason, are a fire that never ceases to burn, and which, were they no more controlled by the laws than independent nations are by each other, would in thousands of instances break forth into assassinations and murders. Whence spring these wars? Are they the result of *ignorance*? If so, they would chiefly be confined to the rude or uninformed part of the community. But is it so? There may, it is true, be more pretences to peace and good-will, and fewer bursts of open resentment, in the higher than in the lower orders of people; but their dispositions are much the same. The laws of politeness can only polish the surface; and there are some parts of the human character which still appear very rough. Even politeness has its regulations for strife and murder, and establishes iniquity by a law. The evil disposition is a kind of subterraneous fire, and in some form it will have vent. Are they the result of *court influence*? No. The truth is, if civil government in some form did not influence the fears of the unjust and contentious part of the community, there would be no security to those who are peaceably inclined, and especially to those who are withal religious, and whose pious conduct, like that of Noah, condemns the world. Now the same disposition which, in persons whose power extends only to a cottage, will operate in a way of domestic discord, in others, whose influence extends to the affairs of nations, will operate on a more enlarged scale, producing war, and all the dire calamities which attend it. The sum of the whole is this: When the preponderating part of the world shall cease to be proud, ambitious, envious, covetous, lovers of their own selves, false, malignant, and intriguing—when they shall love God and one another out of a pure heart—then, and not till then, may we expect wars to cease, and the state of mankind to be essentially meliorated. While these dispositions remain, they will be certain to

show themselves. If the best laws or constitution in the world stand in their way, they will, on certain occasions, bear down all before them.

An anonymous writer in the *Monthly Magazine*,\* (a work which, without avowing it, is pretty evidently devoted to the cause of infidelity,) has instituted an inquiry into "the probability of the future melioration of mankind." A dismal prospect indeed it is which he holds up to his fellow creatures; yet were I an infidel, like him, I should acquiesce in many things which he advances. The anchor of his hopes is *an increase of knowledge*, and the effects of this are circumscribed within a very narrow boundary. With respect to what we call *civilization*, he reckons it to have undergone all the vicissitudes of which it is capable. *Scientific refinement* may contribute to the happiness of a few individuals; but, he fears, cannot be made a ground of much advantage to the mass of mankind. Great scope, indeed, remains for the operation of increased knowledge in improvement in *government*; but even here it can only cure those evils which arise from ignorance, and not those which proceed from intention, which, "while the propensity to prefer our own interest above that of the community is," as he acknowledges, "interwoven into our very nature," will always form the mass of existing ills. If, indeed, the majority of a community, he says, became so enlightened concerning their interests, and so wise, steady, and unanimous in the pursuit of them, as to overcome all that resistance which the possessors of undue advantages will always make to a change unfavourable to themselves, something might be hoped for. But this, while they are under their old masters, he reckons as next to impossible. As to *political revolutions*, he did form high expectations from them; but his hopes are at an end. "I have only the wish left," says he; "the confidence is gone." As to *improved systems of morality*, which he considers as the art of living happy, though it might seem promising, yet history, he very justly remarks, does not allow us to expect that men, in proportion as they advance in this species of knowledge, will become more just, more temperate, or more benevolent. Of the *extinction of wars* he has no hope. The new order of things which seemed opening in Europe, and to bid fair for it, has rather increased the evil; and as to *Christianity*, it has been tried, it seems, and found to be insufficient for the purpose. *Commerce*, instead of binding the nations in a golden chain of mutual peace and friendship, seems only to have given additional motives for war.

The amount is, There is little or no hope of the state of mankind being meliorated on *public* principles. All the improvement he can discern in this way consists in there being a little more lenity in the government of some countries than formerly; and as to this, it is balanced by the prodigious increase of standing armies, and other national burdens.

The only way in which *an increase in knowledge* is to operate to the melioration of the state of mankind is in *private life*. It is to soften and humanize men's manners, and emancipate their minds from the shackles of superstition and bigotry—names which writers of this class commonly bestow upon Christianity. This is the boundary beyond which, whatever be his wishes, the hopes of this writer will not suffer him to pass; and even this respects only Europe and her immediate connexions, and not the whole of them. The great mass of mankind are in an absolutely hopeless condition; for there are no means of carrying our improvements among them but by conquest, and conquest is a Pandora's box, at the mention of which he shudders.

Such are the prospects of unbelievers; such is the horrid despondency under which they sink when Providence counteracts their favourite schemes,

\* For February, 1799, p. 9.

and such the spirit which they labour to infuse into the minds of men in order to make them happy! Christian reader, have you no better hopes than these? Are you not acquainted with a principle which, like the machine of Archimedes, will remove this mighty mass of evils? Be they as great and as numerous as they may, if all can be reduced to a single cause, and that cause removed, the work is done. All the evils of which this writer complains are reducible to that one principle, which he says, (and it is well *he* says it,) "is interwoven into our very nature; namely, The propensity to prefer our own interest above that of the community." It is this propensity that operates in the great, and induces them to oppose every thing that would be unfavourable to their power and advantage; and the same thing operates among common people, great numbers of whom, it is well known, would sell their country for a piece of bread. If this principle cannot be removed, I shall, with this writer, for ever despair of any essential changes for the better in the state of mankind, and will content myself with cultivating private and domestic happiness, and hoping for the blessedness of a future life; but if it can, I must leave him to despair alone.

My hopes are not founded on forms of government, nor even on an increase of knowledge, though each may have its value; but *on the spirit by which both the rulers and the people will be governed*. All forms of government have hitherto rested on the basis of *self-love*. The wisest and best statesmen have been obliged to take it for granted that the mass of every people will be governed by this principle; and consequently, all their schemes have been directed to the balancing of things in such a manner as that people, in pursuing their own interest, should promote that of the public. If in any case they have presumed on the contrary, experience has soon taught them that all their schemes are visionary, and inapplicable to real life. But if the mass of the people, composed of all the different orders of society, were governed by a spirit of justice and disinterested benevolence, systems of government might safely be formed on this basis. It would then be sufficient for statesmen to ascertain what was right, and best adapted to promote the good of the community, and the people would cheerfully pursue it; and, pursuing this, would find their own good more effectually promoted than by all the little discordant arts of a selfish mind.

The excellence of the most admired constitutions which have hitherto appeared in the world, has chiefly consisted in the balance of power being so distributed, among the different orders of society, as that no one should materially oppress or injure the other. They have endeavoured to set boundaries to each other's encroachments, and contrived, in some degree, to counteract venality, corruption, and tumult. But all this supposes a corrupt state of society, and amounts to no more than making the best of things, taking them as they are. As things are, locks, and keys, and bolts, and bars are necessary in our houses; but it were better if there were no occasion for them. I do not take upon me to say that things will ever be in such a state as that there shall be no need of these political precautions; but I believe they will be far less necessary than at present.

If the Bible be true, the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; idolatry, and every species of false religion, shall be no more; the arts and instruments of war shall be laid aside, and exchanged for those of husbandry; the different tribes of man shall be united in one common band of brotherly love; slavery and oppression will cease; righteousness will be established in the earth; and "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

But "Christianity has been tried," it seems, "and found insufficient." That it has not been, as yet, sufficient to banish unjust wars from the earth is true; and it were more than wonderful if it had, seeing it has never yet been cordially embraced by the majority, nor perhaps by the preponderating part of any nation. Nevertheless it has had its influence. This gloomy writer himself acknowledges that the state of society in Europe and America, that is to say, in Christendom, is far preferable to what it is in other parts of the earth. Of the rest of the world he has no hope. Has Christianity done nothing in this case? That thousands in different nations are, by a cordial belief of it, rendered sober, just, disinterested, and peaceable, and that the state of society at large is greatly meliorated, have, I hope, been already proved.\* To believe then in the future accomplishment of the foregoing prophecies, is only to believe that what is already effected in individuals will be extended to the general body of mankind, or, at least, to such a proportion of them as shall be sufficient to give a preponderance in human affairs.

Moreover, the same book which declares that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, has foretold, in great variety of language, the downfall of the papal antichrist, and that by means of the same powers from which its dominion was first derived. We have, in part, seen the fulfilment of the one, and live in expectation of the other. We are not ignorant of the evil designs of infidels; but we believe that God is above them, and that they are only instruments in his hand in the fulfilment of his word. While, therefore, we feel for the miseries of mankind, occasioned by the dreadful devastations of war, we sorrow not as those who have no hope; but are persuaded that all things, even now, are working together for good; and while we pity individual sufferers, we cannot join the whining lamentations of interested men—"Alas, alas, that great city!" On the contrary, we feel disposed to join the song of the heavenly host, "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments.—Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready."

If, according to the doctrine of Bolingbroke, Volney, and other deists, we knew no other source of virtue and happiness than *self-love*, we should often be less happy than we are. Our blessedness is bound up with that of Christ and his followers throughout the world. His friends are our friends, and his enemies are our enemies; they that seek his life seek ours; the prosperity of his kingdom is our prosperity, and we prefer it above our chief joy. From the public stock of blessedness being thus considered as the common property of every individual, arises a great and constant influx of enjoyment. Hence it is that, in times when temporal comforts fail, or family troubles depress, or a cloud hangs over our particular connexions, or death threatens to arrest us in a course of pleasing labour, we have still our resources of consolation. 'Affairs with me are sinking; but *he must increase*.'—'My house is not so with God; but the kingdom of my Lord shall be established for ever.'—'His interest sinks in this congregation; but it rises elsewhere.'—'I die; but God will surely visit you!' Such is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and such the blessedness of those whose chief desire it is "that they may see the good of his chosen, that they may rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and that they may glory with his inheritance."

\* Chap. V. VI.

## PART II.

## THE HARMONY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION CONSIDERED AS AN EVIDENCE OF ITS DIVINITY.

IF Christianity be an imposture, it may, like all other impostures, be detected. Falsehood may always be proved to clash with fact, with reason, or with itself; and often with them all. If, on the contrary, its origin be Divine, it may be expected to bear the character of consistency, which distinguishes every other Divine production. If the Scriptures can be proved to harmonize with historic fact, with truth, with themselves, and with sober reason, they must, considering what they profess, be Divinely inspired, and Christianity must be of God.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE HARMONY OF SCRIPTURE WITH HISTORIC FACT EVINCED BY THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

IF the pretence which the Scriptures make to Divine inspiration be unfounded, it can be no very difficult undertaking to prove it so. The sacred writers, besides abounding in history, doctrine, and morality, have dealt largely in prophecy—and this not in the manner of the heathen priests, who make use of dark and dubious language. Their meaning, in general, is capable of being understood, even at this distance of time, and, in many instances, cannot be mistaken. The dispute, therefore, between believers, and unbelievers, is reducible to a short issue. If Scripture prophecy be Divinely inspired, it will be accomplished; if it be imposture, it will not.

Let us suppose that by digging in the earth a chest were discovered containing a number of ancient curiosities, and, among other things, a tablet inscribed with calculations of the most remarkable eclipses that should take place for a great while to come. These calculations are examined and found to correspond with fact for more than two thousand years past. The inspectors cannot agree, perhaps, in deciding who was the author, whether it had not gone through several hands when it was deposited in the chest, and various other questions; but does this invalidate the truth of the calculations, or diminish the value of the tablet?

It cannot be objected that events have been predicted from mere political foresight which have actually come to pass; for though this may have been the case in a few instances, wherein causes have already existed which afforded ground for the conclusion, yet it is impossible that the successive changes and revolutions of empires, some of which were more than a thousand years distant, and depended on ten thousand unknown incidents, should be the objects of human speculation.

Mr. Paine seems to feel the difficulty attending his cause on this subject. His method of meeting it is not by soberly examining the agreement or disagreement of prophecy and history: that would not have suited his purpose. But, as though he had made a wonderful discovery, he in the first place goes about to prove that the prophets wrote *poetry*; and hence would per-

suade us that a prophet was no other than an ancient Jewish bard. That the prophecies are what is now called poetic, Mr. Paine need not have given himself the trouble to prove, as no person of common understanding can doubt it: but the question is, Did not these writings, in whatever kind of language they were written, contain *predictions of future events*? yea, and of the most notorious and remarkable events, such as should form the grand outlines of history in the following ages? Mr. Paine will not deny this; nor will he soberly undertake to disprove that many of those events have already come to pass. He will, however, take a shorter method—a method more suited to his turn of mind. He will call the prophets “impostors and liars;” he will roundly assert, without a shadow of proof, and in defiance of historic evidence, that the prediction concerning Cyrus was written after the event took place; he will labour to pervert and explain away some few of the prophecies, and get rid of the rest by calling the writer “a false prophet,” and his production “a book of falsehoods;”<sup>\*</sup> These are weapons worthy of Mr. Paine’s warfare. But why all this rage against an ancient bard? Just now a prophet was only a poet, and the idea of a predictor of future events was not included in the meaning of the term. It seems however, by this time, that Mr. Paine has found a number of *predictions* in the prophetic writings, to dismiss which he is obliged, as is usual with him in cases of emergency, to summon all his talents of misrepresentation and abuse.

I take no particular notice of this writer’s attempts to explain away a few of the predictions of Isaiah and other prophets. Those who have undertaken to answer him have performed this part of the business. I shall only notice that he has not dared to meet the great body of Scripture prophecy, or fairly to look it in the face.

To say nothing of the predictions of the destruction of mankind by a flood; of that of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire; of the descendants of Abraham being put in possession of Canaan within a limited period; and of various other events, the history as well as the prophecy of which is confined to the Scriptures; let us review those predictions, the fulfilment of which has been recorded by historians who knew nothing of them, and, consequently, could have no design in their favour.

It is worthy of notice that sacred history ends where profane history, that part of it at least which is commonly reckoned authentic, begins. Prior to the Babylonish captivity, the Scriptural writers were in the habit of narrating the leading events of their country, and of incidentally introducing those of the surrounding nations; but shortly after this time the great changes in the world began to be recorded by other hands, as Herodotus, Xenophon, and others. From this period they dealt chiefly in prophecy, leaving it to common historians to record its fulfilment.

Mr. Paine says the Scripture prophecies are “a book of falsehoods.” Let us examine this charge. Isaiah, above a hundred years before the captivity, predicted the destruction of the Babylonish empire by the Medes and Persians, and Judah’s consequent deliverance. “The plunderer is plundered, and the destroyer is destroyed; Go up, O Elam; form the siege, O Media! I have put an end to all her vexations.”† Ask Herodotus and Xenophon, Was this a falsehood?

Daniel, fourteen years before the establishment of the Medo-Persian dominion by the taking of Babylon, described that dominion with its con-

<sup>\*</sup> Age of Reason, Part II. pp. 53, 44, 47.

† Lowth’s translation of Isaiah xxi. 2. Other prophecies of the same event may be seen in Isa. xliii. ; xiv. ; xxi. ; xliii. 14—17; xlv. 28; xlv. 1—4; xlvii. ; Jer. xxv. 12—26; l. ; li. ; Hab. ii.

quests, and the superiority of the Persian influence to that of the Median, under the symbol of a ram with two horns. "I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beast might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great." This is expounded as follows: "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia."\* Ask the aforementioned historians, Was this a falsehood?

The same Daniel, at the same time, two hundred and twenty-three years before the event, predicted the overthrow of this Medo-Persian dominion, by the arms of Greece, under the command of Alexander; and described the latter government under the symbol of a he-goat, with a notable horn between his eyes. "As I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand." The exposition of this vision follows: "The rough goat is the king of Grecia; and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king."† Ask Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and other historians of those times, Was this a falsehood?

The same Daniel, at the same time, two hundred and thirty years before the event, predicted the death of Alexander, and the division of his empire among four of his principal commanders, each of whom had an extensive dominion. "The he-goat waxed very great; and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones, toward the four winds of heaven." The interpretation of this was as follows: "Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power."‡ Ask the aforementioned historians of those times, Was this a falsehood?

The same Daniel, at the same time, three hundred and eighty years before the event, foretold the outrageous reign and sudden death of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria: particularly, that by flattery and treachery he should accomplish his end; and, on account of the degeneracy of the Jews, should be permitted for a time to ravage their country, interrupt their ordinary course of worship, profane their temple, and persecute, even to death, those who refused to comply with his heathen abominations; but that, in the midst of his career, he should be cut off by a sudden visitation from heaven. "And out of one of them (the four branches of the Grecian empire) came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered." Of this the following is the exposition: "In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are

\* Dan. viii. 3, 4, 20. See also Chap. vii. 5.

† Dan. viii. 5—7, 21. See also Chap. xi. 2—4. ‡ Dan. viii. 8. 22. See also Chap. vii. 6.



come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power, and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”\*

Daniel also foretells, in the eleventh chapter of his prophecies, the wars between this king of Syria and Ptolemy Philometor king of Egypt, with the interposition of the Romans, whose ambassadors should come over in *ships from Chittim*, and compel him to desist; also that, being thus disappointed of his object in Egypt, he should return full of wrath and indignation to his own land, and wreak his vengeance upon the Jews, whose country lay in his way, though they had done nothing to offend him. I will not say, ask Josephus, Diodorus Siculus, and Polybius, if these were falsehoods; ask Porphyry, a professed enemy to the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, and who wrote against them about the middle of the third century. He has proved, from the testimony of six or seven historians of those times, that these predictions were all exactly fulfilled; and, like Mr. Paine by the prophecies concerning Cyrus, is driven, *merely on account of their being true*, to fly in the face of historic evidence, and maintain that they could not be the production of Daniel, but must have been written by some Jew after the events took place.†

As, in the eighth and eleventh chapters of his prophecies, Daniel has foretold the Persian and Grecian governments, with the subdivisions of the latter, and how they should affect the Jewish people; so, in the seventh chapter, he has, in connexion with them, foretold the government of Rome. This singular empire he represents as exceeding all that had gone before in power and terror; and as that of Greece, soon after the death of Alexander, should be divided into four kingdoms, signified by the four heads of the third beast, so this, it is foretold, should be, at the time of its dissolution, divided into ten kingdoms, which are signified by the ten horns of the fourth beast. Ask universal history, Is this a falsehood? Those who adopt the cause of Porphyry must, in this instance, desert his hypothesis; they cannot say that this part of the prophecy was written by some Jew after the event took place, seeing Porphyry himself has acknowledged its existence some hundreds of years before it was accomplished.

The predictions of this prophet did not end here: he at the same time foretold that there should arise among the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire should be broken, a power diverse from all the rest, “a little horn” which should “speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High;” and that this power should continue until “a time, and times, and the dividing of time.” At the end of this period, he adds, “the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy unto the end.” Are these falsehoods? Let the history of the last twelve hundred years, and the present state of the papal hierarchy, determine.

Passing over the predictions of the Messiah, whose birth, place of nativity, time of appearance, manner of life, doctrine, miracles, death, and resurrection were each particularly pointed out,‡ let us examine a few examples from the New Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ foretold the destruction of

\* Dan. viii. 9—12, 23—25.

† See Prideaux's Connexion, Part I. Book II. VIII. Part II. Book III., where the accomplishment of all the foregoing events is clearly narrated, and the authorities cited.

‡ Isa. ix. 6; Micah v. 2; Dan. ix. 20—27; Isa. xlii. 2; xxxv. 5, 6; liii.; Psal. xvi. 10, 11.

Jerusalem by the Romans, and limited the time of its accomplishment to the then "present generation."\* Ask Josephus, the Jewish historian, Is this a falsehood?

It was intimated, at the same time, that the Jewish people should not only fall by the edge of the sword, but that great numbers of them should be "led away captive into all nations;" and that "Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled."† Ask the present descendants of that unhappy people, Is this a falsehood?

The apostle of the Gentiles foretold that there should be "a falling away," or a grand apostacy, in the Christian church; wherein "the man of sin should be revealed, even the son of perdition; who would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; and who as God would sit in the temple of God, showing himself to be God."‡ Also in his Epistle to Timothy: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God had created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."§

A large proportion of the Apocalypse of John respects the grand apostacy, and the corrupt community in which it was accomplished. He describes it with great variety of expression. On some accounts it is represented under the form of a "city," on others of a "beast," and on others of a "woman sitting upon a beast." That we might be at no loss to distinguish it on its appearance, it is intimated that it should not be so much a civil as an apostate ecclesiastical power: it is a "harlot," opposed to the bride, the Lamb's wife;—that it should greatly abound in wealth and worldly grandeur: "The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls;"—that its dominion should not be confined to its own immediate territories: "Power was given it over all kingdoms and tongues and nations;"—that its authority should not be derived from its own conquest, but from the voluntary consent of a number of independent kingdoms to come under its yoke: "The kings of the earth have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast;"—that it should be distinguished by its blasphemies, idolatries, and persecuting spirit: "Upon her were the names of blasphemy. They should make an image of the beast, and as many as would not worship the image of the beast were to be killed. And the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints;"—that its persecutions should extend to such a length as for no man to be allowed the common rights of men, unless he became subject to it: "No man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name;"—that its power should continue for "a time, times, and half a time, forty and two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days;" during which long period God's witnesses should prophesy in sackcloth, be driven as into a wilderness, and, as it were, slain, and their bodies lie unburied:—finally, that they who gave it an existence should be the instruments in taking it away: "The kings," or powers, "of the earth shall hate the whore, and burn her flesh with fire."|| Whether all, or any part of this, be falsehood, let history and observation determine.

It has often been observed, that the prophecies of the Messiah were so numerous and explicit, that, at the time of his appearance, there was a general expectation of it, not only in Judea, but in all the neighbouring

\* Matt. xxiv. 1—35; Luke xxi.

† Luke xxi. 24.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

§ 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.

|| Rev. xi. ; xiii. ; xvii.

nations; and is not the same thing observable, at this time, of the fall of antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, and the general spread of the gospel?

Once more: The sacred writers have predicted the opposition which Christianity should encounter, and described the characters from whom it should proceed: "In the last days," say they, "perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Again, "There shall be mockers in the last time, who shall walk after their own ungodly lusts; filthy dreamers, who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."\* Let Mr. Paine, and other infidels, consider well the above picture, and ask their own consciences, Is this a falsehood?

Bishop Newton, in his *Dissertations*, has clearly evinced the fulfilment of several of these and other Scripture prophecies; and has shown that some of them are fulfilling at this day. To those Dissertations I refer the reader. Enough has been said to enable us to determine which production it is that deserves to be called "a book of falsehoods,"—the prophecies of Scripture, or the *Age of Reason*.

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## CHAPTER II.

THE HARMONY OF SCRIPTURE WITH TRUTH EVINCED FROM ITS AGREEMENT WITH THE DICTATES OF AN ENLIGHTENED CONSCIENCE, AND THE RESULT OF THE CLOSEST OBSERVATION.

If a brazen mirror were found in some remote, uninhabited island, it might be a doubtful matter how it came thither; but if it properly reflected objects, there could be no doubt of its being a real mirror.

The Bible was written with the professed design of being "profitable for reproof;" nor was there ever a book so adapted to the purpose, or so effectual in its operation in disclosing the inward workings of the human mind. Thousands can bear witness from experience, that it is "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Its entrance into the mind gives light, and light which discovers the works of darkness. Far from flattering the vices of mankind, it charges, without ceremony, every son of Adam with possessing the heart of an apostate. This charge it brings home to the conscience, not only by its pure precepts, and awful threatenings, but oftentimes by the very invitations and promises of mercy, which, while they cheer the heart with lively hope, carry conviction by their *import* to the very soul. In reading other books you may admire the ingenuity of the writer; but here your attention is turned inward. Read it but seriously, and your heart will answer to its descriptions. It will touch the secret springs of sensibility; and if you have any ingenuousness of mind towards God, the tears of grief, mingled with those of hope and gratitude, will, ere you are aware, trickle from your eyes.

To whatever particular vices you may have been addicted, here you will

\* 2 Tim. iii. 1—4; Jude.

discover your likeness; and that, not as by a comic representation on the theatre, which, where it reclaims one person by shaming him out of his follies, corrupts a thousand; but in a way that will bring conviction to your bosom.

“Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” Such was the reasoning of the woman of Samaria; and who could have reasoned better? That which makes manifest must be light. But this reasoning is applicable to other things as well as to the Messiahship of Jesus. No man can forbear saying of that book, that doctrine, or that preaching which tells him all that ever he did, Is not this the truth? The satisfaction afforded by such evidence approaches near to intuitive certainty; it is having the witness in ourselves.

Should it be objected, that though this may satisfy our own minds, yet it can afford no evidence to others; I answer, It is true that they who shun the light cannot be supposed to possess the same evidence of its being what it is, as those who have come to it that their deeds may be made manifest; yet even they, if at all acquainted with the Bible, must be aware that the likenesses which it draws are, in a considerable degree, their own. It is not to serious Christians only that the gospel is a mirror. Many who never look into that perfect law of liberty from choice and delight, so as to be blessed in their work, but only glance at it in a transient and occasional way, yet perceive so much of their own character in it as to be convinced that it is right, and that they are wrong. The secret conviction of thousands who hear the word, and do it not, resembles that of Pharaoh, “The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.” The impressions of such people, it is true, are frequently short in their duration; like a man who seeth his natural face in a glass, they go away, and straightway forget what manner of persons they are: but the aversion which they discover seriously to resume the subject, places it beyond all reasonable doubt, that, let their hearts be as they may, the Scriptures have commended themselves to their consciences. They have felt the point of this two-edged sword, and are not disposed to renew the encounter. That this is the case not only with nominal Christians, but with great numbers of professed deists, is manifest from the acknowledgments of such men as the Earl of Rochester, and many others who have relented on the near approach of death. This is often a time in which conscience must and will be heard; and, too often for the happiness of surviving acquaintances, it proclaims to the world that the grand source of their hatred to the Bible has been that for which Ahab hated Micaiah—it prophesying no good concerning them.

The Scriptures are a mirror in which we see not only individual characters, our own and others, but the state of things as they move on in the great world. They show us the spring-head whence all the malignant streams of idolatry, atheism, corruption, persecution, war, and every other evil originate; and, by showing us the origin of these destructive maladies, clearly instruct us wherein must consist their cure.

It has already been observed,\* that Christian morality is summed up in the love of God and our neighbour, and that these principles, carried to their full extent, would render the world a paradise. But the Scriptures teach us that man is a rebel against his Maker; that his carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; that instead of loving God, or even man, in the order which is required, men are become “lovers of their own selves,” and neither God nor man is regarded but as they are found necessary to subserve their wishes.

This single principle of human depravity, supposing it to be true, will fully account for all the moral disorders in the world; and the actual existence of those disorders, unless they can be better accounted for, must go to prove the truth of this principle, and, by consequence, of the Christian system which rests upon it.

We are affected in considering the *idolatry* of so great a part of the human race, but we are not surprised at it. If men be destitute of the love of God, it is natural to suppose they will endeavour to banish him from their thoughts, and, provided the state of society will admit of it, from their worship; substituting gods more congenial with their inclinations, and in the worship of which they can indulge themselves without fear or control.

Neither are we surprised at the *practical atheism* which abounds among unbelievers, and even among nominal Christians, in European nations. If the state of things be such as to render gross idolatry inadmissible, still, if, aversion to God predominate, it will show itself in a neglect of all worship, and of all serious conversation, or devout exercises; in a wish to think there is no God, and no hereafter; and in endeavours to banish every thing of a religious nature from society. Or if this cannot be, and any thing relating to such subjects become matter of discussion, they will be so explained away, as that nothing shall be left which can approve itself to an upright heart. The holiness of the Divine character will be kept out of sight, his precepts disregarded, and morality itself made to consist in something destitute of all true virtue.

We are not surprised at the *corruption* which Christianity has undergone. Christianity itself, as we have already seen, foretold it; and the doctrine of human depravity fully accounts for it. When the Christian religion was adopted by the state, it is natural to suppose there were great numbers of unprincipled men who professed it; and where its leading characters in any age are of this description, it will certainly be corrupted. The pure doctrine of Christ is given up in favour of some flesh-pleasing system, the holy precepts of Christian morality are lowered to the standard of ordinary practice, and the worship and ordinances of Christ are mingled with superstition, and modelled to a worldly temper. It was thus that Judaism was corrupted by the old Pharisees, and Christianity by the papal hierarchy.

The success with which *evil men and seducers* meet, in propagating false doctrine, is no more than, from the present state of things, may be expected. So long as a large proportion of the professors of Christianity receive not the love of the truth, error will be certain to meet with a welcome reception. The grossest impostor has only to advance a system suited to corrupt nature, to assert it with effrontery, and to flatter his adherents with being the favourites of heaven, and he will be followed.\*

The *persecutions* which have been carried on against religion are grievous to humanity, and equally repugnant to justice and to good policy; but they are not in the least surprising. There was not a truth more prominent in our Saviour's addresses to his followers than this, that, having received his word, the world would hate them, because they were not of the world, as

\* Men are much more easily deceived in these matters than in the ordinary concerns of life. If a London merchant were to open warehouses in different parts of the city, and make it his business to traduce the characters and commodities of all other merchants; if his opposition were directed especially against men of probity and eminence, whose situations were contiguous to his own; in fine, if the only traders in the kingdom who could obtain his good word were certain agents whom he had stationed in different parts of the country for the purpose of retailing his wares; would not his designs be evident? He might puff, and pretend to have the good of the public much at heart; but the public would despise him, as a man whose object was a fortune, and whose practices evinced that he would hesitate at no means to accomplish his end. Yet, in religion, such deceptions may be practised with success.

he was not of the world. When he sent them forth to preach the gospel, it was, "as sheep among wolves;" and they were treated accordingly. When he took leave of them, previously to his death, he left them his *peace*, as knowing that in the world they should have tribulation. All this was no more than might be expected; for if it be the character of true religion, that it sets itself against every vicious propensity of the human heart, it is natural to suppose that every one who is under the dominion of such propensity will feel averse from true religion, and from those who adhere to it. The manner in which mankind have stood affected towards godly men has been nearly uniform from the beginning. Cain slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian mocking: as he that was born after the flesh then persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Why was Jerusalem a burdensome stone to the nations? Why were they continually forming leagues to root out its remembrance from the earth? The same spirit that was discovered by Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon towards Israel, was apparent in Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, and their companions towards Judah; and the part acted by the Horonite, the Ammonite, and the Arabian, was afterwards reacted, with additional zeal, by Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the governors and people of Israel. Those who could agree in nothing else could agree in this. The persecutions of pagan and papal Rome, and of all who have symbolized with her, have been only a continuation of the same system; and the descriptions which deistical historians give of these works of darkness, notwithstanding their pretended regard to religious liberty, bear witness that they allow the deeds of their fathers, and inherit their dispositions. The same malignant spirit which was discovered by the heathens towards the ancient Israelites is discoverable in all the writings of unbelievers towards that people to this day. It is true, they are more reconciled to the modern Jews; and for a very plain reason: they feel them to be near akin to themselves. Herod and Pilate were made friends by the crucifixion of Christ. Since that time the old enmity has been transferred to believing Gentiles, who, being grafted into the Jewish olive, and partaking of its advantages, partake also of its persecutions; and by how much the Christian church, at any period, has exceeded the Jewish in purity and spirituality, by so much more force has the wrath of a wicked world burned against it.

After all the pains that unbelievers take to shift the charge of persecution, and to lay it at the door of Christianity, it is manifest, to an observant eye, that there is a deep-rooted enmity in all wicked men, whether they be pagans, papists, protestants, or deists, towards all godly men, of every nation, name, and denomination. This enmity, it is true, is not suffered to operate according to its native tendency. He who holdeth the winds in his hand restrains it. Men are withheld by laws, by policy, by interests, by education, by respect, by regard founded on qualities distinct from religious, and by various other things. There are certain conjunctions of interests, especially, which occasionally require a temporary cessation of hostilities; and it may seem on such occasions as if wicked men were ashamed of their animosities, and were all on a sudden become friendly to the followers of Christ. Thus at the revolution, in 1688, those who for more than twenty years had treated the nonconformists with unrelenting severity, when they found themselves in danger of being deprived of their places by a popish prince, courted their friendship, and promised not to persecute them any more. And thus, at the commencement of the French revolution, deists, catholics, and protestants, who were engaged in one political cause, seemed to have forgotten their resentments, all amicably uniting together in the opening of

a place for protestant worship. But let not the servants of Christ imagine that any temporary conjunction of interests will extinguish the ancient enmity. It may seem to be so for a time; and all things being under the control of Providence, such a time may be designed as a season of respite for the faithful; but when self-interest has gained its end, if other worldly considerations do not interpose, things will return to their former channel. The enmity is not dead, but sleepeth.

Finally, the *wars* which, from the earliest period of history, have desolated the earth, grievous as they are to a feeling mind, contain in them nothing surprising. The Scriptures, with singular propriety, describe the world as *a great sea*, which is ever casting up its mire and dirt; and great conquerors as so many *wild beasts*, which, in succession, rise from its troubled waters, and devour the inhabitants of the earth.\* Nor is this all: they describe not only the fact, but the cause it. Wars among men, as has been already stated,† have their *immediate* causes in “the lusts which war in their members;” but, besides this, the Scripture leads us to a cause more remote, and of still greater importance. They denominate the sword of war “the sword of the Lord,” and constantly intimate that it is one of those means by which he “pleadeth with all flesh.” A part of the curse entailed on men for their departure from the living God consists in this, that, till they return to him, they shall not be able, for any length of time, to maintain amity among themselves. It appears to be one of those laws by which God governs the world, THAT PEOPLE ENGAGED IN AN EVIL CAUSE, HOWEVER HARMONIOUS THEY MAY BE IN THE OUTSET, SHALL PRESENTLY BE AT VARIANCE. Thus it was between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, as Jotham had forewarned them in his parable. Though at first they appeared to rejoice in each other; yet, in a little time, “fire came out from Abimelech and devoured the men of Shechem, and fire came out from the men of Shechem and devoured Abimelech.”‡ Such is commonly the issue of all unprincipled confederacies, traitorous conspiracies, illegal combinations, and illicit amours. Union, in order to be lasting, requires to be cemented with honour. Where this is wanting, however appearances may for a while be flattering, all will prove transitory: mutual jealousies will produce mutual enmities, which are certain to issue in confusion and every evil work. These remarks are no less applicable to the whole human race than to particular parts of it. Men have revolted from God, and yet think to live in harmony among themselves. God, in just judgment, appears to have determined the contrary; and that, till they return to him, they shall be given up to an evil spirit towards each other, and to the ravages of a succession of ambitious leaders, who shall destroy them in great numbers from the face of the earth. It is morally impossible, indeed, that it should be otherwise; for the same principle which induces them to renounce the Divine government dissolves the bands of human society. Supreme self-love is the origin of both, and is sufficient to account for all the disorder in the universe.

Candid reader, review the subject of this chapter. In the last, we traced the agreement of the Holy Scriptures with historic fact; in this, we have seen their correspondence with *living truth*, or with *things as they actually exist, in the mind and in the world*. Similar arguments might also have been drawn from the characters of believers and unbelievers. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called in the early ages of Christianity; and it has been the same in every age. To the Jews the gospel was from the first a stumbling-block, and to philosophers foolishness;

\* Dan. vii.

† Part I. Chap. VII.

‡ Judg. ix.

and such it continues to this day. The existence of the Jews as a distinct people, their dispersion, their attachment to the Old Testament and rejection of the New, their expectation of a Messiah, their acknowledgment of the truth of the historical facts concerning our Lord, the malignity of their spirit; in a word, their exact resemblance, even at this remote period, to the picture drawn of them in the New Testament, are facts which cannot be controverted. Judge impartially: Is there any thing in all this that bears the marks of imposture? A connoisseur will distinguish between paintings taken from life, and such as are the work of mere imagination. An accurate judge of moral painting will do the same. If the Scriptures gave false descriptions of men and things, if they flattered the vices of mankind, or exhibited the moral state of the world contrary to well-known fact, you would conclude them to be a work of falsehood. On the other hand, if they speak of things as they are, if conscience echo to their charges, and fact comport with their representations, they must have been taken from life; and you must conclude them to be what they profess to be—*a work of truth*. And, since the objects described are many of them beyond the ken of human observation, you must conclude that they are not only a work of truth, but what they also profess to be—*the true sayings of God*.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE HARMONY OF SCRIPTURE WITH ITS OWN PROFESSIONS ARGUED FROM THE SPIRIT AND STYLE IN WHICH IT IS WRITTEN.

If the Scriptures be what they profess to be—the word of God, it may be presumed that the spirit which they breathe, and even the style in which they are composed, will be different from what can be found in any other productions. It is true that, having been communicated through human mediums, we may expect them, in a measure, to be humanized; the peculiar turn and talents of each writer will be visible, and this will give them the character of variety; but, amidst all this variety, a mind capable of discerning the Divine excellence will plainly perceive in them the finger of God.

With respect to *style*, though it is not on the natural, but the moral, or rather the *holy* beauties of Scripture that I would lay the principal stress; yet something may be observed of the other. So far as the beauty of language consists in its freedom from affectation, and its conformity to the nature of the subject, it may be expected that a book written by holy men, inspired of God, will be possessed of this excellence. A divinely-inspired production will not only be free from such blemishes as arise from vanity, and other evil dispositions of the mind, but will abound in those beauties which never fail to attend the genuine exercises of modesty, sensibility, and godly simplicity. It will reject the meretricious ornaments of art, but it will possess the more substantial beauties of nature. That this is true of the Scriptures has been proved by several able writers.\*

Mr. Paine, however, can see nothing great, majestic, or worthy of God, in any part of the Bible. Among the numerous terms of reproach with

\* See Blackwall's Sacred Classics. Also Melmoth's Sublime and Beautiful of Scripture; to which is added Dwight's Dissertation on the Poetry, History, and Eloquence of the Bible.



which he honours it, he is pleased to censure the writings of Isaiah as "bombast, beneath the genius of a school-boy;" and to compare the command of the great Creator in the first chapter of Genesis, "Let there be light," to the "imperative manner of speaking used by a conjuror."\* This writer has given us no example of the bombast from Isaiah. Bombast is that species of writing in which great swelling words are used to convey little ideas. But is it thus in the writings of Isaiah? "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.—Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."† Are the ideas too little, in these instances, for the words? The prophets wrote in a poetic style; and how could they write otherwise? Poetry is the language of passion; and such as theirs, of passion raised and inflamed by great and affecting objects. Their language is not that of common poetry, but, as an elegant writer expresses it, "It is the burst of inspiration."

As to the objection against the sublimity of the passage in the first chapter of Genesis, it is sufficient to observe that there is nothing, be it ever so majestic and worthy of God, but a profane and ludicrous imagination may distort it. A rainbow may be compared to a fiddle-stick, but it does not follow that it is an object of equal insignificance. Thunder and lightning may be imitated by a character not less contemptible than a conjuror; but should any one infer that there is nothing more grand, more awful, or more worthy of God, in these displays of nature, than in the exhibitions of a country show, he would prove himself to be possessed of but a small portion of either wit or good sense.

I do not pretend to any great judgment in the beauties of composition; but there are persons of far superior judgment to this writer who have expressed themselves in a very different language. The late Sir William Jones, who for learning and taste, as well as character, has left but few equals, thus expresses himself: "I have regularly and attentively read these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that this volume, independent of its Divine origin, contains more sublimity and beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been composed."

The acknowledgments of Rousseau, likewise, whose taste for fine writing, and whose freedom from prejudice in favour of Christianity, none will call in question, will serve to confront the assertions of Mr. Paine. After declaring that, as there were some proofs in favour of revelation which he could not invalidate, so there were many objections against it which he could not resolve—that he neither admitted nor rejected it—and that he rejected only the *obligation* of submitting to it—he goes on to acknowledge as follows: "I will confess to you, further, that the majesty of the Scripture strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel hath its influence on my

\* Age of Reason, Part II. p. 105 Note.

† Isa. vi. 3; xl. 12—17.

heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers; with all their pomp of diction, how mean—how contemptible—are they, compared with the Scripture! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the air of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind! What subtlety! What truth in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and die, without weakness, and without ostentation?—Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction. On the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality, contained in the Gospels; the marks of whose truth are so striking and invincible, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.”\*

Rousseau’s praises of the Scripture remind us of the high encomiums bestowed by Balaam on the tabernacles of Israel. It is no unusual thing for men to admire that which they do not love.

Let us examine a little more minutely the *spirit* in which the Scriptures are written. It is this which constitutes their *holy* beauty, distinguishes them from all other writings, and affords the strongest evidence of their being written by inspiration of God.

In recording historical events, the sacred writers *invariably eye the hand of God*; in some instances they entirely overlook second causes; and in others, where they are mentioned, it is only as instruments fulfilling the Divine will. Events that come to pass according to the usual course of things, and in which an ordinary historian would have seen nothing Divine, are recorded by them among the works of the Lord: “The Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight.—And the Lord sent against Jehoiakim bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; and also for the innocent blood that he shed, (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood,) which the Lord would not pardon.”†

In their *prophecies*, while they foretold the heaviest calamities upon nations, their own and others, and, viewing the hand of God in all, acquiesced in them, as men they felt tenderly for their fellow creatures, even for their enemies: “My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.—O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still.”‡ When Israel was exposed to calamities, all the neighbouring nations, who hated them on account of their religion, exulted over them; but when the cup went round to them, the prophets who foretold it were tenderly affected by it: “I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh; for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen: and glad-

\* Works, Vol. V. pp. 215—218. † 2 Kings xvii. 18; xxiv. 2—4. ‡ Jer. iv. 19; xvii. 6.

ness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made shouting to cease. Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-haresh.\*

The *miracles* which they record are distinguished from the signs and lying wonders of the following ages, in that there is always to be seen in them an end worthy of God. The far greater part of them were works of pure compassion to the parties, and the whole of them of benevolence to society.

There is nothing in the Scriptures adapted to gratify *presumptuous speculation* or *idle curiosity*. Such a spirit, on the contrary, is frequently checked, and every thing is directed to the renovation or improvement of the heart. The account given of the creation of the sun, moon, and stars is not intended, as Mr. Henry observes, to describe things "as they are in themselves, and in their own nature, to satisfy the curious; but as they are in relation to this earth, to which they serve as *lights*; and this is enough to furnish us with matter for praise and thanksgiving." The miracles of Jesus were never performed to gratify curiosity. If the afflicted, or any on their behalf, present their petition, it is invariably heard and answered; but if the Pharisees come and say, "Master, we would see a sign from thee," or if Herod "hope to see a miracle done by him," it is refused.† When one said to him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" he answered, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."‡

There is nothing in the Scriptures tending, in its own nature, to excite *levity* or *folly*. They sometimes deal in the most cutting irony; but it is never for the sake of displaying wit, or raising a laugh, but invariably for the accomplishment of a serious and important end. A serious mind finds every thing to gratify it, and nothing to offend it; and even the most profligate character, unless he read them in search of something which he may convert into ridicule, is impressed with awe by the pointed and solemn manner in which they address him.

It may be said of the Scriptures, and of them only, that they are *free from affectation and vanity*. You may sometimes find things of this sort described by the sacred writers; but you will never discern any such spirit in the descriptions themselves. Yet, as men, they were subject to human imperfections: if, therefore, they had not been influenced by Divine inspiration, blemishes of this kind must have appeared in their writings, as well as in those of other men. But in what instance have they assumed a character which does not belong to them, or discovered a wish to be thought more religious, more learned, or more accomplished in any way than they were? Nor were they less free from vanity than from affectation. They were as far from making the most of what they were, as from aiming to appear what they were not. Instead of trumpeting their own praise, or aiming to transmit their fame to posterity, several of them have not so much as put their names to their writings; and those who have are generally out of sight. As you read their history, they seldom occur to your thoughts. Who thinks of the evangelists when reading the *four Gospels*? or of Luke while reading the *Acts of the Apostles*? Mr. Paine weaves the laurel on his own brows, vainly boasting that he has "written a book under the greatest disadvantages, which no Bible believer can answer;" and that, with the axe upon his shoulder, like another Sennacherib, he has passed through, and cut down the tall

\* Isa. xvi. 9—11.

† Matt. xii. 38; Luke xxiii. 8, 9.

‡ Luke xiii. 24. See also xxi. 5—19.

cedars of our Lebanon.\* But thus did not the sacred writers, even with regard to heathenism, because of the fear of God. Paul in one instance, for the sake of answering an important end, was compelled to speak the truth of himself, and to appear to boast; yet it is easy to perceive how much it was against his inclination. A *boaster* and a *fool* were, in his account, synonymous terms.†

The sacred writers, while they respect magistracy, and frown upon faction, tumult, and sedition, are *never known to flatter the great*. Compare the fustian eloquence of Tertullus with the manly speeches of Paul. Did he flatter Felix? No; he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; and Felix trembled.” Did he flatter Festus, or even Agrippa? No; the highest compliment which proceeded from him was, that “he knew” the latter “to be expert in all customs and questions among the Jews,” and to maintain the Divine inspiration of the prophets; which declaration, with the whole of this admirable apology, contained only the words of truth and soberness.

They discover no *anxiety to guard against seeming inconsistencies*, either with themselves or one another. In works of imposture, especially where a number of persons are concerned, there is need of great care and caution, lest one part should contradict another; and such caution is easily perceived. But the sacred writers appear to have had no such concern about them. Conscious that all they wrote was true, they left it to prove its own consistency. Their productions possess consistency; but it is not a studied one, nor always apparent at first sight; it is that consistency which is certain to accompany truth.‡

There is an *inimitable simplicity in all their writings, and a feeling sense of what they write*. They come to the point without ceremony or preamble; and, having told the truth, leave it, without mingling their own reflections. This remark is particularly exemplified by the four evangelists, in narrating the treatment of their Lord. Writers who had felt less would have said more.

There is something in all they say which leaves behind it a sensation produced by no other writings; something peculiarly suited to the mind when in its most serious frames, oppressed by affliction, or thoughtful about a future life; something which gives melancholy itself a charm, and produces tears more delicious to the mind than the most high-flavoured earthly enjoy-

\* Age of Reason, Part II. Preface, p. vi., and p. 64

† 2 Cor. xii.

‡ “There is one argument,” says Mr. Wilberforce, in his late excellent treatise, “which impresses my mind with particular force. This is the great variety of the *kinds* of evidence which have been adduced in proof of Christianity, and the confirmation thereby afforded of its truth:—the proof from prophecy—from miracles—from the character of Christ—from that of his apostles—from the nature of the doctrines of Christianity—from the nature and excellence of her *practical precepts*—from the accordance we have lately pointed out between the doctrinal and practical system of Christianity, whether considered each in itself, or in their mutual relation to each other—from other species of internal evidence, afforded in the more abundance in proportion as the sacred records have been scrutinized with greater care—from the accounts of contemporary, or nearly contemporary writers—from the impossibility of accounting, on any other supposition than that of the truth of Christianity, for its promulgation and early prevalence: these and other lines of argument have all been brought forward, and ably urged by different writers, in proportion as they have struck the minds of different observers more or less forcibly. Now, granting that some obscure and illiterate men, residing in a distant province of the Roman empire, had plotted to impose a forgery upon the world; though some foundation for the imposture might, and indeed must, have been attempted to be laid; it seems, at least to my understanding, morally impossible that *so many different species of proofs*, and all so strong, should have lent their *concurrent aid*, and have united their *joint force*, in the establishment of the falsehood. It may assist the reader in estimating the value of this argument to consider upon how different a footing, in this respect, has rested every other religious system, without exception, which was ever proposed to the world, and indeed every other historical fact of which the truth has been at all contested.”—Practical View, &c. pp. 361—363. Third Edition.

ments. By what name shall I express it? It is a *savour of life, a savour of God, an unction from the Holy One.*

Mr. Paine can see no beauty in the New Testament narratives: to him there appears nothing but *imposture, folly, contradiction, falsehood*, and every thing that marks an evil cause. And I suppose he could say the same of the things narrated; of the labours, tears, temptations, and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and of every thing else in the New Testament. Mr. Paine, however, is not the only instance wherein men have lacked understanding. The Jews saw no beauty in the Saviour that they should desire him; and there are persons who can see no beauty in any of the works of God. Creation is to them a blank. But though "the eyes of a fool are at the ends of the earth," for want of objects to attract them, yet "wisdom is before him that understandeth." If Mr. Paine can see no beauty in the sacred pages, it does not follow that there is no beauty to be seen. Let any person of candour and discernment read over the four evangelists, and judge whether they bear the marks of imposture. If he have any difficulty, it will be in preserving the character of a critic. Unless he be perpetually on his guard, he will insensibly lose sight of the writers, and be all enamoured of the great object concerning which they write. In reading the last nine chapters of John, he will perceive the writer to be deeply affected. Though a long time had elapsed since the events had taken place, and he was far advanced in years, yet his heart was manifestly overwhelmed with his subject. There is reason to think that the things which Mr. Paine attempts to ridicule drew tears from his eyes while he narrated them; as an ingenuous mind will find it difficult to review the narrative without similar sensations.

Mr. Paine is pleased to say, "Any person that could read and write might have written such a book as the Bible;" but nothing can be further from the truth. It were saying but little to affirm that *he* could not produce a single page or sentence that would have a similar effect. Stranger as he has proved himself to be to the love of God and righteousness, he could not communicate what he does not feel. The croaking raven might as well endeavour to imitate the voice of the dove, or the song of the nightingale, as he attempt to emulate the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Paine's spirit is sufficiently apparent in his pages, and that of the sacred writers in theirs. So far from writing as they wrote, he cannot understand their writings. That which the Scriptures teach on this subject is sufficiently verified in him, and all others of his spirit: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."\* As easily might the loveliness of chastity be perceived, or the pleasures of a good conscience appreciated, by a debauchee, as the things of God he received by a mind like that of Mr. Paine.

Finally, If the Bible be the word of God, it may be expected that "such an authority and Divine sanction should accompany it," that, while a candid mind shall presently perceive its evidence, those who read it either with negligence or prejudice shall only be confirmed in their unbelief. It is fit that God's word should not be trifled with. When the Pharisees captiously demanded a sign or miracle, they were sent away without one. They might go, if they pleased, and report the inability of Jesus to work a miracle. The evidence attending the resurrection of Christ is of this description. He had exhibited proofs of his Divine mission publicly, and before the eyes of all men; but seeing they were obstinately rejected, he told his enemies that they should see him no more till he should come on a different occasion:† and they saw him no more. They might insist, if they pleased, that the

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† Matt. xxiii. 39.

testimony of his disciples, who witnessed his resurrection, was insufficient. It is thus that heresies, offences, and scandals are permitted in the Christian church, that they who are approved may be made manifest; and that occasion may be furnished for them who seek occasion to reproach religion and persist in their unbelief. If men choose delusion, God also will choose to give them up to it. "The scorner shall seek wisdom, and shall not find it;" and the word of life shall be a "savour of death unto death to them that perish." Mr. Paine, when he wrote the First Part of his *Age of Reason*, was without a Bible. Afterwards, he tells us, he procured one; or, to use his own school-boy language, "a Bible and a Testament; and I have found them," he adds, "to be much worse books than I had conceived."\* In all this there is nothing surprising. On the contrary, if such a scorner had found wisdom, the Scriptures themselves had not been fulfilled.†

If an insolent coxcomb had been of opinion that Sir Isaac Newton was a mere ignoramus in philosophy, and had gone into his company that he might catechise, and afterwards, as occasion should offer, expose him; it is not unlikely that this great writer, perceiving his arrogance, would have suffered him to depart without answering his questions, even though he might know at the time that his unfavourable opinion of him would thereby be the more confirmed. Let us but come to the Scriptures in a proper spirit, and we shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God; but if we approach them in a cavilling humour, we may expect not only to remain in ignorance, but to be hardened more and more in unbelief.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONSISTENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, PARTICULARLY THAT OF SALVATION THROUGH A MEDIATOR, WITH SOBER REASON.

If there is a God who created us, if we have all sinned against him, and if there is reason to believe that he will call us to account for our conduct, all which principles are admitted by Mr. Paine,‡ a gloomy prospect must needs present itself, sufficient indeed to render man "the slave of terror." It is not in the power of this writer, nor of any man living who rejects the Bible, to assure us that pardon will have any place in the Divine government; and however light he may make of the Scripture doctrine of hell, He that calls men to account for their deeds will be at no loss how or where to punish them. But, allowing that God is disposed to show mercy to the guilty, the question is, Whether his doing so by or without a mediator be most consistent with what we know of fitness or propriety?

That pardon is bestowed through a mediator in a vast variety of instances among men cannot be denied; and that it is proper it should be so must be evident to every thinking mind. All who are acquainted with the common affairs of life must be aware of the necessity of such proceedings, and the good effects of them upon society.§

It is far less *humbling* for an offender to be pardoned at his own request than through the interposition of a third person; for, in the one case, he may be led to think that it was his virtue and penitence which influenced the decision; whereas, in the other, he is compelled to feel his own un-

\* *Age of Reason*, Part II. Preface, p. xii.

† Prov. xiv. 6.

‡ *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 1; Part II. p. 100.

§ See President Edwards's Remarks on Important Theological Controversies, Chap. VI.

worthiness: and this may be one reason why the mediation of Christ is so offensive. It is no wonder, indeed, that those who deny humility to be a virtue\* should be disgusted with a doctrine the professed object of which is to abase the pride of man.

As forgiveness without a mediator is less humbling to the offender, so it provides less for the *honour* of the offended, than a contrary proceeding. Many a compassionate heart has longed to go forth, like David towards Ab-salom; but, from a just sense of wounded authority, could not tell how to effect it; and has greatly desired that some common friend would interpose, to save his honour. He has wished to remit the sentence, but has felt the want of a mediator, at the instance of whom he might give effect to his desires, and exercise mercy without seeming to be regardless of justice. An offender who should object to a mediator would be justly considered as hardened in impenitence, and regardless of the honour of the offended; and it is difficult to say what other construction can be put upon the objections of sinners to the mediation of Christ.

Again, To exercise pardon without a mediator would be fixing no such *stigma upon the evil of the offence* as is done by a contrary mode of proceeding. Every man feels that those faults which may be overlooked on a mere acknowledgment are not of a very heinous nature; they are such as arise from inadvertence, rather than from ill design; and include little more than an error of the judgment. On the other hand, every man feels that the calling in of a third person is making much of the offence, treating it as a serious affair, a breach that is not to be lightly passed over. This may be another reason why the mediation of Christ is so offensive to the adversaries of the gospel. It is no wonder that men who are continually speaking of moral evil under the palliating names of *error, frailty, imperfection*, and the like, should spurn at a doctrine the implication of which *condemns* it to everlasting infamy.†

Finally, To bestow pardon without a mediator would be treating the offence as *private*, or passing over it as a matter unknown, an affair which does not affect the well-being of society, and which therefore requires no public manifestation of displeasure against it. Many a notorious offender would, doubtless, wish matters to be thus conducted, and, from an aversion to public exposure, would feel strong objections to the formal interposition of a third person. Whether this may not be another reason of dislike to the mediation of Christ I shall not decide; but of this I am fully satisfied, that the want of a proper sense of the great evil of sin, as it affects the moral government of the universe, is a reason why its adversaries see no necessity for it, nor fitness in it. They prove by all their writings, that they have no delight in the moral excellency of the Divine nature, no just sense of the glory of moral government, and no proper views of the pernicious and widely extended influence of sin upon the moral system: is it any wonder, therefore, that they should be unconcerned about the plague being stayed by a sacrifice? Such views are too enlarged for their selfish and contracted minds. The only object of their care, even in their most serious moments, is to escape punishment; for the honour of God, and the real good of creation, they discover no concern.

The amount is this: If it be indeed improper for a guilty creature to lie low before his Creator, if it be unfit that any regard should be paid to the honour of his character, if the offence committed against him be of so small account that it is unnecessary for him to express any displeasure against it, and if it have been so private and insulated in its operations, as in no way to affect the well-being of the moral system. the doctrine of forgiveness

\* Volney's Law of Nature, p. 49.

† Rom. viii. 3.

through a mediator is unreasonable. But if the contrary be true—if it be proper for a guilty creature to lie in the dust before his offended Creator, if the honour of the Divine character deserve the first and highest regard, if moral evil be the greatest of all evils, and require, even where it is forgiven, a strong expression of Divine displeasure against it, and if its pernicious influence be such that, if suffered to operate according to its native tendency, it would dethrone the Almighty, and desolate the universe, the doctrine in question must accord with the plainest dictates of reason.

The sense of mankind, with regard to the necessity of a mediator, may be illustrated by the following similitude:—Let us suppose a division of the army of one of the wisest and best of kings, through the evil counsel of a foreign enemy, to have been disaffected to his government; and that, without any provocation on his part, they traitorously conspired against his crown and life. The attempt failed; and the offenders were seized, disarmed, tried by the laws of their country, and condemned to die. A respite however was granted them during his majesty's pleasure. At this solemn period, while every part of the army and of the empire was expecting the fatal order for execution, the king was employed in meditating mercy. But how could mercy be shown? "To make light of a conspiracy," said he to his friends, "would loosen the bands of good government: other divisions of the army might be tempted to follow their example; and the nation at large be in danger of imputing it to tameness, fear, or some unworthy motive."

Every one felt, in this case, the necessity of a mediator, and agreed as to the general line of conduct proper for him to pursue. "He must not attempt," say they, "to compromise the difference by dividing the blame; that would make things worse. He must justify the king, and condemn the outrage committed against him; he must offer, if possible, some honourable expedient, by means of which the bestowment of pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just authority; he must convince the conspirators of their crime, and introduce them in the character of supplicants; and mercy must be shown them out of respect to him, or for his sake."

But who could be found to mediate in such a cause? This was an important question. A work of this kind, it was allowed on all hands, required singular qualifications. "He must be *perfectly clear of any participation in the offence*," said one, "or inclination to favour it; for to pardon conspirators at the intercession of one who is friendly to their cause would be not only making light of the crime, but giving a sanction to it."

"He must," said another, "be one who on account of his character and services *stands high in the esteem of the king and of the public*; for to mediate in such a cause is to become, in a sort, responsible for the issue. A mediator, in effect, pledges his honour that no evil will result to the state from the granting of his request. But if a mean opinion be entertained of him, no trust can be placed in him, and, consequently, no good impression would be made by his mediation on the public mind."

"I conceive it is necessary," said a third, "that the weight of the mediation should bear a proportion to the magnitude of the crime, and to the value of the favour requested; and that for this end it is proper he should be a person of *great dignity*. For his majesty to pardon a company of conspirators at the intercession of one of their former comrades, or of any other obscure character, even though he might be a worthy man, would convey a very diminutive idea of the evil of the offence."

A fourth remarked, that "he must possess a *tender compassion* towards the unhappy offenders, or he would not cordially interest himself on their behalf."

Finally, It was suggested by a fifth, "that, for the greater fitness of the



proceeding, it would be proper that some *relation* or *connexion* should subsist between the parties." "We feel the propriety," said he, "of forgiving an offence at the intercession of a father, or a brother; or if it be committed by a soldier, of his commanding officer. Without some kind of previous relation or connexion, a mediation would have the appearance of an arbitrary and formal process, and prove but little interesting to the hearts of the community."

Such were the reasonings of the king's friends; but where to find the character in whom these qualifications were united, and what particular expedient could be devised, by means of which, instead of relaxing, pardon should strengthen just authority, were subjects too difficult for them to resolve.

Meanwhile, the king and his son, whom he greatly loved, and whom he had appointed generalissimo of all his forces, had retired from the company, and were conversing about the matter which attracted the general attention.

"My son!" said the benevolent sovereign, "what can be done in behalf of these unhappy men? To order them for execution violates every feeling of my heart; yet to pardon them is dangerous. The army, and even the empire, would be under a strong temptation to think lightly of rebellion. If mercy be exercised, it must be through a mediator; and who is qualified to mediate in such a cause? And what expedient can be devised by means of which pardon shall not relax, but strengthen just authority? Speak, my son, and say what measures can be pursued?"

"My father!" said the prince, "I feel the insult offered to your person and government, and the injury thereby aimed at the empire at large. They have transgressed without cause, and deserve to die without mercy. Yet I also feel for them. I have the heart of a soldier. I cannot endure to witness their execution. What shall I say? On me be this wrong! Let me suffer in their stead. Inflict on me as much as is necessary to impress the army and the nation with a just sense of the evil, and of the importance of good order and faithful allegiance. Let it be in their presence, and in the presence of all assembled. When this is done, let them be permitted to implore and receive your majesty's pardon in my name. If any man refuse so to implore, and so to receive it, let him die the death!"

"My son!" replied the king, "you have expressed my heart! The same things have occupied my mind; but it was my desire that you should be voluntary in the undertaking. It shall be as you have said. I shall be satisfied; justice itself will be satisfied; and I pledge my honour that you also shall be satisfied in seeing the happy effects of your disinterested conduct. Propriety requires that I stand aloof in the day of your affliction; but I will not leave you utterly, nor suffer the beloved of my soul to remain in that condition. A temporary affliction on your part will be more than equivalent to death on theirs. The dignity of your person and character will render the sufferings of an hour of greater account, as to the impression of the public mind, than if all the rebellious had been executed; and by how much I am known to have loved you, by so much will my compassion to them, and my displeasure against their wicked conduct, be made manifest. Go, my son, assume the likeness of a criminal, and suffer in their place!"

The gracious design being communicated at court, all were struck with it. Those who had reasoned on the qualifications of a mediator saw that in the prince all were united, and were filled with admiration; but that he should be willing to suffer in the place of rebels was beyond all that could have been asked or thought. Yet, seeing he himself had generously pro-

posed it, would survive his sufferings, and reap the reward of them, they cordially acquiesced. The only difficulty that was started was among the judges of the realm. They, at first, questioned whether the proceeding were admissible. "The law," said they, "makes provision for the transfer of debts, but not of crimes. Its language is, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.'" But when they came to view things on a more enlarged scale, considering it as an expedient on an extraordinary occasion, and perceived that the *spirit* of the law would be preserved, and all the ends of good government answered, they were satisfied. "It is not a measure," said they, "for which the law provides; yet it is not contrary to the law, but above it."

The day appointed arrived. The prince appeared, and suffered as a criminal. The hearts of the king's friends bled at every stroke, and burned with indignation against the conduct which rendered it necessary. His enemies, however, even some of those for whom he suffered, continuing to be disaffected, added to the affliction, by deriding and insulting him all the time. At a proper period, he was rescued from their outrage. Returning to the palace, amidst the tears and shouts of the loyal spectators, the suffering hero was embraced by his royal father; who, in addition to the natural affection which he bore to him as his son, loved him for his singular interposition at such a crisis: "Sit thou," said he, "at my right hand! Though the threatenings of the law be not literally accomplished, yet the spirit of them is preserved. The honour of good government is secured, and the end of punishment more effectually answered than if all the rebels had been sacrificed. Ask of me what I shall give thee! No favour can be too great to be bestowed, even upon the unworthiest, nor any crime too aggravated to be forgiven, in thy name. I will grant thee according to thine own heart! Ask of me, my son, what I shall give thee!"

He asked for the offenders to be introduced as supplicants at the feet of his father, for the forgiveness of their crimes, and for the direction of affairs till order and happiness should be perfectly restored.

A proclamation addressed to the conspirators was now issued, stating what had been their conduct, what the conduct of their king, and what of the prince. Messengers also were appointed to carry it, with orders to read it publicly, and to expostulate with them individually, beseeching them to be reconciled to their offended sovereign, and to assure them that, if they rejected this, there remained no more hope of mercy.

A spectator would suppose that in mercy so freely offered, and so honourably communicated, every one would have acquiesced; and if reason had governed the offenders, it had been so: but many among them continued under the influence of disaffection, and disaffection gives a false colouring to every thing.

The time of the respite having proved longer than was at first expected, some had begun to amuse themselves with idle speculations, flattering themselves that their fault was a mere trifle, and that it certainly would be passed over. Indeed the greater part of them had turned their attention to other things, concluding that the king was not in good earnest.

When the proclamation was read, many paid no manner of attention to it; some insinuated that the messengers were interested men, and that there might be no truth in what they said; and some even abused them as impostors. So, having delivered their message, they withdrew; and the rebels, finding themselves alone, such of them as paid any attention to the subject expressed their mind as follows:—

"My heart," says one, "rises against every part of this proceeding. Why all this ado about a few words spoken one to another? Can such a message as this have proceeded from the king? What have we done so much against

him, that so much should be made of it? No petition of ours, it seems, would avail any thing; and nothing that we could say or do could be regarded, unless presented in the name of a third person. Surely if we present a petition in our own names, in which we beg pardon, and promise not to repeat the offence, this might suffice. Even this is more than I can find in my heart to comply with; but every thing beyond it is unreasonable; and who can believe that the king can desire it?

"If a third person," says another, "must be concerned in the affair, what occasion is there for one so high in rank and dignity? To stand in need of *such* a mediator must stamp our characters with everlasting infamy. It is very unreasonable: who can believe it? If the king be just and good, as they say he is, how can he wish thus publicly to expose us?"

"I observe," says a third, "that *the mediator is wholly on the king's side*; and one whom, though he affects to pity us, we have, from the outset, considered as no less our enemy than the king himself. If, indeed, he could compromise matters, and would allow that we had our provocations, and would promise us redress, and an easier yoke in future, I should feel inclined to hearken: but if he have no concessions to offer, I can never be reconciled."

"I believe," says a fourth, "that the king knows very well that we have not had justice done us, and therefore this mediation business is introduced to make us amend for the injury. It is an affair settled somehow betwixt him and his son. They call it *grace*, and I am not so much concerned what they call it, so that my life is spared; but this I say, if he had not made this or some kind of provision, I should have thought him a tyrant."

"You are all wrong," says a fifth: "I comprehend the design, and am well pleased with it. I hate the government as much as any of you: but I love the mediator; for I understand it is his intention to deliver me from its tyranny. He has paid the debt, the king is satisfied, and I am free. I will sue out for my right, and demand my liberty!"

In addition to this, one of the company observed, he did not see what the greater part of them had to do with the proclamation, unless it were to give it a hearing, which they had done already. "For," said he, "pardon is promised only to them who are *willing* to submit, and it is well known that many of us are unwilling; nor *can* we alter our minds on this subject."

After a while, however, some of them were brought to relent. They thought upon the subject matter of the proclamation, were convinced of the justness of its statements, reflected upon their evil conduct, and were sincerely sorry on account of it. And now the mediation of the prince appeared in a different light. They cordially said *Amen* to every part of the proceeding. The very things which gave such offence, while their hearts were disaffected, now appeared to them fit, and right, and glorious. "It is fit," say they, "that the king should be honoured, and that we should be humbled; for we have *transgressed without cause*. It is right that no regard should be paid to any petition of ours, for its own sake; for we have done deeds worthy of death. It is glorious that we should be saved at the intercession of so honourable a personage. The dignity of his character, together with his surprising condescension and goodness, impresses us more than any thing else, and fills our hearts with penitence, confidence, and love. That which in the proclamation is called *grace is grace*; for we are utterly unworthy of it; and if we had all suffered according to our sentence, the king and his throne had been guiltless. We embrace the mediation of the prince, not as a reparation for an injury, but as a singular instance of mercy. And far be it from us that we should consider it as designed to deliver us from our original and just allegiance to his majesty's government! No, rather

it is intended to restore us to it. We love our intercessor, and will implore forgiveness in his name; but we also love our sovereign, and long to prostrate ourselves at his feet. We rejoice in the satisfaction which the prince has made, and all our hopes of mercy are founded upon it; but we have no notion of being freed by it previously to our acquiescence in it. Nor do we desire any other kind of freedom than that which, while it remits the just sentence of the law, restores us to his majesty's government. Oh that we were once clear of this hateful and horrid conspiracy, and might be permitted to serve him with affection and fidelity all the days of our life! We cannot suspect the *sincerity* of the invitation, or acquit our companions on the score of *unwillingness*. Why should we? We do not on this account acquit ourselves. On the contrary, it is the remembrance of our unwillingness that now cuts us to the heart. We well remember to what it was owing that we *could not* be satisfied with the just government of the king, and afterwards *could not* comply with the invitations of mercy: it was because we were under the dominion of a *disaffected spirit*—a spirit which, wicked as it is in itself, it would be more wicked to justify. Our counsel is, therefore, the same as that of his majesty's messengers, with whom we now take our stand. Let us lay aside this cavilling humour, repent, and sue for mercy in the way prescribed, ere mercy be hid from our eyes!"

The reader, in applying this supposed case to the mediation of Christ, will do me the justice to remember that I do not pretend to have perfectly represented it. Probably there is no similitude fully adequate to the purpose. The distinction between the Father and the Son is not the same as that which subsists between a father and a son among men: the latter are two separate beings; but to assert this of the former would be inconsistent with the Divine unity. Nor can any thing be found analogous to the doctrine of Divine influence, by which the redemption of Christ is carried into effect. And with respect to the innocent voluntarily suffering for the guilty, in a few extraordinary instances this principle may be adopted; but the management and application of it generally require more wisdom and more power than mortals possess. We may, by the help of a machine, collect a few sparks of the electrical fluid, and produce an effect somewhat resembling that of lightning; but we cannot cause it to blaze like the Almighty, nor "thunder with a voice like Him."

Imperfect, however, as the foregoing similitude may appear in some respects, it is sufficient to show the fallacy of Mr. Paine's reasoning. "The doctrine of redemption," says this writer, "has for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice. If I owe a person money, and cannot pay him, and he threatens to put me into prison, another person can take the debt upon himself, and pay it for me; but if I have committed a *crime*, every circumstance of the case is changed. Moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer itself. To suppose justice to do this is to destroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing itself. It is then no longer justice, but indiscriminate revenge."\* This objection, which is the same for substance as has been frequently urged by Socinians as well as deists, is founded in misrepresentation. It is not true that redemption has for it basis the idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice. That sin is called a *debt*, and the death of Christ a *price*, a *ransom*, &c., is true; but it is no unusual thing for moral obligations and deliverances to be expressed in language borrowed from pecuniary transactions. The obligations of a son to a father are commonly expressed by such terms as owing and paying: he *owes* a debt of obedience, and in

\* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 20.

yielding it he *pays* a debt of gratitude. The same may be said of an obligation to punishment. A murderer *owes* his life to the justice of his country; and when he suffers, he is said to *pay* the awful debt. So also if a great character, by suffering death, could deliver his country, such deliverance would be spoken of as obtained by the *price* of blood. No one mistakes these things by understanding them of pecuniary transactions. In such connexions, every one perceives that the terms are used not literally, but metaphorically; and it is thus that they are to be understood with reference to the death of Christ. As sin is not a pecuniary, but a moral debt, so the atonement for it is not a pecuniary, but a moral ransom.

There is, doubtless, a sufficient analogy between pecuniary and moral proceedings to justify the use of such language, both in Scripture and in common life; and it is easy to perceive the advantages which arise from it; as, besides conveying much important truth, it renders it peculiarly impressive to the mind. But it is not always safe to reason from the former to the latter; much less is it just to affirm that the latter has for its basis every principle which pertains to the former. The deliverance effected by the prince, in the case before stated, might, with propriety, be called a *redemption*; and the recollection of it, under this idea, would be very impressive to the minds of those who were delivered. They would scarcely be able to see or think of their commander-in-chief, even though it might be years after the event, without being reminded of the *price* at which their pardon was obtained, and dropping a tear of ingenuous grief over their unworthy conduct on this account. Yet it would not be just to say that this redemption had for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice.

It was moral justice which in this case was satisfied: not, however, in its ordinary form, but as exercised on an extraordinary occasion; not the letter, but the spirit of it.

The Scripture doctrine of atonement, being conveyed in language borrowed from pecuniary transactions, is not only improved by unbelievers into an argument against the truth of the gospel, but has been the occasion of many errors among the professors of Christianity. Socinus, on this ground, attempts to explain away the necessity of a satisfaction. "God," says he, "is our *Creditor*. Our sins are *debts* which we have contracted with him; but every one may yield up his right, and more especially God, who is the supreme Lord of all, and extolled in the Scripture for his liberality and goodness. Hence, then, it is evident that God can pardon sins without any satisfaction received."\* Others, who profess to embrace the doctrine of satisfaction, have, on the same ground, perverted and abused it; objecting to the propriety of humble and continued applications for mercy, and presuming to claim the forgiveness of their sins past, present, and to come as their legal right, and what it would be unjust in the Supreme Being, having received complete satisfaction, to withhold.

To the reasoning of Socinus, Dr. Owen judiciously replies, by distinguishing between right as it respects *debts* and as it respects *government*. The former, he allows, may be given up without a satisfaction, but not the latter. "Our sins," he adds, "are called debts, not properly, but metaphorically."† This answer equally applies to those who pervert the doctrine as to those who deny it; for though in matters of debt and credit a full satisfaction from a surety excludes the idea of *free* pardon on the part of the creditor, and admits of a *claim* on the part of the debtor, yet it is otherwise in relation to crimes. In the interposition of the prince, as stated above, an honourable expedient was adopted, by means of which the sovereign was

\* Treatise of Jesus Christ the Saviour, Part III. Chap. I.

† Dissertation on Divine Justice, Chap. IX. Section VII. VIII.

satisfied, and the exercise of mercy rendered consistent with just authority ; but there was no less grace in the act of forgiveness than if it had been without a satisfaction. However well-pleased the king might be with the conduct of his son, the freeness of pardon was not at all diminished by it ; nor must the criminals come before him as claimants, but as supplicants, imploring mercy in the mediator's name.

Such are the leading ideas which the Scriptures give us of redemption by Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul especially teaches this doctrine with great precision : " Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness : that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." From this passage we may remark, first, That the *grace* of God, as taught in the Scriptures, is not that kind of liberality which Socinians and deists ascribe to him, which sets aside the necessity of a satisfaction. Free grace, according to Paul, requires a *propitiation*, even the shedding of the Saviour's *blood*, as a medium through which it may be honourably communicated. Secondly, Redemption by Jesus Christ was accomplished, not by a satisfaction that should preclude the exercise of grace in forgiveness, but in which, the displeasure of God against sin being manifested, mercy to the sinner might be exercised without any suspicion of his having relinquished his regards for righteousness. In " setting forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation," he " declared his righteousness for the remission of sins." Thirdly, The righteousness of God was not only declared when Christ was made a propitiatory sacrifice, but continues to be manifested in the acceptance of believers through his name. He appears as *just* while acting the part of a justifier towards every one that *believeth in Jesus*. Fourthly, That which is here applied to the blessings of forgiveness and acceptance with God is applicable to all other spiritual blessings : all, according to the Scriptures, are freely communicated through the same distinguished medium. See Ephes. i.\*

\* The Christian reader, it is presumed, may hence obtain a clear view of the ends answered by the death of Christ, a subject which has occupied much attention among divines. Some have asserted that Christ by his satisfaction accomplished this only, " That God now, consistently with the honour of his justice, may pardon (returning) sinners if he willeth so to do." This is, doubtless, true, as far as it goes ; but it makes no provision for the return of the sinner. This scheme, therefore, leaves the sinner to perish in impenitence and unbelief, and the Saviour without any security of seeing of the travail of his soul. For how can a sinner return without the power of the Holy Spirit ? And the Holy Spirit, equally with every other spiritual blessing, is given in consideration of the death of Christ. Others, to remedy this defect, have considered the death of Christ as *purchasing* repentance and faith, as well as all other spiritual blessings, on behalf of the elect. The writer of these pages acknowledges he never could perceive that any clear or determinate idea was conveyed by the term *purchase*, in this connexion ; nor does it appear to him to be applicable to the subject, unless it be in an improper or figurative sense. He has no doubt of the atonement of Christ being a perfect satisfaction to Divine justice ; nor of his being *worthy* of all that was conferred upon him, and upon us for his sake ; nor of that which to *us* is sovereign mercy being to *him* an exercise of remunerative justice : but he wishes it to be considered, Whether the moral Governor of the world was laid under such a kind of obligation to show mercy to sinners as a creditor is under to discharge a debtor, on having received full satisfaction at the hands of a surety ? If he be, the writer is unable to perceive how there can be any room for free forgiveness on the part of God, or how it can be said that justice and grace harmonize in a sinner's salvation. Nothing is further from his intention than to depreciate the merit of his Lord and Saviour : but he considers merit as of two kinds ; either on account of a *benefit* conferred, which on the footing of justice requires an equal return, or of something done or suffered, which is *worthy of being rewarded* by a Being distinguished by his love of righteousness. In the first sense it cannot, as he supposes, be exercised towards an infinite and perfect Being. The goodness of Christ himself, in this way, *extendeth not to him*. It is in the last sense that the Scriptures appear to him to represent the merit of the Redeemer. That he " who was in the form of God should take upon him the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men and

These remarks may suffice to show, not only that Mr. Paine's assertion has no truth in it, but that all those professors of Christianity who have adopted his principle have so far deviated from the doctrine of redemption as it is taught in the Scriptures.

As to what Mr. Paine alleges, that the innocent suffering for the guilty, even though it be with his own consent, is contrary to every principle of moral justice, he affirms the same of God's "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.\*" But this is a truth evident by universal experience. It is seen every day, in every part of the world. If Mr. Paine indulge in intemperance, and leave children behind him, they may feel the consequences of his misconduct when he is in the grave. The sins of the father may thus be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. It would, however, be their *affliction* only, and not their punishment. Yet such visitations are wisely ordered as a motive to sobriety. Nor is it between parents and children only that such a connexion exists, as that the happiness of one depends upon the conduct of others; a slight survey of society, in its various relations, must convince us that the same principle pervades creation. To call this injustice is to fly in the face of the Creator. With such an objector I have nothing to do: "He that reproveth God, let him answer it."

If the idea of the innocent suffering in the room of the guilty were in all cases inadmissible, and utterly repugnant to the human understanding, how came the use of *expiatory sacrifices* to prevail, as it has, in every age and nation? Whether the idea first proceeded from a Divine command, as Christians generally believe, or whatever was its origin, it has approved itself to the minds of men; and not of the most uncultivated part of mankind only, but of the most learned and polite. The sacrifices of the Gentiles, it is true, were full of superstition, and widely different, as might be expected, from those which were regulated by the Scriptures; but the general principle is the same: all agree in the idea of the displeasure of the Deity being appeasable by an innocent victim being sacrificed in the place of the guilty. The idea of expiatory sacrifices, and of a mediation founded

humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," was so glorious an undertaking, and so acceptable to the Father, that on this account he "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church." Nor was this all; so *well pleased* was he with all that he did and suffered, as to reward it not only with honours conferred upon himself, but with blessings on sinners for his sake. Whatever is asked *in his name*, it is given us.

It is true, as the writer apprehends, that a way was opened, by the mediation of Christ, for the free and consistent exercise of mercy in all the methods which Sovereign Wisdom saw fit to adopt.

There are *three* kinds of blessings, in particular, which God, out of regard to the death of his Son, bestows upon men: First, He sends forth the gospel of salvation, accompanied with a free and indefinite invitation to embrace it, and an assurance that whosoever complies with the invitation (for which there is no ability wanting in any man who possesses an honest heart) shall have everlasting life. This favour is bestowed on *sinners as sinners*. God "giveth the true bread from heaven" in this way to many who never receive it. He inviteth those to the gospel supper who refuse and *make light of it*, John vi. 32—36; Matt. xxii. 4, 5. Secondly, He bestows his Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the soul; gives a new heart and a right spirit, and takes away the heart of stone. "Christ is exalted to give repentance," Acts v. 31. "Unto us it is given, in behalf of Christ, to believe in him," Phil. i. 29. "We have obtained like precious faith through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 1. This favour is conferred on *elect sinners*. See Acts xiii. 48; Rom. viii. 28—30. Thirdly, Through the same medium is given the free pardon of all our sins, acceptance with God, power to become the sons of God, and the promise of everlasting life. "Your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," 1 John ii. 12. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 32. "We are accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. By means of his death we "receive the promise of eternal inheritance," He' i. 15. This kind of blessings is conferred on *believing sinners*.

\* Age of Reason, Part I. p. 4. Note.

upon them, is beautifully expressed in the Book of Job; a book not only of great antiquity, but which seems to have obtained the approbation of Mr. Paine, having, as he supposes, been written by a Gentile. "And it was so that, after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz, the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him I will accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite, went and did according as the Lord commanded them; the Lord also accepted Job." The objections which are now made to the sacrifice of Christ equally apply to all expiatory sacrifices, the offering up of which, had not the former superseded them, would have continued to this day.

If an innocent character offer to die in the room of a guilty fellow creature, it is not ordinarily accepted, nor would it be proper that it should. For he may have no just right to dispose of his life; or if he have, he has no power to resume it; there may likewise be no such relation between the parties, as that the suffering of the one should express displeasure against the conduct of the other. Besides this, there may be no great and good end accomplished to society by such a substitution: the loss sustained by the death of the one might be equal if not superior, to the gain from the life of the other. If the evil to be endured might be survived—if the relation between the parties were such that, in the sufferings of the one, mankind would be impressed with the evil of the other—and if by such a proceeding great advantage would accrue to society, instead of being accounted inadmissible, it would be reckoned right, and wise, and good. If a dignified individual, by enduring some temporary severity from an offended nation, could appease their displeasure, and thereby save his country from the destroying sword, who would not admire his disinterested conduct? And if the offended, from motives of humanity, were contented with expressing their displeasure, by transferring the effect of it from a whole nation to an individual who thus stepped forward on their behalf, would their conduct be censured as "indiscriminate revenge?" The truth is, the atonement of Christ affords a display of justice on too large a scale, and on too humbling a principle, to approve itself to a contracted, selfish, and haughty mind.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE CONSISTENCY OF THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION WITH THE MODERN OPINION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

It is common for deists to impute the progress of their principles to the *prevalence of true philosophy*. The world, they say, is more enlightened; and a great number of discoveries are progressively making, which render the credibility of the Scriptures more and more suspicious. It is now a commonly received opinion, for instance, among men of science, that this world is but a point in creation; that every planet is a world, and all the fixed stars so many suns in the centres of so many systems of worlds; and that, as every part of creation within our knowledge teems with life, and as



God has made nothing in vain, it is highly probable that all these worlds are inhabited by intelligent beings, who are capable of knowing and adoring their Creator. But if this be true, how incredible is it that so great a portion of regard should be exercised by the Supreme Being towards man as the Scriptures represent! how incredible, especially, it must appear, to a thinking mind, that Deity should become incarnate, should take human nature into the most intimate union with himself, and thereby raise it to such singular eminency in the scale of being; though compared with the whole of creation, if we comprehend even the whole species, it be less than a nest of insects compared with the unnumbered millions of animated beings which inhabit the earth!

This objection, there is reason to think, has had a very considerable influence on the speculating part of mankind. Mr. Paine, in the first part of his *Age of Reason*, (pp. 40—47,) has laboured, after his manner, to make the most of it, and thereby to disparage Christianity. "Though it is not a direct article of the Christian system," he says, "that this world which we inhabit is the whole of the habitable creation; yet it is so worked up therewith, from what is called the Mosaic account of the creation, the story of Eve and the apple, and the counterpart of that story—the death of the Son of God, that to believe otherwise, that is, to believe that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air. The two beliefs cannot be held together in the same mind; and he who thinks he believes both has thought but little of either," p. 40.

Again, Having discoursed on the vast extent of creation, he asks, "But, in the midst of these reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, and that of no greater extent than twenty-five thousand miles?"—"Whence could arise the solitary and strange conceit, that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, should quit the care of all the rest, and come to die in our world, because they say one man and one woman had eaten an apple? And, on the other hand, are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation had an Eve, an apple, a serpent, and a Redeemer! In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life," p. 46.

To animadvert upon all the extravagant and offensive things, even in so small a part of Mr. Paine's performance as the above quotation, would be an irksome task. A few remarks, however, may not be improper.

First, Though Mr. Paine is pleased to say, in his usual style of naked assertion, that "the two beliefs cannot be held together, and that he who thinks he believes both has thought but little of either;" yet he cannot be ignorant that many who have admitted the one have at the same time held fast the other. Mr. Paine is certainly not overloaded with modesty, when comparing his own abilities and acquisitions with those of other men; but I am inclined to think that, with all his assurance, he will not pretend that Bacon, or Boyle, or Newton, to mention no more, had thought but little of philosophy or Christianity. I imagine it would be within the compass of truth, were I to say that they bestowed twenty times more thought upon these subjects than ever Mr. Paine did. His extreme ignorance of Christianity, at least, is manifest by the numerous gross blunders of which he has been detected.

Secondly, Supposing the Scripture account of the creation to be incon-

sistent with the ideas which modern philosophers entertain of its extent, yet it is not what Mr. Paine represents it. It certainly does not teach "that this world which we inhabit is the whole of the habitable creation." Mr. Paine will not deny that it exhibits a world of happiness, and a world of misery; though this, in the career of his extravagance, he seems to have overlooked.

Thirdly, If the two beliefs, as Mr. Paine calls them, cannot be consistently held together, we need not be at a loss to determine which to relinquish. All the reasoning in favour of a multiplicity of worlds, inhabited by intelligent beings, amounts to no more than a *strong probability*. No man can properly be said to believe it: it is not a matter of faith, but of opinion. It is an opinion too that has taken place of other opinions, which, in their day, were admired by the philosophical part of mankind as much as this is in ours. Mr. Paine seems to wish to have it thought that the doctrine of a multiplicity of inhabited worlds is a matter of *demonstration*; but the existence of a number of heavenly bodies, whose revolutions are under the direction of certain laws, and whose returns, therefore, are the objects of human calculation, does not prove that they are all inhabited by intelligent beings. I do not deny that, from other considerations, the thing may be highly probable; but it is no more than a probability. Now, before we give up a doctrine which, if it were even to prove fallacious, has no dangerous consequences attending it, and which, if it should be found a truth, involves our eternal salvation, we should endeavour to have a more solid ground than mere opinion on which to take our stand.

But I do not wish to avail myself of these observations, as I am under no apprehensions that the cause in which I engage requires them. ADMITTING THAT THE INTELLIGENT CREATION IS AS EXTENSIVE AS MODERN PHILOSOPHY SUPPOSES, THE CREDIBILITY OF REDEMPTION IS NOT THEREBY WEAKENED; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IN MANY RESPECTS, IS STRENGTHENED AND AGGRANDIZED. I shall offer a few observations on each of the branches of the above position.

The Scripture doctrine of redemption, it is acknowledged, supposes that man, mean and little as he is in the scale of being, has occupied a peculiar portion of the Divine regard. It requires to be noticed, however, that the enemies of revelation, in order it should seem to give the greater force to their objection, diminish the importance of man, as a creature of God, beyond what its friends can admit. Though Mr. Paine expresses his "hope of happiness beyond this life," and though some other deistical writers have admitted the immortality of the soul; yet this is more than others of them will allow. The hope of a future state, as we have seen, is objected to by many of them as a *selfish* principle; and others of them have attempted to hold it up to ridicule. But the immortality of man is a doctrine which redemption supposes; and if this be allowed, man is not so insignificant a being as they might wish to consider him. A being that possesses an immortal mind, a mind capable of increasing knowledge, and, consequently, of increasing happiness or misery, in an endless duration, cannot be insignificant. It is no exaggeration to say that the salvation of one soul, according to the Scriptural account of things, is of inconceivably greater moment than the temporal salvation of a nation, or of all the nations in the world for ten thousand ages. The eternal salvation, therefore, of a number of lost sinners, which no man can number, however it may be a matter of infinite condescension in the great Supreme to accomplish, is not an object for creatures, even the most exalted, to consider as of small account.

Having premised thus much, I shall proceed, in the first place, to offer a few observations in proof that THERE IS NOTHING IN THE SCRIPTURE

DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION WHICH IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE MODERN OPINION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

1. *Let creation be as extensive as it may, and the number of worlds be multiplied to the utmost boundary to which imagination can reach, there is no proof that any of them, except men and angels, have apostatized from God.* If our world be only a small province, so to speak, of God's vast empire, there is reason to hope that it is the only part of it where sin has entered, except among the fallen angels, and that the endless myriads of intelligent beings, in other worlds, are all the hearty friends of virtue, of order, and of God.

If this be true, (and there is nothing in philosophy or divinity I believe to discredit it,) then Mr. Paine need not have supposed, if he could have suppressed the pleasure of the witticism, that the Son of God would have to travel from world to world in the character of a Redeemer.

2. *Let creation be ever so extensive, there is nothing inconsistent with reason in supposing that some one particular part of it should be chosen out from the rest, as a theatre on which the great Author of all things would perform his most glorious works.* Every empire that has been founded in this world has had some one particular spot where those actions were performed from which its glory has arisen. The glory of the Cæsars was founded on the event of a battle fought near a very inconsiderable city: and why might not this world, though less than "twenty-five thousand miles in circumference," be chosen as the theatre on which God would bring about events that should fill his whole empire with glory and joy? It would be as reasonable to plead the insignificance of *Actium* or *Agincourt*, in objection to the competency of the victories there obtained (supposing them to have been on the side of righteousness) to fill the respective empires of Rome and Britain with glory, as that of our world to fill the whole empire of God with matter of joy and everlasting praise. The truth is, the comparative dimension of our world is of no account. If it be large enough for the accomplishment of events which are sufficient to occupy the minds of all intelligences, that is all that is required.

3. *If any one part of God's creation, rather than another, possessed a superior fitness to become a theatre on which he might display his glory, it should seem to be that part where the greatest efforts have been made to dishonour him.* A rebellious province in an empire would be the fittest place in it to display the justice, goodness, and benignity of a government. Here would naturally be erected a banner of righteousness; here the war would be carried on; here pardons and punishments to different characters would be awarded; and here the honours of the government would be established on such a basis, that the remotest parts of the empire might hear and fear, and learn obedience. The part that is diseased, whether in the body natural or the body politic, is the part to which the remedy is directed. Let there be what number of worlds there may, full of intelligent creatures; yet if there be but one world which is guilty and miserable, thither will be directed the operations of mercy. The good shepherd of the sheep will leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and seek and save that which is lost.

4. *The events brought to pass in this world, little and insignificant as it may be, are competent to fill all and every part of God's dominions with everlasting and increasing joy.* Mental enjoyment differs widely from corporeal: the bestowment of the one upon a great number of objects is necessarily attended with a division of it into parts, and those who receive a share of it diminish the quantity remaining for others that come after them; but not so the other. An intellectual object requires only to be known, and it is equally capable of affording enjoyment to a million as to an individual, to a world as

to those, and to the whole universe, be it ever so extensive, as to a world. If, as the Scriptures inform us, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory; if there be enough in this *mysterious* transaction to fill with joy the hearts of all who believe it; if it be so interesting that the most exalted intelligences become comparatively indifferent to every other object, "desiring to look into it;" then is it sufficient to "fill all things," and to exhibit the Divine glory "in all places of his dominion."\*

Mr. Paine allows that it is not a direct article of the Christian system that there is not a plurality of inhabited worlds; yet, he affirms, it is so *worked up* with the Scripture account, that, to believe the latter, we must relinquish the former as little and ridiculous.

The Scriptures, it is true, do not teach the doctrine of a multitude of inhabited worlds; but neither do they teach the contrary. Neither the one nor the other forms any part of their design. The object they keep in view, though Mr. Paine may term it "little and ridiculous," is infinitely superior to this, both as to utility and magnitude. They were not given to teach us astronomy, or geography, or civil government, or any science which relates to the present life only; therefore they do not determine upon any system of any of these sciences. These are things upon which reason is competent to judge, sufficiently at least for all the purposes of human life, without a revelation from heaven. The great object of revelation is to instruct us in things which pertain to our everlasting peace; and as to other things, even the rise and fall of the mightiest empires, they are only touched in an incidental manner, as the mention of them might be necessary to higher purposes. The great empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are predicted and described in the Scriptures, by the rising and ravaging of so many *beasts* of prey. Speaking of the European part of the earth, which was inhabited by the posterity of Japheth, they do not go about to give an exact geographical description of it; but, by a synecdoche, call it the "isles of the Gentiles;"† and this, as I suppose, because its eastern boundary, the Archipelago, or Grecian *Islands*, were situated contiguous to the Holy Land. And thus, when speaking of the whole creation, they call it "the heavens and the earth," as being the whole that comes within the reach of our senses.

It is no dishonour to the Scriptures that they keep to their professed end. Though they give us no system of astronomy, yet they urge us to study the works of God, and teach us to adore him upon every discovery. Though they give us no system of geography, yet they encourage us to avail ourselves of observation and experience to obtain one; seeing the whole earth is in prophecy given to the Messiah, and is marked out as the field in which his servants are to labour. Though they determine not upon any mode or system of civil government, yet they teach obedience in civil matters to all. And though their attention be mainly directed to things which pertain to the life to come, yet, by attending to their instructions, we are also fitted for the labours and sufferings of the present life.

The Scriptures are written in a *popular* style, as best adapted to their great end. If the salvation of philosophers only had been their object, the language might possibly have been somewhat different; though even this may be a matter of doubt, since the style is suited to the subject, and to the great end which they had in view; but being addressed to men of every degree, it was highly proper that the language should be fitted to every capacity, and suited to their common modes of conception. They speak of the founda-

\* 1 Pet. i. 12; Eph. iv. 10; Psal. ciii. 22.

† Gen. x. 5; Isa. xlix. 1.

tions of the earth, the ends of the earth, the greater and less lights in the heavens, the sun rising, standing still, and going down, and many other things in the same way. If deists object to these modes of speaking, as conveying ideas which are inconsistent with the true theory of the heavens and the earth, let them, if they can, substitute others which are consistent: let them, in their common conversation, when describing the revolutions of evening and morning, speak of the earth as rising and going down, instead of the sun; and the same with regard to the revolution of the planets; and see if men, in common, will better understand them, or whether they would be able even to understand one another. The popular ideas on these subjects are as much "worked up" in the common conversation of philosophers as they are in the Scriptures; and the constant use of such language, even by philosophers themselves, in common conversation, sufficiently proves the futility and unfairness of their objecting to revelation on this account.

By the drift of Mr. Paine's writing, he seems to wish to convey the idea that, so contracted were the views of the Scriptural writers, that even the *globularity* of the earth was unknown to them. If, however, such a sentence as that of Job, "He hangeth the earth upon nothing,"\* had been found in any of the old heathen writers, he would readily have concluded that "this idea was familiar to the ancients." Or if a heathen poet had uttered such language as that of Isaiah—"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing: all nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him as less than nothing, and vanity,"—he might have been applauded as possessing a mind as large, and nearly as well informed, as the geniuses of modern times. But the truth is, the Scriptural writers were not intent on displaying the greatness of their own conceptions, nor even of creation itself; but rather of the glory of Him "who filleth all in all."

The foregoing observations may suffice to remove Mr. Paine's objection; but if, in addition to them, it can be proved that, upon the supposition of a great number of inhabited worlds, Christianity, instead of appearing "little and ridiculous," is the more enlarged, and that some of its difficulties are the more easily accounted for, this will be still more satisfactory. Let us therefore proceed, Secondly, to offer evidence that THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION IS STRENGTHENED AND AGGRANDIZED BY THE SUPPOSED MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

1. *The Scripture teaches that God's regard to man is an astonishing instance of condescension, and that on account of the disparity between him and the celestial creation.*—"When I consider thy heavens," saith David, "the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" "Will God in very deed," saith Solomon, "dwell with men upon the earth?"†

The Divine condescension towards man is a truth upon any system; but, upon the supposition of the heavenly bodies being so many inhabited worlds, it is a truth full of amazement, and the foregoing language of David and Solomon is forcible beyond all conception. The idea of Him who upholds a universe of such extent "by the word of his power" becoming incarnate, residing with men, and setting up his kingdom among them, that he might

\* Chap. xxvi. 7.

† Psal. viii. 3, 4; 2 Chron. vi. 18. In this part of the subject considerable use is made of the Scriptures; but it is only for the purpose of ascertaining *what the Christian doctrine of redemption is*: and this is undoubtedly consistent with every rule of just reasoning, as, whether they be true or false, they are the standard by which this doctrine is to be measured.

raise them to eternal glory, as much surpasses all that philosophy calls great and noble, as the Creator surpasses the work of his hands.

2. *The Scriptures inform us that, before creation was begun, our world was marked out by Eternal Wisdom as the theatre of its joyful operations.* This idea is forcibly expressed in the eighth chapter of Proverbs: "Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: rejoicing always in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."

On this interesting passage I shall offer a few remarks. First, Among the variety of objects which are here specified as the works of God, *the earth* is mentioned as being, in a sort, his peculiar property. Doubtless the whole creation is the Lord's; but none of his other works is here claimed as his own in the manner that the earth is. It is called *his* earth. And this seems to intimate a design of rendering it the grand theatre on which his greatest work should be performed; a work that should fill all creation with joy and wonder. Secondly, The Wisdom of God is described as *rejoicing* in the contemplation of this part of the creation. Whether *Wisdom* in this passage be understood of the promised Messiah, or of a Divine attribute personified, it makes no difference as to the argument. Allow it to mean the latter; and that the rejoicing of Wisdom is a figurative mode of speaking, like that of "mercy rejoicing against judgment;"\* still, redemption by Jesus Christ is the object concerning which it was exercised: nothing less can be intimated than this, that the earth was the place marked out by Eternal Wisdom as the theatre of its joyful operations. Thirdly, *The habitable part* of the earth was more especially the object of Wisdom's joyful contemplation. The abodes of men, which through sin had become scenes of abomination, were, by the interposition of the Mediator, to become the abodes of righteousness. Here the serpent's head was to be bruised, his schemes confounded, and his works destroyed; and that by the "woman's seed," the human nature, which he had despised and degraded. Here a trophy was to be raised to the glory of sovereign grace; and millions of souls, delivered from everlasting destruction, were to present an offering of praise to Him "that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood." Here, in a word, the peculiar glory of the Godhead was to be displayed in such a manner as to afford a lesson of joyful amazement to the whole creation "throughout all ages" of time, yea, "world without end."† Lastly, not only were the abodes of men contemplated with *rejoicing*, but the *sons of men* themselves regarded with *delight*. The operations of Eternal Wisdom were directed to their salvation; and their salvation was appointed to become, in return, a mirror in which the whole creation should behold the operations of Eternal Wisdom. This expressive passage contains a fulness of meaning, let the extent of the intelligent creation be what it may; but if it be of that extent which modern philosophy supposes, it contains a greater fulness still. It perfectly accords with all those ideas suggested of this earth being the chosen theatre upon which events should be brought to pass that shall fill creation with everlasting joy; and well they may, if the prospect of them rejoiced even the heart of God.

\* James ii. 13.

† Eph. iii. 21.

3. *The mediation of Christ is represented in Scripture as bringing the whole creation into union with the church or people of God.* In the dispensation of the fulness of times, it is said that God would "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."\* Again, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether things in earth, or things in heaven."†

The language here used supposes that the introduction of sin has effected a disunion between men and the other parts of God's creation. It is natural to suppose it should be so. If a province of a great empire rise up in rebellion against the lawful government, all communication between the inhabitants of such a province, and the faithful adherents to order and obedience, must be at an end. A line of separation would be immediately drawn by the sovereign, and all intercourse between the one and the other prohibited. Nor would it less accord with the inclination than with the duty of all the friends of righteousness, to withdraw their connexion from those who were in rebellion against the supreme authority and the general good. It must have been thus with regard to the holy angels, on man's apostasy. Those who at the creation of our world had *sung together*, and even *shouted for joy*, would now retire in disgust and holy indignation.

But, through the mediation of Christ, a reunion is effected. By the blood of the cross we have peace with God; and being reconciled to him, are united to all who love him throughout the whole extent of creation. If Paul could address the Corinthians, concerning one of their excluded members, who had been brought to repentance, "To whom ye forgive any thing, I also;" much more would the friends of righteousness say, in their addresses to the great Supreme, concerning an excluded member from the moral system, "To whom *thou* forgivest any thing, *we* also!" Hence angels acknowledge Christians as *brethren*, and become ministering spirits to them while inhabitants of the present world.‡

There is another consideration which must tend to cement the holy part of God's creation to the church; which is, their being *all united under one Head*. A central point of union has a great effect in cementing mankind. We see this every day in people who sit under the same ministry, or serve under the same commander, or are subjects of the same prince; whether minister, general, or prince, if they *love* him, they will be, more or less, united together under him.

Now it is a part of the reward of our Redeemer, for his great humiliation, that he should be exalted as head over the whole creation of God. "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly beings, of earthly, and of those under the earth.—He is the Head of all principality and power.—God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."§

These passages, it is true, represent the dominion of Christ as extending over the whole creation, enemies as well as friends, and things as well as

\* Eph. i. 10.

† Col. i. 19, 20.

‡ Rev. xix. 10; Heb. i. 14.

§ Phil. ii. 8—10; Col. ii. 10; Eph. i. 20—22.

persons. But if the very enemies of God are caused to subserve the purposes of redemption, much more his friends; what the others do by constraint, these do willingly; and the consideration of their having *one Head* must make them feel, as it were, nearer akin. And as Christ is "Head over all things to the church, which is his body," it is hereby intimated that the happiness of the church is by these means abundantly enlarged.

To what extent creation reaches I do not pretend to know: be that however what it may, the foregoing passages teach us to consider the influence of redemption as commensurate with it; and in proportion to the magnitude of the one, such must be the influence of the other, as to the accomplishment of reunion and the restoration of happiness.

4. *Through the mediation of Christ, not only is the whole creation represented as augmenting the blessedness of the church, but the church as augmenting the blessedness of the whole creation.* As one member, be it ever so small, cannot suffer without the whole body, in some degree, suffering with it; so, if we consider our world as a member of the great body or system of being, it might naturally be supposed that the ill or well being of the former would, in some measure, affect the happiness of the latter. The fall of a planet from its orbit, in the solar system, would probably have a less effect upon the other planets, than that of man from the moral system upon the other parts of God's intelligent creation. And when it is considered that man is a member of the body, *distinguished* by sovereign favour, as possessing a nature which the Son of God delighted to honour, by taking it upon himself, the interest which the universe at large may have in his fall and recovery may be greatly augmented. The leprosy of *Miriam* was an event that affected the whole camp of Israel; nor did they proceed on their journeys till she was restored to her situation; and it is not unnatural to suppose that something analogous to this would be the effect of the fall and recovery of man on the whole creation.

The happiness of the redeemed is not the ultimate end of redemption, nor the only happiness which will be produced by it. God is represented in the Scriptures as conferring his favours in such a way as that no creature shall be blessed *merely for his own sake*, but that he might communicate his blessedness to others. With whatever powers, talents, or advantages we are endued, it is not merely for our gratification, but that we may contribute to the general good. God gives discernment to the eye, speech to the tongue, strength to the arm, and agility to the feet, not for the gratification of these members, but for the accommodation of the body. It is the same in other things. God *blessed Abraham*; and wherefore? That he might *be a blessing*. He blessed his posterity after him; and for what purpose? That "in them all the nations of the earth might be blessed."\* Though Israel was a nation *chosen* and *beloved* of God, yet it was not for their righteousness, nor merely with a view to their happiness, that they were thus distinguished; but that he "might perform the oath which he swore unto their fathers;"† the substance of which was that the true religion should prosper among them, and be communicated by them to all other nations. The ungodly part of the Jewish nation viewed things, it is true, in a different light; they valued themselves as the favourites of Heaven, and looked down upon other nations with contemptuous dislike. But it was otherwise with the godly; they entered into the spirit of the promise made to their fathers. Hence they prayed that God would "be merciful to them, and bless them, and cause his face to shine upon them;" to the end, that his "way might be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations."‡

\* Gen. xii. 2: xxii. 18.

† Deut. ix. 5; vii. 7, 8.

‡ Psal. lxxvii.



The same spirit was manifested by the apostles and primitive Christians. They perceived that all that rich measure of gifts and graces by which they were distinguished was given them with the design of their communicating it to others; and this was their constant aim. Paul felt himself a *debtor* both to Jews and Greeks, and spent his life in diffusing the blessings of the gospel, though in return he was continually treated as an evil-doer; and the same might be said of the other apostles.

Nor is this social principle confined to the present life. According to Scripture representations, the happiness of saints in glory will be conferred on them, not that it might stop there, but be communicated to the whole moral system. The redemption of the church has already added to the blessedness of other holy intelligences. It has furnished a new medium by which the glory of the Divine perfections is beheld and admired. To explore the wisdom of God in his works is the constant employment of holy angels, and that in which consists a large proportion of their felicity. Prior to the accomplishment of the work of redemption they contemplated the Divine character through the medium of creation and providence; but "*now* unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, is known, *by the church*, the manifold wisdom of God."\* And so much does this last display of Divine glory exceed all that have gone before it, that those who have once obtained a view of it, through this medium, will certainly prefer it to every other; "which things the angels desire to look into."† They do not, however, become indifferent to any of the Divine operations; creation and providence continue to attract their attention, and are abundantly more interesting; they now study them according to the order in which they exist in the Divine mind, that is, in subserviency to redemption.‡

But that which is already accomplished is but small in comparison of what is in reserve. At the final judgment, when all the faithful will be collected together, they will become a medium through which the Lord Jesus will be *glorified* and *admired* by the whole creation: "He shall come to be glorified *in* his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe—in that day."§ It is a truth that the saints of God will themselves glorify and admire their great Deliverer, but not the truth of this passage; the design of which is to represent them as a medium through which he shall be glorified by all the friends of God in the universe. The great Physician will appear with his recovered millions, every one of whom will afford evidence of his disinterested love, and efficacious blood, to the whole admiring creation.

Much the same ideas are conveyed to us by those representations in which the whole creation are either called upon to rejoice on account of our redemption, or described as actually rejoicing and praising the Redeemer. Thus David, having spoken of God's mercy which was from everlasting to everlasting towards the children of men, addresses ALL HIS WORKS, IN ALL PLACES OF HIS DOMINION, "to bless his name."|| John also informs us, saying, "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."¶

The phraseology of these passages is such that no one can reasonably

\* Eph. iii. 10.

§ 2 Thess. i. 10.

† 1 Pet. i. 12.

|| Psal. ciii. 17—22.

† Col. i. 16. *by* him, and *for* him.

¶ Rev. v. 11—13.

doubt whether the writers intended to express the whole upright intelligent creation, be it of what extent it may; and if it be of that extent which philosophy supposes, the greater must be the influence and importance of the work of redemption.

5. *The Scriptures give us to expect that the earth itself, as well as its redeemed inhabitants, shall at a future period be purified, and reunited to the whole empire of God.*—We are taught to pray, and consequently to hope, that, when “the kingdom of God” shall universally prevail, “his will shall be done on earth as it is *now* in heaven;”\* but if so, earth itself must become, as it were, a part of heaven.

That we may form a clear and comprehensive view of our Lord’s words, and of this part of the subject, be it observed that the Scriptures sometimes distinguish between *the kingdom of God* and *that of Christ*. Though the object of both be the triumph of truth and righteousness, yet the mode of administration is different. The one is natural, the other delegated: the latter is in subserviency to the former, and shall be finally succeeded by it. Christ is represented as acting in our world by delegation; as if a king had commissioned his son to go and reduce a certain rebellious province, and restore it to his dominion. The period allotted for this work extends from the time of the revelation of the promised Seed to the day of judgment. The operations are *progressive*. If it had seemed good in his sight, he could have overturned the power of Satan in a short period; but his wisdom saw fit to accomplish it by degrees. Like the commander of an invading army, he first takes possession of one post, then of another, then of a third, and so on, till by and by the whole country falls into his hands. And as the progress of a conqueror would be more rapid after a few of the strongest fortresses had surrendered, (inasmuch as things would then approach fast to a crisis, to a breaking up, as it were, of the powers of the enemy,) so it has been with the kingdom of Christ, and such will be its progress before the end of time. In the early ages of the world but little was done. At one time true religion appears to have existed only in a few families. Afterwards it assumed a national appearance. After this it was addressed to all nations. And before the close of time all nations shall be subjected to the obedience of Christ. This shall be the “breaking up” of Satan’s empire. Now as, on the conquest of a rebellious province, the delegated authority of the conqueror would cease, and the natural government of the empire resume its original form, so Christ is represented as “delivering up the kingdom to his Father, that God may be all in all.”† This is the ultimatum of the Messiah’s kingdom; and this appears to be the ultimate object for which he taught his disciples to pray: but as the final end involves the preceding gradations which lead on to its accomplishment, in directing them to pray for the coming of God’s kingdom, he directed them to pray for the present prevalence of his own.

As on the conquest of a rebellious province some would be pardoned, and others punished; as every vestige of rebellion would be effaced, and law, peace, and order flow in their ancient channels; such a period might with propriety be termed “a restitution of all things.”‡ Such will be the event of the last judgment, which is described as the concluding exercise of the delegated authority of Christ.

And as on the conquest of a rebellious province, and the restitution of peace and order, that province, instead of being any longer separate from the rest of the empire, would become a component part of it, and the king’s will would be done in it as it had been done without interruption in the

\* Matt. vi. 10.

† 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

‡ Acts iii. 21.

loyal part of his territories; such is the representation given with respect to our world, and the holy parts of God's dominions. A period will arrive when the will of God shall be done on earth as it is now done in heaven. This, however, will never be the case while any vestige of moral evil remains. It must be after the general conflagration; which, though it will destroy every kind of evil, root and branch, that now prevails upon the face of the earth, and will terminate the generations of Adam, who have possessed it, yet will not so destroy the earth itself but that it shall survive its fiery trial, and, as I apprehend, become the everlasting abode of righteousness—a part of the holy empire of God. This was to be the mark on which the disciples were to keep their eye in all their prayers: but as, in desiring a *perfect* conformity to Christ in their own souls, they would necessarily desire the present progress of purity in the use of all the appointed means; so in praying that God's will might be *perfectly* done on earth, even as it is done in heaven, they would pray for the progressive prevalence of righteousness in the world, as that by which it should be accomplished.

It is not improbable that the earth, thus purified, may ever continue the resort, if not the frequent abode, of those who are redeemed from it. Places where some of the most interesting events have been transacted, when visited at some distance of time, often become, in the present state of things, a considerable source of delight. Such was Bethel to Jacob, and Tabor, no doubt, to the three disciples; and if any remains of our present sensations should attend us in a state of immortality, a review of the scenes of our Lord's birth, life, agony, and crucifixion, as well as many other events, may furnish a source of everlasting enjoyment.

However this may be, the Scriptures give us to understand, that though "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up;" yet, "according to promise," we are to "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."\* By the "new heavens" here is plainly to be understood so much of the elements as shall have been affected by the general conflagration; and by "the new earth," the earth after it is purified by it.

Much to the same purpose is the account given towards the close of the Revelation of John. After a description of the general judgment, it follows, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.—And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." When the earth shall have become a part of God's holy empire, heaven itself may then be said to be come down upon it; seeing all that is now ascribed to the one will be true of the other. "Behold, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things shall be passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful."†

If the great end of redemption be the reunion of this world to the holy empire of God, and if such reunion be accompanied with a mutual augmentation of blessedness, then the importance of the one must bear some proportion to the magnitude of the other. Upon any system of philosophy, redemption is great; but upon that which so amazingly magnifies intelligent creation, it must be great beyond expression.

\* 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13.

† Rev. xxi. 1—5.

6. *The Scriptures represent the punishment of the finally impenitent as appointed for an example to the rest of creation.*—"Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."—"And her smoke" (the smoke of Babylon) "rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia."\*

The miseries of the damned are never represented as inflicted upon them from such a kind of wrath or vengeance as bears no relation to the general good. "God is love;" and in none of his proceedings does he violate this principle, or lose sight of the well-being of creation in general. The manifestation of his glory is not only inseparably connected with this object, but consists in accomplishing it.

It is necessary for the general good that God's abhorrence of moral evil should be marked by some strong and durable expression of it, so that no one subject of his empire can overlook it. Such an expression was the death of Christ, his only begotten Son; and this availeth on behalf of all who acquiesce in his salvation: but all who do not, or who possess not such a temper of heart as would acquiesce in it if it were presented to them, must themselves be made sacrifices to his justice; and so, like enemies and traitors to a human government, must be made to answer such an end by their death as shall counteract the ill example afforded by their life. What is said of the barren vine is applicable to the finally impenitent, "It is not fit for any work—it is good for nothing but to be burned!"† The only way in which they promote the general good is by their overthrow; like the censers of Korah and his company, which were made into "broad plates for a covering to the altar, that they might be a sign to the children of Israel in future generations;"‡ or like Lot's wife, who was converted into a "pillar of salt," or a lasting monument of Divine displeasure!

If the grand end of future punishment be *example*, this must suppose the existence of an intelligent creation, who shall profit by it; and it should seem of a creation of magnitude; as it accords with the conduct of neither God nor man to punish a great number for an example to a few.

This truth affords a satisfactory idea of the Divine government, whether there be a multiplicity of inhabited worlds or not; but if there be, it is still more satisfactory; as on this supposition the number of those who shall be finally lost may bear far less proportion to the whole of the intelligent creation than a single execution to the inhabitants of a great empire. It is true the loss to those who are lost will be nothing abated by this consideration; perhaps, on the contrary, it may be augmented; and to them the Divine government will ever appear gloomy: but to those who judge of things impartially, and upon an extensive scale, it will appear to contain no more of a disparagement to the government of the universe than the execution of a murderer, once in a hundred years, would be to the government of a nation.§

\* Jude 7; Rev. xix. 3, 4.

† Ezek. xv. 2—5.

‡ Numb. xvi. 38.

§ It is not without pain that I ask the attention of my reader in this place, for a moment or two, while I express my regret that the late distinguished Essayist, John Foster, should have deemed it necessary, in a note appended to his review of Chalmers's *Astronomical Discourses*, to reflect on the intellectual qualities of Mr. Fuller. After Mr. Foster's extraordinary description of Robert Hall's public prayers, one might have been prepared for almost any great mistake which so great a man might make; but I had forgotten, till the republication of these Reviews, that he had previously represented Andrew Fuller's "characteristic defects" as being "a want of comprehensive expansion of thought, and an unwarranted positiveness in assumptions and inferences;" and that he had quoted this very paragraph as "a striking example of the cool, confident facility with which this respectable author could sometimes dispose of the most mysterious and awful subjects, by

And now I appeal to the intelligent, the serious, and the candid reader, whether there be any truth in what Mr. Paine asserts, that to admit "that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air." On the contrary, it might be proved that every system of philosophy is little in comparison of Christianity. Philosophy may expand our ideas of creation; but it neither inspires a love to the *moral* character of the Creator, nor a well-grounded hope of eternal life. Philosophy, at most, can only place us at the top of Pisgah: there, like Moses, we must die; it gives us no possession of the good land. It is the province of Christianity to add, "All is yours!" When you have ascended to the height of human discovery, there are things, and things of infinite moment too, that are utterly beyond its reach. Revelation is the medium, and the only medium, by which, standing, as it were, "on nature's Alps," we discover things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it never hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.

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## CONCLUDING ADDRESSES

TO

## DEISTS, JEWS, AND CHRISTIANS.

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Whether the writer of these sheets can justly hope that what he advances will attract the attention of unbelievers, he does not pretend to say. If, however, it should fall into the hands of individuals among them, he earnestly entreats that, for their own sakes, they would attend to what follows with seriousness.

### TO DEISTS.

FELLOW MEN,

It is hoped that nothing in the preceding pages can be fairly construed into a want of good-will towards any of you. If I know my heart, it is not you, but your mischievous principles, that are the objects of my dislike.

the help of a false analogy." He complains again that Mr. Fuller "has a most inefficient idea of the magnitude of the Universe. The idea does not in the least either elate or overwhelm his mind." All this, and much more says John Foster. One is obliged to censure the writer, and to express regret that Dr. Price, the editor of the volumes, as he has elsewhere omitted passages from his author, did not omit this. If it were needful to refute the charges thus brought by Mr. Foster, we should only ask the reader to study Mr. Fuller's works, and then judge whether they are true or not. The verdict I anticipate with confidence. Happily, when Mr. Foster attacks his friends, it is in the strongest part of their character; so that no one who has known the persons with whom he is displeased is careful to answer him; and truly the whole affair might pass without notice, were it not that Mr. Foster has a class of speculative admirers who may thus be deterred from reading works which will continue to bless the world for ages to come; and he may produce on not a few minds the impression that, after all, Andrew Fuller had a pigmy intellect, incapable even of the elation and overwhelming surprise which are universally felt most strongly by the ignorant; and that at least a portion of what he has written, and which has called forth the admiration of the wisest men, is but "unwarranted positiveness in assumptions and inferences." And yet on this very book were constructed the very discourses of Dr. Chalmers which he so vastly admires.—B.

In the former part of this performance, I have endeavoured to prove that the system which you embrace overlooks the moral character of God, refuses to worship him, affords no standard of right and wrong, undermines the most efficacious motives to virtuous action, actually produces a torrent of vice, and leaves mankind, under all their miseries, to perish without hope; in fine, that it is an immoral system, pregnant with destruction to the human race. Unless you be able to overlook what is there advanced, or at least be conscious that it is not true with regard to yourselves, you have reason to be seriously alarmed. To embrace a system of immorality is the same thing as to be enemies to all righteousness, neither to fear God nor regard man; and what good fruit you can expect to reap from it, in this world or another, it is difficult to conceive. But, alas! instead of being alarmed at the immorality of your principles, is there no reason to suspect that it is on this very account you cherish them? You can occasionally praise the morality of Jesus Christ; but are you sincere? Why then do you not walk by it? However you may magnify other difficulties, which you have industriously laboured to discover in the Bible, your actions declare that it is the holiness of its doctrines and precepts that more than any thing else offends you. The manifest object at which you aim, both for yourselves and the world, is an exemption from its restraints. Your general conduct, if put into words, amounts to this: "Come, let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us."

Circumstances of late years have much favoured your design. Your party has gained the ascendancy in a great nation, and has been consequently increasing in other nations. Hence it is, perhaps, that your spirits are raised, and that a higher tone is assumed in your speeches and writings than has been usual on former occasions. You are *great*, you are *enlightened*; yes, you have found out the secret, and have only to rid the world of Christianity in order to render it happy. But be not too confident. You are not the first who have set themselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed. You have overthrown superstition; but vaunt not against Christianity. Of a truth you have destroyed the gods of Rome, for they were no gods; but let this suffice you. It is hard to kick against the pricks.

Whatever success may attend your cause, if it be an immoral one, and espoused *on that very account*, it cannot possibly stand. It must fall, and you may expect to be buried in its ruins. It may be thought sufficient for me to reason on the system itself, without descending to the *motives* of those who imbibe it; but where motives are manifested by actions, they become objects of human cognizance. Nor is there any hope of your unbelief being removed, but by something that shall reach the cause of it. My desire is neither to insult nor flatter, but seriously to expostulate with you; if God peradventure may give you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. Three things, in particular, I would earnestly recommend to your serious consideration. How it was that you first imbibed your present principles—How it is that almost all your writers, at one time or other, bear testimony in favour of Christianity—and, How it comes to pass that your principles fail you, as they are frequently known to do, in a dying hour.

First, HOW WAS IT THAT YOU FIRST RENOUNCED CHRISTIANITY, AND IMBIBED YOUR PRESENT PRINCIPLES? Retrace the process of your minds, and ask your consciences, as you proceed, whether all was fair and upright. Nothing is more common than for persons of relaxed morals to attribute their change of conduct to a change of sentiments or views relative to those subjects. It is galling to one's own feelings, and mean in the account of others, to *act against principle*; but if a person can once persuade himself to think favourably of those things which he has formerly accounted sinful, and can

furnish a plea for them, which, at least, may serve to parry the censures of mankind, he will feel much more at ease, and be able to put on a better face when he mingles in society. Whatever inward stings may annoy his peace under certain occasional qualms, yet he has not to reproach himself, nor can others reproach him, with that inconsistency of character as in former instances. Rousseau confesses he found, in the reasonings of a certain lady, with whom he lived in the greatest possible familiarity, all those ideas *which he had occasion for*.—Have you not found the same in the conversation and writings of deists? Did you not, previously to your rejection of Christianity, indulge in vicious courses; and while indulging in these courses, did not its holy precepts and awful threatenings gall your spirits? Were you not like persons gathering forbidden fruit amidst showers of arrows; and had you not recourse to your present principles for a shield against them? If you cannot honestly answer these questions in the negative, you are in an evil case. You may flatter yourselves, for a while, that perhaps there may be no hereafter, or at least no judgment to come; but you know the time is not far distant when you must go and see; and then, if you should be mistaken, what will you do?

Many of you have descended from godly parents, and have had a religious education. Has not your infidelity arisen from the dislike you conceived in early life to religious exercises? Family worship was a weariness to you; and the cautions, warnings, and counsels which were given you, instead of having any proper effect, only irritated your corruptions. You longed to be from under the yoke. Since that time your parents, it may be, have been removed by death; or if they live, they may have lost their control over you. So now you are free. But still something is wanting to erase the *prejudices* of education, which, in spite of all your efforts, will accompany you, and imbitter your present pursuits. For this purpose, a friend puts into your hands *The Age of Reason*, or some production of the kind. You read it with avidity. This is the very thing you wanted. You have long suspected the truth of Christianity, but had not courage to oppose it. Now then you are a philosopher; yes, a philosopher! “Our fathers,” say you, “might be well-meaning people, but they were imposed upon by priests. The world gets more *enlightened* now-a-days. There is no need of such rigidity. The Supreme Being (if there be one) can never have created the pleasures of life but for the purpose of enjoyment. Avaunt, ye self-denying casuists! Nature is the law of man!”

Was not this, or something nearly resembling it, the process of your minds? And are you now satisfied? I do not ask whether you have been able to defend your cause against assailants, nor whether you have gained converts to your way of thinking: you may have done both; but are you satisfied with yourselves? Do you really believe yourselves to be in the right way? Have you no misgivings of heart? Is there not something within you which occasionally whispers, “My parents were righteous, and I am wicked: oh that my soul were in their souls’ stead?”

Ah, young men! if such be the occasional revoltings of your mind, what are you doing in labouring to gain others over to your way of thinking? Can you from experience honestly promise them peace of mind? Can you go about to persuade them that there is no hell, when, if you would speak the truth, you must acknowledge that you have already an earnest of it kindled in your bosoms? If counsels were not lost upon you, I would entreat you to be contented with destroying your own souls. Have pity on your fellow creatures, if you have none upon yourselves. Nay, spare yourselves so much, at least, as not to incur the everlasting execrations of your most intimate acquaintance. If Christianity should prove what your con-

sciences in your most serious moments tell you it is, you are doing this every day of your lives.

Secondly, Consider How IT IS THAT ALMOST ALL YOUR WRITERS, AT ONE TIME OR OTHER, BEAR TESTIMONY IN FAVOUR OF CHRISTIANITY. It were easy to collect, from those very writings which were designed to undermine the Christian religion, hundreds of testimonies in its favour. Voltaire and Rousseau, as we have seen already, have in their fits gone far towards contradicting all which they have written against it. Bolingbroke has done the same. Such sentences as the following may be found in his publications: "Supposing Christianity to have been a human invention, it has been the most amiable invention that was ever imposed on mankind for their good.—Christianity, as it came out of the hand of God, if I may use the expression, was a most simple and intelligible rule of belief, worship, and manners, which is the true notion of a religion.—The gospel is in all cases one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity."\* Paine, perhaps, has said as little in this way as any of your writers, yet he has professed a respect for the character of Jesus Christ. "He was," says he, "a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind."†

In what manner will you go about to account for these concessions? Christian writers, those at least who are sincerely attached to the cause, are not seized with these fits of inconsistency. How is it that yours, like the worshippers of Baal, should thus be continually cutting themselves with knives? You must either give up your leaders as a set of men who, while they are labouring to persuade the world of the hypocrisy of priests, were themselves the most infamous of all hypocrites; or, which will be equally fatal to your cause, you must attribute it to occasional convictions, which they felt and expressed, though contrary to the general strain of their writings. Is it not an unfavourable character of your cause, that in this particular it exactly resembles that of vice itself? Vicious men will often bear testimony in favour of virtue, especially on the near approach of death; but virtuous men never return the compliment by bearing testimony in favour of vice. We are not afraid of Christians thus betraying their cause; but neither your writers nor your consciences are to be trusted in a serious hour.

Thirdly, Consider How IT COMES TO PASS THAT YOUR PRINCIPLES FAIL YOU, AS THEY ARE FREQUENTLY KNOWN TO DO, IN A DYING HOUR. It is a rule with wise men, "so to live as they shall wish they had when they come to die." How do you suppose you shall wish you had lived in that day? Look at the deaths of your greatest men, and see what their principles have done for them at last. Mark the end of that apostle and high priest of your profession, Voltaire; and try if you can find in it either integrity, or hope, or any thing that should render it an object of envy.‡ Why is it that so many of you faint in the day of trial? If your cause were good, you would

\* Works, Vol. IV. pp. 394, 395; Vol. V. pp. 188, 189. † Age of Reason, Part I. p. 5.

‡ The following particulars, among many others, are recorded of this writer by his biographer, Condorcet, a man after his own heart. First, That he conceived the design of overturning the Christian religion, and that by his own hand. "I am wearied," said he, "of hearing it repeated that twelve men were sufficient to establish Christianity; and I wish to prove there needs but one to destroy it." Secondly, That in pursuit of this object he was threatened with a persecution, to avoid which he received the sacrament, and publicly declared his respect for the church, and his disdain of his detractors, namely, those who had called in question his Christianity! Thirdly, That in his last illness, in Paris, being desirous of obtaining what is called Christian burial, he sent for a priest, to whom he declared that he "died in the catholic faith, in which he was born." Fourthly, That another priest (curate of the parish) troubled him with questions. Among other things he asked, "Do you believe the Divinity of Jesus Christ?" "In the name of God, sir," replied Voltaire, "speak to me no more of that man, but let me die in peace."



defend it with uprightness, and die with inward satisfaction. But is it so? Mr. Paine flatters himself that his principles will bear him up in the prospect of death;\* and it is possible that he may brave it out in some such manner as David Hume did. Such instances, however, are rare. For one unbeliever that maintains his courage, many might be produced whose hearts have failed them, and who have trembled for the consequences of their infidelity.

On the other hand, you cannot produce a single instance of a Christian, who at the approach of death was troubled or terrified in his conscience *for having been a Christian*. Many have been afraid in that day lest their faith in Christ should not prove genuine; but who that has put his trust in him was ever known to be apprehensive lest he should at last deceive him? Can you account for this difference? If you have discovered the true religion and ours be all fable and imposture, how comes it to pass that the issue of things is what it is? Do gold, and silver, and precious stones perish in the fire? and do wood, and hay, and stubble endure it?

I have admitted that Mr. Paine may possibly brave it out to the last; but if he does, his courage *may be* merely assumed. Pride will induce men to disguise the genuine feelings of their hearts on more occasions than one. We hear much of courage among duellists; but little credit is due to what they say, if, while the words proceed from their lips, we see them approach each other with paleness and trembling. Yea more, if Mr. Paine's courage in death be not different from what it already is in the prospect of it, it *certainly will be* merely assumed. He has given full proof of what his courage amounts to in what he has advanced on the certainty of a future state. He acknowledges the possibility of a future judgment; yea, he admits it to be rational to believe that there will be one. "The Power," he says, "that called us into being, can, if he please, and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here; and therefore, without seeking any further motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know beforehand that he can."† I shall not stop to inquire into the justness of Mr. Paine's reasoning, from what God can do to what he will do; it is sufficient for me that he admits it to be "rational to believe that God will call men to account for the manner in which they have lived here." And can he admit this truth, and not tremble? Mark his firmness. After acknowledging that a future judgment is the object of rational *belief*, he retracts what he has said by reducing it to only a *probability*, which is to have the influence of belief; yea, and as if that were too terrible an idea, he brings it down to a mere *possibility*. The reason which he gives for these reductions is, that "if we knew it as a fact, we should be the mere *slaves of terror*." Indeed! But wherefore? Christians believe in a judgment to come, and they are not the slaves of terror. They have an *Advocate* as well as a Judge, by believing in whom the terror of judgment is removed. And though Mr. Paine rejects this ground of consolation, yet if things be as he has represented them, I do not perceive why he should be terrified. He writes as though he stood on a very respectable footing with his Creator; he is not "an outcast, a beggar, or a worm;" he needs no mediator: no indeed! He "stands in the same relative condition with his Maker he ever did stand since man existed."‡ Very well: of what then is he afraid? "God is good, and will exceed the very best of us in goodness." On this ground, Lord Shaftesbury assures us, "Deists can have no dread or suspicion to render them uneasy; for it is malice only, and not goodness, which can make them afraid."§ Very well, I say again, of what then is Mr.

\* Age of Reason, Part II. Preface.

† Age of Reason, Part I. p. 21.

‡ Age of Reason, Part II. p. 100.

§ Characteristics, Vol. I. § 5.

Paine afraid? If a Being full of goodness will not hurt him, he will not be hurt. Why should he be terrified at a *certain* hereafter. Why not meet his Creator with cheerfulness and confidence? Instead of this, he knows of no method by which he may be exempted from *terror* but that of reducing future judgment to a mere *possibility*; leaving room for some faint hope, at least, that what he professes to believe as true may, in the end, prove false. Such is the courage of your blustering hero. Unhappy man; unhappy people! Your principles will not support you in death, nor so much as in the contemplation of an hereafter.

Let Mr. Paine's hypothesis be admitted, and that in its lowest form, that there is only a *possibility* of a judgment to come, this is sufficient to evince your folly, and, if you thought on the subject, to destroy your peace. This alone has induced many of you in your last moments to wish that you had lived like Christians. If it be possible that there may be a judgment to come, why should it not be equally possible that Christianity itself may be true. And if it should, on what ground do you stand? If it be otherwise, Christians have nothing to fear. While they are taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, whatever may prove true with respect to another, it is presumed they are safe; but if that Saviour whom you have despised should be indeed the Son of God—if that name which you have blasphemed should be the only one given under heaven and among men by which you can be saved—what a situation must you be in! You may wish at present not to be told of him; yea, even in death it may be a vexation, as it was to Voltaire, to hear of him; but hear of him you must, and, what is more, you must appear before him.

I cannot conclude this address without expressing my earnest desire for your salvation: and whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, reminding you that our Redeemer is merciful. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and them who are out of the way. The door of mercy is not yet shut. At present you are invited and even entreated to enter in. But if you still continue hardened against him, you may find to your cost that the abuse of mercy gives an edge to justice; and that to be crushed to atoms by falling rocks, or buried in oblivion at the bottom of mountains, were rather to be chosen than an exposure to the wrath of the Lamb.

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## TO THE JEWS.

BELOVED FOR THE FATHERS' SAKE!

HE whom you have long rejected looked upon Jerusalem and wept over it. With tears he pronounced upon that famous city a doom, which, according to your own writer, Josephus, was soon afterwards accomplished. In imitation of our Lord and Saviour, we also could weep over your present situation. There are thousands in Britain, as well as in other nations, whose daily prayer is, that you may be saved. Hear me patiently and candidly. Your present and everlasting good is the object of my desire.

It is not my design, in this brief address, to go over the various topics in dispute between us. Many have engaged in this work, and I hope to some good purpose. The late addresses to you, both from the pulpit and the press, as they were dictated by pure benevolence, certainly deserve, and I trust have gained, in some degree, your candid attention. All I shall say will be comprised in a few suggestions, which I suppose to arise from the subject of the preceding pages.

You have long sojourned among men who have been called Christians. You have seen much evil in them, and they have seen much in you. The history of your own nation, and that of every other, confirms one of the leading doctrines of both your and our Scriptures—the *depravity of human nature*. But in your commerce with mankind, you must have had opportunity of distinguishing between nominal and serious Christians. Great numbers in your nation, even in its best days, were wicked men; and great numbers in every nation, at present, are the same. But cannot you perceive a people scattered through various denominations of Christians, who fear God and regard man; who, instead of treating you with a haughty contempt, as being strangers scattered among the nations, discover a tender regard towards you on that very account; who, while they are grieved for the hardness of your hearts, and hurt at your scornful rejection of Him whom their soul loveth, are nevertheless ardently desirous of your salvation? Are you not acquainted with Christians whose utmost revenge, could they have their will of you, for all your hard speeches, would be to be instrumental in turning you, from what they believe to be the power of Satan, unto God?

Let me further appeal to you, Whether Christians of this description be not the true children of Abraham, the true successors of your patriarchs and prophets, rather than those of an opposite spirit, though literally descended from their loins. You must be aware that, even in the times of David, a genuine Israelite was *a man of a pure heart*; and, in the times of the prophets, apostate Israelites were accounted as “Ethiopians.”\* Your ancestors were men of whom the world was not worthy: but where will you now look for such characters among you as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; as Samuel, David, Hezekiah, and Josiah; as Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and many others? While you garnish their sepulchres, have you not manifestly lost their spirit? This is a fact that ought to alarm you, and lead you seriously to examine whether you have not forsaken their faith. One thing, which has particularly struck my mind, I would earnestly recommend to your consideration; namely, *the temper of modern infidels towards your fathers, towards you, and towards us*.

You need not be told that deistical writers invariably treat your fathers with scorn and dislike. Just as Appion and other Greek writers poured contempt upon your nation; just as the more ancient “Moabites” reproached and “proudly magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts;”† so do all our modern infidels. But from the time that your fathers rejected Him in whom we believe as the Lord Messiah, though you have been exposed to the chastisements of Heaven, and to much injurious treatment from pretended Christians; yet deists, the common enemies of revelation, have been, comparatively speaking, reconciled to you. So, however, it appears to me. I do not recollect to have met with a single reflection upon you in any of their writings. On the contrary, they seem to feel themselves near akin to you. Your enmity to Jesus seems to be the price of their forgiveness: like Herod and Pontius Pilate, you became friends in the day of his crucifixion. Mr. Paine, though his writings abound in sneers against your nation *prior* to its rejection of Christ, yet appears to be well reconciled to *you*, and willing to admit your lame account of the body of Jesus being stolen away.‡ Ought you not to be alarmed at these things? Seriously examine whether you have not forsaken the God of your fathers, and become the friends and allies of men who hate both him and them.

The hatred of infidels has long been transferred from you to us. Whether, in the language of the New Testament, we be the true “children of Abra-

\* Amos ix. 7.

† Zeph. ii. 10.

‡ Age of Reason, Part I. pp. 6, 7.

ham," or not, we inherit that reproach and dislike from unbelievers which was heretofore the portion of the godly Israelites. On what account were your fathers hated by the practical atheists of their day? Was it not because of their *devotedness to God*? It was this in David that provoked the resentment of the children of Belial, and rendered them his determined enemies. They were continually jeering at his *prayers*, his *tears*, and his *trust* in Jehovah; turning that which in reality was his *glory into shame*; and afflicting him in his affliction, by scornfully inquiring, "Where is thy God?"\* Such is the treatment which the *godly* part of your nation received in all ages, both from heathens abroad and impious characters at home:† and such is the treatment which serious Christians continue to receive from ungodly men to this day; but are you hated and reproached *on this account*?

Of late years it has been frequently pleaded that the principal objections to your embracing the Christian religion are founded in the doctrines of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, and atonement by his death; doctrines which the greater part of Christians hold to be taught in the New Testament. But those who impute your conduct to these causes must have nearly as mean an opinion of your rationality as they have of ours, with whom they say, "there is no reasoning; and that we are to be pitied, and considered as under a debility of mind in one respect, however sensible and rational in others."‡ What have the principles, which in our judgment are taught in the New Testament, to do with your acknowledging Jesus to be the Messiah, and the Christian religion to be of God? Let these positions be admitted, and examine the New Testament for yourselves. If you were not considered as possessing a sufficient degree of good sense to distinguish between Christianity and the creed of any particular party of Christians, it is surprising that "rational Christians" should think of writing addresses to you. For our parts, we could almost be satisfied that you should decide the controversy, whether the doctrines before mentioned be taught in the New Testament, or not. As to removing these stumbling-blocks, as some call them, out of your way, we have no inclination to attempt it. Only imbibe the spirit of your ancestors, and they will presently cease to *be* stumbling blocks. Believe Moses, and you will believe Jesus; and, believing Jesus, neither his claiming to be the "Son of God," and consequently "equal with God," nor his insisting upon his "flesh being the life of the world," will offend you. On the contrary, whenever the Spirit of grace and of supplications is poured out upon you, and you come to look on Him whom you have pierced, and mourn, you will join in the worship of him; and the doctrine of atonement will be to you a fountain set open for sin and uncleanness.§

You live in expectation of being restored to your own land. We expect the same thing, and rejoice in the belief of it. The Old and the New Testament agree in predicting it.|| But the same prophets that have foretold your return to Canaan have also foretold that you must be brought to "repent of your sins, and to seek Jehovah your God, and David your king."¶ Your holy land will avail you but little, unless you be a holy people.

Finally, You admit, I suppose, that though we should err in believing Jesus to be the Messiah, yet while we deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, it is an error that may not affect our eternal salvation: but if the error be on your side, on what ground do you stand? Your fathers, in this case, were murderers

\* Psal. xxii. 8; iv. 2; xlii. 3; xl. 15.

† Psal. lxxix. 10; cxv. 2; Joel ii. 17; Micah vii. 8—10; Isa. lxvi. 5.

‡ Lindsey's Catechists, Inquiry 6.

§ Zech. xii. 10—14; xiii. 1.

|| Ezek. xxxvii.; Luke xxi. 24.

¶ Hos. iii. 5.

of the Prince of life; and, by adopting their principles, you make the deed your own. His blood lies upon you, and upon your children. The terrible destruction of your city by the Romans, and the hardness of heart to which you have been given up, are symptoms of that wrath which is come upon you to the uttermost. Repent, and believe the gospel, that you may escape the wrath to come!

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## TO CHRISTIANS.

### BELOVED BRETHEREN!

IT is witnessed of David, that he "served the will of God in his generation." Every generation has its peculiar work. The present age is distinguished, you know, by the progress of infidelity. We have long been exempted from persecution; and He whose fan is in his hand, perceiving his floor to stand in need of purging, seems determined by new trials to purge it. The present is a winnowing time. If we wish to serve the will of God in it, we must carefully attend to those duties which such a state of things imposes upon us.

In the first place, Let us *look well to the sincerity of our hearts; and see to it that our Christianity is vital, practical, and decided.* An army called to engage after a long peace requires to be examined, and every one should examine himself. Many become soldiers when danger is at a distance. The mighty host of Midianites were overcome by a selected band. A proclamation was issued through the army of Israel, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return;" and after a great diminution from cowardice, the rest must be brought down to the water to be tried. Such, or nearly such, may be the trials of the church: those who overcome may be reduced to a small company in comparison of those who have borne the Christian name. So indeed the Scriptures inform us. They that obtain the victory with Christ are "called, and chosen, and faithful."\*

The manner in which things of later ages have moved on, in the religious world, has been such as to admit of a larger outer-court, if I may so speak, for a sort of half worshippers. A general religious reputation has been hitherto obtained at a small expense. But should infidelity prevail throughout Christendom, as it has in France, the nominal extent of the Christian church will be greatly reduced. In taking its dimensions, the outer-court will, as it were, be left out and given to the Gentiles. In this case, you must come in or keep out; be one thing or another; a decided friend of Christ, or an avowed infidel. It is possible the time may come when all parties will be reduced, in effect, to two—*believers and unbelievers.*

"Never," says a late masterly and moving writer, "were times more eventful and critical than at present; never were appearances more singular and interesting, in the political or in the religious world. You behold, on the one hand, infidelity with dreadful irruption extending its ravages far and wide; and, on the other, an amazing accession of zeal and activity to the cause of Christianity. Error in all its forms is assiduously and successfully propagated; but the progress of evangelical truth is also great. The number of the apparently neutral party daily diminishes; and men are now either becoming worshippers of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or receding fast through the mists of scepticism into the dreary regions of spec-

\* Rev. xvii. 14.

ulative and practical atheism. It seems as if Christianity and infidelity were mustering each the host of the battle, and preparing for some great day of God. The enemy is come in like a flood; but the Spirit of the Lord hath lifted up a standard against him. 'Who, then, is on the Lord's side? who?—Let him come forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty!'"\*

Secondly, *Let a good understanding be cultivated among sincere Christians of different denominations.* Let the friends of Christ know one another; and let not slighter shades of difference keep them at variance. The enemies of Christianity know how to avail themselves of our discords. The union which is here recommended, however, is not a merely nominal one, much less one that requires a sacrifice of principle. Let us unite, so far as we can act in concert, in promoting the interest of Christ; and hold ourselves open to conviction with regard to other things. Let not the free discussion of our differences be laid aside, or any such connexion formed as shall require it: only let them be conducted with modesty, frankness, and candour, and the godly will find their account in them. Let it be the great concern of all, not so much to maintain their own peculiarities, as to know and practise the truth; not so much to yield, and come nearer to other denominations, as to approximate towards the mind of Christ. *The mind of Christ*, as expressed in his doctrines and precepts, must be the central point in which we meet: as we approach this, we shall come nearer to each other. So much agreement as there is among us, so much is there of union; and so much agreement as there is in the mind of Christ, so much of Christian union.

Finally, *Let not the heart of any man fail him, on account of the high tone and scornful airs assumed by infidels.* The reign of infidelity may be extensive, but it must be short. It carries in it the seeds of its own dissolution. Its immoralities are such that the world cannot long sustain them. Scripture prophecy has clearly foretold all the great governments of the world, from the time of the Jewish captivity to this day—the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman; together with the ten kingdoms into which the last of these empires has been divided, and the papal government which sprung up among them; but it makes no explicit mention of this. It has no individual subsistence given it in the system of prophecy. It is not a "beast," but a mere putrid excrescence of the papal beast—an excrescence which, though it may diffuse death through every vein of the body on which it grew, yet shall die along with it. "The beast," and all which pertains to him, "goeth into perdition."† There is no space of time allowed for this government: no sooner is it said, "Babylon is fallen," than voices are heard in heaven declaring that "the marriage of the Lamb is come." No sooner does "the judgment sit, to take away the dominion of the little horn, to consume and destroy it unto the end," than it follows, "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High."‡

Popery is not yet destroyed, though it has received a deadly blow; and from what is said of the little horn, that they shall take away his dominion, "to consume and to destroy it unto the end," it should seem that its overthrow will be gradual. While this is accomplishing, the reign of infidelity may continue, with various success; but no longer. Only let us "watch and keep our garments clean," (a caution given, it is probable, with imme-

\* Ferrier's Two Discourses at Paisley, in June, 1798. † Rev. xvii. 8, 11.

‡ Dan. vii. 26, 27. The writer has since read a very able discourse by Mr. Nathan Strong, of Hartford, Connecticut, entitled, "Political Instructions from the Prophecies of God's Word;" in which the above sentiments are stated with great force of evidence.

diate reference to the present times,) and we have nothing to fear. It is a source of great consolation that the last of the four beasts, which for more than two thousand years have persecuted the church, and oppressed mankind, is drawing near to its end. The government that shall next prevail will be that of Christ, "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Even so, Amen. Blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen!"

THE  
CALVINISTIC AND SOCINIAN SYSTEMS

EXAMINED AND COMPARED, AS TO THEIR MORAL TENDENCY,

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS, ADDRESSED TO THE FRIENDS OF VITAL AND PRACTICAL RELIGION.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A POSTSCRIPT,

ESTABLISHING THE PRINCIPLE OF THE WORK, AGAINST THE EXCEPTIONS OF  
DR. TOULMIN, MR. BELSHAM, ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Letters are addressed to *the friends of vital and practical religion*, because the author is persuaded that the very essence of true piety is concerned in this controversy; and that *godly men* are the only proper judges of Divine truth, being the only humble, upright, and earnest inquirers after it. So far from thinking, with Dr. Priestley, that "an unbiassed temper of mind is attained in consequence of becoming more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it," he is satisfied that persons of that description have a most powerful bias against the truth. Though it were admitted that false principles, accompanied with a bigoted attachment to them, are worse than none; yet he cannot admit that irreligious men *are* destitute of principles. He has no notion of human minds being unoccupied or indifferent: he that is not a friend to religion in any mode is an enemy to it in all modes; he is a libertine; he "doeth evil," and therefore "hateth the light." And shall we compliment such a character, by acknowledging him to be in "a favourable situation for distinguishing between truth and falsehood?"\* God forbid! It is "he that doeth his will that shall know of his doctrine." The humble, the candid, the upright inquirers after truth are the persons who are likely to find it; and to them the author takes the liberty to appeal.

The principal occasion of these Letters was the late union among Protestant Dissenters, in reference to civil affairs, having been the source of various misconceptions, and, as the writer apprehends, improved as a means of disseminating Socinian principles.

In the late application to parliament, for the repeal of the *Corporation and Test Acts*, the Dissenters have united, without any respect to their doctrinal principles. They considered that they were applying merely for a *civil* right; and that, in such an application, difference in theological sentiments had no more concern than it has in the union of a nation under one civil head, or form of government.

\* Discourses on Various Subjects, p. 95.



This union, however, has become an occasion of many reflections. Serious men of the Established Church have expressed their surprise that some Dissenters could not unite with others, so opposite in their religious principles; and, had the union been of a *religious* nature, it must, indeed, have been surprising. Others have supposed that the main body of Dissenters had either imbibed the Socinian system, or were hastily approaching towards it. Whether the suggestion of Dr. Horsley, that "the genuine Calvinists, among our modern Dissenters, are very few," has contributed to this opinion, or whatever be its origin, it is far from being just. Every one who *knows* the Dissenters knows that the body of them are what is commonly called orthodox. Dr. Priestley, who is well known to be sufficiently sanguine in estimating the numbers of his party—so sanguine that, when speaking of the *common people* of this country, he reckons "nine out of ten of them would prefer a Unitarian to a Trinitarian liturgy;"\* yet acknowledges, in regard to the Dissenters, that Unitarians are by far the minority. In Birmingham, where the proportion of their number to the rest of the Dissenters is greater than in any other town in the kingdom, it appears, from Dr. Priestley's account of the matter, that those called orthodox are nearly three to one: and throughout England and Wales they have been supposed to be "as two, if not as three to one, to the Socinians and Arians inclusive."†

If Dr. Horsley found it necessary, in support of his cause, to overturn Dr. Priestley's assertion, that "great bodies of men do not change their opinions in a small space of time," some think he might have found an example, more to his purpose than that of the body of Dissenters having deserted their former principles, in the well-known change of the major part of the Church of England, who, about the time of Archbishop Laud, went off from Calvinism to Arminianism. Had this example been adduced, his antagonist might have found some difficulty in maintaining his ground against him, as it is an undoubted fact, and a fact which he himself acknowledges, with several others of the kind.‡

The supposition, however, of the Dissenters being generally gone, or going off, to Socinianism, though far from just, has not been without its apparent grounds. The *consequence* which Socinians have assumed, in papers and pamphlets which have been circulated about the country, has afforded room for such a supposition. It has not been very uncommon for them to speak of themselves as THE DISSENTERS, THE MODERN DISSENTERS, &c. It was said, in a paper that was published more than once, "The ancient, like the *modern Dissenters, worshipped one God*; they knew nothing of the Nicene or Athanasian creeds." The celebrated authoress of *The Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* is not clear in this matter. That otherwise admirable performance is tinged with the pride of party consequence. "We thank you, gentlemen," she says, "for the compliment paid the DISSENTERS, when you suppose that, the moment they are eligible to places of power and profit, all such places will at once be filled with them. *We* had not the presumption to imagine that, inconsiderable as we are in numbers, compared to the Established Church; inferior, too, in fortune and influence; labouring, as we do, under the frowns of the court and THE ANATHEMA OF THE ORTHODOX; we should make our way so readily into the recesses of royal favour." Even the *Monthly Reviewers*, though they have borne testimony against mingling doctrinal disputes with those of the

\* Defence of Unitarianism, for 1786, p. 61.

† See Dr. Priestley's Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, Letters III. XI. Also Mr. Parry's Remarks on the Resolutions of the Warwick Meeting.

‡ See Letter III.

repeal of the Test laws,\* yet have sometimes spoken of Dissenters and Socinians as if they were terms of the same meaning and extent. "It appears to us as absurd," they say, "to charge the religious principles of THE DISSENTERS with republicanism, as it would be to advance the same accusation against the Newtonian philosophy. The doctrine of gravitation may as well be deemed dangerous to the state as SOCINIANISM."†

It is natural, from such representations as these, for those who know but little of us, to consider the Socinians as constituting the main body of the Dissenters, and the Calvinists as only a few stragglers, who follow these leading men at a distance in all their measures; but whose numbers and consequence are so small, that even the mention of their names, among Protestant Dissenters, may very well be omitted.

This, however, as it only affects our reputation, or, at most, can only impede the repeal of the Test laws, by strengthening a prejudice, too strong already, against the whole body of Dissenters, might be overlooked. But this is not all; it is pretty evident that the union among us, in civil matters, has been improved for the purpose of disseminating religious principles. At one of the most public meetings for the repeal of the *Corporation and Test Acts*, as the author was credibly informed, Socinian peculiarities were advanced, which passed unnoticed, because those of contrary principles did not choose to interrupt the harmony of the meeting, by turning the attention of gentlemen from the immediate object for which they were assembled. What end could Dr. Priestley have in introducing so much about the Test Act in his controversy with Mr. Burn, on the person of Christ, except it were to gild the pill, and make it go down the easier with Calvinistic Dissenters?

The writer of these Letters does not blame the Dissenters of his own persuasion for uniting with the Socinians. In civil matters, he thinks it lawful to unite with *men*, be their religious principles what they may; but he, and many others, would be very sorry if a union of this kind should prove an occasion of abating our zeal for those religious principles which we consider as being of the very essence of the gospel.

The term *Socinians* is preferred in the following Letters to that of *Unitarians*, not for the mean purpose of reproach, but because the latter name is not a fair one. The term, as constantly explained by themselves, signifies *those professors of Christianity who worship but one God*; but this is not that wherein they can be *allowed* to be distinguished from others. For what professors of Christianity are there who profess to worship a plurality of Gods? Trinitarians profess also to be Unitarians. They, as well as their opponents, believe there is but *one God*. To give Socinians this name, therefore, *exclusively*, would be granting them the very point which they seem so desirous to take for granted; that is to say, the point in debate.

Names, it may be said, signify little; and this signifies no more on one side than the term *orthodox* does on the other. The writer owns that, when he first conceived the idea of publishing these Letters, he thought so; and intended, all along, to use the term Unitarians. What made him alter his mind was, his observing that the principal writers in that scheme have frequently availed themselves of the above name, and appear to wish to have it thought, by their readers, that the point in dispute between them and the Trinitarians is, Whether there be *three* Gods, or only *one*.

If he had thought the use of the term *Unitarians* consistent with justice to his own argument, he would have preferred it to that of Socinians; and would also have been glad of a term to express the system which he has

\* Monthly Review Enlarged, Vol. I. p. 233.

† Ibid. 1790, p. 247.

defended, instead of calling it after the name of Calvin; as he is aware that calling ourselves after the names of men (though it be merely to avoid circumlocution) is liable to be understood as giving them an authority which is inconsistent with a conformity to our Lord's command, "Call no man master upon earth; for one is your Master, even Christ."

He may add, that the substance of the following letters was written before the riots at Birmingham. His regard to justice and humanity made him feel much, on that occasion, for Dr. Priestley, and others who suffered with him; but his regard to what he esteems important truth made him feel more. The injury which a doctrine receives from those who would support it by the unhallowed hands of plunder and persecution is far greater, in the esteem of many, than it can receive from the efforts of its avowed adversaries. For his own part, he has generally supposed that both the contrivers and executors of that iniquitous business, call themselves what they will, were men of *no principle*. If, however, those of the high-church party, who, instead of disavowing the spirit and conduct of the misguided populace, have manifestly exulted in it, must be reckoned among the Trinitarians, he has only to say, they are such Trinitarians as he utterly disapproves, and concerning whom he cannot so well express his sentiments and feelings as in the words of the patriarch: "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel."

Detestable, however, as were the riots at Birmingham, no one can plead that they render the religious principles of Dr. Priestley less erroneous, or less pernicious; or an opposition to them, upon the fair ground of argument, less necessary. On the contrary, the mere circumstance of his being a persecuted man will have its influence on some people, and incline them not only to feel for the man, the gentleman, and the philosopher (all which is right); but to think favourably of his religious opinions. On this consideration, if the following Letters would, previous to that event, have been in any degree proper and seasonable, they are not, by any thing that has since occurred, become improper, or unseasonable.

Since the first edition, the author has attempted, in some places, to strengthen his argument, and to remove such objections as have hitherto occurred. The principal *additions* will be found in Letters IV. and XV. The note, towards the latter end of the former, was occasioned by a report that Dr. Priestley complained of being *misrepresented* by the quotation in the first page of the Preface. This note contains a vindication, not only of the fairness of the quotation from Dr. Priestley, but of another, to the same purpose, from Mr. Belsham; and an answer to what is advanced on its behalf in the *Monthly Review*.

## LETTER I.

## INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL REMARKS.

## CHRISTIAN BROTHERN,

MUCH has been written of late years on the Socinian controversy; so much that the attention of the Christian world has, to a considerable degree, been drawn towards it. There is no reason, however, for considering this circumstance as a matter of wonder, or of regret. Not of *wonder*; for supposing the Deity and atonement of Christ to be Divine truths, they are of such importance in the Christian scheme as to induce the adversaries of the gospel to bend their main force against them, as against *the rock on which Christ hath built his Church*. Not of *regret*; for, whatever partial evils may arise from a full discussion of a subject, the interests of truth will, doubtless, in the end prevail; and the prevalence of truth is a good that will outweigh all the ills that may have attended its discovery. Controversy engages a number of persons of different talents and turns of mind; and by this means the subject is likely to be considered in every view in which it is capable of being exhibited to advantage.

The point of light in which the subject will be considered in these letters, namely, *as influencing the heart and life*, has been frequently glanced at on both sides. I do not recollect, however, to have seen this view of it professedly and separately handled.

In the great controversy in the time of Elijah, recourse was had to an expedient by which the question was decided. Each party built an altar, cut in pieces a bullock, and laid the victim upon the wood, but put no fire under; and the God that should answer by fire was to be acknowledged as the *true* God. We cannot bring our controversies to such a criterion as this: we may bring them to one, however, which, though not so suddenly, is not much less sensibly evident. The tempers and lives of men are books for common people to read; and they will read them, even though they should read nothing else. They are, indeed, warranted by the Scriptures themselves to judge of the nature of doctrines, by their holy or unholy tendency. The true gospel is to be known by its being a "doctrine according to godliness;" teaching those who embrace it "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world." Those, on the other hand, "who believe not the truth," are said to "have pleasure in unrighteousness." "Profane and vain babblings," as the ministrations of false teachers are called, "will increase unto more ungodliness," and their word "will eat as doth a canker." To this may be added, that the parties themselves, engaged in this controversy, have virtually acknowledged the justice and importance of the above criterion, in that both sides have incidentally endeavoured to avail themselves of it. A criterion, then, by which the common people will judge, by which the Scripture authorizes them to judge, and by which both sides, in effect, agree to be judged, cannot but be worthy of particular attention.

I feel, for my own part, satisfied, not only of the truth and importance of the doctrines in question, but also of their holy tendency. I am aware, however, that others think differently, and that a considerable part of what I have to advance must be on the defensive.

"Admitting the truth," says Dr. Priestley, "of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead, original sin, arbitrary predestination, atonement by the death of Christ, and the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures; their *value*, estimated

by their influence on the morals of men, cannot be supposed, even by the admirers of them, to be of any moment, compared to the doctrine of the resurrection of the human race to a life of retribution: and, in the opinion of those who reject them, they have a very unfavourable tendency; giving wrong impressions concerning the character and moral government of God, and such as might tend, if they have any effect, to relax the obligations of virtue.”\*

In many instances Dr. Priestley deserves applause for his frankness and fairness as a disputant: in this passage, however, as well as in some others, the admirers of the doctrines he mentions are unfairly represented. They who embrace the other doctrines are supposed to hold that of *arbitrary* predestination; but this supposition is not true. The term *arbitrary* conveys the idea of caprice; and, in this connexion, denotes that in predestination, according to the Calvinistic notion of it, God resolves upon the fates of men, and appoints them to this or that, without any *reason* for so doing. But there is no justice in this representation. There is no decree in the Divine mind that we consider as void of reason. Predestination to death is on account of sin; and as to predestination to life, though it be not on account of any works of righteousness which we have done, yet it does not follow that God has no reason whatever for what he does. The sovereignty of God is a *wise*, and not a capricious sovereignty. If he hide the glory of the gospel from the wise and prudent, and reveal it unto babes, it is because *it seemeth good in his sight*. But if it seem *good* in the sight of God, it must, all things considered, be good; for “the judgment of God is according to truth.”

It is asserted, also, that the admirers of the forementioned doctrines cannot, and do not, consider them as of equal importance with that of the resurrection of the human race to a life of retribution. But this, I am satisfied, is not the case; for whatever Dr. Priestley may think, *they* consider them, or at least some of them, as essential to true holiness; and of such consequence, even to the doctrine of the resurrection of the human race to a life of retribution, that, without them, such a resurrection would be a curse to mankind, rather than a blessing.

There is one thing, however, in the above passage, wherein we all unite; and this is—*that the value or importance of religious principles is to be estimated by their influence on the morals of men*. By this rule let the forementioned doctrines, with their opposites, be tried. If either those or these will not abide the trial, they ought to be rejected.

Before we enter upon a particular examination of the subject, however, I would make three or four general observations.

First, Whatever Dr. Priestley or any others have said of the immoral tendency of our principles, I am persuaded that I may take it for granted they do not mean to suggest that we are not good members of civil society, or worthy of the most perfect toleration in the state; nor have I any such meaning in what may be suggested concerning theirs. I do not know any religious denomination of men who are unworthy of civil protection. So long as their practices do not disturb the peace of society, and there be nothing in their avowed principles inconsistent with their giving security for their good behaviour, they, doubtless, ought to be protected in the enjoyment of every civil right to which their fellow-citizens at large are entitled.

Secondly, It is not the bad conduct of a few individuals, in any denomination of Christians, that proves any thing on either side, even though they may be zealous advocates for the peculiar tenets of the party which they espouse. It is the conduct of the *general body* from which we ought to

\* Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, Part II. p. 33, 35.

form our estimate. That there are men of bad character who attend on our preaching is not denied; perhaps some of the worst: but if it be so, it proves nothing to the dishonour of our principles. Those who, in the first ages of Christianity, were not humbled by the gospel, were generally hardened by it. Nay, were it allowed that we have a greater number of *hypocrites* than the Socinians, (as it has been insinuated that the *hypocrisy* and *preciseness* of some people afford matter of just disgust to speculative Unitarians,) I do not think this supposition, any more than the other, dishonourable to our principles. The defect of hypocrites lies not so much in the thing professed, as in the sincerity of their profession. The thing professed may be excellent, and, perhaps, is the more likely to be so from its being counterfeited; for it is not usual to counterfeit things of no value. Those persons who entertain low and diminutive ideas of the evil of sin and the dignity of Christ must, in order to be thought religious by us, counterfeit the contrary; but, among Socinians, the same persons may avow those ideas, and be cressed for it. That temper of mind which we suppose common to men, as being that which they possess by nature, needs not to be disguised among them, in order to be well thought of; they have, therefore, no great temptations to hypocrisy. The question in hand, however, is not—What influence either our principles or theirs have upon persons who do not in reality adopt them? but, What influence they have upon those who do!\*

Thirdly, It is not the good conduct of a few individuals, on either side, that will prove any thing. Some have adopted a false creed, and retain it in words, who yet never enter into the spirit of it, and consequently do not act upon it. But merely dormant opinions can hardly be called *principles*; those rather seem to be a man's principles which lie at the foundation of his spirit and conduct. Further, good men are found in denominations whose principles are very bad; and good men, by whatever names they are called, are more nearly of a sentiment than they are frequently aware of. Take two of them, who differ the most in words, and bring them upon their knees in prayer, and they will be nearly agreed. Besides, a great deal of that which passes for virtue amongst men is not so in the sight of God, who sees things as they are. It is no more than may be accounted for without bringing religion or virtue into the question. There are motives and considerations which will commonly influence men, living in society, to behave with decorum. Various occupations and pursuits, especially those of a mental and religious kind, are inconsistent with profligacy of manners. "False apostles," the very "ministers of Satan," are said to "transform themselves into the apostles of Christ," and to appear as the "ministers of righteousness;" even as "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." There are certain vices which, being inconsistent with others, may be the means of restraining them. Covetousness may be the cause of sobriety; and pride restrains thousands from base and ignoble gratifications, in which, nevertheless, their hearts take secret and supreme delight. A decent conduct has been found in Pharisees, in infidels, nay, even in atheists. Dr. Priestley acknowledges that "an atheist may be temperate, good-natured, honest, and,

\* Though the Socinians be allowed, in what is said above, to have but few hypocrites among them; yet this is to be understood as relating merely to one species of hypocrisy. Dr. Priestley, speaking of Unitarians who still continue in the Church of England, says, "From a just aversion to any thing that looks like *hypocrisy* and *preciseness*, they rather lean to the extreme of fashionable dissipation." Yet he represents the same persons, and that in the same page, as "continuing to countenance a mode of worship which, if they were questioned about it, they could not deny to be, according to their own principles, idolatrous and blasphemous."—*Discourses on Various Subjects*, p. 96. The hypocrisy, then, to which these gentlemen have so just an aversion seems to be only of *one* kind.

in the less extended sense of the word, *a virtuous man*.\* Yet Dr. Priestley would not hence infer any thing in favour of the moral tendency of atheism.

Lastly, Neither *zeal* in defence of principles, nor every kind of *devotion* springing from them, will prove these principles to be true, or worthy of God. Several gentlemen, who have gone over from the Calvinistic to the Socinian system, are said to possess greater *zeal* for the propagation of the latter than they had used to discover for that of the former. As this, however, makes nothing to the disadvantage of their system, neither does it make any thing to its advantage. This may be owing, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, to their having found a system more consonant to the bias of their hearts than that was which they formerly professed. And as to *devotion*, a species of this may exist in persons, and that to a high degree, consistently enough with the worst of principles. We know that the gospel had no worse enemies than the "devout and honourable" amongst the Jews, Acts xiii. 50. Saul, while an enemy to Jesus Christ, was as sincere, as zealous, and as devout in his way, as any of those persons whose sincerity, zeal, and devotion are frequently held up by their admirers in favour of their cause.

These observations may be thought by some, instead of clearing the subject, to involve it in greater difficulties, and to render it almost impossible to judge of the tendency of principles by any thing that is seen in the lives of men. The subject, it is allowed, *has* its difficulties, and the foregoing observations are a *proof* of it; but I hope to make it appear, whatever difficulties may, on these accounts, attend the subject, that there is still enough, in the general spirit and conduct of men, by which to judge of the tendency of their principles.

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## LETTER II.

### THE SYSTEMS COMPARED AS TO THEIR TENDENCY TO CONVERT PROFLIGATES TO A LIFE OF HOLINESS.

You need not be told that being *born again—created in Christ Jesus—converted—becoming as a little child, &c.*, are phrases expressive of a change of heart, which the Scriptures make necessary to a life of holiness here, and to eternal life hereafter. It is on this account that I begin with *conversion*, considering it as the commencement of a holy life.

A change of this sort was as really necessary for *Nicodemus*, whose outward character, for aught that appears, was respectable, as for *Zaccheus*, whose life had been devoted to the sordid pursuits of avarice. Few, I suppose, will deny this to be the doctrine taught in the New Testament. But should this be questioned, should the necessity of a change of heart in some characters be denied, still it will be allowed necessary in others. Now, as a change is more conspicuous, and consequently more convincing, in such persons as have walked in an abandoned course, than in those of a more sober life, I have fixed upon the conversion of *profligates* as a suitable topic for the present discussion.

There are two methods of reasoning which may be used in ascertaining the moral tendency of principles. The first is, comparing the nature of the principles themselves with the nature of true holiness, and the agreement or

\* Let. Unb. Part I. p. 6, Pref.

disagreement of the one with the other. The second is, referring to plain and acknowledged facts, and judging of the nature of causes by their effects. Both these methods of reasoning, which are usually expressed by the terms *a priori*, and *a posteriori*, will be used in this and the following Letters, as the nature of the subject may admit.

True conversion is comprehended in those two grand topics on which the apostles insisted in the course of their ministry—"Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us, then, fix upon these great outlines of the apostolic testimony, and examine which of the systems in question has the greatest tendency to produce them.

Repentance is *a change of mind*. It arises from a conviction that we have been in the wrong; and consists in holy shame, grief, and self-loathing, accompanied with a determination to forsake every evil way. Each of these ideas is included in the account we have of the repentance of Job. "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."—"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It is essential to such a change as this, that the sinner should realize the evil nature of sin. No man ever yet repented of a fault without a conviction of its evil nature. Sin must appear *exceeding sinful* before we can, in the nature of things, abhor it, and ourselves on account of it. Those sentiments which wrought upon the heart of David, and brought him to repentance, were of this sort. Throughout the fifty-first Psalm, we find him deeply impressed with the evil of sin, and that considered as an offence *against God*. He had injured Uriah and Bathsheba, and, strictly speaking, had not injured God; the essential honour and happiness of the Divine nature being infinitely beyond his reach: yet, as all sin strikes at the Divine glory, and actually degrades it in the esteem of creatures, all sin is to be considered, in one view, as committed *against God*; and this view of the subject lay so near his heart as to swallow up every other—"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight!" It follows, then, that the system which affords the most enlarged views of the evil of sin must needs have the greatest tendency to promote repentance for it.

Those who embrace the Calvinistic system believe that man was originally created holy and happy; that of his own accord he departed from God, and became vile; that God, being in himself infinitely amiable, deserves to be, and is, the moral centre of the intelligent system; that rebellion against him is opposition to the general good; that, if suffered to operate according to its tendency, it would destroy the well-being of the universe, by excluding God, and righteousness, and peace, from the whole system; that seeing it aims destruction at universal good, and tends to universal anarchy and mischief, it is, in those respects, an infinite evil, and deserving of endless punishment; and that, in whatever instance God exercises forgiveness, it is not without respect to that public expression of his displeasure against it which was uttered in the death of his Son. These, brethren, are the sentiments which furnish us with motives for self-abhorrence; under their influence millions have repented in dust and ashes.

But those, on the other hand, who embrace the Socinian system, entertain diminutive notions of the evil of sin. They consider all evil propensities in men (except those which are accidentally contracted by education or example) as being, in every sense, natural to them; supposing that they were originally created with them: they cannot, therefore, be offensive to God, unless he could be offended with the work of his own hands for being what he made it. Hence, it may be, Socinian writers, when speaking of the sins of men, describe them in the language of palliation,—language tending to



convey an idea of pity, but not of blame. Mr. Belsham, speaking of sin, calls it "human frailty," and the subjects of it "the frail and erring children of men."\* The following positions are for substance maintained by Dr. Priestley, in his treatise on *Necessity*: "That, for any thing we know, it might have been as impossible for God to make all men sinless and happy, as to have made them infinite;" that all the evil there is in sin arises from its tendency to injure the creature; that if God punish sin, it is not because he is so displeased with it as in any case to "take vengeance" on the sinner, sacrificing his happiness to the good of the whole; but, knowing that it tends to do the sinner harm, he puts him in temporary pain, not only for the warning of others, but for his own good, with a view to correct the bad disposition in him; that what is threatened against sin is of such a trifling account, that it needs not be an object of dread. "No necessarian," says he, "supposes that any of the human race will suffer eternally; but that future punishments will answer the same purpose as temporal ones are found to do, all of which tend to good, and are evidently admitted for that purpose; so that God, the author of all, is as much to be adored for what we *suffer* as for what we *enjoy*, his *intention* being equally kind in both. And since God has created us for happiness, what misery can we fear? If we be really intended for ultimate, unlimited happiness, it is no matter, to a truly resigned person, *when*, or *where*, or *how*."† Sin is so trifling an affair, it seems, and the punishment threatened against it of so little consequence, that we may be quite resigned, and indifferent whether we go immediately to heaven, or whether we first pass through the depths of hell!

The question at present is not, Which of these representations is true, or consonant to Scripture? but, Which has the greatest tendency to promote repentance? If repentance be promoted by a view of the evil of sin, this question, it is presumed, may be considered as decided.

Another sentiment intimately connected with that of the evil of sin, and equally necessary to promote repentance, is, *The equity and goodness of the Divine law*. No man ever truly repented for the breach of a law the precepts of which he considered as too strict, or the penalties too severe. In proportion as such an opinion prevails, it is impossible but that repentance must be precluded. Now the precept of the Divine law requires us to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. It allows not of any deviation or relaxation during the whole of our existence. The penalty by which this holy law is enforced is nothing less than the curse of Almighty God. But, according to Mr. Belsham, if God "mark and punish *every* instance of transgression," he must be a "*merciless tyrant*;" and we must be "tempted to wish that the reins of universal government were in better hands."‡ Mr. Belsham, perhaps, would not deny that perfect obedience *is* required by the law, according to the plain meaning of the words by which it is expressed, or that the curse of God is threatened against every one that continueth not in *all things* written in the book of the law to do them; but then this rule is so strict that to "mark and punish every instance" of deviation from it would be severe and cruel. It seems, then, that God has given us a law by the terms of which he cannot abide; that justice itself requires him, if not to abate the precept, yet to remit the penalty, and connive at smaller instances of transgression. I need not inquire how much this reflects upon the moral character and government of God. Suffice it at present to say, that such views must of necessity preclude *repentance*. If the law which forbids "every instance" of human folly be unreasonably strict, and the penalty which threatens the curse of

\* "Sermon on the Importance of Truth," pp. 33—35.

† Pages 118, 122, 65, 149, 150, 128.

‡ Sermon, p. 34.

the Almighty on every one that continueth not in *all things* therein written be indeed cruel, then it must so far be unreasonable for any sinner to be required to repent for the breach of it. On the contrary, God himself should rather repent for making such a law than the sinner for breaking it!

*Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ* is another essential part of true conversion. Faith is credence or belief. Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ is belief of the gospel of salvation through his name. A real belief of the gospel is necessarily accompanied with a *trust* or *confidence* in him for the salvation of our souls. The term *believe* itself sometimes expresses this idea; particularly in 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." This belief, or trust, can never be fairly understood of a mere confidence in his veracity, as to the truth of his doctrine; for if that were all, the *ability* of Christ would stand for nothing; and we might as well be said to trust in Peter, or John, or Paul, as in Christ, seeing we believe their testimony to be valid as well as his. Believing, it is granted, does not necessarily, and in all cases, involve the idea of *trust*, for which I here contend; this matter being determined by the nature of the testimony. Neither Peter, nor any of the apostles, ever pretended that their blood, though it might be shed in martyrdom, would be the price of the salvation of sinners. We may, therefore, credit their testimony, without trusting in them, or *committing* any thing, as Paul expresses it, *into their hands*. But Christ's blood is testified of as the way, and the only way, of salvation. He is said to be "the propitiation for our sins;" and "by himself to have purged our sins."—"Through his blood we have forgiveness."—"Neither is their salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."—"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Hence it follows that, to believe his testimony, must of necessity involve in it a trusting in him for the salvation of our souls.

If this be a just representation of faith in Jesus Christ, we cannot be at a loss to decide which of the systems in question has the greatest tendency to promote it; and as faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ is essential to true conversion, we cannot hesitate in concluding which has the greatest tendency to turn a sinner from the evil of his ways. Not to mention, at present, how Socinian writers disown an "implicit belief" in the testimony of the sacred writers,\* and how they lean to their own understanding, as the criterion by which Scripture is to be tried; that which I would here insist upon is, That, upon their principles, all *trust* or *confidence* in Christ for salvation is utterly excluded. Not only are those principles unadapted to induce us to trust in Christ, but they directly tend to turn off our attention and affection from him. Dr. Priestley does not appear to consider him as "the way of a sinner's salvation" in any sense whatever, but goes about to explain the words of Peter, Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other," &c., not of salvation to eternal life, but "of salvation, or deliverance, from bodily diseases."† And another writer of the same cast, (Dr. Harwood,) in a volume of Sermons lately published, treats the sacred writers with still less ceremony. Paul had said, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;" but this writer, as if he designed to affront the apostle, makes use of his own words in order to contradict him. "Other foundation than this can no man lay," says he; "other expectations are visionary and groundless, and all hopes founded upon any thing else than a *good moral life* are merely imaginary, and contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel," p. 193. Whether these things be not aimed to

\* Dr. Priestley's Defence of Unitarianism, 1787, p. 66.

† Fam. Let. XVI.

raze the foundation on which the church is built; and whether this be any other than "stumbling at the stumbling-stone," and a "setting him at nought," in the great affair for which he came into the world, let every Christian judge. It particularly deserves the serious consideration, not only of the above writers, but of those who are any way inclined to their mode of thinking; for if it should be so that the death of Christ, as a propitiatory sacrifice, is the only medium through which sinners can be accepted of God, and if they should be found fighting against God, and rejecting the only way of escape, the consequence may be such as to cause the ears of every one that heareth it to tingle. Meanwhile, it requires but little penetration to discover that whatever takes away the only foundation of a sinner's confidence cannot be adapted to promote it.

Brethren, examine these matters to the bottom, and judge for yourselves, whether you might not as well expect grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, as to see repentance towards God, or faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, proceeding from Socinian principles.

The foregoing observations serve to show *what may be expected* from the Socinian doctrine, according to the nature of things: let us next make some inquiry into *matters of fact*. We may judge, from the nature of the seed sown, what will be the harvest; but a view of what the harvest actually is may afford still greater satisfaction.

First, then, let it be considered whether Socinian congregations have ever abounded in conversions of the profane to a life of holiness and devotedness to God. Dr. Priestley acknowledges that "the gospel, when it was first preached by the apostles, produced a wonderful change in the lives and manners of persons of all ages," Let. Unb. Pref. ix. Now, if the doctrine which he and others preach be the same, for substance, as that which they preached, one might expect to see some considerable degree of similarity in the effects. But is any thing like this to be seen in Socinian congregations? Has that kind of preaching which leaves out the doctrines of man's lost condition by nature, and salvation by grace only through the atonement of Christ, and substitutes, in their place, the doctrine of mercy without an atonement, the simple humanity of Christ, the efficacy of repentance and obedience, &c. . . . has this kind of preaching, I say, ever been known *to lay much hold on the hearts and consciences of men?* The way in which that "wonderful change" was effected, in the lives and manners of people who attended the first preaching of the gospel, was by the word preached *laying hold on their hearts*. It was a distinguishing mark of primitive preaching, that it "commended itself to every man's conscience." People could not in general sit unconcerned under it. We are told of some who were "cut to the heart," and took counsel to slay the preachers; and of others who were "pricked in the heart," and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But, in both cases, the *heart* was the mark at which the preacher aimed, and which his doctrine actually reached. Has the preaching of the Socinians any such effect as this? Do they so much as expect it should? Were any of their hearers, by any means, to feel pricked in their hearts, and come to them with the question, What shall we do? would they not pity them as enthusiasts, and be ready to suspect that they had been among the Calvinists? If any counsel were given would it not be such as must tend to impede their repentance, rather than promote it; and, instead of directing them to Jesus Christ, as was the practice of the primitive preachers, would they not endeavour to lead them into another course?

Socinian writers cannot so much as *pretend* that their doctrine has been used to convert profligate sinners to the love of God and holiness. Dr.

Priestley's scheme will not enable him to account for such changes, where Christianity has ceased to be a *novelty*. The absolute novelty of the gospel, when first preached, he represents as the cause of its wonderful efficacy; but in the present age, among persons who have long heard it, and have contracted vicious habits notwithstanding, he looks for no such effects. He confesses himself "less solicitous about the conversion of unbelievers *who are much advanced in life* than of younger persons, and that because he despairs of the principles of Christianity having much effect upon the lives of those whose dispositions and habits are already formed."\* Sometimes he reckons that the great body of primitive Christians must have been "well-disposed with respect to moral virtue, even before their conversion to Christianity; else," he thinks, "they could not have been so ready to have abandoned their vices, and to embrace a doctrine which required the strictest purity and rectitude of conduct, and even to sacrifice their lives in the cause of truth," II. 167, 168. In his treatise on *Philosophical Necessity*, (p. 156,) he declares that, "upon the principles of the necessarian, all late repentance, and especially after long and confirmed habits of vice, is altogether and necessarily ineffectual; there not being sufficient time left to produce a change of disposition and character, which can only be done by a change of conduct, and of proportionably long continuance."

I confess I do not perceive the *consistency* of these passages with each other. By the power of *novelty* a wonderful change was produced in the lives and manners of men; and yet the body of them must have been well-disposed with respect to moral virtue—that is, they must have been in such a state as not to need any wonderful change—else they could not have been so ready to abandon their vices. A wonderful change was produced in the lives and manners of men *of all ages*; and yet there is a certain age in which repentance is "altogether and necessarily ineffectual." Inconsistent, however, as these positions may be, one thing is sufficiently evident; namely, that the author considers the conversion of profligates, of the present age, as an object of despair. Whatever the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John may affirm, that according to Dr. Priestley affords but very little, if any, hope to those who in Scripture are distinguished by the name of "sinners," "chief of sinners," and "lost." He does "not expect such conversion of profligate and habitually wicked men as shall make any remarkable change in their lives and characters. Their dispositions and habits are already formed, so that it can hardly be supposed to be in the power of new and better principles to change them." It cannot be unnatural, or uncandid, to suppose that these observations were made from *experience*; or that Dr. Priestley writes in this manner on account of his not being used to see any such effects arise from his ministry, or the ministry of those of his sentiments.

There is a sort of preaching, however, even since the days of inspiration, and where Christianity has ceased to be a *novelty*, which has been attended in a good degree with similar effects to that of the apostles. Whatever was the cause, or however it is to be accounted for, there have been those whose labours have turned *many*, yea, many *profligates*, to righteousness; and that by preaching the very doctrines which Dr. Priestley charges with being the "corruptions of Christianity," and which a once-humble admirer of his

\* Let. Unb. II. Pref.—It is true Dr. Priestley is not here speaking of the profligates among nominal Christians, but of those among avowed infidels. This, however, makes nothing to the argument. The dispositions and habits of profane nominal Christians are as much formed as those of avowed infidels; and their conversion to a holy life is as much an object of despair as the other. Yea, Dr. Priestley in the same place acknowledges that "to be mere nominal Christians is worse than to be no Christians at all."

attempted to ridicule.\* It is well known what sort of preaching it was that produced such great effects in many nations of Europe, about the time of the Reformation. Whatever different sentiments were professed by the Reformers, I suppose they were so far agreed, that the doctrines of human depravity, the Deity and atonement of Christ, justification by faith, and sanctification by the influence of the Holy Spirit, were the great topics of their ministry.

Since the Reformation there have been special seasons in the churches in which a religious concern has greatly prevailed, and multitudes were turned from their evil ways; some from an open course of profaneness, and others from the mere form of godliness to the power of it. Much of this sort of success attended the labours of Perkins, Bolton, Taylor, Herbert, Hildersham, Blackerby, Gouge, Whitaker, Bunyan, great numbers of the ejected ministers, and many since their time, in England; of Livingstone, Bruce, Rutherford, M'Culloch, M'Laurin, Robe, Balfour, Sutherland, and others, in Scotland; of Francke and his fellow labourers in Germany; and of Stoddard, Edwards, Tennant, Buel, and many others, in America.† And what Dr. Watts and Dr. Guyse, in their Preface to Mr. Edwards's Narrative, said of his success, and that of some others, in America, might with equal truth have been said of the rest: "That it was the common plain protestant doctrine of the Reformation, without stretching towards the Antimonians on the one side, or the Arminians on the other, that the Spirit of God had been pleased to honour with such illustrious success."

Nor are such effects peculiar to past ages. A considerable degree of the same kind of success has attended the Calvinistic churches in North America, within the last ten years; especially in the states of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Nor is it peculiar to the western world, though they have been greatly favoured. I believe there are hundreds of ministers now in this kingdom, some in the Established Church, and others out of it, who could truly say to a considerable number of their auditors, as Paul said to the Corinthians, "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men"—"ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." There are, likewise, hundreds of congregations, which might with propriety be addressed in the language of the same apostle to the same people, "And such were some of you (viz. fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners); but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified." And those ministers by whose instrumentality these effects were produced, like their predecessors before mentioned, have dwelt principally on the protestant doctrines of man's lost condition by nature, and salvation by grace only, through the atoning blood of Christ, together with the necessity of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. When, therefore, they see such effects attend their labours, they think themselves warranted to ascribe them, as the apostle did, to "the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11.

The solid and valuable effects produced by this kind of preaching are attested by the late Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, as well as by Dr. Watts and Dr. Guyse. "Presumption and despair," said that ingenious writer, "are the two dangerous extremes to which mankind are prone in religious concerns. Charging home sin precludes the first, proclaiming redemption prevents the last. This has been the method which the Holy Spirit has thought fit to seal and succeed in the hands of his ministers. Wickliffe,

\* See Fam. Let. XXII. P. S.

† See Gillies' Hist. Coll.

Luther, Knox, Latimer, Gilpin, Bunyan, Livingstone, Francke, Blair, Elliot, Edwards, Whitefield, Tennant, and *all* who have been eminently blessed to the revival of *practical godliness*, have constantly availed themselves of this method; and, prejudice apart, it is impossible to deny that great and excellent moral effects have followed.”\*

Should it be alleged that Mr. Robinson, before he died, changed his opinions in these matters, and reckoned all such things as these *enthusiasm*, it might be answered, A change of opinion in Mr. Robinson can make no change in the “facts,” as he justly calls them, which he did himself the honour to record. Besides, the effects of this kind of preaching are not only recorded by Mr. Robinson, but by those who triumph in his conversion to their principles. Dr. Priestley professes to think highly of the Methodists, and acknowledges that they have “civilized and christianized a great part of the uncivilized and unchristianized part of this country.”† Also, in his *Discourses on Various Subjects*, p. 375, he allows their preaching to produce “more striking effects” than that of Socinians, and goes about to account for it.

A matter of fact, so notorious as this, and of so much consequence in the controversy, requires to be well accounted for. Dr. Priestley seems to have felt the force of the objection that might be made to his principles on this ground; and therefore attempts to obviate it. But by what medium is this attempted? The same principle by which he tries to account for the wonderful success of the gospel in the primitive ages is to account for the effects produced by such preaching as that of the Methodists: *the ignorance of their auditors giving what they say to them the force of NOVELTY*. The Doctor is pleased to add, “Our people having in general been brought up in habits of virtue, such great changes in character and conduct are less necessary in their case.”

A few remarks in reply to the above shall close this letter. First, If novelty be indeed that efficacious principle which Dr. Priestley makes it to be, one should think it were desirable, every century or two, at least, to have a new dispensation of religion.

Secondly, If the great success of the primitive preachers was owing to this curious cause, is it not extraordinary that they themselves should never be acquainted with it, nor communicate a secret of such importance to their successors? They are not only silent about it, but, in some cases, appear to act upon a contrary principle. Paul, when avowing the subject-matter of his ministry before Agrippa, seemed to disclaim every thing *novel*, declaring that he had said “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.” And as to the cause of their success, they seem never to have thought of any thing but “the hand of the Lord that was with them”—“The working of his mighty power”—“Who caused them to triumph in Christ, making manifest the savour of his knowledge by them in every place.”

Thirdly, If novelty be what Dr. Priestley makes it to be, the plea of Dives had much more of truth in it than the answer of Abraham. He pleaded that “If one rose from the dead, men would repent:” the novelty of the thing, he supposed, must strike them. But Abraham answered as if he had no notion of the power of mere novelty, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Fourthly, If the success of the apostles was owing to the novelty of their mission, it might have been expected that at Athens, where a taste for *hear-*

\* Translation of Claude, Vol. II. p. 364. Note.

† Fam. Let. VII.

ing and telling of new things occupied the whole attention of the people, their success would have been the greatest. Every body knows that a congeniality of mind in an audience to the things proposed wonderfully facilitates the reception of them. Now, as the gospel was as much of a novelty to them as to the most barbarous nations, and as they were possessed of a peculiar turn of mind which delighted in every thing of that nature, it might have been expected, on the above hypothesis, that a harvest of souls would there have been gathered in. But instead of this, the gospel is well known to have been less successful in this famous city than in many other places.

Fifthly, Some of the most striking effects, both in early and later ages, were not accompanied with the circumstance of novelty. The Sermon of Peter to the inhabitants of Jerusalem contained no *new* doctrine; it only pressed upon them the same things, for substance, which they had heard and rejected from the lips of Christ himself; and, on a prejudgment of the issue by the usual course of things, they would probably have been considered as more likely to reject Peter's doctrine than that of Christ; because, when once people have set their hands to a business, they are generally more loth to relinquish it, and own themselves in the wrong, than at first to forbear to engage in it. And as to later times, the effects produced by the preaching of Whitefield, Edwards, and others, were many of them upon people not remarkably ignorant, but who had attended preaching of a similar kind all their lives without any such effect. The *former*, it is well known, preached the same doctrines in Scotland and America as the people were used to hear every Lord's day; and that with great effect among persons of a lukewarm and careless description. The *latter*, in his *Narrative of the Work of God in and about Northampton*, represents the inhabitants as having been "a rational and understanding people." Indeed, they must have been such, or they could not have understood the compass of argument contained in Mr. Edwards's *Sermons on Justification*, which were delivered about that time, and are said to have been the means of great religious concern among the hearers. Nor were these effects produced by airs and gestures, or any of those extraordinary things in the manner of the preacher which give a kind of novelty to a sermon, and sometimes tend to move the affections of the hearers. Mr. Prince, who, it seems, had often heard Mr. Edwards preach, and observed the remarkable conviction which attended his ministry, describes, in his *Christian History*, his manner of preaching. "He was a preacher," says he, "of a low and moderate voice, a natural delivery, and without any agitation of body, or any thing else in the manner to excite attention, except his habitual and great solemnity, looking and speaking as in the presence of God, and with a weighty sense of the matter delivered."\*

Sixthly, Suppose the circumstance of novelty to have great efficacy, the question is, with respect to such preaching as that of the Methodists, Whether it has efficacy enough to render *the truth of the doctrine* of no account. It is well known that the main doctrines which the Methodists have taught are *man's lost condition by nature, and salvation by the atonement of Christ*; but these, according to Dr. Priestley, are false doctrines; no part of Christianity, but the "corruptions" of it; and "such as must tend, if they have any effect, to relax the obligations to virtue." But if so, how came it to pass that the preaching of them should "civilize and christianize mankind?" Novelty may do wonders, it is granted; but still the nature of those wonders will correspond with the nature of the principles taught. All that it can be supposed to do is to give additional energy to the principles which it accompanies. The heating of a furnace seven times hotter than usual would

\* Gillies's Hist. Coll. II. 196.

not endue it with the properties of water; and water, put into the most powerful motion, would not be capable of producing the effects of fire. One would think it were equally evident that falsehood, though accompanied with novelty, could never have the effect of truth.

Once more, It may be questioned whether the generality of the people who make up the Socinian congregations stand in less need of a change of character and conduct than others. Mr. Belsham says that "rational Christians are often represented as indifferent to practical religion;" and admits, though with apparent reluctance, that "there has been some plausible ground for the accusation."\* Dr. Priestley admits the same thing, and they both go about to account for it in the same way.† Now, whether their method of accounting for it be just or not, they admit the fact; and hence we may conclude that the generality of "rational Christians" are not so righteous as to need no repentance; and that the reason why their preaching does not turn sinners to righteousness is not owing to their want of an equal proportion of sinners to be turned.

But supposing the Socinian congregations were generally so virtuous as to need no great change of character; or, if they did need it, so well informed that nothing could strike them as a novelty; that is not the case with the bulk of mankind amongst whom they live. Now if a great change of character may be produced by the mere power of novelty, why do not Dr. Priestley and those of his sentiments go forth, like some others, to the *highways and hedges*? Why does not he surprise the benighted populace into the love of God and holiness with his *new doctrines*? (New he must acknowledge they are to them.) If false doctrine, such as that which the Methodists have taught, may, through the power of novelty, do such wonders, what might not be expected from the true? I have been told that Dr. Priestley has expressed a wish to go into the streets, and preach to the common people. Let him, or those of his sentiments, make the trial. Though the people of Birmingham have treated him so uncivilly, I hope both he and they would meet with better treatment in other parts of the country; and if, by the power of novelty, they can turn but a few sinners from the error of their ways, and save their souls from death, it will be an object worthy of their attention.

But should Dr. Priestley, or any others of his sentiments, go forth on such an errand, and still retain their principles, they must reverse the declaration of our Lord, and say, *We come not to call sinners, but the righteous to repentance*. All their hope must be in the uncontaminated youth, or the better sort of people, whose habits in the path of vice are not so strong but that they may be overcome. Should they, in the course of their labours, behold a malefactor approaching the hour of his execution, what must they do? Alas! like the priest and the Levite, they must *pass by on the other side*. They could not so much as admonish him to repentance with any degree of hope, because they consider "all late repentance, and especially after long and confirmed habits of vice, as absolutely and necessarily ineffectual."‡ Happy for many a poor wretch of that description, happy especially for the poor thief upon the cross, that Jesus Christ acted on a different principle!

These, brethren, are matters that come within the knowledge of every man of observation; and it behoves you, in such cases, to know "not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power."

\* Sermon, p. 32. † Disc. Var. Sub. p. 95. ‡ Ibid. p. 238. Also Phil. Nec. p. 156.



## LETTER III.

## CONVERSION OF PROFESSED UNBELIEVERS.

Socinian writers are very sanguine on the tendency of their views of things to convert infidels; namely, Jews, heathens, and Mahometans. They reckon that our notions of the Trinity form the grand obstacle to their conversion. Dr. Priestley often suggests that, so long as we maintain the Deity of Jesus Christ, there is no hope of converting the Jews, because this doctrine contradicts the first principle of their religion, *the unity of God*. Things not altogether, but nearly similar, are said concerning the conversion of heathens and Mahometans, especially the latter. On this subject, the following observations are submitted to your consideration.

With respect to the *Jews*, they know very well that those who believe in the Deity of Christ *profess* to believe in the unity of God; and if *they* will not admit this to be consistent, they must depart from what is plainly implied in the language of their ancestors. If the Jews in the time of Christ had thought it impossible, or, which is the same thing, inconsistent with the unity of God, that God the Father should have a Son equal to himself, how came they to attach the idea of *equality* to that of sonship? Jesus asserted that God was his "own Father;" which they understood as making himself "equal with God;" and therefore they sought to kill him as a blasphemer. Had the Jews affixed those ideas of sonship which are entertained by our opponents, namely, as implying nothing more than simple humanity, why did they accuse Jesus of blasphemy for assuming it? They did not deny that to be God's *own Son* was to be equal with the Father; nor did they allege that such an equality would destroy the Divine unity: a thought of this kind seems never to have occurred to their minds. The idea to which they objected was, *that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God*; and hence, it is probable, the profession of this great article was considered in the apostolic age as the criterion of Christianity, Acts viii. 37. Were this article admitted by the modern Jews, they must reason differently from their ancestors, if they scrupled to admit that Christ is equal with the Father.

The Jews were greatly offended at our Lord's words; and his not explaining them so as to remove the stumbling-block out of the way may serve to teach us how we ought to proceed in removing stumbling-blocks out of the way of their posterity. *For this cause they sought to kill him*—"because he had said that God was his Father, *making himself equal with God*."—"Jesus said, I and my Father are one. Then they took up stones to stone him." When he told them of "many good works that he had shown them," and asked, "For which of those works do ye stone me?" they replied, "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because thou, *being a man, makest thyself God*." Hence it is evident that, whether Jesus Christ be truly God, or not, they understood him as asserting that he *was* so; that is, they understood his claiming the relation of *God's own Son*, and declaring that *He and his Father were one*, as implying so much. This was their stumbling-block. Nor does it appear that Jesus did any thing towards removing it out of their way. It is certain he did not so remove it as to afford them the least satisfaction; for they continued to think him guilty of the same blasphemy to the last, and for that adjudged him worthy of death, Matt. xxvi. 63, 66. If Jesus *never thought of being equal with God*, it is a pity there should have been such a misunderstanding between them,—a misunderstanding that proved the occasion of putting him to death!

Such an hypothesis, to be sure, may answer one end; it may give us a more favourable idea of the conduct of the Jews than we have been wont to entertain. If it does not entirely justify their procedure, it greatly extenuates it. They erred, it seems, in imagining that Jesus, by declaring himself *the Son of God*, made himself *equal with God*; and thus, through mistaking his meaning, put him to death as a blasphemer. But then it might be pleaded, on their behalf, that Jesus never suggested that they were in an error in this matter; that, instead of informing them that the name *Son of God* implied nothing more than simple humanity, he went on to say, among other things, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" and instead of disowning with abhorrence the idea of making himself *God*, he seemed to justify it, by arguing from the less to the greater—from the image of the thing to the thing itself, John x. 34-36. Now, these things considered, should an impartial jury sit in judgment upon their conduct, one would think they could not, with Stephen, bring it in *murder*; to make the most of it, it could be nothing worse than manslaughter. All this may tend to conciliate the Jews, as it tends to roll away the reproach which, in the esteem of Christians, lies upon their ancestors for crucifying the Lord of glory; but whether it will have any influence towards their conversion, is another question. It is possible that, in proportion as it confirms their good opinion of their forefathers, it may confirm their ill opinion of Jesus, for having, by his obscure and ambiguous language, given occasion for such a misunderstanding between them. Could the Jews but once be brought to feel that temper of mind which it is predicted in their own prophets they shall feel—could they but "look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born"—I should be under no apprehensions respecting their acknowledging his proper Divinity, or embracing him as the great atonement, to the "fountain" of whose blood they would joyfully repair, that they might be cleansed from their sin and their uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 10; xiii. 1.

Nearly the same things might be observed respecting *heathens* and *Mahometans*. We may so model the gospel as almost to accommodate it to their taste; and by this means we may come nearer together: but whether, in so doing, we shall not be rather converted to them, than they to us, deserves to be considered. Christianity may be so heathenized that a man may believe in it, and yet be no Christian. Were it true, therefore, that Socinianism had a tendency to induce professed infidels, by meeting them, as it were, half way, to take upon them the Christian name, still it would not follow that it was of any real use. The popish missionaries, of the last century, in China, acted upon the principle of accommodation; they gave up the main things in which Christians and heathens had been used to differ, and allowed the Chinese every favourite species of idolatry. The consequence was, they had a great many converts, such as they were; but thinking people looked upon the missionaries as more converted to heathenism, than the Chinese heathens to Christianity.\*

But even this effect is more than may be expected from Socinian doctrines among the heathen. The popish missionaries had engines to work with which Socinians have not. They were sent by an authority which, at that time, had weight in the world; and their religion was accompanied with pomp and superstition. These were matters which, though far from recommending their mission to the approbation of serious Christians, yet would be sure to recommend it to the Chinese. They stripped the gospel of all

\* Millar's Propagation of Christianity, Vol. II. pp. 388, 438.

its *real* glory, and, in its place, substituted a *false* glory. But Socinianism, while it divests the gospel of all that is interesting and affecting to the souls of men, substitutes nothing in its place. If it be Christianity at all, it is, as the ingenious Mrs. Barbauld is said in time past to have expressed it, "Christianity in the frigid zone." It may be expected, therefore, that no considerable number of professed infidels will ever think it worthy of their attention. Like *the Jew*, they will pronounce every attempt to convert them by these accommodating principles *nugatory*; and be ready to ask, with him, *What they shall do more, by embracing Christianity, than they already do.\**

Dr. Priestley, however, is for *coming to action*. "Let a free intercourse be opened," says he, "between Mahometans and rational, that is, Unitarian Christians,† and I shall have no doubt with respect to the consequence." And, again, "Let the Hindoos, as well as the Mahometans, become acquainted with our literature, and have free intercourse with *Unitarian Christians*, and I have no doubt but the result will be in favour of Christianity."‡ So, then, when heathens are to be converted, Trinitarians, like those of Gideon's army that bowed down their knees to drink, must sit at home; and the whole of the expedition, it seems, must be conducted by Unitarians, as by the three hundred men that lapped. Poor Trinitarians, deemed unworthy of an intercourse with heathens! Well, if you must be denied, as by a kind of *Test Act*, the privilege of bearing arms in this Divine war, surely you have a right to expect that those who shall be possessed of it should act valiantly, and do exploits. But what ground have you on which to rest your expectations?—None, except Dr. Priestley's good conceit of his opinions. When was it known that any considerable number of heathens or Mahometans were converted by the Socinian doctrine? Sanguine as the Doctor is on this subject, where are the *facts* on which his expectations are founded?

Trinitarians, however, whether Dr. Priestley think them worthy or not, have gone among the heathens, and that not many years ago, and preached what they thought the gospel of Christ; and I may add, from facts that cannot be disputed, with considerable success. The *Dutch*, the *Danes*, and the *English* have each made some attempts in the East, and, I hope, not without some good effects. If we were to call that conversion which many professors of Christianity would call so without any scruple, we might boast of the conversion of a great many thousands in those parts. But it is acknowledged that many of the conversions in the East were little, if any thing, more than a change of denomination. The greatest and best work, and the most worthy of the name of conversion, of which I have read, is that which has taken place by the labours of the Anglo-Americans among the natives. They have, indeed, wrought wonders. Mr. Elliot, the first minister who engaged in this work, went over to New England in 1632; and being warmed with a holy zeal for converting the natives, learned their language, and preached to them in it. He also, with great labour, translated the Bible, and some English treatises, into the same language. God made him eminently useful for the turning of these poor heathens to himself. He

\* Mr. Levi's Letters to Dr. Priestley, pp. 76, 77

† "Rational, that is, Unitarian Christians."—Why need Dr. Priestley be so particular in informing his reader that a *rational* Christian signifies a *Unitarian* Christian? To be sure, all the world knew, long enough ago, that *rationality* was confined to the Unitarians! Doubtless, they are the people, and wisdom will die with them! When Dr. Priestley speaks of persons of his own sentiments, he calls them "rational Christians;" when, in the same page, he speaks of such as differ from him, he calls them "those who *assume* to themselves the distinguishing title of orthodox." *Considerations on Difference of Opinion*, § 3. Query, Is the latter of these names *assumed* any more than the former; and is Dr. Priestley a fit person to reprove a body of people for assuming a name which implies what their adversaries do not admit?

‡ Let. Unb. II. 116, 117.

settled a number of Christian churches, and ordained elders over them, from among themselves. After a life of unremitted labour in this important undertaking, he died in a good old age, and has ever since been known, both among the English and the natives, by the name of *The Apostle of the American Indians*.

Nor were these converts like many of those in the East, who professed they knew not what, and, in a little time, went off again as fast as they came: the generality of them understood and felt what they professed, and persevered to the end of their lives. Mr. Elliot's example stimulated many others: some in his lifetime, and others after his death, laboured much, and were blessed to the conversion of thousands among the Indians. The names and labours of Bourn, Fitch, Mahew, Pierson, Gookin, Thatcher, Rawson, Treat, Tupper, Cotton, Walter, Sargeant, Davenport, Park, Horton, Brainerd, and Edwards, are remembered with joy and gratitude in those benighted regions of the earth. Query, Were ever any such effects as these wrought by preaching Socinian doctrines?

Great things have been done among the heathens, of late years, by the *Moravians*. About the year 1733, they sent missionaries to *Greenland*—a most inhospitable country indeed, but containing about ten thousand inhabitants, all enveloped in pagan darkness. After the labour of several years, apparently in vain, success attended their efforts; and in the course of twenty or thirty years, about seven hundred heathens are said to have been baptized, and to have lived the life of Christians.\* They have done great good also in the most northern parts of North America, among the *Esquimaux*; and still more among the negroes in the West India islands, where, at the close of 1788, upwards of *thirteen thousand* of those poor, injured, and degraded people were formed into Christian societies. The views of Moravians, it is true, are different from ours in several particulars, especially in matters relating to church government and discipline; but they appear to possess a great deal of godly simplicity; and as to the doctrines which they inculcate, they are, mostly, what we esteem evangelical. The doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ, in particular, forms the great subject of their ministry. The first person in Greenland who appeared willing to receive the gospel was an old man who came to the missionaries for instruction. "We told him," say they, "as well as we could, of the creation of man, and the intent thereof—of the fall and corruption of nature—of the redemption effected by Christ—of the resurrection of all men, and eternal happiness or damnation." They inform us, afterwards, that the doctrine of the cross, or "the Creator's taking upon him human nature, and dying for our sins," was the most powerful means of impressing the minds of the heathen, and of turning their hearts to God. "On this account," they add, "we determined (like Paul) to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Now consider, brethren, were there ever any such effects as the above wrought by the Socinian doctrine? If there were, let them be brought to light. Nay, let a single instance be produced of a Socinian teacher having so much virtue or benevolence in him as to make the attempt,—so much virtue or benevolence as to venture among a race of barbarians, merely with a view to their conversion.

But we have unbelievers at home; and Dr. Priestley, persuaded of the tendency of his principles to convert, has lately made some experiments upon them, as being within his reach. He has done well. There is nothing like *experiment*, in religion as well as in philosophy. As to what tendency his sentiments *would have* upon heathens and Mahometans, provided a free intercourse could be obtained, it is all conjecture. The best way to know

\* See Crantz's History of Greenland.

their efficacy is by *trial*; and trial has been made. Dr. Priestley has addressed *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, and *Letters to the Jews*. Whether this seed will spring up, it is true, we must not yet decide. Some little time after he had published, however, he himself acknowledged, in his *Letters to Mr. Hammon*, "I do not know that my book has converted a single unbeliever." Perhaps he might say the same still; and that, not only of his *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, but of those *to the Jews*.

If the opinion of the Jews may in any degree be collected from the answer of their champion, *Mr. David Levi*, so far are they from being convinced of the truth of Christianity by Dr. Priestley's writings, that they suspect whether he himself be a Christian. "Your doctrine," says Mr. Levi, "is so opposite to what I always understood to be the principles of Christianity, that I must ingenuously confess I am greatly puzzled to reconcile your principles to the attempt. What! a writer that asserts that *the miraculous conception of Jesus does not appear to him to be sufficiently authenticated, and that the original Gospel of St. Matthew did not contain it*, set up for a defender of Christianity against the Jews, is such an inconsistency as I did not expect to meet with in a philosopher, whose sole pursuit hath been in search of truth. You are pleased to declare, in plain terms, *that you do not believe in the miraculous conception of Jesus, and that you are of opinion that he was the legitimate son of Joseph*. After such assertions as these, how you can be entitled to the appellation of 'a Christian,' in the strict sense of the word, is to me really incomprehensible. If I am not greatly mistaken, I verily believe that the honour of Jesus, and the propagation of Christianity, are things of little moment in your serious thoughts, notwithstanding all your boasted sincerity." To say nothing of the opinion of the Jews concerning *what is Christianity* having all the weight that is usually attributed to the judgment of impartial bystanders, the above quotations afford but little reason to hope for their conversion to Christianity by Socinian doctrines.

But still, it may be said, We know not what is to come. True: but this we know, that if any considerable fruit arise from the Addresses above referred to, *it is yet to come*; and not from these Addresses only, but, I am inclined to think, from any thing that has been attempted by Socinians for the conversion of unbelievers.

Is it not a fact that Socinian principles render men indifferent to this great object, and even induce them to treat it with contempt? The *Monthly Reviewers*, (Dec. 1792,)\* in reviewing *Mr. Carey's* late publication on this subject, infer from his acknowledgments of the baneful influence of *wicked Europeans* in their intercourse with heathens, and the great corruptions among various denominations of professing Christians, that if so, "far better is the light of nature, as communicated by their Creator, than any light that our officiousness disposes us to carry to them." By Europeans who have communicated their vices to heathens, Mr. Carey undoubtedly meant, not those ministers of the gospel, or those serious Christians, who have gone among them for their good; but navigators, merchants and adventurers, whose sole object was to enrich themselves; and though he acknowledges a great deal of degeneracy and corruption to have infected the Christian world, yet the qualifications which he requires in a missionary might have secured his proposal from censure, and doubtless would have done so, had not the Reviewers been disposed to throw cold water upon

\* The reference here is to Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Carey's valuable pamphlet, "An Inquiry into the obligation of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathen," which excited considerable interest, and led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society, the parent of modern Missionary Institutions.—B.

every such undertaking. If, indeed, there be none to be found among professing Christians, except such as, by their intercourse with heathens, would only render their state worse than it was before, let the design be given up; but if otherwise, the objection is of no force.

The Reviewers will acknowledge that great corruptions have attended the civil government of Europe, not excepting that of our own country, and that we are constantly engaged in dissensions on the subject; yet I have no doubt but they could find certain individuals who, if they were placed in the midst of an uncivilized people, would be capable of affording them substantial assistance—would teach them to establish good laws, good order, and equal liberty. Nor would they think of concluding, because European conquerors and courtiers, knowing no higher motive than self-interest, instead of meliorating the condition of uncivilized nations, have injured it, that therefore it was vain for any European to think of doing otherwise. Neither would they regard the sneers of the enemies of civil liberty and equity, who might deride them as a *little flock* of conceited politicians, or, at best, of inexperienced philanthropists, whose plans might amuse in the closet, but would not bear in real life. Why is it that we are to be sceptical and inactive in nothing but religion?

Had Mr. Carey, after the example of Dr. Priestley, proposed that his *own denomination only* should open an intercourse with heathens, the Reviewers would have accused him of *illiberality*; and now, when he proposes that “other denominations should engage separately in promoting missions,” this, it is said, would be “spreading our religious dissensions over the globe.” How, then, are these gentlemen to be pleased? By sitting still, it should seem, and persuading ourselves that it is impossible to find out what is true religion; or if not, that it is but of little importance to disseminate it. But why is it, I again ask, that we are to be sceptical and inactive in nothing but religion? The result is this: Socinianism, so far from being friendly to the conversion of unbelievers, is neither adapted to the end nor favourable to the means—to those means, at least, by which *it has pleased God to save them that believe*.

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#### LETTER IV.

##### THE ARGUMENT FROM THE NUMBER OF CONVERTS TO SOCINIANISM EXAMINED.

If *facts* be admitted as evidence, perhaps it will appear that Socinianism is not so much adapted to make converts of Jews, heathens, Mahometans, or philosophical unbelievers, as of a speculating sort of people among professing Christians. These in our own country are found, some in the Established Church, and others among the Dissenters. Among people of this description, I suppose, Socinianism has gained considerable ground. Of this Dr. Priestley, and others of his party, are frequently making their boast, Disc. pp. 93, 94. But whether they have any cause for boasting, even in this case, may be justly doubted. In the first place, let it be considered that, though Socinianism may gain ground among speculating *individuals*, yet the congregations where that system, or what bears a near resemblance to it, is taught, are greatly upon the decline. There are, at this time, a great many places of worship in this kingdom, especially among the *Presbyterians* and the *General Baptists*, where the Socinian and Arian doctrines have been taught till the congregations have gradually dwindled away, and there

are scarcely enow left to keep up the form of worship. There is nothing in either of these systems, comparatively speaking, that alarms the conscience, or interests the heart; and therefore the congregations where they are taught, unless kept up by the accidental popularity of a preacher, or some other circumstances distinct from the doctrine delivered, generally fall into decay.

But, further, let us examine a little more particularly what sort of people they, in general, are who are converted to Socinianism. It is an object worthy of inquiry, whether they appear to be modest, humble, serious Christians, such as have known the plague of their own hearts; in whom tribulation hath wrought patience, and patience experience; such as know whom they have believed, and have learned to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord; such as, in their investigation of sentiments, have been used to mingle earnest and humble prayer with patient and impartial inquiry; such, in fine, as have become little children in their own eyes. *If they be*, it is a circumstance of consequence, not sufficient, indeed, to justify their change of sentiments, but to render that change an object of attention. When persons of this description embrace a set of new principles, it becomes a matter of serious consideration what could induce them to do so. *But if they be not*, their case deserves but little regard. When the body of converts to a system are mere speculatists in religion, men of little or no seriousness, and who pay no manner of attention to vital and practical religion, it reflects neither honour on the cause they have espoused, nor dishonour on that which they have rejected. When we see persons of this stamp go over to the Socinian standard, it does not at all surprise us: on the contrary, we are ready to say, as the apostle said of the defection of some of the professors of Christianity in his day, "They went out from us, but they were not of us."

That many of the Socinian converts were previously men of no serious religion, needs no other proof than the acknowledgment of Dr. Priestley, and of Mr. Belsham. "It cannot be denied," says the former, "that many of those who judge so truly, concerning particular tenets in religion, have attained to that cool and unbiassed temper of mind in consequence of becoming more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it." And this indifference to *all religion* is considered by Dr. Priestley as "favourable to a distinguishing between truth and falsehood,"\*

\* Since the publication of the first edition of these Letters, a report has been circulated that Dr. Priestley has been *misrepresented* by this quotation, which also was referred to at the commencement of the Preface. Dr. P., it has been said, in the place from which the passage is taken, "was not commending a total indifference to religion, but the contrary; and his meaning was, not that such a disregard to all religion is a better qualification for discerning truth than a serious temper of mind, but that it is preferable to that bigoted attachment to a system which some people discover."

That Dr. P.'s leading design was to commend a total indifference to religion was never suggested. I suppose this, on the contrary, was to commend good discipline among the Unitarians, for the purpose of promoting religious zeal. His words are (accounting for the want of zeal among them)—"It cannot be denied that many of those who judge so truly, concerning particular tenets in religion, have attained to that cool, unbiassed temper of mind in consequence of becoming more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it. Though, therefore, they are in a more favourable situation for distinguishing between truth and falsehood, they are not likely to acquire a *zeal* for what they conceive to be the truth."

The *leading* design of Dr. P. in this passage, it is allowed, was to recommend good discipline, as friendly to zeal: and, as a previous indifference to religion in general was unfavourable to that temper of mind which he wished to inspire, in this view he is to be understood as blaming it. Yet, in an *incidental* manner, he as plainly acknowledges it to have been favourable for distinguishing between truth and falsehood; and, in this view, he must be understood as commending it. That he does commend it, though in an incidental way, is manifest from his attributing their judging so truly concerning particular tenets in religion to it; and that not merely as an occasion, but as an adequate cause, producing a good effect; rendering the mind more cool and unbiassed than it was before. To suppose that

Disc. p. 65. Much to the same purpose is what Mr. Belsham alleges, (p. 32.) as quoted before, that "men who are most indifferent to the *practice*

Dr. P. does not mean to recommend indifference to religion in general, as friendly to *truth*, (though unfriendly to *zeal*), is supposing him not to mean what he says.

As to the question, Whether Dr. P. means to compare an indifference to religion in general with a serious temper of mind, or with a spirit of bigotry, it cannot be the latter,—unless he considers the characters of whom he speaks as having been formerly bigoted in their attachment to modes and forms; for he is not comparing them with *other people*, but with themselves at a former period. So long as they regarded religion in general, according to his account, they were in a less favourable situation for distinguishing between truth and falsehood than when they came to disregard it. Dr. P.'s own account of these characters seems to agree with mere men of the world, rather than with religious bigots. They were persons, he says, who troubled themselves very little about religion, but who had been led to turn their attention to the dispute concerning the person of Christ, and, by their natural good sense, had decided upon it. To this effect he writes in pages 96, 97, of his "*Discourses on Various Subjects*." Now this is far from answering to the character of religious bigots, or of those who at any time have sustained that character.

But, waving this, let us suppose that the regard which those characters bore towards religion in general was the regard of bigots. In this case they were a kind of Pharisees, attached to modes and forms, which blinded their minds from discovering the truth. Afterwards they approached nearer to the Sadducees, became more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it. The amount of Dr. P.'s position would then be, that the spirit of a Sadducee is preferable, with respect to discerning truth, to that of a Pharisee, possessing more of a cool, unbiassed temper of mind. The reply that I should make to this is, that neither Pharisees nor Sadducees possess that temper of mind of which Dr. P. speaks, but are both "a generation of vipers," different in some respects, but equally malignant towards the true gospel of Christ; and that the humble, the candid, the serious, and the upright inquirers after truth are the only persons likely to find it. And this is the substance of what I advanced in the first page of the Preface, which has been charged as a *misrepresentation*. I never suggested that Dr. P. was comparing the characters in question with the serious or the candid; but rather that, *let the comparison respect whom it might*, his attributing an unbiassed temper of mind to men, in consequence of their becoming indifferent to religion in general, was erroneous; for that he who is not a friend to religion in any mode is an enemy to it in all modes, and ought not to be complimented as being in a favourable situation for distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

A writer in the *Monthly Review* has laboured to bring Mr. Belsham off in the same manner; but instead of affording him any relief, he has betrayed the cause he has espoused, and made Mr. B. reason in a manner unworthy of his abilities. "We apprehend," says this writer, "that Mr. B. does not mean to assert, nor even to intimate, that indifference to religious practice prepared the mind for the admission of *that religious truth which prompts virtuous conduct*." Mr. B., however, *does* intimate, and even assert, that "the men who are the most indifferent to the practice of religion will ever be the first not only to see the absurdity of a popular superstition, but to *embrace a rational system of faith*." Does the Reviewer mean, then, to acknowledge that the rational system *does not include that kind of truth which prompts virtuous conduct*? There is no truth in his expressions but upon this supposition.

But this writer not only informs us what Mr. B. did *not* mean, but what he *did* mean. (One would think the Reviewer of Dr. Williams must have been very intimate with Mr. B.) Mr. Belsham meant, it seems, "that the absurdities of a popular superstition are more apt to strike the mind of those who are *even* indifferent to religion *than* of those who are bigoted in their attachment to particular creeds and rites; and, therefore, that the former will be more inclined to allow reason to mould their faith than the latter."—*Review of Dr. Williams's Answer to Mr. Belsham*. Jan. 1792.

To be sure, if a Reviewer may be allowed to add a few such words as *more*, and *than*, and *even* to Mr. B.'s language, he may smooth its rough edges, and render it less exceptionable; but is it true that this was Mr. B.'s meaning, or that such a meaning would ever have been invented, but to serve a turn?

If there be any way of coming at an author's meaning, it is by his *words*, and by the *scope of his reasoning*; but neither the one nor the other will warrant this construction. Mr. B.'s *words* are these: "The men who are the most indifferent to the practice of religion will ever be the *first* to embrace a rational system of faith." If he intended merely to assert that immoral characters will embrace the truth before bigots, his words are abundantly too strong for his meaning; for though the latter were allowed to be the last in embracing truth, it will not follow that the former will be the *first*. If the rational system were on the side of truth, surely it might be expected that the serious and the upright would be the *first* to embrace it. But this is not pretended. *Serious Christians*, by the acknowledgment of Mrs. Barbauld, are the *last* that come fully into it.

The *scope of Mr. Belsham's* reasoning is equally unfavourable to such a construction as his words are. There is nothing in the objection which he encounters that admits of such an answer. It was not alleged, *That there was a greater proportion of immoral characters than of bigots among the Unitarians*; had this been the charge, the answer put into Mr. B.'s lips might have been in point. But the charge, as he himself expresses it, was simply



of religion, and whose minds, therefore, are least attached to any set of principles, will ever be the first to see the absurdity of a popular superstition, and to embrace a rational system of faith." It is easy to see, one should think, from hence, what sort of characters those are which compose the body of Socinian converts.

Dr. Priestley, however, considers this circumstance as reflecting no dishonour upon his principles. He thinks he has fully accounted for it. So thinks Mr. Belsham; and so think the Monthly Reviewers, in their Review of Mr. Belsham's Sermon.\*

Surely Socinians must be wretchedly driven, or they would not have recourse to such a refuge as that of acknowledging that they hold a gospel the best preparative for which is a *being destitute of all religion!* "What a reflection," says Dr. Williams, in his answer to this sermon, "is here implied on the most eminent reformers of every age, who were the first to see the absurdities of a popular superstition, and the falsity of reigning principles! What a poor compliment to the religious character of Unitarian reformers! According to this account, one might be tempted to ask, Was it by being indifferent to the practice of religion that Mr. Belsham was qualified to see and pronounce Calvinism to be *gloomy* and *erroneous*, an *unamiable* and *melancholy* system? Charity forbids us to think he was thus qualified; and if so, by his own rule he is no very competent judge; except he is pleased to adopt the alternative, that he is only the humble follower of more *sagacious* but *irreligious* guides."

We read of different kinds of preparatives in the Scriptures, but I do not recollect that they contain any thing like the above. Zeal and attention, a disposition to *search* and *pray*, according to Solomon, (Prov. ii. 1—9,) is a preparative for the discovery of truth. The piety of Cornelius, which he exercised according to the opportunities he possessed of obtaining light, was a preparative for his reception of the gospel as soon as he heard it. And this accords with our Lord's declaration, "He that will do his will shall know of his doctrine." On the other hand, the cold indifference of some in the apostolic age, "who received not the love of the truth," but, as it should

this—"Rational Christians are often represented as indifferent to practical religion." To suppose that Mr. B. would account for this by alleging that immoral characters are more likely to embrace the truth than bigots, (unless he denominate all bigots who are not Unitarians,) is supposing him to have left the objection unanswered. How is it that there should be so great a proportion of immoral characters, rather than of *humble, serious, and godly men*, or of what Mr. Belsham calls "practical believers?" This was the spirit of the objection; and if the above construction of Mr. B.'s words be admitted, it remains unanswered.

Let Dr. Priestley, or Mr. Belsham, or any of their advocates, who have charged the above quotations with *misrepresentation*, come forward, and, if they be able, make good the charge. Till this is done, I shall consider them as fair and just, and as including concessions, which, though possibly made in an unguarded moment, contain a *truth* which must prove a millstone about the neck of the Socinian system.

\* I have not scrupled to class the Monthly Reviewers among Socinians. Although in a work of that kind there is frequently, no doubt, a change of hands; yet it is easy to see that, of late years, (a very short interval excepted,) it has been principally, if not entirely, under Socinian direction; and, so far as religion is concerned, has been used as an instrument for the propagation of that system. Impartiality towards Calvinistic writers is not, therefore, to be expected from that quarter. It is true they sometimes affect to stand aloof from all parties, but it is mere affectation. Nothing can be more absurd than to expect them to judge impartially in a cause wherein they themselves are parties; absurd, however, as it is, some persons are weak enough to be imposed upon by their pretences. Perhaps of late years the Monthly Review has more contributed to the spreading of Socinianism than all other writings put together. The plan of that work does not admit of argumentation: a sudden flash of wit is generally reckoned sufficient to discredit a Calvinistic performance; and this just suits the turn of those who are destitute of all religion. A laborious investigation of matters would not suit their temper of mind; they had rather subscribe to the well-known maxim, that "ridicule is the test of truth;" and then, whenever the Reviewers hold up a doctrine as ridiculous, they have nothing to do but to coin the laugh, and conclude it to be a "vulgar error or a popular superstition."

seem, held it with a loose hand, even while they professed it, was equally a preparative for apostacy. We also read of some, in Isaiah's time, who "leaned very much to a life of dissipation;" they "erred through wine." "All tables are full of vomit and filthiness," (saith the prophet, describing one of their assemblies,) "so that there is no place." He adds, "Whom shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" And what is the answer? Were the men who "leaned to a life of dissipation," who loved to suck at the breasts of sensual indulgence, the proper subjects? No: "those that were weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." But now, it seems, the case is altered, and, in order to find out the truth, the most likely way is to be divested of *all religion!*

It is true these things are spoken of what are called "speculative Unitarians," whom Dr. Priestley calls "men of the world," and distinguishes from "serious Christians." He endeavours also to guard his cause by observing that the bulk of professing Christians, or of those who should have ranked as Christians, in every age, had been of this description. It must be acknowledged that there have been lukewarm, dissipated, and merely nominal Christians, in all ages of the church, and in every denomination: I suspect, however, that Dr. Priestley, in order to reduce the state of the church in general to that of the Unitarians, has rather magnified this matter. But, be that as it may, there are *two* circumstances which render it improper for him to reason from this case to the other:—First, whatever bad characters have ranked with other denominations (at least with ours) as to their religious creed, we do not own, or consider them as "converts;" much less do we glory in the spread of our principles, when men of that character profess to embrace them, as this writer does.\* If we speak of converts to our principles, we disown such people, and leave them out of the account, as persons whose walk and conversation, whatever be their speculative opinions, discover them to be "enemies to the cross of Christ." But were the Socinians to do so, it is more than probable that the number of converts of whom they boast would be greatly diminished. Secondly, whenever irreligious characters profess to imbibe our principles, we do not consider their state of mind as friendly to them. That which we account truth is a system of holiness; a system, therefore, which men of "no religion" will never cordially embrace. Persons may, indeed, embrace a notion about the certainty of the Divine decrees, and the necessity of things being as they are to be, whether the proper means be used or not; and they may live in the neglect of all means, and of all practical religion, and may reckon themselves, and be reckoned by some others, among the Calvinists. To such a creed as this, it is allowed, the want of all religion is the best preparative; but then it must be observed that the creed itself is as false as the practice attending it is impure, and as opposite to Calvinism as it is to Scripture and common sense. Our opponents, on the contrary, ascribe many of their conversions to the absence of religion, as their proper cause, granting that "many of those who judge so truly, concerning particular tenets in religion, have attained to that cool, unbiassed temper of mind *in consequence* of becoming more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it." Could this acknowledgment be considered as the mistake of an unguarded moment, it might be overlooked: but it is a *fact*; a fact which, as Dr. Priestley himself expresses it, "cannot be denied;"† a fact, therefore, which must needs prove a millstone about the neck of his system. That doctrine, be it what it may, to which an indifference to religion is friendly, cannot be the gospel, or any thing pertaining to it, but something very near akin to infidelity.

\* Disc. pp. 91, 93, 94.

† Ib. p. 95.

If it be objected, that the immoral character of persons, previously to their embracing a set of principles, ought not to be alleged against the moral tendency of those principles, because, if it were, Christianity itself would be dishonoured by the previous character of many of the primitive Christians, —it is replied, there are two circumstances necessary to render this objection of any force. First, the previous character of the convert, however wicked it may have been, must have *no influence* on his conversion. Secondly, this conversion must have such an influence on him that, whatever may have been his past character, his future life shall be devoted to God. Both these circumstances existed in the case of the primitive Christians; and if the same could be said of the converts to Socinianism, it is acknowledged that all objections from this quarter ought to give way. But this is not the case. Socinian converts are not only allowed, many of them, to be men of *no religion*; but the want of religion, as we have already seen, is allowed to have influenced their conversion. Nor is this all: it is allowed that their conversion to these principles has no such influence upon them as to make any material change in their character for the better. This is a fact tacitly admitted by Mr. Belsham, in that he goes about to account for it, by alleging what was their character previously to their conversion. It is true he talks of this being the case “only for a time,” and, at length, these converts are to “have their eyes opened; are to feel the benign influence of their principles, and demonstrate the excellency of their faith by the superior dignity and worth of their character.” But these, it seems, like “the annihilation of death” and the conversion of Jews and Mahometans by the Socinian doctrine, are things *yet to come*.

But, it will be pleaded, though many who go over to Socinianism are men of no religion, and continue to “lean to a life of dissipation,” yet this is not the case *with all*: there are some who are exemplary in their lives, men of eminent piety and virtue, and who are distinguished by Dr. Priestley by the name of serious Christians.\* To this it is replied—

First, Whatever piety or virtue there may be among Socinian converts, it may be doubted whether piety or virtue led them to embrace that scheme, or was much in exercise in their researches after it. It has been observed by some who have been most conversant with them, that, as they have discovered a predilection for those views of things, it has been very common for them to discover at the same time a light-minded temper, speaking of sacred things, and disputing about them, with the most unbecoming levity and indecent freedom; avoiding all conversation on experimental and devotional subjects, and directing their whole discourse to matters of mere speculation. Indeed, piety and virtue are, in effect, acknowledged to be unfavourable to the embracing of the Socinian scheme; for if “an indifference to religion in general be favourable to the distinguishing between truth and falsehood,” and if “those men who are the most indifferent to the practice of religion will ever be the *first* to embrace the rational system,” it must follow, by the rule of contraries, that piety, virtue, and zeal for religion, are things unfavourable to that system, and that pious and virtuous persons will ever be the *last* to embrace it; nay, some may think it very doubtful whether they ever embrace it at all. *Serious Christians*, according to the account of Mrs. Barbauld, are the most difficult sort of people that Socinian writers and preachers have to deal with; for though they are sometimes brought to renounce the Calvinistic doctrines in theory, yet there is a sort of leaning towards them in their hearts, which their teachers know not how to eradicate. “These doctrines,” she says, “it is true, among thinking people, are

\* Disc. p. 98.

losing ground: but there is still apparent, in that class called *serious Christians*, a tenderness in exposing them: a sort of leaning towards them, as in walking over a precipice one should lean to the safest side; an idea that they are, if not true, at least good to be believed, and that a salutary error is better than a dangerous truth.”\*

Secondly, Whatever virtue there may be among Socinian converts, it may be questioned whether the distinguishing principles of Socinianism have any tendency towards promoting it. The principles which they hold in common with us, namely, the resurrection of the dead, and a future life, and not those in which they are distinguished from us, are confessedly the springs of their virtue. As to the simple humanity of Christ, which is one of the distinguishing principles of Socinianism, Dr. Priestley acknowledges that “the connexion between this simple truth and a regular Christian life is very slight.”† “That,” says the same author, “which is most favourable to virtue in Christianity is the expectation of a future state of retribution, grounded on a firm belief of the historical facts recorded in the Scriptures; especially the miracles, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. The man who believes these things only, and who, together with this, acknowledges a universal providence, ordering all events—who is persuaded that our very hearts are constantly open to Divine inspection, so that no iniquity, or purpose of it, can escape his observation, will not be a bad man, or a dangerous member of society.”‡ Now these are things in which we are all agreed; whatever virtue, therefore, is ascribed to them, it is not, strictly speaking, the result of Socinian principles. If, in addition to this, we were to impute a considerable degree of the virtue of Socinian converts to “the principles in which they were educated, and the influence to which they were exposed in the former part of their lives,” we should only say of them what Dr. Priestley says of the virtuous lives of some atheists; and perhaps we should have as good grounds for such an imputation in the one case as he had in the other.§

Among the various Socinian converts, have we ever been used to hear of any remarkable change of life or behaviour which a conversion to their peculiar principles effected? I hope there are few Calvinistic congregations in the kingdom, but what could point out examples of persons among them, who, at the time of their coming over to their doctrinal principles, came over also from the course of this world, and have ever since lived in newness of life. Can this be said of the generality of Socinian congregations? Those who have had the greatest opportunity of observing them say the contrary. Yea, they add that the conversion of sinners to a life of holiness does not appear to be their aim; that their concern seems to be to persuade those who, in their account, have *too much* religion, that less will suffice, rather than to address themselves to the irreligious, to convince them of their defect. A great part of Dr. Priestley’s sermon on the death of Mr. Robinson is of this tendency. Instead of concurring with the mind of God, as expressed in his word, “Oh that my people were wise, that they would consider their latter end!” the preacher goes about to dissuade his hearers from thinking too much upon that unwelcome subject.

You will judge, from these things, brethren, whether there be any cause for boasting, on the part of the Socinians, in the number of converts which they tell us are continually making to their principles; or for discouragement on the side of the Calvinists, as if what they account the cause of God and truth were going fast to decline.

\* Remarks on Wakefield’s Inquiry on Social Worship.

† Disc. p. 97.

‡ Letter V. to Mr. Burn.

§ Let. Unb. P. I. Pref. vi.

## LETTER V.

## THE STANDARD OF MORALITY.

You have observed that Dr. Priestley charges the Calvinistic system with being unfriendly to morality, "as giving wrong impressions concerning the character and moral government of God, and as relaxing the obligations of virtue." That you may judge of the propriety of this heavy charge, and whether our system, or his own, tend most to "relax the obligations of virtue," it seems proper to inquire, *which of them affords the most licentious notions of virtue itself.* To suppose that the scheme which pleads for relaxation, both in the precept and in the penalty of the great rule of Divine government, should, after all, relax the least, is highly paradoxical. The system, be it which it may, that teaches us to lower the standard of obedience, or to make light of the nature of disobedience, must surely be the system which relaxes the obligations of virtue, and, consequently, is of an immoral tendency.

The eternal standard of right and wrong is the moral law, summed up in *love to God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to our neighbour as ourselves.* This law is *holy, just, and good*: holy, as requiring perfect conformity to God; just, as being founded in the strictest equity; and good, as being equally adapted to promote the happiness of the creature and the glory of the Creator. Nor have we any notion of the precept of the law being abated, or a jot or tittle of it being given up, in order to suit the inclinations of depraved creatures. We do not conceive the law to be more strict than it ought to be, even considering our present circumstances, because we consider the evil propensity of the heart, which alone renders us incapable of perfect obedience, as no excuse. Neither do we plead for the relaxation of the penalty of the law upon the footing of equity; but insist that, though God, through the mediation of his Son, *doth not mark iniquity in those that wait on him,* yet he *might* do so consistently with justice; and that his not doing so is of mere grace. I hope these sentiments do not tend to "relax the obligations of virtue." Let us inquire whether the same may be said of the scheme of our opponents.

It may be thought that, in these matters, in some of them at least, we are agreed. And, indeed, I suppose few will care to deny, in express terms, that the moral law, consisting of a requisition to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, is an eternal standard of right and wrong. But let it be considered whether the Socinians, in their descriptions of virtue and vice, do not greatly overlook the former branch of it, and almost confine themselves to those duties which belong to the latter. It has been long observed, of writers of that stamp, that they exalt what are called the *social virtues*, or those virtues which respect society, to the neglect, and often at the expense, of others which more immediately respect the God that made us. It is a very common thing for Socinians to make light of religious principle, and to represent it as of little importance to our future well-being. Under the specious name of *liberality of sentiment*, they dispense with that part of the will of God which requires every thought to be in subjection to the obedience of Christ; and, under the guise of *candour and charity*, excuse those who fall under the Divine censure. The Scripture speaks of those "who deny the Lord that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction"—and "of those who receive not the love of the truth, being given up to believe a lie." But the minds of Socinian writers appear to

revolt at ideas of this kind: the tenor of their writings is to persuade mankind that sentiments may be accepted, or rejected, without endangering their salvation. Infidels have sometimes complained of Christianity, as a kind of insult to their dignity, on account of its dealing in *threatenings*; but Dr. Priestley, in his *Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France*, has quite removed this stumbling-block out of their way. He accounts for their infidelity in such a way as to acquit them of blame, and enforces Christianity upon them by the most inoffensive motives. Not one word is intimated as if there was any danger as to futurity, though they should continue infidels, or even atheists, till death. The only string upon which he harps, as I remember, is, that could they but embrace Christianity, they would be much happier than they are!

If I entertain degrading notions of the person of Christ, and if I err from the truth in so doing, my error, according to Mr. Lindsey, is *innocent*,\* and no one ought to think the worse of me on that account. But if I happen to be of opinion that he who rejects the Deity and atonement of Christ is not a Christian, I give great offence. But wherefore? Suppose it an error, why should it not be as innocent as the former? and why ought I to be reproached as an illiberal, uncharitable bigot for this, while no one ought to think the worse of me for the other? Can this be any otherwise accounted for, than by supposing that those who reason in this manner are more concerned for their own honour than for that of Christ?

Dr. Priestley, it may be noted, makes much lighter of error when speaking on the supposition of its being found in himself, than when he supposes it to be found in his opponents. He charges Mr. Venn, and others, with "striving to render those who differ from them in some *speculative points* odious to their fellow Christians;" and elsewhere suggests that "we shall not be judged at the last day according to our *opinions*, but our *works*; not according to what we have *thought of Christ*, but as we have *obeyed his commands*:"† as if it were no distinguishing property of a good work that it originate in a good principle; and as if the meanest opinion, and the most degrading thoughts of Jesus Christ, were consistent with obedience to him. But when he himself becomes the accuser, the case is altered, and instead of reckoning the supposed errors of the Trinitarians to be merely *speculative points*, and *harmless opinions*, they are said to be "idolrous and blasphemous."‡ But idolatry and blasphemy will not only be brought into account at the day of judgment, but be very offensive in the eyes of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9. For my part, I am not offended with Dr. Priestley, or any other Socinian, for calling the worship that I pay to Christ idolatry and blasphemy; because, if he be only a man, what they say is just. If they can acquit themselves of sin in *thinking* meanly of Christ, they certainly can do the same in *speaking* meanly of him; and words ought to correspond with thoughts. I only think they should not trifle in such a manner as they do with error, when it is supposed to have place in themselves, any more than when they charge it upon their opponents.

If Dr. Priestley had formed his estimate of human virtue by that great standard which requires love to God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to our neighbour as ourselves, instead of representing men by nature as having "more virtue than vice,"§ he must have acknowledged, with the Scriptures, that "the whole world lieth in wickedness"—that "every thought and imagination of their heart is only evil continually"—and that "there is none of them that doeth good, no, not one."

\* Apology, 4th ed. p. 48.

† Considerations on Differences of Opinion, § III. Def. Unit. 1786, p. 59. Ditto 1787 p. 68.

‡ Disc. p. 96.

§ Let. Phil. Unb. Part I. p. 80.

If Mr. Belsham, in the midst of that "marvellous light" which he professes lately to have received, had only seen the *extent* and *goodness* of that law which requires us to love God with *all* our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves, in the light in which revelation places it, he could not have trifled, in the manner he has, with the nature of sin, calling it "human frailty," and the subjects of it "the frail and erring children of men;" nor could he have represented God, in "marking and punishing every instance of it, as acting the part of a merciless tyrant."\* Mr. Belsham talks of "Unitarians being led to form just sentiments of the *reasonableness* of the Divine law, and the *equity* of the Divine government;" but of what Divine law does he speak? Not of that, surely, which requires love to God with *all* the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves; nor of that government which threatens the curse of God on every one that continueth not in *all things* written in the book of the law to do them; for this allows not of a *single transgression*, and punishes *every instance* of human folly, which Mr. Belsham considers as "merciless tyranny." He means to insinuate, I suppose, that for the law to take cognizance of the very thoughts and intents of the heart, at least of *every instance* that occurs, is *unreasonable*; and that to inflict punishment accordingly is *inequitable*. He conceives, therefore, of a law, it seems, that is more accommodated to the *propensities*, or, as he would call them, *frailties*, of the erring children of men; a law that may not cut off all hopes of a sinner's acceptance with God by the deeds of it, so as to render an *atoning* Mediator absolutely necessary, and this he calls *reasonable*; and of a government that will *not* bring every secret thing into judgment, nor make men accountable for *every idle word*, and this he calls *equitable*. And this is the "marvellous light" of Socinianism; this is the doctrine that is to promote a holy life; this is the scheme of those who are continually branding the Calvinistic system with Antinomianism!

If the moral law require love to God with *all* the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to our neighbour as ourselves, it cannot allow the *least degree* of alienation of the heart from God, or the *smallest instance* of malevolence to man. And if it be what the Scripture says it is, *holy, just, and good*, then, though it require *all* the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, it cannot be too strict; and if it be not too strict, it cannot be unworthy of God, nor can it be "merciless tyranny" to abide by it. On the contrary, it must be worthy of God to say of a just law, "Not a jot or tittle of it shall fail."

Dr. McGill, in his *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, (p. 252,) maintains that "the Supreme Lawgiver determined from the beginning to mitigate the rigour of the law, to make allowances for human error and imperfection, and to accept of repentance and sincere obedience, instead of sinless perfection." But if this were the determination of the Lawgiver, it was either considered as a matter of *right* or of *undeserved favour*. If the former, why was not the law so framed as to correspond with the determination of the Lawgiver? How was it, especially, that a new edition of it should be published from Mount Sinai, and that without any such allowances? Or, if this could be accounted for, how was it that Jesus Christ should declare that "not a jot or tittle of it should fail," and make it his business to condemn the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees, who had lowered its demands and softened its penalties, with a view to "make allowance for human error and imperfection?" It could answer no good end, one should think, to load the Divine precepts with threatenings of cruelty. A law so loaded would not bear to be put in execution; and we have been taught by Dr. Priestley, in

\* Serm. p. 33-35.

what he has written on the Test Act, to consider "the continuance of a law which will not bear to be put in execution as needless and oppressive, and as what ought to be abrogated.\*" If repentance and sincere obedience be all that ought to be required of men in their present state, then the law ought to be so framed, and allowance to be made by it for error and imperfection. But then it would follow, that where men *do* repent, and *are* sincere, there are no errors and imperfections to be allowed for. Errors and imperfections imply a law from which they are deviations; but if we be under no law, except one that allows for deviations, then we are as holy as we ought to be, and need no forgiveness.

If, on the other hand, it be allowed that the relaxation of the law of innocence is not what we have any *right* to expect, but that God has granted us this indulgence out of *pure grace*, I would then ask the reason why these gentlemen are continually exclaiming against our principles as making the Almighty a tyrant, and his law unreasonable and cruel? Is it tyrannical, unreasonable, or cruel, for God to withhold what we have no right to expect?†

Dr. Priestley defines *justice* as being "such a degree of severity, or pains and penalties so inflicted, as will produce the best effect with respect both to those who are exposed to them, and to others who are under the same government; or, in other words, that degree of evil which is calculated to produce the greatest degree of good; and if the punishment exceed this measure—if, in any instance, it be an *unnecessary* or *useless* suffering, it is always censured as *cruelty*, and is not even called justice, but real injustice." To this he adds, "If, in any particular case, the strict execution of the law would do more harm than good, it is universally agreed that the punishment ought to be remitted."‡ With an observation or two on the above passage, I shall close this letter.

First, That all punishments are designed for the good of the whole, and less (or corrective) punishments for the good of the offender, is admitted. Every instance of Divine punishment will be not only proportioned to the laws of equity, but adapted to promote the good of the universe at large. God never inflicts punishment for the sake of punishing. He has no such pleasure in the death of a sinner as to put him to pain, whatever may be his desert, without some great and good end to be answered by it; but that in the case of the finally impenitent, this end should necessarily include the good of the offender, is as contrary to reason as it is to Scripture. It does not appear, from any thing we know of governments, either human or Divine, that the good of the offender is necessarily, and in all cases, the end of punishment. When a murderer is executed, it is necessary for the good of the community: but it would sound very strange to say it was necessary for his own good; and that, unless *his* good were promoted by it, as well as that of the community, it must be an act of cruelty!

Secondly, That there are cases in human governments in which it is right and necessary to relax in the execution of the sentence of the law is also admitted. But this arises from the imperfection of human laws. Laws are general rules for the conduct of a community, with suitable punishments

\* Fam. Let. VI.

† The intelligent reader who is acquainted with the different sentiments that are embraced in the religious world, will easily perceive the agreement between the Socinian and Arminian systems on this subject. By their exclamations on the *injustice* of God as represented by the Calvinistic system, they both render that a *debt* which God in the whole tenor of his word declares to be of *grace*. Neither of them will admit the equity of the Divine law, and that man is thereby righteously condemned to eternal punishment, antecedently to the grace of the gospel; or if they admit it in words, they will be ever contradicting it by the tenor of their reasonings.

‡ Let. Unb. P. I. pp. 100, 101.



annexed to the breach of them. But no general rules can be made by men that will apply to every particular case. If legislators were wise and good men, and could foresee every particular case that would arise in the different stages of society, they would so frame their laws as that they need not be relaxed when those cases should occur. But God is wise and good; and previously to his giving us the law which requires us to love him with *all* our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves, knew every change that could possibly arise, and every case that could occur. The question, therefore, is not, "whether, if in any particular case the strict execution of the law would do more harm than good, it ought not to be remitted; but whether an omniscient, wise, and good Lawgiver can be supposed to have made a law, the penalty of which, if put in execution, would do more harm than good. Would a being of such a character make a law, the penalty of which, according to strict equity, requires to be remitted; a law by which he could not in justice abide; and that not only in a few singular cases, but in the case of every individual, in every age, to whom it is given?"

It is possible these considerations may suffice to show that the Divine law is *not* relaxed; but, be that as it may, the question at issue is—What is the *moral tendency* of supposing that it is? To relax a bad law would indeed have a good effect, and to abrogate it would have a better; but not so respecting a good one. If the Divine law be what the Scripture says it is, *holy, just, and good*, to relax it in the precept, or even to mitigate the penalty, without some expedient to secure its honours, must be subversive of good order; and the scheme which pleads for such relaxation must be unfavourable to holiness, justice, and goodness.

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## LETTER VI.

### THE PROMOTION OF MORALITY IN GENERAL.

WHAT has been advanced in the last letter on the standard of morality may serve to fix the meaning of the term in this. The term *morality*, you know, is sometimes used to express those duties which subsist between man and man, and in this acceptation stands distinguished from *religion*; but I mean to include under it the whole of what is contained in the moral law.

Nothing is more common than for the adversaries of the Calvinistic system to charge it with immorality; nay, as if this were self-evident, they seem to think themselves excused from advancing any thing like sober evidence to support the charge. Virulence, rant, and extravagance are the weapons with which we are not unfrequently combated in this warfare. "I challenge the whole body and being of moral evil itself;" says a writer of the present day,\* "to invent, or inspire, or whisper any thing blacker or more wicked; yea, if sin itself had all the wit, the tongues and pens of all men and angels, to all eternity, I defy the whole to say any thing of God worse than this. O sin, thou hast spent and emptied thyself in the doctrine of John Calvin! And here I rejoice that I have heard the utmost that malevolence itself shall ever be able to say against infinite benignity! I was myself brought up and tutored in it, and being delivered, and brought to see the evil and danger, am bound by my obligations to God, angels, and men, to warn my fellow sinners; I therefore, here, before God, and the whole universe, recall and

\* Llewellyn's Tracts, p. 292.

condemn every word I have spoken in favour of it. I thus renounce the doctrine as the rancour of devils; a doctrine the preaching of which is babbling and mocking, its prayers blasphemy, and whose praises are the horrible yellings of sin and hell. And this I do, because I know and believe that God is love, and therefore his decrees, works, and ways are also love, and cannot be otherwise." It were ill-spent time to attempt an answer to such unfounded calumny as this, which certainly partakes much more of the ravings of insanity than of the words of truth and soberness; yet this, according to the *Monthly Review*, (July, 1792,) is "the true colouring of the doctrine of Calvinism." Had any thing like this been written by a Calvinist against Socinianism, the Reviewers would have been the first to have exclaimed against Calvinistic illiberality.

This gentleman professes to have been a Calvinist, and so does Dr. Priestley. The Calvinism of the latter, however, appears to have left an impression upon his mind very different from the above. "Whether it be owing to my Calvinistic education," says he, "or my considering the principles of Calvinism as generally favourable to that leading virtue, *devotion*, or to their being something akin to the doctrine of necessity, I cannot but acknowledge that, notwithstanding what I have occasionally written against that system, and which I am far from wishing to retract, I feel myself disposed to look upon Calvinists with a kind of *respect*, and could never join in the contempt and insult with which I have often heard them treated in conversation."\*

But Dr. Priestley, I may be told, whatever good opinion he may have of the piety and virtue of Calvinists, has a very ill opinion of Calvinism; and this, in a certain degree, is true. Dr. Priestley, however, would not say that "the preaching of that system was babbling and mocking, its prayers blasphemy, or its praises the horrible yellings of sin and hell;" on the contrary, he acknowledges "its principles to be generally favourable to that leading virtue, *devotion*."

I confess Dr. Priestley has advanced some heavy accusations on the immoral tendency of Calvinism,—accusations which seem scarcely consistent with the candid concessions just now quoted; and these I shall now proceed to examine. "I do not see," says he, (p. 154,) "what motive a Calvinist can have to give any attention to his moral conduct. So long as he is unregenerate, all his thoughts, words, and actions, are necessarily sinful, and in the act of *regeneration* he is altogether passive. On this account the most consistent Calvinists never address any exhortations to sinners; considering them as *dead in trespasses and sins*, and, therefore, that there would be as much sense and propriety in speaking to the dead as to them. On the other hand, if a man be in the happy number of the *elect*, he is sure that God will, some time or other, and at the most proper time, (for which the last moment of life is not too late,) work upon him his miraculous work of *saving and sanctifying grace*. Though he should be ever so wicked immediately before this Divine and *effectual calling*, it makes nothing against him. Nay, some think that, this being a more signal display of the wonders of Divine grace, it is rather the more probable that God will take this opportunity to display it. If any system of speculative principles can operate as an axe at the root of all virtue and goodness, it is this." On this unfavourable account of Calvinism I will offer the following observations:—

First, If Calvinism be an axe at the root of virtue and goodness, it is only so with respect to those of the "unregenerate;" which certainly do not include all the virtue and goodness in the world. As to others, Dr. Priestley acknowledges, as we have seen already, that our principles are "generally

\* Phil. Nec. 163.

favourable to *devotion*;" and devotion, if it be what he denominates it, "a leading virtue," will doubtless be *followed* with other virtues correspondent with it. He acknowledges also (pp. 163, 164) "there are many (among the Calvinists) whose hearts and lives are, in all respects, truly Christian, and whose Christian tempers are really promoted *by their own views of their system.*" How is it, then, that Dr. Priestley "cannot see what motive a Calvinist can have to give any attention to his moral conduct;" and why does he represent Calvinism as "an axe at the root of *all* virtue and goodness?" By all virtue and goodness he can only mean the virtue and goodness of wicked men. Indeed, this appears plainly to have been his meaning; for after acknowledging that Calvinism has something in it favourable to "an habitual and animated devotion," he adds, p. 162, "but where a disposition to vice has preoccupied the mind, I am very well satisfied, and but too many facts might be alleged in proof of it, that the doctrines of Calvinism have been actually fatal to the *remains of virtue*, and have driven men into the most desperate and abandoned course of wickedness; whereas the doctrine of necessity, properly understood, cannot possibly have any such effect, but the contrary." Now, suppose all this were true, it can never justify Dr. Priestley in the use of such unlimited terms as those before mentioned. Nor is it any disgrace to the Calvinistic system that men whose minds are preoccupied with vice should misunderstand and abuse it. The purest liquor, if put into a musty cask, will become unpalatable. It is no more than is said of some who professed to embrace Christianity in the times of the apostles, that they *turned the grace of God into lasciviousness*. Is it any wonder that the wicked will do wickedly; or that they will extract poison from that which, rightly understood, is the food of the righteous? It is enough if our sentiments, like *God's words, do good to the upright*. *Wisdom* does not expect to be *justified* but of *her children*. The Scriptures themselves make no pretence of having been useful to those who have still lived in sin, but allow the gospel to be "a savour of death unto death in them that perish." The doctrine of necessity is as liable to produce this effect as any of the doctrines of Calvinism. It is true, as Dr. Priestley observes, "it cannot do so, if it be properly understood;" but this is allowing that it may do so if it be misunderstood; and we have as good reason for ascribing the want of a proper understanding of the subject to those who abuse predestination, and other Calvinistic doctrines, as he has for ascribing it to those who abuse the doctrine of necessity. Dr. Priestley speaks of *the remains of virtue*, where a disposition to vice has preoccupied the mind; and of the Calvinistic system being as an axe at the root of these remains: but some people will question whether virtue of such a description have any root belonging to it, so as to require an axe to cut it up; and whether it be not owing to this circumstance that such characters, like the stony-ground hearers, in time of temptation fall away.

Secondly, The Calvinistic system is misrepresented by Dr. Priestley, even as to its influence on the *unregenerate*. In the passage before quoted, he represents those persons "who are of the happy number of the elect as being *sure* that God will, some time or other, work upon them his work of sanctifying grace." But how are they to come at this assurance? Not by any thing contained in the Calvinistic system. All the writers in that scheme have constantly insisted that no man has any warrant to conclude himself of the happy number of the elect, till the work of sanctifying grace is actually wrought. With what colour of truth or ingenuousness, then, could Dr. Priestley represent our system as affording a ground of assurance previously to that event? This is not a matter of small account in the present controversy; it is the point on which the immoral tendency of the doctrine wholly

depends. As to the *certainty* of any man's being sanctified and saved at some future time, this can have no ill influence upon him while it exists merely in the Divine mind. If it have any such influence, it must be owing to his *knowledge* of it at a time when, his heart being set on evil, he would be disposed to abuse it; but this, as we have seen, upon the Calvinistic system, is utterly impossible, because nothing short of a sanctified temper of mind affords any just grounds to draw the favourable conclusion. Dr. Priestley has also represented it as a part of the Calvinistic system, or, at least, "as the opinion of some," that "the more wicked a man is, previously to God's work of sanctifying grace upon him, the more probable it is that he will, some time, be sanctified and saved." But though it be allowed that God frequently takes occasion from the degree of human wickedness to magnify his grace in delivering from it, yet it is no part of the Calvinistic system that the former affords any grounds of probability to expect the latter; and whoever they be to whom Dr. Priestley alludes, as entertaining such an opinion, I am inclined to think they are not among the respectable writers of the party, and probably not among those who have written at all.

Thirdly, Let it be considered, whether Dr. Priestley's own views of philosophical necessity do not amount to the same thing as those which he alleges to the discredit of Calvinism; or, if he will insist upon the contrary, whether he must not contradict himself, and maintain a system which, by his own confession, is less friendly to piety and humility than that which he opposes. A state of *unregeneracy* is considered by Calvinists as being the same thing which Dr. Priestley describes as "the state of a person who sins with a *full consent of will*, and who, *disposed as he is*, is under an impossibility of acting otherwise; but who," as he justly maintains, "is nevertheless accountable, even though that consent be produced by the efficacy and unconquerable influence of motive. It is only," continues he, (pp. 63-65,) "where the necessity of sinning arises from *some other cause than a man's own disposition of mind* that we ever say, there is an impropriety in punishing a man for his conduct. If the impossibility of acting well has arisen from a *bad disposition or habit*, its having been impossible, *with that disposition or habit*, to act virtuously, is never any reason for our forbearing punishment, because we know that punishment is proper to correct that disposition and that habit." Now if it be consistent to punish a man for necessary evil, as Dr. Priestley abundantly maintains, why should it be inconsistent to exhort, persuade, reason, or expostulate with him; and why does he call those Calvinists "the most consistent" who avoid such addresses to their auditors? If "the thoughts, words, and actions of unregenerate men, being necessarily sinful," be a just reason why they should not have exhortations addressed to them, the whole doctrine of necessity must be inconsistent with the use of means, than which nothing can be more contrary to truth, and to Dr. Priestley's own views of things.

As to our being *passive* in regeneration, if Dr. Priestley would only admit that any one character could be found that is so depraved as to be destitute of all true virtue, the same thing would follow from his own necessarian principles. According to those principles, every man who is under the dominion of a vicious habit of mind will continue to choose vice, till such time as that habit be changed, and that by some influence without himself. "If," says he, (p. 7) "I make any particular choice to-day, I should have done the same yesterday, and should do the same to-morrow, provided there be no change in the state of my mind respecting the object of the choice." Now can any person in such a state of mind be supposed to be active in the changing of it; for such activity must imply an inclination to have it

changed; which is a contradiction, as it supposes him at the same time under the dominion of evil and inclined to goodness?

But, possibly, Dr. Priestley will not admit that any one character can be found who is utterly destitute of true virtue. Be it so; he must admit that, in some characters, vice has an *habitual ascendancy*: but the habitual ascendancy of vice as certainly determines the choice as even a total depravity. A decided majority in parliament carries every measure with as much certainty as if there were no minority. Wherever vice is predominant (and in no other case is regeneration needed) the party must necessarily be *passive* in the first change of his mind in favour of virtue.

But there are seasons, in the life of the most vicious men, in which their evil propensities are at a lower ebb than usual; in which conscience is alive, and thoughts of a serious nature arrest their attention. At these favourable moments, it may be thought that virtue has the advantage of its opposite, and that this is the time for a person to become active in effecting a change upon his own mind. Without inquiring whether there be any real virtue in all this, it is sufficient to observe that, if we allow the whole of what is pleaded for, the objection destroys itself. For it supposes that, in order to a voluntary activity in favour of virtue, the mind must first be virtuously disposed, and that by something in which it was *passive*; which is giving up the point in dispute.

Dr. Priestley often represents "a change of disposition and character as being effected only by a change of conduct, and that of long continuance," p. 156. But whatever influence a course of virtuous actions may have upon the disposition, and however it may tend to establish us in the habit of doing good, *all* goodness of disposition cannot arise from this quarter. There must have been a disposition to good, and one too that was sufficiently strong to outweigh its opposite, ere a course of virtuous actions could be commenced; for virtuous action is nothing but the effect, or expression, of virtuous disposition. To say that this previous disposition was also produced by other previous actions is only carrying the matter a little further out of sight; for unless it can be proved that virtuous action may exist prior to and without all virtuous disposition, let the one be carried back as far as it may, it must still have been preceded by the other, and, in obtaining the preceding disposition, the soul must necessarily have been *passive*.\*

Dr. Priestley labours hard to overthrow the doctrine of *immediate Divine agency*, and contends that all Divine influence upon the human mind is through the medium of second causes, or according to the established laws of nature. "If moral impressions were made upon men's minds by an immediate Divine agency, to what end," he asks, "has been the whole apparatus of *revealed religion*?"† This, in effect, is saying that, if there be laws for such an operation on the human mind, every kind of influence upon it must be through the medium of those laws; and that, if it be otherwise, there is no need of the use of means. But might he not as well allege that, if there be laws by which the planets move, every kind of influence upon them must have been through the medium of those laws; and deny that the Divine Being immediately, and prior to the operation of the laws of nature, put them all in motion? Might he not as well ask, If an immediate

\* Since the publication of the second edition of these Letters, it has been suggested by a friend, that there is no necessity for confining these observations to the case of a man totally depraved, or of one under the habitual ascendancy of vice; for that, according to Dr. Priestley's necessarian principles, all volitions are the effects of motives; therefore every man, in every volition, as he is the subject of the influence of motive operating as a cause, is *passive*; equally so as he is supposed to be, according to the Calvinistic system, in regeneration.

† Disc. p. 221.

influence could be exercised in setting the material system in motion, of what use are all the laws of nature, by which it is kept in motion? Whatever laws attend the movements of the material system, the first creation of it is allowed to have been by an immediate exertion of Divine power. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" and why should not the second creation be the same? I say *the second creation*; for the change upon the sinner's heart is represented as nothing less in the Divine word; and the very manner of its being effected is expressed in language which evidently alludes to the first creation—"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Not only Scripture, but reason itself, teaches the necessity for such an immediate Divine interposition in the changing of a sinner's heart. If a piece of machinery (suppose the whole material system) were once in a state of disorder, the mere exercise of those laws by which it was ordained to move would never bring it into order again; but, on the contrary, would drive it on further and further to everlasting confusion.

As to *election*, Dr. Priestley cannot consistently maintain his scheme of necessity without admitting it. If, as he abundantly maintains, God is the author of every good disposition in the human heart;\* and if, as he also in the same section maintains, God, in all that he does, pursues one plan, or system, previously concerted; it must follow that wherever good dispositions are produced, and men are finally saved, it is altogether in consequence of the appointment of God; which, as to the present argument, is the same thing as the Calvinistic doctrine of election.

So plain a consequence is this from Dr. Priestley's necessarian principles, that he himself, when writing his *Treatise* on that subject, could not forbear to draw it. "Our Saviour," he says, (p. 140,) "seems to have considered the rejection of the gospel by those who boasted of their wisdom,† and the reception of it by the more despised part of mankind, as being the consequence of the express appointment of God: 'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'" To the same purpose, in the next page but one, he observes that God is considered as "the sovereign Disposer both of gospel privileges here, and future happiness hereafter, as appears in such passages as 2 Thess. ii. 13, 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.'"

If there be any difference between that election which is involved in Dr. Priestley's own scheme, and that of the Calvinists, it must consist, not in the original appointment, or in the certainty of the event, but in the intermediate causes or reasons which induced the Deity to fix things in the manner that he has done; and it is doubtful whether even this can be admitted. It is true that Dr. Priestley, by his exclamations against *unconditional election*,‡ would seem to maintain that, where God hath appointed a sinner to obtain salvation, it is on account of his foreseen virtue; and he may plead that such an election is favourable to virtue, as making it the ground or procuring cause of eternal felicity, while an election that is altogether unconditional must be directly the reverse. But let it be considered, in the first place, whether such a view of election as this does not clash with the whole tenor of Scripture, which teaches us that we are "saved and called with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to the Divine purpose

\* Phil. Nec. § XI.

† Query, Were not these the *rational religionists* of that age?

‡ Considerations on Difference in Religious Opinions, § III.

and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”—“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”—“At this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”\* Secondly, Let it be considered whether such an election will consist with Dr. Priestley’s own scheme of necessity. This scheme supposes that all virtue, as well as every thing else, is necessary. Now whence arose the necessity of it? It was not self-originated, nor accidental; it must have been established by the Deity. And then it will follow that, if God elect any man on account of his foreseen virtue, he must have elected him on account of that which he had determined to give him; but this, as to the origin of things, amounts to the same thing as unconditional election.

As to men’s taking liberty to sin from the consideration of their being among the number of the elect, that, as we have seen already, is what no man can do with safety or consistency, seeing he can have no evidence on that subject but what must arise from a contrary spirit and conduct. But suppose it were otherwise, an objection of this sort would come with an ill grace from Dr. Priestley, who encourages all mankind not to fear, since God has made them all for unlimited ultimate happiness, and (whatever be their conduct in the present life) to ultimate unlimited happiness they will all doubtless come.†

Upon the whole, let those who are inured to close thinking judge whether Dr. Priestley’s own views of philosophical necessity do not include the leading principles of Calvinism? But should he insist upon the contrary, then let it be considered whether he must not contradict himself, and maintain a system which, by his own confession, is less friendly to piety and humility than that which he opposes. “The essential difference,” he says, “between the two schemes is this: the necessarian believes his own dispositions and actions are the necessary and sole means of his present and future happiness; so that, in the most proper sense of the words, it depends entirely on himself whether he be virtuous or vicious, happy or miserable. The Calvinist maintains, on the other hand, that so long as a man is unregenerate, all his thoughts, words, and actions are necessarily sinful, and in the act of regeneration he is altogether passive.”‡ We have seen already that, on the scheme of Dr. Priestley, as well as that of the Calvinists, men, in the first turning of the bias of their hearts, must be passive. But allow it to be otherwise; allow what the Doctor elsewhere teaches, (p. 156,) that “a change of disposition is the *effect*, and not the *cause*, of a change of conduct;” and that it depends entirely on ourselves whether we will thus change our conduct, and by these means our dispositions, and so be happy for ever: all this, if others of his observations be just, instead of promoting piety and virtue, will have a contrary tendency. In the same performance (p. 107), Dr. Priestley acknowledges that “those who, from a principle of religion, ascribe more to God and less to man than other persons, are men of the greatest elevation of piety.” But if so, it will follow that the essential difference between the necessarianism of Socinians and that of Calvinists (seeing that it consists in this, that the one makes it depend entirely upon a man’s self, whether he be virtuous or vicious, happy or miserable; and the other upon God) is in favour of the latter. Those who consider men as depending entirely upon God for virtue and happiness ascribe more to God and less to man than the

\* See also those scriptures which represent election as the *cause* of faith and holiness, particularly Eph. i. 3, 4; John vi. 37; Rom. viii. 22, 30; Acts xiii. 48; 1 Pet. i. 1; Rom. ix. 15, 16. But if it be the *cause*, it cannot be the *effect* of them.

† Phil. Nec. pp. 128, 129.

‡ Ibid. pp. 152—154.

other, and so according to Dr. Priestley, are "men of the greatest elevation of piety." They, on the other hand, who suppose men to be dependent entirely upon *themselves* for these things, must, consequently, have less of piety, and more of "heathen stoicism;" which, as the same writer in the same treatise (p. 67) observes, "allows men to pray for *external things*, but admonishes them that, as for virtue, it is our own, and must arise from within ourselves, if we have it at all."

But let us come to *facts*. If, as Dr. Priestley says, there be "something in our system which, if carried to its just consequences, would lead us to the most abandoned wickedness," it might be expected, one should think, that a loose, dissipated, and abandoned life would be a more general thing among Calvinists than among their opponents. This seems to be a consequence of which he feels the force, and therefore discovers an inclination to make it good. In answer to the question, "Why those persons who hold these opinions are not abandoned to all wickedness, when they evidently lay them under so little restraint?" he answers, "This is often the case of those who pursue these principles to their just and fatal consequences;" adding, "for it is easy to prove that the Antinomian is the only consistent *absolute predestinarian*."\* That there are persons who profess the doctrine of absolute predestination, and who, from that consideration, may indulge themselves in the greatest enormities, is admitted. Dr. Priestley, however, allows that these are "only such persons whose minds are previously depraved;" that is, wicked men, *who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness*. Nor are such examples "often" to be seen among us; and, where they are, it is commonly in such people as make no serious pretence to personal religion, but who have just so much of predestination in their heads as to suppose that all things will be as they are appointed to be, and therefore that it is in vain to strive,—just so much as to look at the end, and overlook the means; which is as wide of Calvinism as it is of Socinianism. This may be the *absolute predestination* which Dr. Priestley means; namely, a predestination to eternal life, let our conduct be ever so impure; and a predestination to eternal death, let it be ever so holy: and if so, it is granted that the Antinomian is the only consistent believer in it; but then it might, with equal truth, be added, that he is the only person who believes in it at all. The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination supposes that holiness of heart and life are as much the object of Divine appointment as future happiness, and that this connexion can never be broken. To prove that the Antinomian is the only consistent believer in such a predestination as this may not be so *easy* a task as barely to assert it. I cannot imagine it would be very easy, especially for Dr. Priestley; seeing he acknowledges that "the idea of every thing being predestinated from all eternity is no objection to *prayer*, because all means are appointed as well as ends; and therefore, if prayer be in itself a proper means, the end to be obtained by it, we may be assured, will not be had without *this*, any more than without any other means, or necessary previous circumstances."† Dr. Priestley may allege that this is not *absolute predestination*; but it is as absolute as ours, which makes equal provision for faith and holiness, and for every means of salvation, as this does for prayer.

Will Dr. Priestley undertake to prove that *a loose, dissipated, and abandoned life is a more general thing among the Calvinists than among their opponents*? I am persuaded he will not. He knows that the Calvinists, in general, are far from being a dissipated or an abandoned people, and goes about to account for it, and that in a way that *shall reflect no honour upon their principles*. "Our moral conduct," he observes, "is not left at the mercy

\* Con. Dif. Opin. § III.

† Lct. Phil. Unb., Part I. p. 111.



of our opinions; and the regard to virtue that is kept up, by those who maintain the doctrines above mentioned, is owing to the influence of other principles implanted in our nature.\* Admitting this to be true, yet one would think the worst principles will, *upon the whole*, be productive of the worst practices. They whose innate principles of virtue are all employed in counteracting the influence of a pernicious system, cannot be expected to form such amiable characters as where those principles are not only left at liberty to operate, but are aided by a good system. It might, therefore, be expected, I say again, if our principles be what our opponents say they are, that a loose, dissipated and abandoned life would be a more general thing among us than among them.

I may be told that the same thing, if put to us, would be found equally difficult; or that, notwithstanding we contend for the superior influence of the Calvinistic system to that of Socinus, yet we should find it difficult to prove that a loose, dissipated, and abandoned life is a more general thing among Socinians than it is among Calvinists. And I allow that I am not sufficiently acquainted with the bulk of the people of that denomination to hazard an assertion of this nature. But if what is allowed by their own writers (who ought to know them) may be admitted as evidence, such an assertion might, nevertheless, be supported. "Rational Christians are often represented," says Mr. Belsham, "as indifferent to practical religion." Nor does he deny the justice of this representation, but admits, though with apparent reluctance, that "there has been some plausible ground for the accusation;" and goes about to account for it, as we have seen in Letter IV., in such a way, however, *as may reflect no dishonour upon their principles.*† The same thing is acknowledged by Dr. Priestley, who allows that "a *great number* of the Unitarians of the present age are only men of good sense, and without much practical religion;" and that "there is a greater apparent conformity to the world in them than is observable in others."‡ Yet he also goes about to account for these things, as Mr. Belsham does, in such a way *as may reflect no dishonour upon their principles.* It is rather extraordinary that, when facts are introduced in favour of the virtue of the general body of the Calvinists, they are not denied, but accounted for in such a way that their principles must share none of the honour; and when facts of an opposite kind are introduced in proof of the want of virtue in Unitarians, they also are not denied, but accounted for in such a way that their principles shall have none of the dishonour. Calvinism, it seems, must be immoral, though Calvinists be virtuous; and Socinianism must be amiable, though Socinians be vicious! I shall not inquire whether these very opposite methods of accounting for facts be fair or candid. On this the reader will form his own judgment; it is enough for me that the facts themselves are allowed.

If we look back to past ages, (to say nothing of those who lived in the earliest periods of Christianity, because I would refer to none but such as are allowed to have believed the doctrine in question,) I think it cannot be fairly denied that the great body of holy men, who have maintained the true worship of God (if there was any true worship of God maintained) during the Romish apostacy, and who, many of them, sacrificed their earthly all for his name, have lived and died in the belief of the Deity and atonement of Christ. Our opponents often speak of these doctrines being embraced by the apostate Church of Rome; but they say little of those who, during the long period of her usurpation, bore testimony for God. The *Waldenses*, who inhabited the valleys of Piedmont, and the *Albigenses*, who were afterwards scattered almost all over Europe, are allowed, I believe, on all hands, to have

\* Consid. Dif. Opin. § III.

† Dis. Var. Sub., p. 100.

‡ Sermon, p. 32.

preserved the true religion in those darkest of times; and it is thought, by some expositors, that these are the people who are spoken of in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation, under the representation of a woman, to whom were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness—and there be nourished for a time, from the face of the serpent. It was here that true religion was maintained and sealed by the blood of thousands from age to age, when all the rest of the Christian world were *wondering after the beast*. And as to the doctrines which they held, they were much the same as ours. Among the adversaries to the Church of Rome, it is true, there might be men of different opinions. Arius and others may be supposed to have had their followers in those ages; but the body of the people called *Waldenses* are not to be reckoned as such: on the contrary, the principles which they professed were, for substance, the same with those embraced afterwards by the Reformed churches; as is abundantly manifest by several of their catechisms and confessions of faith, which have been transmitted to our times.

Mr. Lindsey, in his *Apology*, has given a kind of history of those who have opposed the doctrine of the Trinity; but they make a poor figure during the above long and dark period, in which, if ever, a testimony for God was needed. He speaks of “churches and sects, as well as individuals, of that description, in the twelfth century;” and there might be such. But can he produce any evidence of their having so much virtue as to make any considerable *sacrifices* for God? Whatever were their number, according to Mr. Lindsey’s own account, from that time till the Reformation, (a period of three or four hundred years, and during which the *Waldenses* and the *Wickliffites* were sacrificing every thing for the preservation of a good conscience,) they “were driven into corners and silence,” (c. 1, p. 34); that is, there is no testimony upon record which they bore, or any account of their having so much virtue in them as to oppose, at the expense either of life, liberty, or property, the prevailing religion of the times.

Mr. Lindsey speaks of the piety of “the famous *Abelard*;” but surely he must have been wretchedly driven for want of that important article, or he would not have ascribed it to a man who, as a late writer observes, “could with equal facility explain Ezekiel’s prophecies and compose amorous sonnets for Heloise: and was equally free to unfold the doctrine of the Trinity, and ruin the peace of a family by debauching his patron’s niece.”\* Mr. Lindsey also, in the *Appendix to his Farewell Sermon to the Congregation in Essex Street*, lately published, holds up the piety of *Servetus*, by giving us one of his prayers addressed to Jesus Christ; in which he expresses his full persuasion that he was under a *Divine impulse* to write against his proper Divinity. Surely if Socinian piety had not been very scarce, Mr. Lindsey would not have been under the necessity of exhibiting the effusions of idolatry and enthusiasm as examples of it.

Religion will be allowed to have some influence in the forming of a national character, especially that of the common people, among whom, if any where, it generally prevails. Now if we look at those nations where Calvinism has been most prevalent, it will be found, I believe, that they have not been distinguished by their immorality, but the reverse. Geneva, the Seven United Provinces, Scotland, and North America (with the last two of which we may be rather better acquainted than with the rest) might be alleged as instances of this assertion. With respect to Scotland, though other sentiments are said to have lately gained ground with many of the clergy, yet Calvinism is known to be generally prevalent among the serious

\* Mr. Robinson’s “Plea for the Divinity of Christ.”

part of the people. And as to their national character, you seldom know an intelligent Englishman to have visited that country without being struck with the peculiar sobriety and religious behaviour of the inhabitants. As to *America*, though, strictly speaking, they may be said to have no national religion, (a happy circumstance in their favour,) yet, perhaps, there is no one nation in the world where Calvinism has more generally prevailed. The great body of the first settlers were Calvinists; and the far greater part of religious people among them, though of different denominations as to other matters, continue such to this day. And as to the moral effects which their religious principles have produced, they are granted, on all hands, to be considerable. They are a people, as the *Monthly Reviewers* have acknowledged, "whose love of liberty is attempered with that of order and decency, and accompanied with the virtues of integrity, moderation, and sobriety. They know the necessity of regard to religion and virtue, both in principle and practice."\*

In each of these countries, it is true, as in all others, there are great numbers of irreligious individuals, perhaps a majority; but they have a greater proportion of religious characters than most other nations can boast; and the influence which these characters have upon the rest is as that of a portion of leaven, which leaveneth the whole lump.

The members of the Church of England, it may be taken for granted, were generally Calvinists, as to their doctrinal sentiments, at, and for some time after, the Reformation. Since that time, those sentiments have been growing out of repute; and Socinianism is supposed, among other principles, to have prevailed considerably among the members of that community. Dr. Priestley, however, is often very sanguine in estimating the great numbers of Unitarians among them. Now let it be considered whether this change of principle has, in any degree, been serviceable to the interests of piety or virtue. On the contrary, did not a serious walking with God, and a rigid attention to morals, begin to die away, from the time that the doctrines contained in the Thirty-nine Articles began to be disregarded?† And now, when Socinianism is supposed to have made a greater progress than ever it did before, is there not a greater degree of *perjury*, and more *dissipation* of manners, than at almost any period since the Reformation.

I am not insensible that it is the opinion of Dr. Priestley, and of some others, that men grow better—that the world advances considerably in moral improvement; nay, Mr. Belsham seems to favour an idea, that, "in process of time the earth may revert to its original paradisaical state—and death itself be annihilated." This, however, will hardly be thought to prove any thing, except that enthusiasm is not confined to Calvinists. And as to men growing better, whatever may be the moral improvement of the world in general, Dr. Priestley somewhere acknowledges that this is far from being the case with the Church of England, especially since the times of Bishop Burnet.

With respect to the *Dissenters*, were there ever men of holier lives than the generality of the *puritans* and *nonconformists* of the last two centuries? Can any thing equal to their piety and devotedness to God be found among the generality of the Socinians, of their time or of any time? In sufferings, in fastings, in prayers, in a firm adherence to their principles, in a close walk with God in their families, and in a series of unremitting labours for the good of mankind, they spent their lives.

\* Review from May to August, 1793, p. 502.

† The same sort of people who held Calvinistic doctrines were at the same time so severe in their morals, that Laud found it necessary, to publish "The Book of Sports," in order to counteract their influence on the nation at large.

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But *fastings* and *prayers*, perhaps, may not be admitted as excellencies in their character; it is possible they may be treated with ridicule. Nothing less than this is attempted by Dr. Priestley, in his Fifth Letter to Mr. Burn. "I could wish," says he, "to quiet your fears, on your account. For the many sleepless nights which your apprehensions must necessarily have caused you, accompanied, of course, with much *prayer* and *fasting*, must, in time, affect your health." Candour out of the question, Is this *piety*? It is said to be no uncommon thing for persons who have been used to pray extempore, when they have turned Socinians, to leave off that practice, and betake themselves to a written form of their own composition. This is formal enough, and will be thought by many to afford but slender evidence of their devotional spirit; but yet one would have supposed they would not have dared to ridicule it in others, however destitute of it they might be themselves.

Dr. Priestley allows that Unitarians are peculiarly wanting in *zeal* for religion.\* That this concession is just, appears not only from the indifference of great numbers of them in private life, but from the conduct of many of their preachers. It has been observed that, when young ministers have become Socinians, they have frequently given up the ministry, and become schoolmasters, or any thing they could. Some, who have been possessed of fortunes, have become mere private gentlemen. Several such instances have occurred, both among Dissenters and Churchmen. If they had true zeal for God and religion, why is it that they are so indifferent about preaching what they account the truth?

Dr. Priestley further allows that Calvinists have "less *apparent* conformity to the world, and that they *seem* to have more of a real principle of religion than Socinians." But then he thinks the other have the most candour and benevolence; "so as, upon the whole, to approach nearest to the proper temper of Christianity." He "*hopes*, also, they have more of a real principle of religion than they *seem* to have," pp. 100, 101. As to candour and benevolence, these will be considered in another Letter. At present it is sufficient to observe that Dr. Priestley, like Mr. Belsham, on a change of character in his converts, is obliged to have recourse to *hope*, and to judge of things contrary to what they *appear* in the lives of men, in order to support the religious character of his party.

That a large proportion of serious people are to be found among Calvinists, Dr. Priestley will not deny; but Mrs. Barbauld goes further. She acknowledges, in effect, that the seriousness which is to be found among Socinians themselves is accompanied by a kind of secret attachment to our principles,—an attachment which their preachers and writers, it seems, have hitherto laboured in vain to eradicate. "These doctrines," she says, "it is true, among thinking people, are losing ground; but there is still apparent, in that class called *serious Christians*, a tenderness in exposing them; a sort of leaning towards them, as, in walking over a precipice, one should lean to the safest side: an idea that they are, if not true, at least good to be believed; and that a salutary error is better than a dangerous truth."† By the "class called serious Christians," Mrs. Barbauld cannot mean professed Calvinists; for they have no notion of leaning towards any system as a system of salutary error, but consider that to which they are attached as being the truth. She must, therefore, intend to describe the serious part of the people of her own profession. We are much obliged to Mrs. Barbauld for this important piece of information. We might not so readily have known, without it, that the hearts and consciences of the *serious part* of Socinians revolt at their

\* Disc. Var. Sub. pp. 94, 95.

† Remarks on Wakefield's Inquiry.

own principles; and that, though they have rejected what we esteem the great doctrines of the gospel in theory, yet they have an inward leaning towards them, as the only safe ground on which to rest their hopes. According to this account, it should seem that *serious Christians* are known by their predilection for Calvinistic doctrines; and that those "*thinking people* among whom these doctrines are losing ground" are not of that class or description, being distinguished from them. Well, it does not surprise us to hear that "those men who are the most indifferent to practical religion are the *first*, and serious Christians the *last*, to embrace the rational system," because it is no more than might be expected. If there be any thing surprising in the affair, it is that those who make these acknowledgments should yet boast of their principles on account of their moral tendency.

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## LETTER VII.

THE SYSTEMS COMPARED AS TO THEIR TENDENCY TO PROMOTE LOVE TO GOD.

OUR opponents, as you have doubtless observed, are as bold in their assertions as they are liberal in their accusations. Dr. Priestley not only asserts that the Calvinistic system is "unfavourable to genuine piety, but to *every branch of vital practical religion.*"\* We have considered, in the foregoing Letter, what relates to morality and piety in general; in the following Letters, we shall descend to particulars; and inquire, under the several specific virtues of Christianity, which of the systems in question is the most unfavourable to them.

I begin with LOVE. The love of God and our neighbour not only contains the sum of the moral law, but the spirit of true religion: a strong presumption therefore must exist for or against a system, as it is found to promote or diminish these cardinal virtues of the Christian character. On both these topics we are principally engaged on the defensive, as our views of things stand charged with being unfavourable to the love of both God and man. "There is something in your system of Christianity," says Dr. Priestley, in his *Letters to Mr. Burn*, "that debases the pure spirit of it, and does not consist with either the perfect veneration of the Divine character, (which is the foundation of true devotion to God,) or perfect candour and benevolence to man." A very serious charge; and which, could it be substantiated, would, doubtless, afford a strong presumption, if not more than a presumption, against us. But let the subject be examined. This Letter will be devoted to the first part of this heavy charge; and the following one, to the last.

As to the question, Whether we feel a veneration for the Divine character, —I should think we ourselves must be the best judges. All that Dr. Priestley can know of the matter is, that *he* could not feel a perfect veneration for a Being of such a character as we suppose the Almighty to sustain. That, however, may be true, and yet nothing result from it unfavourable to our principles. It is not impossible that Dr. Priestley should be of such a temper of mind as incapacitates him for admiring, venerating, or loving God, in his true character; and, hence, he may be led to think that all who entertain such and such ideas of God must be void of that perfect veneration for him which he supposes himself to feel. The true character of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, must be taken into the account, in determining whether

\* *Consid. Diff. Opin.* § III.

our love to God be genuine or not. We may clothe the Divine Being with such attributes, and such only, as will suit our depraved taste; and then it will be no difficult thing to fall down and worship him: but this is not the love of God, but of an idol of our own creating.

The principal objections to the Calvinistic system, under this head, are taken from the four following topics: the *atonement*; the *vindictive* character of God; the *glory* of God, rather than the happiness of creatures, being his last end in creation; and the *worship* paid to Jesus Christ.

First, The doctrine of *atonement*, as held by the Calvinists, is often represented by Dr. Priestley as detracting from the goodness of God, and as inconsistent with his *natural placability*. He seems always to consider this doctrine as originating in the want of love, or, at least, of a sufficient degree of love: as though God could not find in his heart to show mercy without a price being paid for it. "Even the elect," says he, "according to their system, cannot be saved, till the utmost effects of the Divine wrath have been suffered for them by an innocent person."\* Mr. Jardine also, by the title which he has given to his late publication, calling it "*The Unpurchased Love of God, in the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ*," suggests the same idea. When our opponents wish to make good the charge of our ascribing a natural implacability to the Divine Being, it is common for them either to describe our sentiments in their own language, or if they deign to quote authorities, it is not from the sober discussions of prosaic writers, but from the figurative language of poetry. Mr. Belsham describes "the formidable chimera of our imagination, to which," he says, "we have annexed the name of *God the Father*, as a merciless tyrant."† They conceive of "God the Father," says Mr. Lindsey, "always with dread, as being of severe, unrelenting justice, revengeful, and inexorable, without full satisfaction made to him for the breach of his laws. God the Son, on the other hand, is looked upon as made up of all compassion and goodness, interposing to save men from the Father's wrath, and subjecting himself to the extremest sufferings on that account." For proof of this we are referred to the *poetry of Dr. Watts!*—in which he speaks of *the rich drops of Jesus' blood, that calmed his frowning face; that sprinkled o'er the burning throne, and turned his wrath to grace:—of the infant Deity, the bleeding God, and of Heaven appeased with flowing blood.*‡

On this subject, a Calvinist might, without presumption, adopt the language of our Lord to the Jews: "I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me." Nothing can well be a greater misrepresentation of our sentiments than this which is constantly given. These writers cannot be ignorant that Calvinists disavow considering the death of Christ as a *cause* of Divine love or goodness. On the contrary, they always maintain that Divine love is the cause, the first cause of our salvation, and of the death of Christ, to that end. They would not scruple to allow that God had love enough in his heart to save sinners without the death of his Son, had it been consistent with righteousness; but that, as receiving them to favour without some public expression of displeasure against their sin would have been a dishonour to his government, and have afforded an encouragement for others to follow their example, *the love of God wrought in a way of righteousness*; first giving his only begotten Son to become a sacrifice, and then pouring forth all the fulness of his heart through that appointed medium. The incapacity of God to show mercy without an atonement, is no other than that of a righteous governor, who, whatever good-will he may bear to an offender, cannot admit the thought of passing by the offence, without some public

\* Diff. Opin. § III.

† Serm. pp. 33—35.

‡ Apology, 4th Ed. p. 97—and Appendix to his Farewell Sermon, at Essex Street, p. 52.

expression of his displeasure against it; that, while mercy triumphs, it may not be at the expense of law and equity, and of the general good.

So far as I understand it, this is the light in which Calvinists consider the subject. Now judge, brethren, whether this view of things represent the Divine Being as *naturally implacable*,—whether the gift of Christ to die for us be not the strongest expression of the contrary,—and whether this, or the system which it opposes, “give wrong impressions concerning the character and moral government of God.” Nay, I appeal to your own hearts, whether that way of saving sinners through an atonement, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other,—in which God is “just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,”—do not endear his name to you more than any other representation of him that was ever presented to your minds. Were it possible for your souls to be saved in any other way—for the Divine law to be relaxed, or its penalty remitted, without respect to an atonement—would there not be a virtual reflection cast upon the Divine character? Would it not appear as if God had enacted a law that was so rigorous as to require a repeal, and issued threatenings which he was obliged to retract? or, at least, that he had formed a system of government without considering the circumstances in which his subjects would be involved—a system “the strict execution of which would do more harm than good;” nay, as if the Almighty, on this account, were ashamed to maintain it, and yet had not virtue enough to acknowledge the remission to be an act of *justice*, but must, all along, call it by the name of *grace*? Would not the thought of such a reflection destroy the bliss of heaven, and stamp such an impression of *meanness* upon that character whom you are taught to adore, as would almost incapacitate you for revering or loving him?

It is further objected that, according to the Calvinistic system, God is a *vindictive being*, and that, as such, we cannot love him. It is said that we “represent God in such a light that no earthly parent could imitate him, without sustaining a character shocking to mankind.” That there is a mixture of the vindictive in the Calvinistic system is allowed; but let it be closely considered whether this be any disparagement to it. Nay, rather, whether it be not necessary to its perfection. The issue, in this case, entirely depends upon the question whether vindictive justice be in itself amiable. If it be, it cannot render any system unamiable. “We are neither amused nor edified,” says a writer in the *Monthly Review*, “by the coruscations of damnation. Nor can we by any means bring ourselves to think, with the late Mr. Edwards, that the vindictive justice of God is a glorious attribute.”\* This, however, may be very true, and vindictive justice be a glorious attribute notwithstanding.

I believe it is very common for people, when they speak of vindictive punishment, to mean that kind of punishment which is inflicted from a wrathful disposition, or a disposition to punish for the pleasure of punishing. Now if this be the meaning of our opponents, we have no dispute with them. We do not suppose the Almighty to punish sinners for the sake of putting them to pain. Neither Scripture nor Calvinism conveys any such idea. Vindictive punishment, as it is here defended, stands opposed to that punishment which is merely *corrective*: the one is exercised for the good of the party; the other not so, but for the good of the community. Those who deny this last to be amiable in God, must found their denial either on Scripture testimony, or on the nature and fitness of things. As to the *former*, the Scriptures will hardly be supposed to represent God as an unamiable being; if, therefore, they teach that vindictive

\* *Review of Edwards's Thirty-three Sermons, March, 1791.*

Justice is an unamiable attribute, it must be maintained that they never ascribe that attribute to God. But with what colour of evidence can this be alleged? Surely not from such language as the following: "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." "Our God is a consuming fire." "God is jealous, and the Lord *revenge*; the Lord *revenge*, and is furious; the Lord will take *vengeance* on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?—His fury is poured out like fire." "O Lord God, to whom *vengeance* belongeth: O God, to whom *vengeance* belongeth, show thyself!" "He that showeth no mercy shall have judgment without mercy." "He that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour." "For we know him that hath said, *Vengeance* belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render *vengeance* to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." "The angels which kept not their first estate—he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking *vengeance* on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."\*

As to the *nature and fitness of things*, we cannot draw any conclusion thence against the loveliness of vindictive justice, as a *Divine* attribute, unless the thing itself can be proved to be unlovely. But this is contrary to the common sense and practice of mankind. There is no nation or people under heaven but what consider it, in various cases, as both necessary and lovely. It is true they would despise and abhor a magistrate who should punish beyond desert, or who should avail himself of the laws of his country to gratify his own caprice, or his private revenge. This, however, is not vindictive justice, but manifest injustice. No considerate citizen, who values the public weal, could blame a magistrate for putting the penal laws of his country so far in execution as should be necessary for the true honour of good government, the support of good order, and the terror of wicked men. When the inhabitants of Gibeah requested that the Levite might be brought out to them, that they might know him, and, on their request not being granted, abused and murdered his companion, all Israel, as one man, not only condemned the action, but called upon the Benjamites to deliver up the criminals to justice. Had the Benjamites complied with their request, and had those sons of Belial been put to death, not for their own good, but for the good of the community, where had been the unloveliness of the procedure? On the contrary, such a conduct must have recommended itself to the heart of every friend of righteousness in the universe, as well as have prevented the shocking effusion of blood which followed their refusal. Now if vindictive justice may be glorious in a human government, there is no reason to be drawn from *the nature and fitness of things* why it would not be the same in the Divine administration.

But the idea on which our opponents love principally to dwell is that of a *father*. Hence the charge that we "represent God in such a light that no earthly parent could imitate him, without sustaining a character shocking to mankind." This objection comes with an ill grace from Dr. Priestley, who

\* Deut. iv.; Heb. xii.; Nahum i.; Psal. xciv.; James ii.; Isa. xxvii.; Heb. x.; Deut. xxxii.; Jude; 2 Thess. i.



teaches that "God is the author of sin, and may do evil, provided it be with a view that good may come."\* Is not this representing God in such a light that no one could imitate him, without sustaining a character shocking to mankind? Whether Dr. Priestley's notions on this subject be true, or not, it is true that God's ways are so much above ours, that it is unjust, in many cases, to measure his conduct to a rebellious world by that of a father to his children.

In this matter, however, God is imitable. We have seen already that a good magistrate, who may justly be called the *father* of his people, ought not to be under the influence of blind affection, so as, in any case, to show mercy at the expense of the public good. Nor is this all. There are cases in which a parent has been obliged, in benevolence to his family, and from a concern for the general good, to give up a stubborn and rebellious son, to bring him forth with his own hands to the elders of his city, and there with his own lips bear witness against him; such witness, too, as would subject him not to a mere salutary correction, but to be stoned to death by the men of his city. We know such a law was made in Israel;† and, as a late writer observed upon it, such a law was wise and good;‡ it was calculated to enforce in parents an early and careful education of their children; and if, in any instance, it was executed, it was *that all Israel might hear, and fear!* And how do we know but that it may be consistent with the good of the whole system, yea, necessary to it, that some of the rebellious sons of men should, in company with apostate angels, be made *examples* of Divine vengeance; that they should stand, like Lot's wife, as *pillars of salt*, or as everlasting monuments of God's displeasure against sin; and that, while their smoke riseth up for ever and ever, all the intelligent universe should *hear, and fear, and do no more so wickedly?* Indeed, we must not only know that this *may* be the case, but if we pay any regard to the authority of Scripture, that it *is* so. If words have any meaning, this is the idea given us of the "angels which kept not their first estate," and of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah; who are said to be "set forth *for an example*, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

It belongs to the character of an all-perfect Being, who is the moral Governor of the universe, to promote the good of the whole; but there may be cases, as in human governments, wherein the general good may be inconsistent with the happiness of particular parts. The case of robbers, of murderers, or of traitors, whose lives are sacrificed for the good of society, that the example of terror afforded by their death may counteract the example of immorality exhibited by their life, is no detraction from the benevolence of a government; but rather essential to it.

But how, after all, can we *love* such a tremendous Being? I answer, A capacity to resent an injury is not always considered as a blemish, even in a *private character*; if it be governed by justice, and aimed at the correction of evil, it is generally allowed to be commendable. We do not esteem the favour of a man, if we consider him as incapable, on all occasions, of resentment. We should call him an easy soul, who is kind merely because he has not sense enough to feel an insult. But shall we allow it right and fit for a puny mortal thus far to know his own worth, and assert it; and, at the same time, deny it to the great Supreme, and plead for his being insulted with impunity?

God, however, in the punishment of sin, is not to be considered as acting in a merely *private capacity*, but as the universal moral Governor; not as

\* Phil. Nec. pp. 117—121.

† Deut. xxi. 18—21.

‡ Mr. Robinson, in his Sermon to the Young People at Willingham.

separate from the great system of being, but as connected with it, or as the Head and Guardian of it. Now, in this relation, vindictive justice is not only consistent with the loveliness of his character, but essential to it. Capacity and inclination to punish disorder in a state are never thought to render an earthly prince less lovely in the eyes of his loyal and faithful subjects, but more so. That temper of mind, on the contrary, which should induce him to connive at rebellion, however it might go by the name of benevolence and mercy, would be accounted, by all the friends of good government, injustice to the public; and those who, in such cases, side with the disaffected, and plead their cause, are generally supposed to be tainted with disaffection themselves.

A third objection is taken from the consideration of *the glory of God*, rather than the happiness of creatures, being his last end in creation. "Those who assume to themselves the distinguishing title of orthodox," says Dr. Priestley, "consider the Supreme Being as having created all things *for his glory*, and by no means for the general happiness of all his creatures."\* If, by the general happiness of *all* his creatures, Dr. Priestley means the general good of the universe, nothing can be more unfair than this representation. Those who are called orthodox never consider the glory of God as being at variance with the happiness of creation in general, nor with that of any part of it, except those who have revolted from the Divine government; nor, if we regard the intervention of a Mediator, with theirs, unless they prove finally impenitent, or, as Dr. Priestley calls them, "wilful and obstinate transgressors." The glory of God *consists*, with reference to the present case, in doing that which is best upon the whole. But if, by the general happiness of *all* his creatures, he means to include the happiness of those angels who kept not their first estate, and of those men who die impenitent, it is acknowledged that what is called the orthodox system does by no means consider this as an end in creation, either supreme or subordinate. To suppose that the happiness of *all* creatures, whatever might be their future conduct, was God's ultimate end in creation, (unless we could imagine him to be disappointed with respect to the grand end he had in view,) is to suppose what is contrary to *fact*. All creatures, we are certain, are not happy in this world; and if any regard is to be paid to revelation, all will not be happy in the next.

If it be alleged that a portion of misery is necessary in order to relish happiness; that, therefore, the miseries of the present life, upon the whole, are blessings; and that the miseries threatened in the life to come may be of the same nature, designed as a purgation, by means of which sinners will at length escape the second death;—it is replied, All the miseries of this world are not represented as blessings to the parties, nor even all the good things of it. The drowning of Pharaoh, for instance, is never described as a blessing to him; and God declared that he had "cursed the blessings" of the wicked priests, in the days of the prophet Malachi. "All things," we are assured, "work together for good;" but this is confined "to those who love God, and are called according to his purpose." As to the life to come, if the miseries belonging to that state be merely temporary and purgative, there must be all along a mixture of love and mercy in them; whereas the language of Scripture is, "He that hath showed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy."—"The wine of the wrath of God will be poured out without mixture." Nay, such miseries must not only contain a *mixture* of love and mercy, but they themselves must be the effects and expressions of love; and then it will follow that the foregoing language of

\* Diff. Opin. § III.

limitation and distinction (which is found indeed throughout the Bible) is of no account, and that blessings and cursings are the same things. Dr. Priestley himself speaks of "the laws of God as being guarded with awful sanctions;" and says, "that God will inflexibly punish all wilful and obstinate transgressors."\* But how can that be called an *awful* sanction which only subjects a man to such misery as is necessary for his good? How, at least, can that be accounted *inflexible* punishment in which the Divine Being all along aims at the sinner's happiness? We might as well call the operation of a surgeon in amputating a mortified limb, in order to save the patient's life, by the name of inflexible punishment, as those miseries which are intended for the good of the sinner. If that be their end, they are, strictly speaking, blessings, though blessings in disguise: and, in that case, as Dr. Edwards in his answer to Dr. Chauncy has fully proved, blessings and curses are in effect the same things.

As to our considering the Supreme Being as having created all things for his own glory, I hope it will be allowed that the Scriptures *seem*, at least, to countenance such an idea. They teach us that "the Lord made all things *for himself*"—that "all things are created by him, and *for him*." He is expressly said to have created Israel (and if Israel, why not others?) *for his glory*. Not only "of him, and through him," but "*to him* are all things." Glory, and honour, and power are ascribed to him by the elders and the living creatures; for, say they, "Thou hast created all things; and for *thy pleasure* they are and were created."†

But further, and what is more immediately to the point, I hope this sentiment will not be alleged as a proof of our want of love to God; for it is only assigning him the supreme place in the system of being; and Dr. Priestley himself elsewhere speaks of "the love of God, and a regard to his glory," as the same thing.‡ One should think those, on the other hand, who assign the happiness of creatures as God's ultimate end, thereby giving him only a subordinate place in the system, could not allege this as an evidence of their love to him. That place which God holds in the great system of being he ought to hold in our affections; for we are not required to love him in a greater proportion than the place which he occupies requires. If it were otherwise, our affections must move in a preposterous direction. We ought, therefore, on this supposition, to love ourselves, our own happiness, and the happiness of our fellow-creatures, more than God; for God himself is supposed to do the same. But if so, the great rule of human actions should have been different. Instead of requiring love to God in the first place, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and then love to ourselves and our neighbours, it should have been reversed. The song of the angels, too, instead of beginning with "Glory to God in the highest," and ending with "peace on earth, and good-will to men," should have placed the last first, and the first last. How such a view of things can tend to promote the love of God, unless a subordinate place in our affections be higher than the supreme, it is difficult to conceive.

The great God, who fills heaven and earth, must be allowed to form the far greatest proportion, if I may so speak, of the whole system of being; for, compared with him "all nations," yea, all worlds, "are but as a drop of the bucket, or as the small dust of the balance." He is the source and continual support of existence, in all its varied forms. As the great Guardian of being in general, therefore, it is fit and right that he should, in the first place, guard the glory of his own character and government. Nor can this be to the disadvantage of the universe, but the contrary; as it will appear, if it be con-

\* Diff. Opin. § III.

† Prov. xvi.; Col. i.; Heb. ii.; Isa. xliii.; Rom. vi.; Rev. iv.

‡ Diff. Opin. § I.

sidered that it is the glory of God to do that which shall be best upon the whole. The glory of God, therefore, connects with it the general good of the created system, and of all its parts, except those whose welfare clashes with the welfare of the whole.

If it were otherwise, if the happiness of *all* creatures were the great end that God from the beginning had in view, then, doubtless, in order that this end might be accomplished, every thing else must, as occasion required, give way to it. The glory of his own character, occupying only a subordinate place in the system, if ever it should stand in the way of that which is supreme, must give place, among other things. And if God have consented to all this, it must be because the happiness, not only of creation in general, but of every individual, is an object of the greatest magnitude, and most fit to be chosen; that is, it is better, and more worthy of God, as the Governor of the universe, to give up his character for purity, equity, wisdom, and veracity, and to become vile and contemptible in the eyes of his creatures—it is better that the bands which bind all holy intelligences to him should be broken, and the cords which hold together the whole moral system be cast away—than that the happiness of a creature should, in any instance, be given up! Judge, ye friends of God, does this consist with “the most perfect veneration for the Divine character?”

Once more, It seems to be generally supposed, by our opponents, that the worship we pay to Christ tends to divide our hearts; and that, in proportion as we adore him, we detract from the essential glory of the Father. In this view, therefore, they reckon themselves to exercise a greater veneration for God than we. But it is worthy of notice, and particularly the serious notice of our opponents, that it is no new thing for an opposition to Christ to be carried on under the plea of love to God. This was the very plea of the Jews, when they took up stones to stone him. “For a good work,” said they, “we stone thee not, but for that thou, being a man, makest thyself *God*.” They very much prided themselves in their *God*; and, under the influence of that spirit, constantly rejected the Lord Jesus. “Thou art called a Jew, and makest thy boast of *God*.”—“We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even *God*.”—“Give *God* the praise; we know that this man is a sinner.” It was under the pretext of zeal and friendship for God that they at last put him to death as a blasphemer. But what kind of zeal was this, and in what manner did Jesus treat it? “If *God* were your Father,” said he, “ye would love me.”—“He that is of *God* heareth *God*’s words.”—“It is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say that he is your *God*; yet ye have not known him.”—“I know you, that you have not the love of *God* in you.”

Again, The primitive Christians will be allowed to have loved God aright; yet they worshipped Jesus Christ. Not only did the martyr Stephen close his life by committing his departing spirit into the hands of Jesus, but it was the common practice, in primitive times, to invoke his name. “He hath authority,” said Ananias concerning Saul, to bind “all that call on thy name.” One part of the Christian mission was to declare that “whosoever should call on the name of the Lord should be saved,” even of that Lord of whom the Gentiles had not heard. Paul addressed himself “to all that in every place called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” These modes of expression (which, if I be not greatly mistaken, always signify Divine worship) plainly inform us that it was not merely the practice of a few individuals, but of the great body of the primitive Christians, to invoke the name of Christ; nay, and that this was a mark by which they were distinguished as Christians.\*

\* Acts ix. 14, compared with ver. 17; Rom. x. 11—14; 1 Cor. i. 2.

Further, It ought to be considered that, in worshipping the Son of God, we worship him not on account of that wherein he differs from the Father, but on account of those perfections which we believe him to possess in common with him. This, with the consideration that we worship him not to the exclusion of the Father, any more than the Father to the exclusion of him, but as one with him, removes all apprehensions from our minds that, in ascribing glory to the one, we detract from that of the other. Nor can we think but that these ideas are confirmed, and the weight of the objection removed, by those declarations of Scripture where the Father and the Son are represented as being in such union that "he who hath seen the one hath seen the other;" and "he who honoureth the one honoureth the other;" yea, that "he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who sent him."\*

It might be fairly argued, in favour of the tendency of Calvinistic doctrines to promote the love of God, that, upon those principles, we have more to love him for than upon the other. On this system, we have much to be forgiven; and, therefore, love much. The expense at which our salvation has been obtained, as we believe, furnishes us with a motive of love to which nothing can be compared. But this I shall refer to another place;† and conclude with reminding you that, notwithstanding Dr. Priestley loads Calvinistic principles with such heavy charges as those mentioned at the beginning of this Letter, yet he elsewhere acknowledges them to be "generally favourable to that leading virtue, devotion;" which, in effect, is acknowledging them to be favourable to *the love of God*,

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## LETTER VIII.

### CANDOUR AND BENEVOLENCE TO MEN.

You recollect that the Calvinistic system stands charged by Dr. Priestley with being inconsistent, not only with a perfect veneration of the Divine character, but with "perfect candour and benevolence to man."

This, it must be owned, has often been objected to the Calvinists. Their views of things have been supposed to render them sour and ill-natured towards those who differ from them. Charity, candour, benevolence, liberality and the like, are virtues to which the Socinians, on the other hand, lay almost an exclusive claim. And such a weight do they give these virtues, in the scale of morality, that they conceive themselves, "upon the whole, even allowing that they have more of an apparent conformity to the world than the Trinitarians, to approach nearer to the proper temper of Christianity than they."‡

I shall not go about to vindicate Calvinists, any further than I conceive their spirit and conduct to admit of a fair vindication; but I am satisfied that, if things be closely examined, it will be found that a great deal of what our opponents attribute to themselves is not benevolence or candour, and that a great deal of what they attribute to us is not owing to the want of either.

\* John xiv. 7—9; ver. 23. The reader may see this subject ably urged by Mr. Scott, in his "Essays on the most Important Subjects of Religion," No. VII. These *Essays* are of a piece with the other productions of that judicious writer; and though small, and for the convenience of the poor, sold for one penny [two cents] each, contain a fund of solid, rational, and Scriptural divinity.

† Letter XIV.

‡ Disc. Var. Sub. p. 100.

Respecting *benevolence*, or *good-will* to men, in order to be genuine, it must consist with love to God. There is such a thing as *partiality* to men, with respect to the points in which they and their Maker are at variance; but this is not benevolence. Partiality to a criminal at the bar might induce us to pity him, so far as to plead in extenuation of his guilt, and to endeavour to bring him off from the just punishment of the laws; but this would not be benevolence. There must be a *rectitude* in our actions and affections to render them truly virtuous. Regard to the public good must keep pace with compassion to the miserable, else the latter will degenerate into vice, and lead us to be "partakers of other men's sins." Whatever pretences may be made to devotion, or love to God, we never admit them to be real, unless accompanied with love to men; neither should any pretence of love to men be admitted as genuine, unless it be accompanied with love to God. Each of these virtues is considered in the Scriptures as an evidence of the other. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."—"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."

There is such a thing as *partiality* to men, as observed before, with respect to the points in which they and their Maker are at variance; leaning to those notions that represent their sin as comparatively little, and their repentance and obedience as a balance against it; speaking smooth things, and affording intimations that, without an atonement, nay, even without repentance in this life, all will be well at last. But if it should prove that God is wholly in the right, and man wholly in the wrong—that sin is exceedingly sinful—that we all deserve to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord—and that, if we be not interested in the atonement of Christ, this punishment must actually take place; if these things, I say, should at last prove true, then all such notions as have flattered the pride of men, and cherished their presumption, instead of being honoured with the epithets of liberal and benevolent, will be called by very different names. The princes and people of Judah would, doubtless, be apt to think the sentiments taught by Hananiah, who prophesied smooth things concerning them, much more benevolent and liberal than those of Jeremiah, who generally came with heavy tidings; yet true benevolence existed only in the latter. Whether the complexion of the whole system of our opponents do not resemble that of the false prophets, who *prophesied smooth things, and healed the hurt of the daughter of Israel slightly, crying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace*; and whether their objections to our views of things be not the same for substance as might have been made to the true prophets; let all who wish to know the truth, however ungrateful it may be to flesh and blood, decide.

A great deal of what is called *candour* and *benevolence* among Socinians is nothing else but *indifference to all religious principle*. "If we could be so happy," says Dr. Priestley, "as to believe that there are no errors but what men may be so circumstanced as to be *innocently* betrayed into, that any mistake of the head is very consistent with rectitude of heart, and that all differences in modes of worship may be only the different methods by which different men (who are equally *the offspring of God*) are endeavouring to honour and obey their common Parent, our differences of opinion would have no tendency to lessen our mutual love and esteem."\* This is, manifestly, no other than indifference to all religious principle. Such an indifference, it is allowed, would produce a temper of mind which Dr. Priestley calls *candour* and *benevolence*; but which, in fact, is neither the one nor the other,

\* Diff. Opin. § II.

Benevolence is *good-will to men*; but good-will to men is very distinct from a good opinion of their principles or their practices—so distinct that the former may exist in all its force without the least degree of the latter. Our Lord thought very ill of the principles and practices of the people of Jerusalem, yet he “beheld the city and wept over it.” This was genuine benevolence.

Benevolence is a very distinct thing from *complacency* or *esteem*. These are founded on an approbation of character; the other is not. I am bound by the law of love to bear good-will to men, as creatures of God, and as fellow creatures, so as, by every means in my power, to promote their welfare, both as to this life and that which is to come; and all this, let their character be what it may. I am bound to *esteem* every person for that in him which is truly amiable, be he a friend or an enemy, and to put the best construction upon his actions that truth will admit; but no law obliges me to esteem a person respecting those things which I have reason to consider as erroneous or vicious. I may pity him, and ought to do so; but to esteem him, in those respects, would be contrary to the love of both God and man. Indifference to religious principle, it is acknowledged, will promote such esteem. Under the influence of that indifference, we may form a good opinion of various characters, which, otherwise, we should not do; but the question is, Would that esteem be right, or amiable? On the contrary, if religious principle of any kind should be found necessary to salvation, and if benevolence consist in that good-will to men which leads us to promote their real welfare, it must contradict it; for the welfare of men is promoted by speaking the truth concerning them. I might say, If we could be so happy as to think virtue and vice indifferent things, we should then possess a far greater degree of esteem for some men than we now do; but would such a kind of esteem be right, or of any use either to ourselves or them?

*Candour*, as it relates to the treatment of an adversary, is that temper of mind which will induce us to treat him openly, fairly, and ingenuously; granting him every thing that can be granted consistently with truth, and entertaining the most favourable opinion of his character and conduct that justice will admit. But what has all this to do with indifference to religious principle, as to matters of salvation? Is there no such thing as treating a person with fairness, openness, and generosity, while we entertain a very ill opinion of his principles, and have the most painful apprehensions as to the danger of his state? Let our opponents name a more candid writer of controversy than President Edwards; yet he considered many of the sentiments against which he wrote as destructive to the souls of men, and those who held them as being in a dangerous situation.

As a great deal of what is called candour and benevolence among Socinians is merely the effect of indifference to religious principle, so a great deal of that in Calvinists, for which they are accused of the want of these virtues, is no other than *a serious attachment to what they account Divine truth, and a serious disapprobation of sentiments which they deem subversive of it*. Now, surely, neither of these things is inconsistent with either candour or benevolence; if it be, however, Jesus Christ and his apostles are involved in the guilt, equally with the Calvinists. They cultivated such an attachment to religious principle as to be in real earnest in the promotion of it, and constantly represented the knowledge and belief of it as necessary to eternal life. “Ye shall know the truth,” said Christ, “and the truth shall make you free.”—“This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” They also constantly discovered a

marked disapprobation of those sentiments which tended to introduce "another gospel," so far as to declare that man accursed who should propagate them. They considered false principles as pernicious and destructive to the souls of men. "If ye believe not that I am he," said Christ to the Jews, "ye shall die in your sins,"—"and whither I go ye cannot come." To the Galatians, who did not fully reject Christianity, but in the matter of justification were for uniting the works of the law with the grace of the gospel, Paul testified, saying, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."

Had the apostle Paul considered "all the different modes of worship as what might be only the different methods of different men, endeavouring to honour and obey their common Parent," he would not have felt "his spirit stirred in him" when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry; at least he would not have addressed idolaters in such strong language as he did, "preaching to them that they should turn from these vanities unto the living God." Paul considered them as having been all their life employed, not in worshipping the living God only in a mode different from others, but *mere vanities*. Nor did he consider it as a "mere mistake of the head, into which they might have been innocently betrayed;" but as a *sin*, for which they were *without excuse*, (Rom. i. 20,) a *sin* for which he called upon them, in the name of the living God, to *repent*.

Now if candour and benevolence be Christian virtues, which they doubtless are, one should think they must consist with the practice of Christ and his apostles. But if this be allowed, the main ground on which Calvinists are censured will be removed; and the candour for which their opponents plead must appear to be spurious, and foreign to the genuine spirit of Christianity.

Candour and benevolence, as Christian virtues, must also consist with each other; but the candour of Socinians is destructive of benevolence, as exemplified in the Scriptures. Benevolence in Christ and his apostles extended not merely, nor mainly, to the bodies of men, but to their souls; nor did they think so favourably of mankind as to desist from warning and alarming them, but the reverse. They viewed the whole world as "lying in wickedness,—in a perishing condition; and hazarded the loss of every earthly enjoyment to rescue them from it, as from the jaws of destruction. But it is easy to perceive that, in proportion to the influence of Socinian candour upon us, we shall consider mankind, even the heathens, as a race of virtuous beings, all worshipping the great Father of creation, only in different modes. Our concern for their salvation will consequently abate, and we shall become so indifferent respecting it as never to take any considerable pains for their conversion. This, indeed, is the very truth with regard to Socinians. They discover, in general, no manner of concern for the salvation of either heathens abroad, or profligates at home. Their candour supplies the place of this species of benevolence, and not unfrequently excites a scornful smile at the conduct of those who exercise it.

The difference between our circumstances and those of Christ and his apostles, who were Divinely inspired, however much it ought to deter us from passing judgment upon the hearts of individuals, ought not to make us think that every mode of worship is equally safe, or that religious principle is indifferent as to the affairs of salvation; for this would be to consider as false what, by Divine inspiration, they taught as true.

Let us come to matters of fact. Mr. Belsham does not deny that Calvinists may be "pious, candid, and benevolent;" but he thinks they would have been *more so* if they had been Socinians. "They, and there are many such," says he, "who are sincerely pious, and diffusively benevolent with



these principles, could not have failed to have been much better, and much happier, had they adopted a milder, a more rational, a more truly evangelical creed," Ser. p. 30. Now if this be indeed the case, one might expect that the most perfect examples of these virtues are not to be looked for among us, but among our opponents: and yet it may be questioned whether they will pretend to more perfect examples of piety, candour, or benevolence, than are to be found in the characters of a HALE, a FRANCK, a BRAINERD, an EDWARDS, a WHITEFIELD, a THORNTON, and a HOWARD, (to say nothing of the living,) whose lives were spent in doing good to the souls and bodies of men, and who lived and died depending on the atoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The last of these great men, in whom his country glories, and who is justly considered as *the martyr of humanity*, is said thus to have expressed himself, at the close of his last will and testament: "My immortal spirit I cast on the sovereign mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of my strength, and, I trust, is become my salvation." He is said also to have given orders for a plain neat stone to be placed upon his grave, with this inscription, "*Spes mea Christus;*" CHRIST IS MY HOPE!

We are often reminded of the persecuting spirit of Trinitarians, and particularly of Calvin towards *Servetus*. This example has been long held up by our opponents, not only as a proof of his cruel disposition and odious character, but as if it were sufficient to determine what must be the turn and spirit of Calvinists in general. But supposing the case to which they appeal were allowed to prove the cruelty of Calvin's disposition—nay, that he was, on the whole, a wicked man, destitute both of religion and humanity—what would all this prove as to the tendency of the system that happened to be called after his name, but which is allowed to have existed long before he was born? We regard what no man did or taught as oracular, unless he could prove himself Divinely inspired, to which Calvin never pretended. Far be it from us to vindicate him, or any other man, in the business of persecution. We abhor every thing of the kind as much as our opponents. Though the principles for which he contended appear to us, in the main, to be just; yet the weapons of his warfare, in this instance, were carnal.

It ought, however, to be acknowledged, on the other side, (and if our opponents possessed all the candour to which they pretend, they would in this, as well as in other cases, acknowledge,) that persecution for religious principles was not at that time peculiar to any party of Christians; but common to all, whenever they were invested with civil power. It was an error, and a detestable one; but it was the error of the age. They looked upon heresy in the same light as we look upon those crimes which are inimical to the peace of civil society; and, accordingly, proceeded to punish heretics by the sword of the civil magistrate. If Socinians did not persecute their adversaries so much as Trinitarians, it was because they were not equally invested with the power of doing so. Mr. Lindsey acknowledges that *Faustus Socinus* himself was not free from persecution, in the case of *Francis Davides*, superintendent of the Unitarian churches in Transylvania. Davides had disputed with Socinus on the invocation of Christ, and "died in prison in consequence of his opinion, and some offence taken at his supposed indiscreet propagation of it from the pulpit. I wish I could say," adds Mr. Lindsey, "that Socinus, or his friend *Blandrata*, had done all in their power to prevent his commitment, or procure his release afterwards." The difference between Socinus and Davides was very slight. They both held Christ to be a mere man. The former, however, was for praying to him; which the latter, with much greater consistency, disapproved. Considering this, the persecution to which Socinus was accessory was as great

as that of Calvin; and there is no reason to think but that, if Davides had differed as much from Socinus as Servetus did from Calvin, and if the civil magistrates had been for burning him, Socinus would have concurred with them. To this might be added, that the conduct of Socinus was marked with *disingenuity*, in that he considered the opinion of Davides in no very heinous point of light, but was afraid of increasing the odium under which he and his party already lay among other Christian churches.\*

Mr. Robinson, in his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, has given an account of both these persecutions; but it is easy to perceive the prejudice under which he wrote. He evidently inclines to extenuate the conduct of Socinus, while he includes every possible circumstance that can in any manner blacken the memory of Calvin. Whatever regard we may bear to the latter, I am persuaded we should not wish to extenuate his conduct in the persecution of Servetus, or to represent it in softer terms, nor yet so soft, as Mr. Robinson has represented that of the former in the persecution of Davides.

We do not accuse Socinianism of being a persecuting system, on account of this instance of misconduct in Socinus; nor is it any proof of the superior candour of our opponents that they are continually acting the very reverse towards us. As a *Baptist*, I might indulge resentment against *Cranmer*, who caused some of that denomination to be burned alive; yet I am inclined to think, from all that I have read of *Cranmer*, that, notwithstanding his conduct in those instances, he was, upon the whole, of an amiable disposition. Though he held with Pædobaptism, and in this manner defended it, yet I should never think of imputing a spirit of persecution to Pædobaptists in general, or of charging their sentiment, in that particular, with being of a persecuting tendency. It was the opinion that *erroneous religious principles are punishable by the civil magistrate* that did the mischief, whether at Geneva, in Transylvania, or in Britain; and to this, rather than to Trinitarianism, or to Unitarianism, it ought to be imputed.

We need not hold, with Mr. Lindsey, "the innocence of error," in order to shun a spirit of persecution. Though we conceive of error, in many cases, as criminal in the sight of God, and as requiring admonition, yea, exclusion from a *religious* society; yet while we reject all ideas of its exposing a person to *civil* punishment or inconvenience, we ought to be acquitted of the charge of persecution. Where the majority of a religious society consider the avowed principles of an individual of that society as being fundamentally erroneous, and inconsistent with the united worship and well-being of the whole, it cannot be persecution to endeavour, by Scriptural arguments, to convince him; and if that cannot be accomplished, to exclude him from their communion.

It has been suggested, that to think the worse of a person on account of his sentiments is a species of persecution, and indicates a spirit of bitterness at the bottom, which is inconsistent with that benevolence which is due to all mankind. But if it be persecution to think the worse of a person on account of his sentiments, (unless no man be better or worse, whatever sentiments he imbibes, which very few will care to assert,) then it must be persecution for us to think of one another according to truth. It is also a species of persecution of which our opponents are guilty, as well as we, whenever they maintain the superior moral tendency of their own system. That which is adapted and intended to do good to the party cannot be persecution, but general benevolence. Let us suppose a number of travellers, all proposing to journey to one place. A number of different ways present themselves to view, and each appears to be the right way. Some are

\* Mr. Lindsey's Apology, pp. 153—156.

inclined to one; some to another; and some contend that, whatever smaller difference there may be between them, they all lead to the same end. Others, however, are persuaded that they all do *not* terminate in the same end, and appeal to a correct map of the country, which points out a number of by-paths, resembling those in question, each leading to a fatal issue. Query, Would it be the part of benevolence, in this case, for the latter to keep silence, and hope the best; or to state the evidence on which their apprehensions were founded, and to warn their fellow travellers of their danger?

There are, it is acknowledged, many instances of a want of candour and benevolence among us, over which it becomes us to lament. This is the case, especially, with those whom Dr. Priestley is pleased to call "the only consistent absolute predestinarians." I may add there has been, in my opinion, a great deal too much haughtiness and uncandidness discovered by some of the Trinitarians of the Established Church, in their controversies with Socinian Dissenters. These dispositions, however, do not belong to them as Trinitarians, but as Churchmen. A slight observation of human nature will convince us that the adherents to a religion established by law, let their sentiments be what they may, will always be under a powerful temptation to take it for granted that they are right, and that all who dissent from them are contemptible sectaries, unworthy of a candid and respectful treatment. This temptation, it is true, will not have equal effect upon all in the same community. Serious and humble characters will watch against it; and being wise enough to know that real worth is not derived from any thing merely external, they may be superior to it. But those of another description will be very differently affected.

There is, indeed, a mixture of evil passions in all our religious affections, against which it becomes us to watch and pray. I see many things, in those of my own sentiments, which I cannot approve; and, possibly, others may see the same in me. And should the Socinians pretend to the contrary, with respect to themselves, or aspire at a superiority to their neighbours, it may be more than they are able to maintain. It cannot escape the observation of thinking and impartial men, that the candour of which they so frequently boast is pretty much confined to their own party, or those that are near akin to them. Socinians can be candid to Arians, and Arians to Socinians, and each of them to deists; but if Calvinists expect a share of their tenderness, let them not greatly wonder if they be disappointed. There need not be a greater, or a more standing proof of this, than the manner in which the writings of the latter are treated in the Monthly Review.

It has been frequently observed, that though Socinian writers plead so much for candour and esteem among professing Christians, yet, generally speaking, there is such a mixture of scornful contempt discovered towards their opponents, as renders their professions far from consistent. Mr. Lindsey very charitably accounts for our errors, by asserting that "the doctrine of Christ being possessed of two natures is the fiction of ingenious men, *determined, at all events, to believe Christ to be a different being from what he really was, and uniformly declared himself to be*; by which fiction of theirs they elude the plainest declarations of Scripture concerning him, and *will prove him to be the most high God, in spite of his own most express and constant language to the contrary*. And as there is no reasoning with such persons, they are to be pitied, and considered as being under a debility of mind in this respect, however sensible and rational in others."\* Would Mr. Lindsey wish to have this considered as a specimen of Socinian candour? If Mrs. Barbauld had been possessed of candour equal to her ingenuity,

\* Catech. Inq. 6.

instead of supposing that Calvinists derive their ideas of election, the atonement, future punishment, &c. from the tyranny and caprice of an Eastern despot, she might have admitted, whether they were right or not, that those principles appeared to them to be taught in the Bible.\*

If we may estimate the candour of Socinians from the spirit discovered by *Mr. Robinson*, in the latter part of his life, the conclusion will not be very favourable to their system. At the time when this writer professed himself a Calvinist, he could acknowledge those who differed from him, with respect to the Divinity of Christ, as "mistaken brethren;" at which time his opponents could not well complain of his being uncandid. But when he comes to change his sentiments on that article, he treats those from whom he differs in a very different manner, loading them with every species of abuse. Witness his treatment of *Augustine*, whose conduct, previously to his conversion to Christianity, though lamented with all the tokens of penitential sorrow, and entirely forsaken in the remaining period of his life, he industriously represents to his disadvantage; calling him "a pretended saint, but an illiterate hypocrite, of wicked dispositions;" loading his memory, and even the very country where he lived, with every opprobrious epithet that could be devised.† Similar instances might be added from his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, in which the characters of *Calvin* and *Beza* are treated in an equally uncandid manner.‡

Dr. Priestley himself, who is said to be the most candid man of his party, is seldom overloaded with this virtue when he is dealing with Calvinists. It does not discover a very great degree of perfection in this, or even in common civility, to call those who consider his principles as pernicious by the name of "bigots," "the bigots," &c., which he frequently does. Nor is it to the credit of his *impartiality*, any more than of his candour, when weighing the moral excellence of Trinitarians and Unitarians against each other, as in a balance, to suppose "the former to have *less*, and the latter something *more*, of a real principle of religion, than they seem to have."§ This looks like taking a portion out of one scale, and casting it into the other, for the purpose of making weight where it was wanting.

Dr. Priestley, in answer to *Mr. Burn*, *On the Person of Christ*, acquits him of "any thing base, disingenuous, immoral, or wicked;" and seeing *Mr. Burn* had not acquitted him of all such things in return, the Doctor takes occasion to boast that his "principles; whatever they are, are more *candid* than those of *Mr. Burn*."|| But if this acknowledgment, candid as it may seem, be compared with another passage in the same performance, it will appear to less advantage. In Letter V. the Doctor goes about to account for the *motives* of his opponents; and if the following language do not insin-

\* A friend of mine, on looking over *Mrs. Barbauld's* Pamphlet, in answer to *Mr. Wakefield*, remarks as follows: "Mrs. B. used to call Socinianism, *The frigid zone of Christianity*; but she is now got far north herself. She is amazingly clever; her language enchanting; but her caricature of Calvinism is abominable."

† Hist. Bapt. p. 652.

‡ *Mr. Robinson*, in his "Notes on *Claude*," observes from *Mr. Burgh*, that "whatever occurs in modern writers of history, of a narrative nature, we find to be an inference from a system previously assumed, without any view to the seeming truth of the facts recorded; but to the establishment of which the historian appears, through every species of misrepresentation, to have zealously directed his force. The subversion of freedom was the evident purpose of *Mr. Hume*, in writing the *History of England*. I fear we may, with too much justice, affirm the subversion of Christianity to be the object of *Mr. Gibbon*, in writing his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*," Vol. II. pp. 147, 148. Perhaps it might, with equal propriety, be added, that the subversion of what is commonly called orthodoxy, and the vindication, or palliation, of every thing which, in every age, has been called by the name of heresy, were the objects of *Mr. Robinson* in writing his *History of Baptism*, and what has since been published under the title of *Ecclesiastical Researches*.

§ Disc. Var. Sub. p. 100.

|| Fam. Let. XVIII.

uate any thing "base, immoral, or wicked," to have influenced Mr. Burn, it may be difficult to decide what baseness, immorality, or wickedness is. "As to Mr. Burn's being willing to have a *gird at me*, as Falstaff says, it may easily be accounted for. He has a view to rise in his profession; and being a man of good natural understanding and good elocution, but having had no advantage of education, or family connexions, he may think it necessary to do something, in order to make himself conspicuous; and he might suppose he could not do better than follow the sure steps of those who had succeeded in the same chase before him." What can any person make of these two passages put together? It must appear, either that Dr. Priestley accused Mr. Burn of motives of which in his conscience he did not believe him to be guilty, or that he acquitted him of every thing base and wicked, not because he thought him innocent, but merely with a view to glory over him, by affecting to be under the influence of superior candour and generosity.

The manner in which Dr. Priestley treated *Mr. Badcock* in his *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, holding him up as an immoral character, at a time when, unless some valuable end could have been answered by it, his memory should have been at rest, is thought to be very far from either candour or benevolence. The Doctor and Mr. Badcock seem to have been, heretofore, upon friendly terms, and not very widely asunder as to sentiment. Private letters pass between them, and Mr. Badcock always acknowledges Dr. Priestley his superior. But about 1783, Mr. Badcock opposes his friend, in the *Monthly Review*, and is thought, by many, to have the advantage of him. After this, he is said to act scandalously and dishonestly. He dies; and soon after his death Dr. Priestley avails himself of his former correspondence, to expose his dishonesty; and, as if this were not enough, supplies, from his own conjectures, what was wanting of fact, to render him completely odious to mankind.

Dr. Priestley may plead that he has held up "the example of this unhappy man as a warning to others." So, indeed, he speaks: but thinking people will suppose that if this *Zimri* had not "*slain his master, his bones might have rested in peace.*" Dr. Priestley had just cause for exposing the author of a piece signed *Theodosius*, in the manner he has done in those Letters. Justice to himself required this; but what necessity was there for exposing Mr. Badcock? Allowing that there was sufficient evidence to support the heavy charge, wherein does this affect the merits of the cause? Does proving a man a villain answer his arguments? Is it worthy of a generous antagonist to avail himself of such methods to prejudice the public mind? Does it belong to a controvertist to write his opponent's history after he is dead, and to hold up his character in a disadvantageous light, so as to depreciate his writings?

Whatever good opinion Socinian writers may entertain of the ability and integrity of some few individuals who differ from them, it is pretty evident that they have the *candour* to consider the body of their opponents as either *ignorant or insincere*. By the Poem which Mr. Badcock wrote in praise of Dr. Priestley, when he was, as the Doctor informs us, his "humble admirer," we may see in what light we are considered by our adversaries. Trinitarians, among the *Clergy*, are there represented as "sticking fast to the Church for the sake of a living;" and those whom the writer calls "orthodox, popular preachers" (which I suppose may principally refer to *Dissenters* and *Methodists*) are described as *fools and enthusiasts*; as either "staring, stamping, and damning in nonsense," or else "whining out the tidings of salvation, telling their auditors that grace is cheap, and works are all an empty bubble." All this is published by Dr. Priestley in his *Twenty-second Letter to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, and that without any marks

of disapprobation. Dr. Priestley himself, though he does not descend to so low and scurrilous a manner of writing as the above, yet suggests the same thing, in the Dedication of his *Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity*. He there praises *Dr. Jebb* for his "attachment to the unadulterated principles of Christianity, how unpopular soever they may have become, through the prejudices of the *weak* or the *interested* part of mankind."

After all, it is allowed that Dr. Priestley is in general, and especially when he is not dealing with a Calvinist, a fair and candid opponent; much more so than the *Monthly Reviewers*, who, with the late Mr. Badcock, seem to rank among his "humble admirers."\* Candid and open, however, as Dr. Priestley in general is, the above are certainly no very trifling exceptions; and considering him as excelling most of his party in this virtue, they are sufficient to prove the point for which they are alleged; namely, that when Socinians profess to be more candid than their opponents, their profession includes more than their conduct will justify.

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## LETTER IX.

### THE SYSTEMS COMPARED AS TO THEIR TENDENCY TO PROMOTE HUMILITY.

You recollect the prophecy of Isaiah, in which, speaking of gospel times, he predicts "that the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day;" as if it were one peculiar characteristic of the true gospel to lay low the pride of man. The whole tenor of the New Testament enforces the same idea. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."—"Jesus said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."—"Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." It may be concluded, with certainty, from these passages, and various others of the same import, that the system which has the greatest tendency to promote this virtue approaches nearest to the true gospel of Christ.

Pride, the opposite of humility, may be distinguished, by its objects, into natural and spiritual. Both consist in a too high esteem of ourselves: the one on account of those accomplishments which are merely natural, or which pertain to us as men; the other on account of those which are spiritual, or which pertain to us as good men. With respect to the first, it is not very difficult to know who they are that ascribe most to their own understanding; that profess to believe in nothing but what they can comprehend; that arrogate to themselves the name of *rational Christians*; that affect to "pity all

\* About eight or nine years ago, the *Monthly Review* was at open war with Dr. Priestley; and the Doctor, like an incensed monarch, summoned all his mighty resources to expose its weakness, and to degrade it in the eye of the public. The conductors of the Review, at length, finding, it seems, that *their country was nourished by the king's country, desired peace*. They have ever since very punctually paid him tribute; and the conqueror seems very well contented, on this condition, to grant them his favour and protection.

those who maintain the doctrine of two natures in Christ, as being under a debility of mind in this respect, however sensible and rational in others ;” that pour compliments extravagantly upon one another ;\* that speak of their own party as the wise and learned, and of their opponents as the ignorant and illiterate, who are carried away by vulgar prejudices ;† that tax the sacred writers with “ reasoning inconclusively,” and writing “ lame accounts ;” and that represent themselves as men of far greater compass of mind than they, or than even Jesus Christ himself !

The last of these particulars may excite surprise. Charity, that hopeth all things, will be ready to suggest, Surely no man that calls himself a Christian will dare to speak so arrogantly. I acknowledge, I should have thought so, if I had not read in Dr. Priestley’s *Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity*, p. 133, as follows : “ Not that I think that the sacred writers were *necessarians*, for they were not *philosophers* ; not even our Saviour himself, as far as appears :—But their habitual devotion naturally led them to refer all things to God, without reflecting on the rigorous meaning of their language ; and very probably, had they been interrogated on the subject, they would have appeared not to be apprised of the necessarian scheme, and would have answered in a manner unfavourable to it.” The sacred writers, it seems, were well-meaning persons ; but, at the same time, so ignorant as not to know the meaning of their own language ; nay, so ignorant that, had it been explained to them, they would have been incapable of taking it in ! Nor is this suggested of the sacred writers only ; but, as it should seem, of Jesus Christ himself. A very fit person Jesus Christ must be, indeed, to be addressed as “ *knowing all things* ;” as a “ *revealer*” of the mind of God to men ; as “ *the wisdom of God* ;” as he in whom “ *it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell* ;” by whom the judges of the earth are exhorted to be “ *instructed* ;” and who shall “ *judge the world*” at the last day ; when, in fact, he was so ignorant as not to consider the meaning of his own language ; or, if he had been interrogated upon it, would not have been apprised of the extent of the scheme to which his words naturally led, but would probably have answered in a manner unfavourable to it ! Is this the language of one that is *little in his own eyes* ?

But there is such a thing as *spiritual pride*, or a too high esteem of ourselves on account of spiritual accomplishments ; and this, together with a spirit of *bigotry*, Dr. Priestley imputes to Trinitarians.

“ Upon the whole,” says he, “ considering the great mixture of spiritual pride and bigotry in some of the most zealous Trinitarians, I think the moral character of Unitarians in general, allowing that there is in them a greater apparent conformity to the world than is observable in others, approaches more nearly to the proper temper of Christianity. It is more cheerful, more benevolent, and more candid. The former have probably less, and the latter, I hope, somewhat more, of a real principle of religion than they seem to have.” ‡ To this it is replied,

First, If Trinitarians be proud at all, it seems it must be of their spirituality ; for as to rationality, they have none, their opponents having, by a kind of exclusive charter, monopolized that article. It is their misfortune, it seems, when investigating the doctrine of the person of Christ, to be under a “ debility of mind,” or a kind of periodical insanity.

Secondly, Admitting that a greater degree of spiritual pride exists among Trinitarians than among their opponents, if we were, for once, to follow Dr. Priestley’s example, it might be accounted for without any reflection upon their principles. Pride is a sin that easily besets human nature, though

\* Mr. Toulmin’s Sermon on the Death of Mr. Robinson, pp. 47, 56.

† Mr. Belsham’s Sermon, pp. 4, 32.

‡ Disc. Var. Sub. p. 100.

nothing is more opposite to the spirit that becomes us; and whatever it is in which a body of men excel, they are under a peculiar temptation to be proud of that, rather than of other things. The English people have been often charged, by their neighbours, with pride on account of their civil constitution; and I suppose it has not been without reason. They have conceived themselves to excel other nations in that particular; have been apt to value themselves upon it, and to undervalue their neighbours more than they ought. This has been their fault; but it does not prove that their civil constitution has not, after all, its excellencies. Nay, perhaps, the reason why some of their neighbours have not been so proud in this particular as they, is, that they have not had that to be proud of. Christians, in general, are more likely to be the subjects of pride than avowed infidels; for the pride of the latter, though it may rise to the highest pitch imaginable, will not be in their *spirituality*. The same may be said of Socinians. For while "a great number of them are only men of good sense, and without much practical religion," as Dr. Priestley in the same page acknowledges they are, their pride will not be in their spirituality, but in their supposed rationality.

Thirdly, Let it be considered whether our doctrinal sentiments do not bear a nearer affinity to those principles which, in Scripture, are constantly urged as motives to humility, than those of our opponents. The doctrines inculcated by Christ and his apostles, in order to lay men low in the dust before God, were those of human depravity, and salvation by free and sovereign grace through Jesus Christ. The language held out by our Lord was, that he "came to seek and to save that which was lost." The general strain of his preaching tended to inform mankind, not only that he came to save *lost* sinners, but that no man, under any other character, could partake of the blessings of salvation. "I came," saith he, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." To the same purpose the apostle of the Gentiles declared to the Ephesians, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Nor did he speak this of Gentiles or of profligates only; but, though himself a Jew, and educated a Pharisee, he added, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." To the doctrine of the universal depravity of human nature he very properly and joyfully proceeds to oppose that of God's rich mercy: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." The humbling doctrine of salvation by undeserved favour was so natural an inference, from these premises, that the apostle could not forbear throwing in such a reflection, though it were in a parenthesis: "*By grace ye are saved.*" Nor did he leave it there, but presently after drew the same conclusion more fully: "For by grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast," Eph. ii. To the same purport he taught in his other Epistles: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."—"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," 2 Tim. i.; Tit. iii.; 1 Cor. i.

These, we see, were the sentiments by which Christ and his apostles



taught men humility, and cut off boasting. But, as though it were designed in perfect opposition to the apostolic doctrine, Socinian writers are constantly exclaiming against the Calvinistic system, because it maintains the insufficiency of a good moral life to recommend us to the favour of God. "Repentance, and a good life," says Dr. Priestley, "are of themselves sufficient to recommend us to the Divine favour."\* "When," says Mrs. Barbauld, "will Christians permit themselves to believe that the same conduct which gains them the approbation of good men here will secure the favour of Heaven hereafter? When a man like Dr. Price is about to resign his soul into the hands of his Maker, he ought to do it, not only with a reliance on his mercy, but his *justice*. It does not become him to pay the blasphemous homage of deprecating the wrath of God, when he ought to throw himself into the arms of his love."† "Other foundation than this can no man lay," says Dr. Harwood: "All hopes founded upon any thing else than a good moral life are merely imaginary."‡ *So they wrap it up*. If a set of writers united together, and studied to form an hypothesis in perfect contradiction to the Holy Scriptures, and the declared humbling tendency of the gospel, they could not have hit upon a point more directly to their purpose. The whole tenor of the gospel says, "*It is not of works, lest any man should boast.*" But Socinian writers maintain that it is of works, and of them only; that in this, and in no other way, is the Divine favour to be obtained. We might ask, *Where is boasting then? Is it excluded?* NAY; is it not admitted and cherished?

Christ and his apostles inculcated humility, by teaching the primitive Christians that *virtue itself* was not of themselves, but the gift of God. They not only expressly declared this with respect to faith, but the same, in effect, of every particular included in the general notion of true godliness. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself," said Christ, "except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me:" for "without me ye can do nothing." "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "He worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." The manifest design of these important sayings was to humble the primitive Christians, and to make them feel their entire dependence upon God for virtue, even for every *good thought*. "Who maketh thee to differ?" said the apostle, "and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" "Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" The Calvinistic system, it is well known, includes the same things; but where is the place for them, or where do they appear, in the system of our opponents? Dr. Priestley, in professed opposition to Calvinism, maintains "that it depends entirely upon a man's *self* whether he be virtuous or vicious, happy or miserable;"§ that is to say, it is a man's self that maketh him to differ from another; and he has that, (namely, virtue,) which he did not receive, and in which, therefore, he may glory.||

\* History of the Corruption of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 155.

† Answer to Mr. Wakefield.

‡ Sermons, p. 193.

§ Phil. Nec. p. 153.

|| It is true that Dr. Priestley himself sometimes allows that virtue is *not our own*, and does not arise from within ourselves; calling that mere *heathen stoicism* which maintains the contrary; and tells us that "those persons who, from a principle of religion, ascribe more to God, and less to man, are persons of the greatest elevation in piety." Phil. Nec. pp. 107, 108. Yet, in the same performance, he represents it as a part of the necessarian scheme, by which it is opposed to Calvinism, "that it depends entirely upon a man's *self* whether he be virtuous or vicious," p. 153. If Dr. Priestley mean no more, by these expressions, than that our conduct in life, whether virtuous or vicious, depends upon our choice, the Calvinistic scheme, as well as his own, allows of it. But if he mean that a virtuous choice originates in ourselves, and that we are the proper cause of it, this can agree to

Dr. Priestley replies to this kind of reasoning: "When we consider ourselves as *the workmanship of God*, that all our powers of body and of mind are derived from him, that he is *the giver of every good and of every perfect gift*, and that without him we can do and enjoy nothing, how can we conceive ourselves to be in a state of greater dependence or obligation? that is, what greater reason or foundation can there possibly be for the exercise of *humility*? If I believe that I have a power to do the duty that God requires of me; yet, as I also believe that that power is his gift, I must still say, *What have I that I have not received? and how then can I glory as if I had not received it?*"\*

It is true Dr. Priestley, and, for aught I know, all other writers, except atheists, acknowledge themselves indebted to God for the powers by which virtue is attained, and, perhaps, for the means of attaining it; but this is not acknowledging that we are indebted to him for virtue itself. Powers and opportunities are mere natural blessings; they have no virtue in them, but are a kind of talent, capable of being improved or not improved. Virtue consists not in the possession of natural powers, any more than in health, or learning, or riches; but in the use that is made of them. God does not, therefore, upon this principle, give us virtue. Dr. Priestley contends, that as we are "God's *workmanship*, and derive all our powers of body and mind from him, we cannot conceive of ourselves as being in a state of greater dependence upon him." The apostle Paul, however, teaches the necessity of being "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." According to Paul, we must become his *workmanship* by a new creation, in order to the performance of good works; but according to Dr. Priestley, the first creation is sufficient. Now if so, the *difference* between one man and another is not to be ascribed to God; for it is supposed that God has given all men the power of attaining virtue, and that the difference between the virtuous man and his neighbour is to be ascribed to himself, in making a good use of the powers and opportunities with which he was invested. Upon this system, therefore, we may justly answer the question, *What hast thou which thou hast not received?*—"I have *virtue*, and the promise of eternal life as its reward; and, consequently, have whereof to glory." In short, the whole of Dr. Priestley's concessions amount to nothing more than the heathen stoicism which he elsewhere condemns. Those ancient philosophers could not deny that all their powers were originally derived from above; yet they maintained "that, as for virtue, it is *our own*, and must arise *from within ourselves*, if we have it at all."

I do not deny that all men have natural powers, together with means and opportunities of doing good; which, if they were but completely well-disposed, are equal to the performance of their whole duty. God requires no more of us than to love and serve him with *ALL our strength*. These powers and opportunities render them accountable beings, and will leave them without excuse at the last day. But if they are *not* rightly disposed, all their natural powers will be abused; and the question is, To whom are we indebted for a *change of disposition*? If to God, we have reason to lie in the dust, and acknowledge it was he that "*quickened us, when we were dead in sins*;" if to ourselves, the doctrine of the Stoics will be established, and we shall have "*whereof to glory*."

nothing but the Arminian notion of a self-determining power in the will; and that, in fact, as he himself elsewhere observes, is mere *heathen stoicism* which allows men to pray for external things, but admonishes them that, as for virtue, it is *our own*, and must arise *from within ourselves*, if we have it at all." p. 69.

\* Diff. Opin. § III.

## LETTER X.

## CHARITY: IN WHICH IS CONSIDERED THE CHARGE OF BIGOTRY.

THE main reason why we are accused of spiritual pride, bigotry, uncharitableness, and the like, is the *importance* which we ascribe to some of our sentiments. Viewing them as essential to Christianity, we cannot, properly speaking, acknowledge as Christians those who reject them. It is this which provokes the resentment of our opponents, and induces them to load us with opprobrious epithets. We have already touched upon this topic, in the *Letter on Candour*, but will now consider it more particularly.

It is allowed that we ought not to judge of whole bodies of men by the denomination under which they pass, because names do not always describe the real principles they embrace. It is possible that a person who attends upon a very unsound ministry may not understand or adopt so much of the system which he hears inculcated, as that his disposition shall be formed or his conduct regulated by it. I have heard, from persons who have been much conversant with Socinians, that though in general they are of a loose, dissipated turn of mind, assembling in the gay circles of pleasure, and following the customs and manners of the world; yet that there are some among them who are more serious; and that these, if not in their conversation, yet in their solemn addresses to the Almighty, incline to the doctrines of Calvinism. This perfectly accords with Mrs. Barbauld's representation of the matter, as noticed towards the close of the *Sixth Letter*. These people are not, properly speaking, Socinians; and therefore ought to be left quite out of the question. For the question is, Whether as believing in the Deity and atonement of Christ, with other correspondent doctrines, we be required, by the charity inculcated in the gospel, to acknowledge, as fellow Christians, those who thoroughly and avowedly reject them.

It is no part of the business of this Letter to prove that these doctrines are true; this at present I have a right to take for granted. The fair state of the objection, if delivered by a Socinian, would be to this effect: "Though your sentiments should be right, yet by refusing to acknowledge, as fellow Christians, others who differ from you, you overrate their importance, and so violate the charity recommended by the gospel." To the objection, as thus stated, I shall endeavour to reply.

Charity, it is allowed, will induce us to put the most favourable construction upon things, and to entertain the most favourable opinion of persons, that truth will admit. It is far from the spirit of Christianity to indulge a censorious temper, or to take pleasure in drawing unfavourable conclusions against any person whatever; but the tenderest disposition towards mankind cannot convert truth into falsehood, or falsehood into truth. Unless, therefore, we reject the Bible, and the belief of *any thing* as necessary to salvation, though we should stretch our good opinion of men to the greatest lengths, yet we must stop somewhere. Charity itself does not so *believe all things* as to disregard truth and evidence. We are sometimes reminded of our Lord's command, "*Judge not, lest ye be judged.*" This language is, doubtless, designed to reprove a censorious disposition, which leads people to pass *unjust* judgment, or to discern *a mote in a brother's eye, while they are blind to a beam in their own*: but it cannot be intended to forbid *all* judgment whatever, even upon characters; for this would be contrary to what our Lord teaches in the same discourse, warning his disciples to *beware of false prophets, who would come to them in sheep's clothing*; adding,

“*Ye shall know them by their fruits.*” Few pretend that we ought to think favourably of *profligate* characters, or that it is any breach of charity to think unfavourably concerning them. But if the words of our Lord be understood as forbidding *all judgment whatever* upon characters, it must be wrong to pass any judgment upon them. Nay, it must be wrong for a minister to declare to a drunkard, a thief, or an adulterer, that if he die in his present condition, he must perish, because this is judging the party not to be in a state of salvation.

All the use that is commonly made of our Lord’s words is in favour of *sentiments*, not of *actions*; but the Scriptures make no such distinction. Men are there represented as being under the wrath of God who have *not believed* on the name of the only-begotten Son of God; nor is there any thing intimated in our Lord’s expressions, as if the judgment which he forbade his disciples to pass were to be confined to matters of sentiment. The judgment which is there reprovèd is *partial* or *wrong* judgment, whether it be on account of sentiment or of practice. Even those who plead against judging persons on account of sentiment (many of them at least) allow themselves to think unfavourably of avowed infidels, who have heard the gospel, but continue to reject it. They themselves, therefore, do judge unfavourably of men on account of their sentiments; and must do so, unless they will reject the Bible, which declares unbelievers to be under condemnation.

Dr. Priestley, however, seems to extend his favourable opinion to idolaters and infidels, without distinction. “All differences in modes of worship,” he says, “may be only the different methods by which different men (who are equally *the offspring of God*) are endeavouring to honour and obey their common Parent.” He also inveighs against a supposition that the mere holding of any *opinions* (so it seems the great articles of our faith must be called) should exclude men from the favour of God. It is true what he says is guarded so much as to give the argument he engages to support a very plausible appearance; but withal so ill directed as not in the least to affect that of his opponents. His words are these: “Let those who maintain that the mere holding of any *opinions* (without regard to the *motives and state of mind* through which men may have been led to form them) will necessarily exclude them from the favour of God, be particularly careful with respect to the premises from which they draw so alarming a conclusion.” The counsel contained in these words is undoubtedly very good. Those premises ought to be well-founded from which such a conclusion is drawn. I do not indeed suppose that any ground for such a conclusion exists, and who they are that draw it I cannot tell. The mere holding of an opinion, considered abstractedly from the motive or state of mind of him that holds it, must be simply an exercise of intellect; and, I am inclined to think, has in it neither good nor evil. But the question is, whether there be not truths which from the nature of them cannot be rejected without an evil bias of heart; and, therefore, where we see those truths rejected, whether we have not authority to conclude that such rejection must have arisen from an evil bias.

If a man say, *There is no God*, the Scripture teaches us to consider it rather as the language of his *heart* than simply of his judgment, and makes no scruple of calling him a *fool*; which, according to the Scriptural idea of the term, is equal to calling him a *wicked man*. And let it be seriously considered, upon what other principle our Lord could send forth his disciples to “preach the gospel to every creature,” and add, as he did, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Is it not here plainly supposed that the gospel was accompanied with such evidence, that no intelligent creature could reject it but from an evil bias of heart, such as would justly expose him to damnation? If it had been pos-

sible for an intelligent creature, after hearing the gospel, to think Jesus an impostor, and his doctrine a lie, without any evil motive, or corrupt state of mind, I desire to know how the Lord of glory is to be acquitted of something worse than bigotry in making such a declaration.

Because the mere holding of an opinion, irrespective of the motive or state of mind in him that holds it, is neither good nor evil, it does not follow that "all differences in modes of worship may be only the different methods by which different men are endeavouring to honour and obey their common Parent." The latter includes more than the former. The performance of worship contains more than the mere holding of an opinion; for it includes an exercise of the heart. Our Lord and his apostles did not proceed on any such principle, when they went forth preaching the gospel, as I hope has been sufficiently proved in the *Letter on Candour*. The principles on which they proceeded were, *An assurance that they were of God, and that the whole world were lying in wickedness—That he who was of God would hear their words; and he who was not of God would not hear them—That he who believed their testimony set to his seal that God was true; and he that believed it not made God a liar.*

If we consider a belief of the gospel, in those who hear it, as essential to salvation, we shall be called bigots; but if this be bigotry, Jesus Christ and his apostles were bigots; and the same outcry might have been raised against them, by both Jews and Greeks, as is now raised against us. Jesus Christ himself said to the Jews, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins;" and his apostles went forth with the same language. They wrote and preached that men "might believe that Jesus was the Christ; and that, believing, they might have life through his name." Those who embraced their testimony they treated as in a state of salvation, and those who rejected it were told that they had "judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life." In short, they acted as men fully convinced of the truth of what their Lord had declared in their commission; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

To all this an unbelieving *Jew* might have objected in that day, with quite as good a grace as Socinians object in this, "These men think that our salvation depends upon receiving their opinions! Have we not been the people of God, and in a state of salvation, time out of mind, without believing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God? Our fathers believed only in general that there was a Messiah to come; and were, no doubt, saved in that faith. We also believe the same, and worship the same God: and yet, according to these bigots, if we reject their opinion concerning Jesus being the Messiah, we must be *judged unworthy of everlasting life.*"

A *heathen* also, suppose one of Paul's hearers at Athens, who had just heard him deliver the discourse at Mars' hill, (recorded in Acts xvii.) might have addressed his countrymen in some such language as the following: "This Jewish stranger, Athenians, pretends to make known to us 'the unknown God.' Had he been able to make good his pretensions, and had this been all, we might have been obliged to him. But this *unknown God*, it seems, is to take the place of all others that are known, and be set up at their expense. You have hitherto, Athenians, acted worthy of yourselves; you have liberally admitted all the gods to a participation of your worship; but now, it seems, the whole of your sacred services is to be engrossed by one. You have never been used to put any restraint upon *thought or opinion*; but, with the utmost freedom, have ever been in search of new things. But this man tells us, we 'ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto silver or gold;' as though we were bound to adopt his manner of thinking, and no other. You have been famed for your adoration of the gods; and to this

even your accuser himself has borne witness; yet he has the temerity to call us to *repentance* for it. It seems, then, we are considered in the light of *criminals*—criminals on account of our *devotions*—criminals for being *too* religious, and for adhering to the religion of our ancestors! Will Athenians endure this? Had he possessed the *liberality* becoming one who should address an Athenian audience, he would have supposed that, however we might have been hitherto mistaken in our devotions, yet our intentions were good; and that ‘all the differences in modes of worship, as practised by Jews and Athenians, (who are equally, by his own confession, *the offspring of God*,) may have been only different methods by which we have been endeavouring to honour and obey our common Parent.’ Nor is this all; for we are called to repentance, *because this unknown God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world, &c.* So, then, we are to renounce our principles and worship, and embrace his, on pain of being called to give an account of it before a Divine tribunal. Future happiness is to be confined to his sect; and our eternal welfare depends upon our embracing his opinions! Could your ears have been insulted, Athenians, with an harangue more replete with ‘*pride, arrogance, and bigotry?*’

“But, to say no more of this insulting language, the *importance* he gives to his opinions, if there were no other objection, must ever be a bar to their being received at Athens. You, Athenians, are friends to *free inquiry*. But should our philosophers turn Christians, instead of being famous, as heretofore, for the search of *new truth*, they must sink into a state of mental stagnation. ‘Those persons who think that their salvation depends upon holding their present opinions must necessarily entertain the greatest dread of *free inquiry*. They must think it to be hazarding of their eternal welfare to listen to any arguments, or to read books, that savour of idolatry. It must appear to them in the same light as listening to any other temptation, whereby they would be in danger of being seduced to their everlasting destruction. This temper of mind cannot but be a foundation for the most deplorable bigotry, obstinacy, and ignorance.’

“The Athenians, I doubt not, will generally abide by the religion of their forefathers; but should any individuals think of turning Christians, I trust they will never adopt that illiberal principle of making their opinion necessary to future happiness. While this man and his followers hold such a notion ‘of the *importance* of their present sentiments, they must needs live in the dread of all free inquiry; whereas we, who have not that idea of the importance of our present sentiments, preserve a state of mind proper for the discussion of them. If we be wrong, as our minds are under no strong bias, we are within reach of conviction; and thus are in the way to grow wiser and better as long as we live.’”

By the above it will appear that the apostle Paul was just as liable as we are to the charge of bigotry. Those parts which are marked with *single* reversed commas are, with only an alteration of the word *heresy* to that of *idolatry*, the words of Dr. Priestley in the *Second Section* of his *Considerations on Differences of Opinions*. Judge, brethren, whether these words best fit the lips of a Christian minister or of a heathen caviller. The consequences alleged by the supposed Athenian, against Paul, are far from just, and might be easily refuted; but they are the same, for substance, as those alleged by Dr. Priestley against us; and the premises from which they are drawn are exactly the same.

From the whole, I think, it may safely be concluded, if there be any sentiments taught us in the New Testament in a clear and decided manner, this is one: That the apostles and primitive preachers considered the belief of

the gospel which they preached as necessary to the salvation of those who heard it.

But though it should be allowed that a belief of the gospel is necessary to salvation, it will still be objected that Socinians believe the gospel as well as others; their Christianity, therefore, ought not to be called in question on this account. To this it is replied, If what Socinians believe be indeed the gospel—in other words, if it be not deficient in what is essential to the gospel—they undoubtedly ought to be acknowledged as Christians; but if otherwise, they ought not. It has been pleaded, by some who are not Socinians, that we ought to think favourably of all who profess to embrace Christianity, *in general*, unless their conduct be manifestly immoral. But we have no such criterion afforded us in the New Testament; nor does it accord with what is there revealed. The New Testament informs us of various “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” who appeared among the primitive Christians; men who professed the Christian name, but yet were, in reality, enemies to Christianity; who “perverted the gospel of Christ,” and introduced “another gospel” in its place.

But these men, it is said, not only taught false doctrine, but led *immoral lives*. If by *immoral* be meant grossly wicked, they certainly did not all of them answer to that character. The contrary is plainly supposed in the account of the false apostles among the Corinthians; who are called “deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness,” 2 Cor. xi. I would not here be understood as drawing a comparison between the false apostles and the Socinians. My design, in this place, is not to insinuate any specific charge against them, but merely to prove that, if we judge favourably of the state of every person who bears the Christian name, and whose exterior moral character is fair, we must judge contrary to the Scriptures.

To talk of forming a favourable judgment from a profession of Christianity *in general*, is as contrary to reason and common sense as it is to the New Testament. Suppose a candidate for a seat in the House of Commons, on being asked his political principles, should profess himself a friend to *liberty in general*. A freeholder inquires, “Do you disapprove, sir, of taxation without representation?” “No.” “Would you vote for a reform in parliament?” “No.” “Do you approve of the liberty of the press?” “No.” Would this afford satisfaction? Is it not common for men to admit that in the gross which they deny in detail? The only question that can fairly be urged is, Are the doctrines which Socinians disown (supposing them to be true) of such importance that a rejection of them would endanger their salvation?

It must be allowed that these doctrines *may* be what we consider them, not only true, but *essential* to Christianity. Christianity, like every other system of truth, must have some principles which are essential to it; and if those in question be such, it cannot justly be imputed to pride or bigotry, it cannot be uncharitable, or uncandid, or indicate any want of benevolence to think so. Neither can it be wrong to draw a natural and necessary conclusion, that those persons who reject these principles are not Christians. To think justly of persons is, in no respect, inconsistent with a universal goodwill towards them. It is not, in the least, contrary to charity to consider unbelievers in the light in which the Scriptures represent them, nor those who reject what is essential to the gospel as rejecting the gospel itself.

Dr. Priestley will not deny that Christianity has its *great truths*, though he will not allow the doctrines in question to make any part of them. “The being of a God—his constant overruling providence, and righteous moral

government—the Divine origin of the Jewish and Christian revelations—that Christ was a teacher sent from God—that he is our master, lawgiver, and judge—that God raised him from the dead—that he is now exalted at the right hand of God—that he will come again, to raise all the dead, and sit in judgment upon them—and that he will then give to every one of us according to our works;—these,” says he, “are, properly speaking, the *only great truths of religion*; and to these not only the *Church of England*, and the *Church of Scotland*, but even the *Church of Rome*, gives its assent.”\* We see here that Dr. Priestley not only allows that there are certain great truths of religion, but determines what, and what “only,” they are. I do not recollect, however, that the false teachers in the churches of Galatia denied any one of these articles; and yet, without rejecting some of the *great and essential* truths of Christianity, they could not have *perverted* the gospel of Christ, or have introduced *another gospel*.

But Dr. Priestley, it seems, though he allows the above to be *great truths*, yet considers nothing as *essential* to Christianity but a *belief of the Divine mission of Christ*. “While a man believes,” he says, “in the Divine mission of Christ, he might with as much propriety be called a Mahometan as be denied to be a Christian.”† To call Socinians *Mahometans* might, in most cases, be improper; they would still, however, according to this criterion of Christianity, be within the pale of the church; for Mahomet himself, I suppose, never denied the Divine mission of Christ, and very few of those doctrines which Dr. Priestley calls “the *only great truths of religion*.” The Doctor informs us that some people consider him, already, as “half a Mahometan.”‡ Whether this be just or unjust, according to *his* notions of Christianity a Mahometan is to be considered as more than half a Christian. He ought, if the above criterion be just, to be acknowledged as a fellow Christian; and the whole party, instead of being ranked with heathenish and Jewish unbelievers, as they are by this same writer,§ ought to be considered as a sect or denomination of Christians. The Doctor, therefore, need not have stopped at the *Church of Rome*, but might have added the *Church of Constantinople*, as agreeing in his “only great truths of religion.”

I scarcely need to draw the conclusion which follows from what has been observed: If not only those who *perverted the gospel* among the Galatians did, but even the *Mahometans* may, acknowledge those truths which Dr. Priestley mentions, they cannot be the *only great*, much less the *distinguishing*, truths of the Christian religion.

The difference between Socinians and Calvinists is not about the mere circumstantials of religion. It respects nothing less than the *rule* of faith, the *ground* of hope, and the *object* of worship. If the Socinians be right, we are not only superstitious devotees, and deluded dependents upon an arm of flesh, (Jer. xvii. 5,) but habitual idolaters. On the other hand, if we be right, they are guilty of refusing to subject their faith to the decisions of Heaven, of rejecting the only way of salvation, and of sacrilegiously depriving the Son of God of his essential glory. It is true they do not deny our Christianity on account of our supposed idolatry; but for this no reason can be assigned, except their indifference to religious truth, and the deistical turn of their sentiments.

If the proper Deity of Christ be a Divine truth, it is a great and a fundamental truth in Christianity. Socinians, who reject it, very consistently reject the worship of Christ with it. But worship enters into the essence of religion; and the worship of Christ, according to the New Testament, into the essence of the Christian religion. The primitive Christians are charac-

\* Fam. Let. XXII.

† Letters to Mr. Burn (Pref.)

‡ Diff. Opin. § V.

§ Fam. Let. XVII. Conclusion.



terized by their "calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus." The apostle, when writing to the Corinthians, addressed himself "to the Church of God at Corinth, to them that were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place called upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."\* That this is designed as a description of true Christians, will not be denied; but this description does not include Socinians, seeing they call not upon the name of Christ. The conclusion is, Socinians would not have been acknowledged, by the apostle Paul, as true Christians.

If the Deity of Christ be a Divine truth, it must be the Father's will that all men should honour the Son in the same sense, and to the same degree, as they honour the Father; and those who honour him not as God will not only be found opposing the Divine will, but are included in the number of those who, by refusing to honour the Son, honour not the Father who hath sent him; which amounts to nothing less than that the worship which they pay to the Father is unacceptable in his sight.

If the Deity of Christ be a Divine truth, he is the object of *trust*; and that not merely in the character of a witness, but as *Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength*. This appears to be another characteristic of true Christians in the New Testament. "In his name shall the Gentiles trust." "I know whom I have trusted; and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." "In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." But, if it be a characteristic of true Christianity so to trust in Christ as to commit the salvation of our souls into his hands, how can we conceive of those as true Christians who consider him only as a fellow creature, and, consequently, place no such confidence in him?

If men by nature be in a *lost* and *perishing* condition, and if Christ came to seek and save them under those characters, as he himself constantly testified, then all those that were whole in their own eyes, and seemed to need no physician, as the scribes and Pharisees of old, must necessarily be excluded from an interest in his salvation. And in what other light can those persons be considered who deny the depravity of their nature, and approach the Deity without respect to an atoning Saviour?—Further,

If the death of Christ, as an atoning sacrifice, be the only way of a sinner's salvation—if there be "no other name given under heaven, or among men, by which we must be saved"—if this be the "foundation which God hath laid in Zion"—and if no other will stand in the day of trial—how can we conceive that those who deliberately disown it, and renounce all dependence upon it for acceptance with God, should be yet interested in it? Is it supposable that they will partake of that *forgiveness of sins* which believers are said to receive *for his sake, and through his name*, who refuse to make use of that name in any of their petitions?

If the doctrine of atonement by the cross of Christ be a Divine truth, it constitutes the very substance of the gospel; and, consequently, is essential to it. The doctrine of the cross is represented in the New Testament as the grand peculiarity and the principal glory of Christianity. It occupies a large proportion among the doctrines of Scripture, and is expressed in a vast variety of language. Christ "was delivered for our offences, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities." "He died for our sins."

\* Mr. Lindsey's observation, that "called upon the name of Christ," should be rendered, *called by the name, of Christ*, if applied to Rom. x. 13, would make the Scriptures promise salvation to every one that is called a Christian. Salvation is promised to all who *believe, love, fear, and call upon the name of the Lord*; but never are the possessors of it described by a mere accidental circumstance, in which they are not voluntary, and in which, if they were, there is no virtue.

“By his death purged our sins”—is said to “take (or bear) away the sins of the world”—to have “made peace through the blood of his cross”—“reconciled us to God by his death”—“redeemed us by his blood”—“washed us from our sins in his own blood”—“by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us”—“purchased his church by his own blood,” &c. &c. This kind of language is so interwoven with the doctrine of the New Testament, that, to explain away the one, is to subvert the other. The doctrine of the cross is described as being, not merely an important branch of the gospel, but *the gospel itself*. “We preach Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” “An enemy to the cross of Christ” is only another mode of describing an enemy to the gospel.\* It was reckoned a sufficient refutation of any principle, if it could be proved to involve in it the consequence of Christ’s having “died in vain.”† Christ’s *dying for our sins* is not only declared to be a Divine truth, “according to the Scriptures,” but a truth of such importance that the then *present standing* and the *final salvation* of the Corinthians were suspended upon their adherence to it.‡ In fine, the doctrine of the cross is the central point in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united. What the sun is to the system of nature, that the doctrine of the cross is to the system of the gospel; it is the life of it. The revolving planets might as well exist and keep their course, without the attracting influence of the one, as a gospel be exhibited worthy of the name that should leave out the other.

I am aware that Socinian writers do not allow the doctrine of the *atonement* to be signified by that of the *cross*. They would tell you that they believe in the doctrine of the cross; and allow it to have a *relative* or *subordinate* importance, rendering the truth of Christ’s resurrection more evident, by cutting off all pretence that he was not really dead.§ Whether this meagre sense of the phrase will agree with the design of the apostle, in this and various other passages in the New Testament—whether it contain a sufficient ground for that singular *glorying* of which he speaks, or any principle by which *the world was crucified to him, and he unto the world*—let the impartial judge. But, be this as it may, the question here is not whether the doctrine of atonement be signified by that of the cross; but, supposing it be so, whether it be of such importance as to render a denial of it a virtual denial of Christianity.—Once more,

If we believe in the absolute necessity of *regeneration*, or that a sinner must be renewed in the spirit of his mind, or never enter the kingdom of God, in what light must we consider those who plead for a reformation only, and deny the doctrine of a supernatural Divine influence, by which a *new heart is given us, and a new spirit is put within us*? Ought we, or can we, consider them as the subject of a Divine change who are continually ridiculing the very idea of it?

It is common for our opponents to stigmatize us with the name of *bigots*. Bigotry, if I understand it, is a blind and inordinate attachment to one’s opinions. If we be attached to principles on account of their being *ours*, or because *we* have adopted them, rather than because they appear to us to be taught in the Holy Scriptures; if we be attached to *some* peculiar principles to the neglect of *others*, or so as to give them a greater proportion in the system than they require; if we consider things as being of greater importance than the Scriptures represent them; if we obstinately adhere to

\* 1 Cor. i. ii.

† Gal. ii.

‡ 1 Cor. xv.

§ Dr. Priestley’s Sermon on “Glorying in the Cross.”

our opinions, so as to be averse to free inquiry, and not open to conviction; if we make so much of principles as to be inattentive to holy practice; or if a difference in religious sentiment destroy or damp our benevolence to the persons of those from whom we differ; in any of these cases we are subject to the charge of bigotry. But we may consider a belief of certain doctrines as necessary to salvation, without coming under any part of the above description. We may be attached to these doctrines, not because we have already embraced them, but on account of their appearing to us to be revealed in the Scriptures; we may give them only that degree of importance in our views of things which they occupy there; we may be so far friends to free inquiry as impartially to search the Scriptures, to see whether these things be true, and so open to conviction as to relinquish our sentiments when they are proved to be unscriptural; we may be equally attached to practical godliness, and to the principles on which it is founded; and notwithstanding our ill opinion of the religious sentiments of men, and our apprehensions of the danger of their condition, we may yet bear good-will to their persons, and wish for nothing more than an opportunity of promoting their welfare, both for this life and that which is to come.

I do not pretend that Calvinists are free from bigotry; neither are their opponents. What I here contend for is, that their considering a belief of certain doctrines as necessary to salvation, unless it can be proved that they make more of these doctrines than the Scriptures make of them, ought not to subject them to such a charge.

What is there of bigotry in our not reckoning the Socinians to be Christians, more than in their reckoning us *idolaters*? Mr. Madan complained of the Socinians "insulting those of his principles with the charge of idolatry." Dr. Priestley justified them by observing, "All who believe Christ to be a man, and not God, must necessarily think it idolatrous to pay him Divine honours; and to *call* it so is no other than the necessary consequence of avowing our belief." Nay, he represents it as ridiculous that they should "be allowed to think the Trinitarians idolaters without being permitted to call them so."\* If Socinians have a right to think Trinitarians idolaters, they have doubtless a right to call them so; and, if they be able, to make it appear so: nor ought we to consider ourselves as insulted by it. I have no idea of being offended with any man, in affairs of this kind, for speaking what he believes to be the truth. Instead of courting compliments from each other in matters of such moment, we ought to encourage an unreservedness of expression, provided it be accompanied with sobriety and benevolence. But neither ought Socinians to complain of our refusing to acknowledge them as Christians, or to impute it to a spirit of bigotry; for it amounts to nothing more than avowing a necessary consequence of our belief. If we believe the Deity and atonement of Christ to be essential to Christianity, we must necessarily think those who reject these doctrines to be no Christians; nor is it inconsistent with charity to speak accordingly.

Again, What is there of bigotry in our not allowing the Socinians to be Christians, more than in their not allowing us to be *Unitarians*? We profess to believe in the Divine unity as much as they do in Christianity. But they consider a oneness of person, as well as of essence, to be essential to the unity of God, and therefore cannot acknowledge us as Unitarians; and we consider the Deity and atonement of Christ as essential to Christianity, and therefore cannot acknowledge them as Christians. We do not choose to call Socinians Unitarians, because that would be a virtual acknowledgment that we ourselves do not believe in the Divine unity; but we are not

\* Fam. Let. VI.

offended at what they think of us; nor do we impute it to bigotry, or to any thing of the kind. We know that while they think as they do on the doctrine of the Trinity, our sentiments must appear to them as Tritheism. We comfort ourselves in these matters with this, that the thoughts of creatures uninspired of God are liable to mistake. Such are theirs concerning us, and such are ours concerning them; and if Socinians do indeed *love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, it is happy for them. The judgment of their fellow creatures cannot affect their state; and thousands who have scrupled to admit them among the true followers of Christ in this world would rejoice to find themselves mistaken in that matter at the last day.

It has been pleaded, by some who are not Socinians, that a belief in the doctrine of the atonement is not necessary to salvation: they observe that the disciples of our Lord, previously to his death, do not appear to have embraced the idea of a vicarious sacrifice; and, therefore, conclude that a vicarious sacrifice is not of the essence of faith. They add, It was owing to prejudice, and consequently wrong, for the disciples to disbelieve this doctrine; and they admit the same thing with respect to Socinians: yet, as the error in the one case did not endanger their salvation, they suppose it may not do so in the other. To this objection the following observations are offered in reply:—

First, Those who object in this manner do not suppose the disciples of Christ to have agreed with Socinians in any of their peculiar sentiments, except the rejection of a *vicarious sacrifice*. They allow them to have believed in the doctrines of human depravity, Divine influence, the miraculous conception, the pre-existence and proper Deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, &c. The case of the disciples, therefore, is far from being parallel with that of the Socinians.

Secondly, Whatever were the ignorance and error which occupied the minds of the disciples, relative to the death of the Lord, their case will not apply to that of Socinians, on account of the difference in the state of revelation, as it stood before and after that event. Were it even allowed that the disciples did reject the doctrine of Christ being a vicarious sacrifice, yet the circumstances which they were under render their case very different from ours. We can perceive a very considerable difference between rejecting a principle before and after a full discussion of it. It would be a far greater evil, in the present day, to persecute men for adhering to the dictates of their consciences, than it was before the rights of conscience were so fully understood. It may include a thousand degrees more guilt for this country, at the present time, to persist in the slave trade, than to have done the same thing previously to the late inquiry on that business. But the disparity between periods, with regard to the light thrown upon these subjects, is much less than between the periods before and after the death of Christ, with regard to the light thrown upon that subject. The difference between the periods before and after the death of Christ was as great as between a period in which a prophecy is unaccomplished, and that in which it is accomplished. There are many things that seem plain in prophecy, when the event is passed, which cannot then be honestly denied; and it may seem wonderful that they should ever have been overlooked or mistaken; yet overlooked or mistaken they have been, and that by men of solid understanding and real piety.

It was after the death of Christ, when the means of knowledge began to diffuse light around them, that the disciples were, for the first time, reproved for their *slowness of heart to believe*, in reference to this subject. It was after the death and resurrection of Christ, when the way of salvation was fully and clearly pointed out, that those who stumbled at the doctrine of the

cross were reckoned *disobedient* in such a degree as to denominate them unbelievers, and that the most awful warnings and threatenings were pointed against them, as *treading under foot the blood of the Son of God*. It is true our Lord had repeatedly predicted his death, and it was faulty in the disciples not to understand and believe it; yet what he taught on that subject was but little, when compared with what followed. The "great salvation," as the apostle to the Hebrews expresses it, "first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed" to the primitive Christians "by those who heard him;" but then it is added, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will." Now it is upon this accumulation of evidence that he asks, "*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*"\*

A belief in the *resurrection* of Christ is allowed, on all hands, to be essential to salvation, as it is an event upon which the truth of Christianity rests.† But the disciples of Christ, previously to the event, were as much in the dark on this article as on that of the atonement. Even to the last, when he was actually risen from the dead, they visited his tomb, in hope of finding him, and could scarcely believe their senses, with respect to his having left it; "for as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." Now if the resurrection of Christ, though but little understood before the event, may, after it, be considered as essential to Christianity, there is no reason to conclude but that the same may be said of his atonement.

Thirdly, It is not clear that the disciples did reject the idea of a vicarious sacrifice. They had all their lives been accustomed to vicarious sacrifices: it is therefore very improbable that they should be prejudiced against the idea itself. Their objection to Christ's laying down his life seems to have been directed simply against his *dying*, rather than against his dying as a *vicarious* sacrifice. Could they have been reconciled to the former, for any thing that appears, they would have readily acquiesced in the latter. Their objection to the death of Christ seems to have been more the effect of ignorance and misguided affection than of a rooted opposition of principle; and therefore, when they came to see clearly into the design of his death, it is expressed not as if they had essentially altered their sentiments, but *remembered the words which he had spoken to them*; of which, while their minds were beclouded with the notions of a temporal kingdom, they could form no clear or consistent ideas, and therefore had forgotten them, Luke xxiv. 1—8.

And notwithstanding the ignorance and error which attended the disciples, there are things said of them which apply much more than the objection would seem to allow:—"Whither I go," said Christ, "ye know; and the way ye know." As if he should say, I am not going to a strange place, but to the house of my Father and of your Father; with the way to which you are acquainted, and therefore will soon be with me. "Thomas said unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.—If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." From this passage it appears that the disciples had a *general* idea of salvation through Christ, though they did not understand *particularly* how it was to be accomplished. Further, Christ taught his hearers, saying, "Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye have no life in you:"—

\* Heb. ii. 1—4.

† 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15; Rom. x. 9.

“and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” On this occasion, many of his nominal disciples were offended, and “walked no more with him;” but the true disciples were not offended. On the contrary, being asked, “Will ye also go away? Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” From this passage it plainly appears that the true disciples of Christ were, even at that time, considered as believing so much on the subject of Christ’s giving himself for the life of the world, as to “eat his flesh, and drink his blood;” for our Lord certainly did not mean to condemn them, as having “no life in them.” So far were they from *rejecting* this doctrine, that the same words at which the false disciples were offended were to them “the words of eternal life.” Probably, this great truth was sometimes more and sometimes less apparent to their view. At those periods in which their minds were occupied with the notion of a temporal kingdom, or in which events turned up contrary to their expectations, they would be all in darkness concerning it; yet, with all their darkness, and with all their doubts, it does not appear to be a doctrine which they can be said to have *rejected*.

No person, I think, who is open to conviction can be a bigot, whatever be his religious sentiments. Our opponents, it is true, are very ready to suppose that this is our general character, and that we are averse from free inquiry; but this may be more than they are able to prove. We acknowledge that we do not choose to circulate books indiscriminately among our friends which are considered by us as containing false and pernicious doctrines; neither do other people. I never knew a zealous Dissenter eager to circulate a book containing high-church principles among his children and connexions, nor a Churchman those which contain the true principles of dissent. In like manner an Anti-trinitarian will not propagate the best productions of Trinitarians. If they happen to meet with a weak performance, in which the subject is treated to disadvantage, they may feel no great objection to make it public; but it is otherwise with respect to those in which it is treated to advantage. I have known some gentlemen affecting to possess what has been called a liberal mind, who have discovered no kind of concern at the indiscriminate circulation of Socinian productions; but I have also perceived that those gentlemen have not been far from their kingdom of heaven. If any person choose to read the writings of a Socinian, or of an atheist, he is at liberty to do so; but, as the *Monthly Reviewers* themselves observe, “Though we are always ready to engage in inquiries after truth, and wish to see them at all times promoted; yet we choose to avoid disseminating notions which we cannot approve.”\*

As to being open to conviction *ourselves*, it has been frequently observed that Socinians discover as great an aversion to the reading of our writings as we can discover to the reading of theirs. Some will read them, but not many. Out of a hundred persons, whose minds lean towards the Socinian system, should you put into their hands a well-written Calvinistic performance, and desire them carefully and seriously to read it over, I question whether five would comply with your request. So far, however, as my observation extends, I can perceive in such persons an eagerness for reading those writings which suit their taste, and a contempt of others, equal, if not superior, to what is perceivable in people of other denominations.

Dr. Priestley suggests that the importance which we give to our sentiments tends to prevent an earnest and impartial search after truth. “While they imbibe such a notion of their present sentiments they must needs,” he says, “live in the dread of all free inquiry; whereas we, who have not that

\* Monthly Review Enlarged, Vol. VI. p. 555.

idea of the importance of our present sentiments, preserve a state of mind proper for the discussion of them. If we be wrong, as our minds are under no strong bias, we are within the reach of conviction; and thus are in the way to grow wiser and better as long as we live.”\*

Mr. Belsham, however, appears to think the very reverse. He pleads, and I think very justly, that an idea of the non-importance of sentiment tends to destroy a spirit of inquiry, by becalming the mind into a state of indifference and carelessness. He complains of those of his own party (the Socinians) who maintain that “sincerity is every thing, that nothing is of much value but an honest heart—and that speculative opinions—the cant name for those interesting doctrines which the wise and good in every age have thought worthy of the most serious discussion,—that these speculative opinions, as they are opprobriously called, are of little use. What is this,” adds he “but to pass a severe censure upon those illustrious names whose acute and learned labours have been successfully employed in clearing up the difficulties in which these important subjects were involved; to condemn their own conduct, in wasting so much of their time and pains upon such useless speculations; and to check the progress of religious inquiry and Christian knowledge? Were I a friend to the popular maxim—that speculative opinions are of no importance, I would endeavour to act consistently with my principles: I would content myself with believing as my fathers believed; I would take no pains to acquire or diffuse knowledge; I would laugh at every attempt to instruct and to ameliorate the world; I would treat as a visionary and a fool every one who should aim to extend the limits of science; I would recommend to my fellow creatures that they should neither lie nor defraud, that they should neither swear falsely nor steal, should say their prayers as they have been taught: but as to any thing else, that they need not give themselves any concern; for that honesty was every thing, and that every expectation of improving their circumstances, by cultivating their understandings and extending their views, would prove delusive and chimerical.”†

None will imagine that I have quoted Mr. Belsham on account of my agreement with him in the great principles of the gospel. What he would reckon important truth I should consider as pernicious error; and, probably, his views of the importance of what he accounts truth are not equal to what I have attempted to maintain. But in this general principle we are agreed—*That our conceiving of truth as being of but little importance has a tendency to check free inquiry rather than to promote it*; which is the reverse of what we are here taught by Dr. Priestley.

To illustrate the subject more fully, suppose the possession of a precious stone, of a certain description, to entitle us to the possession of some very desirable object; and suppose that none of any other description would answer the same end; would that consideration tend to prejudice our minds in favour of *any* stone we might happen to possess, or prevent an impartial and strict inquiry into its properties? Would it not rather induce us to be more inquisitive and careful, lest we should be mistaken, and so lose the prize? If, on the other hand, we could imagine that any stone would answer the same end, or that an error in the matter were of trifling importance as to the issue, would it not have a tendency to promote a spirit of carelessness in our examinations; and as all men are apt, in such cases, to be prejudiced in favour of what they already have, to make us rest contented with what we had in possession, be it what it might?

It is allowed, however, that as every good has its counterfeit, and as there

\* Diff. Opin. § II.

† Serm. pp. 5, 6.

is a mixture of human prejudices and passions in all we think or do, there is danger of this principle degenerating into an unchristian severity; and of its being exercised at the expense of that benevolence which is due to all men. There is nothing, however, in this view of things, which, in its own nature, tends to promote these evils; for the most unfavourable opinion of a man's principles and state may consist with the most perfect benevolence and compassion towards his person. Jesus Christ thought as ill of the principles and state of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the generality of the Jewish nation, as any of us think of one another; yet he wept over Jerusalem, and to his last hour sought her welfare. The apostle Paul had the same conception of the principles and state of the generality of his countrymen as Christ himself had, and much the same as we have of the Socinians. He considered them, though they "followed after the law of righteousness," or were very devout in their way, yet as "not having attained to the law of righteousness;" in other words, as not being *righteous* persons; which the Gentiles, who submitted to the gospel, were. And "wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Yet Paul, in the same chapter, and in the most solemn manner, declared that he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart;" nay, that he "could wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren's sake, his kinsmen according to the flesh!" Rom. ix.

But why need I say more? Dr. Priestley himself allows all I plead for: "The man," says he, "whose sole spring of action is *a concern for lost souls*, and a care to preserve the purity of that gospel which alone teaches the most effectual method of their recovery from *the power of sin and Satan unto God*, will feel an ardour of mind that will prompt him strenuously to oppose all those whom he considers as obstructing his benevolent designs." He adds, "I could overlook every thing in a man who I thought meant nothing but my everlasting welfare."\* This, and nothing else, is the temper of mind which I have been endeavouring to defend; and, as Dr. Priestley has here generously acknowledged its propriety, it becomes us to acknowledge, on the other hand, that every species of zeal for sentiments in which a concern for the everlasting welfare of men is wanting, is an unhallowed kind of fire; for which whoever indulges it will receive no thanks from him whose cause he may imagine himself to have espoused.

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## LETTER XI.

### THE SYSTEMS COMPARED AS TO THEIR INFLUENCE IN PROMOTING THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

If the Holy Scriptures be a proper medium by which to judge of the nature of virtue, it must be allowed to include *the love of Christ*; nay, that love to Christ is one of the cardinal virtues of the Christian scheme, seeing it occupies a most important place in the doctrines and precepts of inspiration. "He that loveth me," said Christ, "shall be loved of my Father."—"If God were your Father, ye would love me."—"Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maran-atha."

\* Diff. Opin. § I.



From these passages, with many others that might be produced, we may conclude that love to Christ is not only a Christian virtue, but essential to the very existence of Christianity; nay, to *morality* itself, if by that term he meant a conformity to the moral law. The following lines, though expressed by a poet, contain more than a poetic flight, even the words of truth and soberness:

“Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Love,  
The grand morality is love of Thee!”——

In judging which of the systems in question is most adapted to promote love to Christ, it should seem sufficient to determine which of them tends most to exalt his character, which places his mediation in the most important light, and which represents us as most indebted to his undertaking.

With respect to the *first*: Every being commands our affection in proportion to the degree of intellect which he possesses, provided that his goodness be equal to his intelligence. We feel a respect towards an animal, and a concern at its death, which we do not feel towards a vegetable; towards those animals which are very sagacious, more than to those which are otherwise; towards man, more than to mere animals; and towards men of enlarged powers, if they be but good as well as great, more than to men in common. According to the degree of intellect which they possess, so much they have of being, and of estimation in the scale of being. A man is of “more value than many sparrows:” and the life of David was reckoned to be worth ten thousand of those of the common people. It has been thought to be on this principle that God, possessing infinitely more existence than all the creatures taken together, and being as good as he is great, is to be loved and revered without bounds, except those which arise from the limitation of our powers; that is, “with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.”

Now if these observations be just, it cannot be doubted which of the systems in question tends most to promote the love of Christ; that which supposes him to be equal or one with God, or that which reduces him to the rank of a mere fellow creature. In the same proportion as God himself is to be loved above man, so is Christ to be loved, supposing him to be truly God, above what he is, or ought to be, supposing him to be merely a fellow man.

The prophets, apostles, and primitive Christians seem to have felt this motive in all its force. Hence, in their various expressions of love to Christ, they frequently mingle acknowledgments of his Divine dignity and excellence. They, indeed, never seem afraid of going too far, or of honouring him too much; but dwell upon the dignity and glory of his person as their darling theme. When David meditated upon this subject, he was raised above himself. “My heart,” saith he, “is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men.”—“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.”—“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O MOST MIGHTY, with thy glory and thy majesty.” The expected Messiah was frequently the subject of Isaiah’s prophecies. He loved him; and his love appears to have been founded on his dignity and Divine excellency. “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, THE MIGHTY GOD, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” He thus describes the preaching of John the Baptist:—“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our

GOD."—"Behold, the LORD GOD will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. *He* shall feed his flock like a shepherd; *He* shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, so loved the Messiah as to rejoice in his own child chiefly because he was appointed to be his prophet and forerunner. "And thou, child," said the enraptured parent, "shalt be called the prophet of the *Highest*; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways," Luke i. John the Baptist himself, when the Jews artfully endeavoured to excite his jealousy on account of the superior ministerial success of Christ, replied, "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."—" *He that cometh from above is above all*: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: *He that cometh from heaven is above all.*"\*

The apostles, who saw the Lord, and who saw the accomplishment of what the prophets foretold, were not disappointed in him. Their love to him was great, and their representations of his person and character ran in the same exalted strain. "In the beginning was the Word," said the beloved disciple, "and the Word was with God, and the Word *was God*. The same was in the beginning with God. All things *were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*. He was in the world, and *the world was made by him*, and the world knew him not. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the *only begotten of the Father*,) full of grace and truth." Thomas insisted upon an unreasonable kind of evidence of the resurrection of his Lord from the dead; saying, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." When reproved by our Lord's offering to gratify him in his incredulous proposal, he confessed, with a mixture of shame, grief, and affection, that, however unbelieving he had been, he was now satisfied that it was indeed his Lord, and no other; saying, "*My Lord and my God!*" The whole Epistle to the Hebrews breathes an ardent love to Christ, and is intermingled with the same kind of language. Jesus is there represented as "*upholding all things by the word of his power*;" as the object of *angelic adoration*; as he to whom it was said, "*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*;" as he who "*laid the foundation of the earth*;" and concerning whom it is added, "*the heavens are the work of thine hands*;" as superior to Moses, the one being the *builder* and *owner* of the house, even *God* that built all things, and the other only a servant in it; as superior to Aaron and to all those of his order, "*a great High Priest*,"—Jesus the *Son of God*;" and, finally, as infinitely superior to angels; for, "to which of the angels said he, at any time, *Thou art my Son; or, Sit on my right hand?*" Hence the gospel is considered as exhibiting "*a great salvation!*" and those who *neglect* it are exposed to a recompense of wrath which they *shall not escape*.

Paul could scarcely mention the name of Christ without adding some strong encomium in his praise. When he was enumerating those things which rendered his countrymen dear to him, he mentions their being *Israel-*

\* John iii. 28—31. Query, in what sense could Christ be said to come from *above*, even from *heaven*, if he was merely a man, and came into the world like other men? It could not be on account of his *office*, or of his receiving his mission from God; for, in that sense, John was from heaven as well as he. Was it not for the same reason which John elsewhere gives for his being "preferred before him," viz. that "*He was before him?*"

*ites*, to whom pertained the *adoption*, and the *glory*, and the *covenants*, and the *giving of the law*, and the *service of God*, and the *promises*; whose were the *fathers*, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, *Christ came*. Here, it seems, he might have stopped; but having mentioned the name of Christ, he could not content himself without adding, *Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* Rom. ix. Having occasion also to speak of him in his Epistle to the Colossians (chap. i.) as "God's dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," he could not forbear adding, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created *by* him, and *for* him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

And now, brethren, I might appeal to you on the justness of Dr. Priestley's assertion, that "in no sense whatever, not even in the lowest of all, is Christ so much as called *God* in all the New Testament."\* I might appeal to you whether such language as the above would ever have proceeded from the sacred writers, had they embraced the scheme of our opponents. But, waving these particulars, as irrelative to the immediate point in hand, I appeal to you whether such love as the prophets and apostles expressed towards Christ could consist with his being merely a fellow creature, and their considering him as such; whether the manner in which they expressed that love, upon the principles of our opponents, instead of being acceptable to God, could have been any other than the height of extravagance, and the essence of idolatry. Judge also for yourselves, brethren, which of the systems in question has the greatest tendency to promote such a spirit of love to Christ as is here exemplified: that which leads us to admire these representations, and, on various occasions, to adopt the same expressions; or that which employs us in coldly criticising away their meaning: that which leads us, without fear, to give them their full scope; or that which, while we are honouring the Son, would excite apprehensions, lest we should, in so doing, dishonour the Father.

The next question to be discussed is, *Which of the two systems places the mediation of Christ in the most important point of light?* That system, doubtless, which finds the greatest use for Christ, or in which he occupies the *most important place*, must have the greatest tendency to promote love to him. Suppose a system of politics were drawn up, in which *civil liberty* occupied but a very small portion, and was generally kept out of view; or if, when brought forward, it was either for the purpose of abating the high notions which some people entertain of it, or, at least, of treating it as a matter not absolutely necessary to good civil government; who would venture to assert that such a system was friendly, or its abettors, friends to civil liberty? This is manifestly a case in point. The Socinian system has but little use for Christ, and none at all as an atoning sacrifice. It scarcely ever mentions him, unless it be to depreciate those views of his dignity which others entertain, or in such a way as to set aside the absolute necessity of his mediation.

It is not so in our views of things. We find so much use for Christ, if I may so speak, that he appears as the *soul* which animates the whole body of our divinity; as the centre of the system, diffusing light and life to every part of it. Take away Christ; nay, take away the Deity and atonement of Christ; and the whole ceremonial of the Old Testament appears to us little more than a dead mass of uninteresting matter: prophecy loses all that is in-

\* Letters to Mr. Burn, Letter I.

teresting and endearing; the gospel is annihilated, or ceases to be that *good news* to lost sinners which it professes to be; practical religion is divested of its most powerful motives, the evangelical dispensation of its peculiar glory, and heaven itself of its most transporting joys.

The sacred penmen appear to have written all along upon the same principles. They considered *Christ* as the *All in all* of their religion; and, as such, they loved him with their whole hearts. Do they speak of the first tabernacle?" They call it a "figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience."—"But *Christ* being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Do they speak of prophecy? They call the testimony of *Jesus* the "spirit" of it, Rev. xix. 10. Of the gospel? It is the doctrine of "*Christ crucified*." Of the medium by which the world was crucified to them, and they to the world? It is the same. The very "reproach of *Christ*" had a value stamped upon it, so as, in their esteem, to surpass all the treasures of the present world. One of the most affecting ideas which they afford us of heaven consists in ascribing everlasting glory and dominion "to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, were heard with a loud voice, saying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*"

Let us select a particular instance in the character of Paul. This apostle seemed to be swallowed up in love to *Christ*. His mercy to him, as one of the "chief of sinners," had bound his heart to him with bonds of everlasting gratitude. Nor was this all; he saw that glory in his person, office, and work which eclipsed the excellence of all created objects, which crucified the world to him, and him unto the world. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for *Christ*. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of *Christ Jesus my Lord*, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." Nor did he now repent; for he immediately adds, "And do count them but dung, that I may win *Christ*, 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."—"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." When his friends wept because he would not be dissuaded from going to Jerusalem, he answered, "What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? For I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, *for the name of the Lord Jesus.*" Feeling in himself an ardent love to *Christ*, he vehemently desired that others might love him too. For this cause he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, in behalf of the Ephesians; praying that *Christ* might dwell in their hearts by faith. He represented him to them as the medium of all spiritual blessings; of election, adoption, acceptance with God, redemption, and the forgiveness of sins; of a future inheritance, and of a present earnest of it; as Head over all things to the church, and as him that *filleth all in all*. He described him as the only way of access to God, and as the sole foundation of a sinner's hope; whose riches were unsearchable, and the dimensions of his love passing knowledge.

If any drew back, or deviated from the simplicity of the gospel, he felt a most ardent thirst for their recovery: witness his Epistles to the Corinthians

the Galatians, and (if, as is generally supposed, he was the writer of it) to the Hebrews. If any one drew back, and was not to be reclaimed, he denounced against him the Divine declaration, "My soul shall have no pleasure in him." And whatever might be the mind of others, like Joshua, he was at a point himself: "Henceforth," he exclaims, "let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." If he wished to "live," it was for Christ; or if to "die," it was to be with him. He invoked the best of blessings on those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and denounced an "anathema maran-atha" on those who loved him not.

The reason why I have quoted all these passages is to show that the primitive gospel was full of Christ; or that Christ was, as it were, the centre and the life of the evangelical system; and that this, its leading and principal characteristic, tended wonderfully to promote the love of Christ. Now, brethren, let me appeal to you again: Which of the systems in question is it which resembles that of the apostles in this particular, and consequently has the greatest tendency to promote love to Christ? That of which Christ is the All in all; or that in which he is scarcely ever introduced, except for the purpose of representing him as a "mere fellow creature, a fallible and peccable man?"

The third and last question to be discussed (if indeed it need any discussion) is, Which of the two systems represents us as most indebted to Christ's undertaking? Our Lord himself has laid it down as an incontrovertible rule, that those who have much forgiven will love him much, and that those who have little forgiven will love him but little. That system, therefore, which supposes us the greatest debtors to forgiving love, must needs have the greatest tendency to promote a return of love. Our views with respect to the depravity of human nature are such, that, upon our system, we have much more to be forgiven than our opponents have upon theirs. We suppose ourselves to have been utterly depraved, our very nature totally corrupted; and, consequently, that all our supposed virtues, while our hearts were at enmity with God, were not virtue in reality, but destitute of its very essence. We do not, therefore, conceive of ourselves, during our unregeneracy, as having been merely stained by a few imperfections; but as altogether polluted, by a course of apostacy from God, and black rebellion against him. That which is called sin by our opponents must consist chiefly, if not entirely, in the irregularity of a man's outward conduct; else they could not suppose, as Dr. Priestley does, that "virtue bears the same proportion to vice that happiness does to misery, or health to sickness, in the world;"\* that is, that there is much more of the former than of the latter. But the merely outward irregularities of men bear no more proportion to the whole of their depravity, according to our views of it, than the particles of water which are occasionally emitted from the surface of the ocean to the tide that rolls beneath. The religion of those who make sin to consist in little besides exterior irregularities, or who conceive of the virtues of men as greatly exceeding their vices, appears to us to resemble the religion of Paul, previously to his conversion to Christianity. While he thought of nothing but the irregularities of his exterior conduct, his virtues doubtless appeared to him to outweigh his vices, and therefore he concluded all was well; that he was in a fair way to everlasting happiness; or, as he himself expresses it, "alive without the law." But when, through the glass of that Divine "commandment" which prohibits the very inclination to evil, he saw the corruption that reigned within, transgression assumed a very different appearance; it was then a mighty ocean, that swelled and swept off all his

\* Let. Phil. Unb. Vol. I. Let. V.

legal hopes. "Sin revived," and he died. In short, our views of human depravity induce us to consider ourselves, by nature, as unworthy, as lost, and ready to perish; so that if we are saved at all, it must be by rich grace, and by a great Saviour. I scarcely need to draw the conclusion, that, having according to our system most to be forgiven, we shall, if we truly enter into it, love most.

Further, our system supposes a much greater malignity in sin than that of our opponents. When we speak of sin, we do not love to deal as Mr. Belsham does in extenuating names. We find no authority for calling it "human frailty," or for affixing any idea to it that shall represent us rather as objects worthy of the compassion of God than as subjects of that which his soul abhorreth. We do not see how Mr. Belsham, or those of his sentiments, while they speak of moral evil in so diminutive a style, can possibly conceive of it, after the manner of the inspired writers, as an "evil and bitter thing;" or, as it is expressed in that remarkable phrase of the apostle Paul, "exceeding sinful."\*

Our opponents deny sin to be, in any sense, an infinite evil; or, which is the same thing, deserving of endless punishment, or that such punishment will follow upon it. Nobody, indeed, supposes that sin is, in all respects, infinite. As committed by a finite creature, and admitting of different degrees, it must be finite, and will doubtless be punished hereafter with different degrees of punishment; but as committed against a God of infinite excellence, and as tending to infinite anarchy and mischief, it must be infinite. All that is meant, I suppose, by calling sin an infinite evil, is that it is deserving of endless punishment; and this can never be fairly objected to as an absurdity. If there be no absurdity in the immortality of a sinner's existence, there is none in supposing him to deserve a punishment, be it in what degree it may, that shall run commensurate with it. There is no absurdity in supposing a sinner to have been guilty of such crimes as to deserve misery for as long a duration as he is capable of sustaining it. But whatever may be said as to the truth or falsehood of this sentiment, thus much is clear, that, in proportion as our opponents conceive diminutively of the evil of sin, they diminish the grace of forgiveness; and if that forgiveness come to us through Christ, as is plainly implied in their loving him most who have most forgiven, it must needs follow that, in the same proportion, the love of Christ is sapped at the foundation.

Once more, The *expense* at which we suppose our forgiveness to have been obtained is a consideration which endears to us both the gift and the giver. We do not conceive of Christ, in his bestowment of this blessing upon us, as presenting us with that which cost him nothing. If the portion given by Jacob to his son Joseph was heightened and endeared by its being obtained "by the sword and the bow," much more is a title to eternal life, by its being obtained through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is this that attracts the hearts of those who are described as singing a new song to their Redeemer, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

\* The expression "exceeding sinful," is very forcible. It resembles the phrase, "far more exceeding," or rather, *excessively exceeding*, in 2 Cor. iv. 7. It seems that the Holy Spirit himself could not find a worse name for sin than its own. If we speak of a treacherous person, we call him a "Judas;" if of Judas, we call him a "devil;" but if of Satan, we want a comparison, because we can find none that is worse than himself: we must therefore say, as Christ did, "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own." It was thus with the apostle, when speaking of the evil of his own heart, "That sin by the commandment might become"—what? He wanted a name worse than its own—he could not find one—he therefore unites a strong epithet to the thing itself, calling it, "exceeding sinful."

It does not appear, from any thing I have seen, that the system of our opponents can, with any plausibility, be pretended to equal ours, respecting love to Christ. All that can be alleged, with any colour of reason; all, at least, that I have noticed, is this, That, in proportion as we, in this way, furnish motives of love to Christ, we detract from those of love to the Father, by diminishing the freeness of his grace, and exhibiting him as one that was incapable of bestowing forgiveness, unless a price was paid for it. To this it is replied, If the incapacity of the Father to show mercy without an atonement consisted in a want of love, or any thing of natural implacability, or even a reluctance to the bestowment of mercy, there would be force in the objection; but if it be no other than the incapacity of a righteous governor, who, whatever good-will he may have to an offender, cannot bear the thought of passing by the offence without some public expression of displeasure against it—that, while mercy triumphs, it may not be at the expense of law, of equity, and of the general good—such an incapacity rather infers a perfection than an imperfection in his nature; and instead of diminishing our regard for his character, must have a powerful tendency to increase it.

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## LETTER XII.

### VENERATION FOR THE SCRIPTURES.

IF we may judge of the nature of true piety by the examples of the prophets and holy men of old, we may conclude with certainty that an affectionate attachment to the Holy Scriptures, as the rule of faith and practice, enters deeply into the spirit of it. The Holy Scriptures were described by David under the names of the *word, statutes, laws, precepts, judgments, and testimonies* of God; and to these, all through the Psalms, especially in the 119th, he professes a most ardent attachment. Such language as the following was very common with him, as well as others of the Old Testament writers: "O how I love thy law!"—"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—"My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times."—"Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."—"Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage."—"The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

Dr. Priestley often professes great regard for the sacred writings, and is very severe on Mr. Burn, for suggesting that he denied "the infallibility of the apostolic testimony concerning the person of Christ." He also tells Dr. Price, "No man can pay a higher regard to *proper* Scripture authority than I do." We may therefore take it for granted that a regard for the authority of Scripture is a virtue; a virtue that our opponents, as well as we, would be thought to possess.

I wish, in this Letter, to inquire, supposing the sacred writers to have been honest and good men, What a regard to the *proper* authority of their writings includes, and to compare it with the avowed sentiments of our adversaries. By these means, brethren, you may be the better able to judge for yourselves whether the spirit which animates the whole body of the Socinian divinity does not breathe a language unfriendly to the sacred

writings, and carry in it something hostile to *every thought being subdued to the obedience of Christ*.

In order to judge of a regard for proper Scriptural authority, it is necessary, in the first place, to have recourse to the *professions* of the sacred writers concerning what they wrote. If any man venerate the authority of Scripture, he must receive it as *being what it professes to be, and for all the purposes for which it professes to be written*. If the Scriptures profess to be Divinely inspired, and assume to be the infallible standard of faith and practice, we must either receive them as such, or, if we would be consistent, disown the writers as impostors.

The professions of the sacred writers are as follow: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue: the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me."—"Thus saith the Lord."—"And Jehoshaphat stood, and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

New Testament writers bear ample testimony to the inspiration of those under the Old Testament. "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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—"No prophecy of the Scripture is of private interpretation"—it is not to be considered as the private opinion of a fallible man, as the case is with other productions—"for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Nor did the New Testament writers bear testimony to the inspiration of the prophets only; but considered their *own writings* as equally inspired: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Peter ranks the Epistles of Paul with "other Scriptures." There seems to have been one instance in which Paul disowned his having received any "commandment from the Lord," and in which he proceeded to give his own private "judgment" (1 Cor. vii.); but this appears to have been a particular exception from a general rule, of which notice was expressly given; an exception, therefore, which tends to strengthen, rather than to weaken, the argument for apostolic inspiration.

As the sacred writers considered themselves as Divinely inspired, so they represented their writings as the infallible test of Divine truth, to which all appeals were to be made, and by which every controversy in religious matters was to be decided. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—"These are the true sayings of God."—"That which is noted in the Scriptures of truth."—"What saith the Scripture?"—"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."—The Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The sacred writers did not spare to denounce the most awful judgments against those who should either pervert their writings, add to them, or detract from them. Those who wrested the apostolic Epistles are said to have "wrested them as they did the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."—"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."—"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."—"If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take



away his part out of the book of life." Nothing short of the most perfect Divine inspiration could justify such language as this, or secure those who used it from the charge of bold presumption and base imposition.

Dr. Priestley often professes great regard for the Scriptures, and, as has been observed before, is very severe on Mr. Burn for representing him as denying "the infallibility of the apostolic testimony concerning the person of Christ." Far be it from me to wish to represent the sentiments of Dr. Priestley in an unfair manner, or in such a light as he himself could justly disavow. All I mean to do is to quote a passage or two from his own writings, and add a few remarks upon them.

Speaking in favour of reverence for the sacred writings, he says, "Not that I consider the books of Scripture as *inspired*, and, on that account, entitled to this high degree of respect, but as authentic records of the dispensations of God to mankind, with every particular of which we cannot be too well acquainted."

Again, "If you wish to know what, in my opinion, a Christian is bound to believe with respect to the *Scriptures*, I answer, that the books which are universally received as *authentic* are to be considered as faithful records of past transactions, and, especially, the account of the intercourse which the Divine Being has kept up with mankind from the beginning of the world to the time of our Saviour and his apostles. No Christian is answerable for more than this. The writers of the books of Scripture were *men*, and therefore *fallible*; but all that we have to do with them is in the character of *historians* and *witnesses* of what they heard and saw. Of course, their credibility is to be estimated, like that of other historians, viz. from the circumstances in which they wrote, as with respect to their opportunities of knowing the truth of what they relate, and the biases to which they might be subject. Like all other historians, they were liable to mistakes with respect to things of small moment, because they might not give sufficient attention to them; and with respect to their *reasoning*, we are fully at liberty to judge of it, as well as that of any other man, by a due consideration of the propositions they advance, and the arguments they allege. For it by no means follows, because a man has had communications with the Deity for certain purposes, and he may be depended upon with respect to his account of those communications, that he is in other respects more wise and knowing than other men."\*

"You say," says he, in his *Letters to Dr. Price*, "that I do not allow of Scriptural authority; but indeed, my friend, you should have expressed yourself with more caution. No man can pay a higher regard to *proper* Scriptural authority than I do; but neither I, nor I presume yourself, believe implicitly every thing that is advanced by any writers in the Old or New Testament. I believe all the writers, without exception, to have been men of the greatest probity, and to have been well informed of every thing of consequence of which they treat; but, at the same time, I believe them to have been *men*, and consequently *fallible*, and liable to mistake with respect to things to which they had not given much attention, or concerning which they had not the means of exact information; which I take to be the case with respect to the account that Moses has given of the creation and fall of man." In a late performance, entitled *Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France*, (p. 38,) Dr. Priestley speaks much in the same strain. "That the books of Scripture," he says, "were written by particular Divine inspiration is a thing to which the writers themselves make no pretensions. It is a notion destitute of all proof, and that has done great injury to the evidence of Christianity."

\* Let. Phil. Unb. Part II. Pref. p. xiii.; also Letter V.

From this account, taken altogether, you will observe, brethren, that Dr. Priestley does not believe either the Old or the New Testament to be *Divinely inspired*; to be so inspired as that he is "bound implicitly to believe every thing" (and might he not have added *any thing*?) "which the writers of those books advance." He believes that the Scriptures, instead of being *the rule of faith and practice*, are only "faithful records of past transactions;" and that no authority attends them, except what attends the writings of any other honest and well-informed historian; nor even that in many cases: for he maintains that "no Christian is bound to consider any of the books of Scripture as faithful records of past transactions, unless they have been *universally* received as authentic;" that is, if any person, at least any considerable number of persons, at any period, have thought proper to dispute the authenticity of any of these writings, that part immediately ceases to have any claim upon posterity, and may be rejected with impunity. And even those writers whose works, upon the whole, are allowed as authentic, are supposed to have written upon subjects "to which they had not given much attention, and concerning which they were not possessed of sufficient means of information;" and, consequently, in those cases are not to be regarded. This is the whole of what he means by "*proper* Scriptural authority." This is the ground on which, while he speaks of the sacred writers as *fallible*, he nevertheless maintains the infallibility of their testimony concerning the person of Christ. He does not pretend to say the apostles were inspired in that article, though not in others; but merely that this was a case in which, by the mere exercise of their senses, they were competent to decide, and even certain of deciding right. Whether these notions of *proper* Scriptural authority will accord with the foregoing *professions*, I leave you to judge: also, if Dr. Priestley's views be right, whether the sacred writers, professing what they did, could be men of the "greatest probity."

You will observe, further, that the fallibility which Dr. Priestley imputes to the sacred writers, as being *men*, must rest upon this principle—That it is impossible for God himself so to inspire a *man* as to preserve him from error without destroying his nature; and as he considers Christ as a mere *man*, perhaps it is on this principle that he maintains him to be "fallible and peccable." Yet he has never been able to produce one example in which he has actually failed. But it should seem very extraordinary for a fallible and peccable man to go through the world in such a manner that his worst enemies could not convict him of a single failure, nor accuse him of any sin. If this matter be capable of proof, let Dr. Priestley prove it. Though the Jews declined the challenge, yet it is possible that he may possess sufficient "*magnanimity*" to accept it.\*

Further, you will observe that the *infallibility* which Dr. Priestley ascribes to the apostolic testimony, concerning the person of Christ, implies that every historian is infallible in similar circumstances. His reasoning supposes that if a sensible and upright historian have the proper means of information, and pay attention to his subject, he is infallible: but is this a fact? It certainly has not been usual for us to consider historians in this light. We commonly suppose that, amidst the most ample means of information and the greatest attention that uninspired men (who all have their prejudices and imperfections) are ever known to pay to a subject, they are liable to mistakes. Dr. Priestley has written a treatise in which he has declared for the doctrine of *materialism*; and, I suppose, he would be thought to have paid attention to it, and to have possessed the means of

\* When Dr. Priestley charged the Mosaic history of the creation and fall of man with being a *lame account*, it was imputed to his *magnanimity*.

information as far as the nature of the subject will admit; yet, I imagine, he does not pretend, in that article, to infallibility.

If it be objected that the nature of the subjects is different, and that the apostles were capable of arriving to a greater degree of certainty concerning the person of Christ than Dr. Priestley could obtain on the subject of materialism, I answer, this appears to me to be more easily asserted than proved. Dr. Priestley, indeed, tells us, "They were as capable of judging whether he was a *man* as whether John the Baptist was one." This is very true; and if the question were *whether he was a man*, it might be to the purpose. But at this time of day, however some of the humble followers of Dr. Priestley may amuse themselves in circulating pamphlets proving that Jesus Christ was a man, and that with a view to convert the Trinitarians; yet he himself cannot be insensible that a materialist might with just as much propriety gravely go about to prove that men have material bodies.\* Supposing Christ to have been merely a man, this was a matter that could not be visible to the eyes of the apostles. How could they judge by his exterior appearance whether he was merely a man, or both God and man? The august personages that appeared to Abraham, to Lot, and to Jacob are called *men*: nor was there any thing that we know of in their exterior appearance different from other men; yet it does not hence follow that they were merely human. God, in the above instances, assumed the appearance of a man; and how could the disciples be certain that all this might not be preparatory to his becoming really incarnate? It is true that our Lord might have told them that he was merely a man; and, in that case, they might have been said to be certain of it: but if so, it was either in some private instructions, or else in the words which they have recorded in their writings. We cannot say it was impossible for the apostles to mistake respecting the person of Christ owing to their private instructions, because that would be building upon a foundation of which we are confessedly ignorant; neither can we affirm it on account of any of those words of Christ to his disciples which are *recorded*, for we have those words as well as they; and it might as well be said of us as of them, that "it is impossible for us to be under any mistake upon the subject." We might as well, therefore, allow what Dr. Priestley says to be infallible, on the question whether men have souls or not, as what the apostles say (if we give up their inspiration) on the question whether Christ was Divine or not; for the one is as much an object of the senses as the other.

I cannot conceive of any foundation for the above assertion, unless it be upon the supposition of a union of the Divine and human natures being *in itself impossible*. Then, indeed, if we suppose the apostles knew it to be so, by knowing him to be a *man*, they must have known him to be a *mere* man. But if a union of the Divine and human natures be in itself impossible, that impossibility might as well appear to Dr. Priestley as to the apostles, if they were uninspired; and he might as well maintain the infallibility of his own notions relative to the person of Christ as of theirs.

In fine, Let Dr. Priestley view the subject in what light he may, if he deny the Divine inspiration of the apostles, he will never be able to maintain their infallibility on any ground but what would equally infer his own.

When Mr. Burn charged Dr. Priestley with denying the infallibility of

\* When Socinian writers have produced a list of texts which prove the proper humanity of Christ, they seem to think their work is done. Our writers reply, We never questioned his humanity. If you attempt to prove any thing, prove to us that he was *merely* human. Here our opponents feeling themselves pinched, it should seem, for want of evidence, have been known to lose their temper. It is on this occasion that Mr. Lindsey is reduced to the necessity of *abusing* and *insulting* his opponents, instead of answering their arguments. See quotations, p. 202.

the apostolic testimony, he principally finds his charge on what the Doctor had written in a miscellaneous work, called "The Theological Repository:" in which he maintained that "some texts of the Old Testament had been improperly quoted by writers in the New;" who, it seems, were sometimes "misled by Jewish prejudices."\* Mr. Burn inferred that, if they were misled in their application of one text, they were *liable* to the same thing in others; and that, if so, we could have no security whatever for their proper application of any passage, or for any thing like *infallibility* attending their testimony. One would think this is not the most inconclusive mode of reasoning that ever was adopted; and how does Dr. Priestley refute it? He replies, "It does not follow, because I suppose the apostles to have been fallible in *some* things, that they were therefore fallible in all." He contends that he always considered them as infallible *in what respects the person of Christ*; as a proof of which he alleges his always having "appealed to their testimony, as being willing to be decided by it." And yet we generally suppose a single failure proves a writer fallible as really as a thousand; and as to his appealing to their testimony, and being willing to be decided by it, we generally appeal to the best evidence we can obtain, and must be decided by it. But this does not prove that we consider that evidence as *infallible*. Dr. Priestley has appealed to the *Fathers*; yet he will hardly pretend that their testimony is infallible, or that they were incapable of contradicting either themselves or one another, even in those matters concerning which the appeal is made. If he will, however, he must suppose them to have differed very widely from writers of a later date. Where is the historian who has written upon the opinions or characters of a body of men, even of those of his own times, but who is liable, and likely, in some particulars, to be contradicted by other historians of the same period, and equally respectable? †

To be sure, if Dr. Priestley thinks proper to declare that he believes the apostles, uninspired as they were, to have been infallible when they applied passages of the Old Testament *to the person of Christ*—and that notwithstanding their being fallible, and misled by Jewish prejudices in their application of passages on other subjects—nobody has a right to say he does not. Thus much may be said, however, that he will find it no very easy task to prove himself, in this matter, a *rational Christian*. If the apostles are to be considered as uninspired, and were actually misled by Jewish prejudices in their application of some Old Testament passages, it will require no small degree of labour to convince people in general that we can have any security for their not being so in others.

Mr. Burn, with a view to illustrate his argument, supposed an example; viz. the application of Psalm xlv. 6 to Christ, in Heb. i. 8. He observes that, according to the foregoing hypothesis, "there is no dependence to be placed upon the argument, because the apostle, in his application of this scripture to the Messiah, *was misled by a prejudice common among the Jews, respecting this and other passages in the Old Testament*. Mr. Burn does not mean to say that Dr. Priestley *had, in this manner, actually rejected the argument from Heb. i. 8*; but barely that, according to this hypothesis, *he might do so*: he preserves the *principle* of his opponent's objection, as he himself expresses it; but does not mean to assert that he had applied that principle to this particular passage. And how does Dr. Priestley reply to this? Why, by alleging that he *had not* applied the above principle to the passage in question, but had given it a sense which allowed the propriety of

\* Letters to Mr. Burn, Letters I. II.

† See this truth more fully illustrated in a Letter of Dr. Ed. Williams to Dr. Priestley, prefixed to his "Abridgement of Dr. Owen on the Hebrews."

its being applied to Christ; that is, he had not made that use of a principle which might be made of it, and which no one asserted he had made of it. Dr. Priestley is, doubtless, possessed of great abilities, and has had large experience in controversial writing: to what a situation, then, must he have been reduced, to have recourse to such an answer as the above!

This question between Mr. Burn and Dr. Priestley, if I understand it, is not whether the latter appealed to the Scriptures for the truth of his opinions; but whether his supposing the sacred writers, in some cases, to apply Scripture improperly, does not render that appeal inconsistent—not whether he had allowed the propriety of the apostle's quoting the sixth verse of the forty-fifth Psalm, and applying it, in the first chapter of the Hebrews, to Christ; but whether, upon the principle of the sacred writers being liable to make, and having actually made, some improper quotations, he *might not* have disallowed it—not whether the apostles did actually fail in this or that particular subject; but whether, if they failed in some instances, they were not *liable* to fail in others, and whether any dependence could be placed on their decisions—not whether the apostles testified *things which they had seen and heard from the beginning*; but whether their *infallibility* can be supported merely upon that ground, without supposing that the Holy Spirit assisted their memories, guided their judgments, and superintended their productions. If the reader of that controversy keep the above points in view, he will easily perceive the futility of a great many of Dr. Priestley's answers, notwithstanding all his positivity and triumph, and his proceeding to admonish Mr. Burn to repentance.

Dr. Priestley, in his *Sixth Letter* to Mr. Burn, denies that he makes *the reason of the individual the sole umpire in matters of faith*. But if the sacred writers, “in some things which they advanced, were fallible, and misled by prejudice,” what dependence can be placed on them? Whether the reason of the individual be a proper umpire in matters of faith, or not, the writings of the apostles, on the foregoing hypothesis, can make no such pretence. Dr. Priestley may allege that we must distinguish between those things to which the apostles had not given much attention, and other things to which they had; those in which they were prejudiced, and others in which they were unprejudiced; those concerning which they had not the means of exact information, and others of a different description: but can he himself, at this distance of time, or even if he had been contemporary with them, always tell what those cases are? How, in many instances at least, can he judge, with any certainty, of the degree of attention which they gave to things, of the prejudiced or unprejudiced state of their minds, or of the means of information which they possessed? Or if *he* could decide with satisfaction to himself on these matters, how are the bulk of mankind to judge, who are not possessed of his powers and opportunities, but who are equally interested in the affair with himself? Are they implicitly to rely on his opinion; or to supplicate Heaven for a new revelation, to point out the defects and errors of the old one? In short, let Dr. Priestley profess what regard he may for the Scriptures, if what he advances be true, *they* can be no proper test of truth; and if the reason of the individual be not the sole umpire in these matters, there can be no umpire at all; but all must be left in gloomy doubt, and dreadful uncertainty.\*

The generality of Socinian writers, as well as Dr. Priestley, write degradingly of our only rule of faith. The Scriptures profess to be “profitable for doctrine,” and to be “able to make men wise unto salvation.” “The testi-

\* The reader will observe that the foregoing remarks on the controversy between Mr. Burn and Dr. Priestley have nothing to do with that part of it which relates to the riots at Birmingham, but merely with that on *the person of Christ*.

mony of the Lord is" said to be "sure, making wise the simple;" and those who made it their study professed to have obtained "more understanding than all their teachers." But Mr. Lindsey considers the Scriptures as unadapted to promote any high perfection in knowledge; and supposes that they are left in obscurity, with design to promote an occasion of charity, candour, and forbearance. Speaking of the doctrine of the person of Christ, "Surely it must be owned," he says, "to have been left in some obscurity in the Scriptures themselves, which might mislead readers full of heathen prejudices (otherwise so many men, wise and good, would not have differed, and still continue to differ, concerning it): and so left, it should seem, on purpose to whet human industry, and the spirit of inquiry into the things of God, to give scope for the exercise of men's charity and mutual forbearance of one another, and to be one great means of cultivating the moral disposition, which is plainly the design of the Holy Spirit of God in the Christian revelation, and not any high perfection in knowledge, which so few can attain."\*

On this extraordinary passage one might inquire, first, If the Scriptures have left the subject in obscurity, why might not the mistake of those who hold the Divinity of Christ (supposing them to be mistaken) have been accounted for, without alleging, as Mr. Lindsey elsewhere does, that "they are determined, at all events, to believe Christ to be a different being from what he really was; that there is no reasoning with them;" and that "they are to be pitied, and considered as being under a debility of mind, in this respect, however sensible and rational in others?"† If wise and good men have differed upon the subject in all ages, and that owing to the obscurity with which it is enveloped in the Scriptures themselves, why this abusive and insulting language? Is it any disgrace to a person not to see that clearly in the Scriptures which is not clearly there to be seen?

Secondly, If the Scriptures have indeed left the subject in obscurity, how came Mr. Lindsey to be so decided upon it? The "high perfection of knowledge" which he possesses must, undoubtedly, have been acquired from some *other quarter*, seeing it made no part of the design of the Holy Spirit in the Christian revelation. But if so, we have no further dispute with him; as, in what respects religion, we do not aspire to be *wise above what is written*.

Thirdly, Let it be considered whether the principle on which Mr. Lindsey encourages the exercise of charity, and mutual forbearance, do not cast a heavy reflection upon the character of God. The Scriptures, in what relates to the person of Christ, (a subject on which Dr. Priestley allows the writers to have been *infallible*;) are left obscure—so obscure as to mislead readers full of heathen prejudices; nay, and with the very design of misleading them! God himself, it seems, designed that they should stumble on in ignorance, error, and disagreement, till, at last, wearied with their fate, and finding themselves united in one common calamity, they might become friends! But what is this friendship? Is it not at the expense of him who is supposed to have spread their way with snares, or (which is the same thing) with misleading obscurity? Is it any other than the "friendship of the world," which "is enmity with God?"

In perfect harmony with Mr. Lindsey is the language of a writer in the *Monthly Review*. "The nature and design of the Scripture," he says, "is not to settle disputed theories, nor to decide upon speculative controverted questions, even in *religion and morality*. The Scriptures, if we understand any thing of them, are intended not so much to make us wiser as to make

\* Apology, Chap. ii.

† Catechist, Inquiry VI.

us better; not to solve the doubts, but, rather, to make us obey the dictates of our consciences."\* The Holy Scriptures were never designed, then, to be a *rule* of faith or practice; but merely a *stimulative*! In matters of speculation (as all disputed subjects will be termed, whether doctrinal or practical) they have no authority, it seems, to decide any question. *What saith the Scripture?* therefore, would now be an impertinent question. You are to find out what is truth, and what is righteousness, by your reason and your conscience; and when you have obtained a system of religion and morality to your mind, Scripture is to furnish you with motives to reduce it to practice. If this be true, to what purpose are all appeals to the Scriptures on controverted subjects? and why do Socinians pretend to appeal to them? Why do they not honestly acknowledge that they did not learn their religion thence, and therefore refuse to have it tried at that bar! This would save much labour. To what purpose do they object to particular passages as *interpolations*, or *mistranslations*, or the like, when the whole, be it ever so pure, has nothing at all to do in the decision of our controversies? We have been used to speak of conscience having but *one master, even Christ*; but now, it seems, conscience is its own master, and Jesus Christ does not pretend to dictate to it, but merely to assist in the execution of its decisions!

Mr. Belsham carries the matter still further. This gentleman, not satisfied, it seems, with disclaiming an implicit confidence in Holy Scripture, pretends to find *authority, in the Scriptures themselves, for so doing*. "The Bereans," he says, "are commended for not taking the word even of an apostle, but examining the Scriptures for themselves, whether the doctrines which they heard were true, and whether St. Paul's reasoning was just."† I do not recollect that the Bereans were "commended for not taking the word of an apostle;" but for not rejecting it without examination, as the Jews did at Thessalonica. But granting it were otherwise, their situation was different from ours. They had not then had an opportunity of obtaining evidence that the apostles were Divinely inspired, or that the gospel which they preached was a message from God. This, surely, is a circumstance of importance. There is a great difference between their entertaining some doubt of the gospel, till they had fully examined its evidences, and our still continuing to doubt of its particular doctrines and reasonings, even though we allow it to be a message from God. To this may be added, that, in order to obtain evidence, the Bereans *searched the Scriptures*. By comparing the facts which Paul testified with the prophecies which went before, and the doctrines which he preached with those of the Old Testament, they would judge whether his message was from God or not. There is a great difference between the criterion of the Bereans and that of the Socinians. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were the allowed standard of the former, and they employed their reason to find out their meaning, and their agreement with New Testament facts; but the authority and agreement of the Old and New Testaments will not satisfy the latter, unless what they contain agree also with their preconceived notions of what is fit and reasonable. The one tried what, for aught they at that time knew, were mere private reasonings by the Scriptures; but the other try the Scriptures by their own private reasonings. Finally, If proposing a doctrine for examination prove the proposer liable to false or unjust reasoning, it will follow that the reasoning of Christ might be false or unjust, seeing he appealed to the Scriptures, as well as his apostles, and commanded his hearers to *search*

\* Review of Horsley's Sermon, March, 1793.

† Sermon on the Importance of Truth, p. 39.

them. It will also follow that all the great *facts* of Christianity, as well as the reasonings of Christ and his apostles, were liable to be detected of falsehood; for these were as constantly submitted to examination as the other. "These things," said they, "were not done in a corner." Nay, it must follow that God himself is liable to be in a wrong cause, seeing he frequently appeals to men's judgments and consciences. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard." The inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah were exhorted, and even entreated, it may be said, not to take matters upon trust; but to examine for themselves whether the conduct of Jehovah was just, or whether any thing ought to have been done for his vineyard that was not done!

But, far as our English Socinians have gone in these things, they do not seem to have exceeded, nor hardly to have equalled, those of the same denomination in other countries. These appear to have made great advances indeed towards infidelity. Mr. *Blackwall* makes mention of two, whose language conveys an idea of uncommon disrespect to the sacred writings. *George Engedin*, speaking of the writings of the apostle John, says, "If a concise, abrupt obscurity, inconsistent with itself, and made up of allegories, is to be called sublimity of speech, I own John to be sublime; for there is scarcely one discourse of Christ which is not altogether allegorical and very hard to be understood." *Gagnieus*, another writer of the same spirit, says, "I shall not a little glory, if I shall be found to give some light to Paul's darkness,—a darkness, as some think, industriously affected."—"Let any of the followers of these worthy interpreters of the gospel, and champions of Christianity," adds Mr. Blackwall, by way of reflection, "speak worse, if they can, of the ambiguous oracles of the father of lies. These fair-dealing gentlemen first disguise the sacred writings, and turn them into a harsh allegory; and then charge them with that obscurity and inconsistency which is plainly consequent upon that sense which their interpretations force upon them. They outrage the Divine writers in a double capacity; first they debase their sense as theologues and commentators, and then carp at and vilify their language as grammarians and critics."\*

Steinbart, Semler, and other foreign Socinians, of later times, write in a similar strain. The former, speaking of the narrations of facts contained in the New Testament, says, "These narrations, true or false, are only suited for ignorant, uncultivated minds, who cannot enter into the evidence of natural religion." The same writer adds, "Moses, according to the childish conceptions of the Jews in his days, paints God as agitated by violent affections, partial to one people, and hating all other nations." The latter in a Note on 2 Pet. i. 21—"The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"—says, "Peter speaks there according to the conception of the Jews;" and, "the prophets may have delivered the offspring of their own brains as Divine revelations."†

Socinian writers sometimes profess great respect to the Holy Scriptures; and most, if not all of them, would have it thought that they consider their testimony as being in their favour. But if so, why all these pains to depreciate them? We know who they are that not only undermine their general credit, but are obliged, on almost every occasion, to have recourse to *interpolation*, or *mistranslation*; who are driven to disown the apostolic *reasonings* as a proper test of religious sentiment, and to hold them as the mere private opinions of men, no way decisive as to what is truth. But is it usual, in any cause, for persons to endeavour to set aside those witnesses, and to

\* Sacred Classics, Part II. Chap. V.

† Dr. Erskine's Sketches and Hints of Church History, No. III. pp. 95, 71.



invalidate that testimony, which they consider, at the same time, as being in their favour? This is a question which it does not require much critical skill to decide.

When Socinian writers have mangled and altered the translation to their own minds, informing us that such a term *may* be rendered so, and such a passage should be pointed so, and so on, they seem to expect that their opponents should quote the Scriptures accordingly; and if they do not, are very liberal in insinuating that their design is to impose upon the vulgar. But though it be admitted that every translation must needs have its imperfections, and that those imperfections ought to be corrected by fair and impartial criticism, yet, where alterations are made by those who have an end to answer by them, they ought always to be suspected, and will be so by thinking and impartial people.

If we must quote particular passages of Scripture after the manner in which our adversaries translate them, we must also avoid quoting all those which they object to as interpolations. Nor shall we stop here: we must, on certain occasions, leave out whole chapters, if not whole books. We must never refer to the *reasonings* of the apostles, but consider that they were subject to be misled by Jewish prejudices; nor even to *historical facts*, unless we can satisfy ourselves that the historians, independently of their being Divinely inspired, were possessed of sufficient means of information. In short, if we must never quote Scripture except according to the rules imposed upon us by Socinian writers, we must not quote it at all; not, at least, till they shall have indulged us with a Bible of their own, that shall leave out every thing on which we are to place no dependence. A publication of this sort would, doubtless, be an acceptable present to the Christian world, would be comprised in a *very small compass*, and be of infinite service in cutting short a great deal of unnecessary controversy, into which, for want of such a criterion, we shall always be in danger of wandering.

Dr. Priestley, in his *Animadversions on Mr. Gibbon's History*, takes notice of what is *implied* in that gentleman's endeavouring to lessen the number and validity of the early martyrdoms; namely, a consciousness that they afforded an argument against him. "Mr. Gibbon," says the Doctor, "appears to have been sufficiently sensible of the value of such a testimony to the truth of the gospel history, as is furnished by the early martyrdoms, and therefore he takes great pains to diminish their number; and when the facts cannot be denied, he endeavours to exhibit them in the most unfavourable light."\* Judge, brethren, whether this picture does not bear too near a resemblance to the conduct of Dr. Priestley, and other Socinian writers, respecting the Holy Scriptures.

I have heard of persons who, when engaged in a lawsuit, and fearing lest certain individuals should appear in evidence against them, have so contrived matters as to *sue the witnesses*; and so, by making them parties in the contest, have disqualified them from bearing testimony. And what else is the conduct of Dr. Priestley, with respect to those passages in the New Testament which speak of Christ as *God*? We read there that "the Word who was made flesh, and dwelt among us," *was God*. Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my *God*!"—"Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, *God* blessed for ever."—"Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever."—"Feed the church of *God*, which he hath purchased with his own blood."—"Hereby perceive we the love of *God*, because he laid down his life for us."† But Dr. Priestley asserts that "in no sense whatever, not even in the lowest of all, is Christ so much as called

\* Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, Part II, p. 217.

† John i. 1, 14; xx. 28; Rom. ix. 5; Heb. i. 8; Acts xx. 28; 1 John iii. 16.

*God* in all the New Testament.”\* The method taken by this writer to enable him to hazard such an assertion, without being subject to the charge of downright falsehood, could be no other than that of laying a kind of *arrest* upon the foregoing passages, with others, as being either interpolations or mistranslations, or something that shall answer the same end, and by these means imposing silence upon them as to the subject in dispute. To be sure we may go on, killing one Scripture testimony, and stoning another, till, at length, it would become an easy thing to assert that there is not an instance, in all the New Testament, in which our opinions are confronted. But to what does it all amount? When we are told that “Christ is never so much as called *God* in all the New Testament,” the question is whether we are to understand it of the New Testament as it was left by the sacred writers, or as corrected, amended, curtailed, and interpreted by a set of controvertists, with a view to make it accord with a favourite system.

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### LETTER XIII.

#### ON THE TENDENCY OF THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS TO PROMOTE HAPPINESS, OR CHEERFULNESS OF MIND.

Nothing is more common with our opponents than to represent the Calvinistic system as gloomy, as leading to melancholy and misery. Our ideas of God, of sin, and of future punishment, say they, must necessarily depress our minds. Dr. Priestley, as we have seen already, reckons Unitarians “more cheerful” than Trinitarians. Nor is this all. It has even been asserted that the tendency of our principles is to promote “moral turpitude, melancholy, and despair; and that the suicide practised among the middling and lower ranks is frequently to be traced to this doctrine.”† This is certainly carrying matters to a great height. It might be worth while, however, for those who advance such things as these to make good what they affirm, if they be able. Till that be done, candour itself must consider these bold assertions as the mere effusions of malignity and slander.

It is some consolation, however, that what is objected to us by Socinians, is objected to *religion itself* by unbelievers. Lord *Shaftesbury* observes—“There is a melancholy which accompanies all enthusiasm,” which, from his pen, is only another name for Christianity. To the same purpose, Mr. *Hume* asserts—“There is a gloom and melancholy remarkable in all devout people.” If these writers had formed a comparison between deists and atheists on the one side, and devout Christians on the other, they would have said of the former, as Dr. Priestley says of Unitarians, “they are more cheerful, and more happy.”

It is granted that the system we adopt has nothing in it adapted to promote the happiness of those who persist in enmity against God, and in a rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. While men are at war with God, we do not know of any evangelical promise that is calculated to make them happy. This, perhaps, with some, may be a considerable ground of objection to our views of things; but then such objection must stand equally against the Scriptures themselves, since their language to ungodly men is, “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.” All the prophets and ministers of the word were, in effect, commanded to “say to the wicked

\* Letters to Mr. Burn, Letter I.

† See Critical Review for Sept. 1787, on Memoirs of Gabriel D’Anville.

*It shall be ill with him.*" This, with us, is one considerable objection against the doctrine of the *final salvation of all men*, a doctrine much circulated of late, and generally embraced by Socinian writers. Supposing it were a truth, it must be of such a kind as is adapted to comfort mankind *in sin*. It is good news; but it is to the impenitent and unbelieving, even to those who live and die such; which is a characteristic so singular, that I question whether any thing can be found in the Bible to resemble it. If our views of things be but adapted to encourage sinners to return to God by Jesus Christ,—if they afford strong consolation to those who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them,—and if sobriety, righteousness, and godliness here meet with the most powerful motives,—this is all that the Scriptures themselves propose.

Our system, it is granted, is not adapted to promote that kind of cheerfulness and happiness to which men in general are greatly addicted; namely, that which consists in *self-deceit* and *levity of spirit*. There is a kind of cheerfulness which resembles that of a tradesman who avoids looking into his accounts, lest they should disturb his peace and render him unhappy. This, indeed, is the cheerfulness of a great part of mankind, who shun the light, lest it should disturb their repose, and interrupt their present pursuits. They try to persuade themselves that *they* shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst; and there are not wanting preachers who afford them assistance in the dangerous delusion. The doctrines of human depravity, of sinners being under the curse of the law, and of their exposedness to everlasting punishment, are those which are supposed to lead us to melancholy; and we may fairly conclude that the *opposites* of these doctrines are at the bottom of the cheerfulness of which our opponents boast. Instead of considering mankind as lost sinners, exposed to everlasting destruction, they love to represent them simply as creatures, as the children of God, and to suppose that, having, in general, more virtue than vice, they have nothing to fear; or if, in a few instances, it be otherwise, still they have no reason to be afraid of *endless* punishment. These things, to be sure, make people cheerful; but it is with the cheerfulness of a wicked man. It is just as wicked men would have it. It is no wonder that persons of "no religion," and who "lean to a life of dissipation," should be "the first to embrace these principles." They are such as must needs suit them; especially if we add what Dr. Priestley inculcates in his Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinson, *that it is not necessary to dwell in our thoughts upon death and futurity, lest it should interrupt the business of life, and cause us to live in perpetual bondage.*\* We hope it is no disparagement of the Calvinistic doctrine that it disclaims the promoting of all such cheerfulness as this. That cheerfulness which is damped by thoughts of death and futurity is, at best, merely natural joy. It has no virtue in it; nay, in many cases, it is positively vicious, and founded in self-deception. It is nothing better than "the laughter of a fool." It may blaze awhile in the bosoms of the dissipated and the secure; but if the sinner be once awakened to just reflection, it will expire like "the crackling of thorns under a pot."

There is, also, a kind of happiness which some persons enjoy, in treating the most serious and important subjects with *levity*, making them the subjects of jests, and trying their skill in disputing upon them, which is frequently called *pleasantry*, *good nature*, and the like. A cheerfulness of this kind, in Oliver Cromwell, is praised by Mr. Lindsey, and represented as an excellency "of which the gloomy bigot is utterly incapable."† *Pleasantry*, on some occasions, and to a certain degree, is natural and allowable; but if

\* This is the substance of what he advances, pp. 7—12.

† Apology, Chap. II.

sporting with sacred things must go by that name, let me be called "a gloomy bigot" rather than indulge it.

Once more, It is allowed that the system we embrace has a tendency, on various occasions, to promote *sorrow of heart*. Our notions of the evil of sin exceed those of our opponents. While they reject the doctrine of atonement by the cross of Christ, they have not that glass in which to discern its malignity which others have. There are times in which we remember Calvary, and weep on account of that for which our Redeemer died. But so far are we from considering this as our infelicity, that, for weeping in this manner once, we could wish to do so a thousand times. There is a pleasure in the very pains of godly sorrow, of which the light-minded speculatist is utterly incapable. The tears of her that wept, and washed her Saviour's feet, afforded abundantly greater satisfaction than the unfeeling calm of the Pharisee, who stood by, making his ill-natured reflections upon her conduct.

If our views of things have no tendency to promote solid, holy, heavenly joy—joy that fits true Christians for the proper business of this world, and the blessedness of that which is to come—we will acknowledge it a strong presumption against them. If, on the other hand, they can be proved to possess such a tendency, and that in a much greater degree than the opposite scheme, it will be a considerable argument in their favour. Let us examine this matter a little closer.

The utmost happiness which the peculiar principles of Socinians are adapted to promote consists in *calmness of mind*, like that of a philosopher contemplating the works of creation. The friends of that scheme conceive of man as a good kind of being, and suppose that there is a greater proportion of virtue in the world than vice, and that things, upon the whole, are getting better still, and so tending to happiness. They suppose that there is little or no breach between God and men,—nothing but what may be made up by repentance, a repentance without much pain of mind,\* and without any atoning Saviour; that God, being the benevolent Father of his rational offspring, will not be strict to mark iniquity; and that, as his benevolence is infinite, all will be well at last,—“as with the good, so with the sinner; with him that sweareth, as with him that feareth an oath.” This makes them serene, and enables them to pursue the studies of philosophy, or the avocations of life, with composure. This appears to be the summit of *their* happiness, and must be so of all others if they wish to escape their censure. For if any one pretends to happiness of a superior kind, they will instantly reproach him as an enthusiast. A writer in the Monthly Review observes, concerning the late *President Edwards*, “From the account given of him, he appears to have been a very reputable, good, and pious man, according to his *views and feelings* in religious matters, which those of different sentiments and cooler sensations will not fail to consider as all *wild ecstasy, rapture, and enthusiasm.*”†

The tendency of any system to promote *calmness* is nothing at all in its favour, any further than such calmness can be proved to be virtuous. But this must be determined by the situation in which we stand. We ought to be affected according to our situation. If, indeed, there be no breach between God and men,—if all be right on our part as well as his, and just as it should be,—then it becomes us to be calm and thankful; but if it be otherwise, it becomes us to feel accordingly. If we have offended God, we ought to bewail our transgressions, and be sorry for our sin; and if the

\* Such a repentance is pleaded for by Mr. Jardine, in his letters to Mr. [afterwards Dr.] Bogue.

† Review of Edwards's History of Redemption, Vol. LXXX. Art. 68.

offence be great, we ought to be deeply affected with it. It would be thought very improper, for a convict, a little before the time appointed for his execution, instead of cherishing proper reflections on the magnitude of his offence, and suing for the mercy of his offended sovereign, to be employed in speculating upon his benevolence, till he has really worked himself into a persuasion that no serious apprehensions were to be entertained, concerning either himself or any of his fellow convicts. Such a person might enjoy a much greater degree of *calmness* than his companions; but considerate people would neither admire his mode of thinking, nor envy his imaginary felicity.

Calmness and serenity of mind *may* arise from ignorance of ourselves, and from the want of a principle of true religion. While Paul was ignorant of his true character, he was calm and easy, or, as he expresses it, "alive without the law;" "but when the commandment came," in its spirituality and authority, "sin revived, and he died." The Pharisee, who was *whole* in his own esteem, and needed no physician, was abundantly more calm than the publican, who smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" While any man is destitute of a principle of true religion, the strong man armed keepeth the house, and the goods are in *peace*; and while things are thus, he will be a stranger to all those holy mournings which abound in the Psalms of David, and to those inward conflicts between *flesh and spirit* described in the writings of Paul. And knowing nothing of such things himself, he will be apt to think meanly of those who do; to deride them as enthusiasts, to reproach them with gloominess, and to boast of his own insensibility, under the names of calmness and cheerfulness.

Supposing the calmness and cheerfulness of mind of which our opponents boast to be on the side of virtue, still it is a cold and insipid kind of happiness, compared with that which is produced by the doctrine of salvation through the atoning blood of Christ. One great source of happiness is *contrast*. Dr. Priestley has proved, what indeed is evident from universal experience, "that the recollection of past troubles, after a certain interval, becomes highly pleasurable, and is a pleasure of a very durable kind."\* On this principle he undertakes to prove the infinite benevolence of the Deity, even in his so ordering things that a mixture of pain and sorrow shall fall to the lot of man. On the same principle may be proved, if I mistake not, the superiority of the Calvinistic system to that of the Socinians, in point of promoting happiness. The doctrines of the former, supposing them to be true, are *affecting*. It is affecting to think that man, originally pure, should have fallen from the height of righteousness and honour to the depth of apostacy and infamy—that he is now an enemy to God, and actually lies under his awful and just displeasure, exposed to everlasting misery—that, notwithstanding all this, a ransom is found to deliver him from going down to the pit—that God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son to become a sacrifice for sin, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life—that the issue of Christ's death is not left at an uncertainty, nor the invitations of his gospel subject to universal rejection, but an effectual provision is made, in the great plan of redemption, that he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied—that the Holy Spirit is given to renew and sanctify a people for himself—that they who were under condemnation and wrath, being justified by faith in the righteousness of Jesus, have peace with God—that aliens and outcasts are become the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty—

\* Lett. Phil. Unb. Part I. Letter VI.

that everlasting arms are now beneath them, and everlasting glory is before them. These sentiments, I say, supposing them to be true, are undoubtedly *affecting*. The Socinian system, supposing it were true, compared with this, is cold, uninteresting, and insipid.

We read of "joy and peace in believing," of "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Those who adopt the Calvinistic doctrine of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of their own lost condition as sinners, are prepared to imbibe the joy of the gospel, supposing it to exhibit a great salvation, through the atonement of a great Saviour, to which others of opposite sentiments must of necessity be strangers. The Pharisees who thought well of their character and condition, like the elder son in the parable, instead of rejoicing at the good news of salvation to the chief of sinners, were disgusted at it; and this will ever be the case with all who, like the Pharisees, are *whole* in their own eyes, so whole as to think they need no physician.

The votaries of the Socinian scheme do not, in general, appear to feel their hearts much interested by it. Voltaire could say in his time—"At least, hitherto, only a very small number of those called Unitarians have held any religious meetings."\* And though Dr. Priestley, by his great zeal, has endeavoured to invigorate and reform the party; yet he admits the justice of a common complaint among them, that "their societies do not flourish, their members have but a slight attachment to them, and easily desert them; though it is never imagined," he adds, "that they desert their principles."† All this the Doctor accounts for by allowing that their principles are not of that importance which we suppose ours to be, and that "many of those who judge so truly concerning the particular tenets of religion have attained to that cool, unbiassed temper of mind, in consequence of becoming more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it." Through *indifference*, it seems, they come in; through *indifference* they go out; and they are very *indifferent* while there. Yet, it is said, they still retain their principles; and, I suppose, are very cheerful, and very happy. Happiness, theirs, consequently, which does not interest the heart, any more than reform the life.

Although the aforementioned writer in the *Monthly Review* insinuates that President Edwards's religious feelings were "all wild ecstasy, rapture, and enthusiasm," yet he adds—"We cannot question the sincerity of Mr. Edwards, who, however he may possibly have imposed on himself by the warmth of his imagination, was, perhaps, rather to be envied than derided for his ardours and ecstasies, which, in themselves, were at least innocent; in which he, no doubt, found much delight, and from which no creature could receive the least hurt." I thank you, sir, for this concession. It will, at least, serve to show that the sentiments and feelings which you deem wild and enthusiastic may, by your own acknowledgment, be the most adapted to promote human happiness; and that is all for which I at present contend. President Edwards, however, was far from being a person of that warm imagination which this writer would insinuate. No man could be a greater enemy to real enthusiasm. Under the most virulent oppositions, and the heaviest trials, he possessed a great share of coolness of judgment as well as of calmness and serenity of mind, as great as any one to whom this gentleman can refer us among those whom he calls men of *cool sensations*, and perhaps greater. But he felt deeply in religion; and in such feelings, our adversaries themselves being judges, he was to be "envied, and not derided."

\* Additions to General History, Art. England, under Charles II.

† Dis. Var. Sub. p. 94.

Why should religion be the only subject in which we must not be allowed to *feel*? Men are praised for the exercise of ardour, and even of ecstasy, in poetry, in politics, and in the endearing connexions of social life; but, in religion, we must either go on with cool indifference, or be branded as enthusiasts. Is it because religion is of less importance than other things? Is eternal salvation of less consequence than the political or domestic accommodations of time? It is treated by multitudes as if it were; and the spirit of Socinianism, so far as it operates, tends to keep them in countenance. Is it not a pity but those who call themselves *rational Christians* would act more rationally? Nothing can be more irrational, as well as injurious, than to encourage an ardour of mind after the trifles of a moment, and to discourage it when pursuing objects of infinite magnitude.

“Passion is reason, transport temper here!”

The Socinian system proposes to exclude *mystery* from religion, or “things in their own nature incomprehensible.”\* But such a scheme not only renders religion the only thing in nature void of mystery, but divests it of a property essential to the continued communication of happiness to an immortal creature. Our passions are more affected by objects which surpass our comprehension than by those which we fully know. It is thus with respect to *unhappiness*. An unknown misery is much more dreadful than one that is fully known. Suspense adds to distress. If, with regard to transient sufferings, we know the worst, the worst is commonly over; and hence our troubles are frequently greater when feared than when actually felt. It is the same with respect to *happiness*. That happiness which is felt in the pursuit of science abates in the full possession of the object. When once a matter is fully known, we cease to take that pleasure in it as at first, and long for something new. It is the same in all other kinds of happiness. The mind loves to swim in deep waters; if it touch the bottom it feels disgust. If the best were once fully known, the best would thence be over. Some of the noblest passions in Paul were excited by objects incomprehensible: “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!”—“Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory!” Now, if things be so, it is easy to see that to divest religion of every thing incomprehensible is to divest it of what is essential to human happiness. And no wonder; for it is nothing less than to divest it of God!

The Socinian scheme, by rejecting the Deity and atonement of Christ, rejects the very essence of that which both supports and transports a Christian’s heart. It was acknowledged by Mr. Hume, that “the *good*, the *great*, the *sublime*, and the *ravishing*, were to be found evidently in the principles of theism.” To this Dr. Priestley very justly replies—“If so, I need not say that there must be something *mean*, *object*, and *debasing* in the principles of atheism.”† But let it be considered whether this observation be not equally applicable to the subject in hand. Our opponents, it is true, may hold sentiments which are great and transporting. Such are their views of the works of God in creation: but so are those of deists. Neither are these the sentiments in which they differ from us. Is the Socinian system, *as distinguished from ours*, adapted to raise and transport the heart? This is the question. Let us select only one topic for an example. Has any

\* Def. Unit. for 1786, p. 67.

† Lett. Phil. Unb. Part I. Pref. p. x.

thing, or can any thing, be written, on the scheme of our adversaries, upon the death of Christ, equal to the following lines?—

“Religion! thou the soul of happiness;  
And groaning *Calvary* of thee! *there* shine  
The noblest truths; *there* strongest motives sting!  
There sacred violence assaults the soul.—  
My theme! my inspiration! and my crown!  
My strength in age! my rise in low estate!  
My soul’s ambition, pleasure, wealth!—my world!  
My light in darkness! and my life in death!  
My boast through time! bliss through eternity!  
Eternity too short to speak thy praise,  
Or fathom thy profound of love to man!  
To man of men the meanest, e’en to me;  
My sacrifice! my God! what things are these!”

Again,

“Pardon for infinite offence! and pardon  
Through means that speak its value infinite!  
A pardon bought with blood! with blood Divine!  
With blood Divine of him I made my foe!  
Persisted to provoke, though wooed, and awed,  
Blessed, and chastised, a flagrant rebel still!  
A rebel ’midst the thunders of his throne!—  
Nor I alone, a rebel universe!  
My species up in arms! not one exempt!  
Yet for the foulest of the foul he dies!  
Bound, every heart! and every bosom, burn!  
Oh what a scale of miracles is here!—  
Praise! flow for ever (if astonishment  
Will give thee leave); my praise! for ever flow;  
Praise ardent, cordial, constant, to high Heaven  
More fragrant than Arabia sacrificed;  
And all her spicy mountains in a flame!”

*Night Thoughts, Night IV.*

There is a rich, great, and ravishing quality in the foregoing sentiments, which no other theme can inspire. Had the writer been a Socinian, and attempted to write upon the death of Christ, he might, by the strength of his mind and the fire of his genius, have contributed a little to raise his subject; but here his subject raises him above himself.

The dignity of Christ, together with his glorious undertaking, was, as we have seen in Letter XI., a source of joy and love to the primitive Christians. It was their darling theme, and that which raised them above themselves. Now, according to our system, Christians may still rejoice in the same manner, and give vent to their souls, and to all that is within them; and that without fear of going beyond the words of truth and soberness, or of bordering, or seeming to border, upon idolatry. But, upon the principles of our opponents, the sacred writers must have dealt largely in hyperbole; and it must be our business, instead of entering into their spirit, to sit down with “cool sensations,” criticise their words, and explain away their apparent meaning.

Brethren, I appeal to your own hearts, as men who have been brought to consider yourselves as the Scriptures represent you—Is there any thing in that preaching which leaves out the doctrine of salvation by an atoning sacrifice that can afford you any relief? Is it not like the priest and Levite, who passed by on the other side? Is not the doctrine of atonement by the blood of Christ like the oil and wine of the good Samaritan? Under all the pressures of life, whether from inward conflicts or outward troubles, is not this your grand support? What but “an Advocate with the Father,” one who “is the propitiation for our sins,” could prevent you, when you have sinned against God, from sinking into despondency, and encourage you to sue afresh for mercy? What else could so divest affliction of its bitterness, death of its sting, or the grave of its gloomy aspect? In fine, what



else could enable you to contemplate a future judgment with composure? What hope could you entertain of being justified, at that day, upon any other footing than this, "It is Christ that died?"

I am aware I shall be told that this is appealing to the passions, and to the passions of enthusiasts. To which it may be replied, In a question which relates to happiness, the *heart* is the best criterion; and if it be enthusiasm to think and feel concerning ourselves as the Scriptures represent us, and concerning Christ as he is there exhibited, let me live and die an enthusiast. So far from being ashamed to appeal to such characters, in my opinion they are the only competent judges. Men of mere speculation play with doctrines; it is the plain and serious Christian that knows most of their real tendency. In a question, therefore, which concerns their happy or unhappy influence, his judgment is of the greatest importance.

Dr. Priestley allows that "the doctrine of a general and a most particular providence is so leading a feature in every scheme of predestination, it brings God so much into every thing, that an habitual and animated devotion is the result."\* This witness is true: nor is this all. The same principle, taken in its connexion with various others, equally provides for a serene and joyful satisfaction in all the events of time. All the vicissitudes of nations, all the furious oppositions to the church of Christ, all the efforts to overturn the doctrine of the cross, or blot out the spirit of Christianity from the earth, we consider as permitted for wise and holy ends; and being satisfied that they make a part of God's eternal plan, we are not inordinately anxious about them. We can assure our opponents that, when we hear them boast of their increasing numbers, as also professed unbelievers of theirs, it gives us no other pain than that which arises from good-will to men. We have no doubt that these things are wisely permitted—that they are a fan in the hand of Christ, by which he will thoroughly purge his floor—and that the true gospel of Christ, like the sun in the heavens, will finally disperse all these interposing clouds. We are persuaded, as well as they, that things, upon the whole, whether we, in our contracted spheres of observation, perceive it or not, are tending to the general good—that the empire of truth and righteousness, notwithstanding all the infidelity and iniquity that are in the world, is upon the increase—that it must increase more and more—that glorious things are yet to be accomplished in the church of God—and that all which we have hitherto seen, or heard, of the gospel dispensation, is but as the first fruits of an abundant harvest.

The tendency of a system to promote present happiness may be estimated by the degree of *security* which accompanies it. The obedience and sufferings of Christ, according to the Calvinistic system, constitute the ground of our acceptance with God. A *good moral life*, on the other hand, is the only foundation on which our opponents profess to build their hopes.† Now, supposing our principles should prove erroneous, while they do not lead us to neglect good works, but to abound in them, from love to God, and with a regard to his glory, it may be presumed that the Divine Being will not cast us off to eternity for having ascribed too much to him, and too little to ourselves. But if the principles of our opponents should be found erroneous, and the foundation on which they build their hopes should, at last, give way, the issue must be fatal. I never knew a person, in his dying moments, alarmed for the consequences of having assumed too little to himself, or for having ascribed too much to Christ; but many, at that hour of serious reflection, have been more than a little apprehensive of danger from the contrary.

\* Phil. Nec. p. 162.

† See the quotations from Dr. Priestley, Dr. Harwood, and Mrs. Barbauld, Letter IX.

After all, it is allowed that there is a considerable number of persons amongst us who are under too great a degree of mental dejection; but though the number of such persons, taken in the aggregate, be considerable, it is not sufficient to render it any thing like a *general* case. And as to those who are so, they are, almost all of them, such, either from constitution, from the want of a mature judgment to distinguish just causes of sorrow, or from a sinful neglect of their duties and their advantages. Those who enter most deeply into our views of things, provided their conduct be consistent, and there be no particular propensity to gloominess in their constitution, are among the happiest people in the world.

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## LETTER XIV.

### A COMPARISON OF MOTIVES TO GRATITUDE, OBEDIENCE, AND HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

THE subject of this Letter has been occasionally noticed already; but there are a few things in reserve that require your attention. As men are allowed on both sides to be influenced by *motives*, whichever of the systems it is that excels in this particular, that of course must be the system which has the greatest tendency to promote a holy life.

One very important motive, with which the Scriptures acquaint us, is THE LOVE OF GOD MANIFESTED IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—"Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins."—"God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." The benevolence of God to men is represented in the New Testament as consisting not in his overlooking their frailties, not so much even in his forgiving their sins, as in giving his only begotten Son to die for them. *Herein was love*; and herein was found the grand motive to grateful obedience. There is no necessity indeed for establishing this point, since Dr. Priestley has fully acknowledged it. He allows "that the love of God in giving his Son to die for us is the consideration on which the Scriptures always lay the greatest stress, as a motive to gratitude and obedience."\* As this is a matter of fact, then, allowed on both sides, it may be worth while to make some inquiry into the reason of it; or *why* it is that so great a stress should be laid, in the Scriptures, upon this motive. To say nothing of the strong presumption which this acknowledgment affords in favour of the doctrine of atonement, suffice it at present to observe, that, in all other cases, an obligation to gratitude is supposed to bear some proportion to the magnitude or *value* of the gift. But if it be allowed in this instance, it will follow that the system which gives us the most exalted views of the dignity of Christ must include the strongest motives to obedience and gratitude.

If there be any meaning in the words, the phraseology of John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave *his only begotten Son*," conveys an idea of the highest worth in the object bestowed. So great was this gift,

\* Def. Unit. 1786, p. 102.

that the love of God in the bestowment of it is considered as *inexpressible* and *inestimable*. We are not told *how much* he loved the world, but that he so loved it that he gave *his only begotten Son*. If Jesus Christ be of more worth than the *world* for which he was given, then was the language of the sacred writer fit and proper; and then was the gift of him truly great, and worthy of being made "the consideration upon which the Scriptures should lay the greatest stress, as a motive to gratitude and obedience." But if he be *merely a man* like ourselves, and was given only to instruct us by his doctrine and example, there is nothing so *great* in the gift of him, nothing that will justify the language of the sacred writers from the charge of bombast, nothing that should render it a motive to gratitude and obedience, upon which the *greatest stress* should be laid.

Dr. Priestley, in his *Letters to Dr. Price*, observes that, "In passing from Trinitarianism to High Arianism, from this to your Low Arianism, and from this to Socinianism, even of the lowest kind, in which Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses or any other prophet, there are sufficient sources of gratitude and devotion. I myself," continues Dr. Priestley, "have gone through all those changes; and I think I may assure you that you have nothing to apprehend from any part of the progress. In every stage of it, you have that consideration on which the Scriptures always lay the greatest stress, as a motive to gratitude and obedience; namely, the love of God, the Almighty Parent, in giving his Son to die for us. And whether this Son be man, angel, or of a super-angelic nature, every thing that he has done is to be referred to the *love of God*, the original Author of all, and to him all our gratitude and obedience is ultimately due."\*

Dr. Priestley, it seems, wishes to have it thought that, seeing Trinitarians, Arians, and Socinians agree in considering the gift of Christ as an expression of the love of God, therefore their different systems are upon a level, as to the grand motive to gratitude and obedience: as if it made no difference at all whether that gift was small or great; whether it was a man or an angel, or one whom men and angels are bound to adore; whether it was to die, as other martyrs did, to set us an example of perseverance, or, by laying down his life as an atoning sacrifice, to deliver us from the wrath to come. He might as well suppose the gift of one talent to be equal to that of ten thousand, and that it would induce an equal return of gratitude; or that the gift of Moses, or any other prophet, afforded an equal motive to love and obedience as the gift of Christ.

If, in every stage of religious principle, whether Trinitarian, Arian, or Socinian, by admitting that one general principle, *the love of God in giving his Son to die for us*, we have the same motive to gratitude and obedience, and that in the same degree, it must be because the greatness or smallness of the gift is a matter of no consideration, and has no tendency to render a motive stronger or weaker. But this is not only repugnant to the plainest dictates of reason, as hath been already observed, but also to the doctrine of Christ. According to this, *he that hath much forgiven loveth much, and he that hath little forgiven loveth little*. Hence it appears that the system which affords the most extensive views of the evil of sin, the depth of human apostacy, and the magnitude of redemption, will induce us to love the most, or produce in us the greatest degree of gratitude and obedience.

It is to no purpose to say, as Dr. Priestley does, "Every thing that Christ hath done is to be referred to *the love of God*." For, be it so, the question is, if this system be true, *what hath he done*; and what is there to be referred

\* Def. Unit. 1786, pp. 101, 102.

to the love of God? To say the most, it can be but little. If Dr. Priestley be right, the breach between God and man is not so great but that our repentance and obedience are of themselves, without any atonement whatever, sufficient to heal it. Christ, therefore, could have but *little to do*. But the less he had to do, the less we are indebted to him, and to God for the gift of him; and, in proportion as this is believed, we must of course feel less gratitude and devotedness of soul to God.

Another important motive with which the Scriptures acquaint us is the LOVE OF CHRIST IN COMING INTO THE WORLD, AND LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."—"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich."—"Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."—"Verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham."—"The love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."—"Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."—"To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Such is the uniform language of the New Testament, concerning the love of Christ; and such are the moral purposes to which it is applied. It is a presumption in favour of our system, that here the above motives have all their force; whereas, in the system of our opponents, they have scarcely any force at all. The following observations may render this sufficiently evident.

We consider the coming of Christ into the world as a *voluntary undertaking*. His *taking upon him*, or *taking hold*, not of the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; his taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men, and that from a state of *mind* which is held up for our example; and his becoming *poor*, though previously rich, for our sakes, and that as an act of grace; all concur to establish this idea. For this we feel our hearts bound, by every consideration that love unparalleled can inspire, to gratitude and obedience. But our opponents, by supposing Christ to have been a mere man, and to have had no existence till he was born of Mary, are necessarily driven to deny that his coming into the world was a voluntary act of his own; and, consequently, that there was any love or *grace* in it. Dr. Priestley, in answer to Dr. Price, contends only that he "came into the world in obedience to the command of the Father, and not in consequence of his own proposal." But the idea of his coming in obedience to the command of the Father is as inconsistent with the Socinian scheme as his coming in consequence of his own proposal. For if he had no existence previously to his being born of Mary, he could do neither the one nor the other. It would be perfect absurdity to speak of *our* coming into the world as *an act of obedience*; and, on the hypothesis of Dr. Priestley, to speak of the coming of Christ under such an idea must be equally absurd.\*

We consider Christ's coming into the world as an act of *condescending love*; such, indeed, as admits of no parallel. The *riches* of Deity, and the

\* Def. Ur.it. 1786, p. 102.

*poverty* of humanity, the *form of God*, and the *form of a servant*, afford a contrast that fills our souls with grateful astonishment. Dr. Priestley, in the last-mentioned performance,\* acknowledges that "the Trinitarian doctrine of the incarnation is calculated forcibly to impress the mind with Divine condescension." He allows the doctrine of the incarnation as held by the Arians to have such a tendency in a degree; but he tells Dr. Price, who pleaded this argument against Socinianism, that "the Trinitarian hypothesis of the Supreme God becoming man, and then suffering and dying for us, would, no doubt, impress the mind more forcibly still." This is one allowed source of gratitude and obedience, then, to which the scheme of our adversaries makes no pretence, and for which it can supply nothing adequate. But Dr. Priestley thinks to cut up at one stroke, it seems, all the advantages which his opponents might hope to gain from these concessions, by adding—"With what unspeakable reverence and devotion do the Catholics eat their Maker!" That a kind of superstitious devotion may be promoted by falsehood is admitted; such was the "*voluntary humility*" of those who worshipped angels. But as those characters, with all their pretended humility, were "*vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind*;" so all that appearance of reverence and devotion which is the offspring of superstition will be found to be something at a great remove from piety or devotedness to God. The superstitions of popery, instead of promoting reverence and devotion, have been thought, by blinding the mind, and encumbering it with other things, to destroy them.† There are times in which Dr. Priestley himself "cannot conceive of any practical use being made of transubstantiation;"‡ but now it is put on a level with a doctrine which, it is allowed, "tends forcibly to impress the mind with Divine condescension."

Once more, We believe that Christ, in laying down his life for us, actually *died as our substitute*; endured the curse of the Divine law, that we might escape it; was delivered for our offences, that we might be delivered from the wrath to come; and all this while we were yet enemies. This is a consideration of the greatest weight; and if we have any justice or ingenuousness about us, love like this must constrain us to live, not to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again. But according to our adversaries, Christ died *for us* in no higher sense than a common martyr, who might have sacrificed his life to maintain his doctrine; and, by so doing, have set an example for the good of others. If this be all, why should not we be as much indebted, in point of gratitude, to Stephen, or Paul, or Peter, who also in that manner died for us, as to Jesus Christ? And why is there not the same reason for their death being proposed as a motive for us to live to them, as for his, that we might live to him?

But there is another motive, which Dr. Priestley represents as being "that in Christianity which is most favourable to virtue; namely, a future state of retribution, grounded on the firm belief of the historical facts recorded in the Scriptures; especially in the miracles, the death, and the resurrection of Christ. The man," he adds, "who believes these things only, and who, together with this, acknowledges a universal providence, ordering all events; who is persuaded that our very hearts are constantly open to the Divine inspection, so that no iniquity, or purpose of it, can escape his observation; will not be a bad man, or a dangerous member of society."§ Dr. Priestley, elsewhere, as we have seen, acknowledges that "the love of God, in giving his Son to die for us, is *the consideration on which the Scriptures always lay*

\* Page 103.

† See Mr. Robinson's Sermon on 2 Cor. iv. 4, entitled, "The Christian Doctrine of Ceremonies."

‡ Def. Unit. 1786, p. 33.

§ Letter V. to Mr. Burn.

*the greatest stress*, as a motive to gratitude and obedience;" and yet he speaks here of "a future state of retribution, as being that in Christianity which is *most favourable to virtue.*" One should think that what the Scriptures always lay the greatest stress upon should be that in Christianity which is most favourable to virtue, be it what it may. But, waving this, let it be considered whether the Calvinistic system has not the advantage, even upon this ground. The doctrine of a future state of retribution is a ground possessed by Calvinists as well as by Socinians; and, perhaps, it may be found that their views of that subject and others connected with it, are more favourable to virtue and a holy life than those of their adversaries.

A motive of no small importance by which we profess to be influenced is *the thought of our own approaching dissolution.* Brethren, if you embrace what is called the Calvinistic view of things, you consider it as your duty and interest to be frequently conversing with mortality. You find such thoughts have a tendency to moderate your attachments to the present world; to preserve you from being inordinately elated by its smiles, or dejected by its frowns. The consideration of the *time being short* teaches you to hold all things with a loose hand; to weep as though you wept not, and rejoice as though you rejoiced not. You reckon it a mark of true wisdom, to keep the end of your lives habitually in view; and to follow the advice of the Holy Scriptures, where you are directed rather to "go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting," where the godly are described as praying, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," and God himself as saying, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" But these things, instead of being recommended and urged as motives of piety, are discouraged by Dr. Priestley, who teaches that it is not necessary to dwell in our thoughts upon death and futurity, lest it should interrupt the business of life, and cause us to live in perpetual bondage.\*

The Scriptures greatly recommend the virtue of heavenly-mindedness. They teach Christians to consider themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth; to be dead to the world, and to consider their life, or portion, as hid with Christ in God. The spiritual, holy, and happy state which, according to the Calvinistic system, commences at death, and is augmented at the resurrection, tends more than a little to promote this virtue. If, brethren, you adopt these views of things, you consider the body as a tabernacle, a temporary habitation; and when this tabernacle is dissolved by death, you expect a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Hence it is that you desire to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. There are seasons in which your views are expanded, and your hearts enlarged. At those seasons, especially, the world loses its charms, and you see nothing worth living for, except to serve and glorify God. You have, in a degree, the same feelings which the apostle Paul appears to have possessed when he said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." But Dr. Priestley teaches that the heavenly state shall not commence till the resurrection. He does not suppose that there is any state of existence, strictly speaking, wherein we shall be absent from the body, and present with the Lord; for he considers the soul as having no existence at all separate from the body. He must, therefore, of necessity be a stranger to any such "strait" as that mentioned by the apostle. If the question were put to him, or to any of his sentiments, whether they would choose to abide longer *in the flesh*, (which might be profitable to their connexions,)

\* Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinson, pp. 7—22.

or immediately depart this life, they would be at no loss what to answer. They could not, in any rational sense, consider death as "gain." It would be impossible for them upon their principles to desire to depart. Conceiving that they come to the possession of heavenly felicity as soon if they die fifty years hence as if they were to die at the present time, they must rather desire to live as long as the course of nature will admit; so long, at least, as life can be considered preferable to non-existence. It would indicate even a mean and unworthy temper of mind, upon their principles, to be in such a *strait* as Paul describes. It would imply that they were weary of their work, and at a loss whether they should choose a cessation of being, or to be employed in serving God, and in doing good to their fellow creatures.

The *nature* and *employments* of the heavenly state deserve also to be considered. If you adopt the Calvinistic view of things, you consider the enjoyments and employments of that state in a very different light from that in which Socinian writers represent them. You read in your Bibles that "the Lord will be our everlasting light, and our God our glory;" that "our life is hid with Christ in God;" that "when he shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory;" and that we shall then "be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Hence you conclude that *a full enjoyment of God, and conformity to him, are the sum of heaven.* You read, further, that the bliss in reserve for Christians is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" that "now we are the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" and hence you naturally conclude that *the heavenly state will abundantly surpass all our present conceptions of it.* Again, you read that those who shall be found worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, "neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God." Hence you conclude that *the employments and enjoyments of that state are altogether spiritual and holy.* You read of our knowledge here being "in part;" but that there we shall "know even as we are known;" and that the Lamb, "which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of water." Hence you conclude that we shall not only enjoy greater means of knowledge, which, like a fountain, will flow for ever, and assuage our thirsty souls, but that *our minds will be abundantly irradiated, and our hearts enlarged, by the presence of Christ; whose delightful work it will be to open the book, and to loose the seals; to unfold the mysteries of God; and to conduct our minds amidst their boundless researches.* Once more, you read concerning those who shall obtain that world, and the resurrection, that they shall experience "no more death;" that they shall "go no more out;" that the "inheritance" to which they are reserved is "incorruptible,—and fadeth not away;" and that the weight of glory which we look for is "eternal." Hence you conclude that *the immortality promised to Christians is certain and absolute.*

These are very important matters, and must have a great influence in attracting your hearts toward heaven. These were the things which caused the patriarchs to live like strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They looked for a habitation, a better country, even a heavenly one. These were the things that made the apostles and primitive Christians consider their afflictions as light and momentary. "For this cause," say they, "we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

But if you adopt the Socinian view of things, your ideas of the heavenly

state, compared with the above, will be miserably flat and cold; and consequently your affections will be more set on things below, and less on things above. Dr. Priestley, in his Sermon on the death of Mr. Robinson, is not only employed in dissuading people from too much thought and fear about death, but from too much *hope* respecting the state beyond it. He seems to fear lest we should form *too high* expectations of heavenly felicity, and so meet with a disappointment. The heaven which he there describes does not necessarily include *any one of the foregoing ideas*, but might exist if they were all excluded!

Take his own words: "The change of our *condition* by death may not be so great as we are apt to imagine. As our *natures* will not be changed, but only *improved*, we have no reason to think that the *future world* (which will be adapted to our merely improved nature) will be *materially different from this*. And, indeed, why should we ask or expect any thing more? If we should still be obliged to provide for our subsistence by exercise or labour, is that a thing to be complained of by those who are supposed to have acquired fixed habits of industry, becoming rational beings, and who have never been able to bear the languor of absolute rest or indolence? Our future happiness has with much reason been supposed to arise from an increase of knowledge. But if we should have nothing more than the *means* of knowledge furnished us, as we have here, but be left to our own labour to find it out, is that to be complained of by those who will have acquired a *love of truth*, and a habit of inquiring after it? To make discoveries ourselves, though the search may require time and labour, is unspeakably more pleasing than to learn every thing by the information of others.\* If the *immortality* that is promised to us in the gospel should not be *necessary* and *absolute*, and we should only have the *certain means* of making ourselves immortal, we should have much to be thankful for. What the Scriptures inform us concerning a future life is expressed in general terms, and often in figurative language. A more particular knowledge of it is wisely concealed from us."—p. 18.

You see, brethren, here is not one word of God, or of Christ, as being the sum and substance of our bliss; and, except that mention is made of our being free from "imperfections bodily and mental," the whole consists of mere *natural* enjoyments; differing from the paradise of Mahometans chiefly in this, that their enjoyments are principally sensual, whereas these are mostly intellectual: those are adapted to gratify the voluptuary, and these the philosopher. Whether such a heaven will suit a holy mind, or be adapted to draw forth our best affections, judge ye.

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## LETTER XV.

### THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN SOCINIANISM AND INFIDELITY, AND THE TENDENCY OF THE ONE TO THE OTHER.

I SUPPOSE we may take it for granted, at present, that Christianity is favourable to true virtue, and that infidelity is the reverse. If it can be proved, therefore, that Socinianism resembles infidelity in several of its lead-

\* Is not this the rock on which Dr. Priestley and his brethren split? Have they not, on this very principle, coined a gospel of their own, instead of receiving the instructions of the sacred writers?



ing features, and has a direct tendency towards it, that will be the same as proving it unfavourable to true virtue.

It has been observed, and I think justly, that "there is no consistent medium between genuine Christianity and infidelity." The smallest departure from the one is a step towards the other. There are different degrees of approach, but all move on in the same direction. Socinians, however, are not willing to own that their scheme has any such tendency. Dr. Priestley appears to be more than a little hurt at being represented by the bigots (as he politely calls those who think ill of his principles) as undermining Christianity; and intimates that, by their rigid attachment to certain doctrines, some are forced into infidelity, while others are saved from it by his conciliating principles.\* Many things to the same purpose are advanced by Mr. Lindsey, in his "Discourse addressed to the Congregation at the Chapel in Essex Street, Strand, on resigning the Pastoral Office among them." We are to accommodate our religion, it seems, to the notions and inclinations of infidels; and then they would condescend to receive it. The principle of *accommodation* has been already noticed in Letter III. And it has been shown, from the example of the popish missionaries in China, to have no good tendency. To remove every stumbling-block out of the way of infidels would be to annihilate the gospel. Such attempts, also, suppose what is not true—that their not believing in Christianity is owing to some fault in the system, as generally received, and not to the temper of their own minds. Faults there are, no doubt; but if their hearts were right, they would search the Scriptures for themselves, and form their own sentiments according to the best of their capacity.

The near relation of the system of Socinians to that of infidels may be proved from the agreement of their principles, their prejudices, their spirit, and their success.

First, There is an agreement in their LEADING PRINCIPLES. One of the most important principles in the scheme of infidelity, it is well known, is *the sufficiency of human reason*. This is the great bulwark of the cause, and the main ground on which its advocates proceed in rejecting revelation. If the one, say they, be sufficient, the other is unnecessary. Whether the Socinians do not adopt the same principle, and follow hard after the deists in its application too, we will now inquire. When Mr. Burn charged Dr. Priestley with "making the reason of the individual the sole umpire in matters of faith," the Doctor denied the charge, and supposed that Mr. Burn must have been "reading the writings of Bolingbroke, Hume, or Voltaire, and have imagined them to be his;" as if none but professed infidels maintained that principle. This, however, is allowing it to be a principle pertaining to infidelity; and of such importance, it should seem, as to distinguish it from Christianity. If it should prove, therefore, that the same principle occupies a place, yea, and an equally important place, in the Socinian scheme, it will follow that Socinianism and deism must be nearly allied. But Dr. Priestley, as was said, denies the charge; and tells us that he "has written a great deal to prove the *insufficiency of human reason*:" he also

\* Here the late Mr. Robinson, of Cambridge, is brought in as an example; who, as some think in an excess of complaisance, told the Doctor, in a private letter, that, "but for his friendly aid, he feared he should have gone from enthusiasm to deism." *Letters to Mr. Burn*, Pref. To say nothing, whether the use Dr. Priestley made of this *private letter* was warrantable, and whether it would not have been full as modest to have forborne to publish to the world so high a compliment on himself; supposing not only the thing itself to have been strictly true, but that the conduct of Dr. Priestley was as strictly proper, what does it prove? Nothing, except that the region of Socinianism is so near to that of deism, that, new and then, an individual, who was on the high road to the one, has stopped short, and taken up with the other.

accuses Mr. Burn of the "grossest and most unfounded calumny," in charging such a principle upon him.—Letter IV.

If what Mr. Burn alleges be "a gross and unfounded calumny," it is rather extraordinary that such a number of respectable writers should have suggested the same thing. I suppose there has been scarcely a writer of any note among us, but who, if this be calumny, has calumniated the Socinians. If there be any credit due to Trinitarian authors, they certainly have hitherto *understood* matters in a different light from that in which they are here represented. They have supposed, whether rightly or not, that their opponents, in general, do hold the very principle which Dr. Priestley so strongly disavows.

But this is not all. If what Mr. Burn alleges be a gross and unfounded calumny, it is still more extraordinary that Socinian writers should calumniate themselves. Mr. Robinson, whom Dr. Priestley glories in as his convert, affirms much the same thing; and that in his "History of Baptism," a work published after he had adopted the Socinian system. In answering an objection brought against the Baptists, as being enthusiasts, he asks, "Were Castelio, and Servetus, Socinus, and Crellius enthusiasts? On the contrary, they are taxed with attributing *too much to reason*, AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF REASON IS THE SOUL OF THEIR SYSTEM,"—p. 47. If the last member of this sentence be true, and Dr. Priestley have maintained the same principle as much as any of his predecessors, then is what Mr. Burn alleges true also, and no calumny. Further, If Mr. Robinson's words be true, the system of a Socinus, and of a Bolingbroke, however they may differ in some particulars, cannot be very wide asunder. They may be *two bodies*; but the difference cannot be very material, so long as those bodies are inhabited by ONE SOUL.

But was not Mr. Robinson mistaken? Has he not inadvertently granted that which ought not in justice to have been granted? Suppose this to be a fact, why might not the same construction have been put upon what is alleged by Mr. Burn and other Trinitarian writers, instead of calling it by the hard name of "gross and unfounded calumny?" If we say no worse of our opponents than they say of themselves, they can have no just grounds of complaint; at least they should complain with less severity.

Further, If Mr. Robinson was mistaken, and if Dr. Priestley do really maintain *the insufficiency of human reason* in matters of religion, it will follow, after all that he has pleaded in behalf of reason, that he is no better friend to it than other people. The Doctor often reminds his Calvinistic opponents of an *old saying*, that "No man is against reason, till reason is against him." Old sayings, to be sure, prove much in argument. This old saying, however, is very just, provided the term *reason* be understood of *the real fitness of things*. Dr. Priestley's opponents are not against reason in this sense of the word; but against setting up *the reason of the individual* as umpire in matters of faith; and this we see is no more than the Doctor himself disavows, in that he supposes a principle of this kind is no where to be found, except in such writings as those of Bolingbroke, of Hume, or of Voltaire. He tells us that he has "written much to prove the *insufficiency* of human reason, and the necessity of Divine revelation." He is then *professedly against reason* in the same sense as his opponents are, and the deists might remind him of his "old saying" with as much propriety as he reminds other people of it.

Once more, If Mr. Robinson was mistaken, and if his concession be beyond the bounds of justice and propriety, it will follow that, notwithstanding what Dr. Priestley has said of *saving him from infidelity*, he was not

saved from it after all.\* Whether Mr. Robinson's words convey a just idea of Socinianism or not, they must be allowed to express what were *his own ideas of it*. Whatever, therefore, Dr. Priestley believes, *he* appears to have believed in *the sufficiency of reason*. But if none besides infidels maintain

\* I must be allowed a few words about this eminently talented, misguided, but I firmly believe, misrepresented man. It has been the custom to hold him up as having renounced the Christian faith, and as dying in the belief of the Socinian creed. That he was not in the strictest sense of the word *orthodox*, I am reluctantly compelled to admit; that his vanity and high admiration of talent wherever he found it, led him to associate with a party who admired and courted him, I also grant; that some extracts of letters which have been published in his works, as well as some passages in his larger productions, manifest a flippancy and levity too much in harmony with that system, is but too true. But still I hesitate.

I shall be told, in addition to these things, that his congregation at Cambridge were found, by his successor, the eminent Robert Hall, to contain some who rejected the atonement; but who does not know that when a minister at all declines from the right path, many of his people are disposed to travel farther than their teacher? But far as some of them were gone towards Socinianism, I never heard of a disposition among them to elect a Socinian pastor; and I believe that all traces of the evil soon disappeared under Mr. Hall's ministry. If it should be triumphantly added, that proof positive of Robinson's defection is furnished by the fact that the Unitarians of Birmingham invited him to preach for them, and that on the last sabbath of his life he occupied their pulpits in that town, it may be met by the statement first, that one of these congregations—that at the old meeting-house,—did not then profess Unitarianism, but semi-arianism, and that many orthodox ministers occasionally occupied their pulpit; and farther, that both the congregations have always, on the occasion of advocating their schools, (which was Mr. Robinson's task,) been in the habit of selecting men on account of their talents and influence, rather than their creed. On this principle, only a few years since, they invited a popular Roman Catholic priest of that town to occupy their pulpit, to advocate the same cause. These things are not to be justified, but they ought to be heard in favour of Robinson, before he is entirely cast out from our body.

Let me be permitted to state one or two more facts. The men with whom Robinson had to do in his own denomination, were the very worst into whose hands a sensitive, vain, and yet mentally independent man could have fallen. Fuller, Booth, and the senior Hall, were stern, sturdy men, who could never make the least allowance for any one who deviated a hair's breadth from their views. They denounced him;—he laughed at them;—the Socinians courted him, and, to some extent, he fell into the snare. When he met with any degree of kindness, he was melted by it. I remember hearing the description of a scene, from the lips of an old London Baptist, which much affected me. The late Rev. James Dore, of Maze Pond, was long an intimate friend of Robinson's, and they frequently exchanged pulpits. After the hue and cry had been raised against the latter, and Mr. Booth had published his sermon on the Importance of Truth, which was considered to be aimed against him, poor Robinson called on Dore, who received him kindly, but told him that he dared not ask him to preach. My informant told me that he saw Robinson sitting on the pulpit stairs, listening to the accustomed sweet strains of his friend Dore, who stood in his own pulpit agitated and distressed, while his former companion sat listening, bathed in tears, and evidently writhing under mental agony. Had all the Baptist ministers of that day been James Dore, Robinson might have been recovered from danger.

Another fact ought to be taken into the account. We have two Memoirs of Robinson—by Dyer and Flower, both of them decided Socinians, and both of them, very naturally, disposed to bring him as near to themselves as possible. It will be remembered that this body have been in the habit of claiming Sir Isaac Newton, Milton, and the pious Dr. Watts; but we are not yet disposed to dismiss either them, or even Robert Robinson, to their fellowship.

It was my happiness to be acquainted, during his latter years, with the late reverend and estimable Coxé Feary, of Bluntisham, in Huntingdonshire; whose character for correct doctrine and every christian excellence is too well known to need any attestation from my pen. I learnt from his own lips, that he was in early life a most intimate companion of Robinson's—that after report had circulated Robinson's defection from the faith, he, as well as others, contrived not to meet him; but that within a month of his death, Feary being at Cambridge, and hearing of the declining state of his old friend's health, he resolved to call on him. The meeting was solemnly affecting; in the course of it he said to Mr. Feary:—"My dear brother, I am no Socinian,—I am no Arian; my soul rests its whole hope of salvation on the atonement of Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God. My views of Divine truth are precisely what they were when I wrote my Plea for the Divinity of Jesus Christ." Mr. Feary was entirely satisfied; and I am glad, though years have elapsed, that I have now an opportunity to fulfil the request of that excellent man, in publishing these facts to the world.

I may be asked, what then were Mr. Robinson's real views, and wherein did he differ from sound Trinitarians? My answer is that he believed in the Indwelling scheme, or as it is sometimes called, Sabellianism; nor is there a sentence in the celebrated "Plea," in

that principle, it must follow that Dr. Priestley's glorying in Mr. Robinson is vain; and that the latter, so far from justifying the Doctor's boast of having saved him from infidelity, was not saved from it at all, but was the disciple of a Bolingbroke, of a Hume, or of a Voltaire, rather than of a Priestley.

But, after all, was Mr. Robinson indeed mistaken? Is not "the sufficiency of reason the soul of the Socinian system?" It is true, Socinians do not openly plead, as do the deists, that religion is *so* sufficient as that revelation is unnecessary; nor is it supposed that Mr. Robinson meant to acknowledge that they did. But do they not constantly advance what amounts to the same thing? I do not know what publications Dr. Priestley refers to when he speaks of having written a great deal to prove the "insufficiency of human reason, and the necessity of Divine revelation;" but if it be upon the same principles as those which he avows in his other productions, I do not see how he can have proved his point. According to these principles, the sacred writers were as liable to err as other men, and in some instances actually did err, producing "lame accounts, improper quotations, and inconclusive reasonings;" and it is the province of reason, not only to judge of their credentials, but of the particular doctrines which they advance.—Let. XII. Now this is not only "making the reason of the individual the sole umpire in matters of faith," but virtually rendering revelation unnecessary. If the reason of the individual is to sit supreme judge, and insist that every doctrine which revelation proposes shall approve itself to its dictates or be rejected, the necessity of the latter might as well be totally denied. If it be necessary, however, it is no otherwise than as a French parliament used to be necessary to a French king; not in order to dictate to his majesty, but to afford a sanction to his resolutions; or, at most, to tender him a little advice, in order to assist him in forming his judgment; which advice, notwithstanding, he might receive or reject, as best suited his inclination.

Dr. Priestley often suggests that he makes no other use of human reason than all other protestants make against the papists, when pleading against the doctrine of transubstantiation; that is, where the literal sense of a text involves an absurdity, he so far allows the dictates of reason as to understand it figuratively. But this is not the case; for the question here does not at all respect the *meaning* of Scripture, whether it should be understood literally or figuratively; but whether its *allowed* meaning ought to be accepted as truth, any farther than it corresponds with our preconceived notions of what is reason. According to the principles and charges above cited, it ought not; and this is not only summoning revelation to the bar of our own understandings, but actually passing sentence against it.

The near affinity of Socinianism to deism is so manifest, that it is in vain to disown it. Nobody supposes them to be entirely the same. One acknowledges Christ to be a true prophet, the other considers him as an impostor; but the denial of the proper inspiration of the Scriptures, with the receiving of some part of them as true, and the rejecting of other parts, even of the same books, "as lame accounts, improper quotations, and inconclusive reasonings," naturally lead to deism. Deists themselves do not so reject the Bible as to disbelieve every historical event which is there recorded. They would not deny, I suppose, that there were such characters in the world as

consistent with that view of the subject. I entirely reprobate that system, believe in its tendency towards Socinianism, and would earnestly caution every one against it; but I cannot exclude Robinson from all my love, because he believed what was taught by Watts and Doddridge, by the late excellent Mr. Toller, the friend of Fuller, and many other estimable men.—B.

Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; and that some things which are written concerning each are true.

In short, they take what they like best, as they would from any other ancient history, and reject the rest: and what does Dr. Priestley even pretend to more? He does not reject *so much* as a deist; he admits various articles which the other denies: but the difference is only in degree. The relation between the first and leading principles of their respective systems is so near, that one spirit may be said to pervade them both; or to use the imagery of Mr. Robinson, one soul inhabits these different bodies. The opposition between faith and unbelief is so great, in the Scriptures, that no less than salvation is promised to the one, and damnation threatened to the other; but if they were no further asunder than Socinianism and deism, it is passing strange that their consequences should be so widely different.

Another leading principle, common to Socinians and deists, is *the non-importance of principle itself, in order to the enjoyment of the Divine favour*. Nothing is more common than for professed infidels to exclaim against Christianity, on account of its rendering the belief of the gospel necessary to salvation. Lord Shaftesbury insinuates that the heathen magistrates, in the first ages of Christianity, might have been justly offended "with a notion which treated them, and all men, as profane, impious, and damned, who entered not into particular modes of worship, of which there had been formerly so many thousand kinds instituted, all of them compatible and sociable till that time."\* To the same purpose is what Mr. Paine advances, who, I imagine, would make no pretence of friendship towards Christianity. "If we suppose a large family of children," says he, "who on any particular day, or particular circumstance, made it a custom to present to their parents some token of their affection and gratitude, each of them would make a different offering, and, most probably, in a different manner. Some would pay their congratulations in themes, of verse or prose, by some little devices as their genius dictated, or according to what they thought would please; and perhaps the least of all, not able to do any of those things, would ramble into the garden or the field, and gather what it thought the prettiest flower it could find, though perhaps it might be but a simple weed. The parent would be more gratified by such a variety than if the whole of them had acted on a concerted plan, and each had made exactly the same offering."† And this he applies, not merely to the diversified modes of worshipping God which come within the limits of the Divine command, but to the various ways in which mankind have in all ages and nations worshipped, or pretended to worship, a Deity. The sentiment which this writer, and all others of his stamp, wish to propagate is, that, in all modes of religion, men may be very sincere; and that, in being so, all are alike acceptable to God. This is infidelity undisguised. Yet this is no more than Dr. Priestley has advanced in his *Differences in Religious Opinions*. "If we can be so happy," he says, "as to believe that all differences in modes of worship may be only the different methods by which different men (who are equally *the offspring of God*) are endeavouring to honour and obey their common Parent, our differences of opinion would have no tendency to lessen our mutual love and esteem."—Sect. II.

Nor is Dr. Priestley the only writer of the party who unites with the author of *The Age of Reason*, in maintaining that it matters not what religion we are of, if we be but sincere in it. Dr. Toulmin has laboured to defend this notion, and to prove from Acts x. 34, 35, and Rom. ii. 6, 10, 12, that it was maintained by Peter and Paul.‡ But before he had pretended to

\* Characteristics, Vol. I. § 3.

† Rights of Man, Part II., near the conclusion.

‡ Practical Efficacy, pp. 164, 165, 2d Ed.

palm it upon them, he should have made it evident that Cornelius, when he "feared God and worked righteousness," and those Gentiles, when they are supposed to have "worked good," and to be heirs of "glory, honour, and peace," were each of them actually living in idolatry; and being sincere, that God was well pleased with it. It is no part of the question whether heathens may be saved; but whether they may be saved *in their heathenism*; and whether heathenism and Christianity be only different modes of worshipping our common Father, and alike acceptable to him.

Several other principles might be mentioned, in which Socinians and deists are agreed, and in which the same objections that are made by the one against Calvinism are made by the other against the Holy Scriptures. Do Socinians reject the Calvinistic system because it represents God as a vindictive being? For the same reason the Scriptures themselves are rejected by the deists. Are the former offended with Calvinism on account of the doctrines of atonement and Divine sovereignty? The latter are equally offended with the Bible for the same reasons. They know very well that these doctrines are contained in the Scriptures; but they dislike them, and reject the Scriptures partly on account of them. The sufficiency of repentance to secure the Divine favour, the evil of sin consisting merely in its tendency to injure the creature, all punishment being for the good of the offender as well as for the public good, with various other principles which are opposed in these Letters in defence of Calvinism, are the same things for substance which those who have written against the deists have had to encounter, when defending revelation.\* It is a consolation to us to trace these likenesses; as it affords a presumption that our sentiments accord with the Scriptures, being liable to the same objections.

Socinian writers not only make the same objections to Calvinism which deists make to revelation, but, in some instances, have so far forgotten themselves, as to unite with the latter in pointing their objections against revelation itself. Steinbart and Semler (as quoted in Letter XII.) have fallen foul upon the writers of the Old and New Testament. "Moses," says the former, "according to the childish conceptions of the Jews in his days, paints God as agitated by violent affections; partial to one people, and hating all other nations." "Peter," says the latter, 2 Epistle i. 21, "speaks according to the conception of the Jews; and the prophets may have delivered the offspring of their own brains as Divine revelations."† The infidelity of Socinians is frequently covered with a very thin disguise; but here the veil is entirely thrown off. One thing, however, is sufficiently evident; while they vent their antipathy against the Holy Scriptures, in such indecent language, they betray a consciousness that the contents of that sacred volume are against them.

The likeness of Socinianism to deism will further appear, if we consider, Secondly, the similarity of their PREJUDICES. The peculiar prejudices of deists are drawn, I think, with great justness, by Dr. Priestley himself. "There is no class or description of men," he observes, "but what are subject to peculiar prejudices; and every prejudice must operate as an obstacle to the reception of some truth. It is in vain for unbelievers to pretend to be free from prejudices. They may, indeed, be free from those of the vulgar; but they have others, peculiar to themselves: and the very affectation of being free from vulgar prejudices, and of being wiser than the rest of mankind, must indispose them to the admission even of truth, if it should happen to be with the common people. The suspicion that the faith of the vulgar is superstitious and false is, no doubt, often well-founded; because they, of

\* See Leland's Def. Christ. against Tindall, Vol. I. Chap. IV. VI. VIII.

† Dr. Erskine's Sketches and Hints of Church History, No. III. pp. 65—71.

course, maintain the *oldest opinions*, while the speculative part of mankind are making new discoveries in science. Yet we often find that they who pride themselves on their being the furthest removed from superstition in some things are the greatest dupes to it in others; and it is not universally true that all old opinions are false, and all new ones well-founded. An aversion to the creed of the vulgar may, therefore, mislead a man; and, from a fondness for singularity, he may be singularly in the wrong.\*

Let those who are best acquainted with Socinians judge whether this address, with a very few alterations, be not equally adapted to them and to professed unbelievers. We know who they are, besides avowed infidels, who affect to be "emancipated from *vulgar prejudices* and *popular superstitions*, and to embrace a rational system of faith."† It is very common with Socinian writers, as much as it is with deists, to value themselves on being wiser than the rest of mankind, and to despise the judgment of plain Christians, as being the judgment of the *vulgar* and the *populace*. It is true Dr. Priestley has addressed Letters to the common people at Birmingham, and has complimented them with being "capable of judging in matters of religion and government." However, it is no great compliment to Christians in general, of that description, to suppose, as he frequently does, not only that the Trinitarian system, but that every other, was the invention of learned men in different ages, and that the vulgar have always been led by their influence. "The creed of the vulgar of the present day," he observes, "is to be considered not so much as *their* creed, for they were not the inventors of it, as that of the thinking and inquisitive in some former period. For those whom we distinguish by the appellation of the *vulgar* are not those who introduce any new opinions, but those who receive them from others, of whose judgment they have been led to think highly."‡ On this principle, Dr. Priestley somewhere expresses his persuasion of the future prevalence of Unitarianism. He grants that, at present, the body of common Christians are against it; but as the learned and the speculative are verging towards it, he supposes the other will, in time follow them. What is this but supposing them incapable of forming religious sentiments for themselves; as if the Bible were to them a sealed book, and they had only to believe the system that happened to be in fashion, or rather, *to have been* in fashion some years before they were born, and to dance after the pipe of learned men?

It is acknowledged that, in matters of human science, common people, having no standard to judge by, are generally led by the learned; but surely it is somewhat different in religion, where we have a standard; and one, too, that is adapted to the understanding of the simple. However many people may be led implicitly by others, yet there will always be a number of plain, intelligent, serious Christians who will read the Bible, and judge for themselves; and Christians of this description will always have a much greater influence, even upon those who do not judge for themselves, than mere speculative men, whom the most ignorant cannot but perceive to be wanting in serious religion, and respect to mankind; and while this is the case, there is no great danger of the body of common Christians becoming Socinians.

Thirdly, There is a BOLD, PROFANE, AND DARING SPIRIT discovered in the writings of infidels; a spirit that fears not to speak of sacred things with the most indecent freedom. They love to speak of Christ with a sneer, calling him *the carpenter's son*, *the Galilean*, or some such name, which, in their manner of expressing it, conveys an idea of contempt. Though Socinians do not go such lengths as these, yet they follow hard after them in their

\* Let. Phil. Unb. P. II. Let. V.

† Mr. Belsham's Sermon, pp. 4, 32.

‡ Let. Phil. Unb. P. II. Let. V.

profane and daring manner of speaking. Were it proper to refer to the speeches of private individuals, language might be produced very little inferior in contempt to any of the foregoing modes of expression; and even some of those who have appeared as authors have discovered a similar temper. Besides the examples of Engedin, Gagneius, Steinbart, and Semler, (as quoted in Letter XII.,) the *magnanimity* which has been ascribed to Dr. Priestley, for censuring the Mosaic narrative of the fall of man, calling it "a LAME account," is an instance of the same irreverent spirit.

Fourthly, The alliance of Socinianism to deism may be inferred from this, That the success of the one bears a proportion to that of the other, and resembles it in the most essential points. Socinians are continually boasting of their success, and of the great increase of their numbers; so also are the deists, and I suppose with equal reason. The number of the latter has certainly increased in the present century, in as great a proportion as the former, if not greater. The truth is, a spirit of infidelity is the main temptation of the present age, as a persecuting superstition was of ages past. This spirit has long gone forth into the world. In different denominations of men it exists in different degrees, and appears to be permitted to try them that dwell upon the earth. Great multitudes are carried away with it; and no wonder, for it disguises itself under a variety of specious names; such as *liberality*, *candour*, and *charity*; by which it imposes upon the unwary. It flatters human pride, calls evil propensity *nature*, and gives loose to its dictates; and, in proportion as it prevails in the judgments as well as in the hearts of men, it serves to abate the fear of death and judgment, and so makes them more cheerful than they otherwise would be.

It is also worthy of notice, that the success of Socinianism and deism has been among the same sort of people; namely, *men of a speculative turn of mind*. Dr. Priestley some where observes, that "learned men begin more to suspect the doctrine of the Trinity;" and possibly it may be so. But then it might, with equal truth, be affirmed that learned men begin more and more to suspect Christianity. Dr. Priestley himself acknowledges that, "among those who are called philosophers, the unbelievers are the crowd."\* It is true he flatters himself that their numbers *will* diminish, and that "the evidences of Christianity will meet with a more impartial examination in the present day than they have done in the last fifty years." But this is mere conjecture, such as has no foundation in fact. We may as well flatter ourselves that Socinians will diminish: there is equal reason for the one as for the other. It is not impossible that the number of both may be diminished in some future time, but when that time shall come it is not for us to say.

It may be suggested, that it is a circumstance not much in favour, either of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of Christianity, that such a number of philosophers and learned men suspect them. But, unfavourable as this circumstance may appear to some, there are others who view it in a very different light. The late Mr. Robinson, of Cambridge, always contended that common Christians were in a more favourable state for the discovery of religious truth than either the rich or the learned. And Dr. Priestley not only admits, but accounts for it. "Learned men," he says, "have *prejudices* peculiar to themselves; and the very affectation of being free from vulgar prejudices, and of being wiser than the rest of mankind, must indispose them to the admission even of truth, if it should happen to be with the common people." If "not many wise men after the flesh" are found among the friends of Christianity, or of what we account its peculiar doctrines, is it any other than what might have been alleged against the primitive church? The things of



God, in their times, were "hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes," and that "because it seemed good in his sight."

It is further worthy of notice, that the same *disregard of religion in general*, which is allowed by our opponents to be favourable to Socinianism, is equally favourable to deism. Dr. Priestley describes unbelievers of a certain age amongst us, as "having heard Christianity from their infancy, as having, in general, believed it for some time, and *as not coming to disbelieve it till they had long disregarded it.*"\* A disregard of Christianity, then, preceded their openly rejecting it, and embracing the scheme of infidelity. Now this is the very process of a great number of Socinian converts, as both the Doctor and Mr. Belsham elsewhere acknowledge. It is by a disregard of all religion that men become infidels; and it is by the same means that others become Socinians.

The foregoing observations may suffice to show the *resemblance* of Socinianism to deism. It remains for me to consider the *tendency* of the one to the other.

Dr. Priestley seems to admit that his scheme approaches nearer to that of unbelievers than ours; but then he disowns its having any tendency, on that account, to lead men to infidelity. On the contrary, he retorts the charge upon his opponents, and asserts his own scheme to have an opposite effect. "An enemy as I am considered to Christianity, by some," says he, "I have saved many from that infidelity into which the bigots are forcing them." The case of the late Mr. Robinson is here introduced as an example to confirm this assertion. The reasoning of Dr. Priestley, on this subject, resembles that of Archbishop Laud on another. When accused of leaning to popery, he denied the charge, and gave in a list of *twenty-one* persons, whom he had not merely saved from going over to that religion, but actually *converted* from it to the protestant faith.† Yet few thinking people imagine the principles of Laud to have been very unfriendly to popery, much less that they were adapted to save men from it.

That Socinianism has a direct tendency to deism will appear from the following considerations:—First, By giving up the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and allowing them to be the production of fallible men, (of men who, though too honest knowingly to impose upon others, were, notwithstanding, so far under the influence of inattention, of prejudice, and of misinformation, as to be capable of being imposed upon themselves,) Socinians furnish infidels with a handle for rejecting them. To give up the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is to give them up as *the word of God*, and as *binding upon the consciences of men*; to which our opponents apparently have no objection. They are seldom, if ever, known to warn mankind that the rejection of the Holy Scriptures will endanger their eternal welfare. Nor can they do so consistently with what they elsewhere plead for, that "all differences in modes of worship may be only different modes of endeavouring to honour and obey our common Parent." Under the pretext of appealing to the *reason* of unbelievers, they neglect to address themselves to their hearts and consciences. If the cause of infidelity lie in the want of evidence, or if those who leaned towards it were ingenuous and disinterested inquirers after truth, solemn warnings might be the less necessary. But if it lie in the temper of their hearts, which blinds their minds to the most convincing proofs, their hearts and consciences must be addressed as well as their understandings. The sacred writers and preachers always proceeded upon this principle. This only will account for such language as the following: "The blindness of their *heart*."—"Lest they should understand with their

\* *Ibid.* Pref. p. ix.

† Neal's History of the Puritans.

heart, and be converted.”—“*Repent*, and believe the gospel.”—“If God, peradventure, will give them *repentance* to the acknowledging of the truth.” This was the method of John the Baptist, of Christ and his apostles, in their addresses to unbelievers; and whatever addresses are made to infidels, whether Jews or deists, in which the *sin* of unbelief, and the *danger* of persisting in it, are not insisted on, they will tend to harden them in infidelity rather than to recover them out of it. Dr. Priestley, in effect, acknowledges that the cause of infidelity lies in the temper of the heart; and yet, when he addresses himself to infidels, he seems to consider them as merely in want of evidence, and fosters in them an idea of their security, notwithstanding their rejection of the gospel. This is manifestly the tendency of his *Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France*.

Dr. Priestley acknowledges that men *seldom reject Christianity in theory till they have long disregarded it in practice*;\* that is, they seldom believe it to be false without their hearts being fully inclined to have it so. Let us then consider a character of this description, in his examination of Christianity. He has long disregarded the practice of it, and begins now to hesitate about its truth. If he reads a defence of it upon our principles, he finds the authority of Heaven vindicated, his own sceptical spirit condemned, and is warned that he fall not upon a rock that will prove his eternal ruin. He throws it aside in resentment, calls the writer a bigot, and considers the *warning* given him as an insult to his dignity. Still, however, there is a sting left behind, which he knows not how to extract; a something which says within him, *How, if it should be true?* He takes up a defence of Christianity upon Socinian principles; suppose Dr. Priestley’s *Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France*. He is now brought to a better humour. Here is no *threatening*, no imminent danger. The sting is extracted. The reasoning in many parts is plausible; but having long wished to disbelieve Christianity, it makes little or no impression upon him, especially as it seems to be of no *great* consequence if he do so. It is only rejecting that entirely which professed Christians reject in part. It is only throwing off the testimony and opinions of fallible men. What will be his next step is not very difficult to conjecture.

By allowing part of the Gospels to be *spurious*, Socinian writers enable the *Jews* to ask, with an air of triumph, “How are we sure that the remainder is authentic?”† We are often told that the Jews can never embrace what is called orthodox Christianity, because of its inconsistency with one of the first principles of their religion, the *unity* of God. We do not ask them, however, to give up the unity of God. On the contrary, we are fully persuaded that our principles are entirely consistent with it. But this is more than our opponents can say with regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures; a principle as sacred and as important with the Jews as the unity of God itself. Were they to embrace Dr. Priestley’s notions of Christianity, they must give up this principle, and consider their own sacred writings in a much meaner light than they at present do. They have no conception of the Old Testament being a mere “authentic history of past transactions;” but profess to receive it as the very word of God, the infallible rule of faith and practice. Whenever they shall receive the New Testament, there is reason to conclude it will be under the same character, and for the same purposes. While they consider their own Scriptures as Divinely inspired, and hear professed Christians acknowledge that “part of their Gospels is spurious,” they will be tempted to look down upon Christianity with scorn, and so be hardened in their infidelity.

\* Let. Phil. Unb. Vol. II. Preface, p. ix. † Mr. D. Levi’s Letters to Dr. Priestley, p. 82.

Secondly, If the sacred writings be not received for the purposes for which they were professedly given, and for which they were actually appealed to by Christ and his apostles, they are in effect rejected; and those who pretend to embrace them for other purposes will themselves be found to have passed the boundaries of Christianity, and to be walking in the paths of infidelity. We have seen, in Letter XII., that the Scriptures *profess* to be *the word of God, and the rule of faith and practice*. Now if any man believe in revelation, he must receive it as being what it professes to be, and for all the purposes for which it professes to have been written. The Monthly Review suggests that "the Scriptures were never designed to settle disputed theories, and to decide speculative, controverted questions, even in religion and morality."\* But if so, what must we think of their assuming to be the rule of faith and practice? what must we think of Christ and his apostles, who appealed to them for the truth of their doctrines, and the goodness of their precepts? On the principles of our opponents, they must have been either weak or wicked. If they considered them as the standard of faith and practice, they must have been weak; if they did not, and yet appealed to them as a decisive test, they were certainly wicked. In either case their testimony is unworthy of regard, to suppose which is downright infidelity.

Thirdly, By the degrading notions which Socinians entertain of the person of Christ, they do what in them lies to lessen the sin of rejecting him, and afford the adversaries of the gospel a ground for accusing him of presumption, which must necessarily harden them in unbelief. The Jews consider their nation, according to the sentiments of orthodox Christians, as lying under the charge "of crucifying the *Lord and Saviour of the world*;" but, according to those of Dr. Priestley, as "only having crucified *a prophet*, that was sent to them in the first instance."† Such a consideration diminishes the degree of their guilt, tends to render them more indifferent, and consequently must harden them in infidelity. By considering our Lord as *merely* a prophet, Socinians also furnish the Jews with the charge of *presumption*; a weighty objection indeed against his Messiahship! "He preached *himself*," says Mr. Levi, "as *the light of the world*, which is an instance not to be paralleled in Scripture; for the duty of a prophet consisted in his delivery of God's word or message to the people, not in presumptuously preaching himself. Again, we meet with the same example in John xiv. 6, where Jesus preaches *himself*, as *the way, the truth, and the life*." From all which he concludes, "it is manifest that he was not sent by God to us as a prophet, seeing he was so deficient in the essential character of a prophet."‡ How Dr. Priestley, upon his principles, will be able to answer this reasoning, I cannot tell. Though he has written a reply to Mr. Levi, I observe he has passed over this part of the subject very lightly, offering nothing that sufficiently accounts for our Lord's preaching himself as "the light of the world,—the way, the truth, and the life," upon the supposition of his being merely a prophet.

Fourthly, The progress which Socinianism has made has generally been towards infidelity. The ancient Socinians, though they went great lengths, are, nevertheless, far outdone by the moderns. If we look over the *Racovian Catechism*, printed at Amsterdam in 1652, we shall find such sentiments as the following:—"No suspicion can possibly creep into the mind concerning those authors, (the sacred writers,) as if they had not had exact cognizance of the things which they described, in that some of them were eye and ear witnesses of the things which they set down, and the others were fully and accurately informed by them concerning the same. It is

\* Monthly Review Enlarged, Vol. X. p. 357.

† Levi's Letters to Priestley, p. 14.

‡ Ibid. p. 24.

altogether incredible that God, whose goodness and providence are immense, hath suffered those writings wherein he hath proposed his will, and the way to eternal life, and which, through the succession of so many ages, have, by all the godly, been received and approved as such, to be any ways corrupted." —p. 3. I need not go about to prove that these sentiments are betrayed into the hands of infidels by modern Socinians. Dr. Priestley (as we have seen in Letter XII.) supposes the sacred writers to have written upon subjects "to which they had not given much attention, and concerning which they had not the means of exact information," and in such cases considers himself at liberty to disregard their productions. Instead of maintaining that the sacred writings cannot have been corrupted, modern Socinians are continually labouring to prove that they *are* so.

Some, who are better acquainted with Socinians and deists than I profess to be, have observed that it is very common for those who go over to infidelity to pass through Socinianism in their way. If this be the case, it is no more than may be expected, according to the natural course of things. It is not common, I believe, for persons who go over to Socinianism to go directly from Calvinism, but through one or other of the different stages of Arminianism, or Arianism, or both. Dr. Priestley was once, as he himself informs us, "a Calvinist, and that of the strictest sect. Afterwards," he adds, "he became a High Arian, next a Low Arian, and then a Socinian, and then, in a little time, a Socinian of the lowest kind, in which Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses, or any other prophet;" to which he might have added—and in which the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is given up.\* The Doctor also informs us that he "does not know when his creed will be fixed."† And yet he tells us, in his volume of Sermons, (page 95,) that "Unitarians are not apt to entertain any doubt of the truth of their principles." But this, I suppose, is to be understood of their principles only in one point of view; namely, as they are opposed to what is commonly called orthodoxy; for as they are opposed to infidelity, they are apt to entertain doubts concerning them, as much and perhaps more than any other men; and, in that line of improvement, to hold themselves open to the reception of greater and greater illuminations. It is in this direction that Dr. Priestley has generally moved hitherto; and should he, before he fixes his creed, go one degree further, is there any doubt where that degree will land him? Should it be upon the shores of downright infidelity, it can afford no greater matter of surprise to the Christian world than that of an Arian becoming a Socinian, or a deist an atheist.

By the following extract from a letter which I received from a gentleman of candour and veracity, and extensive acquaintance in the literary world, it appears that several of the most eminent characters amongst professed unbelievers in the present age were but a few years ago in the scheme of Socinian: "I think I may say, without exaggeration, that, of my acquaintance, the greater part of *literary* men who have become Unitarians are either sceptics, or strongly tending that way. I could instance in —, —, —, —, —, —, —, and many others. About four months ago I had a pretty long conversation with one of the above gentlemen (as intelligent a man as any I know) on this subject. He reminded me of a conversation that had passed betwixt us about a year and a half before, in which I had observed there was a near affinity between Unitarianism and deism, and told me he was then rather surprised I should suppose so, but that now he was completely of that opinion; and that, from very extensive observations, there

\* Lett. Phil. Unb. Part II. pp. 33—35.

† Def. Unit. 1787, p. 111.

was nothing he was more certain of than that the one led to the other. He remarked how much Dr. Priestley was mistaken in supposing he could, by cashiering orthodoxy, form what he called rational Christians; for that, after following him thus far, they would be almost sure to carry their speculations to a still greater extent. All the professed unbelievers I have met with rejoice in the spread of Unitarianism as favourable to their views."

Christian brethren, permit me to request that the subject may be seriously considered. Whether the foregoing positions be sufficiently proved, it becomes not me to decide. A reflection or two, however, may be offered, upon the supposition that they are so; and with these I shall conclude.

First, If that system which embraces the Deity and atonement of Christ, with other correspondent doctrines, be friendly to a life of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, it must be of God, and it becomes us to abide by it, not because it is the doctrine of Calvin or of any other man that was uninspired, but as being "the gospel which we have received" from Christ and his apostles; "wherein we stand, and by which we are saved."

Secondly, if that system of religion which rejects the Deity and atonement of Christ, with other correspondent doctrines, be unfriendly to the conversion of sinners to a life of holiness, and of professed unbelievers to faith in Christ; if it be a system which irreligious men are the first and serious Christians the last to embrace; if it be found to relax the obligations to virtuous affection and behaviour, by relaxing the great standard of virtue itself; if it promote neither love to God under his true character, nor benevolence to men as it is exemplified in the spirit of Christ and his apostles; if it lead those who embrace it to be wise in their own eyes, and instead of humbly deprecating God's righteous displeasure, even in their dying moments, arrogantly to challenge his justice; if the charity which it inculcates be founded in an indifference to Divine truth; if it be inconsistent with ardent love to Christ, and veneration for the Holy Scriptures; if the happiness which it promotes be at variance with the joys of the gospel; and, finally, if it diminish the motives to gratitude, obedience, and heavenly-mindedness, and have a natural tendency to infidelity; it must be an immoral system, and consequently not of God. It is not the gospel of Christ, but "*another gospel.*" Those who preach it preach *another Jesus*, whom the apostles did not preach; and those who receive it receive *another spirit*, which they never imbibed. It is not the light which cometh from above, but a cloud of darkness that hath arisen from beneath, tending to eclipse it. It is not the highway of truth, which is a way of holiness; but a by-path of error, which misleads the unwary traveller, and of which, as we value our immortal interests, it becomes us to beware. We need not be afraid of evidence, or of free inquiry; for if irreligious men be the first, and serious Christians be the last, who embrace the Socinian system, it is easy to perceive that the avenues which lead to it are not, as its abettors would persuade you to think, an openness to conviction, or a free and impartial inquiry after truth, but *a heart secretly disaffected to the true character and government of God, and dissatisfied with the gospel way of salvation.*

I am, Christian Brethren,

Respectfully and affectionately yours,

ANDREW FULLER.

## POSTSCRIPT.

On the first appearance of the foregoing Letters, in 1793, some of the most respectable characters amongst the Socinians, and who have since affected to treat them with contempt, acknowledged that they were "well worthy of their attention." No answer, however, appeared to them till 1796, when Dr. Toulmin published his *Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine*, and Mr. Kentish his sermon on *The Moral Tendency of the Genuine Christian Doctrine*. To these publications a reply was written in 1797, entitled *Socinianism Indefensible on the Ground of its Moral Tendency*. Mr. Kentish wrote again, and Dr. Toulmin has lately published a second edition of his piece, with large additions. I had no inclination to add any thing in reply to Mr. Kentish, being well satisfied that the public should judge from the evidence that was before them. And as to Dr. Toulmin, his second edition is, like his first, full of irrelative matter.

Having been charged with *shifting the ground of the argument, and begging the question*, this writer labours to persuade his readers that he has done neither. "He did not intend," he says, "nor profess, to give a *full* and *minute* answer to Mr. Fuller's tract. He meant not *much more* than to take an *occasion* from that publication to bring the general question, namely, the practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine, to the test of Scriptural facts,"—p. 133. This is acknowledging that, *if he had* professed to give a proper answer to the work, he would have been obliged by the laws of just reasoning to keep to the ground of his opponent. But intending only to write a piece that should bear some *allusion* to it, he considered himself at liberty to choose his own ground. But if this were his intention, why did he profess, at his outset, to "enter the lists" with me, and to comprehend in his performance "the main point to which a reply to my Letters need be directed?" If this be not professing to answer a work, nothing is.

The design of Dr. Toulmin seems to have been very complex, and his account of it has much the appearance of evasion. He did not intend to give a *full* and *minute* answer: Did he mean to give *any* answer; or only to write a piece which might *pass for an answer*? He meant not *much more* than thus and thus: Did he mean *any* more? If he did, he ought to have kept to the proper ground of reasoning; or if he thought it unfair, to have proved it so.

But he had a right, he says, to choose the ground of his argument as well as I. Doubtless, if he had chosen to write upon any subject *professing to answer another*, or wishing his performance to pass for an answer, he had; but if, at the outset, he propose to "enter the lists" with an opponent, and to comprehend "all that to which a reply to his performance need be directed," it is otherwise. If a Christian divine wish to write in favour of Christianity, he is at liberty to choose his ground. He may fix, as Bishop Newton has, on the argument from *prophecy*. But if a deist come after him, professing to "enter the lists" with him, and to comprehend in his performance "all that to which a reply to the work of his opponent need be directed," he is obliged, by the rules of just reasoning, either to examine the arguments of his adversary, or attempt to overturn the principle on which they rest. If, instead of trying the truth of the Christian religion by the fulfilment of *prophecy*, he were to fill up his pages by arguing on the improbability of *miracles*, or the *sufficiency of the light of nature*, what would Dr. Toulmin say to him? And if, in order to excuse himself, he should allege that he did not intend nor profess to give a *full* and *minute* answer to his

antagonist—that he meant not *much more* than to take an *occasion* from his publication to bring forward the general question between Christians and deists on the necessity of a Divine revelation—might he not better have held his peace? Must not judicious persons, even amongst his friends, clearly perceive that he has betrayed the cause; and, whether they choose to acknowledge it or not, be fully convinced that, if he did not wish to answer the work, he should have let it alone; or if the ground of argument were unfair, he should have proved it so, and not have set up another which had no relation to it?

Thus it is that Dr. Toulmin has *shifted the ground of the argument*: and what is that ground to which he gives the preference? He wished, it seems, to try “the practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine by the test of Scriptural facts.” Are those facts, then, a proper medium for such a trial? I have been used to think that every tree was to be tried by its *own* fruits, and not by those of another. *Scriptural facts*, such as those which Dr. Toulmin alleges, afford a proper test of the practical efficacy of *Scripture doctrines*; and if brought against the cause of infidelity, would be in point. But there is no question in this case whether Scripture truth be of a practical nature, but wherein it consists? The *facts* to which Dr. Toulmin wishes to draw the reader’s attention prove nothing in favour of Unitarianism or Trinitarianism; for before they can be brought to bear, the work of proof must be accomplished by other means. An attempt to establish the practical efficacy of modern Unitarianism by Scriptural facts, is like producing the fruits of Palestine in order to ascertain the soil of Taunton.

Dr. Toulmin complained of my animadverting on particular passages in the writings of Unitarians, and suggested that I ought rather to have applied my arguments to the general, the fundamental, principles of their system. “That there is *one* God, the Father, and one Mediator between God and man, the *man* Christ Jesus.” To this it was answered, “The unity of God, and the humanity of Christ, then, it seems, are the principles which I ought to have attacked; that is, I ought to have attacked principles which I profess to believe, and not those which I profess to disbelieve.”—“But,” says Dr. T. in reply, “does he receive these principles in the *pure and simple form* in which Unitarians embrace them?”—p. 81, note.

The Doctor ought to have expressed his fundamental principles *in his own words*, and not in those of Scripture. Every controversial writer, who does not wish to beg the question, will do so. He ought to have said Mr. Fuller, instead of animadverting on particular passages in the writings of Unitarians, should have attacked their first principles: That God is *one person*, and that Christ is *merely a man*. This had been fair and open; and had the objection been made in this form, I might have replied to this effect:—My object was not to attack particular principles so much as the general tendency of their religion taken in the gross, and the passages on which I animadverted chiefly related to this view of the subject. Yet, in the course of the work, I have certainly attempted to prove the *Divinity of Christ*; and whatever goes to establish this doctrine goes to demolish those leading principles which, it is said, I ought to have attacked; for if Christ be God, he cannot be *merely a man*, and there must be more than *one person* in the Godhead. But, not contented with expressing his leading principles in his own words, Dr. Toulmin chooses Scripture language for the purpose. This, I contended, was begging the question; or taking it for granted that the terms *one God*, in Scripture, mean *one person*, and that Christ’s being called *a man* denotes that he was *merely a man*. To show the impropriety of this proceeding, I alleged that I believed both the unity of God and the humanity of Christ; and, therefore, ought not to be expected to oppose either of them.

“But does he receive these principles,” says Dr. T., “in the *pure and simple form* in which Unitarians embrace them?” What is this but saying that I do not admit the Socinian *gloss* upon the apostle’s words? Dr. Toulmin may contend that the Scriptures express his sentiments so plainly as to need no gloss; but a gloss it manifestly is. He may call it a *pure and simple form*, or what he pleases; but nothing is meant by it beyond a gloss, nor proved, except the prevalence of his easy-besetting sin, that of begging the question.

To show, in a still stronger light, the unfairness of a controversial writer’s attempting to shroud his opinions under the phraseology of Scripture, I supposed it to be done by a Calvinist, and asked what Dr. Toulmin would say to it in that case. I could say, for example, *There is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit*, in whose name we are baptized—*The Word was God—Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures*; and could require Socinians not to animadvert on particular passages in Calvinistic writers, but on *these our leading principles*. Would they admit, or ought they to be expected to admit, of these as our leading principles? No: Dr. Toulmin has given proof that he does not, and has thereby justified me in refusing to admit the same thing on his side of the question. He will not allow that our leading principles are expressed by these passages of Scripture, because they say nothing of the Father, Son, and Spirit being *one God*, nor of a *sameness of essence*, &c. &c., pp. 5, 6, note. Very well: neither do I allow that his leading principles are expressed by the passages he has produced; for they say nothing of God’s being *one person*, or of Christ’s being *merely* a man. If the Scriptures which I alleged express my sentiments *as fully* as the passages he has produced express his, that is sufficient. My object was not to join issue in endeavouring to prove that my sentiments were expressly and fully contained in Scripture language; but to show the futility of such pretences on either side. So far from “affecting to show that the first principles of the Calvinists are to be expressed in the words of Scripture,” it was manifestly my design to show that the practice of so expressing them, *in controversy*, was objectionable, in that it takes for granted that which requires to be proved.

It is true, as Dr. Toulmin says, that if he, or any other person, were to offer to subscribe the passages which I have produced, as exhibiting a creed tantamount to ours, we should demur to admit it in this view. But this, instead of overturning my reasoning, confirms it, and cuts the throat of his own argument; for it is no less true, that if I, or any other person, were to offer to subscribe the passages produced by him, as exhibiting a creed tantamount to his, he would demur to admit it in this view. Nay, more: in his case, it is beyond supposition. I have actually offered to subscribe the apostles’ words, and he has actually refused to admit my subscription; alleging that I do not receive them in that *pure and simple form* in which Unitarians embrace them. According to his own reasoning, therefore, the words of the apostle, by which he would express his leading principles, do not contain the *whole* of them, and he must have failed in his attempt to express them in Scripture language; and, consequently, the “boasted superiority” of his scheme, even in this respect, is without foundation.

If we can believe Dr. Toulmin, however, the Scriptures not only expressly declare God to be one, but *one person*. “This simple idea of God, that he is one single person,” says he, from Mr. Lindsey, “literally pervades every passage of the sacred volumes.” To this I have answered, among other things, “It might have served a better purpose, if, instead of this general assertion, these gentlemen had pointed us to a *single* instance in which the unity of God is literally declared to be personal.” And what has Dr. Toulmin



said in reply? "The appeal, one would think, might be made to Mr. Fuller's own good sense. What can be more decisive instances of this than the many passages in which the singular personal pronouns, and their correlates, are used concerning the Supreme Being; as, *I, me, my, mine, &c.*"—p. 85, note. Whatever may be thought of my good sense, or that of my opponent, I appeal to good sense itself, whether he has made good his assertion. To say nothing of his reducing it from *every passage* to *many* passages, which probably strikes out ninety-nine passages out of a hundred in the sacred volumes, if the singular personal pronouns be a literal declaration that God is one person, the plural personal pronouns, *Let us make man in our image, &c.* must equally be a literal declaration that he is more than one. The singular personal pronouns, also, which are frequently applied to the Holy Spirit,\* contain a decisive proof, yea, a literal declaration, of his personality; and which inevitably draws after it the doctrine of the Trinity.

Dr. Toulmin has said much about *judging the heart* (pp. 95—101, note); but his objection does not seem to lie against judging, so much as judging Unitarians. If I affirm, what the Scriptures uniformly teach,† that a false and immoral system has its origin not in simple mistake, but in disaffection to God,‡ this is highly presumptuous, this is judging the heart; but if Dr. Toulmin pronounce my mode of arguing to be "savouring of spleen and ill-nature, and evidently *designed* to fix an opprobrium and disgrace," (p. 134,) the case is altered.

It is right to judge of the disposition of the heart by "overt acts;" that is, by words and deeds: but where this judgment is directed against Unitarians, it is not right, after all; for it is possible we may judge uncandidly and unjustly! It is right for Dr. T. to disregard the professions of his opponent, when he declares his belief in the unity of God and the humanity of Christ, and expresses that belief in the words of Scripture, because he does not "receive these principles in the *pure and simple form* in which Unitarians embrace them." But if we disregard *their* professions, and require any thing more than a declaration of their faith in the words of Scripture, we set up "*our* gospel, or the gospel according to *our views* of it," and act contrary to our professed principles as Protestants, as Dissenters, and as Baptists.

When our creed and worship are such that they cannot conscientiously join them, they have a right to separate from us; otherwise they could not "keep the commandments of Jesus pure and undefiled:" but whatever be their creed, or the tenor of their conversation or prayers, we have no right to refuse communion with them.

If we do not model our professions, preaching, and worship, so as to give no offence to an individual of their principles, we "assume a power which no Christian, or body of Christians, possesses:" yet they do not model their professions, preaching, or worship, so as to give no offence to us; neither do we desire they should. They do not confine themselves to the words of Scripture; nor is it necessary they should. They inquire whether our professions accord with the *meaning* of Scripture, and we claim to do the same. The reason why Dr. T. will not allow of this and other claims must, I should think, be this: Their views of the gospel are "*pure and simple,*" and ours are *corrupt*. Thus it is, reader, that he goes about to prove that he does not "take for granted the principles on which he argues," and that "he assumes nothing!" If Dr. T. can persuade himself and his friends that he

\* John xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7—15; 1 Cor. xii. 11.

† 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 John iv. 6; Jude 4.

‡ The reader will recollect that what is affirmed, in the concluding sentence of the Letters, is merely hypothetical, and rests upon the supposition of Socinianism being what I had attempted to prove it, a false and immoral system.

has not shifted the ground of the argument, has not assumed what he should have proved, and, in short, has not tacitly acknowledged Socinianism to be indefensible on the ground of its moral tendency, they are welcome to all the consolation such a persuasion will afford them.

All I shall add will be a brief defence of the *principle* on which the foregoing Letters are written. To undermine this is a point at which all my opponents have aimed. The practical efficacy of a doctrine, *in the present age*, is a subject, it seems, which ought not to be discussed as the test of its being true. They are, at least, to a man against it: a pretty clear evidence this that it does not speak good concerning them.

Mr. Belsham, in his *Review of Mr. Wilberforce*, glancing at *The Systems Compared*, says, "The amount of it is, We Calvinists being much better Christians than you Socinians, our doctrines must, of course, be true." "The Unitarians," he adds, "will not trespass upon the holy ground. We have learned that 'not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.' And be it known to Mr. Wilberforce, and to all who, like him, are disposed to condemn their brethren unheard, that if the Unitarians were inclined to boast, they have whereof to glory. And if they took pleasure in exposing the faults of their orthodox brethren, they likewise have tales to unfold which would reflect little credit on the parties, or on their principles. But of such mutual reproaches there would be no end,"—pp. 267, 268, 274.

Dr. Toulmin alleges that "it is a mode of arguing very unfavourable to *candour* and fair discussion, savouring of *spleen* and *ill-nature*, principally calculated to *misrepresent* and *irritate*, and evidently designed to fix an opprobrium and disgrace;" that when our Saviour cautioned his followers to "beware of false prophets," who should be "known by their fruits," he meant not persons who would teach *false doctrine*, and whose lives would accord with it, but persons of *insincere character*, whose doctrine might, nevertheless, be true; and that his brethren have not reasoned against Calvinism from the immoral *lives* of Calvinists, but merely from the immoral *tendency* of their principles,—pp. 134, 148, 154.

If the mode of arguing pursued in the foregoing Letters be liable to all these objections, it is rather singular that it should not have been objected to till it was pointed against Socinianism. If it can be shown to be a mode of arguing consonant to the directions given by our Saviour, and actually used by the apostles, the fathers, the reformers, the puritans, and even by our opponents themselves, their objecting to it in this instance will prove nothing, except it be the weakness of their cause.

Our Saviour warned his followers to "beware of false prophets," and gave this direction concerning them, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." This direction, founded in self-evident truth, and enforced by the Head of the Christian church, appeared to me to furnish a proper criterion by which to judge of the claims, if not of every particular opinion, yet of every *system* of opinions pretending to Divine authority.

Mr. Kentish admitted that "the effects produced by a doctrine were a proper criterion of its *value*, but not of its *truth*." But the value of a doctrine implies its truth. Falshood is of no value: whatever proves a doctrine valuable, therefore, must prove it to be true.

Mr. Kentish further objects, "This celebrated saying of our Saviour is proposed as a test of *character*, and not as a criterion of *opinion*." To the same purpose Dr. Toulmin alleges that "this is a rule given to judge, not concerning *principles*, but men; not concerning the sentiments promulgated by them, but concerning their own characters and pretensions. The persons here pointed at are hypocrites and false prophets; such as would falsely

pretend a commission from God. Their pretensions might be blended with a *true doctrine*, but their claims were founded in dissimulation. They would be discovered by their covetousness, love of gain, and lasciviousness,"—p. 148.

These writers are, in general, exceedingly averse from judging *men*, considering it as uncaudid and presumptuous, and plead for confining all judgment to *things*: but, in this case, *things* themselves seem to be in danger; and therefore *men* are left to shift for themselves.

According to this exposition, it is the duty of Christians, when ministers discover an avaricious and ambitious disposition, though sound in doctrine, and in time past apparently humble and pious, to set them down as hypocrites. And this is more *candid*, it seems, and savours less of *spleen* and *ill-nature*, than drawing an unfavourable conclusion of their doctrinal principles.

But waving this, The saying of our Saviour is given as a test of *false prophets*, or teachers; an epithet never bestowed, I believe, on men whose doctrine was *true*. That false prophets and teachers were men of bad character I admit, though that character was not always apparent (2 Cor. xi. 14; Matt. vii. 15); but that they are ever so denominated on account of their character, as distinct from their doctrine, does not appear. When any thing is said of their doctrine, it is invariably described as false. "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or lo there, *believe him not*; for false Christs, and *false prophets*" bearing witness in their favour, "shall arise."—"There were *false prophets* among the people, even as there shall be *false teachers* among you, who privily shall bring in *damnable heresies*, even *denying the Lord that bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."—"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many *false prophets* are gone out into the world."—"Every spirit that *confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh* is not of God."—"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the *doctrine of Christ*, hath not God."—"If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

If the "false prophets" described by our Saviour were such as might teach "a true doctrine," the descriptions given by the New Testament writers, uniformly representing them as teaching falsehood, are at variance with those of their Master.

That there were hypocrites who taught a true doctrine may be allowed; but they are never denominated *false prophets*, or *false teachers*. Balaam was a wicked character, and is called a *prophet*; but as the subject matter of his prophecies was true, he is not called a *false prophet*. Judas, also, was a hypocrite and a thief, at the same time that he was a preacher and an apostle; but as what he taught was true, he is not described as a *false teacher* or a *false apostle*.

These things considered, let the impartial reader determine whether our Saviour did not mean to direct his followers to judge by their fruits *who were the patrons of false doctrine*.

With respect to the *use* which has been made of this direction, I appeal, in the first place, to the *apostles*, and New Testament writers. I presume they will not be accused of self-commendation, nor of spleen and ill-nature; yet they scrupled not to represent those who believed their doctrine as "washed" and "sanctified" from their former immoralities, (1 Cor. vi. 11,) and those who believed it not as "having pleasure in unrighteousness," 2 Thess. ii. 12. All those *facts* which Dr. Toulmin has endeavoured to press into the service of modern Unitarianism are evidences of the truth of the

primitive doctrine, and were considered as such by the New Testament writers. They appealed to the effects produced in the lives of believers, as "their epistles, known and read of all men," in proof that they "had not corrupted the word of God," but were the true ministers of Christ, 2 Cor. ii. 17, &c. With the fullest confidence they asked, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" plainly intimating that truth was well known by its effects. Nor was error less so: those who introduced false doctrines are invariably described as unholy characters, 2 Pet. ii. 13; Jude; 1 Cor. xv. 33, 34.

To quote the reasonings of the *Fathers* on this principle were to copy a large proportion of their *apologies*. I question whether there be one of them which does not contain arguments for the truth of Christianity on the ground of the holy lives of Christians; and which does not infer, or in some form intimate, the falsehood of heathenism from the known immorality of heathens. Their opponents, having no better answer at hand, might possibly charge this reasoning with vain boasting, spleen, and ill-nature; but I do not recollect that it was ever imputed to these causes by Christians.

As to the *Reformers*, the most successful attacks which they made upon the Church of Rome were founded on the dissolute lives of her clergy, and the holiness and constancy of those whom she persecuted unto death. The general strain of their writings may be seen in Fox's Martyrology, which is, in effect, an exhibition of the moral character of the persecutors and the persecuted, from which the world is left to judge which was the true religion; and, I may add, a considerable part of the world did judge, and acted accordingly.

Dr. Toulmin suggests, from *Mosheim*, that the Reformers, and particularly Calvin and his associates, neglected the science of morals,—p. 153. But Mosheim's prejudice against Calvin and his associates renders his testimony of but little weight, especially as the reader may satisfy himself of the contrary by the writings of the parties which are yet extant. The eighth chapter of the second book of *Calvin's Institutes* is sufficient to wipe away this slander. The morality there inculcated is such as neither Antinomians, nor "great numbers" amongst modern Unitarians, can endure. That there were some among the *gospellers*, as they were called, who were loose characters, is admitted: such there are in every age; but take the reformed as a body, and they were not only better Christians than their persecutors, but than those their successors, who, while pretending to teach the "science" of morality, have deserted the great principles by which it requires to be animated, and debased it, by allowing the amusements of the theatre, and other species of dissipation, to be consistent with it.

The historian of the *puritans* has recorded of that persecuted people, that "while others were at plays and interludes, at revels, or walking in the fields, or at the diversions of bowling, fencing, &c., on the evening of the sabbath, they, with their families, were employed in reading the Scriptures, singing psalms, catechising their children, repeating sermons and prayer; that neither was this confined to the Lord's day, but they had their hours of family devotion on the week days, esteeming it their duty to take care of the souls as well as of the bodies of their servants; and that they were circumspect as to all the excesses of eating and drinking, apparel, and lawful diversions; being frugal in housekeeping, industrious in their particular callings, honest and exact in their dealings, and solicitous to give every one his own."\*

These things might not be alleged in proof of the truth of every particular

\* Neal's History of the Puritans, Vol. I. Chap. VIII.

opinion which they held; (neither have I inferred from such premises the truth of every opinion maintained by Calvinists;) but they were alleged in proof that their religion, in the main, *was that of Jesus Christ*, and the religion of their adversaries *a very near approach to that of antichrist*. Nor do I recollect that the writer has been charged, unless it be by those who felt the condemnation which his story implied, with vain boasting, spleen, or ill-nature.

Finally, Will our opponents accuse *themselves* of these evils, for having reasoned upon this principle as far as they are able? That they have done this is manifest, though Dr. Toulmin affects to disown it, alleging that they have not reasoned on the *lives* of men, but merely on the *tendency* of principles,—p. 154. That they have reasoned on the tendency of principles is true; and so have I: such is the reasoning of the far greater part of the foregoing Letters. But that they avoided all reference to the *lives* of Calvinists, is not true. Was it on the tendency of principles, or on the lives of men, that Dr. Priestley reasoned, when he compared the *virtue* of Trinitarians with that of Unitarians, allowing that though the latter had more of an apparent conformity to the world than the former, yet, upon the whole, they approached nearer to the proper temper of Christianity than they? \* Has he confined himself to the tendency of principles in what he has related of Mr. Badcock †? Does he not refer to the *practices* of Antinomians, in proof of the immoral tendency of Calvinism, representing them as the legitimate offspring of our principles? See quotation, p. 148.

And though Mr. Belsham now affects to be disgusted with this mode of reasoning, yet there was a time when he seemed to think it would be of service to him, and when he figured away in the use of it. Did he not affirm that “they who are sincerely pious, and diffusively benevolent, with our principles, could not have failed to have been much *better*, and much *happier*, had they adopted a milder, a more rational, a more truly evangelical creed?” And what is this but affirming that those of his sentiments are *better* and *happier* in general than others?

Yet this gentleman affects to despise the foregoing Letters; for that the sum of them is, “We Calvinists being much better Christians than you Socinians, our doctrines must of course be true.” ‡ Strange that a writer should so far forget himself as to reproach the performance of another for that which is the characteristic of his own!

Nor is this all: in the small compass of the same discourse, he expresses a hope that Socinian converts would “at length feel the benign influence of their principles, and *demonstrate the excellence of their faith by the superior dignity and worth of their character*.” If the excellence of principles (and of course their truth, for nothing can be excellent which is not true) be not demonstrable by the character of those who embrace them, how is the superior dignity and worth of character to demonstrate it?

Such was once the “self-commending” language of Mr. Belsham; but whether his converts have disappointed his hope, or whether the ground be too “holy” for him, so it is, that he is now entirely of a different mind; and what is worse, would fain persuade his readers that it is ground on which he and his brethren have never “trespassed.”

This is the man who, after throwing down the gauntlet, declines the contest; and after his partisans have laboured to the utmost to maintain their cause, talks of what they *could say and do*, were they not withheld by motives of generosity!

One would imagine, from Mr. Belsham’s manner of writing, that I had

\* Dis. Var. Sub. p. 100.

† Fam. Let. XXII.

‡ Review, p. 274.

dealt largely in *tales* of private characters. The truth is, what tales have been told are of their own telling. I freely acknowledged\* that "I was not sufficiently acquainted with the bulk of Socinians to judge of their moral character." Every thing was rested on their own concessions; and this it is which is the galling circumstance to Mr. Belsham and his party. They may now insinuate what great things they *could* bring forward to our disadvantage, were they not restrained by motives of modesty and generosity; but they can do nothing. They might, indeed, collect tales of individuals, and point out many faults which attach to the general body; but they cannot prove it to be equally immoral with the general body of Socinians. Before this can be consistently attempted, they must retract their concessions; and this will not avail them; for it must be manifest to all men that it was only to answer an end.

The reader is now left to judge for himself, whether the principle of reasoning adopted in the foregoing Letters be justly liable to the objections which have been raised against it, whether our opponents did not first apply it against us, and whether any other reason can be given for their present aversion to it than that they feel it to be unfavourable to their cause.

A. F.

\* See p. 149

# SOCINIANISM INDEFENSIBLE

ON THE

## GROUND OF ITS MORAL TENDENCY:

CONTAINING

A REPLY TO TWO LATE PUBLICATIONS;

THE ONE BY DR. TOULMIN,

ENTITLED

THE PRACTICAL EFFICACY OF THE UNITARIAN DOCTRINE CONSIDERED;

THE OTHER BY MR. KENTISH,

ENTITLED

THE MORAL TENDENCY OF THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

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### INTRODUCTION.

It is now more than three years since the first publication of *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems examined and compared as to their Moral Tendency*. Dr. Toulmin expresses some regret that, at the time he wrote, nothing had appeared in answer to it; and seems disposed to account for this circumstance in a way that may acquit his cause of seeming to be indefensible. Addressing himself to me, he says, "No one can doubt that the gentlemen, on passages in whose writings many of your reflections are grounded, are every way equal to the contest, if they saw fit to enter the lists with you. As they have not done it, I presume they think it sufficient to leave the candid reader to judge between you and them."—p. 2.

That these gentlemen, so far as abilities are concerned, are equal to this contest, there can, indeed, be no doubt; but whether they be *every way* equal to it, is another question. It is beyond the power of any man to convert truth into falsehood, or falsehood into truth; and their silence may, for any thing Dr. Toulmin can prove, be owing to the difficulty of the undertaking. One thing is rather remarkable: though Dr. Toulmin has undertaken a defence of Socinianism, yet he has cautiously avoided a vindication of the writings of those gentlemen on which I had animadverted. Such a conduct could not have been pursued by them: if they had written, they must have entered on a defence of their writings, or have given them up as indefensible.

Dr. Toulmin informs us that, for his own part, "it was but lately that the piece fell in this way, so as to find him at leisure to read it,"—p. 1. This, undoubtedly, is a sufficient apology, so far as it respects himself; and if he

or his colleague, Mr. Kentish, have but overturned the substance of the piece against which they have written, time and other circumstances are of small account. If the opinion of *Reviewers*, on these performances, be of any weight, it must be concluded that they have done this, at least. *The Analytical and Monthly Reviews*, with *The Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*, have each bestowed, on one or other of them, their strong and unqualified approbation. Whether their critiques have been of any advantage to the cause, I may hereafter inquire: at present, I shall proceed to examine what is advanced by each of my opponents, in their order.

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## REPLY TO DR. TOULMIN.

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### SECTION I.

#### ON THE GROUND OF ARGUMENT USED IN THIS CONTROVERSY, AND THE ATTEMPTS OF OUR OPPONENTS TO SHIFT IT.

WHEN I first formed a design of writing against Socinianism, I perceived that although the Holy Scriptures were treated by Socinian writers with great disrespect in various instances, yet they were generally the ultimate tribunal to which the appeal was made. The object of the controversy, on both sides, seemed to be to ascertain their *true meaning*. For this purpose, two general methods had been adopted: First, Arranging the various passages of Scripture which relate to the subject, and reasoning upon them. Secondly, Examining in what sense Christians in the early ages of Christianity understood them.

The first is the common way of deciding controversies in divinity; and a very good way it is, if fairly conducted. I had several objections, however, against pursuing it in this instance. First, It was ground which was already fully occupied. Able writers, on both sides, had gone over all the passages of Scripture relating to the subject; and many of them had nearly exhausted their genius, in reasoning upon the scope of the sacred writers, and in criticising upon the original language. Secondly, I perceived that Socinian writers had got into such an unwarrantable habit of criticising upon the sacred writings, that the plainest passages could not stand before them; whole chapters and whole books were cashiered as spurious; and even the whole Bible was declared to be "obscure," and "never designed to decide upon controverted questions in religion and morality."\* It appeared to me of but little account to reason upon texts of Scripture, when the Scripture itself, whatever might be its meaning, was virtually disallowed.

As to the last of these methods, it was not within my province. Besides, it appeared to me that whatever pleasure we may feel in tracing the history of early opinions, and whatever good purposes may be answered by a work of this nature if impartially conducted, yet it can afford no proper criterion of what is the apostolic doctrine. Christians in early ages were as liable

\* *Monthly Review Enlarged*, Vol. X. p. 357.



to err as we are, and in many instances they did err, so as to contradict the Scriptures and one another.

Thinking on these things, it occurred to me that there was another method of reasoning distinct from those which have been already mentioned; namely, by inquiring—*What is that doctrine in the present day which is productive of the best moral effects?* Several considerations induced me to prefer this ground of reasoning, in the present case, to either of the other two. First, It would serve to ascertain what was the apostolic doctrine as well as the former of them, and much better than the latter. If, for example, in discoursing on the vines and fig-trees which formerly grew in the land of Canaan, a dispute should arise whether they resembled this or that species now growing in other countries, one way of deciding it would be to compare the fruits. If the fruit of one species could be proved to possess a much nearer likeness than the fruit of another, that would tend to decide the controversy in its favour. Secondly, An inquiry into the moral tendency of the different doctrines would not only serve as a medium of ascertaining which of them was the apostolic doctrine, but would also prove *the truth of that doctrine*, and its *Divine original*; for it is a principle so deeply engraven on the human mind—that whatever doctrine is productive of good fruits must in itself be good, and have its origin in God, that very few writers, if any, would dare to maintain the contrary. I perceived, therefore, if I could not only prove that what is commonly called Calvinism is most productive of effects similar to those which sprang from the doctrine of the apostles, but also exhibit them in such a light, as I went along, as that they should approve themselves to every man's conscience, I should thereby cut off the retreat of those Socinian writers who, when their doctrine is proved to be antiscritural, forsake Christian ground, and take shelter upon the territories of deism; degrading the Bible as an "obscure book," taxing its writers with "reasoning inconclusively," and declaring that "its nature and design was not to settle disputed theories, or decide upon controverted questions, in religion and morality." I knew well that though they dared to write degradingly of the Scriptures, and of the sacred writers, yet they dare not professedly set themselves against morality. Thirdly, The judging of doctrines by their effects is a practice warranted by Scripture: "By their fruits ye shall know them." A very able writer, in a discourse on this passage, has shown that "the rule here given by our Saviour is the best that could have been given; that it is sufficient to distinguish truth from error; and that it is in fact the rule by which all good men, and indeed mankind in general, do judge of religious principles and pretensions."\* Fourthly, I supposed that such a method of reasoning would be more interesting to the public mind, having never before, to my recollection, been adopted as the ground of any particular treatise on the subject. Fifthly, It was ground upon which there was room for common Christians to stand and be witnesses of the issue of the contest, which, while the controversy turned upon the opinion of the Fathers, or the construction of a text of Scripture, was not the case. Sixthly, It was a ground of reasoning to which our opponents could not fairly object, seeing they had commenced an attack upon it, charging the Calvinistic system with "gloominess," "bigotry," and "licentiousness;" with being "averse to the love of both God and man," and "an axe at the root of all virtue."

These were the principal reasons which induced me to prefer the ground of argument on which I have proceeded. I would not be understood, however, as expressing the least disrespect towards the works of those who have

\* Dr. Witherspoon's Trial of Religious Truth by its Moral Influence.

proceeded on other grounds. Let the subject be examined in every point of view. Every author has a right to choose his ground of reasoning, provided it be a fair one; and that which may be unsuitable to the turn and talents of one person may be suitable to those of another. If the reader wish to see the present controversy pursued on the ground of Scripture testimony and the opinions of early ages, he may consult to great advantage a late very valuable and elaborate work of Dr. Jamieson, entitled, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Scripture, and of the Primitive Faith, concerning the Deity of Christ, in Reply to Dr. Priestley's History of Early Opinions*, 2 vols. 8vo.

Knowing somewhat of the abilities of the writers on the other side, and their readiness on all occasions to defend their cause, I did not expect to escape their censure. I laid my accounts that what I advanced would either be treated as unworthy of notice, or, if any answer was written, that the strength of the arguments would be tried to the uttermost. In both these particulars, however, I have been mistaken. They have not treated it as unworthy of notice. They have acknowledged the contrary. And as to trying the strength of the arguments, I must say that Dr. Toulmin has not so much as looked them in the face. On the contrary, though *the Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine* is the title of his performance, yet he acknowledges (p. 5) his design is to "supersede the examination of that comparison into which I had fully entered;" that is, to relinquish the defence of the practical efficacy of his principles, and to reason entirely upon other ground! Mr. Kentish is the only writer who has pretended to encounter the argument. Whether he has succeeded will be hereafter examined. At present I shall attend to Dr. Toulmin.

This writer observes, at the outset, that "the title prefixed to his Letters will lead the reader to expect from them, chiefly, the discussion of one point; but that a point of great importance in itself, and the main one to which a reply to Mr. Fuller's work need to be directed."

Now, reader, what would you have expected that *one point* to be. The title prefixed to his Letters, recollect, is this: *The Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine considered*. Would you not have supposed that the Doctor was going to offer evidence in favour of the practical efficacy of *modern* Unitarianism? From the title of his book, could you have expected any other than an exhibition of the most forcible *arguments* in favour of the holy tendency of his principles, together with a number of undoubted *facts*, in which their efficacy has appeared sufficient, at least, to confront the evidence alleged on the other side? How great then must be your disappointment, to find him employed in "producing evidence in support of his opinion from *passages of Scripture*," and in proving, what nobody calls in question that the preaching of the apostles was productive of great moral effects!

Dr. Toulmin, it should seem, can find no such fruits of Socinian doctrines as will support an appeal, and, therefore, is under the necessity of going seventeen hundred years back, in search of examples. But are those examples in point? Were the principles of Christians, in the apostolic age, the same as those of Socinians? With what face can Dr. Toulmin *take it for granted* that they were, or even go about to *prove* it, as a medium of establishing the practical efficacy of modern Unitarianism?

When the grand end of a controversy is to determine a principle, a writer who assumes that principle as a medium of proof is guilty of *begging the question*; and if, in order to escape the public censure, he endeavour to give evidence of this principle from *some other source of argument* than that which he professes to answer, he is guilty of *shifting* the ground of the controversy; and, by so doing, virtually gives up his cause as indefensible.

This is exactly the case with Dr. Toulmin. The doctrine of the apostles is allowed, on both sides, to have produced great moral effects. The object of the controversy was to ascertain *what that doctrine was*. The medium of proof which I had adopted, and to which Dr. Toulmin, if he pretended to write an answer to me, ought to have confined himself, was the *effects* which it produced. I attempted to prove that the apostolic and Calvinistic doctrines are nearly similar, from the similarity of their effects; and that the apostolic and Socinian doctrines are dissimilar, from the dissimilarity of their effects. To have answered this reasoning, Dr. Toulmin should have proved, either that the effects of the Calvinistic doctrine are *not* similar to those which attended the doctrine of the apostles, and that the effects of the Socinian doctrine *are* so; or else that a similarity of effects is not a proper ground from which to infer a similarity in the nature of the doctrines. His attempting to prove the practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine by assuming that the apostles were Unitarians, in his sense of the term, is nothing better than *begging the question*; and his endeavouring to screen himself from this reproach, by labouring to prove the point in dispute from a review of the Acts of the Apostles, let his reasonings be ever so just, is foreign from the purpose: it is *shifting the ground of the argument*; it is declining to meet the inquiry on the ground of moral tendency, and substituting, in its place, *observations on the meaning of Scripture testimony*, which, to all intents and purposes, is relinquishing the practical efficacy of modern Unitarianism as indefensible. The plain language of his performance is this: There are no examples to be found of any considerable moral influence which the Unitarian doctrine has had upon the hearts and lives of men of late ages; and therefore I have had recourse to the preaching of the apostles, and have endeavoured to prove that they were Unitarians.

If Dr. Toulmin thought the moral tendency of a doctrine an improper medium of proof, why did he not professedly decline it? Why did he not acknowledge that Dr. Priestley was wrong in challenging an inquiry on such a ground? And why did he entitle his performance, *The Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine*? This piece does not answer to its title: it ought, rather, to have been called, *An Inquiry into the Doctrines which the Primitive Preachers delivered, by a Review of the Acts of the Apostles*. The practical efficacy of either doctrine makes no part of his argument, and occupies scarcely any place in his performance, except the title-page; and there is reason to think it would not have been there, but for the sake of its wearing the *appearance* of an answer to the piece against which it is written.

I am not obliged, by the laws of controversy, to follow Dr. Toulmin in his review of the history of the Acts of the Apostles; nor is it my intention to be diverted from the subject by the manœuvres of any opponent. The only notice I shall take of this part of his performance will be in a few pages in the form of an *Appendix*, as being a subject beside the question; and that, merely to show, as a thing by the bye, that, even upon his own ground, his cause is indefensible.

An anonymous writer, in the *Analytical Review*,\* discovers a similar inclination with that of Dr. Toulmin, *to shift the ground of the controversy*; but with this difference: the Reviewer openly avows his dislike of the medium of proof which I have adopted, calling it “a fallacious test,” and recommending to all parties, “instead of asking *by whom* any system is professed, to confine themselves to the single inquiry, *by what evidence* it is supported; whereas Dr. Toulmin, though he discovers the same dislike to the ground of argument on which I have proceeded, yet has not the ingenu-

\* Vol. XVII. pp. 183, 184.

ousness to acknowledge it, but *pretends* to reason upon the practical efficacy of his principles, while, in fact, he has utterly relinquished it, and endeavoured to establish his system upon another ground.

The writer above mentioned, having quoted the concluding paragraph of my Letters, calls it "an unfounded and presumptuous sentence, pronounced upon the *hearts* of those who adopt Socinian principles," and insinuates that I must have written in a *bad spirit*. Before I have finished these pages, I shall have occasion to defend the passage referred to more particularly. At present, I only observe that, taken in its connexion, it amounts to no more than this, That *if* Socinianism be an immoral system, immoral dispositions are the avenues which lead to it: and it is possible that this writer, notwithstanding what he has said under cover, might be ashamed to come forward, and, in a publication to which he should prefix his name, avow his denial of this proposition.

This Reviewer wishes to have it thought that the moral effects produced by a doctrine form no part of the evidence by which it is supported; that is to say, he wishes to shift this ground of argument, as unsuitable to his purpose. If the effects of a doctrine upon the hearts and lives of men be no proper ground of argument, why are we directed by our Lord to judge of false teachers by their fruits? and why were not the same observations made while Socinians were throwing out their accusations of immorality against the Calvinists? Writers may rave like furies against them, and be applauded by Socinian Reviewers.\* But a single attempt to repel these shafts of calumny, and to *prove*, from facts which no one has yet undertaken to dispute, that immorality attaches to the other side, quite alters the nature of things: lo, then, the ground of argument is unfair, and the writer must be a man of a bad spirit!

About forty years ago the Socinians, and those who veered towards their sentiments in the Church of Scotland, are said to have attacked the Calvinistic system with various kinds of weapons. Amongst others, they abounded in the use of ridicule; so much, indeed, that they seemed disposed to adopt Lord Shaftesbury's maxim, that "Ridicule is the test of truth." At this juncture, Dr. Witherspoon, as it is supposed, published his *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, in which he successfully turned their weapon upon themselves. The effect of that performance was very considerable: a dead silence succeeded its publication; *none moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped*; but they comforted one another, by suggesting that the author of the *Characteristics* must be a man of a bad heart!

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## SECTION II.

### FURTHER REMARKS ON DR. TOULMIN, WITH REPLIES TO VARIOUS OF HIS ANIMADVERSIONS.

DR. TOULMIN gives us, at the outset of his performance, a short account of the "fundamental principles" of his scheme. These, he tells us, are, "That there is but *ONE God*, the sole Former, Supporter, and Governor of the universe, the *ONLY* proper object of religious worship; and that there is but one Mediator between God and men, the *MAN* Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the doc-

\* See Monthly Review for July, 1792, on Llewellyn's Tracts, p. 226.

trine of a future life,"—p. 4. He afterwards complains that, "instead of applying my arguments against these principles, I have brought forward particular positions, scattered through the works or discourses of several eminent persons, known and able advocates of the Unitarian faith, which have no immediate and direct connexion with the first principles of it." These positions, he observes, "might or might not be true; and the truth of the great doctrines of the unity of God and the humanity of Christ remain, in either case, unaffected by it,"—p. 41. The unity of God, and the humanity of Christ, then, it seems, are the principles which I ought to have attacked; that is to say, I ought to have attacked principles which I profess to believe, and not those which I profess to disbelieve! Dr. Toulmin seems disposed to be on the *safe* side. By avoiding a defence of those positions which are quoted from the principal writers of the party, and adopting the words of Scripture as the medium by which to express his sentiments, (taking it for granted, as he goes along, that these Scripture expressions are to be understood in his sense of them,) his work becomes very easy, and very pleasant. But thinking people will remark that, by so doing, he has retired from the field of controversy, and taken refuge upon neutral ground. Dr. Toulmin knows that I shall not dispute with him the apostolic position, that *there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*; and his taking it for granted that these and other scriptures convey his peculiar sentiments—namely, that the unity of God is *personal*, and that Christ is *merely* a man—is *begging the question*; a practice to which he is more than a little addicted.

What would Dr. Toulmin have said, if I had alleged that Socinians, instead of attacking the positions of the leading writers amongst the Calvinists, ought to have attacked our first principles; such as the following: there is a *Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit, in whose name we are baptized: The Word was God: Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures?* And if to this I had added, "We think it a just ground of boast that we can express our fundamental opinions in the *words of Scripture*," (p. 5,) would he not have replied to this effect—We do not deny any one of your positions. These are not your distinguishing principles, but are such as are allowed on both sides. *It is the sense which you put on these passages of Scripture* which constitutes your first principles, and the points of difference between us. You ought not to expect that we should attack the words of Scripture; for it is not Scripture, but your *glosses* upon it, that we oppose; and it is mean in you to *beg the question*, by taking it for granted that your sense of these passages is the true one: it is no other than shrouding your obnoxious glosses under the sacred phraseology of Scripture, and it betrays an inclination in you to impose upon us the one under the form of the other.

"No man who striveth for the mastery is crowned, except he strive lawfully." If a Grecian combatant had quitted the ground marked out for the contest, like Dr. Toulmin, he would not only have lost the prize, but would have been struck out of the list of honourable competitors.

Dr. Toulmin labours to prove that there are certain principles that are productive of piety, which are not peculiar to Calvinists or Socinians, but are common to both; and mentions several devotional treatises of Calvinistic writers in which these are the only principles insisted on,—p. 33, 34. And what if this be granted? I never said that the distinguishing principles of Calvinism were the *only* sources of holy practice. On the contrary, the being of a God, which we hold in common with the deists, is the foundation-stone to the great fabric of piety and virtue. This, however, I must observe, that the most important truths, when accompanied with great errors, are retained to but very little purpose, in comparison of what they are when

accompanied with other truths. Divine truths, in this respect, resemble Divine precepts; they are so connected together, that he who offends in one point is, as it were, guilty of all. It is thus that one great truth, the being of a God, is of but very little use to deists who reject his word; and, I may add, it is thus that the doctrine of a future life loses almost all its effect in the hands of both deists and Socinians. Dr. Toulmin will admit the propriety of this remark, as it respects the former;\* and if Dr. Priestley's "Sermon on the Death of Mr. Robinson" may be considered as a specimen of the Socinian doctrine of a future life, there can be but little doubt of the latter.†

In introducing the above remarks, Dr. Toulmin tells us his design is to prove "that the Calvinistic system is not essential to devotion,"—p. 35. Truly, our opponents are, of late, become moderate in their demands. Heretofore, Calvinism was "unfriendly to the love both of God and man, and an axe at the root of all virtue;" but now, it seems, it is allowed to have a tendency in favour of devotion, and all that is argued for is that it is "*not essential*" to it.

After holding up the character of several Socinians, as eminent for piety and virtue, Dr. Toulmin observes, that "if the number of excellent characters should not be so great as amongst other denominations, a cause of this is easily to be assigned: the number of Socinians hath always, in the latter ages of the church, borne a small proportion to the number of Trinitarians and Calvinists; and the number of sincere, conscientious persons, attentive to the cultivation of pious affections, hath borne a small proportion to those who have been nominal Socinians or Calvinists," p. 36. It was no part of my plan to examine the good or bad conduct of individuals, whether they were Socinians or Calvinists; it was the *general body* from which I proposed to form an estimate.

As to Dr. Toulmin's attempt to reduce the state of Socinians and Calvinists to a level, it comes too late. His brethren have acknowledged that "rational Christians are often represented as indifferent to practical religion:" nor have they denied the charge, or alleged that they are no more so than is common with other denominations of Christians; but, on the contrary, have tacitly admitted it, by endeavouring to *account* for it. Nay, why need I go back to the acknowledgments of Mr. Belsham or Dr. Priestley? Dr. Toulmin himself has, in effect, acknowledged the same thing: he also goes about to *account* for the defect in devotion among Socinians compared with Calvinists in such a way as shall not be disparaging to the principles of the former, with respect to their influence on the piety of their feelings. "They," he says, "deeply engaged in the investigation of truth, absorbed in gaining just ideas, may have been necessarily betrayed into a neglect of the culture of the heart and affections,"—p. 36. These methods of *accounting* for things, whether just or not, are plain indications of the *existence of the fact* accounted for; all attempts, therefore, to disown or palliate it are nugatory and vain.

But let us examine Dr. Toulmin's method of accounting for the defect of devotion amongst Socinians. They are so absorbed in the acquisition of truth, it seems, as to neglect the culture of the heart; yea, necessarily to neglect it. This is somewhat strange. Truth and righteousness used to be reckoned friendly to each other; but of late, it seems, the case is altered. Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham have taught us that *indifference to religion is friendly to the acquisition of truth*; and Dr. Toulmin completes the scheme, by teaching us that *the acquisition of truth is friendly to indifference to*

\* See his "Dissertation on the Internal Evidences, &c. of Christianity," p. 246 Note.

† See Remarks in "Systems Compared," pp. 305, 306.

religion; or, which is the same thing, *that it leads to the neglect of cultivating holy affections*. Say, reader, can that be *truth, evangelical truth*, which is thus acquired, and which thus operates? The knowledge of Christ's doctrine was formerly promoted by *doing his will*; and, being known, it invariably wrought in a way of righteousness.

I know, indeed, that persons deeply engaged in *polemics*, whatever cause they espouse, are in danger of neglecting the culture of the heart; but whatever allowances require to be made on one side of the controversy ought equally to be made on the other. Unless Dr. Toulmin means to acknowledge that, on account of the peculiar difficulty of defending their cause, they have had greater labour and more "absorbing" application than their opponents, he cannot, therefore, account for their defects from their *polemical* engagements. The "investigation" to which he refers must be *private*, like that of the noble Bereans; but serious investigation of Divine truth has not been used to produce the effect which Dr. Toulmin ascribes to it, but the reverse. The deeper the primitive Christians drank into it, the more powerfully it operated, "changing them into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God."—"Grace and peace were multiplied in them by the knowledge of God, and of Jesus their Lord." What strange fatality is it that hangs about Socinianism! It seems doomed to die by its own hands!

That Dr. Toulmin's sentiments have produced glorious effects in turning sinners to righteousness is manifest, if he may but take for granted, or be allowed to have proved, that these were the sentiments of the apostles; but if this be not allowed him, and he be asked for proof of any such effects arising from Socinianism, or, as he would call it, modern Unitarianism, here he scarcely pretends to any thing of the kind. He endeavours, however, to account for the contrary, from "circumstances not included in the nature of the doctrine, or its inefficiency." "There are times," he observes, "in which men hear not Moses and the prophets.—The flock of Christ, while he was upon earth, was a little flock.—He lamented the unsuccessfulness of his own preaching; and the preaching of the apostles was not always successful,"—pp. 8, 9, 39. All this is true, and proves that the success of any doctrine depends upon something else than merely its being adapted to the end. But can it be said of the apostles' doctrine, that *there never was a time in which it was remarkably blessed to the conversion of sinners*? Dr. Toulmin admits the contrary: but to what period will he refer us when Socinianism was productive of such effects? If the doctrine of our opponents be the same for substance as that of the Scriptures, is it not surprising that, ever since the times of the apostles, "circumstances" should have existed to counteract its efficacy? or if this were admissible, is it not still more surprising that those very effects should since that time have been transferred to a false doctrine, a mere corruption of Christianity?

But "the unsuccessfulness," it is pleaded, "may in some degree be imputed to the conduct of those who, instead of refuting their doctrine by plain, Scriptural, and sound argument, give representations of it that are invidious, raise prejudices against it, and prevent its having a fair hearing." A part of this charge is exhibited against me for representing their "congregations as gradually dwindling away; their principles as having nothing in them, comparatively speaking, to alarm the conscience, or interest the heart; and their sincerity, zeal, and devotion as on a footing with those of Saul the persecutor,"—p. 40. As to the *last* of these representations, the whole of what I have suggested goes to prove that a species of devotion may exist which is anti-evangelical; and, therefore, that the mere existence of devotion, irrespective of its nature and effects, is no evidence in favour of the principles from which it arises. And as to the whole of them, the only question

is whether they be true. If I have given false and invidious representations, they are capable of being proved such; and if the arguments which I have used be not plain, sound, and Scriptural, they are the more easily overturned. It is rather singular, however, that those facts which I alleged to have existed *at the time I wrote* should be attributed in any degree to me! And why have not the same effects been produced upon Calvinistic congregations? Dr. Toulmin well knows it has not been for want of the strongest representations, both from the pulpit and the press, of the immoral tendency of their principles. There is no system of religion that has suffered a larger portion of obloquy in the present century. Preachers, writers, and reviewers, of almost every description, have thought themselves at liberty to inveigh against "the gloomy, licentious, and blasphemous doctrines of Calvin." And yet we have experienced very little, if any, injury from these representations. Common people do not pay much regard to what is alleged by writers; they judge of the tree by its fruits. It is thus, as we reckon, that the accusations of our opponents have had but very little effect upon us; and if ours against them were not founded in truth, they would in like manner fall to the ground.

Dr. Toulmin complains of my using the term *Socinians*, as being a term of reproach,—p. 41. For my own part I would much rather call them by another name, if they would but adopt a fair one. Let them take a name that does not assume the question in dispute, and I would no longer use the term *Socinians*. But Dr. Toulmin seems to think that there is no necessity for this: "The name," he says, "by which we choose to be called is, you are sensible, that of Unitarians,"—p. 42. True, I am sensible that this is the name by which they choose to be called; but it is rather surprising to me that Dr. Toulmin should be insensible that, in so doing, they choose also to *beg the question* in dispute. It seems, according to him, that we ought at the very outset of our controversies to acknowledge that we worship a plurality of gods; that is, that our conduct is irrational and unscriptural! He thinks that for Trinitarians to profess also to be Unitarians, or to worship but one God, "is strange and contradictory;" that "it is saying that they who admit a threefold division, or distinction, in the Divine nature, hold the same tenet with those who contend for its simple unity,"—p. 43. I know not who they are that admit of a division in the Divine nature; and those who plead for a personal distinction in it, nevertheless maintain its simple unity, though they do not consider that unity as personal; and consequently do not hold the same tenet with their opponents.

What is it that Dr. Toulmin desires, unless it be that we should grant him the question in dispute? Where a gentleman can be so very condescending, as in this manner to solicit for a name, it grates with my feelings to give him a denial. He must be reminded, however, that he has no right to expect it at our hands, much less to charge us with strange and contradictory assertions in case of our refusal.

The tone of positivity which our opponents assume, when defending their notion of the Divine unity, is rather extraordinary; and if we could but be persuaded to admit of confidence, in the place of evidence, their exclusive right to the name of Unitarians would be fully established. "This simple idea of God," says Dr. Toulmin, from Mr. Lindsey, "that he is one single Person, literally pervades every passage of the sacred volumes,"—p. 45. A common reader of the Bible would not have thought of finding any thing relating to this subject in *every passage*; and in those passages where the subject is introduced, who, except Mr. Lindsey and Dr. Toulmin, would have asserted that the *personal* unity of the Deity literally pervaded them all? It might have answered a better purpose, if, instead of this general assertion,



either of these gentlemen would have pointed us to *one single instance* in which the unity of God is literally declared to be *personal*. Instead of this we are asked, in the words of Mr. Lindsey, "How we can form any notion of the unity of the Supreme Being, but from that unity of which we ourselves are conscious?"—p. 45, note. It is not impossible, or uncommon, for us to form ideas of three being one, and one three, *in different respects*: but what if, in this instance, we have no distinct idea? We do not profess to understand the mode of the Divine subsistence. What notion can either we or our opponents form of the *spirituality* of the Supreme Being, or of any being who is purely *spiritual*? I can form no idea of any being who is not, like myself, corporeal; but it does not follow, from thence, either that God must needs be a material being, or that there are no immaterial beings in the universe.

Dr. Toulmin at length comes to the title of my last Letter, *The resemblance of Socinianism to Deism, and the tendency of the one to the other*. He calls this "a solecism," and charges it with "inconsistency and absurdity." "It implies," he says, "that to receive the Divine mission of Jesus has a resemblance to considering him as a deceiver; that to take him as my master, the resurrection and the life, has a tendency to the rejection of him; that to learn of him is to deny him; that to profess to obey him resembles disobedience; and that to hope for the mercy of God in him will lead me to cast off this hope."—p. 45. Surely Dr. Toulmin must feel himself touched on a tender point, or he would not have so far lost the possession of himself as to have suffered this paragraph to escape his pen. Can he seriously think that it is on account of their receiving the Divine mission of Jesus, their acknowledging him as their master, the resurrection and the life, their learning of him, professing to obey him, or hoping for the mercy of God in him, that we reckon their system to resemble deism, or to have a tendency towards it? No; he knows the contrary.

But "it is a singular circumstance," he adds, "that a resemblance and affinity to deism should be ascribed to the creed of those amongst whom have arisen the most able critics on the Scriptures, and the most eminent advocates for Divine revelation."—p. 45. Most eminent, no doubt, they are, in the opinion of Dr. Toulmin; but let the eminency of their opinions be what it may, if, in criticising and defending the sacred oracles, they give up their inspiration; plead that they are interpolated; cashier whole chapters, where they are found to clash with a favourite hypothesis; tax the writers with reasoning inconclusively; declare the whole an obscure book, not adapted to settle disputed theories, or to decide upon speculative, controverted questions, even in religion and morality; those sacred oracles will not admit them to be friends, but consider them as adversaries in disguise.

I have not attempted, as Dr. Toulmin suggests, to prove the relation of Socinianism to deism barely from an agreement *in some instances*; but from instances in which Socinians, by uniting with the deists, have given up some of the fundamental principles by which Christians have been used to maintain their ground against them. Neither is the *success* of our opponents in gaining numbers to their party, and its resemblance in this respect to infidelity, *in itself* considered, alleged as an argument against them; but rather its being amongst the same description of people, mere speculatists in religion, and its being allowed to arise from a similar cause, namely, *a disregard to religion in general*. I have also attempted to prove, by several arguments, the direct *tendency* of Socinianism to deism; but of these Dr. Toulmin has taken no notice. I have appealed to facts; but neither is any notice taken of them. If further proof were needed, I might now appeal to *more recent* facts.

The new German reformers, if I am rightly informed, are making swift progress in this direction. Bahrdt, a little before his death, is said to have published a proposal that the worship and instruction in churches should be confined to natural religion, in which all agree. Last year, my informant adds, an anonymous writer carried the idea further; he is for banishing from churches all the theory of natural religion, as there are disputes about a future state, and the providence, perfections, and even existence of God; and that only the duties of self-government, justice, and beneficence should be taught. Of those who have *lately* joined the standard of infidelity, in our own country, is there not a large proportion of Socinians? Have not several of them who were candidates for the ministry, and even ministers themselves, given up their work, and avowed their rejection of Christianity? It is not in the power of the leading characters amongst them to prevent these things. Socinianism is slippery ground; few will be able to stand upon it. Some few may, and doubtless will; but the greater part, I am persuaded, will either return to the principles which they have discarded, or go further. Mrs. Barbauld might well represent their situation by that of people "walking over a precipice;" and describe "that class called *serious Christians*," amongst them, as "leaning to the safest side." A precipice indeed it is, or rather the declivity of a rock, bulging into the sea, and covered with ice; a few wary individuals may frame to themselves a kind of artificial footing, and so retain their situation; but the greater part must either climb the summit, or fall into the deep.

"The general tenor of your book," says Dr. Toulmin, "and your mode of arguing, remind me, sir, of a piece published in the last century, entitled, '*Puritanisme the Mother, and Sinne the Daughter*; or a Treatise wherein is demonstrated, from twenty several Doctrines and Positions of Puritanisme, that the Faith and Religion of the Puritans doth forcibly induce its Professors to the perpetrating of *Sinne*, and doth warrant the committing of the same.' I could wish the piece in your hands, and to see what remarks you would offer on the candour of the imputation, or the conclusiveness of the argument. The same remarks, I am inclined to think, would supply an answer to the general tenor of your own treatise."—p. 48.

I have not seen the piece to which Dr. Toulmin refers, but I am inclined to think I should not be greatly at a loss to vindicate the puritans from the charge, and that without being necessitated to travel back seventeen hundred years for examples, and to *beg the question* in dispute, by taking it for granted, or even undertaking to prove, that the apostles and primitive Christians were puritans. I have no doubt but the conduct of the accused would bear a comparison with that of their accusers. I could allege from Mr. Neal's *History* of that persecuted people, (a work which Dr. Toulmin is now publishing,) that "while others were at plays and interludes, at revels, or walking in the fields, or at the diversions of bowling, fencing, &c., on the evening of the sabbath, the puritans, with their families, were employed in reading the Scriptures, singing psalms, catechising their children, repeating sermons, and prayer; nor was this only the work of the Lord's day; but they had their hours of family devotion on the week days, esteeming it their duty to take care of the souls as well as the bodies of their servants. They were circumspect as to all the excesses of eating and drinking, apparel, and lawful diversions; being frugal in housekeeping, industrious in their particular callings, honest and exact in their dealings, and solicitous to give to every one his own."—Vol. I. c. 8. If Dr. Toulmin could fairly allege the same things in behalf of the body of modern Unitarians, he need not "call upon the churches of Christ in Judea and Samaria" (p. 39) to bear witness to the holy efficacy of his doctrine.

And why does Dr. Toulmin complain of "my mode of arguing?" He might have found examples of it without going back to the days of puritanism. It is the same mode which has been adopted by his brethren against the Calvinists. They commenced the attack. I have only met them upon their own ground. A large proportion of my *Letters*, it is well known, are written on the defensive; and if, in the course of the controversy, I have occasionally acted on the offensive, I had a right to do so. Dr. Toulmin's complaining of my "mode of arguing" is as if the Philistines had complained of the unfairness of the weapon by which Goliath lost his head.

I had observed that "it was very common for those who go over to infidelity to pass through Socinianism in their way." To this Dr. Toulmin answers, "A similar remark, if I mistake not, I have seen made on the side of popery against the Reformation, that protestantism was the pass to infidelity,"—p. 48. But what does this prove? The question is, Is such a charge capable of being supported? A few solitary individuals might doubtless be produced; but in return I could prove that a *great nation* has been led into infidelity by popery, and that the former is the natural offspring of the latter. If Dr. Toulmin could retort the charge against Socinianism with equal success, what he writes might with propriety be called *an answer*. But his reasoning amounts to no more than that of a person who, being charged with a crime at the bar of his country, should argue that a similar charge had been brought against other people, and that innocent characters had in some instances been wrongfully accused.

As a kind of answer to my XIth Letter, Dr. Toulmin has reprinted, in the form of an Appendix, a piece which he had published some years ago in the Theological Repository, on *The Nature and Grounds of Love to Christ*. But I conceive I might as well reprint my XIth Letter in reply to this, as he this in answer to mine. His piece is not written against the Trinitarian, but the Arian hypothesis; and is pointed chiefly against the pre-existent glory of Christ being represented in Scripture as the ground of love to him. But this position has little if any connexion with our ideas of the subject; for though we contend that Christ did exist prior to his coming into the world, yet we have no idea of making his bare existence, but his glorious character and conduct, a ground of love. It is not *how long* Christ has existed, but what he is, and what he has done, that endears him to us. If he be a mere creature, it is of very little account with us whether he be seventeen hundred or seventeen thousand years old.\* It is true the pre-existence of Christ was necessary in order that his coming into the world should be a *voluntary* act, as I have attempted to prove in my XIVth Letter; and his being possessed of a pre-existent glory was necessary that his coming into the world might be an act of *humiliation* and *condescension*, as I have also in the same place attempted to prove it was; and this his voluntary humiliation, notwithstanding what Dr. Toulmin has written, affords a ground of love to him. No Christian, whose mind is not warped by system, can read such passages as the following without feeling a glow of sacred gratitude:—"Verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."—"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he

\* See Joseph Pike of Warminster's Impartial View of the Trinitarian and Arian Scheme, c. x.

humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." How foreign is this from Dr. Toulmin's assertion, "that the circumstance of Christ's degradation from a glorious pre-existent state is never hinted at when his death is spoken of, though so proper to cast a glory around it, as illustrating his grace and philanthropy."—p. 61.

If Dr. Toulmin wished to answer my XIth Letter, why did he not prove that the original *dignity* of Christ's character is never represented in Scripture as the ground of love to him, that his mediation is exhibited in an equally important point of light by the Socinian as by the Calvinistic scheme, and that the former represents us as equally indebted to his undertaking with the latter?

The "extravagant compliment" to which I referred, and concerning which Dr. Toulmin complains of my not having done him justice, (pp. 50, 51,) respected not Mr. Robinson, but his biographer, whom Dr. Toulmin characterized as "a learned and sensible writer;" and his performance on *the Nature of Subscription* as a work "full of learning, of all judicious remarks and liberal sentiment." I may remark, however, from Dr. Toulmin's account of his regard for Mr. Robinson, that he pays but little respect to the apostolic manner of regarding persons, namely, *for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them*. Truth had no share in Dr. Toulmin's regard; but *the love of liberty* was substituted in its place as a companion for piety. "My regard for Mr. Robinson," he says, "did not ebb and flow with *his opinions*," (a name by which our opponents choose to call religious principles,) "but was governed by the permanent qualities of the man, the friend of liberty and piety, and who had sacrificed much for conscience."—p. 51.

Dr. Toulmin's performance concludes with a quotation from Dr. Lardner. There are several sentiments in it which I cordially approve. I cannot, however, acquiesce in the whole. "We should be cautious," he says, "of judging others—God alone knows the hearts of men, and all their circumstances, and is, therefore, the only judge what errors are criminal, and how far men fall short of improving the advantages afforded them, or act up to the light that has been given them,"—p. 52. We should, I grant, "be cautious of judging others; and I may add, should never attempt it, *but from their words or actions*. But if it be presumptuous *in this way* to judge others, then is the tree not to be known by its fruits. In this case, though it might be lawful for Peter to declare to Simon that, by his *thinking that the gift of God might be purchased with money, he perceived that his heart was not right in the sight of God*, and for Paul to address Elymas on account of his opposition to the gospel as *a child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness*, seeing they were inspired of God, yet it was utterly wrong for the bishop of Llandaff to apply this language to Mr. Paine, and his *Apology for the Bible* (which is generally allowed to be written in a very gentle style) must, nevertheless, be censured as presumptuous. Upon this supposition, Dr. Toulmin has written presumptuously, in affirming that "the number of sincere, conscientious persons, attentive to the cultivation of pious affections, hath borne a small proportion to those who have been nominal Socinians and Calvinists,"—p. 36. It is presumptuous also in him to complain of the want of *candour* and *justice* in his opponent,—p. 39. Yea, upon this supposition, it was presumption in the Analytical Reviewer to call what I had written "a presumptuous sentence, pronounced upon the *hearts* of those who adopt Socinian principles." If it be presumption to judge the hearts of men by their words and actions, what right had he to judge of mine? A presumptuous sentence is a sentence which proceeds from a presumptuous *spirit*. His censure, therefore, includes the very fault, if it be a fault, against which it is pointed. It resembles the conduct of a man who

should *swear* that he disapproves of *oaths*, or who should *falsely* accuse his neighbour of being a *liar*.

If it be presumptuous to judge of the hearts of men by their words and actions, it must be presumptuous to judge of the good or evil of any action. For no action, considered separately from its motive, is either good or evil. It is no otherwise good or evil than as it is the expression of the heart. To judge an action, therefore, to be either this or that, is to judge the heart to be so.

I may be told that Dr. Lardner is not speaking of immorality, but of *errors in judgment*. True; but his reasoning would apply to actions as well as errors. The former *may* be as innocent as the latter. The killing of a man, for instance, *may* have arisen from mere accident. It is the motive which governed the action that determines its guilt or innocence; "but God alone knows the hearts of men, and all their circumstances, and is therefore the only judge what *actions* are criminal." In this manner we might censure the proceedings of a jury which should sit in judgment upon a person, to determine whether the act by which he has taken away the life of a fellow creature arose from accident or design.

Who can say, with infallible precision, concerning any action, how far the author of it "has fallen short of improving the advantages afforded him, or how far he has failed of acting up to the light that has been given him?" If this reasoning, therefore, prove any thing, it will prove that men are utterly incompetent for any kind of judgment in things which relate to good and evil.

A man may err in his notions of morality as well as concerning evangelical truth: he may think, with some modern unbelievers, that the confining of a man to one woman is unnatural; that fornication is allowable; and that even adultery is but a small crime, and, where it is undetected, no crime at all. Now if God alone is to judge of these errors, God alone must also judge of the actions resulting from them; for there can be no more of moral evil in the one than in the other. If the former may be innocent, so may the latter; and all being to us uncertainty, owing to our ignorance of the motive, or state of mind, from which such notions were formed, together with the advantages which the party may have possessed, we must, in all such cases, entirely cease from passing censure.

If it be alleged that there are such light and evidence in favour of chastity that no man can err on that subject, unless his error arise from some evil bias, I answer, this is what, in other cases, is called judging men's hearts; and why may I not as well say there are such light and evidence in favour of the gospel, that no man can reject it but from an evil bias? This appears to me to be the truth, and the ground on which unbelief is threatened with *damnation*, and a *denial of the Lord who bought us followed with swift destruction*.

Far be it from me to indulge a censorious spirit, or to take pleasure in thinking ill of any man. Nay, far be it from me to pass any kind of judgment on any man, further than I am called to do so; and when this is the case, I desire it may always be in meekness and fear; knowing, not only that I also am judged of others, but that all of us, and all our decisions, must be tried another day at a higher tribunal.

It may be asked, What call have we to pass any kind of judgment upon those who disown the Deity and atonement of Christ? I answer, We are called either to admit them as fellow Christians into communion with us, or to refuse to do so. We are necessitated, therefore, to pass some judgment; and this is all that we do pass. We do not pretend to say, concerning any individual, that *we are certain he is not in a state of salvation*; but we say

*we cannot perceive sufficient ground to warrant our acknowledging him as a fellow Christian.*

We must either admit every pretender to Christianity into communion with us, and so acknowledge him as a fellow Christian, or we shall be accused of judging the hearts of men. The rule by which we admit to fellowship is a *credible profession of Christianity*. There are two things which render a profession credible. First, That the thing professed be Christianity. Secondly, That the profession be accompanied with a practice correspondent with it. If a man say he loves God, and lives in malevolence against his brother, all will admit that he ought to be rejected; and though such rejection may include a kind of judgment upon his heart, none will object to our proceedings on this account. But if this be judging the heart, we suppose we have a right and are obliged to judge it from *words* as well as from actions. If the profession which a person makes of Christianity do not include what, in our judgment, is essential to it, we cannot consistently admit him to communion with us, nor acknowledge him as a fellow Christian. *Our judgment* must be the rule of *our conduct*. If we err, so it is; but we ought not to act in opposition to our convictions. To acknowledge a person as a fellow Christian, while we consider him defective in the essentials of Christianity, would be to act hypocritically, and tend to deceive the souls of men.

Some persons have spoken and written as though we *invaded the right of private judgment* by refusing to commune with those who avow Socinian principles. But if a community have not a right to refuse, and even to exclude, an individual whose sentiments they consider as subversive of the gospel, neither has an individual any right to separate himself from a community whose sentiments he considers in a similar light. Provided they would forbear with him, he ought to do the same with them. This principle condemns not only the Reformation from popery, but all other reformations in which individuals have withdrawn from a corrupt community, and formed one of a purer nature. Under a plea for liberty, it would chain down the whole Christian world in slavery; obliging every community to hold fellowship with persons between whom and them there is an entire want of Christian concord. It aims to establish the liberty of the individual at the expense of that of society. Our opponents, however, will be silent in this case. They, with proper consistency, persuade their people to come out from Trinitarian communities.\* Were I to imbibe their sentiments, I should follow their counsel, and separate myself from those whom *I accounted idolaters*; or if the community should be beforehand with me, and separate me from them, as one whom *they accounted a subverter of the gospel*, however painful such a separation might prove to my feelings, I should have no just reason to complain.

In our view, our opponents have renounced the principal ideas included in those primitive forms of confession, *Jesus is the Christ—Jesus Christ is the Son of God*; and as charity itself does not require us to acknowledge and treat that as Christianity which, in our judgment, is not so, we think it our duty, in love, and with a view to their conviction, both by our words and actions, to declare our decided disapprobation of their principles. We lay no claim to infallibility any more than our opponents. We act according to our judgment, and leave them to act according to theirs; looking forward to that period when we shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

\* See Mr. Kentish, p. 44, note.

## APPENDIX :

CONTAINING A FEW REMARKS ON DR. TOULMIN'S REVIEW OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

FIRST, Let it be observed, that Dr. Toulmin, by appealing to the history of the Acts of the Apostles, would seem to be an adherent to Scripture, and to disregard every thing else in comparison with it. But if the system which he espouses be so friendly to the Scriptures, how is it that they are treated with so little respect by almost all the writers who embrace it? and why did not Dr. Toulmin answer my Letter on "Veneration for the Scriptures," (No. XII.,) in which this charge is substantiated?

Secondly, Dr. Toulmin proceeds on the supposition that the history of the Acts of the Apostles is, in itself, independent of the other parts of the sacred writings, a complete account of the substance, at least, of what the apostles preached, and that it ascertains those principles the publication of which preceded the conversions in the primitive age. But why should he suppose this? The book professes to be a history of the *Acts* of the Apostles. As to the *principles* which operated in producing the great effects of those times, they are occasionally touched; but that not being the professed object of the sacred writer, it is but occasionally. He does not always relate even the substance of what the apostles preached. For instance, he tells us that Paul preached at Troas until midnight, but makes no mention of any thing that he taught. He informs us of that apostle's conversion to Christianity, and makes no mention, it is true, of those principles which I have supposed necessary to repentance and faith, as having had any influence in producing that effect; such as a conviction of the evil nature of sin, our own depravity, &c.; and this silence of the sacred writer Dr. Toulmin improves into an argument against me. Let. III. But if we hence infer that these principles had no influence in conversion, in that of Saul, for example, we must contradict the apostle's own particular account of this matter, which he has stated in the seventh chapter to the Romans; where he intimates that, by a view of the spirituality of the Divine law, he was convinced of his own depravity, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and died, as to all hopes of acceptance with God by the deeds of the law.

When any thing is said, in the Acts of the Apostles, concerning principles, the account is very *general*.—"They ceased not to teach and preach *Jesus Christ*." In Samaria, Philip "preached *Christ*." Unto the eunuch "he preached *Jesus*," and declared that "Christ was the Son of God." The discourses of the apostles are frequently called "*the word of the Lord*," and "*the word of God*."

To suppose that the principles which are particularly specified in the history of the Acts were the only ones which were influential, in the conversions of those times, would be to exclude, not only those doctrines which are commonly called Calvinistic, but various others, which are allowed, on all hands, to be the first principles of religion; such as the being of a God, the excellency and purity of his moral government, the Divine origin of the Old Testament, &c. The apostles, in preaching to the Jews, did not assert these principles, but they *supposed* them. It were unreasonable to expect they should have done otherwise, seeing these were principles which their hearers professedly admitted; yet it does not follow that they had no influence in their conversion. On the contrary, we are assured that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is," and that "by the law is the know-

ledge of sin." Nor is it less evident that to embrace the Messiah includes an approbation of those scriptures which foretold his character and conduct.

Thirdly, Though the writer of the Acts of the Apostles does not profess to give us even the substance of the ministry of the apostles, yet he says sufficient to convince an unprejudiced reader that their doctrine was very different from that of Socinus, or of modern Unitarians. It is true they spoke of Christ as "*a man*," "*a man approved of God by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him*;" and taught that "*God raised him from the dead*;" and if we had denied either of these truths, it would have been in point for Dr. Toulmin to have laboured, all through his Second and Third Letters, to establish them. But they taught the proper *Deity* as well as the humanity of Christ, and atonement by his death as well as the fact of his resurrection. They exhibited him as *the Lord*, on whose *name sinners* were to call for salvation;\* and declared that by the shedding of his blood *his church was purchased*, and believing sinners "*justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*," chap. xx. 28; xiii. 39.

Peter, in his first sermon, addressed the Jews upon principles of the truth of which they, in their consciences, were convinced: "Ye men of Israel," said he, "hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God—by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, *as ye yourselves also know*—ye—by wicked hands have crucified and slain."† Upon these principles he grounded others, of which they were *not convinced*; namely, his resurrection from the dead, (24–32,) his exaltation at the right hand of God; (33,) his being made both Lord and Christ, (36,) and of remission of sins through his name, (38.) In his next sermon, he asserted him to be *the Son of God*, (chap. iii. 13,) *the Holy One, and the Just, the Prince (or author) of life*, whom they had *killed*, preferring a murderer before him, (14, 15.) If Jesus was the *author* of life in the same sense in which Barabbas was the *destroyer* of it, then was the antithesis proper, and the charge adapted to excite the greatest alarm. It was nothing less than declaring to them that, in crucifying Jesus of Nazareth, they had *crucified the Lord of glory*; or that the person whom they had slain was no other than the Creator of the world, in human nature! In the first instance the apostle appealed to what the Jews *themselves knew* of Christ; in the last, to what *he knew* concerning him, who, with his fellow apostles, had *beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*.

Did Peter speak as would a "modern Unitarian,"‡ when he said to his countrymen, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved?" Such language, I fear, is seldom, if ever, used in their pulpits: it is such, at least, as I have never met with in their writings. On the contrary, one of their principal writers endeavours to explain it away, or to prove that it is not meant of "salvation to eternal life, but of deliverance from bodily diseases."§

Dr. Toulmin finds Stephen before the council, but makes no mention of his death, in which he is described as praying to Christ, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Having made a few remarks upon the eighth chapter, he observes, "I next meet with this apostle (Peter) receiving an extraordinary commission to preach unto Cornelius and his house,"—p. 17. But why does he skip over the ninth

\* Chap. ii. 21. Compare Chap. ix. 14; xxii. 16; Rom. x. 12, and 1 Cor. i. 22.

† Chap. ii. 22. ‡ Dr. Toulmin, p. 14.

§ Dr. Priestley's Fam. Let. XIV



chapter, which gives an account of the conversion of Saul? Was it because we there find the primitive Christians described as "calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus?" 14, 21. And why does he make mention of "the fine speech of the apostle Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus," and yet overlook that solemn charge, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," chap. xx. 28. Is it because he thinks, with Dr. Priestley, that "we ought to be exceedingly cautious how we admit such an expression?"\* That seems to be the reason. But then we ought to be as cautious how we admit the book which contains it.

In preaching to the Jews, the apostles insisted that *Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, the Son of God*; resting the proof of these assertions upon the fact that *God had raised him from the dead*; and Dr. Toulmin reckons this to be, "what, in modern style, is called Unitarianism,"—p. 28. But this is proceeding too fast. Before such a conclusion can be fairly drawn, it must be proved that these propositions have the same meaning in the Socinian creed as in that of the apostles. Let us examine whether that be the case. When they asserted that *Jesus was the Christ*, the meaning of the terms must be supposed to have been sufficiently understood. When Paul preached at Athens, though he ultimately brought Christ into his discourse, yet he did not use this kind of language. It would have been improper to have done so. The Athenians would not have understood what he meant by *Jesus being the Christ*; but the Jews did; and the ideas which they would attach to this name must be collected from the means of information which they possessed. If, as Socinians affirm, the *Christ* preached by the apostle was only an instructor of mankind; if he suffered martyrdom only in confirmation of his doctrine; and if his being called *the Son of God* denoted him to be nothing more than human; it must be supposed that these were the ideas which the prophets had given of the Messiah, which our Lord himself had professed, and which the Jews had understood him to profess. And if all this be true, it must be granted that the apostles used these terms in the sense of our opponents; and Dr. Toulmin's conclusion, that "their preaching was the same, for substance, as that of modern Unitarians," is just. But if the Messiah prefigured by Jewish sacrifices, and predicted by the prophets, was to take away the sins of the world, by being made an atoning sacrifice; if Christ, in professing to be *the Son of God*, professed to be *equal with God*; and if his countrymen generally so understood him, and therefore accused him of *blasphemy*, and put him to death; then it is *not* true that the apostles could use these terms in the sense of our opponents, and Dr. Toulmin's conclusion is totally unfounded.

The reader may now judge of the propriety of the following language used by Dr. Toulmin. "If you suppose, sir, that these sentiments were inculcated and blended with the great truth, the Messiahship of Jesus, it is *supposition* only, which is not supported by the testimony of the historian, nor by the practice of the apostolic preachers on any other occasion. You may build on suppositions; but I must be allowed to adhere to what is written."—p. 24.

Now I appeal to the intelligent reader whether Dr. Toulmin has any thing more than *supposition* as the ground of his conclusion, that the apostles, in teaching that *Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God*, "taught nothing more than what, in modern style, is called the Unitarian doctrine." The only ground for such a conclusion is the *supposition* that the Messiah, predicted by the Jewish prophets, was not to become an atoning sacrifice, but a mere instructor of mankind; that he was to be merely a man; that his being

called the Son of God denoted him to be nothing more than human; that this was the substance of what he himself professed, and of what the Jews understood him to profess. All this is mere *supposition*, for which not the shadow of a proof is offered; and yet, without it, Dr. Toulmin's conclusion must fall to the ground.

Contrary to all this supposition, I take leave to observe, First, That the Messiah prefigured by the Jewish sacrifices, and predicted by the prophets, *was* to become a sacrifice of atonement or propitiation for the sins of the world. His soul was to be "made an offering for sin." The Lord was to "lay on him the iniquity of us all." He was the "Lamb of God," who was to "take away the sin of the world." But if the Old Testament representations were in favour of the Messiah's being an atoning sacrifice, the apostles, in declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, virtually declared him to be an atoning sacrifice. Secondly, That the Messiah, predicted by the prophets, was to be God manifest in the flesh, or God in our nature. Unto the *Son* it was said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." *The child born* was to be called the mighty God. *He* who was to "feed his flock like a shepherd, to gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom," was no other than "the Lord God, who would come with strong hand, and whose arm should rule for him." "The goings forth" of him who was to be born in Bethlehem "were of old," from everlasting.\* But if the prophetic representations of the Messiah were in favour of his being God in our nature, the apostles, in declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, virtually declared him to be God in our nature. Thirdly, That our Lord, in saying, *I am the Son of God*, was understood by the Jews as claiming an *equality with God*; that he was, on this account, accused of blasphemy, and finally put to death; and all this without having said any thing that should contradict the idea which they entertained. Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said, also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."—"The Jews said, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." But for the apostles under these circumstances, and without explaining away the supposed blasphemy, to assert that *Jesus was the Son of God*, was the same thing as asserting him to be equal with God; and their calling on his murderers to "repent and be baptized in his name, for the remission of sins," was calling them to retract their charge of blasphemy, to embrace him in that very character for claiming which they had put him to death, and to place all their *hopes of forgiveness in his NAME, by which alone they could be saved*," chap. ii. 38; iv. 12.

From these premises, and not from mere *supposition*, I conclude that the Deity and atonement of Christ were comprehended in the great doctrines of his Sonship and Messiahship.

If Dr. Toulmin's remarks on the Acts of the Apostles are foreign to the argument, much more so are those which respect the concessions of ancient Fathers, and modern churches and churchmen. To these I shall make no reply. And though I have so far followed him, as, in these few pages, to reply to some of his observations; yet I desire it may be noticed that I shall not hold myself obliged to pursue this subject any further. If Dr. Toulmin chooses to resume the controversy, let him keep to the subject; namely, *The moral tendency of our respective systems*. Any thing besides this will be entitled to no reply.

\* Comp. Heb. i. 8; Isa. ix. 6; xl. 10, 11; Micah v. 2.

## REPLY TO MR. KENTISH'S SERMON, &amp;c.

MR. KENTISH entitles his Discourse, "The Moral Tendency of the Genuine Christian Doctrine." This title is either *irrelative* to the professed object of his undertaking, or it is *begging the question*. If he only mean to affirm that the genuine Christian doctrine, be it what it may, is productive of moral effects in those who embrace it, this is what none but a professed infidel would deny. It is a principle which every denomination of Christians admits. It is the datum on which I have proceeded, in endeavouring to ascertain what the genuine Christian doctrine is. If, therefore, Mr. Kentish intends only to prove what his title announces, his performance must be totally *irrelative* to its professed object, and contains no answer to the piece against which it is written. But it is possible that, by the *genuine Christian doctrine*, Mr. Kentish means what "he sincerely *believes* to be such," or what he calls the Unitarian doctrine. But this is *begging the question* at the outset. Our opponents must surely be reduced to very *necessitous* circumstances, or they would not condescend to such humble methods of establishing their principles.

Mr. Kentish, speaking of my Letters on Socinianism, observes that "it was by no means his intention, or his wish, to canvass every observation which is there advanced." To canvass every observation might be unnecessary; but an answer to any work ought to enter upon a full and thorough discussion of the principal subjects included in it. A performance that does not require this requires no answer at all. I cannot think, therefore, that Dr. Toulmin and Mr. Kentish are justifiable in evading the body of the arguments contained in the publication which they attempt to answer. The number of veterans, in literary war, which are to be found on the side of our opponents, renders it difficult to account for their refusing to hazard a decisive engagement, without imputing it to a conviction that they stand upon *disadvantageous ground*. Dr. Toulmin has proved *his* dislike to it by a barefaced attempt to shift it. Mr. Kentish has not done so; his performance has less evasion, and less assuming of the question in debate, and, consequently, is more respectable than that of his colleague. He keeps upon the proper ground; but, as though he thought it enchanted, he hurries over it, touching upon only a few of the topics of discussion, and taking but very little notice of the arguments of his opponent as he passes along. It is a retreat, instead of a regular engagement; a running fight, rather than a pitched battle. In favour of such a mode of conducting the controversy, it is possible he might choose to print in the form of a sermon.

But Mr. Kentish has *reasons* for not being more particular in his answer: "Of Mr. Fuller's remarks, many," says he, "are personal, and many refer solely to a vindication of the religious principles that he has seen proper to embrace,"—p. 3. Pref. If many of my remarks be *personal*, Mr. Kentish had a right to point them out; and ought to have done so, rather than content himself with a general accusation, unsubstantiated by a single proof. That I have vindicated those religious principles which I have thought proper to embrace is true: the misrepresentation and contempt with which they have been treated by the Reviewers, and other Socinian writers, rendered a vindication of them necessary; and if our opponents have now retreated within the limits of their own territory, and are contented to act in future merely on the defensive, it may be presumed, without arrogance, that it has not been altogether without effect.

Mr. Kentish seems not only contented to act on the defensive, with respect to the moral tendency of his principles, but also with respect to the actual *moral effects* produced by them. He thinks, "in point of fact, it can scarcely be proved that, in love to God, they are *surpassed* by their fellow Christians; though God forbid," he adds, "that we should rashly arrogate to ourselves *superiority of virtue!*"—p. 3. Rash, arrogant, and shocking, however, as this pretence appears to Mr. Kentish, it is no more than has been made by his brethren. All that Dr. Priestley has written upon the gloomy and immoral tendency of Calvinism implies a pretence to a superiority of virtue. What else is meant by his charging our views with being "unfavourable to the love of both God and man, and an axe at the root of all virtue?" He accuses us of "living in the dread of all free inquiry;" whereas they "are in the way of growing wiser and better as long as they live." He also goes about to weigh the virtue of Unitarians and Trinitarians; and though he allows the former to have most of an apparent conformity to the world, yet, "upon the whole," he supposes them to "approach nearest to the proper temper of Christianity." Mr. Belsham also does not scruple to assert, that "they who are sincerely pious and diffusively benevolent *with* these principles could not have failed to have been much *better*, and much happier, had they adopted a milder, a more rational, a more truly evangelical creed." These are passages which I have quoted and answered, in my *Letters on Socinianism*; and what else can be made of them but a *pretence to superiority of virtue?* I do not accuse these writers of rashness or arrogance, in making such pretences, unless it be on account of their asserting what they are unable to maintain. It would be consistent with Christian humility to prove that true believers are men of superior virtue to unbelievers; and if any denomination of professing Christians have an advantage over others, in this respect, they have a right, especially when accused by them of immorality, fairly and modestly to state it. But who can forbear to pity the situation of men who, after all these challenges, on the first close inquiry that is made into the justice of their claims, are reduced to the dire necessity of giving them up, of standing merely upon the defensive, and of exclaiming against the *rashness of arrogating to themselves a superiority of virtue!*

It will be time enough for Mr. Kentish to "admit a claim to infallibility" when such a claim is made, or to a "knowledge of the motives or designs of men," any further than as they are made manifest by their words and actions, when his opponent makes any pretence to it. In this way, I suppose, he himself will not scruple to judge the heart, since he proposes, in the same page, to "illustrate the *spirit* in which my examination is written,"—p. 4, Pref. I assure Mr. Kentish, it was neither in an "unguarded" nor a "guarded" moment that I presumed to charge Unitarians with having a heart secretly disaffected to the true character and government of God, and dissatisfied with the gospel way of salvation. Rather was it not in an unguarded moment that he, as well as several of his brethren in the reviewing department, accused me of so doing? If any of these writers thought proper to quote my words, why did they not quote the whole sentence as it stands? By their method of quotation, one might prove, from the Scriptures, that *there is no God.*

The proposition as it stands in my *Letters* is *conditional*. It is true the thing affirmed is, that "the avenues which lead to Socinianism are not an openness to conviction, or a free and impartial inquiry after truth, but a heart secretly disaffected to the true character and government of God, and dissatisfied with the gospel way of salvation;" but the *condition* on which the truth of this proposition is suspended is, that Socinianism is a system the character of which is that "irreligious men are the first, and serious Chris-

tians the last, to embrace it." Now, do our opponents mean to admit, without hesitation or explanation, that this *is* the character of Socinianism? I know, indeed, they have conceded thus much; but I was ready to suppose that, upon its being represented to them in its own colours, they would have recalled, or at least have endeavoured to put a more favourable construction upon, their concessions. But it should seem, by their applying the latter branch of the proposition to themselves, they admit the former, as properly characteristic of their system; and if they admit the one, I see no cause to recede from the other.

I have contended that it is not presumption to judge of men's motives *by their words and actions*; and that it is what our opponents, as well as all other men, do in innumerable instances. In this instance, however, *I have not judged the motives of any individual*. The thing affirmed barely respects *the general course of things*. The avenues which lead to any place are the ordinary passages through which persons enter; but it does not follow that they are the only ones. Were I to assert that the avenues which lead to *offensive war* are not, as its abettors would persuade us to think, a desire to maintain the honour of their country, but a heart secretly disaffected to the true interests of mankind, and dissatisfied with the morality of the gospel; such an assertion, I fear, would contain too much truth; it would not denote, however, that there never was an individual who engaged in such wars but from such motives. Persons may be drawn into them unawares, and contrary to their inclinations; and, being once engaged, may find it difficult to recede. Thus, with respect to our religious sentiments, education, connexions, and various other things, may have great influence in determining them. How far such things may consist with sincere love to Christ, I have not undertaken to decide. But as, in the one case, a person would generally find his heart averse from actual engagements, and leaning towards a peace; so, I apprehend, it will be in the other: like the *serious Christians* mentioned by Mrs. Barbauld, though they may rank with Socinians, yet their hearts will *lean* towards the doctrine that exalts the Saviour, and exhibits him as the atoning sacrifice.

Before Mr. Kentish enters on the defence of his principles, on the ground of their moral tendency, he offers six remarks. These are as follows:—

1. "An obvious effect of the impressions to which mankind are exposed, from surrounding objects, is that no principles can so fully influence the conduct as might be expected in theory."—p. 6. True; but the same remark equally requires to be made in favour of Calvinism as of Socinianism. There is nothing in it, therefore, appropriate, or which goes to account for that want of practical religion which is acknowledged peculiarly to attend the professors of the latter.

2. "While some men are, confessedly, much better than their principles, it will not, it cannot, be disputed that to the most valuable principles others fail of doing justice."—p. 6. That some men's hearts are better than their systems is true; and for this reason, notwithstanding all that is said by my opponents to the contrary, I have not presumed to decide upon the state of individuals.

It is also allowed that "to the most valuable principles others fail of doing justice." This is the same thing, for substance, as that which I have acknowledged in my introductory observations; and I have therefore never reasoned either from the bad or good conduct of individuals, but from that of the *general body*. It is true I have mentioned the names of some eminent persons among the Calvinists; but it was merely to confront an assertion of Mr. Belsham, that those who were singularly pious and diffusively benevolent, *with Calvinistic principles*, could not have failed to have been

much better, and much happier, if they had imbibed a different creed." The piety and benevolence of Hale, Franck, Brainerd, Edwards, Whitefield, Thornton, and Howard, were introduced as a proof that such degrees of virtue have been found amongst Calvinists as have never been exceeded by men of what are called rational principles, or, indeed, of any principles whatever.

3. "It deserves to be considered, further, whether doctrines which have most efficacy upon the dispositions, the conduct, and the feelings of Christians, be not such as they profess in common,"—p. 7. I have no objection to this or any other subject being considered, though I am persuaded the result of an impartial consideration, in this case, would be different from that which is suggested by Mr. Kentish; but granting his supposition to be true, the difficulty on his side is just where it was. If the principles which Calvinists and Socinians hold in common be the grand sources of virtue, why do they not influence both alike? Why is it that "rational Christians are spoken of as indifferent to practical religion;" and that those who acknowledge this charge, as Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham have done, are not able to vindicate them from it? If Calvinists and Socinians hold principles in common which are of a holy tendency, and yet the latter are the most indifferent to practical religion, there must be something unfavourable to virtue, one should think, in their peculiar sentiments.

4. "From a natural partiality moreover to opinions which themselves embrace, men will suppose those opinions to have a tendency peculiarly favourable to virtue and happiness. There is danger, therefore, lest the conclusion to which I have adverted be drawn rather by the feelings than by the understanding, rather by prejudice than by calm and unbiassed reason."—p. 8. To this I answer, if the conclusions which I have drawn be unreasonable, they are capable of being proved so.

5. "In their ideas too of moral excellence, different sects of Christians may not exactly agree.—Many of them severely censure certain instances of conformity to the world, which others of them may think not merely lawful, but deserving of praise."—p. 8. True. Some for example may live in the disuse of prayer, and may plead in excuse that this practice does not accord with their ideas of devotion. They may also frequent the gaming table, and the assembly room, and occasionally, if not constantly, resort to the theatre; and may contend that each is an innocent if not a praiseworthy amusement. But if people are not to be criminated beyond the line marked out by their own opinions of morality, our "moderation" must extend further than Mr. Kentish himself might be willing to allow. There are people in the world who think favourably of polygamy, and others who would plead for fornication, yea, for adultery itself, provided it were kept a secret; yet, it is to be hoped, he would not think the better of such practices on this account. On the contrary, he must think himself warranted to conclude, in ordinary cases at least, that the opinions of such persons were formed under the influence of an immoral bias, and, therefore, that they themselves partake of the nature of immorality.

6. "The very nature of the argument proposed renders it extremely difficult to deduce from it a satisfactory inference. If to judge respecting the conduct of men, even in single cases, demand much care and knowledge, far more requisite are these qualifications when sentence is to be passed upon their general character. Who indeed is so intimately acquainted with the various denominations of Christians as to form a decision, upon this point, that shall not be liable to the imputation of partiality or rashness?"—pp. 8, 9. That care and knowledge are necessary in such a comparison I shall not dispute; and if I have betrayed my want of either, I presume it is capa-

ble of being exposed; but that the thing itself is impracticable I cannot admit. It is not impossible to discover who in general are serious, conscientious, and pious men, and who they are that indulge in dissipation and folly. The observation of Mr. Kentish, if it prove any thing, proves that the moral tendency of a doctrine is no proper criterion of its truth. Yet he acknowledges that "in religion the maxim, 'Ye shall know them by their fruits,' is a maxim unquestionably of high authority, evident reason, and familiar application."—p. 5. How can these things consist together? If it be of "familiar application," it cannot be "extremely difficult," nor require any extraordinary degree of understanding to apply it. Let there be what difficulty there may however in this case, my work, so far as related to facts, was done ready to my hand. Dr. Priestley, Mr. Belsham, and Mrs. Barbauld were my authorities for the want of regard to practical religion amongst rational Christians; writers whom Mr. Kentish will not accuse of the want of either "care or knowledge," and to whom he will not in this cause impute either "partiality or rashness."

It has been suggested by some who are friendly to the cause of Socinianism, though not professed Socinians, that I have made an unfair use of a few concessions; and that a similar use might be made of the concessions of many of the puritans, who in their day lamented the imperfections and degeneracy of their own people. If Dr. Priestley and his brethren had barely acknowledged that there were great defects amongst their people when compared with the primitive Christians, or with what they ought to be, this, I confess, had been no more than what puritan writers have done, and the writers of every other denomination of Christians might have done; and such acknowledgments ought not to have been improved against them. But who beside themselves have ever professed to hold a set of principles, to the discernment of which an indifference to religion in general was favourable—a system which those who were most indifferent to the *practice* of religion were the first, and serious Christians the last, to embrace? Who beside themselves have been reduced, by facts which they could not deny, to such dire necessity?

From the foregoing introductory observations, Mr. Kentish proceeds to the body of his discourse, which he divides into four heads of inquiry.—“I. What is the tendency of the Unitarian doctrine with respect to the cultivation and exercise of the divine, the social, and the personal virtues? II. What assistance, support, and consolation does it afford, in the season of temptation, affliction, and death? III. What is its efficacy in the conversion of profligates and unbelievers? And, IV. Finally, how far is it adapted to promote a veneration for the Scriptures, and to fortify our faith in Christianity?”

#### I. ON THE DIVINE, THE SOCIAL, AND THE PERSONAL VIRTUES.

Under the first of these particulars, Mr. Kentish very properly considers "love to God;" and so far as he attempts an answer to what I have written, I suppose this is to be considered as an answer to my VIIth Letter. The substance of what he advances upon this subject is as follows:—"We believe, according to the sublime language of the favourite apostle, that 'God is love;' we consider all his moral excellences, as justice, truth, and holiness, as modifications of this principle. Happiness we regard as the grand object of his works and dispensations, and conceive of his glory as resulting from the diffusion of this happiness."

"These being our ideas of the Deity, love to him cannot fail to be *shed abroad in our hearts*. Did we think of him, indeed, as one altogether like unto ourselves—did we imagine that he is vindictive, inexorable, arbitrary, and partial—and did we suppose his glory to be something distinct from the

exercise of his goodness, we might experience difficulty in obedience to this first and greatest of the commandments. But in the contemplation of infinite power, employed to execute designs which proceed from infinite benevolence, and are planned by consummate wisdom, filial affection towards God is naturally enkindled and preserved in our breasts."—pp. 11, 12.

On this statement I would observe, in the first place, that it passes over one very important topic of discussion between us; namely, the doctrine of the atonement. Why is it that Mr. Kentish has passed over this doctrine? He knows that Socinian writers have charged it with implying *the natural implacability of God*, a charge against which I have attempted to defend it. Have I not a right to conclude, from Mr. Kentish's silence on this head, that he feels the ground to be untenable?

Mr. Kentish has not only declined the discussion of one of the most important subjects, but those topics which have fallen under his notice are stated with great *unfairness*. His account of my sentiments respecting the vindictive character of God is marked by the grossest misrepresentation. I had carefully explained the term *vindictive*, when applied to the Divine conduct in the punishment of sin, by observing that "it is very common for people when they speak of vindictive punishment, to mean that kind of punishment which is inflicted from a wrathful disposition, or a disposition to punish for the pleasure of punishing. Now if this be the meaning of our opponents, we have no dispute with them. We do not suppose the Almighty to punish sinners for the sake of putting them to pain. Vindictive punishment, as it is here defended, stands opposed to that punishment which is merely *corrective*. The one is exercised for the good of the party; the other not so, but for the good of the community."—Letter VII. Now, though Mr. Kentish must have observed this statement, yet he has suffered himself to write as follows:—"Did we imagine that God is vindictive, inexorable, arbitrary, and partial—or did we suppose his glory to be something distinct from the exercise of his goodness—we might experience difficulty in obedience to this first and greatest of the commandments."—pp. 11, 12. As a proof, it should seem, that these were my sentiments, Mr. Kentish refers to page 71 of my Letters, where I have acknowledged that there is a mixture of *the vindictive* in the Calvinistic system. But have I not also in the same page so explained my meaning as to reject those offensive ideas which Mr. Kentish has introduced in connexion with it? Why did he hold up my acknowledgment concerning the vindictive character of God, without at the same time holding up that sense of it in which I professed to defend it? Or if he might think himself excused from this, why did he connect such terms with it as must exhibit it in a different and contrary sense, even in that very sense in which I had opposed it? I cannot but consider this as disingenuous; and as greatly resembling the conduct of certain deists, who, in their attacks upon Christianity, choose first to dress it up in the habits of popery.

As to the glory of God consisting in the exercise of his goodness, if it be meant of the *manifestation* of the Divine glory, and goodness be put for *moral excellence*, it is the same thing as that which I have acknowledged; namely, that "the glory of God *consists* in doing that which shall be best upon the whole:" but, by goodness, Mr. Kentish means merely beneficence, undistinguishing beneficence, or the pursuit of ultimate happiness in behalf of every intelligent being in the creation, obedient or rebellious, penitent or impenitent, men or devils. In this sense I allow that the glory of God may be at variance with the happiness of creatures, and I contend that, where it is so, the latter, and not the former, ought to be given up.

Mr. Kentish pleads from "the declaration of the favourite apostle, *God is love*," and supposes that "all his moral excellences, as justice, truth, and



holiness, are but modifications of this principle." To all this I have no objection, provided the object aimed at be the general good of the moral system. But Mr. Kentish supposes, if God be love, that in all he does he must have the good of every individual in his dominions in view. On this principle he must have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain and Balaam, and Saul and Judas, and all those who, in every age, have lived "foaming out their own shame," and to whom, according to the Scriptures, "*is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*," together with Satan and all his rebellious legions, not only as examples to the intelligent creation, but *for their own good!* Surely this is not a necessary inference from the apostolic declaration. There are other cases, as well as this, in which justice may be a modification of love; but in no case does it require that an incorrigible offender should not be punished but for his own advantage. The execution of a murderer may be an exercise of pure benevolence to the community, though of just displeasure to the criminal. The removal of a restless, ambitious, intriguing, and bloody-minded prince or princess from the earth may be a mercy to mankind, and, as such, may be considered as an act worthy of *the God of love*; but it may not follow that this is accomplished in love to *the systematic murderer of the human race*. If all the West India islands were to be overwhelmed in some dire destruction, I am not sure that it would not be a mercy to the human species; it would terminate the miseries of thousands, and prevent the annual sacrifice of thousands more: and yet such an event might proceed, not from love, but from just displeasure to guilty individuals. It does not follow, therefore, from any principles with which we are acquainted, that because *God is love*, he must have the happiness of his incorrigible enemies in view, in all the displeasure which he pours upon them.

In order, it should seem, to obviate this reasoning, Mr. Kentish objects to our "thinking and speaking respecting the measures of the Divine administration, as though they were precisely similar to the measures which are pursued by earthly rulers,"—p. 20. It is curious to observe in what manner our opponents shift their positions, and veer about as occasion requires. Dr. Priestley accused the Calvinistic system of representing God in such a light, "that no earthly parent could imitate him without sustaining a character shocking to mankind." To this I answered, by proving that it is the practice of every good government to make examples of incorrigible offenders, and that benevolence itself requires it; yea, that there have been cases in which even a *parent* has been obliged, in benevolence to his family, and from a concern for the general good, to give up a stubborn and rebellious son to be stoned to death by the elders of his city, and that, not for his own good, but *that all Israel might hear and fear*. To this Mr. Kentish replies that God's government is not to be measured by human governments. First, then, we are accused of exhibiting the Divine character in such a light that it cannot be imitated; and when we prove that it can and ought in those respects to be imitated, then we are charged with thinking and speaking of God "as one altogether like ourselves!"

But passing this, the point at issue is, which of the above representations of the Divine character tends most to excite our *love* to him. Mr. Kentish conceives that, as love to God arises from a contemplation of his goodness, his scheme must, in this instance, have the advantage. That depraved creatures, who care not for the honour of the divine government, but whose supreme regard is directed towards themselves, should love that being best who, whatever be their character and conduct, is most devoted to their happiness, is readily admitted. But this is not the love of God. That goodness is the immediate object of love I also admit; but goodness in

the Divine Being is the same thing as moral excellence, and this renders him an object of love only to such created beings, as, in some degree, bear his image. The goodness for which Mr. Kentish pleads is mere undistinguishing beneficence, of which we can form no idea, without feeling, at the same time, a diminution of *respect*. If a supreme magistrate should possess such an attachment to his subjects as that, whatever were their crimes, he could in no case be induced to give any one of them up to condign punishment, or to any other punishment than what should be adapted to promote his good, he would presently become an object of general *contempt*. Or if a father should possess such a fondness for his children, that, let any one of them be guilty of what he might, suppose it were a murder, a hundred times repeated, yet he could never consent that any punishment should be inflicted upon him, excepting such as might be productive of his good, such a father would be detested by the community, and *despised* by his own family.

But, perhaps, I may be told that the Divine government is not to be measured by human governments; no, not by those which are *parental*. Be it so; indeed I am willing to grant Mr. Kentish that it is not. If he can prove from *Scripture* that the Divine government is possessed of this peculiarity, that, in every instance of justice, the good of the party, as well as the good of the community, is the object pursued, I will readily admit it, and will never mention its inconsistency with our ideas of government any more. But while no manner of appeal is made to the Scriptures—while the numerous passages which I have alleged in favour of the doctrine of vindictive punishment remain unnoticed—while nothing of any account, except the nature and fitness of things, is alleged—I have a right to show that, *from the nature and fitness of things*, no conclusion like that of Mr. Kentish can be drawn, but the very reverse. Love to a government, even a parental one, must be accompanied with *respect*. A being whose kindness degenerates into fondness, however his conduct may please our selfish humours, can never be the object of our *esteem*. On this principle, when Jehovah proclaimed his name or character to Moses, he not only declared himself to be “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin;” but added, “*and that will by no means clear the guilty.*”

“Love to God,” Mr. Kentish observes, “is no enthusiastic rapture, no offspring of a licentious imagination. It consists in the highest esteem for the Divine character, and the liveliest gratitude for the Divine mercies,”—p. 10. Very true; it is the *character* of God that is the prime object of genuine love; and I may add, what I have observed before, that “the true character of God, as revealed in the Scriptures, must be taken into the account, in determining whether our love to God be genuine or not. We may clothe the Divine Being with such attributes, and such only, as will suit our depraved taste; and then it will be no difficult thing to fall down and worship him: but this is not the love of God, but of an idol of our own creating.” It appears to me that the God in whom Mr. Kentish professes to believe is not the true God, or the God revealed in the Bible; and that the love he pleads for is no other than self-love, or an attachment to a being whose glory consists in his being invariably attached to us.

The character of God is principally manifested to us through those two grand mediums, the law and the gospel; but neither of them conveys any such idea of him as that which Mr. Kentish endeavours to exhibit. By the precepts and penalties of the former, Jehovah declared his love to men, as creatures, by guarding them against every approach to evil; but he also, by the same means, solemnly declared his love of righteousness, and his deter-

mination to maintain a righteous government in the universe. By the *propitiation* exhibited in the latter, the same important ideas are repeated, and others, of still greater importance to us, revealed. Here Jehovah declares his compassion to men, as guilty and miserable; but it is without any relaxation of the rigid uprightness of his moral government, or the least implication that his rebellious creatures had been hardly dealt with, that he pours forth a rich exuberance of mercy upon the unworthy. He is still the "just God, and the Saviour; just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." While salvation is promised to every believing sinner, damnation is threatened to every one that believeth not.

There is a rectitude that runs through all the dispensations of God, which determines his true character, and, by consequence, the nature of genuine love to him, seeing the one must necessarily correspond with the other. The Scripture character of God is such that wicked men are naturally averse from it. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Our Lord told the Jews, notwithstanding all their boasted attachment to God, that they "had not the love of God in them." Hence we are taught the necessity of the "heart being circumcised to love the Lord our God," Deut. xxx. 6. But the character of God, as drawn by Mr. Kentish, is such that the most depraved being must approve it, and that without any change in the unholy bias of his heart. *Sinners can love those that love them.* A being, the perfections of whose nature require him to promote the good of creation in general, will be loved by those, and those only, who value the general good, and who no otherwise desire the happiness of any creature, not even their own, than as it is included in the well-being of his moral empire. But a being the properties of whose nature prevent him, in any instance, from making a final example of any of his rebellious creatures, or punishing them in any way except that in which their good shall be his ultimate end, may be beloved by those who have no regard for the general good, nor for any part of intelligent existence but themselves, or such as become subservient to themselves. And what, other than this, is Mr. Kentish's representation of love to God? Considering God as all goodness, and goodness as consisting in a determination to do good, ultimately, to every creature, let his character and conduct be what it may, he supposes it to be *natural* to men to love him. "The love of God," he says, "cannot fail to be shed abroad in our hearts;" it is "naturally enkindled and kept alive in our breasts;"—pp. 11, 12. Genuine love to God requires to be "shed abroad in the heart *by the Holy Spirit*:" but there needs no Holy Spirit in this case; it is altogether *natural* to man. Mr. Kentish therefore acted very properly in leaving that part of the passage out of his quotation.

The scheme of our opponents not only misrepresents the *nature* of love to God, but it is miserably deficient with respect to *motives* whereby it may be excited. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins."—"God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."—"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Such is the language of inspiration; but this affecting epitome of gospel truth is despoiled of all its glory by the expositions of our opponents. Every thing rich, interesting, and endearing, which it contains, evaporates in their hands, as by a kind of chemical process; and nothing is left behind that can acquit the sacred writers of dealing in great swelling words of vanity.

Mr. Kentish's remarks upon this subject, together with a quotation from

Dr. Kippis in support of it, are feeble and nugatory; they prove nothing but the poverty of the cause. "By the goodness of the Almighty, exhibited in the works of nature, in the dispensations of providence, and in our temporal comfort, we are as much impressed, I presume," says Mr. Kentish, "as any class of Christians. And if we neither think nor speak like some of them concerning the Divine love manifested in the gift of Jesus Christ, it must not hence be inferred that we are less attentive to its magnitude and extent. It is our persuasion, on the contrary, that, from the views we cherish of this important subject, we can say with peculiar justice, 'We love him, because he first loved us.'"—pp. 12, 13. To the "persuasion" of Mr. Kentish is added the *opinion* of Dr. Kippis, that when "writers express themselves as if the Christian revelation would be of little value, unless their particular systems are adopted, it is a kind of language which is extremely injudicious, and which ought to be avoided and discouraged; and that no man can think meanly of the evangelical dispensation, or detract from its excellence and dignity, who believes that God is the author of it—that it was communicated by Jesus Christ—and that he conveys to us knowledge, pardon, holiness, and eternal life,"—pp. 12, 13, note. Our opponents, then, in all their numerous charges of *idolatry, corrupting Christianity, &c.*, exhibited against us, wish to be understood it seems, after all, as including nothing under these offensive terms which implies "a mean opinion of the evangelical dispensation, or which detracts from its excellence and dignity!" I wish it were in my power honestly to return the compliment. In this case, however, I should think consistency would require me to retract my former charges. But were Calvinists and Socinians to coalesce upon Dr. Kippis's principles, I should fear it would deserve the name of a *confederacy* against the Holy Scriptures. The apostle Paul must necessarily fall under their united censure; for if it be "extremely injudicious to represent the Christian revelation as of little value, unless a particular system be adopted," he must have been verily guilty in suggesting that the Galatian teachers, who only erred on the doctrine of justification, had introduced "another gospel," and aimed at "perverting the gospel of Christ." But if the scheme of Mr. Kentish be defective in one point of view, he seems to think it has the advantage in another.

The *unity* of God, he observes, stands connected with the command to love him; and he hence labours to prove the superior efficacy of his sentiments in *promoting* this temper of mind, inasmuch as they who imbibe them are not subject to be distracted and bewildered in their worship, as those are who worship a plurality of deities,—pp. 14, 15. But with this reasoning I, who do not worship a plurality of deities, have no concern.

Under the article of *Love to God*, Mr. Kentish proceeds to discourse on *love to Christ*,—pp. 15–19. With what "propriety" this is done, unless he be possessed of Deity, I shall not inquire. It is in this place, I suppose, that we are to consider him as answering my XIth Letter, which was written on this subject. The questions discussed in that Letter were, "Which of the two systems tends most to exalt the character of Christ? Which places his mediation in the most important view? and, Which represents us as most indebted to his undertaking?" The substance of Mr. Kentish's remarks, on the first of these questions, consists in this: that it is not *greatness*, but *goodness*, that is the object of love; that "love to Christ has its just foundation, not in a persuasion of his superior dignity, but in a conviction that his character was distinguished by the 'beauty of holiness,' or the charms of virtue,"—p. 16. I allow that goodness, and not greatness, is the immediate object of love; but Mr. Kentish will also allow that the latter renders a being *capable* of the former. The more any person possesses of

enlargedness of mind, the more capable he is of goodness; and if his moral qualities keep pace with his natural accomplishments, he is a more estimable character than if his mind were not enlarged.

The greater any character is, therefore, if his goodness be but equal to his greatness, the more he becomes the proper object of love. Will Mr. Kentish pretend that the "charms of virtue," in a good man, (in Jesus Christ for example, supposing him to be only a good man,) ought to render him as much the object of our affection as the infinitely glorious moral excellence of the Divine Being ought to render him? But by how much the character of the Divine Being is more estimable than that of the best of men, by so much is the character of Christ more estimable, upon the supposition of his proper Deity, than that of his being merely human. Mr. Kentish, as though he felt this difficulty, and wished to remove it, suggests that it is upon the principle of *gratitude* that we "give to God, the supreme author of our enjoyments, our highest, purest love,"—p. 17. But is it *gratitude only* that binds us to love God better than a creature? Is it merely because we receive more from him? Is it not also on account of the infinite amiableness of his moral character, as displayed particularly in the gospel, or (as the Scriptures express it) of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?" Yea, is it not, *primarily*, on this account that God is entitled to our "highest and purest love?"

Mr. Kentish has not thought it proper to enter on the inquiries, "Which of the two systems places the mediation of Christ in the most important light? and which represents us as most indebted to his undertaking?" He has made some observations, however, upon *gratitude*. Having stated that God is to be loved, on this principle, with our highest, purest love, he adds, "Hence, too, we cannot avoid indulging and showing affection for those of our fellow creatures whom he disposes and enables to do us good; and who, in truth, are but the instruments of his bounty. It is upon the same principle that we perceive the justice of manifesting no common love to Christ, the author, under God, of our most valuable privileges and our richest blessings,"—p. 17. Whether the love of our opponents towards Christ, in a way of gratitude, be common or uncommon, while they maintain that he existed not till he was born of Mary, they cannot consider themselves as under any obligation to him for *coming into the world to save them*; seeing that was a matter in which he must have been totally *involuntary*; and while they reject the doctrine of the *atonement*, I do not see how they can feel obliged to *him* for the forgiveness of their sins, or to any thing which he has done, or suffered, for their hopes of eternal life. They may feel indebted to him for having *published* these doctrines; but if this be all, it is a small affair for so much to be made of it. Many a prophet who was a bearer of heavy tidings would have been glad, in this respect, to exchange messages with him. Dr. Toulmin, in a former publication, has tried to magnify this subject a little, by alleging that "Christ came not only to *preach* the doctrine of a future state, but to *prove* it, and to furnish a *pledge* of the resurrection to eternal life by his own resurrection."\* Dr. Toulmin has not informed us in what manner the mission of Christ proved the doctrine of a future state, any otherwise than as his resurrection afforded a pledge of it; and this can add nothing as a foundation of gratitude to him, inasmuch as, upon his principles, it was a matter in which he had no *voluntary* concern.

For our parts, we consider ourselves deeply indebted to Christ for his voluntary assumption of our nature; for the preference given to us before the fallen angels; for his condescending to become subject to temptations

\* Dissertation on the Internal Evidences and Excellency of Christianity, App. I. p. 215. VOL. II.—35

and afflictions for our sake, "that in all things he might be made like unto his brethren;" and for his offering himself without spot to God as our atoning sacrifice, thereby *obtaining* the remission of our sins, and becoming the *foundation* of our hopes of eternal life; but none of these things have any place in the system of our opponents. And, though they would persuade us that they hold the sentiments embraced by primitive Christians, yet they cannot follow them in these important particulars. Their views of things will not suffer them to speak of his "taking upon him flesh and blood;" of his "taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham;" of his "being in the form of God, and yet taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men;" of our being forgiven for his sake; or of "the promise of an eternal inheritance" *being received* "by means of his death."\* According to their principles, his coming into the world was no act of his own; he had no existence prior to his existing in *flesh and blood*; it was not a matter of choice with him whether he would be made an angel or a man; he never existed in any other form nor sustained any other character than that of *a servant*; his death had no influence on the forgiveness of our sins, or in procuring eternal life: none of these things, therefore, afford to them any foundation for gratitude.

The substance of this argument was stated in my XIVth Letter; but neither of my opponents has thought proper to take any notice of it. It might be their wisdom to decline this part of the subject, which is so strongly supported by the express declarations of Scripture.

Mr. Kentish seems to feel that love to Christ makes but a diminutive figure in the Socinian scheme; and therefore apologizes for it. To suppose Christ to have been possessed of "a super-human nature, and so to regard him," he says, "would be infringing upon our pious gratitude to the adorable Being whom we are commanded to love with an entire affection." To this I reply, Our belief of a doctrine which our opponents will not allow us to believe, namely, the Divine unity, enables us to repel this objection: we believe (and that, on the first of all authority) that *Christ and the Father are so one*, that "he who hath seen him hath seen the Father;" and that "he who honoureth him," in so doing, "honoureth the Father." The idea thrown out by Mr. Kentish, and which enters into the essence of his system, is what the Scriptures are utterly unacquainted with. They require us to love creatures in different degrees. But inasmuch as this love, if carried to excess, would dishonour the Divine Being, these requirements are accompanied and limited by various cautions. Thus we are required to love all mankind as our fellow creatures, but we must take heed of improper attachment, lest we "worship the creature more than the Creator." We are commanded to love and honour our parents; but if they stand in competition with Christ, we are required comparatively to *hate* them. Christians are enjoined to love their ministers who are over them in the Lord; but if even the servants of Christ be idolized, it shall be demanded on their behalf, "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" We are doubtless obliged to love angels, because they are our "brethren," and are employed as "ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation;" but if any attempt to worship them, they will profess themselves to be what they are, and direct to the worshipping of God, Rev. xxii. 9. Now if Christ be only a creature, it might have been expected that the numerous commands to love and honour him should also have been accompanied with some such cautions, lest, in complying with them, we should "infringe" upon the

\* Heb. ii. 14, 16; Phil. ii. 6, 7; Eph. iv. 32; Heb. ix. 15.

honour due to the Father. The great honour to which Christ was exalted, above all other creatures, rendered such cautions peculiarly necessary; since love to him would be in the greatest danger of being carried to excess; and it is a fact that the great body of those whom our opponents will allow to have been serious Christians, in almost all ages, have actually worshipped him as God. Yet there is not a single caution against this sort of excess in all the New Testament; nor the least intimation that, in giving glory to the Son, we may possibly "infringe" upon the glory of the Father. On the contrary, when the topic of love to Christ occurs, every thing is said to inflame it, and nothing to damp it. There is a becoming jealousy in the Divine Being expressed in other cases, but never in this: if any thing of this kind be expressed, it is on the other side. "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—"If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."—"The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

Mr. Kentish, as if he felt no pleasure in discoursing upon the character and work of Christ as the grounds of love to him, proceeds to remark, with some apparent satisfaction, upon certain expressions of it. "From the lips of our Divine instructor himself," he says, "let us learn the lesson of love to him; let us hence be informed in what this principle consists. 'If a man love me,' says Jesus, 'he will keep my words.'—'He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.'—'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.'—'These things I command you, that ye love one another.' Who can here refrain from observing how truly rational is this language, how remote from mystery and enthusiasm? But whilst Christ declares that such as obey his laws, as imbibe his spirit, manifest love to him, let none of his followers be so ignorant and presumptuous as to insist upon other testimonies of affection to their Master. Of better they cannot possibly conceive; upon stronger they cannot possibly rely."—pp. 18, 19.

I have no dispute with Mr. Kentish concerning what are the proper expressions of love to Christ; but his insinuating that to plead for his Deity and atonement, as grounds of love to him, is to "insist upon other testimonies of affection towards him," testimonies which are "mysterious and enthusiastic," is calculated to perplex the subject. To say nothing of the "decency" of his pronouncing upon our conduct, in this instance, as "ignorant and presumptuous," it is but too manifest that he wishes to confound the *reasons* of love with the *expressions* of it, and, under a show of regard for the one, to draw off the reader's attention from the other. Mr. Kentish may recollect that the same language is used of love to God as of love to Christ: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,"—p. 12. Now, an enemy to the infinitely amiable moral character of the Deity, as the primary ground of love to him, might here exclaim with Mr. Kentish, "Let us hence be informed in what the principle of love to God consists; it is to 'keep his commandments.' Who can here refrain from observing how truly rational is this language, how remote from mystery and enthusiasm? But while God declares that such as keep his commandments manifest love to him, let none be so ignorant and presumptuous as to insist on other testimonies of affection to him. Let them not talk of *contemplating* infinite power employed to execute designs which proceed from infinite benevolence, and of filial affection towards God as enkindled by such contemplations,"—p. 12. Mr. Kentish would probably reply to this effect: 'The *grounds*, or *reasons*, of love to God are one thing, and the appointed expressions of it another; and your depreciating

the former, under a pretence of exalting the latter, is as if you were to kill the root in order to preserve the fruit. Such is my reply to Mr. Kentish.

From the love of God and Christ, Mr. Kentish proceeds to discourse on *the fear of God*,—p. 19. I do not recollect having advanced any thing, in my Letters, on this subject. I may observe, however, that the definition given of this virtue does not appear to me to answer to the Scriptural account of it. It is said to be “the veneration of infinite grandeur.” But this approaches nearer to a definition of admiration than of fear. The *moral* excellence of the Deity, as the object of fear, enters not into it; neither is there any thing of a moral nature included in it. Without taking upon me to define this heavenly virtue, I may observe, that a holy dread of offending God, or of incurring his displeasure, enters into its essence. The main objection that I feel to the scheme of my opponent, on this head, is, that the Divine *goodness*, according to his notion of it, necessarily pursues the ultimate happiness of all creatures, pure or impure, penitent or impenitent, men or devils. This, as I have already stated, undermines that *respect* to the Divine character which is the foundation of both love and fear.

That God is the Father of all his creatures is true (p. 20); but it is also true that he is a Father to those that believe in his Son in such a sense as he is not to the rest of the world. The Jews boasted that God was their Father: but Jesus answered, “If God were your Father, ye would love me.” “To as many as received Christ,” and no more, was power given “to become the sons of God, even to them who believed on his name.” This *adoption by Jesus Christ* is not the common heritage of men: it is a subject of special promise, “Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” And it ought to be observed, that it is this evangelical relation, and not that of creatures to their Creator, that converts our “afflictions into fatherly corrections.” There have been characters in the world, of whom it has been said, “He that made them will not have mercy on them: and he that formed them will show no favour.” These things ought not to be confounded.

After considering the fear of God, our author proceeds to discourse on *confidence in him*,—p. 21. In this, as in most other of his discussions, Mr. Kentish appears to me to forget that he is a sinner; representing the Divine Being, and his creature, man, as upon terms of the most perfect amity. His persuasion of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Deity begets confidence. But nothing is said of his going to God, under a sense of his helpless and perishing condition as a sinner, and under the warrant of the gospel invitations; or of his confiding in him for eternal salvation. The confidence which Mr. Kentish describes is more suitable to the condition of holy angels than of guilty creatures, who have incurred the just displeasure of their Maker.

There is one subject included in the Scripture exercises of devotion which Mr. Kentish has passed over; namely, *trusting in Christ*. Under the article of love to God he considered love to Christ; and trusting in Christ is no less an exercise of Christian devotion than love to him; an exercise, too, with which our eternal salvation stands connected. “In his name shall the Gentiles trust.”—“That ye should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”—“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.”—“I know whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.” In my second Letter, I observed, that, upon the principles of our opponents, “all trust, or confidence, in Christ for salvation is



utterly excluded." And how has Mr. Kentish answered to this charge? By passing it over in silence. This is a serious matter. Oh that, for their own sakes, they could be convinced of the insufficiency of the ground on which they rest their hopes, and build upon the foundation that God hath laid in Zion! Uncharitable and uncandid as they consider me, I could water these pages with tears for them. My heart's desire and prayer to God is that they may be saved. But "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

From reasoning, Mr. Kentish proceeds to *facts*. He calls upon us "to show that, as a body, they are less actuated than others by the spirit of genuine devotion,"—p. 22. Mr. Kentish must be sensible that private devotion is a matter that cannot come under public cognizance. In my VIIIth Letter, therefore, which was written upon this part of the subject, I did not refer to facts, but contented myself with reasoning on the tendency of principles. It is a circumstance not the most favourable, however, to the devotion of Socinians, that persons, when they embrace their system, though they have previously been in the habit of praying to God, yet are frequently known, at that time, entirely to give it up; or if they practise it, it is by drawing up a written composition, and reading it to the Almighty. Such, I suppose, was Mrs. Barbauld's *Address to the Deity*, to which Mr. Kentish referred,—p. 25, note. Though I have not seen it, I doubt not that it was an elegant composition; but whether there was any *devotion* in it is another question. Sure I am that such things are at a great remove from those prayers and supplications which abounded amongst the primitive Christians, and which have abounded amongst serious Christians of every age. Mr. Kentish should consider, too, that the principal part of what I have alleged, to the disadvantage of Socinian piety, is taken from the acknowledgments of their own writers. He calls upon his "fellow Christians to show that, as a body, they are less actuated than others by the spirit of genuine devotion;" and from his fellow Christians, even in the strictest sense of the term, let him receive an answer. Dr. Priestley confesses that so it *seems* to be; and Mrs. Barbauld, by manifest consequence, informs us that *so it is*. "Calvinists," says the former, "*seem* to have more of a real principle of religion than Unitarians." "There is still apparent, in that class called *serious Christians*," says the latter, "a tenderness in exposing these doctrines, a sort of leaning towards them, as in walking over a precipice one would lean to the safest side." What is this but acknowledging that *complete Socinians are not distinguished by their seriousness?*

Mr. Kentish next refers to a *number of characters* of his own denomination who have been eminent for their piety, pp. 23, 25. Whether this account be liable to animadversion, I have no inclination to inquire. To animadvert on the characters of individuals, especially on those of the dead, is invidious; and it forms no part of my plan: on the contrary, as I have said before, I have professedly declined it. Let our opponents make the most of their piety; let them muster up all their force; let them claim those as Unitarians when dead whom they refused to acknowledge as such while they were living;\* I have no apprehensions as to the issue of the contest.

Our opponents, however, must not always be indulged in their pretensions. We cannot allow them, for example, to substitute *words* in the place of *actions*. If one on their side the question make a speech, or print a sermon, or a set of sermons, in favour of morality, they seem to wish to consider it amongst the evidences of the moral tendency of their principles. It is not Dr. Priestley's writing *on the duty of not living to ourselves*, nor Mr. Turner's

\* Dr. Priestley refused to acknowledge Dr. Price as a Unitarian when they were engaged in controversy, though both my opponents now place him in their list.

publishing a volume of sermons on moral subjects, though applauded by Reviewers, principally, if not entirely, of his own persuasion, that will afford a "practical answer to my Letters on Socinianism."\*

From the Divine, Mr. Kentish proceeds to discourse on the *social* and *personal* virtues,—p. 25. I perceive many things, in this part of his performance, which would admit of a reply; but nothing that requires any, except what he alleges on the *innocence of error*. "Liberality," Mr. Kentish observes, "inclines us to believe that involuntary religious error exposes not men to the displeasure of their Maker."—And again, "We assert the innocence of involuntary error. It is the unhappiness of many professors of our religion to consider it as partaking of the nature of sin. Such is the language they use in their writings,"—pp. 29, 30. Surely Mr. Kentish has not read what he has written against, or he must have noticed that I also have acknowledged the innocence of *involuntary* error. Have I not said, "The mere holding of an opinion, considered abstractedly from the motive, or state of mind, of him that holds it, must be simply an exercise of intellect; and, I am inclined to think, has in it neither good nor evil?"—p. 245. Does not Mr. Kentish know that the ground on which I have supposed error relating to the gospel to be sinful is, that it is *not involuntary*? Not that I accuse those who err of *knowing that they do so*, or of *avowing principles which in their conscience they do not believe*: this would not be error, but gross dishonesty. Voluntary error is that which arises from an *evil bias of heart*, or a dislike to the truth. Such is the account given of certain characters by a sacred writer: "Because they received not the love of the truth—God sent them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie." These men were not apprised of their being in an error; they believed their lie: but this belief arose from a dislike of truth; and it was this that denominated it voluntary and sinful.

What is it that Mr. Kentish would persuade his readers that I believe? "The mere conclusions of the understanding," he says, "where the will is unconcerned, cannot surely participate of guilt;" and who thinks they can? "Guilt," he adds, "then only attaches itself to error when men willingly and indolently refuse to employ the means of better information which are put into their hands,"—p. 31. Very well; and who imagines the contrary?

From these principles, which Mr. Kentish seems willing to have considered as the exclusive property of himself and his brethren, he proceeds to draw certain useful improvements: "By these considerations, my fellow Christians," he says, "we are restrained from placing ourselves in the chair of infallibility, from rashly judging upon the present state, and the future doom, of our virtuous, though, it may be, mistaken brethren." Part of this is, no doubt, very good; it is highly proper that fallible creatures should make no pretence to infallibility: but how can Mr. Kentish say that they do not judge upon the present state of others, when, in the same sentence, he pronounces some men "virtuous," and calls them "brethren?" Will he give the name of "virtuous" to every man in the world? If not, he occupies the seat of judgment as really as I do: his censure, therefore, does not affect my judging upon "the present state of men;" (for he does the same, and that in the same breath;) but my not acknowledging those as "virtuous Christian brethren" whom he accounts so.

But, say our opponents, it is illiberal and presumptuous in you to attribute men's errors on Divine subjects to an evil bias of heart. *If they were not attributed to this cause in the Scriptures, I grant it would be so*; but it is neither illiberal nor presumptuous to view things as they are there repre-

\* See "Wood's Sermon," for Turner, of Wakefield, pp. 50, 51, Note.

sented. I have no more inclination than Mr. Kentish to occupy the "chair of infallibility;" but I consider it is a part of my proper work, and that of every other Christian, to *judge of the meaning of his decisions who does occupy it*. Produce me an example from the New Testament of a single character who imbibed and taught false doctrine, and who was treated by the apostles as innocent. How different from this is the conduct of Paul, and Peter, and John, and Jude.\* Nay, produce me a single example of error in matters of religion amongst good men that is treated as innocent in the Holy Scriptures. Are not the tenets of some amongst the Corinthians, who denied the resurrection, called "evil communications," which would "corrupt good manners?" Were not the errors of the Galatians called "disobedience" to the truth; and were they not reproached on this account as "foolish," and in a sort "bewitched," and as needing to have Christ "again formed in them?" Did not our Lord accuse his own disciples, whose minds were blinded by their notions of an earthly kingdom, with folly and slowness of heart? Luke xxiv. 25.

In things purely *natural*, men may think justly, or make mistakes, without any degree of goodness on the one side, or evil on the other; and even in things of a moral nature, if our errors arose either from natural incapacity, or the want of sufficient means of information, they would be excusable; but never, that I recollect, do the Scriptures represent errors of the latter description, especially those which relate to the gospel way of salvation, as arising from these causes. They teach us that "way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein," intimating that the errors which men make concerning the way of salvation do not arise from the want of natural capacity, but of a *way-faring spirit*, or a true desire to walk in it.

I am not conscious of retaining any error, yet there is little doubt but that I do; from having discovered many in my past life, I have reason to suspect that there are many more about me undiscovered. But whatever they be, I suppose they are owing to some sinful prejudice of which I am not aware, and I know not that I am obliged to think differently of the errors of other people.

I perceive Mr. Kentish himself can admit the morality of opinion where himself or a fellow creature is the the object of it. He pleads for liberality of sentiment (by which he seems to intend an equally good opinion of men, notwithstanding their errors) as a *virtue*, a virtue in which he thinks his brethren to excel. He must therefore consider its opposite as a *vice*, a vice which operates to our disadvantage. Now, I would ask Mr. Kentish, as before I asked Mr. Lindsey, "supposing that I am in an error, in thinking amiss of my fellow creatures, why should it not be as innocent as thinking amiss of Christ? Why ought I to be reproached as an illiberal, uncharitable bigot, for the one, while no one ought to think the worse of me for the other?" I wish some one of our opponents would answer this question.

If "the language of *liberality* is," what Mr. Kentish says it is, "that, in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted," we can assure him that we are not such strangers to it as he may be apt to imagine. Such language not only approves itself to our judgments, but rejoices our hearts. And if *bigotry* is, as he defines it, "such an inordinate attachment to our own modes of faith and worship as prompts us to *have no dealings* with those who prefer others, to think of them with unkindness, and to act towards them with violence," provided he do not extend his *dealings* to Christian fellowship, which, according to his note in page 44, he does not, we can cordially unite with him in reprobating it. Liberality and

\* Gal. i. 7, 8; 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 John iv. 6; Jude 4.

candour of this description may exist, as Mr. Kentish observes, in harmony with zeal for religious principle.

But if *liberality* must incline us to treat errors of a moral and religious nature, especially those which relate to the gospel way of salvation, as mere mistakes of the understanding, "in which the will is unconcerned," it is a kind of virtue to which we make no pretence; and if *bigotry* consists in the reverse of this, we have no objection to be thought bigots, believing as we do that such bigotry is abundantly recommended in the Holy Scriptures.

But "it is impossible, surely," says my opponent, "that, maintaining this opinion, they should regard the man whose religious sentiments differ from theirs with perfect complacency, satisfaction, and benevolence,"—p. 30. Where, then, did Mr. Kentish learn to confound "perfect complacency and satisfaction" with "benevolence?" To exercise the former towards characters who renounce what we consider as the fundamental principles of the gospel, or even towards any man but "for the truth's sake that dwelleth in him," is, in our esteem, sinful; but the latter ought to be exercised towards all mankind, whatever be their principles or characters. I cannot be conscious of another's feelings; but, for my own part, I find no difficulty in this matter arising from my religious principles; and it is a satisfaction to my mind to see not only the apostle of the Gentiles ardently desiring the salvation of his countrymen, the Jews, but my Lord and Saviour himself weeping over them, while each abhorred both their principles and their practice. If this be a "persecuting" principle, Paul, and even our Saviour, must both have been persecutors.

Mr. Kentish, having thus reviewed the social and personal virtues, calls upon "fair and unbiassed observation to determine what is the character which they bear in their commerce with mankind." "If," says he, "it be not more exemplary than that of other Christians, it is not, perhaps, in any degree, inferior,"—p. 31. Mr. Kentish knows very well that the authorities from which I drew a contrary conclusion were no other than those of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham. "It cannot be denied," says the former, "that many of those who judge so truly concerning particular tenets in religion have attained to that cool, unbiassed temper of mind, in consequence of becoming more indifferent to religion in general, and to all the modes and doctrines of it." "Men who are the most indifferent to the *practice* of religion," says the latter, "and whose minds, therefore, are least attached to any set of principles, will ever be the first to see the absurdities of a popular superstition, and to embrace a rational system of faith." Such was the method in which these writers attempted to account for the alleged fact, "that rational Christians were indifferent to practical religion." This fact they could not deny; and by attempting to *account* for it, they tacitly admitted it; yea, Mr. Belsham expressly grants that "there has been some plausible ground for the accusation."

To the authority of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham I may now add that of Dr. Toulmin and Mr. Kentish. The former, after the example of his predecessors, endeavours to *account* for their "neglecting the culture of the heart and affections" (p. 36); and the latter acknowledges, without scruple, that, "with less restraint than is practised by some of their brethren, they enter into the world, and indulge in its amusements,"—p. 32.

But Mr. Kentish, though he grants the above, denies that there is any thing in it that can be fairly improved to their disadvantage. "Unless it can be shown," he says, "that we so use the world as to use it to excess, (referring to I Cor. vii. 31,) we shall take no shame to ourselves on this account." It is worth while to remark the *progress* which our opponents make in matters of morality. Dr. Priestley acknowledged much the same as Mr.

Kentish, that "there is a greater apparent conformity to the world in Unitarians than is observable in others;" but he does not undertake to *justify* it: all he attempts is to *account* for it in a way that might reflect no dishonour upon Unitarianism. He represents those amongst them who thus "lean to a life of dissipation" as being only "speculative Unitarians," "men of the world," and distinguishes them from "serious Christians." And when he comes to weigh the virtue of Trinitarians and Unitarians in a balance, he allows that conformity to the world, which is to be found in the latter, to be a detraction from their excellence; and only pleads that they have other virtues which counterbalance it, or which, "upon the whole," cause their character to "approach nearer to the proper temper of Christianity than the other."\* Mr. Belsham also, though he speaks of rational Christians as having "often been represented as indifferent to practical religion," and admits that "there has been some plausible ground for the accusation;" yet does not *justify* it, but expresses a hope that it will be "only for a time;" and that, at length, those who give occasion for such accusations will "have their eyes opened, and feel the benign influence of their principles, and demonstrate the excellency of their faith by the superior dignity and worth of their character."† But how different from all this is the conduct of Mr. Kentish! Dr. Priestley *apologizes*; Mr. Belsham *hopes*; but Mr. Kentish, despairing, it should seem, of things growing better, and refusing to "take shame on the account," boldly *justifies* it; yea, more, suggests that such conformity to the world is "not only lawful, but deserving of praise,"—pp 32, 33. This is carrying matters with a high hand.

From Dr. Priestley's account of things, one might have supposed that though there were "great numbers" of these conformists to the world amongst the Unitarians, yet they were a kind of excrescences of the body, and distinguishable from it, as "men of the world" are distinguishable from "serious Christians;" but, according to Mr. Kentish, it is their general character, and they are not ashamed of it; nay, they consider it as "not only lawful, but deserving of praise!"

That we are allowed, in the passage to which Mr. Kentish refers, to *use this world*, is true: men are allowed to form conjugal connexions, to buy and sell, and to rejoice in all their labour. It is necessary, however, that even these enjoyments should be chastised by an habitual sense of their brevity and uncertainty. That this, or any other passage of Scripture, should be pleaded in favour of an *indulgence in the amusements of the world*, is beyond any thing that I have lately witnessed from the pen of a Christian minister.

My opponent proceeds to his second head of inquiry, viz.

"II. WHAT ASSISTANCE, SUPPORT, AND CONSOLATION DOES THE UNITARIAN DOCTRINE AFFORD IN THE SEASON OF TEMPTATION, AFFLICTION, AND DEATH?"

Mr. Kentish here quotes a number of scriptures, which, allowing him his own exposition of them, can scarcely be said to express a single sentiment peculiar to what he calls Unitarianism. His whole aim, in this part of his subject, seems to be to prove that "Unitarians may, by the principles which they hold in common with others, be possessed of something superior to calmness of mind." I must say, I never saw any thing, in any of their writings, that appeared to me to bear any tolerable resemblance to the joys of the gospel. I admit, however, that what I have advanced on this subject might have been better expressed. If, instead of affirming that "the utmost happiness to which the Socinian scheme *pretends* is calmness of mind," I had said, The utmost happiness which the peculiar principles of Socinians

\* Disc. Var. Sub. p. 100.

† Sermon, &c.

are adapted to promote is calmness of mind, it would have been more accurate. My opponent's being obliged to have recourse to common principles as the springs of joy and consolation, is a sufficient proof that those which are peculiar to his scheme, as a Socinian, were altogether unadapted to his purpose. He may wish to have it thought, indeed, that Christ's being "in all things made like unto his brethren," and his resurrection being that of *a man*, are terms expressive of his peculiar sentiments. So he insinuates,—pp. 34, 35. But let any person consult the first of these passages, Heb. ii. 16, 17, and he will find that he who was in all things made like unto his brethren "took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham;" that is to say, he existed prior to his being a man, and was voluntary in choosing to assume the human rather than the angelic nature. By culling single sentences, without taking their connexion, we may prove any thing we please; but, in so doing, we abuse the Scriptures, rather than interpret them. That the resurrection of Christ was the resurrection of *a man* no one questions; but to infer hence that he was a *mere* man is drawing conclusions which are not contained in the premises.

The scheme of our opponents is so far from being adapted to promote evangelical joy, that it leads them, in general, to despise it as enthusiastic. As an example of this, I cited the critique of the *Monthly Reviewers* upon President Edwards's *History of Redemption*; and such examples might be multiplied almost without end. But if men were not strangers to the sacred joys of religion themselves, how is it possible to conceive that they could despise them in others?

The following head of inquiry is next introduced, viz.

"III. WHAT IS THE DEGREE OF EFFICACY WHICH THE UNITARIAN DOCTRINE POSSESSES IN RESPECT TO THE CONVERSION OF PROFLIGATES AND UNBELIEVERS?"—p. 35.

On another occasion, Mr. Kentish tells his auditors that "concerning the natural influence of religious opinions, the world will judge, not from abstract reasoning and fancied tendencies, but from our dispositions and our lives" (p. 46); that is to say, from facts. But on this subject he has produced neither the one nor the other. "We claim to embrace," he says, "and allow no other doctrine than what Jesus and his apostles taught,"—p. 36. True; but the question is, If their claim be admissible, how comes it to pass that their doctrine has no better effect? Mr. Kentish answers, "The fact is to be explained by the prevalence of human corruptions." Is it a fact, then, that men are more corrupt amongst Socinians than in those congregations where the doctrine of atonement through the blood of Christ is taught and believed?

But, perhaps, what we call conversion will not be admitted by our opponents as genuine. "We reject," says Mr. Kentish, "and reason and the Scriptures, we think, authorize us to reject, every pretence to sudden conversion. True conversion from sin to holiness we regard as the work of time and labour." If it were necessary to examine this subject, the conversion pleaded for by Mr. Kentish might appear as mean in our esteem as ours does in his. But I desire no other criterion of true conversion in this case than that by which *the end is accomplished*. Where I see a man turned from sin to holiness, I call him a converted man. That such a change is sometimes gradual is admitted; but this is not always the case; neither was it in the primitive ages. I know very well that Dr. Priestley, as well as Mr. Kentish, considers all sudden changes as nugatory, and supposes that conversion is a work of time and labour. Upon this principle he affirms that "all late repentance, especially after long and confirmed habits of vice, is absolutely and necessarily ineffectual." That our opponents should imbibe

such an opinion has nothing surprising in it; but that they should pretend that the "Scriptures authorize it" is somewhat extraordinary. Was not the repentance of Zaccheus, and that of the thief upon the cross, a late repentance, and yet effectual? Was the repentance of either of them the effect of long time and labour? Were the Jews under Peter's sermon, the jailer and his household, or any others of whom there is an account in the Acts of the Apostles, converted in the manner Mr. Kentish describes? If, however, the whole that was to be attributed to God, in this change, were no more than Mr. Kentish supposes; if it consisted merely in his furnishing us with "the powers of willing and acting; it might well be considered as a work of time and labour; or rather, as a work that time, in its utmost extent, would never be able to accomplish.

But what end has Mr. Kentish to answer by his objecting to sudden conversion, and representing it as a work of time and labour? Does he mean to suggest that their doctrine has not yet had time to operate? If not, what difference does it make to the argument? We call nothing conversion, amongst us, but that in which a change of disposition and life appears; and if this end were accomplished amongst them in any considerable degree, whether it were suddenly or gradually, he need not be at a loss for facts to support the efficacy of his doctrine. Instead of these, Mr. Kentish is obliged to content himself with *asserting* that "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, rightly understood, have as intimate a connexion with their views of the Christian dispensation as with those of their brethren;"—and with *hoping* that "there are those in their number who have found the plain, the simple, yet the despised gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation."

I shall not controvert the remarks of my opponent respecting the Jews, and respecting unbelievers who reside in a Christian country. It is true, as he observes, "little can be said on either side, inasmuch as the experiment has never, perhaps, been fairly and entirely made by both the parties." Meanwhile, I perfectly acquiesce in the observation, that "eventually, without doubt, that representation of Christianity which has Scripture, and," it may be, "antiquity for its basis; which is simple in its nature, and conformable to our best ideas of the Divine character and government; will every where prevail."

On the subject of *Missions to the Heathen*, I have only to observe, that if other Socinian writers had said nothing worse than Mr. Kentish, my remarks, on that subject, would not have appeared.

Lastly, Mr. Kentish proceeds to consider,

"IV. HOW FAR THE ADMISSION OF UNITARIAN DOCTRINE IS ADAPTED TO PROMOTE A VENERATION FOR THE SCRIPTURES, AND TO FORTIFY OUR FAITH IN CHRISTIANITY,"—p. 38.

The principle which I assumed, at the outset of my inquiry on this subject, was this, "If any man venerate the authority of Scripture, he must receive it *as being what it professes to be, and for all the purposes for which it professes to be written*. If the Scriptures profess to be Divinely inspired, and assume to be the infallible standard of faith and practice, we must either receive them as such, or, if we would be consistent, disown the writers as impostors." After stating this principle as the ground, or datum, of the argument, I proceeded to examine into the *professions* of the sacred writers. Now I would ask Mr. Kentish whether the above position be not unobjectionable as a ground of argument. Has it not the property which every ground of argument ought to possess, that of being admitted, or admissible, by both parties? And if so, why has he not joined issue upon it? I have no inclination to "view my opponent with the eye of jealousy and suspicion" (p. 45);

but what motive can be assigned for his passing over this ground, and substituting in the place of it such a definition of veneration for the Scriptures as leaves out the ideas of *inspiration* and *infallibility*? It is true he has used the former of these terms, but it is manifest that he considers the apostles in no other light than honest, well-informed historians. "To venerate the Scriptures," says he, "is to receive and value them as containing a revelation of the will of God to man; it is to investigate them with diligence and impartiality; to interpret them fairly and consistently; to be guided by the natural, plain, and uniform sense of them, in articles of faith and on points of conduct.—Then, it should seem, do we entertain a just and correct view of their inspiration, when we regard them as the writings of men who derived from the very best sources of information their acquaintance with the history and doctrine of Christ; of men whose integrity is beyond all question; of men who credibly relate facts and discourses which either themselves witnessed, or which they deliver on the authority of the spectators and the hearers; and who faithfully teach that word of God with a knowledge of which they were furnished by their Master, and by miraculous communications subsequent to his ascension."—pp. 38, 39.

Whether this representation sufficiently express a proper veneration for the Scriptures is itself a matter of dispute. It is, therefore, very improper for a ground of argument, and especially for being substituted in the place of a position that was liable to no objection from any quarter. Why did not Mr. Kentish admit my general position, that, "If any man venerate the authority of Scripture, *he must receive it as being what it professes to be, and for all the purposes for which it professes to be written?*" and why did he not, on this ground, join issue in an examination of the *professions* of the sacred writers? Such a conduct would have been fair and manly; but that which Mr. Kentish has substituted in the place of it is evasive, and unworthy of a candid reasoner.

Mr. Kentish having given us his *opinion* of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the veneration that is due to them, thus concludes, "If this be to venerate the Scriptures, our principles, I must be allowed to think, are far indeed from being unfriendly to such veneration,"—p. 39. What does this conclusion amount to more than this, That if his notions of Divine inspiration may be admitted as a standard, why then their veneration for the Scriptures will be found, at least in his opinion, to come up to it? Assuredly, the question was not whether the veneration which our opponents exercise towards the Scriptures be such as corresponds with *their own notions* of their inspiration, but whether it agrees with the veneration which the *Scriptures themselves* require. Mr. Kentish must excuse me, if I remind him of the resemblance of his conduct to that of persons who, "measuring themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves, are not wise."

But further, I am not sure that Mr. Kentish's conclusion will follow, even from his own premises. There is so much disrespect discovered in the writings of our opponents towards the Holy Scriptures, (of which I have attempted to give evidence in my XIIth Letter,) that, even upon Mr. Kentish's own professed views, they come miserably short of veneration. Mr. Kentish acknowledges that veneration "consists in being guided by the natural, plain, and uniform sense of them, in articles of faith, and on points of conduct;" but the *Monthly Reviewers* assert that "the nature and design of the Scriptures is not to settle disputed theories, nor to decide on controverted questions, even in religion and morality—that they are intended, not so much to make us wiser, as to make us better; not to solve the doubts, but rather to make us obey the dictates of our consciences."\* And how

\* Monthly Review Enlarged, Vol. X. p. 357.



are all the subtractions of Dr. Priestley to be reconciled with Mr. Kentish's criterion of veneration? He supposes the sacred penmen to have written upon subjects "to which they had not given much attention, and concerning which they were not possessed of sufficient means of information." Mr. Kentish, it is true, may not be accountable for the assertions of the Monthly Reviewers, or of Dr. Priestley; but then his conclusions should have been more confined; instead of affirming, that "if this be to venerate the Scriptures, their principles are far from being unfriendly to such veneration,"—he should only have asserted it with respect to *his own*.

My opponent proceeds: "But if reverence of these sacred records of our faith is to be manifested by a dread of examining them, lest their doctrines be found in contradiction to our present opinions; or by a blind acquiescence in the unavoidable inaccuracies of transcribers, and in the no less unavoidable, but more injurious, errors of translators; or by a bigoted opposition to every attempt toward an improved knowledge and version of them; or by judging of the truths which they teach rather from the sound of detached passages, than from the signification and tenor of the context; such reverence we disclaim. Sincerely attached to the sacred volume, against such reverence we steadfastly protest,"—pp. 39, 40.

But how if reverence to these sacred records should *not* consist in a dread of examining them; or in a blind acquiescence in the inaccuracies of transcribers, and the errors of translators; or in a bigoted opposition to any attempt toward an improved knowledge or version of them; or in judging of the truths which they teach rather from the sound of detached passages, than from the signification and tenor of the context? How if this should prove to be a kind of reverence for which Mr. Kentish's opponent does not plead any more than himself? And how if our objections should not be against examination, but against the conclusions which some persons draw; not against correcting, but corrupting the translation; not against attending to the scope of the writers, but against torturing them to speak contrary to their real intentions? Will it not follow, in this case, that this "steadfast protest" is against a nonentity, and that this mighty triumph is over a man of straw?

It is a usual way of writing, first to lay down a proposition, and then to establish it by evidence. In this manner I have generally proceeded. Mr. Kentish, in quoting my language, has more than once taken simply the proposition, taking no notice of the evidence by which it was supported, and then accused me of dealing in peremptory assertions,—pp. 29, 35. Such is his conduct in reference to what I have written on the tendency of Socinianism to infidelity,—p. 40, note. Mr. Kentish is welcome to call the positions which I have advanced "calumny," or by what other name he pleases; let but the evidence with which they are supported be considered in connexion with them, and if they will not stand the test of examination, let them share the fate they deserve.

As to what my opponent alleges concerning what it is that denominates any one a professing Christian, and his appeal to the Acts of the Apostles, (p. 41,) I have already said what I judge necessary on that subject in my reply to Dr. Toulmin, where also I have adduced some additional evidence of the tendency of Socinianism to deism.

I have only one more remark to make on Mr. Kentish; it respects the meaning of our Lord's words in John xiv. 28, "My Father is greater than I." The sense which has commonly been put upon this passage, both by Trinitarians and Anti-trinitarians, appears to me to be beside the scope of the writer; nor is that of Mr. Kentish in my judgment more plausible. I agree with him, "that it is not the mere abstract doctrine of his Father's

superiority which he designed to assert," or rather I think that it expresses no comparison whatever between the *person* of the Father and that of the Son. The comparison appears evidently to me to respect *the state of exaltation with the Father and the state of humiliation* which he then sustained. "If ye loved me," saith he, "ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I."—The glory and happiness which my Father possesses, and which I go to possess with him, is greater than any thing I can here enjoy: your love to me therefore, if it were properly regulated, instead of prompting you to wish to detain me here, would rather incline you to rejoice in my departure.\*

But though I disagree with Mr. Kentish in his sense of this passage of Scripture, I perfectly agree with him in the general sentiment with which he concludes his performance, that "the season may not be far distant when systems which assume the Christian name shall, like fabrics erected upon the sand, be overthrown by a mighty fall,"—but "that real Christianity has nothing to fear." And I may add, that it is with sacred satisfaction I anticipate the time when all that exalteth itself against Christ, let it affect whose systems it may, shall utterly fall, and nothing shall be left standing but the simple unadulterated doctrine of the cross.

I shall conclude my reply to both Dr. Toulmin and Mr. Kentish with a brief *Review of the Reviewers*. What has fallen under my observation is contained in the *Monthly* and *Analytical Reviews*, and the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*.

In the *Monthly Review Enlarged* my opponents had reason to expect, not merely a friend and patron, but a respectable and powerful ally. The managers of that work were parties in the controversy, as much so as Dr. Priestley, or Mr. Belsham, or Mr. Lindsey, or Mrs. Barbauld. They were called upon to defend their allegations or to relinquish them. But, like the late empress of the North by the allies, they have been a long time in raising their quota, and at last have mustered up about half a dozen lines. In these lines, which are given in a Review of Mr. Kentish's Sermon, they have, with a design sufficiently apparent, preserved a sullen silence respecting the piece which gave occasion for it. "From an impartial perusal of this sensible and well-written discourse," they tell us, "the candid reader may perhaps apprehend that the important objects of piety and virtue may be advanced on the Unitarian plan, although he should not himself embrace it."—Jan. 1797, Art. 74.

Brief, cautious, and sullen as this review may appear, it is the best that my opponents can either of them boast. It is true it contains merely *opinion*; and that is expressed in very general terms: but herein, for aught I know, may consist its excellency. The other Reviewers, as the reader will presently perceive, by descending to particulars, and attempting to back their opinion with *reasoning*, have ruined the cause, and injured those whom it was their intention to serve.

The *Analytical Review* (Oct. 1796, p. 394) of Dr. Toulmin's performance is too long for insertion here. The substance of it amounts to no more than this, *that the ground on which I have conducted the controversy is not a fair one*. But this implies a reflection on the wisdom of Dr. Toulmin for pretending to meet me upon this ground; and a still greater reflection upon Mr. Kentish for engaging upon it, and acknowledging that "in religion the maxim, *Ye shall know them by their fruits*, is a maxim unquestionably of high authority, evident reason, and familiar application;" yea, more, that it is a criterion "by which the world will judge concerning the natural influ-

\* See Calvin and Henry upon the place.

ence of our religious opinions." It also implies a conviction on the part of the Reviewer that *his cause is lost*. Like a second in a duel, he informs the world that it is no wonder his friend has fallen; for he fought upon unfair ground!

If this review has been of any use to Dr. Toulmin, it is by an attempt to *cover his retreat*. By raising an outcry against the professed ground of the controversy, a kind of apology is formed for its being *shifted*; and the reader's attention is insensibly turned off from the Doctor's false reasoning, and reconciled to what he has advanced foreign to the subject from the Acts of the Apostles. But whatever service might be afforded by this, it is all undone by what follows; for after having raised an outcry against reasoning on the ground of moral tendency, he discovers *an inclination to make the utmost use of it that he is able*. As Dr. Toulmin, notwithstanding his shifting the ground of the argument, has no objection to exhibit all the morality on his side that he can muster up; so neither has the Analytical Reviewer any objection to repeat it after him. The one can tell of their virtuous individuals, and the other can echo the account, though both ought to have known that it is not from the character of individuals, but of the *general body*, that I proposed to reason.

If the critique of the Analytical Review be weak, that in the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine* is still weaker. This Reviewer observes that "the method Dr. Toulmin has taken to show the moral tendency of Unitarian principles is plain and solid; it is one recommended by his antagonist, an appeal to *facts*. He examines every specimen of apostolical preaching recorded in the Acts of the Apostles; each of which, he endeavours to show, is in unison with Unitarian sentiments. From this the inference is very clear, that the world was converted, and the sinners of mankind were brought to faith and repentance, by the preaching of the simple Unitarian doctrine, directly contrary to what Mr. Fuller has advanced, that 'Socinian writers cannot pretend that their doctrine has been used to convert profligate sinners to the love of God and holiness.'"—Oct. 1796, p. 394.

Dr. Toulmin has appealed to *facts*; and it seems the writer of this article does not know but that they were *facts in point*. That they are not so must be evident on the slightest reflection; for they can be of no use to Dr. Toulmin, unless he first prove that the apostles were of his sentiments; and if this be proved, they can be of no use afterwards, because the point in question is supposed to be decided without them. Whether Dr. Toulmin was aware of this I shall not pretend to determine; it is evident, however, that his affecting to join issue in an appeal to facts (p. 6) has every property of a *feint*, or of an attempt to keep up the appearance of a regular pitched battle, while in reality he was effecting a retreat. But whatever may be thought of Dr. Toulmin's acquaintedness or unacquaintedness with what he was doing, this writer appears to know nothing of the matter. He does not know that the Doctor's repairing to the primitive Christians for examples of the conversion of profligates to the love of God and holiness, instead of proving "the direct contrary" to what I had affirmed, affords the strongest confirmation of it. It did not occur to him, it seems, that if Dr. Toulmin could have found, or pretended to find, examples *near home*, he would not have gone to so great a distance in search of them.

## REFLECTIONS ON MR. BELSHAM'S REVIEW

OF

### MR. WILBERFORCE'S TREATISE ON CHRISTIANITY.

(WRITTEN IN 1798.)

SOON after Mr. Belsham had removed to Hackney, he printed his sermon on "The Importance of Truth," in which he strongly maintained the superior moral efficacy of his principles. Amongst other things he affirmed, that "those who were singularly pious with [Calvinistic] principles, could not have failed to have been much better, if they had imbibed a different creed,"—p. 30.

Several things of the same kind were thrown out by other writers of the party. These pretensions were soon after examined by the author of "The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Compared." On the appearance of that publication, though Dr. Priestley could not be persuaded to read it, yet as Mr. Belsham, it is said, "assured him it was well worthy of his perusal," it may be presumed that he himself has perused it. And as he is equally concerned to defend his assertion, and has been called upon to do so, it might have been expected that he would have come forward and answered that publication. But whatever be the reason, he has always shown himself averse to such an undertaking.

Two of his brethren, however, have stood forward, namely, Dr. Toulmin and Mr. Kentish; but neither of them has ventured to vindicate him or Dr. Priestley. A Reply also to these publications has appeared, by the author of "The Systems Compared;" and lately Mr. Kentish has published Strictures upon that Reply. There is a certain point in controversy at which it is proper to discontinue it. "When," as Dr. Watts observes, "little words and occasional expressions are dwelt upon, which have no necessary connexion with the grand point in view,"\* and when a serious investigation becomes likely to degenerate into vain wrangling, it is best to cease. When it comes to this, the public mind says—Desist; and with this decision it becomes a writer, instead of tenaciously contending for the last word, respectfully to acquiesce.

To this may be added, when the misstatements of an opponent are numerous, his sentiments sufficiently explicit, and his expositions of Scripture, with all his critical accoutrements, too absurd to be regarded by serious and thinking minds, the continuation of a controversy is not more tedious to a reader than it must be irksome to a writer. The subject is before the public; let them decide.

A few remarks, however, may be offered on a passage or two in Mr. Belsham's Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise.

Having given a brief account of his own opinions, he adds, "This short abstract of Unitarian principles will enable us to judge of the value of an argument proposed in a work entitled, 'Calvinism and Socinianism Com-

\* Improvement, Part II. chap. 8.

pared,' upon which Mr. Wilberforce passes a very high encomium;\* the amount of which is, 'We Calvinists being much better Christians than you Socinians, our doctrines must of course be true.' To this masterly defence of the doctrines of Christianity, and acute refutation of the opposite errors, Mr. Wilberforce and his friends are welcome. The Unitarians will not trespass upon the holy ground. We have learned that 'not he who commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth;' and, satisfied with this, we wait with cheerful confidence the decision of that day which shall try every man's work. In the mean time, we rest our cause upon the Scriptures critically examined and judiciously explained. This way of reasoning is branded in the same masterly performance as 'mangling and altering the translation to our own minds,' which brings to my recollection the Quaker's exclamation, O argument, O argument, the Lord rebuke thee!"—p. 274.

Mr. Wilberforce having observed it "as an unquestionable fact, a fact which Unitarians almost admit, that they are not distinguished by a superior purity of life, and still less by that frame of mind which, by the injunction to be spiritually, not carnally minded, the word of God prescribes to us as one of the surest tests of our experiencing the vital power of Christianity,"—"Such," Mr. Belsham replies, "is the candid judgment which Mr. Wilberforce forms of the moral and religious character of the Unitarians. How nearly resembling the character of the Pharisee in the parable, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, nor even as this publican!' How closely bordering upon that supercilious spirit which our Lord reproves in the Jews, who concluded, because the Son of man came eating and drinking, and affecting no habits of austerity, or unnecessary singularity, that he must therefore be the friend and associate of publicans and sinners! But be it known to Mr. Wilberforce, and to all who like him are disposed to condemn their brethren unheard, that if the Unitarians were inclined to boast in the characters of those who have professed their principles, they have whereof to glory; and if they took pleasure in exposing the faults of their more orthodox brethren, they likewise have tales to unfold which would reflect little credit, either on the parties or on their principles. But of such reproaches there would be no end."—pp. 267, 268.

On these passages I take the liberty of offering a few remarks:—

1. The *amount* of the work to which Mr. Belsham alludes is not what he makes it to be, that "we Calvinists being much better Christians than you Socinians, our doctrines must of course be true." A large proportion of that work is designed to point out the native tendency of principles, or what, other things being equal, they may be expected to produce in those who imbibe them.

2. If that part of the work which relates to facts fall under a censure of self-commendation, the same may be said of the writings of some of the best of men who have ever written. Mr. Neal, in his *History of the Puritans*, thought it no breach of modesty to prove that they were far better men than their persecutors.—Vol. I. c. 8. The Reformers, in establishing their cause availed themselves of the immoralities of the papists, and the superior moral efficacy of the doctrine of the Reformed churches upon the hearts and lives of men. The ancient fathers, in their apologies for Christianity, constantly appealed to the holy lives of Christians as a proof of the purity of their doctrine. And the apostles, though they praised not themselves, yet made no scruple of affirming that those who believed their doctrines were "purified in obeying them;" that they "were of God," and that "the whole world was

then lying in wickedness." These things were truths, and they had a right to insist upon them, not for the purpose of commending themselves, but for the sake of doing justice to the gospel.

3. In reflecting upon the ground of argument used by the author of "The Systems Compared," contemptuously calling it "holy ground," does not Mr. Belsham cast a reflection upon the great Founder of the Christian religion, who taught his disciples to judge of the tree by its fruits?\*

4. By rejecting this ground of argument, and professing to rest his cause upon another, Mr. Belsham, after the example of Dr. Toulmin, has given up the controversy as it respects the moral efficacy of principles.

5. If reasoning from the moral efficacy of doctrines be improper, and imply the pharisaical spirit of self-commendation, Mr. Belsham must have acted improperly and pharisaically in commencing an attack on the Calvinists upon this principle. Did the author of "The Systems Compared" begin this war? No; it was Mr. Belsham himself that began it. This "holy ground," from which he now pretends to retire in disgust, was of his own marking out. It was Mr. Belsham who, in the plenitude of his confidence that his cause was the cause of *truth*, first pleaded for its comparative importance, by affirming that those who were pious and benevolent characters with our principles would have been much more so with his. And yet this same Mr. Belsham, after thus throwing down the gauntlet, can decline the contest; after two of his brethren have tried all their strength, and summoned all their resources, in defence of Socinian piety, he can talk of Unitarians "not trespassing upon this holy ground," and of the characters which they *could* produce, were they inclined to boast. Yes: this is the writer who, after acknowledging that "Unitarians had often been represented as indifferent to practical religion;" allowing, too, "that there had been some plausible ground for the accusation," and not justifying such things, but merely expressing a *hope* that they would continue "but for a time;"—this, I say, is the writer who can now accuse Mr. Wilberforce of Pharisaism for repeating his own concessions; and, what is worse, can justify that life of dissipation which he had before condemned, by comparing it with the conduct of him who "came eating and drinking, and affecting no habits of austerity or unnecessary singularity."

6. It is not true that the author of "The Systems Compared" has objected either to the "critical examination or judicious explanation of the Scriptures." It is true he has not adopted this as his ground of argument; yet instead of denying it in others, as Mr. Belsham would have it thought, he has expressed his approbation of it. It is not of criticising, and much less of judiciously explaining the Scriptures, that he complains, but of perverting them. In the same page in which he complained of the Socinians "mangling and altering the translation to their own minds," he also said, "Though it be admitted that every translation must needs have its imperfections, and that those imperfections ought to be corrected by fair and impartial criticism; yet where alterations are made by those who have an end to answer by them, they ought always to be suspected, and will be so by thinking and impartial people." If Mr. Belsham had quoted this part of the passage as well as the

\* If Mr. Belsham should distinguish, as Mr. Kentish does, between the *truth* of doctrines and their *value*, and maintain that the effects which they produce are a proper criterion of the latter, but not of the former, it might be asked whether the value of a doctrine does not imply its truth? Surely falsehood will not be reckoned valuable! and if so, whatever proves the value of a doctrine, proves it at the same time to be true.

Should he further allege, with the above writer, that "this celebrated saying is proposed as a test of character, and not as a criterion of opinion;" it might be answered, it is proposed as a test of *false* prophets or teachers; a character never ascribed to those whose doctrines accord with *truth*. See Matt. vii. 15.

other, it might have prevented the pleasure which doubtless he felt in repeating the Quaker's exclamation. To say nothing of his pedantic supposition, that all argument is confined to criticising texts of Scripture, let others judge who it is that is under the necessity of exclaiming, "O argument, O argument, the Lord rebuke thee!" After all, the *stress* which our opponents lay upon criticism affords a strong presumption against them. It was a shrewd saying of Robinson's, "Sober criticism is a good thing; but woe be to the system that hangs upon it!"

7. The threat which Mr. Belsham holds out of "the tales which they could tell of their orthodox brethren" contains an unfounded implication. Any reader would suppose, from this passage, that Mr. Belsham's opponents had dealt largely in such tales; but this is not true. If the author on whom he reflects had been disposed to deal in articles of this kind, he might possibly have swelled his publication beyond its present size. But, contrary to this, he professedly disclaimed introducing individual characters or private tales on either side, as being equally invidious and unnecessary to the argument. The truth is, he rested his cause upon the concessions of his adversaries; and this is the galling circumstance to Mr. Belsham and his party. What tales have been told are of their telling. They may now insinuate what great things they *could* bring forward in their own favour, and to our disadvantage, were they not restrained by considerations of modesty and generosity. But they can do nothing, and this they well know, without first retracting what they have conceded; nor even then, forasmuch as all such retractions would manifestly appear to the world to be only to answer an end.

In fine, I appeal not merely to Mr. Belsham's special jury of "men of enlightened minds and sound learning," but to every man of common understanding, whether his apology for declining a defence of his own assertion be either ingenuous or just; whether a larger portion of misrepresentation and self-contradiction could well have been crowded into so small a compass; and whether what he has advanced can be considered in any other light than as the miserable groan of a dying cause.

LETTERS TO MR. VIDLER,  
ON  
THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

A REVIEW of the Controversy between Mr. Vidler and Mr. Fuller on the doctrine of Universal Salvation, in Twelve Letters to a Universalist, being prepared for the press, it was judged a fit opportunity for gratifying the wishes of many of Mr. Fuller's friends to reprint his Letters to Mr. Vidler on that subject. He was accordingly applied to for his permission, and returned the following answer: "Mr. Vidler, in a letter to me, signified his intention to reprint the whole controversy. As he has now, I should think, had sufficient time to fulfil his proposal, and has not done it, you are at liberty to publish that part of it which belongs to me."

The reader is requested to notice that the first of these Letters appeared in the Evangelical Magazine for September, 1795, and the seven following ones in the Universalist's Miscellany, between July, 1779, and July, 1800; and that, owing to this circumstance, the first Letter in the present series was not numbered in that of the Universalist's Miscellany: but what is there called the *first* is here the *second*; and so on throughout.

August 2, 1802.

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LETTER I.

EXPOSTULATIONS WITH MR. VIDLER,\* ON HIS HAVING EMBRACED THE DOCTRINE  
OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It has afforded me some painful concern to hear of your having embraced the scheme of universal salvation. When you were at K—, you appeared to me to be of a speculative disposition. I have long thought such a turn of mind to be very advantageous, or very dangerous; persons

\* Mr. Vidler was a popular minister, pastor of the Baptist church at Battle, in the county of Sussex. He had considerable talents, a commanding address, and insinuating manners. His congregation was large, and he very artfully corrupted the members of the church, always very solemnly denying the real character of his doctrines till he found that a majority of them went with him; he then threw off the mask, and expelled the members who would not embrace his creed. The latter built a new house, and after long and arduous struggles have succeeded in raising another Baptist church. Mr. V. maintained his popularity at Battle for a few years, when he removed to London, to succeed Winchester, and there he died. As might be expected, he and the people at Battle, fell into the lowest quagmires of Socinianism; and, as will always be the case where the peculiarities of the Gospel are disowned, the cause has dwindled. It is matter of devout thankfulness that error ultimately destroys itself; while truth retains the principle of vigour, and rises, sooner or later, above all her enemies.—B.



of this description either make great advances in truth, or fall into great errors. I cannot, in this letter, enter deeply into the controversy; nor is there any necessity for it, as I am told that Dr. Edwards's Answer to Dr. Chauncey is in your hands. I earnestly wish you may read that piece with care, impartiality, and openness to conviction. I think you ought to have read it before you advanced your change of sentiment; and I greatly wish you had; for though I do not question your openness to conviction, any more than that of any other person in your situation, yet I know something of what is in man: I know it is a very rare thing, *when we have once openly disavowed a sentiment, to return to it, and openly avow it again.* There are many instances of people changing their principles, and there may have been instances of the other; but I do not recollect any. False shame, supported by mistaken pride, forms here a very powerful temptation. The dread of being accused of versatility and indecision insensibly obtains such a dominion over the mind as to blind it to one side of the argument, and to give efficacy to every thing that looks like an argument, or the shadow of an argument, on the other.

It is certainly a very serious matter that we *do not err* in our ministrations. Error in a minister may affect the eternal welfare of many. I hope I may presume upon the friendliness of your temper, while I expostulate with you upon the subject. I will not be tedious to you; but let me entreat you to consider the following things:—

First, Whether your change of sentiment has not arisen from an idea of endless punishment being, in itself, *unjust*. If it has, consider whether this does not arise from diminutive notions of the evil of sin; whether you be not too much infected by sin yourself to be a proper judge of its demerit—(a company of criminals would be very improper judges of the equity and goodness of a law which condemns them); whether you do not hold a principle from which it will follow, that millions will be finally happy who will not be indebted to either the grace of God or the death of Christ for their happiness; and consequently, must have a heaven to themselves, not being able to join with those who ascribe theirs to God and the Lamb. For if endless misery be *unjust*, exemption from it must be the sinner's *right*, and can never be attributed to *mercy*; neither could a mediator be needed to induce a righteous God to liberate the sinner, when he had suffered his full desert. In fine, consider whether you do not contradict your own experience. I think you have told me of your great distress of soul, arising from a consciousness of your deserving to be cast out of God's favour, and banished for ever from his presence. Can you *now* say that you did not deserve this? Do you not deserve it still? If you do, why not others?

Secondly, Consider *whether the genius of the sentiment in question be not opposite to that of every other sentiment in the Bible.* The whole tenor of Scripture saith "to the righteous, it shall be well with him; and to the wicked, it shall be ill with him:" but universal salvation saith, not only to the righteous, but to the wicked, it shall be well at last with him. Do consider whether you can find any one Scripture truth that resembles it in this respect. What doctrine, besides this, can you find in the Bible that affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death? Instead of siding with God against a wicked world, as a servant of God ought to do, is not this siding with a wicked world against God, and encouraging them to believe, what they are apt enough to believe without encouragement, that they "shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst?" "Woe is me," said an apostle, "if I preach not the gospel?"

“If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel,” he is declared to be “accursed!” Do seriously consider whether the doctrine of universal salvation will not render your preaching “another gospel.” The gospel of Christ is *good tidings to the meek, healing to the broken-hearted, and comfort to them that mourn*; but must not yours be good tidings to the proud and impenitent, and comfort to those whom the Scripture declares under condemnation and the curse? The gospel of Christ is a system of holiness; a system entirely opposite to every vicious bias of the human heart; a system, therefore, which no unrenewed heart embraces: “He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” But the good news which you must publish requires no change of heart that it may be embraced, being just suited to the wishes of an abandoned mind.

Thirdly, Consider whether your ministrations, on this principle, will not savour of his who taught our first parents, “Ye shall not surely die.” If you should raise the hopes of the ungodly part of your audience, that, though they should live and die in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not *be filthy still*; though they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove *bottomless*; though the worm may prey upon them, yet, at some period or other, it shall *die*; and though they may have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell in *everlasting* burnings; if, I say, you should raise such hopes, and if all at last should prove a deception, think how you will be able to look *them* in the face another day; and, what is still more, how you will be able to look *Him* in the face who hath charged you to be “free from the blood of all men;” and to “say unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him!”

My dear friend! do not take it unkindly. My soul is grieved for you, and for the souls of many around you. How are you as to peace of mind, and communion with God? Beware of the whirlpool of Socinianism. From what I understand of the nature and tendency of your principles, it appears to me you are already within the influence of its destructive stream. All who hold this sentiment, I know, are not Socinians; but there are few, if any, Socinians who do not hold this sentiment; which is certainly of a piece with their whole system. It would greatly rejoice my heart to be able to acknowledge you, as heretofore, my brother and fellow labourer in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do let me hear from you, and believe me to be

Yours, &c.

A. F.

## LETTER II.

REASONS FOR NOT CONTINUING THE CONTROVERSY, AND REPLIES TO MR. VIDLER'S OBJECTIONS TO THE FOREGOING.

SIR,

In the year 1793, when I understood that you had imbibed the doctrine of universal salvation, I wrote you a private expostulatory letter, to which you returned no answer. You speak of this letter as being no secret in the circle of my acquaintance. I do not think it was shown to more than two or three individuals. Some time after, as a request was made, in the *Evangelical Magazine*, for some thoughts on that subject, and as there was nothing private in the contents of that letter, I took the liberty to send it up for insertion. Accordingly it appeared in the Magazine for September,

1795, under the signature of *Gaius*. To this letter you have since written an answer, in the two first numbers of your *Miscellany*: I received, from you, a copy of those numbers at the time; and, since then, another of the second edition; for both of which I thank you. To this I made no reply. In your second edition, you inform your readers of the case, and seem to wish much to know the reasons of my silence. Some of your friends in the country, possessing a little of the sanguine temper perhaps of your Birmingham correspondent, appear to have entertained a hope that it was owing to the impression which your letters had made upon my mind. If such be also your hope, I can only say it has no foundation.

Whether the reasons of my silence be "cogent" or not, the reader will judge, when I have stated them. If I do not consider them as requiring a *continued* silence, it is because you have compelled me to pursue a different conduct. To the best of my recollection, I had three reasons for not writing at that time:—

First, I did not know that it would be agreeable to you to insert in your *Miscellany* what I might write upon the subject; and though I considered the *Evangelical Magazine* as a suitable work for the introduction of a single piece, yet it did not appear to be a very proper vehicle for a continued discussion, unless what was said on both sides were introduced.

Secondly, Though I was not very deeply impressed with the force of your arguments; yet, being fully persuaded, notwithstanding what you say of the holy nature of your doctrine, that it needed only to be read by a certain description of people in order to be imbibed; and not supposing your work to have a very extensive circulation at present; I thought it might be as well to let it alone. You may consider this, if you please, as an acknowledgment of the weakness of my cause.

Thirdly, Your two letters appeared to me to contain so many misapprehensions, and such a quantity of perversion of the plain meaning of Scripture, that I felt it a kind of hopeless undertaking to go about to correct them.

I do not entertain a mean opinion of your talents, but I think they are perverted by a system. You write as though you did not understand the plain meaning of words. I should not have thought that, by saying, "I observed you to be of a *speculative* disposition," I should either have puzzled or offended you. I certainly did not mean, by that form of speech, either that you discovered a disposition "not to take the assertions of men as the rule of your faith," on the one hand; or any particular "want of respect towards the sacred writings," on the other. I should not have thought of using such modes of expression to convey either of these ideas. If you choose to pay yourself such a compliment, or load yourself with such a censure, you are at liberty to do so; but do not attribute either of them to me. You might have supposed that I meant to exhibit no very heavy charge, nor indeed any charge at all, under this form of expression; seeing I added, that "such a turn of mind might be very *advantageous*, as well as very dangerous."

In suggesting that "it is a serious matter that we err not in our ministrations," I do not mean either to take it for granted that you were in an error, or to prove that you were so; but merely to bespeak your serious attention to the subject. Your stumbling at the threshold in this manner, sir, afforded but little hope that, if I wrote, it would produce any other effect than a wrangle of words, for which I had neither time nor inclination.

The three questions which I put to you, and "entreated you to consider," were, it seems, totally irrelative to the subject, equally so as to "the doctrine of election;" yet you thought proper to offer answers to some parts of them, as well as to pass over others. Waving, for the present, the consideration

of those parts which you have noticed, I shall remind the reader of a few things which you have *not* noticed, and leave him to judge whether even they were totally irrelative to the subject.

You have not told us, that I recollect, whether you claim an exemption from endless punishment *as a right*; but seem to wish us to think that this is not your ground, especially as you ascribe it to the death of Christ (p. 10): yet, in other parts of your Miscellany, I perceive the gift of Christ itself is considered as a *reparation for an injury* (p. 69); which affords but too plain a proof that, notwithstanding all you say of grace and love, it is not on the footing of grace, but *debt*, that you hold with universal salvation.

Under the second question, you were asked, "What doctrine, *besides* that of universal salvation, you would find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death?" To this you have given no answer. Was this question equally irrelative to the subject as to the doctrine of election?

Under the third question, you were addressed as follows:—"If you should raise the hopes of the ungodly part of your audience, that though they should live and die in their *filthiness*, yet they shall not be *filthy still*; though they go down to the *pit*, yet it shall not prove *bottomless*; though the worm prey upon them, yet at some period or other it shall *die*; and though they may have to encounter *devouring fire*, yet they shall not dwell with *everlasting burnings*: if, I say, you should raise such hopes, and if all at last should prove a deception, think how you will be able to look *them* in the *face* another day; and, what is still more, how you will be able to look *Him* in the face who hath charged you to be *pure from the blood of all men!*" Was this equally irrelative to the subject as to the doctrine of election? Yet to no part of this have you given any answer, except your attempting to explain away the term *everlasting* may be so called. You represent the whole of this third question as proceeding on the supposition of your denying *all* future punishment. But is not this a gross misrepresentation? Does not the whole foregoing passage allow that you admit of future punishment of a limited duration; and hold up, though not in the form of arguments, several Scriptural objections to that notion? I consider this, sir, as a further proof of your talents for fair and plain reasoning being perverted by a system.

You appeal to the *Scriptures*, and contend that they no where teach the doctrine of endless punishment; yet you are aware that they *appear* to do so, and are obliged to have recourse to a method of weakening the force of terms, in order to get rid of them. It has been long the practice of writers on your side of the question to ring changes on the words *aion* and *aionios*,—pretty words, no doubt; and could they be proved to be less expressive of endless duration than the English words *everlasting* and *eternal*, they might be something to the purpose; but if not, the continual recurrence to them is a mere affectation of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant. Be this as it may, this is an exercise which hardly becomes you or me. I shall only observe upon it, that, by this method of proceeding, you may disprove almost any thing you please. There are scarcely any terms, in any language, but what, through the poverty of language itself, or the inequality of the number of words to the number of ideas, are *sometimes* used in an improper or figurative sense. Thus if one attempt to prove the Divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah, God, &c.*, you may reply that the name *Jehovah* is sometimes given to things; as to an altar, a city, and once to the church; therefore nothing can be concluded, from hence, in favour of the argument. Thus, also, if one go about to prove the omniscience of God, from its being declared that *his understanding is infi-*

nite, you might answer, the term "infinite" is sometimes used to express only a very great degree; as when the strength of Ethiopia and Egypt is said to have been *infinite*, Nah. iii. 9. Again, If one endeavour to prove the endless existence of God from his being called the *eternal* God, the *everlasting* God, &c., or the endless duration of the heavenly inheritance, from its being called *eternal* life, an inheritance *incorruptible* and that *fadeth not away*; you might answer, these terms are sometimes used to signify only a limited duration; and that a thing, in common language, is said to be *incorruptible*, when it will continue a long time without any signs of decay.

The question is, *Could stronger terms have been used, concerning the duration of future punishment, than are used?* To object against the words *everlasting*, *eternal*, &c., as being too weak or indeterminate in their application for the purpose, is idle, unless others could be named which are stronger, or more determinate. What expressions could have been used that would have placed the subject beyond dispute? You ordinarily make use of the term *endless* to express our doctrine: it should seem, then, that if we read of *endless* punishment, or punishment *without end*, you would believe it. Yet the same objections might be made to this as to the words *everlasting*, *eternal*, &c. It is common to say of a loquacious person, He is an *endless* talker: it might, therefore, be pretended that the term *endless* is very indeterminate; that it often means no more than a long time; and, in some instances, not more than three or four hours, at longest. Thus you see, or may see, that it is not in the power of language to stand before such methods of criticising and reasoning as those on which you build your system.

Admitting all that you allege in favour of the limited sense of the above terms, still the nature of the subject, the connexion and scope of the passages, together with the use of various other forms of expression, which convey the same thing, are sufficient to prove that, when applied to the doctrine of future punishment, they are to be understood without any limitation.

If we read of a disease cleaving to a man *for ever*, the plain meaning is, *to the end of his life*; if of an *everlasting* priesthood, the meaning is, one that should continue *to the end of the dispensation* of which it was an institute; if of *everlasting* hills, or mountains, the meaning is, that they will continue *till the end of the world*: but if, *after* this world is ended, and successive duration consequently terminated, we read that the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, and that in the same passage in which it is added, *but the righteous into everlasting life*, (Matt. xxv. 46,) woe be to the man who dares to plunge into that abyss, on the presumption of finding a bottom!

The evidence which you offer of a *successive duration* after this period is a proof of the scarcity of that article in the paths which you are in the habit of tracing. A plain, unbiassed reader of Scripture would have supposed that the terms *day and night*, in Rev. xiv. 11, had been a figurative mode of expression, to denote *perpetuity*; and especially as the same language is used by the inhabitants of heaven, chap. vii. 15. For my part, I confess, I should as soon have dreamed of proving, from what is said in chap. xxi. 24—"The *nations* of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the new Jerusalem,"—that mankind will maintain their present political distinctions in a future state, as of founding, upon such language, the idea of successive duration. Your expositions on other parts of the Revelation are of the same description, as frigid as they are puerile. It is a wonder the new Jerusalem *coming down from heaven* had not been supposed to have fallen into *the sea*, and to have filled it up; and an argument been drawn from its great dimensions of its being large enough to contain the whole human race. You must not be surprised, sir, if I do not perceive the force of these passages, in proving that all beyond the last judgment is not *proper eternity*.

## LETTER III.

## DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING MR. VIDLER'S SCHEME, AND ITS INCONSISTENCY WITH SCRIPTURE.

SIR,

You complain, more than once, of my not understanding the subject against which I write; and here, for aught I see, I must fall under. I confess I do not, nor can I understand what it is that you believe. Having heard and seen so much of your professing to hold the doctrine of *universal* salvation, *universal* restitution, and that "all men will be finally benefited by the death of Christ," I really thought you had meant so; and could not have imagined that, with these pretensions, you would have avowed the notion of annihilation. Hence it was that in my third question, though I did not, as you allege, proceed upon the supposition of your denying *all* future punishment, yet, I acknowledge, I did proceed upon the supposition that you hold with no other future punishment than what should terminate in everlasting life. And who could have thought otherwise? After all the information you have since given me, I am still so ignorant as not to understand how all men are to be finally saved, and yet a part of them annihilated! Neither can I comprehend how there can come a time with sinners when he that made them will *not have mercy upon them*, on the supposition that *all punishment, of all degrees and duration, is itself an exercise of mercy*,—p. 10.

Neither can I comprehend how you reconcile many things in your scheme with the Scriptures. I have been used to understand the terms *death* and *perish*, being opposed to everlasting life, (John iii. 16; x. 28,) as expressive, not of the loss of being, but of well-being. But with you they signify annihilation,—p. 42. The design of God, it seems, in giving his Son to suffer for us, was not to save us from suffering, but merely from becoming extinct, and to perpetuate our existence. And the *death* which those who keep his sayings shall never taste, John viii. 52, means the same thing: they shall exist for ever; a blessing which your scheme makes equally applicable to many who do not keep his sayings as to those who do. And where do you find the above terms used to convey the idea of annihilation on any other subject; and whence was this notion learned?\*

When we are told "that God will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he hath made," Isa. lvii. 16; I supposed it had been meant only of them who, in the context, are said to *put their trust in the Lord*; and that in the present life, seeing it was promised them that they should *possess the land, and inherit his holy mountain*; of them who were of a *contrite and humble spirit*, and not of the *wicked*, who are likened to the *troubled sea*, for whom there is *no peace*; but you consider all these promises as belonging to the same people as the threatening in chap. xxvii. 11, "He that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour!"

I observe, when such terms as *for ever* seem to favour your cause, they are to be taken in their utmost latitude of meaning. If it had been said of the Divine Being, he *will* contend for ever, you would have introduced your sing-song of *aionas* and *aionon*,† as sometimes meaning only a limited dura-

\* The reader will perceive, hereafter, that Mr. Fuller was mistaken in supposing Mr. Vidler to hold the doctrine of annihilation; this he acknowledges in Letter VII.—Ed.

† Alluding to Mr. Vidler's quotation in the Universalist's Miscellany, No. 1. p. 8.

tion; but seeing it is said he will *not* contend for ever, here the word must be understood of duration without end. You must excuse me, however, if I for once avail myself of your critical labours, and remind you that *for ever*, in this passage, refers merely to the present life, as the context plainly shows.

I never imagined, till I saw it in the writings of universalists, that *finishing transgression* and *making an end of sin*, Dan. ix. 24, had any reference to what was to be done after the resurrection and the last judgment; and especially since what is there predicted was to be accomplished within *seventy weeks*, or four hundred and ninety years, from the time of the prophecy.

I have been used to think that the mediation of Christ was not on behalf of fallen angels, whose nature he took not on him, of whose salvation the Scriptures are silent, and whose own ideas are, that they have nothing to do with him, Matt. viii. 29. But, according to your reasonings, they also must be either saved or annihilated; yea, they must have at least the offer of salvation, otherwise their present and future sufferings would not be in mercy, which you consider as belonging to all punishment whatever.

It had been usual with me to think that the triumph of mercy in the day of retribution, as described in James ii. 13; Psal. lxii. 12, respected another description of people than those who were to receive *judgment without mercy*; namely; those that should "so speak, and so do, as they that should be judged by the perfect law of liberty:" but you have found out a scheme, it seems, in which these opposites are united in the same persons; and in which the ungodly, while receiving *judgment without mercy*, have no judgment but what is *in mercy*,—p. 10. Is it surprising, sir, that a man of plain and ordinary capacity should be at a loss to understand such things as these?

It would not have occurred to me that an argument could have been drawn from the threatenings of God to Israel in the present life, Lev. xxv., to what shall be done to the ungodly world in the life to come; yet so it is, p. 43; and the ground on which the analogy is justified is the *immutability* of the Divine character. But what the immutable character of God requires to be done must be done alike in all ages, and to all people; whereas what was there threatened of Israel was not done at the same time to other nations, nor has it been done since to any nation beside them, Amos iii. 2; Acts xvii. 30. There is nothing in it analogous to his dealings with mankind, unless it be the general idea of his "making use of natural evil to correct moral evil." This being known to be the case on earth, you "cannot but think it must be the design of future punishment." Such is the whole of your argument, which you recommend to my "serious consideration!" But how if, on the other hand, I should say, though natural evil be used on earth to correct moral evil in society at large, yet it is not always sent for the purpose of correcting the parties themselves? We have no proof that the men of Sodom were destroyed by fire, or Pharaoh drowned in the sea, for their good; therefore I cannot but think there is a similar design in future punishment.

I always supposed that the sense in which God is said to be "*the Saviour of all men*, especially of them that believe," (p. 44,) was that in which the apostle there puts his *trust* in him; namely, as the God of providence, whose care is extended to all his creatures, but especially to believers.

I have read of the "dispensation of the fulness of times;" but the idea never occurred to me that these times were to be understood of ages beyond the last judgment. I have no doubt but the "gathering together in one all things in Christ which are in heaven, and which are on earth," will be accomplished, and that within the limits of *time*. If it be done, as you allow it will, (p. 10,) by the time "that he shall have put down all rule, and all

authority, and power, and shall have subdued all things unto himself," it will be done by the time he shall have raised the dead and judged the world; for THEN is this work described as being accomplished, 1 Cor. xv. 24.

In reading the account of the "new heaven and new earth," in the 21st chapter of the Revelation, I find, amongst other things, it is said, "there shall be no more death;" and afterwards, "no more curse;" but I should not have thought of these things being applied to the universe at large, but merely to the inhabitants of that blessed state; and the rather, seeing it is said, in the same chapter, that "the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have *their part* in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Neither could I have supposed it possible, from such a representation of the *second death*, to conclude that it consisted in annihilation.

By the "times of the restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21, I have been used to understand the times of the resurrection and the last judgment; for that till then, and no longer, will Christ be detained *in the heavens*. Whenever Christ descends from heaven, then, according to Peter, will be the times of the restitution of all things: but this will be previously and in order to his raising the dead, and judging the world, 1 Thess. iv. 16. Consequently, these are the times of which the apostle speaks. The utter overthrow which will then be given to the kingdom of Satan by the general conflagration, 2 Pet. iii. 12; the destruction of the last enemy, death, by the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 23, 26; and the final adjustment of human affairs by the last judgment, Matt. xxv. 31—46; will be a *restitution of all things*: the empire of sin will be crushed, and the government of God completely restored.

But the *times* in which your scheme is to be accomplished must be after the final judgment; for from that period there is an *everlasting punishment* for the wicked to endure, a *lake of fire* into which they are to be cast, Matt. xxv. 46; Rev. xx. 15, and from which your restitution of all things is to recover them. Your restitution, therefore, and that of the Scriptures, are not the same.

You cannot conceive of a restitution of all things, and of sin being *made an end of*, unless all the individuals in the creation be either reconciled to God or annihilated; but what authority have you for such a construction of these terms? Did the *restoring of all things* on the Messiah's first appearance, Matt. xvii. 11, include all individuals, as far as it went? When God said to Zedekiah, "And thou, profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end," did it mean that he should be either converted or annihilated? Ezek. xxi. 25. And when the same language is used of the sins of the people, chap. xxxv. 5, does it mean that they should be either converted or annihilated? Rather, is it not manifest that, by *iniquity having an end*, is meant that the perpetrators of it were brought to condign punishment, shut up in Babylon, as in a prison, and rendered incapable of doing further mischief? Such will be the case with all the ungodly at the second coming of Christ; and this will be the restoration of peace, order, and happiness to the rest of the universe.

The doctrine of endless misery appears to you to "confound all degrees of punishment, in giving infinite punishment to all,"—p. 42. You, it seems, can conceive of no diversity of suffering, unless it be in duration. Will the reflection of lost souls on their past life, then, be in all exactly the same?—the same in the objects reflected on; and, consequently, the same in the intenseness of their misery? How grossly absurd, sir, must be your notions of future punishment, to admit of such an idea! Besides, there is equal reason to believe that there will be different degrees of glory as of misery.



If heavenly bliss bear any relation to the labours and sufferings of the present life on behalf of Christ, which the Scriptures assure us it does, (Matt. v. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 17,) these being diverse, that must also be the same. But according to your reasoning, there can be no diversity, unless it be in duration: either, therefore, all degrees of happiness must be confounded, in giving happiness to all; or the inhabitants of heaven, as well as those of hell, must, after a certain period, be continually diminishing by annihilation.

Such, sir, are your expositions of Scripture. Except in the productions of a certain maniac in our own country, I never recollect to have seen so much violence done to the word of God in so small a compass.

According to your scheme, all things work together for good to them that love not God, as well as to them that love him. Thus you confound what the Scriptures discriminate.

Our Lord told the Jews, that if they believed not that he was the Messiah, they should *die in their sins*, and whither he went they *could not come* (John viii. 21); but, according to your scheme, they might die in their sins, and yet be able to go whither he went, and inherit eternal life.

The Scriptures describe a sort of characters who shall be exposed to "a certain fearful looking for of judgment" (Heb. x. 27); but this, according to your scheme, can be nothing more than annihilation. For as the case of the characters described is suggested to be irrevocable and hopeless, they cannot be punished, during ages of ages, *in a way of mercy*, or with a view to their recovery; and as to their being punished during this long period, and in the end annihilated, this would be contrary to all your ideas of punishment, which must always have its foundation in mercy. Hence it follows that all this fearful looking for of judgment amounts to no more than what atheists and infidels generally prefer; death being to them an *everlasting sleep*.

Nor is your hypothesis less at variance with itself than with the Holy Scriptures. Your notion of *temporary punishment* clashes with all your arguments drawn from the benevolent feelings of a good man. You ask, "Doth not every good man love his enemies, and forgive even the worst of them? Is there a man living, whose heart is filled with the love of God, that would not promote the best interest of his most inveterate foe, if it lay in his power? And has not God more love than the best of men? And are not his wisdom and his power equal to his love?"—p. 74.

In return, I ask, Is there a man living, whose heart is filled with the love of God, who would be willing that his worst enemy should be cast into hell for ages of ages, or for a single age, or even a single day, when it was in his power to deliver him from it? But God hath more love than the best of men; and his wisdom and power are equal to his love; consequently, there will be no future punishment!

Your notion of annihilation will also contradict the greater part of your pretensions. You talk of *universal salvation*, but you do not believe it; for a part of the human race are to be given up, as incurable, to annihilation. You plead the fifth chapter to the Romans in favour of your doctrine; contending that *justification of life* will be as extensive as *condemnation*: but you believe no such thing; for a part of those who are condemned, instead of being justified and saved, will be given up, as incurables, to annihilation. You think you see *times* beyond the last judgment in which *all things*, or rather, as you understand it, *all persons*, are to be gathered together in Christ, and reconciled by the blood of his cross: howbeit, you mean not so, neither doth your heart think so; for a part of them will be struck out of existence, who can, therefore, be neither gathered together nor reconciled. You pretend to unite the opinions of Calvinists and Arminians: the former,

you say, render the death of Christ effectual, but limit its design to a part of mankind; the latter tender it to all, but consider it as ineffectual; while you maintain that it is designed for all, and effectual to all,—pp. 70, 71. But this is mere pretence; you believe no such thing; for a part of mankind are to be, at last, annihilated. By an anecdote which you have inserted in p. 65 of your Miscellany, you flatter yourself that you have fastened a difficulty on a Mr. R——, from which he cannot extricate himself but by embracing your doctrine. But neither could he, if he did embrace it; for you no more believe that God will save all mankind than Mr. R——.

You pretend to urge it as a difficulty on me that “either God *cannot or will not make an end of sin*; that there is not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ to destroy the works of the devil; or else that the full efficacy of the atonement is withheld by the Divine determination,”—p. 44. But it is all pretence. If it be a difficulty, it equally bears upon your own hypothesis as upon mine. If Christ died with an intention to save all, why are not all saved? Why must a number of them be annihilated? Is it because God *cannot* bring them to repentance and salvation, or because he *will not*? Is there not efficacy enough in the blood of the cross to destroy the works of the devil, without his having recourse to a mere act of power; an act which might have been exerted without that blood being shed? Or is the full efficacy of the atonement withheld by the Divine determination?

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#### LETTER IV.

##### REPLIES, AND DEFENCES OF FORMER REASONINGS.

SIR,

I MUST be very weak, if, while writing in a publication of which my opponent is the editor, I should expect to have the last word. When I have said what appears to me necessary on any point, and on the whole matter of dispute, I shall leave it to the judgment of the candid reader.

From any thing I had advanced, you had no ground to conclude that I formed an improper estimate of my own reputation. Any man who has been in the habit of writing, and whose writings have been at all regarded by the public, must be possessed of some reputation; and whether it be small or great, it is his duty not to make use of it for the propagation of what he believes to be pernicious error.

“Truth,” you say, “courts the public observation of men;” and so may error. If it be true that wisdom “crieth in the top of high places,” it is equally true that folly is *loud and stubborn*. The advocates of infidelity, sir, are not less bold than yourself, nor less loud in their challenges of examination. Such challenges afford no criterion of truth; nor is it any proof of the goodness of a cause, that its abettors court the public attention. They may be well aware that public prejudice is in their favour; or may entertain a much greater dread of sinking into insignificance, by neglect, than of being overcome in the field of contest.

You have repeatedly reminded me of the favour which you confer upon me, by permitting my papers to appear in your Miscellany. Now, sir, I consider it as no favour at all, nor as affording any proof of your impartiality. If you think otherwise, you are at perfect liberty, after introducing this series

of Letters, to discontinue them. If I wish to write any thing further on the subject, I shall not be at a loss for a proper medium.

“The prejudices of both professor and profane,” you tell me, “are in my favour.” Had you used the term *consciences*, instead of prejudices, you would have been nearer the truth. So far as my observations extend, the prejudices of the bulk of mankind are on the other side. Deists and libertines lead the way, by an open or affected rejection of all future punishment. Socinians, who generally include universal salvation in their scheme, follow hard after them. Mrs. Barbauld, if I remember right, in her Remarks on Mr. Wakefield’s Inquiry, goes so far as to represent the ideas of access to God through a Mediator, and of punishment in a bottomless pit, as originating in the ignorance and servility of Eastern customs. Unbelievers, it is well known, rejoice in the spread of Socinianism, as being favourable to their views; and Socinians rejoice no less in the spread of universalism, as favourable to theirs. This is sufficiently manifest by the applauses which writers on your side commonly meet with in the Monthly Review. There are great numbers of nominal Christians, of loose characters, who would be glad to believe your doctrine of temporary punishment, and to proceed, by an easy transition, to that of no punishment at all; nor is there any bar which prevents their falling in with these views, but the remonstrance of their consciences. They fear it is too favourable to their vices to be true; and therefore are deterred from embracing it. Such, sir, is the “description of people” after whom you inquire; such is the company with whom you associate, and to whom you administer consolation; and such is the justness of your remark, that “the prejudices of both professor and profane are in my favour.” If you yourself had not been persuaded of the contrary, I question whether you would have given that title to my first two Letters which appears on the blue covers of your work.\* The word *torments*, it is true, can give no *just* offence, as it is a Scriptural expression; yet to persons who judge on these subjects merely by their feelings, the ideas conveyed by it are sufficient to prejudice them against every thing which a writer may advance.

Your Magazines, sir, I presume, would be less acceptable to many of your readers than they are, if, instead of employing so large a portion of them in attempting to prove that all will be finally happy, you were frequently to insist that some men would be tormented in hell, without any mixture of mercy, for a number of ages; and if you insisted on this doctrine also in your pulpit exercises, you yourself might possibly be considered as a “brawler of damnation.”

You carefully avoid claiming universal salvation *as a right*, and are pleased to represent my inquiry on that subject as “a quibble.” I am not surprised, sir, that you should feel reluctant on this head, that you should decline the defence of your friend, and that you should alternately compliment and reproach your opponent, as if to keep him at a distance from the subject.—No. I. p. 5; No. XXXIV. p. 309. If I mistake not, this is a fundamental principle in your system, and that which proves it to be fundamentally wrong. There is no need of having recourse to the pieces of other writers; your own productions afford sufficient evidence that the salvation for which you plead is not that which arises from the free grace of God through Jesus Christ; and, consequently, that it is no part of the salvation revealed in the gospel. You reject the idea of invalidating the Divine threatenings towards sinners, (No. XXXIV. p. 310,) admitting “them in their full latitude, and the execution of them too;” maintaining that “God will deal with his crea-

\* “Letter I. from Mr. A. Fuller, in defence of eternal torments.”

tures according to their character," and that "sinners will be punished according to their works."—No. II. p. 42. Now, sir, if there be any meaning in all this language, it is, That *justice* will have its course on the ungodly; and that, whatever punishment they endure, whether it be vindictive or corrective, endless or temporary, it is all that their sins *deserve*. If the threatenings of God mean no more than a punishment which is temporary, and for the good of sinners, their conduct can deserve no more; for we cannot have a more certain rule of estimating the just demerit of sin than the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against it. But if sinners endure the full desert of their sin, there is no room for grace, or *undeserved favour*; nor is any place left for the work of mediation. A criminal who has suffered the full penalty of the law has no right to be told that his liberation is an act of grace, or that it was owing to the mediation of another. Your universal salvation, therefore, is no part of that which arises from the grace of God, or the death of Christ; nor is it, properly speaking, salvation at all, but a legal discharge, in consequence of a full satisfaction to Divine justice being made by the sufferings of the sinner.

If you contend that the liberation of the sinner *is* owing to the grace of God, through the mediation of his Son, which mitigates and shortens his punishment, then you at once give up all you have before maintained: That sinners will be punished *according to their works*, and that the threatenings of God will be fully executed upon them. You may have read of "instances of both punishment and pardon to the same persons, and for the same sins" (No. XXXV. p. 337); but this must be where the punishment has not been according to the desert of the sin, otherwise there had been no need of pardon.

You talk much of my dealing in "*suppositions*, instead of arguments," and of my "resting my conclusions on unfounded assumptions."

I have carefully examined these charges, and am unable to perceive the justice of them in a single instance. Though the Letter which appeared in the Evangelical Magazine was chiefly in the form of supposition, yet that supposition was not destitute of argument to support it. It is possible, sir, though it does not appear to have occurred to your mind, that arguments themselves may be conveyed under the form of suppositions. To convince you that this was the case, in the above Letter, I will put the very passage to which you object into the form of argument.

The Scriptures teach us that those who, at a certain period, are found *filthy, shall be filthy still*; that they shall be cast into that *bottomless pit* which was prepared for the devil and his angels; and that they shall dwell with *everlasting burnings*.

But your doctrine teaches that though they be filthy at death, or judgment, or any other period, yet they shall not be *always so*; that though they be cast into the pit of destruction, yet it shall not prove *bottomless*; and that though they have to encounter devouring fire, yet they shall not dwell with *everlasting burnings*.

Therefore your doctrine is antisciptural. But if your doctrine be antisciptural, it is of that nature which tends to deceive the souls of men; and you will not be able to look them in the face another day, and still less HIM who hath charged you to be pure from the blood of all men.

The first three positions contain the argument, and the last the inference.

I should think "the world," or rather the reader, did not need to be informed what argument there was in this string of suppositions; if he did, however, I have attempted, at your request, to give him that information.

With respect to building on "unfounded assumptions," for which I am accused of "betraying my ignorance of the subject I have written against,"

(No. II. p. 45.) you have given us two instances, which I shall briefly examine.

First, I had asked, "What doctrine, *besides* that of universal salvation, will you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses; and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death?" What principle is it that is here assumed? Why, you answer, that the doctrine of universal salvation *does* afford encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and *does* furnish ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in sin till death. And is this indeed a question? I took it for a self-evident truth, and supposed you must and would have acknowledged it. Whether you will, or not, however, I appeal to the common sense of the reader, whether any position can be more self-evident than the following: If the Scriptures teach that all men shall be finally saved, every sinner, whatever be his vicious courses, is encouraged to expect eternal life; and though he should persist in sin till death, is warranted to hope and rejoice in the prospect of all being well with him at last.—For any man to deny this position is to deny what is self-evident, and there can be no further reasoning with him.

To allege, in answer, that it will be always ill with the wicked *while he continues so*, is trifling; for if the sinner be taught to believe that, at some future period beyond this life, he shall be delivered both from sin and punishment, whether the former branch of this deliverance afford him joy or not, the latter must.

The same question, you say, might be asked concerning the doctrine of election. It might; but I should readily answer, No sinner, while going on in his trespasses, is warranted to consider himself as elected to salvation; therefore that doctrine affords no ground of hope and joy to persons of this description. Can you say the same of the doctrine of universal salvation? If there were the same ground for an ungodly sinner to conclude himself elected as your doctrine affords for his concluding that he shall be eternally saved, the cases would be parallel, and both these doctrines would be alike subject to the charge of comforting those whom God would not have comforted; but as this is not true of election, your notion is still solitary, and your difficulty remains where it was. All the encomiums which you pass upon the universal scheme (No. II. pp. 41–44) furnish not a single example of any other Divine truth which gives encouragement to a sinner, while in his sins, to believe that in the end it shall be well with him. The question, therefore, still returns upon you, *What doctrine, BESIDES that of universal salvation, will you find in the Bible which affords encouragement to a sinner going on still in his trespasses, and which furnishes ground for hope and joy, even supposing him to persevere in them till death?*

I do not say, "let the world judge" whether this question proceeded on any *unfounded assumption*, and whether it be equally applicable to election as to universal salvation, because I imagine it will be but a very small part of the world that will examine our productions; but I am willing to make my appeal to the intelligent and impartial reader. And with respect to you, sir, the task which you have set yourself is before you; either to "confess it to be true" that your doctrine gives encouragement, hope, and joy to wicked men; or to "expose the falsehood of this supposition more fully."

In the second place, You charge me with "taking it for granted that your views invalidate the Divine threatenings towards sinners;" and intimate that there is no "reason" in what I say, but upon the supposition of your denying "all future punishment."—No. II. p. 45. That I never supposed you to deny all future punishment I have already proved; and that any thing which

I advanced required such a supposition you have not hitherto made appear. As to your invalidating the Divine threatenings, so far as the doctrine of universal salvation appears to me to operate in that way, so far I must of necessity believe that you do; but whatever may be my belief, the question is, Have I built any conclusion upon it as an acknowledged truth? If so, how came I to *entreat you to consider whether it was not so?* Is it usual to entreat an opponent to consider whether that which we take for granted as an acknowledged truth be true? Undoubtedly, I suggested this idea to you, as being my judgment; which, however, I did not desire to impose upon you, any further than as it was supported by evidence; and therefore, at the same time, intimated what was the ground of that judgment; namely, *the near resemblance between your labours and those of the deceiver of mankind.* If you cannot perceive this resemblance, I cannot help it. Other people can, and will. He persuaded his auditors, that though they should transgress, yet the evil they had dreaded would not come upon them: they believed, and were not afraid to transgress. You persuade your auditors, that though they should die in their sins, yet the evil will not be *so great* as they had been used to apprehend: God hath not said, Ye shall die eternally; and he means that you shall all come where Jesus is. If they believe, must they not be *less afraid* of transgression than before?

And now, sir, who is "ignorant?" and who has been employed in "raising a dust to hide the truth?" are questions which I leave you to resolve. It is enough for me if I have proved your charges to be unfounded; for if this be accomplished, your work still returns upon your hands; as it will follow that, notwithstanding all your challenges, and calling out for more to be written, you have not yet answered the first Letter.

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## LETTER V.

### EVIDENCES OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

SIR,

You seem to wish to persuade your readers that the grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine of endless punishment are very slender. The truth is, I have not, at present, attempted to state those grounds. Considering myself as not engaged in a formal controversy, I only introduced a few passages; and to several of them you have hitherto made no reply. The principal grounds on which I rest my belief of the doctrine you oppose are as follow—

#### I. ALL THOSE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH DESCRIBE THE FUTURE STATES OF MEN IN CONTRAST.

"Men of the world, who have their portion in this life: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.—The hope of the righteous shall be gladness; but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.—The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death.—And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.—He will gather his wheat into the garner, and will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.—Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.—Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the

will of my Father who is in heaven.—Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.—The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth: then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.—The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that gathered fish of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to the shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.—Blessed is that servant, whom, when his lord cometh, he shall find so doing: but and if that evil servant should say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. But cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: then shall he also say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into everlasting life.—He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.—Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.—He that heareth my sayings, and doeth them, is like unto a man who built his house upon a rock; and when the flood arose, the storm beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like unto a man who built his house upon the earth, against which the storm did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.—God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—All that are in their graves shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.—Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory?—The Lord knoweth them that are his.—But in a great house there are vessels to honour, and vessels to dishonour.—Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.—That which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation.”

I consider these passages as designed to express THE FINAL STATES OF MEN; which, if they be, is the same thing, in effect, as their being designed to express the doctrine of endless punishment; for if the descriptions here given of the portion of the wicked denote their *final* state, there is no possibility of another state succeeding it.

That the above passages do express the *final* states of men may appear from the following considerations:—

1. The state of the righteous (which is all along opposed to that of the wicked) is allowed to be final; and if the other were not the same, it would not have been, in such a variety of forms, contrasted with it; for it would not be a contrast.

2. All these passages are totally silent as to any other state following that of destruction, damnation, &c. If the punishment threatened to ungodly men had been only a purgation, or temporary correction, we might have expected that something like this would have been intimated. It is supposed that some, who are upon the right foundation, may yet build upon it *wood, and hay, and stubble*; and that the party shall *suffer loss*; but *he himself shall be saved*, though it be *as by fire*. Now if the doctrine of universal salvation were true, we might expect some such account of all lapsed intelligences when their future state is described; but nothing like it occurs in any of the foregoing passages, nor in any other.

3. The phraseology of the greater part of them is inconsistent with any other state following that which they describe. On the supposition of salvation being appointed as the ultimate portion of those who die in their sins, they have not *their portion in this life*; but will, equally with those who die in the Lord, *behold his righteousness, and be satisfied in his likeness*. Their expectation shall not *perish*; but shall issue, as well as that of the righteous, in *gladness*; and though *driven away in their wickedness*, yet they have *hope in their death*, and that hope shall be realized. The broad way doth not lead to *destruction*, but merely to a temporary correction, the end of which is everlasting life. The chaff will not be burned, but turned into wheat, and gathered into the garner. The tares will be the same, and gathered into the barn; and the bad fish will be turned into good, and gathered into vessels. The cursed, as well as the blessed, shall inherit the kingdom of God; which also was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. There may be a woe against the wicked, that they shall be kept from their consolation for a long time, but not that they *have received it*. Those who, in the present life, believe *not* in Christ, shall not *perish*, but have everlasting life. This life, also, is improperly represented as the seed time, and the life to come as the harvest, inasmuch as the seeds of heavenly bliss may be sown in hell; and though the sinner may reap corruption, as the fruit of all his present doings, yet that corruption will not be the opposite of *everlasting life*, seeing it will issue in it. Finally, Though they *bear briers and thorns*, yet their END is not *to be burned*, but to obtain salvation. To the foregoing Scripture testimonies may be added,

II. ALL THOSE PASSAGES WHICH SPEAK OF THE DURATION OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT BY THE TERMS "EVERLASTING, ETERNAL, FOR EVER, AND FOR EVER AND EVER:"—

"Some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and *everlasting* contempt.—It is better for thee to enter into life halt, or maimed, than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into *everlasting* fire.—Depart, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire.—And these shall go into *everlasting* punishment.—They shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.—He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is in danger of (or subject to) *eternal*



damnation.—The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of *eternal* fire.—These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved *for ever*.—Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness *for ever*.—If any man worship the beast, or his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*: and they have no rest day nor night.—And they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up *for ever and ever*.—And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are; and shall be tormented day and night *for ever and ever*.”

I have not mentioned Isa. xxxiii. 14, because I wish to introduce no passage but what shall be allowed to refer to a future life. The Hebrew word **על**, in Dan. xii. 2, answers to the Greek **αἰών**; and whatever may be said of the ambiguity of the term, the antithesis, in this passage, as in Matt. xxv. 46, determines it to mean the same when applied to “shame and contempt” as when applied to life.

As to the term **αἰώνιος**, rendered *everlasting*, or *eternal*, which you consider as proving nothing, on account of its ambiguity, there is a rule of interpretation, which I have long understood to be used on other subjects by all good critics, and which I consider as preferable to yours. In my next Letter I may examine their comparative merits. This rule is, *That every term be taken in its PROPER sense, except there be something in the subject or connexion which requires it to be taken otherwise*. Now, so far as my acquaintance with this subject extends, it appears to be generally allowed by lexicographers that **αἰών** is a compound of **ἀεί** and **ων**, and that its literal meaning is *always being*;\* also, that the meaning of its derivative **αἰώνιος** is *endless, everlasting, or eternal*. This term, **αἰώνιος**, which is very sparingly applied in the New Testament to limited duration, I always take in its proper sense, except there be something in the connexion or subject which requires it to be taken otherwise; and as I do not find this to be the case in any of those places where it is applied to punishment, I see no reason, in these cases, to depart from its proper acceptation. Everlasting punishment is, in some of them, opposed to everlasting life; which, so far as an antithesis can go to fix the meaning of a term, determines it to be of the same force and extent.

To allege that the *subject* requires a different meaning, in this case, to be given to the term, is to assume what will not be granted. The *proof* that has been offered on this point will be considered hereafter.

With respect to the phrases, **εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα**, *for ever*, and **εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων**, *for ever and ever*, I believe you will not find a single example in all the New Testament of their being used to convey any other than the idea of

\* Aristotle, the philosopher, who lived upwards of three hundred years before the New Testament was written, plainly tells us the meaning which the Greek writers of his time, and those who in his time were accounted ancients, affixed to this term. Speaking of the gods, whom he considered as immortal, and as having their residence above the heavens, he says, “The beings which exist there neither exist in place, nor does time make them grow old; nor undergo they any changes, being placed beyond the motion even of those who are the furthest removed (from the centre); but possessing an unchangeable life, free from all outward impressions, perfectly happy, and self-sufficient, they continue through all **αἰῶνα**, eternity. And this the ancients admirably signified by the word itself; for they call the time of each person’s life his **αἰών**, inasmuch as according to the laws of nature nothing (respecting him) exists out of the limits of it; and for the same reason, that which comprehends the duration of the whole heaven, the whole of infinite time, and infinity itself, is called **αἰῶνα**, eternity; taking its name from always being, (**ἀεί ἐναι**), immortal and divine.”

endless duration. You tell us that *εις αιωνας αιωνων*, for *ever and ever*, in Rev. xiv. 11, should be rendered, "to the age of ages." Are you certain of this? Admitting the principle of your translation, some would have rendered it *to ages of ages*: but, render it how you will, the *meaning* of the phrase is the same. You might render it thus in other instances, wherein it is applied to the happiness of the righteous, or the glory to be ascribed to God; but this would not prove that such happiness and such glory were of limited duration, or that the phrase in question is expressive of it.

To the above may be added,

III. ALL THOSE PASSAGES WHICH EXPRESS THE DURATION OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT BY IMPLICATION, OR BY FORMS OF SPEECH WHICH IMPLY THE DOCTRINE IN QUESTION.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world.—The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit *shall not be forgiven unto men*, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.—He hath *never forgiveness*, but is in danger of eternal damnation.—There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it.—It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.—If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment which shall devour the adversaries.—What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?—Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.—Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.\*—Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us who would come from thence.—He that believeth not the Son shall *not see life*; but the wrath of God *abideth on him*.—I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall *die in your sins*; whither I go *ye cannot come*.—Whose *end* is destruction.—He that showeth no mercy, shall have *judgment without mercy*."

If there be some for whom Jesus did not pray, there are some who will have no share in the benefits of his mediation, without which they cannot be saved.—If there be some that never will be forgiven, there are some that never will be saved; for forgiveness is an essential branch of salvation. Let there be what uncertainty there may in the word *eternal* in this instance, still the meaning of it is fixed by the other branch of the sentence,—*they shall never be forgiven*. It is equal to John x. 28, *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish*. If there were any uncertainty as to the meaning of the word *eternal* in this latter passage, yet the other branch of the sentence would settle it; for that must be endless life which is opposed to their *ever perishing*; and, by the same rule, that must be endless damnation which is opposed to their *ever being forgiven*. If there be a sin for the pardon of which Christians are forbidden to pray, it must be on account of its being the revealed will of God that it never should be pardoned. If repentance be absolutely necessary to forgiveness, and there be some who it is impossible should be renewed again unto repentance, there are some whose salvation is impossible. If there be *no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment*, this is the same thing as the sacrifice already offered being of no saving effect; for if it were otherwise, the language would not contain any peculiar threatening against the wilful sinner, as it would be no more than might be said to any sinner; nor would a *fearful looking for of judgment* be his certain doom. If the souls of some men will be *lost or cast away*, they cannot all be *saved*; seeing these things are opposites. A man may be lost in a desert, and yet saved in fact; or he may *suffer loss*, and yet

\* Several times repeated in a few verses.

himself be saved: but he cannot be lost so as to be cast away, and yet finally saved; for these are perfect contraries. Whatever may be the precise idea of the *fire* and the *worm*, there can be no doubt of their expressing the punishment of the wicked; and its being declared of the one that it *dieth not*, and of the other that *it is not quenched*, is the same thing as their being declared to be endless. It can be said of no man, on the principle of universal salvation, that *it were good for him not to have been born*: since whatever he may endure for a season, an eternal weight of glory will infinitely outweigh it. An *impassable gulf*, between the blessed and the accursed, equally militates against the recovery of the one and the relapse of the other. If some shall *not see life*, but the wrath of God *abideth* an them—if those who die in their sins shall not come where Jesus is—if their *end* be destruction, and their portion be *judgment without mercy*—there must be some who will not be finally saved.

To these may be added,

IV. ALL THOSE PASSAGES WHICH INTIMATE THAT A CHANGE OF HEART, AND A PREPAREDNESS FOR HEAVEN, ARE CONFINED TO THE PRESENT LIFE.

“Seek ye the Lord *while he may be found*; call ye upon him *while he is near*: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.—Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded—I 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 they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early, but shall not find me.—Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that shall be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When *once* the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are—Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity—there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.—While they (the foolish virgins) went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that *were ready* went in with him to the marriage, and *the door was shut*.—We beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. Behold, *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.—To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.—Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God—lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

According to these scriptures, there will be no successful calling upon the Lord after a certain period, and, consequently, no salvation. Whether there be few that shall ultimately be saved, our Lord does not inform us; but he assures us that there are *many who will not be saved*; or, which is the same thing, who will not be able to enter in at the strait gate. None, it is plainly intimated, will be able to enter there who have not agonized here. There will be no believing unto salvation, but *while we have the light*; nor any admission into the kingdom, unless we be *ready at the coming of the Lord*. The present is the *accepted time, the day of salvation*, or the season for sin-

ners to be saved. If we continue to harden our hearts through life, he will swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest. If we *turn away from him who speaketh from heaven*, it will be equally impossible for us to obtain the blessing, as it was for Esau after he had despised his birthright. Finally, beyond a certain period, there shall be no more change of character, but every one will have received that impression which shall remain for ever, whether he be just or unjust, filthy or holy.

In this Letter I have endeavoured to state the grounds of my own persuasion; in the next I may examine the reasonings and objections which you have advanced against it. The greater part of this evidence being taken from our Lord's discourses, who knew the truth, and was himself to be the Judge of the world, renders it peculiarly interesting. If a preacher in these times delivered half so much on the subject, you would denominate him "a brawler of damnation."

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## LETTER VI.

### REPLIES TO OBJECTIONS.

SIR,

IN a former Letter I suggested, that whether the Scriptures teach the doctrine of endless punishment or not, they certainly *appear* to do so. Whether this suggestion was unfounded, the evidence in my last Letter must determine. You attempt, however, to discredit it by alleging the few instances in which the terms *ever*, *everlasting*, &c., as connected with future punishment, are used in the Scriptures.

"*Everlasting*, as connected with the future punishment of *men*," you say, "is used only *five* times in the Old and New Testament; and yet this same word is used in the Scriptures at least *ninety* times (very generally indeed) in relation to things that either have ended or must end." You proceed, "As to the word *eternal*, which is of the same meaning, it is used in the text and margin upward of *forty* times in the whole Bible; out of which there are only *two* which can be supposed to relate to future punishment."\* You should have proceeded a little further, sir, and have told us how often the terms *ever*, *for ever*, and *for ever and ever*, are applied to this subject; for the distinction between them and the words *everlasting* and *eternal* is chiefly English, and you have allowed that it is from the use of the one as well as the other that I suppose the Scriptures must "appear" to teach the doctrine of endless punishment. As a candid reasoner, you should also have borne to mention Jude 6, with a view to diminish the number of testimonies; as it is not to the endless punishment of *men* only that you object. By these means your number would, at least, have extended to *eleven* instead of seven.

But, passing this, I shall offer a few observations on your reasoning. First, If the term *everlasting* be applied to future punishment five or six times out of ninety in which it is used in the Scriptures, this may be as large a proportion as the subject requires. It is applied, in the Scriptures, to more than twenty different subjects; so that to be applied five or six times to one is full as frequent a use of it as ought to be expected.

Secondly, If the application of the term *everlasting* to future punishment only five or six times discredit the very *appearance* of its being endless, the

\* Universalist's Miscellany, No. XXXV. p. 325.

same, or nearly the same, may be said of *the existence of God*, to which it is applied not much more frequently. You might go over a great part of the sacred writings on this subject, as you do on the other; telling us that not only many of the Old Testament writers make no use of it, but a large proportion of the New; that Matthew never applies the word to this subject, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John; that it is not so applied in the Acts of the Apostles; and though Paul once uses it, in his Epistle to the Romans, yet he closes that, and all his other Epistles, without *so* using it again; that James did not use it, nor Peter, nor John, either in his three Epistles or in the Apocalypse. And when you had thus established your point, you might ask, with an air of triumph, "Is this a proof that the Scriptures *appear* to teach" the eternal existence of God? Truly, sir, I am ashamed to refute such trifling; yet if I did not, your readers might be told that, doubtless, I had "cogent reasons" for my silence.

Thirdly, If any conclusion can be drawn from the number of times in which a term is used in the Scriptures, that number should be ascertained from the languages in which they were written, and not from a translation, which, on such a subject, proves nothing; but if this had been done, as it certainly ought by a writer of your pretensions, we should have heard nothing of number *two*, nor of number *five*.

Fourthly, You tell us not only that "the word *everlasting* is used very generally indeed in relation to things that either have ended or must end;" but that the word which is so rendered was, by the Old Testament writers, most generally so applied,—pp. 328, 329. By "the word which we render *everlasting*" I suppose you mean **על**, though there are other words as well as this which are rendered *everlasting*, and this word is not always so rendered. I have carefully examined it by a Hebrew concordance, and, according to the best of my judgment, noticed, as I went along, when it is applied to limited and when to unlimited duration; and I find that though it is *frequently* used to express the former, yet it is *more frequently* applied, even in the Old Testament, to the latter. I do not allege this fact as being of any consequence to the argument; for if it had been on the other side, it would have proved nothing. It would not have been at all surprising if, in a book wherein so little is revealed concerning a future state, the word should have been used *much more* frequently in a figurative than in a proper sense; but as far as I am able to judge, the fact is otherwise.

In looking over the various passages in which the word occurs, I perceive that, in many of those instances which I noted as the examples of the limited use of it, the limitation is such as arises necessarily from the kind of duration, or state of being, which is spoken of. When Hannah devoted her child Samuel to the Lord *for ever*, there was no limitation in her mind; she did not intend that he should *ever* return to a private life. Thus also, when it is said of a servant whose ear was bored in his master's house, he shall serve him *for ever*, the meaning is, that he should never go out free. And when Jonah lamented that the earth with her bars was about him *for ever*, the term is not expressive of what it actually *proved*, namely, a three days' imprisonment, as you unaccountably construe it (p. 6); but of what it was *in his apprehensions*, which were, that he was cut off from the land of the living, and should *never* more see the light.

So far as my observations extend, the word, whenever applied to a *future state*, is to be taken in the endless sense; and this you yourself will allow, *except in those passages which relate to future punishment*. You, therefore, plead for a meaning to the term, in relation to this subject, which has nothing parallel in the Scriptures to support it.

In the New Testament the future state is a frequent topic with the sacred

writers; and there, as might be expected, the terms rendered *everlasting*, *eternal*, *for ever*, &c., are generally applied in the endless sense. Of this you seem to be aware; and, therefore, after asserting that, by Old Testament writers, the term rendered *everlasting* was "most generally" applied otherwise, you only add, concerning New Testament writers, that they "use it but a few times in relation to future punishment; a remark, as we have already seen, of but very little account. If a particular term should be applied to one subject only five or six times, it does not follow that the evidence is scanty. There may be other terms equally expressive of the same thing; and the foregoing Letter, it is presumed, has given proof that this is the case in the present instance. And if there were no other terms to convey the sentiment, five or six solemn asseverations on any one subject ought to be reckoned sufficient, and more than sufficient, to command our assent; and if so, surely they may be allowed to justify the assertion, that the Scriptures *appear*, at least, to teach the doctrine of everlasting punishment.

In answering what I considered as a misconstruction of a passage of Scripture, (Rev. xiv. 11,) I suggested that the phrase *day and night* was not expressive of a successive or terminable duration, but a figurative mode of speech, denoting *perpetuity*. "It follows then," say you, "that your best ground for believing that there is no successive duration after the end of this world is only a figurative expression or two,"—p. 329. Did ever a writer draw such an inference? What I alleged was, not for the purpose of proving endless punishment, but merely to correct what I considered as a misinterpretation of a passage of Scripture. If this be your method of drawing consequences, we need not be surprised at your inferring the doctrine of universal salvation from the Holy Scriptures.

I thought that you, as well as myself, had better not have attempted to criticise on Hebrew and Greek terms. You think otherwise. Very well: we have a right, then, to expect the more at your hands. Yet, methinks, you should have been contented to meet an opponent who never professed to have a competent acquaintance with either of those languages on his own ground; or, if not, you should either have assumed a little less consequence, or have supported your pretensions with a little better evidence. To be sure, it was very kind in you to inform me that though *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* agree, in some respects, with the English words *eternity* and *eternal*, yet they will not always bear to be rendered by these terms. I ought equally to thank you, no doubt, for teaching me, and that repeatedly, that "as for the word *eternal*, it is the same in the original which is translated *everlasting*,"—pp. 7, 238. Seriously, may not a person, without pretending to be qualified for Greek criticisms, understand so much of the meaning of words as to stand in no need of the foregoing information? Nay, more; is it not possible for him to know that the Greek words *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* will not always bear to be rendered by the English words *eternity*, *everlasting*, or *eternal*; and yet perceive no evidence of the one being *less expressive of endless duration than the other*?

This, if it must be so called, was my "hypothesis." To overturn it, you allege that the Greek terms will "admit of a plural," and of the pronouns *this* and *that* before them; which the English will not,—pp. 332, 333. So far as this is the case, it may prove that there is *some difference* between them; but not that this difference consists in the one being *less expressive of endless duration than the other*. Words in English that are properly expressive of endless duration may not ordinarily admit of a plural; and if this were universally the case, it would not follow that it is the same in Greek. Nor is it so; for the idea of endless duration is frequently conveyed by these very plural forms of expression. Thus, in Eph. iii. 11, *κατὰ πρόθεσιν*

τῶν αἰώνων, according to his eternal purpose. So also, in 1 Tim. i. 17, Τῷ δὲ Βασιλεὶ τῶν αἰώνων ἀφάρτῳ, ἀοράτῳ, μόνῳ σαφῶ Θεῶ, τιμῇ καὶ δόξῃ εἰς τὰς αἰώνας τῶν αἰώνων, *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.* Render these passages how you will, you cannot do them justice, unless you express the idea of unlimited duration. And though the English terms may not admit of what is termed a plural form, yet they admit of what is equal to it; for though we do not say *everlastings* nor *eternities*, yet we say *for ever and ever*; and you might as well contend that *for ever* cannot properly mean unlimited duration, seeing another *ever* may be added to it, as that *αἰών* must needs mean a limited duration, on account of its admitting a plural form of expression. You might also, with equal propriety, plead for a plurality of *evers* in futurity, from the English phraseology, as for a plurality of *ages* from the Greek.

With respect to the admission of the pronouns *this* and *that*, we use the expressions, *this* eternity of bliss, or *that* eternity of bliss; nor does such language, being applied to a state of existence, express the idea of limitation. The very passage that you have quoted, (Luke xx. 35,) where *αἰών* is rendered *world*, and admits of the pronoun *that* before it, refers to a state which you yourself, I should suppose, would allow to be endless.

For any thing you have hitherto alleged, the Greek words *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* are no less expressive of endless duration than the English words *everlasting* and *eternal*: the latter, when applied to temporary concerns, are used in a figurative or improper sense, as frequently as the former. And if this be a truth, it must follow that *the continual recurrence to them by your writers is no better than a sing-song; a mere affectation of learning, serving to mislead the ignorant.*

You make much of your *rule* of interpretation, that “where a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself must determine the meaning of the word,”—p. 333. You are so confident that this rule is unobjectionable as to intimate your belief that I “shall not, a second time, have the temerity to reprove you for the use of it.” If you examine, you will perceive that I have not objected to it a first time yet, but rather to your manner of applying it. I shall take the liberty, however, to object to it now, whatever “temerity” it may imply. I know not who those “best critics” are from whom you profess to have taken it; but, to me, it appears disrespectful to the Scriptures, and inadmissible. It supposes that all those words which are used in relation to different things (which, by the way, almost all words are) have no proper meaning of their own, and that they are to stand for nothing in the decision of any question; but are to mean any thing that the subject to which they relate can be proved to mean without them. Had you said that the subject, including the scope of the writer, must commonly determine whether a word should be taken in a literal or a figurative sense, that had been allowing it to have a proper meaning of *its own*; and to this I should have no objection; but to allow no meaning to a term, except what shall be imparted to it by the subject, is to reduce it to a cipher.

But exceptionable as your rule of interpretation is in itself, it is rendered much more so by your manner of applying it. If, under the term “subject,” you had included the scope and design of the writer, it had been so far good; but, by this term, you appear all along to mean *the doctrine of future punishment, considered abstractedly from what the Scriptures teach concerning it*; at least, from what they teach by the terms which professedly denote its duration. You require that “there be something in the nature of future punishment which necessarily leads us to receive the word *αἰώνιος* in an endless sense; in which case (as you very properly add) it is not the *word*, but

the *subject*, which gives the idea of endless duration,"—p. 329. What is this but saying, We are to make up our minds on the duration of future punishment from the nature and fitness of things; and having done this, we are to understand the Scripture terms which are designed to express that duration accordingly? But if we can settle this business without the aid of those Scripture terms, why do we trouble them; and what is the meaning of all your criticisms upon them? If they are so "weak, from their vague and indeterminate application in Scripture," that nothing certain can be gathered from them, why not let them alone? It should seem as though all your critical labour upon these terms was for the sake of imposing silence upon them.

I do not know that endless punishment can be proved from the nature of things; but neither can it be disproved. Our ideas of moral government, and of the influence of sin upon it, are too contracted to form a judgment, *a priori*, upon the subject. It becomes us to listen, with humility and holy awe, to what is revealed in the oracles of truth, and to form our judgment by it. When I suggested that "the nature of the subject determined that the term everlasting, when applied to future punishment, was to be taken in the endless sense," I intended no more than that such is the sense in which it is used when applied to a future state.

By your rule of interpretation, I have the "temerity" to say again, you might *disprove almost any thing you please*. I observed before, that if one should attempt to prove the Divinity of the Son of God, or even of the Father, from his being called *Jehovah*, your mode of reasoning would render all such evidence of no account, because the same appellation is sometimes given to an altar, &c. You reply, by insisting that you interpret this term by the *subject*. But, if you interpret it as you do the term *αἰώνιος*, it is not the name of Jehovah that forms any part of the ground of your conclusion. You do not, on this principle, believe God to be self-existent from his being called Jehovah; but that the name Jehovah means self-existent, because it is applied to God, whom, from other considerations, you know to be a self-existent being. If Christ were called Jehovah a thousand times, you could not, *on this account*, believe him to be the true God, according to your principle; because the same word being applied to other things, its meaning can only be determined by the *subject*; and in this case, as you say, it is not the word, but the subject, that gives the idea.

The rule adopted in my last Letter allows a proper meaning to every Scripture term, and does not attempt to set it aside in favour of one that is improper, or figurative, unless *the scope of the passage, or the nature of the subject require it*. This is a very different thing from *not admitting it, unless the subject, from its own nature, render it absolutely necessary*. The one is treating the proper meaning of a Scripture word with respect, not dispensing with it but upon urgent necessity; the other is treating it with indignity, refusing it admission except where it cannot be denied.

You refer me to Hab. iii. 6, as a parallel passage with Matt. xxv. 46, in which the same word is used, in the same text, in a different sense,—p. 331. But these passages are not parallel; for there is no such antithesis in the one as in the other. It has been thought, and I apprehend is capable of being proved, that the everlasting ways, or paths, of God, denote those very goings forth by which he scattered the mountains, and caused the hills to bow; and that the term everlasting, in both instances, is expressive of merely limited duration. But admitting that the everlasting hills are opposed to the everlasting ways of God, or that the one were only *lasting*, and the other properly *everlasting*; still the antithesis, in this case, naturally directs us so to expound them; whereas, in Matt. xxv. 46, it directs us to the contrary. If



there be an opposition of meaning in the one case, it lies in the very term *everlasting*; or between the duration of the hills, and that of the Divine ways: but the opposition in the other is between *life* and *punishment*, and the adjective *everlasting* is applied in common to both; which, instead of requiring a different sense to be given to it, requires the contrary. The words recorded by Matthew are parallel to those in John v. 29, "Some shall come forth to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation;" and we might as rationally contend for a different meaning to the term "resurrection" in the one case, as to the term "everlasting" in the other.

But, besides all this, by your manner of quoting the passage, you would induce one to suppose that you had taken it merely from the *English translation*, which, in a man of your pretensions, would be hardly excusable; for though the same word be twice used in the passage, yet it is not in those places which you have marked as being so: the instances which you have pointed out, as being the same word, are not the same, except in the *English translation*.

It was asked, whether stronger terms could have been used concerning the duration of future punishment than those that are used? You answer, "The question ought not to be, what language God could have used? but what is the meaning of that which he has used?"—p. 334. I should have thought it had been one way of ascertaining the strength of the terms that are used, to inquire whether they be equally strong with any which the language affords! Should this be the case, it must follow, that if they do not convey the idea of endless duration, it is not in the power of language, or at least of that language, to convey it.

You suggest a few examples, however, which in your apprehension would have been stronger, and which, if it had been the design of the Holy Spirit, to teach the doctrine of endless punishment, might have been used for the purpose. "I refer you," say you, "to Heb. vii. 16, ἀκατάλυτος, *endless* say our translators." "The word," you add, "is never connected in Scripture with punishment, and but this once only with life; which, however, shows that the sacred writers speak of future life in a different way than they do of punishment,"—p. 334. It is true the term ἀκατάλυτος is here applied to *life*; but not, as you insinuate, to that life of future happiness which is opposed to punishment. The life here spoken of is that which pertains to our Lord's priesthood, which is opposed to that of Aaron, wherein men *were not suffered to continue, by reason of death*. The word signifies *indissoluble*; and being applied to the nature of a priesthood which death could not *dissolve*, is very properly rendered *endless*. It possibly *might* be applied to the endless happiness of good men, as opposed to the *dissoluble* or transitory enjoyments of the present state; but as to the punishment of the wicked, supposing it to be endless, I question whether it be at all applicable to it. I can form no idea how the term *indissoluble*, any more than *incorruptible*, can apply to punishment. The word καταλύω, *to loose or dissolve*, it is true, is said to refer to travellers *loosing* their own burdens, or those of their beasts, when they are resting by the way; but there are no examples of its being used with reference to the termination of punishment, nor does it appear to be applicable to it. In its most common acceptation, in the New Testament, it signifies *to destroy, or demolish*; and you will scarcely suppose the sacred writers to suggest the idea of a *destruction which cannot be destroyed*.

You offer a second example; referring me to Isa. xlv. 17, "Israel shall not be confounded, world without end" (p. 364); but this is further off still. In the first place, The phrase is *merely English*; and, therefore, affords no

example of "Greek," for which it is professedly introduced. Secondly, It is not a translation from the Greek, but from the Hebrew. To have done any thing to purpose, you should have found a Greek word, which might have been applied to punishment, stronger than αἰώνιος; or if you must needs go to another language, you should have proved that the Hebrew words in Isa. xlv. 17, which are applied to future happiness, are stronger than the Greek word αἰώνιος, which is applied to future punishment: but if you had attempted this, your criticisms might not have perfectly accorded; as they are the same words which you elsewhere tell us would, if "literally rendered, be *age* and *ages*" (p. 364); and, therefore, are properly expressive of only a limited duration. And why did you refer us to the *Old Testament*? It could not be for the want of an example to be found in the New. You know, I dare say, that the English phrase, *world without end*, occurs in Eph. iii. 21. And are the Greek words *there* used stronger than αἰών and its derivatives? On the contrary, they are the very words made use of; and in a plural form, too; εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰῶνων, *throughout all ages, world without end*. Had these very terms been applied to future punishment, you would have pleaded for a different translation, and denied that they were expressive of endless duration.

Without pretending to any thing like a critical knowledge of either the Greek or Hebrew language, I can perceive, sir, that all your arguments have, hitherto, been merely founded upon *English phraseology*; and from your translating **אין** and **אלי** *age* and *ages*, (p. 364,) as though one were the singular, and the other the plural; and εἰς αἰῶνας αἰῶνων, "to the *age* of ages," as though one, here also, were the singular, and the other the plural; as well as from your reference to ἀκατάλυτος, as a proper term to be applied to endless punishment; I am furnished with but little inducement to retract my opinion, that you had better not have meddled with these subjects.

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## LETTER VII.

AN EXAMINATION OF MR. VIDLER'S SYSTEM, AND OF HIS ARGUMENT IN SUPPORT OF IT.

SIR,

I HAVE, certainly, to beg your pardon for having misunderstood you with respect to the doctrine of *annihilation*. I did not observe how you opposed the idea of endless punishment on the one hand, and annihilation on the other. In this matter I submit to your correction, and readily acquit you of all those absurdities which would have followed the admission of *that* principle. Other parts of that Letter, however, you have but lightly touched; and some of them are entirely passed over.

As to your conjectures about my *motives*, both you and your friends might have been as well employed in something else. I can truly say that I never wrote a line in my life with a view to "raise a dust" that might obscure the truth; and it is difficult to suppose that any person, unless he himself had been in the habit of doing so, would have thought of imputing it to another.

It is my desire to understand you, and not to wrest any of your words to a meaning which they do not fairly include. I have endeavoured to collect your sentiments as well as I am able. The amount of your first maxim, in p. 330, appears to me to be this:—"That if God created men, and placed them in circumstances which he certainly foreknew would issue in their fall

and ruin, he willed this their fall and ruin; and that it is of no importance that he forewarned them to avoid the evil: whatever be the event, he is chargeable with it." "But God," you say, "hath sworn by himself that he willeth not the death of him who dieth; that is, he willeth it not as death finally or simply, or destruction irrecoverable. If, therefore, it occur, it is a part of his economy of grace, and, finally, a ministration unto life; for he hath declared that it is his will that all should be saved; therefore the doctrine which forges any contrary will falsifies supreme, unchangeable truth."

Thus, it seems, you reckon that you acquit your Creator of injustice, which must, otherwise, attach to his character and conduct. Let us examine this matter. It is true that whatever exists must, in some sense, accord with the will of God. Let the blasphemer make what use he may of it, it may be asked, "Who hath resisted his will?" God willeth not evil, however, as evil, but permits its existence for wise ends. The good that shall arise from it, and not the evil, is the proper object of Divine volition. But it is not true that God is on this account chargeable with man's sin; that all his cautions and warnings are of no account; and that he is to be "accused" of the death of the sinner, if he die eternally. If it be, however, it is not the doctrine of universal salvation that will free him from the charge.

I am surprised, sir, that you could allow yourself in this manner to reproach your Maker. You cannot allege all these things as merely attaching to my system. It is a fact (is it not?) that God did place man in circumstances which he certainly foreknew would issue in his fall; and that he did, notwithstanding, caution and warn him against apostacy, and still continues to caution and warn sinners against those very sins which he certainly foreknew they will commit: who, then, is this that dares to arraign his conduct, and to accuse him of insincerity?—Who that, at one stroke, aims to sweep away the accountableness of his creatures, and to charge him with the evil of their sin, on account of his having placed them in such circumstances?

If it be as you insinuate, it must follow that man is not blameworthy in all his rebellion against his Maker, nor justly accountable for any of its consequences. Whether those consequences be *eternal* makes nothing to the argument. Sin, and all the evils which follow upon it, are, by you, transferred from the sinner to the account of his Creator! State your supposition with reference to your own principles: "Suppose him about to create twenty men; he knows ten of them will become vicious, and, consequently, exposed to the tremendous penalty of damnation *for ages of ages*. Who doubts, in such a case, that he wills that penalty, who, being almighty and all-knowing, does that without which it could not come to pass; and who will not accuse him of their damnation—having sent them into such circumstances?" Thus, sir, you undermine the justice of *all* punishment, present and future, and every principle of moral government.

"Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God." Yes, says Mr. Vidler, it is he, who, knowing all events, and placing us in such circumstances as he does, that is accountable! And it is of no importance, in the consideration of common sense, that he cautions or forewarns us against the evil.

If what you have suggested be true, it must also follow that there is no need of a mediator, or of forgiving mercy. Where there is no blame, it is an insult to talk of forgiveness, or of the need of a mediator to effect a reconciliation. All that is necessary to recover man is justice. If the Creator only be accountable for the evil, it belongs to him to remedy it. Thus, instead of supporting the doctrine of universal salvation, you undermine all salvation at the very foundation.

Think not that you shall be able to roll away this reproach, which you

have had the temerity to charge on your Creator, by suggesting that all the evil which follows will be ultimately a benefit; for still it follows that man has not been blameworthy in sinning against God, that God has never been sincere in his cautions and warnings, and that, being accountable for the whole, it is but justice to man that he turn all to his ultimate advantage as a recompense for present injury. "He sent his children into the wood, it seems, where he knew the poisonous fruit abounded; and though he warned them against it, yet he was not in earnest; and when they had eaten, to the endangering of their lives, he counteracted the poison, but was conscious, at the same time, that if there were any fault in the affair, it was his own; and if the children were to perish, he would be justly accused of their death." And can you, sir, with these sentiments, continue to disavow your *invalidating the Divine threatenings towards sinners*; and concurring with him who taught our first parents, "Ye shall not surely die?" What better exposition could the deceiver of mankind have wished for than what your words afford? "Ye shall not surely die;" namely, "finally, or simply, or with destruction irrecoverable." "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened." "If death occur, it is a part of his economy of grace, and finally a ministration unto life;" that is, it shall prove a benefit.

"God hath sworn that he willeth not the death of him that dieth; that is, he willeth it not as death finally, or simply, or destruction irrecoverable." Death simply and finally, then, means irrecoverable destruction, does it? But if it does so in this passage, it *may* in others; and then the threatenings of death, provided they were put in execution, may mean eternal damnation. Yea, if death, in this passage, mean irrecoverable destruction, it will follow that some are irrecoverably destroyed; for the death in which God taketh no pleasure, whatever it be, the sinner is supposed to suffer—He hath no pleasure in the death of *him that dieth*. God taketh no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, in the same sense as *he doth not afflict willingly*, nor grieve the children of men. It does not mean that he doth *not afflict them*, for this is contrary to fact; but he doth not afflict for affliction's sake, or for any pleasure that he takes in putting his creatures to pain. In all his dealings with sinners he acts like a good magistrate, who never punishes from caprice, but for a good end; in many cases for the correction of the party, and in all for the good of the community.

To your second maxim I have no objection—"That whatever God does, is intended by his goodness, conducted by his wisdom, and accomplished by his power." But your application of it is inadmissible. Some parts of it are trifling, others rest on unfounded assumptions, and others are adapted to overthrow all future punishment.

First, The greater part of it is *mere trifling*.—Whoever supposed that eternal punishment, or any punishment, was a *benefit* to God, or even a *pleasure* to him, or any holy beings, for its own sake? Or who pretends that it is inflicted for the *honour, pleasure, or benefit* of the sinner?

Secondly, Some parts of it which object to endless punishment, because it cannot be for the *honour* of God or the *benefit* of creatures, proceed altogether upon *unfounded assumptions*.—The only proof you have offered for the *first* branch of this position is naked assertion, "that every unsophisticated heart would so determine." Suppose, I say, every unsophisticated heart would determine the contrary, my assertion would prove as much as yours; and, I may add, if *our* hearts be sophisticated, it must be by malignity, or the wish of having our fellow creatures miserable: which, I imagine, you will not generally impute to us. But if *your* hearts be sophisticated, it is much more easily accounted for. The decision of sinful creatures, in

such a case as this, is like that of a company of criminals, who should sit in judgment on the nature of the penalties to which they are exposed; whose prejudices are much more likely to cause them to err on the favourable than on the unfavourable side.—The *second* branch of this position is as unsupported as the first. Only one reason is alleged, and that is far from being an acknowledged truth, viz. That no possible good can arise to society from the punishment of sinners, but that of *safety*. Common sense and universal experience teach us that this is not the only end of punishment. Israel might have been safe, if Pharaoh and his host had not been drowned; yet they were drowned. Was *safety* the only end answered to the world by the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah? or were they not rather *set forth for an example*? Is it only for the *safety* of society that a murderer is publicly executed? That end would be equally answered by perpetual imprisonment, or banishment, or a *private* execution; but there would be wanting an *example* to express the displeasure of a good government against crimes, and to impress the public mind with it.

Thirdly, Most of what you say on this subject, if admitted, would overturn *all* future punishment. You might ask, Would it be honourable to God to have any of his creatures miserable, *for ages of ages*, rather than happy? Would it be a greater *pleasure*? *Benefit* he can have none; for there is no profit in their blood. As to the punished, future punishment can be neither honour nor pleasure to them; and if their salvation could be accomplished without it, it cannot be any benefit to them. If they may not be saved without it, it must be either because there was not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ for the purpose, or else that “the full efficacy of the atonement was withheld by the Divine determination.” As to *fellow creatures*, can the future punishment of any of the human race be an honour to them? Who ever thought it an honour to him that any of his family were punished in any way? Is it not a dishonour to human nature at large to be sent to hell? Can any creature have *pleasure* in the punishment of another? Would not every benevolent mind possess a greater pleasure in seeing sinners converted and saved, without going to hell, than to see them condemned to weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, *for ages of ages*? Benefit they can have none, except *safety*; and that is better answered by their enmity being conquered in the present life. As, then, future torments can answer no possible good end to any one in the universe, I conclude them to be neither the work nor will of God; and, consequently, not the doctrine of Scripture!

You “think there is a vast difference, indeed, in the nature of future blessedness and future punishment; such as fully to justify us in giving a very different sense to the word eternal, when applied to these subjects,”—p. 331. It may be so; but your thoughts prove nothing. “Sin and misery,” you say, “have no root or foundation in God; and, therefore, must come to an end.” A while ago they seemed to have their sole root in him, so much so as to exclude the accountableness of creatures; but, allowing they have not, this inference is a mere creature of the imagination. Reduce your argument to form, and see what it will amount to:—

Whatever has its root in the creature must come to an end:

But sin and misery have their root in the creature;

Therefore, sin and misery must come to an end.

Now what proof, I ask, have you for your major proposition? None at all. It is an argument, therefore, without any medium of proof, founded upon mere imagination. Another, with equal plausibility, might imagine that, as sin and misery had their origin in the present state, they will also terminate in the present state; and, consequently, that there will be no future punishment. And another might imagine that, as the acts of human beings are

performed within a few years, the effects of them upon society cannot extend much further; and, consequently, it is absurd to suppose that a whole nation still feels the consequence of what was transacted in a few hours at Jerusalem, nearly 1800 years ago; and a whole world, of what was wrought, perhaps, in less time in the garden of Eden. In short, there are no bounds to the imagination, and will be no end to its absurdities, if it go on in this direction. If, instead of taking our religion from the Bible, we labour to form a system from our own ideas of fitness and unfitness, and interpret the Bible accordingly, there will be no end of our wanderings.

Because all judgment is committed to the Son, you conclude that future punishment has its origin in mercy, and will end in eternal salvation. To this I answer, First, If it be owing to the mediation of Christ that punishment should be a work of mercy, this is allowing, that if no mediator had been provided, it must have been the reverse. But if so, all your arguments against eternal punishment from the Divine perfections, and all your attempts to maintain that the original meaning of the Divine threatenings never included this idea, are given up. Secondly, If whatsoever is done by Christ in his mediatorial capacity shall terminate on his delivering up the kingdom to the Father, the rewards of the righteous, as well as the punishments of the wicked, must, at that period, come to an end; for he will equally confer the one as inflict the other. The "execution of judgment" committed to the Son denotes, not merely the carrying into execution of the sentence at the last day, but the general administration of God's moral government, both in this world and that which is to come.—See Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; Matt. xii. 18-20.

You talk of our "ascribing a proper eternity to sin and misery," as if we considered sin and misery to be necessarily eternal. The existence of intelligent creatures is no more eternal than their moral qualities or sensations; and therefore it would be improper to ascribe eternity either to the one or the other: but if God perpetuates the existence of intelligent beings to an endless duration, he may also perpetuate their moral qualities to the same extent, whether they originated with their existence, or were acquired at any subsequent period. Holiness and happiness, in respect to creatures, are not necessarily eternal, any more than sin and misery; and, in this view, it would be as improper to ascribe eternity to the purity and blessedness of the saved as to the sin and misery of the lost, seeing that the endless duration of both depends upon the will of God. You speak of the "life and blessedness of holy beings, as having their root and foundation in God; and that, being thus grounded in him, they will be, like him, eternal in duration." But this position is contrary to fact; for was not "God the source and proper spring both of the life and blessedness" of the unsinning angels? Yet they "kept not their first estate," but lost their blessedness, and "are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day." The life and blessedness of man, in a state of innocence, had their origin in God, as well as those of saints and angels; yet they were not, on this account, like their Author, "eternal in duration." To make such an assertion is, "to say the least of it, an unguarded mode of expression;" but more than this, it is contrary to fact, and tends to lessen the dependence of creatures upon God as the constant author of all their happiness. The argument to prove that sin and misery cannot be eternal is the counterpart of the above position; and, of course, it is equally fallacious.

"Sin and misery being contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God, they must," it seems, "come to an end." Such an assertion is soon made; but where is the proof? A little more assurance might lead another to say that sin and misery, being contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God,

cannot *exist* in a future state; and, were it not for the awful evidence of facts, another might assert that sin and misery do not *now* exist; for, in theory, it would be as easy to prove that the present existence of sin and misery is as contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God as their existence in future; and that their existence in future, *for ages of ages*, is as contrary to the holiness and benevolence of God as their existence to an endless duration. By such kind of reasoning, some men have become atheists, because they cannot reconcile the present state of things with their ideas of a superintending Power, possessed of infinite holiness and benevolence; and I cannot but tremble for the man who begins to travel in this unwary path, by measuring the Divine administration by his own unhallowed notions of moral fitness.

If your attempts to prove that all judgment is a work of mercy, and yet that there may be "judgment without mercy," should prove fruitless, it is no more than may be expected; for the thing itself is a contradiction. "The Scriptures afford instances of punishment and pardon to the same persons, and for the same sins" (p. 337); but was this punishment "without mercy?" "Judgment and mercy were united in God's dealings with Jerusalem,"—p. 338. Granted; but, for this very reason, it could not be "judgment without mercy." You might as well allege the union of wisdom and righteousness in all the works of God as a proof that there are some works in which wisdom will be exercised without righteousness.

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## LETTER VIII.

A FURTHER EXAMINATION OF MR. VIDLER'S SCHEME, WITH REPLIES TO HIS ANIMADVERSIONS.

SIR,

I do not know whether I fully understand your remarks on *proper eternity*,—p. 364. It is certainly one of those ideas in which the human mind is easily lost, as it infinitely surpasses our comprehension; but whether "the Scriptures have revealed any thing past or to come, besides what is connected with successive duration," and whether we be "left to infer a *proper eternity* only from the nature of Deity," are other questions. You will allow that the Scriptures *attribute* a proper eternity to the Divine Being, and to his all-comprehending purposes, which, I should think, is not leaving us to *infer* it from his nature. They speak also of a period when "God shall be all in all;" when the *end* cometh; and of the "end of all things" being at hand. They likewise promise an inheritance that shall "be without end." I should think, therefore, that this inheritance, of which the New Testament speaks very fully, cannot be said to be connected with successive duration; not so connected, at least, as to be commensurate with it.

By successive duration being ended, I meant no more than what I apprehended you must mean by the cessation of *day and night*, (p. 8,) and the state of things when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father. Strictly speaking, it may be true that the idea of successive duration necessarily attaches, and ever will attach, to the existence of creatures; and that none but God can be said to exist without it: but there is a period, by your own acknowledgment, when the states of creatures will be for ever fixed; and if, at this period, sinners be doomed to everlasting punishment, the term "everlasting" must be understood to mean endless duration. This

period I conceive to be at the last judgment; you extend it to ages beyond it. Here, therefore, is our difference. I did not allege Rev. x. 6 in favour of there being an end of time. I did not apprehend it needed proof. Your formal answer to it, therefore, is only removing an objection of your own creating; and if designed to prove that time will have no end, it is as contrary to your own avowed principles as to mine.

You contend that "the day of judgment is not the finishing period of Christ's kingdom;" for which you offer a number of reasons. To the greater part of them I have already replied. The rest I shall briefly consider:—

"This earth (which is to be the hell of wicked men, 2 Pet. iii. 7-13) is to be renewed, whereby hell itself will be no more,"—p. 365. If this gloss will bear the test, you have certainly, for once, hit upon a clear proof of your point; for none can imagine the conflagration to be eternal. But first, The Scriptures speak of a hell *already existing*, wherein the angels who kept not their first estate are "reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day;" and in which the departed spirits of wicked men "lift up their eyes, being in torment;" and intimate that this, whatsoever and wherever it be, will be the hell of ungodly men; for they are doomed to depart into everlasting fire, "prepared for the devil and his angels." But this cannot be upon earth, as its present condition does not admit of it.

Secondly, If the earth, as being dissolved by fire, is to be the hell of ungodly men, their punishment must *precede* the day of judgment, instead of following it; for the conflagration is uniformly represented as prior to that event. It is described, not, as your scheme supposes, as taking place a thousand years after Christ's second coming, but as attending it. The "day of the Lord's coming" is the same as "the day of God," which Christians look for and hasten to; "*wherein* the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved.—Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him;" and all this previous to his giving orders for his saints to be "gathered unto him." And thus we are taught, by the apostle Paul, that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven *in flaming fire*," 2 Pet. ii. 7, 12, 13; Psal. 1.; 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

Thirdly, I appeal to the judgment of the impartial reader, whether, by the *perdition* of ungodly men, be not meant the destruction of their *lives*, and not of their *souls*? It is spoken of in connexion with the deluge, and intimated that, as the ungodly were then destroyed from the face of the earth by water, in like manner they should now be destroyed by fire.

You plead the promise that "every knee shall bow to Christ," and consider this as inconsistent with "a stubborn knee, even in hell." But the question is, Whether the bowing of the knee to Christ be necessarily expressive of a *voluntary* and *holy* submission to him? The same inspired writer applies the language to that universal conviction which shall be produced at the last judgment, when every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. "We shall all stand," saith he, "before the judgment-seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."—Rom. xiv. 10-12. But you will not pretend that every knee will, *in that day*, bow to Christ in a way of voluntary submission.

"All things," you allege, "are to be reconciled to the Father by the blood of the cross; but while any continue in enmity against God, this can never be performed,"—p. 364. You refer, I suppose, to Col. i. 20. But if the reconciliation of things in earth, and things in heaven, denote the salvation of all the inhabitants of heaven and earth, it would follow, (1.) That the



holy angels are *saved* as well as the unholy; though, in fact, they never sinned. (2.) That when the apostle adds, "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled," he deals in unmeaning tautology. Things in heaven, and things in earth, were at variance through sin. Men becoming the enemies of God, all his faithful subjects and all the works of his hands were at war with them; yea, they were at variance with each other. But through the blood of Christ all things are reconciled; and, under his headship, all made to subserve the present and everlasting good of them who believe in him. Such appears to me to be the meaning of the passage, and it involves neither of the foregoing absurdities.

"Christ," you add, "is to rule till his enemies are *subdued*; till there be no authority, power, or dominion but what shall be subservient to him; till death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed; and as the wages of sin is death, the second death must be here included,"—p. 365. This language, which is taken from 1 Cor. xv., is manifestly used in reference to the resurrection of the bodies of those that sleep in Jesus, which is an event that precedes the last judgment; for "*when* this corruptible shall have put on incorruption—*then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory," which is the same thing as *the last enemy being destroyed*. And "*then* cometh the end," the last judgment, and the winding up of all things, "*when* he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power,"—ver. 24, 25. For you to interpret this language of things that are to *follow the last judgment*, and to say that it *must* include the second death, proves nothing but the dire necessity to which your system reduces you.

"Finally, The character of God is LOVE; which is expressly against the horrible idea of the endless misery of any of his rational creatures,"—p. 395. So, sir, you are pleased to assert. Another might from the same premises infer that the punishment of any of his rational creatures in hell, for ages of ages, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, (and this notwithstanding the death of his Son, and the omnipotence of his grace, which surely was able to have saved them from it,) is horrible and incredible! Is it inconsistent with the benevolence of a supreme magistrate that he dooms certain characters to death? Rather, is it not an exercise of his benevolence? Should a malefactor persuade himself and his companions in guilt that his Majesty cannot possibly consent to their execution, without ceasing to be that lovely and good character for which he has been famed, would not his reasoning be as false in itself as it was injurious to the king? Nay, would it not be inimical to his own interest and that of his fellow criminals; as, by raising a delusive hope, they are prevented from making a proper and timely application to the throne for mercy?

Such are your reasons for successive duration and final salvation after the last judgment; but whether they ought to satisfy any other person, let the reader judge. I shall close with replies to a few of your animadversions.

Your misrepresentation of what I had advanced concerning the Jews as a distinct nation, I should hope, needs no correction. If any of your readers can mistake what you have said for a just statement of the views, or an answer to the argument, of your opponent, they are beyond the reach of reasoning.

You infer, from what was God's end in punishing Israel *in the present life*, that (seeing he was an *immutable* Being) it must be the same in his punishing others in the life to come,—pp. 43, 44. I answered, "That I might as well infer from what appears to be his end in punishing Pharaoh and Sodom *in the present life*, which was not their good, but the good of

others, that such will be the end of future punishment,"—p. 261. You reply by *supposing* that these characters were destroyed for their good,—p. 367. What, *in the present life*? No; but in the life to come! And do you call this reasoning?

You say, "If any be finally incorrigible, it must be in consequence of the Divine purpose, or else the purpose of God has been frustrated." I have in my last Letter replied to the substance of this dilemma. I may add, you need be under no apprehension that I shall be tempted to give up the infrustrableness of the Divine purpose: and if I admit that God, in just judgment, has purposed to give some men up to stumble, and fall, and perish, it is no more than the Scriptures abundantly teach. You talk of "the LAST state of a creature according with the Divine purpose;" but I know of no evidence for this which does not equally apply to *every state*. If you be tempted to ask, "Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" you may possibly recollect that these questions have been asked before, and answered too; and it may be of use to you to study the answer.

Akin to this is your dilemma, "That God cannot or will not make an end of sin; that there is not efficacy enough in the blood of Christ to destroy the works of the devil; or else that the full efficacy of the atonement is withheld by the Divine determination." It has been already observed, and I hope proved, that the Scripture phrases, *making an end of sin*, &c., convey no such idea as you attach to them,—p. 264. And as to your dilemma, to which you ascribe great "weight," I answer again, you need be under no apprehension of my limiting the power of God, or the efficacy of the Saviour's blood; and if I say that both the one and the other are applied under the limitations of his own infinite wisdom, I say, not only what the Scriptures abundantly teach, but what you yourself must admit. Can you pretend that your scheme represents God as doing all he can do, and as bestowing all the mercy which the efficacy of the Saviour's blood has rendered consistent? If so, you must believe that God cannot convert more than he actually does in the present life, and that the efficacy of the blood of Christ is not equal to the saving of more than a part of mankind from the second death.

You think that "the Scripture is not silent concerning the future emendation of the ancient Sodomites;" and refer me to Ezek. xvi. 44–63, arguing that "Sodom and her daughters must be taken literally for the city of Sodom and the neighbouring cities of the plain; that the prophecy must refer to the very persons who were destroyed, seeing they left no descendants; and that there is the same reason to expect the restoration of Sodom as the fulfilment of God's gracious promise towards Jerusalem,"—p. 368. But if your interpretation prove any thing, it will prove—I will not say too much, but too little. It will prove, not that the ancient Sodomites will be saved from "the vengeance of eternal fire," and introduced into the heavenly world, but barely that they are to return to *their former estate*,—ver. 55. And do you seriously think that *after the last judgment* the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Samaria and Jerusalem, will be rebuilt, and repossessed by their ancient inhabitants? If so, it is time for me to lay down my pen.

The former part of the above passage (ver. 46–59) I apprehend to be no promise, but the language of keen reproof; and instead of intimating a return to either Sodom or Jerusalem, the latter is reasoned with on the footing of her own deserts, and told in effect not to expect it any more than the former.\* The latter part (ver. 60–63) contains the language of free mercy; not, however, towards the same individuals against whom the threatenings

\* See a similar kind of phraseology in Jer. xxxiii. 19–26.

are directed, but to their distant posterity, who, under the gospel dispensation, should be brought home to God; and, by a new and better *covenant*, have the *Gentiles* given to them. The conversion of the heathen is expressed by this kind of language more than once; as by "bringing again the captivity of Moab, of Elam, and of the children of Ammon in the latter days," Jer. xlviii. 47; xlix. 6, 39.

You "have not discernment enough," it seems, "to perceive the gross absurdity" of maintaining that there can be no diversity in future punishment unless it be in duration; that is, that the reflections of sinners on their past life must all be exactly the same. It may be so; but I cannot help it. Your answer amounts to this: Diversity of degrees in future punishment *may* be accounted for by varying the duration of it; "for every one knows there needs not so much time to inflict a hundred stripes as to inflict ten times that number." Therefore, that *must* be the way, and the only way; and if you do not admit it, you "confound all degrees of punishment, in giving infinite punishment to all,"—pp. 42, 264, 369.

You believe, you say, that "those who die in their sins cannot go where Christ is." You must mean to say merely that they *cannot follow him now, but shall follow him AFTERWARDS*. Such things, indeed, are said of Christ's friends, but not of his enemies.

You have represented me as maintaining that all punishment clashes with the benevolence "both of God and his people." I have said no such thing concerning God; and if we were equally wise and righteous, and equally concerned to guard the interests of the universe, as he is, we should be, in all respects, of the same mind with him. The misery which I suppose true benevolence to clash with is misery inflicted for its own sake; and to this, whether it be temporary or endless, it is alike abhorrent. God has also made it *our* duty, while sinners are not his confirmed enemies, to do all in our power to preserve their lives, and save their souls; but *He* is not obliged to do all that he can to these ends, nor does he. Temporary punishment, you contend, may consist with benevolence, "because it is directed to a good and glorious end;" and do I contend for endless punishment on any other principle? If you can form no idea of an end that is good and glorious, save that which respects "the amendment of the sufferer," it does not follow that no such end exists. A murderer, contemplating his approaching exit, might be so much absorbed in the love of himself as to be of your opinion; but the community would not.

Whether I have entered into the "merits of the cause," or conducted the controversy in a becoming "spirit," I consider it as no part of my province to determine. The impartial reader will judge whether I have dealt in "soft words, or hard arguments;" and if, in this particular, I have been so happy as to follow your counsel, whether I have not been obliged to deviate from your example. On this account, I shall be excused from taking any notice of your animadversions on these subjects, together with those of your new ally, the "Hoxton Student," unless it be to thank you for affording additional proof of the justness of my remark, *That Socinians rejoice in the spread of universalism*.

Whether the kingdom of heaven be prepared for all men or not, that you and I may so agonize, in the present life, as at last to enter in, is the desire and prayer of your sincere well-wisher.

A. F.

THE  
GOSPEL WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION,

OR THE

DUTY OF SINNERS TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST,

WITH CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS;

TO WHICH IS ADDED

AN APPENDIX,

ON THE NECESSITY OF A HOLY DISPOSITION IN ORDER TO BELIEVING IN CHRIST.

“Go, . . . preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned!”—JESUS CHRIST.

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author had no thoughts of reprinting the present publication till he was repeatedly requested to do so from very respectable quarters.

The corrections and additions, which form a considerable part of this edition, are such as, after a lapse of fifteen years, the writer thought it proper to make. It would be inexcusable for him to have lived all this time without gaining any additional light by what he has seen and heard upon the subject; and still more so to publish a Second Edition without doing all in his power towards improving it. The *omissions*, however, which also are considerable, are not always owing to a disapprobation of the sentiment, but to other things presenting themselves which appeared to be more immediately in point.

1801.

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PREFACE.

WHEN the following pages were written, (1781),\* the author had no intention of publishing them. He had formerly entertained different sentiments. For some few years, however, he had begun to doubt whether all his principles on these subjects were Scriptural. These doubts arose chiefly from thinking on some passages of Scripture, particularly the latter part of the second Psalm, where kings, who “set themselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed,” are positively commanded to “kiss the Son;” also the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, who, he found,

First published in 1786.—B.

did not hesitate to address unconverted sinners, and that in the most pointed manner—saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—“Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” And it appeared to him there must be a most unwarrantable *force* put upon these passages to make them mean any other repentance and faith than such as are connected with salvation.

Reading the lives and labours of such men as Elliot, Brainerd, and several others, who preached Christ with so much success to the American Indians, had an effect upon him. Their work, like that of the apostles, seemed to be plain before them. They appeared to him, in their addresses to those poor benighted heathens, to have none of those difficulties with which he felt himself encumbered. These things led him to the throne of grace, to implore instruction and resolution. He saw that he wanted both; the one to know the mind of Christ, and the other to avow it.

He was, for some time, however, deterred from disclosing his doubts. During nearly four years they occupied his mind, and not without increasing. Being once in company with a minister whom he greatly respected, it was thrown out, as a matter of inquiry, Whether he had generally entertained just notions concerning unbelief! It was common to speak of unbelief as a calling in question the truth of our own personal religion; whereas, he remarked, “it was the calling in question the truth of what God had said.” This remark appeared to carry in it its own evidence.

From this time, his thoughts upon the subject began to enlarge. He preached upon it more than once. From hence, he was led to think on its opposite, faith, and to consider it as *a persuasion of the truth of what God has said*; and, of course, to suspect his former views concerning its not being the duty of unconverted sinners.

He was aware that the generality of Christians with whom he was acquainted viewed the belief of the gospel as something presupposed in faith, rather than as being of the essence of it; and considered the contrary as the opinion of Mr. Sandeman, which they were agreed in rejecting, as favourable to a dead or inoperative kind of faith. He thought, however, that what they meant by a belief of the gospel was nothing more than a general assent to the doctrines of revelation, unaccompanied with love to them, or a dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. He had no doubt but that such a notion of the subject ought to be rejected; and if this be the notion of Mr. Sandeman, (which, by the way, he does not know, having never read any of his works,) he has no scruple in saying it is far from any thing which he intends to advance.\*

It appeared to him that we had taken unconverted sinners too much upon their word, when they told us that they believed the gospel. He did not doubt but that they might believe many things concerning Jesus Christ and his salvation; but being blind to the *glory of God*, as it is displayed in the *face of Jesus Christ*, their belief of the gospel must be very superficial, extending only to a few facts, without any sense of their real intrinsic excellency; which, strictly speaking, is not faith. Those who see no form nor comeliness in the Messiah, nor beauty, that they should desire him, are described as *not believing the report concerning him*, Isa. liii. 1, 2.

\* Since the first edition of this piece made its appearance, the author has seen Mr. Sandeman's writings, and those of Mr. A. McLean, who, on this subject, seems to agree with Mr. Sandeman. Justice requires him to say that these writers do not appear to plead for a kind of faith which is not followed with love, or by a dependence on Christ alone for salvation; but their idea of faith itself goes to exclude every thing cordial from it. Though he accords with them in considering the belief of the gospel as saving faith, yet there is an important difference in the ideas which they attach to believing. This difference with some other things is examined, in an Appendix, at the end of this edition.

He had also read and considered, as well as he was able, President Edwards's *Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will*, with some other performances on the difference between natural and moral inability. He found much satisfaction in this distinction; as it appeared to him to carry with it its own evidence—to be clearly and fully contained in the Scriptures—and calculated to disburden the Calvinistic system of a number of calumnies with which its enemies have loaded it, as well as to afford clear and honourable conceptions of the Divine government. If it were not the duty of unconverted sinners to believe in Christ, and that because of their inability, he supposed this inability must be natural, or something which did not arise from an evil disposition; but the more he examined the Scriptures, the more he was convinced that all the inability ascribed to man, with respect to believing, arises from the aversion of his heart. They *will not* come to Christ that they may have life; *will not* hearken to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely; *will not* seek after God; and *desire not* the knowledge of his ways.

He wishes to avoid the error into which we are apt to be betrayed, when engaged in controversy—that of magnifying the importance of the subject beyond its proper bounds; yet he seriously thinks the subject treated of in the following pages is of no small importance. To him, it appears to be the same controversy, for substance, as that which in all ages has subsisted between God and an apostate world. God has ever maintained these two principles: *All that is evil is of the creature, and to him belongs the blame of it*; and *all that is good is of himself, and to him belongs the praise of it*. To acquiesce in *both* these positions is too much for the carnal heart. The advocates for free-will would seem to yield the former, acknowledging themselves blameworthy for the evil; but they cannot admit the latter. Whatever honour they may allow to the general grace of God, they are for ascribing the preponderance in favour of virtue and eternal life to their own good improvement of it. Others, who profess to be advocates for free grace, appear to be willing that God should have all the honour of their salvation, in case they should be saved; but they discover the strongest aversion to take to themselves the blame of their destruction in case they should be lost. To yield both these points to God is to fall under in the grand controversy with him, and to acquiesce in his revealed will; which acquiescence includes "*repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*." Indeed, it were not very difficult to prove that each, in rejecting one of these truths, does not, in reality, embrace the other. The Arminian, though he professes to take the blame of the evil upon himself, yet feels no guilt for being a sinner, any further than he imagines he could, by the help of Divine grace, given to him and all mankind, have avoided it. If he admit the native depravity of his heart, it is his misfortune, not his fault; his fault lies, not in being *in* a state of alienation and aversion from God, but in not making the best use of the grace of God to get out of it. And the Antinomian, though he ascribes salvation to free grace, yet feels no obligation for the pardon of his impenitence, his unbelief, or his constant aversion to God, during his supposed unregeneracy. Thus, as in many other cases, opposite extremes are known to meet. Where no grace is given, they are united in supposing that no duty can be required; which, if true, "*grace is no more grace*."

The following particulars are premised, for the sake of a clear understanding of the subject:—

First, There is no dispute about the doctrine of election, or any of the discriminating doctrines of grace. They are allowed on both sides; and it is granted that none ever did or ever will believe in Christ but those who

are chosen of God from eternity. The question does not turn upon what are the causes of salvation, but rather upon what are the causes of damnation. "No man," as Mr. Charnock happily expresses it, "is an unbeliever, but because he will be so; and every man is not an unbeliever, because the grace of God conquers some, changeth their wills, and bends them to Christ."\*

Secondly, Neither is there any dispute concerning who ought to be encouraged to consider themselves as entitled to the blessings of the gospel. Though sinners be freely invited to the participation of spiritual blessings; yet they have no interest in them, according to God's revealed will, while they continue in unbelief; nor is it any part of the design of these pages to persuade them to believe that they have. On the contrary, the writer is fully convinced that, whatever be the secret purpose of God concerning them, they are at present under the curse.

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

Fourthly, The question is not whether men are required to believe any more than is reported in the gospel, or any thing that is not true; but whether that which is reported ought not to be believed with all the heart, and whether this be not saving faith.

Fifthly, It is no part of the controversy whether unconverted sinners be able to turn to God, and to embrace the gospel; but what kind of inability they lie under with respect to these exercises; whether it consists in the want of natural powers and advantages, or merely in the want of a heart to make a right use of them. If the former, obligation, it is granted, would be set aside; but if the latter, it remains in full force. They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God; but it does not follow that they are not obliged to do so; and this their obligation requires to be clearly insisted on, that they may be convinced of their sin, and so induced to embrace the gospel remedy.

Sixthly, The question is not whether faith be required of sinners as a virtue, which, if complied with, shall be the ground of their acceptance with God, or that on account of which they may be justified in his sight; but whether it be not required as the appointed *means* of salvation. The righteousness of Jesus believed in is the only ground of justification, but faith in him is necessary to our being interested in it. We remember the fatal example of the Jews, which the apostle Paul holds up to our view. "The Gentiles," saith he, "who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. *Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith*, but, as it were, by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Though we had not been elsewhere told (1 Pet. ii. 8) that in doing this they were *disobedient*, yet our judgments must be strangely warped by system if we did not conclude it to be their sin, and that by which they fell and perished. And we dare not but charge our hearers, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to beware of stumbling upon the same stone, and of falling after the same example of unbelief.

Finally, The question is not whether unconverted sinners be the subjects

\* Discourses, Vol. II. p. 473.

of exhortation, but whether they ought to be exhorted to perform spiritual duties. It is beyond all dispute that the Scriptures do exhort them to many things. If, therefore, there be any professors of Christianity who question the propriety of this, and who would have nothing said to them, except that, "if they be elected they will be called," they are not to be reasoned with, but rebuked, as setting themselves in direct opposition to the word of God. The greater part of those who may differ from the author on these subjects, it is presumed, will admit the propriety of sinners being exhorted to duty; only this duty must, as they suppose, be confined to merely natural exercises, or such as may be complied with by a carnal heart, destitute of the love of God. It is one design of the following pages to show that God requires the heart, the whole heart, and nothing but the heart; that all the precepts of the Bible are only the different modes in which we are required to express our love to him; that, instead of its being true that sinners are obliged to perform duties which have no spirituality in them, there are no such duties to be performed; and that, so far from their being exhorted to every thing excepting what is spiritually good, they are exhorted to nothing else. The Scriptures undoubtedly require them to read, to hear, to repent, and to pray, that their sins may be forgiven them. It is not, however, in the exercise of a carnal, but of a spiritual state of mind, that these duties are performed.

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## PART I.

### THE SUBJECT SHOWN TO BE IMPORTANT, STATED, AND EXPLAINED.

GOD, having blessed mankind with the glorious gospel of his Son, hath spoken much in his word, as it might be supposed he would, of the treatment which it should receive from those to whom it was addressed. A cordial reception of it is called, in Scripture, *receiving Christ, allowing him, believing in him, &c.*, and the contrary, *refusing, disallowing, and rejecting him*; and those who thus reject him are, in so doing, said to *judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life*.<sup>\*</sup> These are things on which the New Testament largely insists: great stress is there laid on the reception which the truth shall meet with. The same lips which commissioned the apostles to go and "preach the gospel to every creature," added, "He that *believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*." "To as many as *received him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;" but to them "who received him not," but refused him, and rejected his way of salvation, he became a stumbling-stone, and a rock of offence, that they might stumble, and fall, and perish. Thus the gospel, according to the different reception it meets with, becomes a "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death."

The controversies which have arisen concerning faith in Jesus Christ are not so much an object of surprise as the conduct of those who, professing to be Christians, affect to decry the subject as a matter of little or no importance. There is not any principle or exercise of the human mind of which the New Testament speaks so frequently, and on which so great a stress is laid. And with regard to the inquiry whether faith be required of all men who hear, or have opportunity to hear the word, it cannot be uninteresting. If it be not, to inculcate it would be unwarrantable and cruel to

<sup>\*</sup> John i. 12; iii. 16; Psal. cxviii. 22: 1 Pet. ii. 7; Matt. xxi. 42; Acts xiii. 46.



our fellow sinners, as it subjects them to an additional charge of abundance of guilt; but if it be, to explain it away is to undermine the Divine prerogative, and, as far as it goes, to subvert the very intent of the promulgation of the gospel, which is that men "should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and, believing, have life through his name," John xx. 31. This is doubtless a very serious thing, and ought to be seriously considered. Though some good men may be implicated in this matter, it becomes them to remember that "whosoever breaketh one of the least of Christ's commandments, and teacheth men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." If believing be a commandment, it cannot be one of the *least*: the important relations which it sustains, as well as the dignity of its object, must prevent this: the knowledge of sin, repentance for it, and gratitude for pardoning mercy, all depend upon our admitting it. And if it be a *great* commandment, the breach of it must be a great sin; and whosoever teaches men otherwise is a partaker of their guilt; and, if they perish, will be found to have been accessory to their eternal ruin. Let it be considered whether the apostle to the Hebrews did not proceed upon such principles, when he exclaimed, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so *great* salvation?" And the Lord Jesus himself, when he declared, "*He that believeth not shall be damned!*"

In order to determine whether faith in Christ be the duty of all men who have opportunity to hear the gospel, it will be necessary to determine what it is, or wherein it consists. Some have maintained that it consists in a persuasion of our interest in Christ and in all the benefits and blessings of his mediation. The author of *The Further Inquiry*, Mr. L. Wayman, of Kimbolton, who wrote about sixty years ago upon the subject, questions "whether there be any act of special faith which hath not the nature of appropriation in it" (p. 13); and by appropriation he appears to mean a persuasion of our interest in spiritual blessings. This is the ground upon which he rests the main body of his argument: to overturn it, therefore, will be in effect to answer his book. Some, who would not be thought to maintain that a persuasion of interest in Christ is essential to faith, for the sake of many Christians whom they cannot but observe, upon this principle, to be, generally speaking, unbelievers, yet maintain what fully implies it. Though they will allow, for the comfort of such Christians, that assurance is not of the essence of faith, (understanding by assurance an assured persuasion of our salvation,) but that *a reliance on Christ* is sufficient; yet, in almost all other things, they speak as if they did not believe what at those times they say. It is common for such persons to call those fears which occupy the minds of Christians, lest they should miss of salvation at last, by the name of unbelief; and to reprove them for being guilty of this God-dishonouring sin, exhorting them to be strong in faith, like Abraham, giving glory to God; when all that is meant is, that they should, without doubting, believe the goodness of their state. If this be saving faith, it must inevitably follow that it is *not* the duty of unconverted sinners; for they are not interested in Christ, and it cannot possibly be their duty to believe a lie. But if it can be proved that the proper object of saving faith is not our being interested in Christ, but the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God, (which is true, whether we believe it or not,) a contrary inference must be drawn; for it is admitted, on all hands, that it is the duty of every man to believe what God reveals.

I have no objection to allowing that true faith "hath in it the nature of appropriation," if by this term be meant an application of the truths believed to our own particular cases. "When the Scriptures teach," says a pungent writer, "we are to receive instruction, for the enlightening of *our own* minds;

when they admonish, *we* are to take warning; when they reprove, *we* are to be checked; when they comfort, *we* are to be cheered and encouraged; and when they recommend any grace, *we* are to desire and embrace it; when they command any duty, *we* are to hold ourselves enjoined to do it; when they promise, *we* are to hope; when they threaten, *we* are to be terrified, as if the judgment were denounced against *us*; and when they forbid any sin, *we* are to think they forbid it unto *us*. By which application we shall make all the rich treasures contained in the Scriptures wholly our own, and in such a powerful and peculiar manner enjoy the fruit and benefit of them, as if they had been wholly written *for us*, and none other else besides us.\*

By saving faith, we undoubtedly embrace Christ *for ourselves*, in the same sense as Jacob embraced Jehovah as *his* God (Gen. xxviii. 21); that is, to a rejecting of every idol that stands in competition with him. Christ is all-sufficient, and suited to save *us* as well as others; and it is for the forgiveness of *our* sins that we put our trust in him. But this is very different from a persuasion of our being in a state of salvation.

My objections to this notion of faith are as follow:—

First, Nothing can be an object of faith, except what God has revealed in his word; but the interest that any individual has in Christ and the blessings of the gospel, more than another, is not revealed. God has no where declared, concerning any one of us, as individuals, that we shall be saved; all that he has revealed on this subject respects us *as characters*. He has abundantly promised that all who *believe in him, love him, and obey him* shall be saved; and a persuasion that *if we sustain these characters* we shall be saved, is doubtless an exercise of faith: but whether we do or not, is an object not of faith, but of consciousness. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”—“My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth: hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”† If any one imagine that God has revealed to him his interest in his love, and this in a special, immediate, and extraordinary manner, and not by exciting in him the holy exercises of grace, and thereby begetting a consciousness of his being a subject of grace, let him beware lest he deceive his soul. The Jews were not wanting in what some would call the faith of assurance: “We have one Father,” said they, “even God:” but Jesus answered, “If God were your Father, ye would love me.”

Secondly, The Scriptures always represent faith as terminating on something without us; namely, on Christ, and the truths concerning him: but if it consist in a persuasion of our being in a state of salvation, it must terminate principally on something within us; namely, the work of grace in our hearts; for to believe myself interested in Christ is the same thing as to believe myself a subject of special grace. And hence, as was said, it is common for many who entertain this notion of faith to consider its opposite, unbelief, as a *doubting whether we have been really converted*. But as it is the truth and excellence of the *things to be interested in*, and not his *interest in them*, that the sinner is apt to disbelieve; so it is these, and not that, on which the faith of the believer primarily terminates. Perhaps what relates to personal interest may, in general, more properly be called *hope* than faith; and its opposite *fear*, than unbelief.

Thirdly, To believe ourselves in a state of salvation (however desirable, when grounded on evidence) is far inferior in its object to saving faith. The grand object on which faith fixes is the glory of Christ, and not the

\* Downam's Guide to Godliness, p. 647.

† 1 John ii. 3, 5; iii. 18, 19.

happy condition we are in, as interested in him. The latter doubtless affords great consolation; and the more we discover of his excellence, the more ardently shall we desire an interest in him, and be the more disconsolate while it continues a matter of doubt. But if we be concerned only for our own security, our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins. As that repentance which fixes merely on the consequences of sin as subjecting us to misery is selfish and spurious, so that faith which fixes merely on the consequences of Christ's mediation as raising us to happiness is equally selfish and spurious. It is the peculiar property of true faith to endear Christ: "Unto you that believe *he* is precious." And where this is the case, if there be no impediments arising from constitutional dejection or other accidental causes, we shall not be in doubt about an interest in him. Consolation will accompany the faith of the gospel: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Fourthly, All those exercises of faith which our Lord so highly commends in the New Testament, as that of the centurion, the woman of Canaan, and others, are represented as terminating on his *all-sufficiency* to heal them, and not as consisting in a persuasion that they were interested in the Divine favour, and therefore should succeed. "Speak the word only," says the one, "and my servant shall be healed; for I am a man in authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." Such was the persuasion which the other entertained of his all-sufficiency to help her, that she judged it enough if she might but partake of the crumbs of his table—the scatterings as it were of mercy. Similar to this is the following language:—"If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole."—"Believe ye that I am *able* to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord."—"Lord, if thou wilt, thou *canst* make me clean."—"If thou *canst* do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us: Jesus said, If thou *canst* believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." I allow that the case of these people, and that of a sinner applying for forgiveness, are not exactly the same. Christ had no where promised to heal all who came for healing; but he has graciously bound himself not to cast out any who come to him for mercy. On this account, there is a greater ground for faith in the willingness of Christ to save than there was in his willingness to heal; and there was less unbelief in the saying of the leper, "*If thou wilt*, thou *canst* make me clean," than there would be in similar language from one who, convinced of his own utter insufficiency, applied to him for salvation. But a persuasion of Christ being both able and willing to save all them that come unto God by him, consequently to save us if we so apply, is very different from a persuasion that we are the children of God, and interested in the blessings of the gospel.

Mr. Anderson, an American writer, has lately published a pamphlet on the *Scripture Doctrine of the Appropriation which is in the Nature of saving Faith*. The scheme which he attempts to defend is that of Hervey, Marshall, &c., or that which in Scotland is known by the name of the *Marrow doctrine*.\* These divines write much about the gospel containing a *gift* or *grant* of Christ and spiritual blessings to sinners of mankind; and that it is the office of faith so to receive the gift as to claim it as our own; and thus they seem to have supposed that it becomes our own. But the gospel contains no *gift* or *grant* to mankind in general, beyond that of an offer or free invitation; and thus, indeed, Mr. Boston, in his notes on the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, seems to explain it. It warrants every sinner to believe

\* Alluding to a work published some years since, under the title of "The Marrow of Modern Divinity."

in Christ for salvation, but no one to conclude himself interested in salvation till he has believed; consequently, such a conclusion, even where it is well-founded, cannot be faith, but that which follows it.

Mr. Anderson is careful to distinguish the appropriation for which he contends from "the knowledge of our being believers, or already in a state of grace,"—p. 61. He also acknowledges that the ground of saving faith "is something that may be known before, and in order to the act of faith;" that it is "among the things that are revealed, and which belong to us and to our children,"—p. 60. Yet he makes it of the essence of faith to believe "that Christ *is ours*,"—p. 56. It must be *true*, then, that Christ is ours, antecedently to our believing it, and whether we believe it or not. This, it seems, Mr. Anderson will admit; for he holds that "God hath made a *gift* or *grant* of Christ and spiritual blessings to sinners of mankind," and which denominates him ours "before we believe it." Yet he does not admit the final salvation of all to whom Christ is thus supposed to be given. To what, therefore, does the gift amount, more than to a free invitation, concerning which his opponents have no dispute with him? A free invitation, though it affords a warrant to apply for mercy, and that with an assurance of success; yet gives no *interest* in its blessings, but on the supposition of its being accepted. Neither does the gift for which Mr. A. contends; nothing is conveyed by it that insures any man's salvation. All the author says, therefore, against what he calls *conditions* of salvation, is no less applicable to his own scheme than to that of his opponents. His scheme is as really conditional as theirs. The condition which it prescribes for our becoming interested in the blessings of eternal life, so interested, at least, as to possess them, is, to believe them to be our own; and without this he supposes we shall never enjoy them.

He contends, indeed, that the belief of the promises cannot be called a condition of our right to claim an interest in them, because if such belief *be* claiming an interest in them, it would be making a thing the condition of itself,—pp. 50, 51. But to this it is replied, First, Although Mr. A. considers saving faith as *including* appropriation, yet this is only one idea which he ascribes to it. He explains it as consisting of three things: a *persuasion* of Divine truth, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit; a *sure* persuasion; and an *appropriating* persuasion of Christ's being ours,—pp. 54-56. Now though it were allowed that the last branch of this definition is the same thing as claiming an interest in the promises, and therefore cannot be reckoned the condition of it; yet this is more than can be said of the former two, which are no less essential to saving faith than the other. Secondly, The sense in which the promise is *taken*, by what is called appropriating faith, is not the same as that in which it is *given* in the promise itself. As given in the word, the promise is general, applying equally to one sinner as to another; but as taken, it is considered as particular, and as insuring salvation. Thirdly, If an *interest* in the righteousness of Christ were the immediate object of saving faith, how could it be said that "unto us it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead?" If Christ's righteousness be ours, it must be so as imputed to us; but this would be making the apostle say, If we believe Christ's righteousness to be imputed to us, it *shall be* imputed to us.

I have no partiality for calling faith, or any thing done by us, the condition of salvation; and if by the term were meant a deed to be performed of which the promised good is the reward, it would be inadmissible. If I had used the term, it would have been merely to express the necessary connexion of things, or that faith is *that without which there is no salvation*; and, in this sense, it is no less a condition in Mr. A.'s scheme than in that

which he opposes. He thinks, however, that the promises of God are, by his statement of things, disencumbered of conditions; yet how he can prove that God has absolutely given Christ and spiritual blessings to multitudes who will never possess them, I am at a loss to conceive. I should have supposed that whatever God has absolutely promised would take effect. He says, indeed, that "the Lord may give an absolute promise to those who, in the event, never come to the actual enjoyment of the promised blessing, as in the case of the Israelites being brought to the good land, (Exod. iii. 17,) though the bulk of them that left Egypt perished in the wilderness through unbelief;"—p. 43. It is true God absolutely promised to plant them, "*as a nation*," in the good land, and this he performed; but he did not absolutely promise that every individual who left Egypt should be amongst them. So far as it respected individuals (unless it were in reference to Caleb and Joshua) the promise was not absolute.

Upon the mere ground of Christ being exhibited in the gospel, "I am persuaded," says Mr. A., "that he is *my* Saviour; nor can I, without casting reproach upon the wisdom, faithfulness, and mercy of God, in setting him forth, entertain any doubts about my justification and salvation through his name,"—p. 65. Has God *promised* justification and salvation, then, to every one to whom Christ is exhibited? If he has, it doubtless belongs to faith to give him credit: but, in this case, we ought also to maintain that the promise will be performed, whatever be the state of our minds; for though we believe not, he abideth faithful. On the other hand, if the blessing of justification, though freely offered to all, be only promised to believers, it is not faith, but presumption, to be persuaded of my justification, any otherwise than as being conscious of my believing in Jesus for it.

Mr. A. illustrates his doctrine by a similitude. "Suppose that a great and generous prince had made a grant to a certain class of persons, therein described, of large estates, including all things suitable to their condition; and had publicly declared, that whosoever of the persons so described would believe such an estate, in virtue of the grant now mentioned, to be his own, should not be disappointed, but should immediately enter upon the granted estate, according to the order specified in the grant. Suppose, too, that the royal donor had given the grant in writing, and had added his seal, and his oath, and his gracious invitation, and his most earnest entreaty, and his authoritative command, to induce the persons described in the grant to accept of it. It is evident that any one of these persons, having had access to read or hear the grant, must either be verily persuaded that the granted estate is his own, or be chargeable with an attempt to bring dishonour upon the goodness, the veracity, the power, and authority of the donor; on account of which attempt he is liable not only to be debarred for ever from the granted estate, but to suffer a most exemplary and tremendous punishment."—p. 66.

I suppose the object of this similitude is expressed in the sentence, "It is evident that any one of these persons, having had access to read or hear the grant, must either be verily persuaded that the granted estate *is his own*, or be chargeable with dishonouring the donor." In what sense, then, *is it his own*? He is freely invited to partake of it; that is all. It is not *so* his own but that he may ultimately be debarred from possessing it; but in whatever sense *it is his own*, that is the only sense in which he is warranted to *believe it to be so*. If the condition of his actually possessing it be his believing that he shall actually possess it, he must believe what was not revealed at the time, except conditionally, and what would not have been true but for his believing it.

The above similitude may serve to illustrate Mr. A.'s scheme; but I know

of nothing like it, either in the concerns of men or the oracles of God. I will venture to say there never was a gift or grant made upon any such terms, and the man that should make it would expose himself to ridicule. The Scriptures furnish us with an illustration of another kind. The gospel is a *feast freely provided*, and sinners of mankind are *freely invited* to partake of it. There is no mention of any *gift*, or *grant*, distinct from this, but this itself is a ground sufficient. It affords a complete warrant for any sinner, not indeed to believe the provisions to be *his own*, whether he accept the invitation or not, but that, relinquishing every thing that stands in competition with them, and receiving them as a *free gift*, they *shall be his own*. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."—"To us it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Those who were persuaded to embrace the invitation are not described as coming to *make a claim of it as their property*, but as gratefully accepting it; and those who refused are not represented as doubting whether the feast was *provided for them*, but as *making light of it*, and preferring their farms and merchandise before it.

In short, if this writer can prove it to be *true* that justification and eternal life are absolutely given, granted, and promised, to all who hear the gospel, there can be no dispute whether saving faith includes the belief of it with respect to ourselves, nor whether it be a duty; but if the thing be false, it can be no part of the faith of the gospel, nor of the duty of a sinner, to give credit to it.

But to return. That the belief of the truth which God hath revealed in the Scriptures concerning Christ is saving faith is evident from the following passages:—"Go preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Believing, here, manifestly refers to *the gospel* to be preached, and the rejection of which would subject the unbeliever to certain damnation.—"These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." Believing unto life is here described as a persuasion of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God; and that on the ground of what was written in the Scriptures.—"Those by the wayside are they that hear: then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." This language plainly denotes that a real belief of the word is connected with salvation. Peter confessed, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Here it is plainly intimated that a belief of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of the living God, is saving faith; and that no man can be strictly said to do this, unless he be the subject of a spiritual illumination from above. To the same purpose are those express declarations of Paul and John: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."—"Whoso believeth that Jesus is the Christ is the Son of God."—"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"—"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."—"He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."—"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit."—Again, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." The *light* they then had was that of the gospel; and had they believed it, they would have been the children of *light*, or true Christians. "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth."—"These things I say that ye might be saved." Our Lord could not mean less by this language than that, if they believed

those things which John testified, and which he himself confirmed, they would be saved; which is the same thing as declaring it to be saving faith. Christ "shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." The words in a parenthesis are evidently intended to give the reason of the phrase, "them that believe," and intimate that it was the belief of the gospel testimony that denominated them believers. "God hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." It cannot be doubted that, by the "belief of the truth," is here meant faith in Christ; and its being connected with sanctification of the Spirit and eternal salvation, proves it to be saving.

If the foregoing passages be admitted to prove the point, (and if they do not, we may despair of learning any thing from the Scriptures,) the duty of unconverted sinners to believe in Christ cannot fairly be called in question; for, as before said, it is admitted on all hands that it is the duty of every man to believe what God reveals.

But to this statement it is objected, that Christianity having at that time great opposition made to it, and its professors being consequently exposed to great persecution and reproach, the belief and acknowledgment of the gospel was more a test of sincerity than it now is: men are now taught the principles of the Christian religion from their youth, and believe them, and are not ashamed to acknowledge them; while yet they give no evidence of their being born of God, but of the contrary. There is some force in this objection, so far as it respects a *confession* of Christ's name; but I do not perceive that it affects the belief of the gospel. It was no more difficult to believe the truth at that time than at this, though it might be much more so to avow it. With respect to that traditional assent which is given to Christianity in some nations, it is of the same nature as that which is given to Mahometanism and paganism in others. It is no more than that of the Jewish nation in the time of our Lord towards the Mosaic Scriptures. They declared themselves to be Moses's disciples, and had no doubt but they believed him; yet our Lord did not allow that they believed his writings. "Had ye believed Moses," says he, "ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me." The same is doubtless true of all others who assent to his gospel merely from having been educated in it. Did they believe it, they would be consistent, and embrace those things which are connected with it. It is worthy of remark, that those professors of Christianity who *received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*, are represented as *not believing the truth*, and as having pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 12. To admit the existence of a few facts, without possessing any sense of their humiliating implication, their holy nature, their vast importance, or the practical consequences that attach to them, is to admit the body without the spirit. Paul, notwithstanding his knowledge of the law, and great zeal on its behalf, while blind to its *spirituality*, reckoned himself to be "without the law," Rom. vii. 9. And such are those professing Christians, with respect to the gospel, "who receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved."

It is further objected, that men are said to have believed the gospel, who, notwithstanding, were destitute of true religion. Thus some among the chief rulers are said to have "believed in Jesus, but did not confess him; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." It is said of Simon that he "believed also;" yet he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Agrippa is acknowledged by Paul to have *believed the prophets*, and faith is attributed even to the devils. The term *belief*, like almost every other term, is sometimes used in an improper sense. Judas is

said to have *repented* and hanged himself, though nothing more is meant by it than his being smitten with remorse, wishing he had not done as he did, on account of the consequences. Through the poverty of language there is not a name for every thing that differs, and therefore where two things have the same visible appearance, and differ only in some circumstances which are invisible, it is common to call them by the same name. Thus men are termed *honest* who are punctual in their dealings, though such conduct in many instances may arise merely from a regard to their own credit, interest, or safety. Thus the remorse of Judas is called *repentance*; and thus the convictions of the Jewish rulers, of Simon, and Agrippa, and the fearful apprehension of apostate angels, from what they had already felt, is called *faith*. But as we do not infer, from the application of the term *repentance* to the feelings of Judas, that there is nothing spiritual in *real* repentance, so neither ought we to conclude, from the foregoing applications of the term *believing*, that there is nothing spiritual in a *real* belief of the gospel.

“The objects of faith,” it has been said, “are not bare axioms or propositions: the act of the believer does not terminate at an axiom, but at *the thing*; for axioms are not formed but that by them knowledge may be had of *things*.” To believe a bare axiom or proposition, in distinction from the thing, must be barely to believe that such and such letters make certain words, and that such words put together have a certain meaning; but who would call this believing the proposition? To believe the proposition is to believe *the thing*. Letters, syllables, words, and propositions are only means of conveyance; and these, as such, are not the objects of faith, but *the thing conveyed*. Nevertheless, those things must have a conveyance, ere they can be believed in. The *person, blood, and righteousness of Christ*, for instance, are often said to be objects of faith; and this they doubtless are, as they are objects held forth to us by the language of Scripture: but they could not meet our faith, unless something were *affirmed concerning them* in letters and syllables, or vocal sounds, or by some means or other of conveyance. To say therefore that these are objects of faith is to say the truth, but not the whole truth; the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ *revealed in the Scriptures as the way of a sinner’s acceptance with God*, are, properly speaking, the objects of our faith; for without such a revelation it were impossible to believe in them.

Mr. Booth, and various other writers, have considered faith in Christ as a *dependence* on him, a *receiving* him, a *coming* to him and *trusting in him* for salvation. There is no doubt but these terms are frequently used, in the New Testament, to express believing. “As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name.”—“He that *cometh* to me shall never hunger, and he that *believeth* in me shall never thirst.”—“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first *trusted* in Christ.”—“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.” Whether these terms, however, strictly speaking, convey the same idea as believing, may admit of a question. They seem rather to be the immediate effects of faith than faith itself. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes the order of these things, in what he says of the faith of Enoch: “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Here are three different exercises of mind: First, believing *that God is*; Secondly, believing that he is a *rewarder of them that diligently seek him*; Thirdly, *coming* to him: and the last is represented as the effect of the former two. The same may be applied to Christ. He that cometh to Christ must believe the gospel testimony, that he is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners; the only name given under



heaven, and among men, by which we must be saved: he must also believe the gospel promise, that he will bestow eternal salvation on all them that obey him; and under the influence of this persuasion, he *comes* to him, *commits* himself to him, or *trusts* the salvation of his soul in his hands. This process may be so quick as not to admit of the mind being conscious of it; and especially as, at such a time, it is otherwise employed than in speculating upon its own operations. So far as it is able to recollect, the whole may appear to be one complex exercise of the soul. In this large sense also, as comprehending not only the credit of the gospel testimony, but the soul's dependence on Christ alone for acceptance with God, it is allowed that believing is necessary, not only to salvation, but to justification. We must *come* to Jesus that we may have *life*. Those who attain the blessing of justification must *seek it by faith*, and *not by the works of the law*; *submitting* themselves to the righteousness of God. This blessing is constantly represented as following our *union* with Christ; and "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."<sup>\*</sup>

Let it but be granted that a real belief of the gospel is not merely a matter presupposed in saving faith, but that it enters into the essence of it, and the writer of these pages will be far from contending for the exclusion of trust or dependence. He certainly has no such objection to it as is alleged by Mr. M'Leau, that "to include, in the nature of faith, any holy exercise of the heart, affects the doctrine of justification by grace alone, without the works of the law."<sup>†</sup> If he supposed, with that author, however, that, in order to justification being wholly of grace, no holiness must precede it; or that the party must, at the time, be in a state of enmity to God; he must, to be consistent, unite with him also in excluding *trust* (which, undoubtedly, is a holy exercise) from having any place in justifying faith; but persuaded as he is that the freeness of justification rests upon no such ground, he is not under this necessity.

The term *trust* appears to be most appropriate, or best adapted of any, to express the confidence which the soul reposes in Christ for the fulfilment of his *promises*. We may credit a report of evil tidings as well as one of good, but we cannot be said to trust it. We may also credit a report, the truth or falsehood of which does not at all *concern* us; but that in which we place *trust* must be something in which our well-being is involved. The relinquishment of false confidences which the gospel requires, and the risk which is made in embracing it, are likewise better expressed by this term than by any other. A true belief of the record which God has given of his Son is accompanied with all this; but the term *belief* does not, of itself, necessarily convey it. When Jacob's sons brought the coat of many colours to him, he credited their story; he believed Joseph to be torn to pieces; but he could not be said to *trust* that he was. When the same persons, on their return from Egypt, declared that Joseph was yet alive, Jacob, at first, believed them not, but, on seeing the wagons, he was satisfied of the truth of their declaration, and *trusted* in it too, leaving all behind him on the ground of it.

But whatever difference there may be between *credit* and *trust*, they agree in those particulars which affect the point at issue; the one, no less than the other, has relation to *revealed truth* as its foundation. In some cases it directly refers to the Divine veracity; as in Psal. cxix. 42, *I trust in thy word*. And where the immediate reference is to the power, the wisdom, or the mercy of God, or to the righteousness of Christ, there is a remote relation to veracity; for neither the one nor the other would be objects of trust, were they not revealed in a way of *promise*. And from hence it will follow, that

<sup>\*</sup> John v. 40; Rom. ix. 31, 32; x. 3; 1 Cor. vi. 17.    <sup>†</sup> On the Commission, p. 83.

trusting in Christ, no less than crediting his testimony, is the *duty* of every sinner to whom the revelation is made.

If it be asked, What ground could a sinner, who shall at last prove to have no interest in the salvation of Christ, ever possess for trusting in him? let it be considered what it was for which he was warranted or obliged to trust. Was it that Christ would save him, whether he believed in him or not? No: there is no such promise, but an explicit declaration of the contrary. To trust in this, therefore, would be to trust in a falsehood. That for which he ought to have trusted in him was the obtaining of mercy, *in case he applied for it*. For this there was a complete warrant in the gospel declarations, as Mr. Booth, in his *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners*, has fully evinced. There are principles, in that performance, which the writer of these pages, highly as he respects the author, cannot approve. The principal subjects of his disapprobation have been pointed out, and he thinks Scripturally refuted, by Mr. Scott;\* but with respect to the warrant which every sinner has to trust in Christ for salvation, Mr. B. has clearly and fully established it. I may add, if any man distrust either the power or willingness of Christ to save those that come to him, and so continue to stand at a distance, relying upon his own righteousness, or some false ground of confidence, to the rejection of him, it is criminal and inexcusable unbelief.

Mr. Booth has (to all appearance, designedly) avoided the question, Whether faith in Christ be the *duty* of the ungodly? The leading principle of the former part of his work, however, cannot stand upon any other ground. He contends that the gospel affords a complete *warrant* for the ungodly to believe in Jesus; and surely he will not affirm that sinners are at liberty either to embrace the warrant afforded them or to reject it? He defines believing in Jesus Christ "*receiving him as he is exhibited in the doctrine of grace, or depending upon him only*." But if the ungodly be not *obliged*, as well as warranted, to do this, they are at liberty to do as the Jewish nation did, to *receive him not*, and to go on depending upon the works of the law for acceptance with God. In the course of his work, he describes the gospel message as full of kind invitations, winning persuasions, and importunate entreaties; and the messengers are commissioned to persuade and entreat sinners to be reconciled to God, and to regard the vicarious work of Jesus as the only ground of their justification,"—pp. 36, 37, 2d ed. But how if they should remain unreconciled, and continue to disregard the work of Christ? How if they should, after all, *make light* of this "royal banquet," and prefer their farms and their merchandises to these "plentiful provisions of Divine grace?" Are they guiltless in so doing, and free from all breach of duty? I am persuaded, whatever was Mr. Booth's reason for being silent on this subject, he will not say they are.

\* See his Warrant and Nature of Faith.

## PART II.

ARGUMENTS TO PROVE THAT FAITH IN CHRIST IS THE DUTY OF ALL MEN WHO HEAR, OR HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR, THE GOSPEL.

WHAT has been already advanced, on the nature of faith in Christ, may contribute to the deciding of the question whether faith be the duty of the ungodly; but, in addition to this, the Scriptures furnish abundance of positive evidence. The principal part of that which has occurred to me may be comprehended under the following propositions:—

I. UNCONVERTED SINNERS ARE COMMANDED, EXHORTED, AND INVITED TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST FOR SALVATION.

It is here taken for granted that whatever God commands, exhorts, or invites us to comply with, is the duty of those to whom such language is addressed. If, therefore, saving faith be not the duty of the unconverted, we may expect never to find any addresses of this nature directed to them in the Holy Scriptures. We may expect that God will as soon require them to become angels as Christians, if the one be no more their duty than the other.

There is a phraseology suited to different periods of time. Previously to the coming of Christ, and the preaching of the gospel, we read but little of *believing*; but other terms, fully expressive of the thing, are found in abundance. I shall select a few examples, and accompany them with such remarks as may show them to be applicable to the subject.

Psalm ii. 11, 12, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him." The Psalm is evidently a prophecy of the resurrection and exaltation of the Messiah. Whatever reference may be had to Solomon, there are several things which are not true of either him or his government; and the whole is applicable to Christ, and is plentifully applied to him in the New Testament.

The "kings and judges of the earth," who are here admonished to "serve the Lord (Messiah) with fear," and to "kiss the Son lest he be angry," are the same persons mentioned in verse 2, which words we find, in the New Testament, applied to "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel" (Acts iv. 27); that is, these were the enemies of Christ, unregenerate sinners; and such, for any thing that appears, they lived and died.

The command of God addressed to these rulers is of a *spiritual* nature, including unfeigned faith in the Messiah, and sincere obedience to his authority. To "kiss the Son" is to be reconciled to him, to embrace his word and ordinances, and bow to his sceptre. To "serve him with fear, and rejoice with trembling," denote that they should not think meanly of him, on the one hand, nor hypocritically cringe to him, from a mere apprehension of his wrath, on the other; but sincerely embrace his government, and even *rejoice* that they had it to embrace. That which is here required of unbelievers is the very spirit which distinguishes believers, a holy fear of Christ's majesty, and a humble confidence in his mercy; taking his yoke upon them, and wearing it as their highest delight. That the object of the command was spiritual is also manifest from the threatening and the promise annexed to it, "lest ye perish from the way"—"blessed are all they that put their trust in him." It is here plainly supposed that if they did not embrace the Son, they should perish from the way; and if they did put their trust in him, they

should be blessed. The result is, unconverted sinners are commanded to believe in Christ for salvation; therefore believing in Christ for salvation is their duty.

Isaiah lv. 1-7, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knewest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." This is the language of invitation: but Divine invitation implies an obligation to accept it; otherwise the conduct of those who "made light" of the gospel supper, and preferred their farms and merchandise before it, had been guiltless.

The concluding verses of this passage express those things literally, which the foregoing ones described metaphorically: the person invited and the invitation are the same in both. The *thirst* which they are supposed to possess does not mean a holy desire after spiritual blessings, but the natural desire of happiness which God has implanted in every bosom, and which, in wicked men, is directed not to "the sure mercies of David," but to that which "is not bread," or which has no solid satisfaction in it. The *duty*, to a compliance with which they are so pathetically urged, is a relinquishment of every false way, and a returning to God in His name who was given for "a witness, a leader, and a commander to the people;" which is the same thing as "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." The encouragements held up to induce a compliance with this duty are the freeness, the substantialness, the durableness, the certainty, and the rich abundance of those blessings which as many as repent and believe the gospel shall receive. The whole passage is exceedingly explicit, as to the duty of the unconverted; neither is it possible to evade the force of it by any just or fair method of interpretation.

Jeremiah vi. 16, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." The persons here addressed are, beyond all doubt, ungodly men. God himself bears witness of them that "their ears were uncircumcised, and they could not hearken; for the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, and they had no delight in it," ver. 10. Yea, so hardened were they, that "they were not ashamed when they had committed abomination," and so impudent that "they could not blush," ver. 15. And such, for anything that appears, they continued; for when they were exhorted to "walk in the good way," their answer was, "We will not walk therein." Hence the awful threatening which follows: "Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it," ver. 19.

The "good way," in which they were directed to walk, must have been the same as that in which the patriarchs and prophets had walked in former ages; who, we all know, lived and died in the faith of the promised Messiah.

Hence our Lord, with great propriety, applied the passage to himself, Matt. xi. 28. Jeremiah directed to "the old paths," and "the good way," as the only medium of finding rest to the soul: Jesus said, "Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

We see in this passage also, as in many others, in what manner God requires sinners to *use the means of grace*; not by a mere attendance upon them, (which, while the end is disregarded, and the means rested in instead of it, is not using, but perverting them,) but with a sincere desire to find out the good way, and to walk in it. God requires no natural impossibilities. No man is required to believe in Christ before he has opportunity of examining the evidence attending his gospel: but he ought to search into it like the noble Bereans, immediately, and with a pure intention of finding and following the good way; which, if he do, like them he will soon be found walking in it. If we teach sinners that a mere attendance on the means of grace is that use of them which God requires at their hands, and in which consists the whole of their duty, as to repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be found false witnesses for God, and deceivers of the souls of men.

The New Testament is still more explicit than the Old. Faith in Jesus Christ, even that which is accompanied with salvation, is there constantly held up as the duty of all to whom the gospel is preached.

John xii. 36, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." The persons to whom this passage was addressed were unbelievers, such as "though Jesus had done so many miracles among them, yet believed not on him" (ver. 37); and it appears that they continued unbelievers, for they are represented as given over to judicial blindness and hardness of heart, ver. 40. The *light* which they were exhorted to believe in appears to be himself as revealed in the gospel; for thus he speaks in the context, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness." And that the believing which Christ required of them was such as, had it been complied with, would have issued in their salvation, is manifest from its being added, "that ye may be the children of light;" an appellation never betowed on any but true believers.

John vi. 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." These words contain an answer to a question. The persons who asked it were men who "followed Christ for loaves," who "believed not," and who after this "walked no more with him," ver. 26, 36, 66. Christ had been rebuking them for their mercenary principles in thus following him about, and charging them, saying, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life," ver. 27. They replied by asking, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" which was saying in effect, We have been very zealous for thee in following thee hither and thither; yet thou dost not allow that we please God: thou directest us "to labour for that which endureth unto everlasting life." What wouldest thou have us to do? what can we do? what must we do, in order to please God? To this question our Lord answers, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;" which, if it be a proper answer, is the same as saying, This is the first and greatest of all duties, and without it no other duty can be acceptable.

It has been said, in answer to the argument from this passage, "The words contain a declaration that believing in Christ for salvation is necessary to the enjoyment of eternal life, and that faith in him is an act acceptable and pleasing to God; but afford no proof that it is required of men in a state of unregeneracy. To declare to unregenerate persons the necessity of faith in

order to salvation, which is what our blessed Lord here does, falls very far short of asserting it to be their present duty.\*

We see by this answer that Mr. Brine, who will be allowed to have been one of the most judicious writers on that side the question, was fully convinced of three things. First, That the persons here addressed were unregenerate sinners. Secondly, That the faith recommended is saving. Thirdly, That when faith is here called the *work of God*, it does not mean the work which God *performs*, but an act of theirs, which would be *acceptable* and *pleasing* to him. Yet we are told that our Lord merely expresses the *necessity* of it, without asserting it to be their present *duty*. Was it not the object of their inquiry then, What was their present duty, or what they ought to do in order to please God? What else can be made of it? Further, How can our Lord be supposed in answer to their question to tell them of an act which was necessary, acceptable, and pleasing to God, but which was not their present duty? Is such an answer worthy of him? Nay, how could their believing be an act acceptable and pleasing to God, if it were not their present duty? God is pleased with that only in us which he requires at our hands.

John v. 23, "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." That men are obliged to honour the Father, by a holy hearty love to him, and adoration of him under every character by which he has manifested himself, will be allowed by all except the grossest Antinomians; and if it be the will of the Father that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, nothing less can be required of them than a holy, hearty love to him, and adoration of him under every character by which *he* has manifested himself. But such a regard to Christ necessarily supposes faith in him; for it is impossible to honour him, while we reject him in all or any of his offices, and neglect his great salvation. To honour an infallible teacher is to place an implicit and unbounded confidence in all he says; to honour an advocate is to commit our cause to him; to honour a physician is to trust our lives in his hands; and to honour a king is to bow to his sceptre, and cheerfully obey his laws. These are characters under which Christ has manifested himself. To treat him in this manner is to honour him, and to treat him otherwise is to dishonour him.

The Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament abound with exhortations to *hear* the word of God, to *hearken* to his counsel, to *wait* on him, to *seek* his favour, &c., all which imply saving faith. "*Hearken* unto me, O ye children; for blessed are they that keep my ways. *Hear* instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that *heareth* me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death!"—"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? *Turn* you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."—"Hear, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see. *Hearken* diligently unto me. *Incline* your ear, and come unto me: *hear*, and your soul shall live."—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, *call ye upon him* while he is near."—"This is my beloved Son: hear him."—"And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not *hear* that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people."—"Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life."

\* Mr. Brine's Motives to Love and Unity, &c., p. 42.

It is a grievous misapplication of such language to consider it as expressive of a mere attendance upon the means of grace, without any spiritual desire after God; and to allow that unregenerate sinners comply with it. Nothing can be further from the truth. The Scriptures abound in promises of spiritual and eternal blessings to those who thus *hearken, hear, and seek* after God: such exercises, therefore, must of necessity be spiritual, and require to be understood as including faith in Christ. The Scriptures exhort to no such exercises as may be complied with by a mind at enmity with God: the duties which they inculcate are all spiritual, and no sinner while unregenerate is supposed to comply with them. So far from allowing that ungodly men *seek* after God, or do any *good thing*, they expressly declare the contrary. "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did *understand*, that did *seek* God. Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy: there is none that *doeth good*, no, not one." To reduce the exhortations of Scripture to the level of a carnal mind is to betray the authority of God over the human heart; and to allow that unconverted sinners comply with them is to be aiding and abetting in their self-deception. The unconverted who attend the means of grace generally persuade themselves, and wish to persuade others, that they would gladly be converted and be real Christians, if it were but in their power. They imagine themselves to be waiting at the pool for the moving of the water, and therefore feel no guilt on account of their present state of mind. Doubtless, they are willing and desirous to escape the wrath to come; and, under certain convictions, would submit to relinquish many things, and to comply with other things, as the condition of it; but they have no direct desire after spiritual blessings. If they had, they would seek them in the name of Jesus, and, thus seeking, would find them. The preaching, therefore, which exhorts them to mere outward duties, and tells them that their only concern is, in this manner, to wait at the pool, helps forward their delusion, and, should they perish, will prove accessory to their destruction.

Simon the sorcerer was admonished to "repent, and pray to the Lord, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven him." From this express example many, who are averse from the doctrine here defended, have been so far convinced as to acknowledge that it is the duty of the unconverted to pray, at least for temporal blessings; but Simon was not admonished to pray for temporal blessings, but for *the forgiveness of sin*. Neither was he to pray in a carnal and heartless manner; but to *repent*, and pray. And being directed to *repent*, and pray for the *forgiveness of sin*, he was, in effect, directed to believe in Jesus; for in what other name could forgiveness be expected? Peter, after having declared to the Jewish rulers that *there was none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*, cannot be supposed to have directed Simon to hope for forgiveness in any other way.

To admonish any person to pray, or to seek the Divine favour, in any other way than by *faith in Jesus Christ*, is the same thing as to admonish him to follow the example of Cain, and of the self-righteous Jews. Cain was not averse from worship. He brought his offering; but having no sense of the evil of sin, and of the need of a Saviour, he had taken no notice of what had been revealed concerning the promised Seed, and paid no regard to the presenting of an expiatory sacrifice. He thanked God for temporal blessings, and might pray for their continuance; but this was not *doing well*. It was practically saying to his Maker, I have done nothing to deserve being made a sacrifice to thy displeasure; and I see no necessity for any sacrifice being offered up, either now or at the end of the world. In short, it was claiming to approach God merely as a creature, and as though nothing had taken

place which required an atonement. The self-righteous Jews did not live without religion: they followed after the law of righteousness; yet they did not attain it: and wherefore? "*Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.*" And shall we direct our hearers to follow this example, by exhorting them to pray, and seek the Divine favour, in any other way than by faith in Jesus Christ? If so, how can we deserve the name of Christian ministers?

The Scriptures exhort sinners to put their *trust* in the Lord, and censure them for placing it in an arm of flesh. Whether trusting in Christ for the salvation of our souls be distinguishable from believing in him or not, it certainly includes it. To trust in Christ is to believe in him; if, therefore, the one be required, the other must be. Those who "loved vanity, and sought after lying," are admonished "to offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and to put their trust in the Lord; and a trust connected with the sacrifices of righteousness must be spiritual. To rely on any other object is to "trust in vanity," against which sinners are repeatedly warned: "Trust not in oppression; become not vain in robbery." "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord."

It is allowed, that if God had never sent his Son into the world to save sinners, or if the invitations of the gospel were not addressed to sinners indefinitely, there would be no warrant for trust in the Divine mercy; and, as it is, there is no warrant for trust beyond what God has promised in his word. He has not promised to save sinners indiscriminately, and therefore it would be presumption in sinners indiscriminately to trust that they shall be saved. But he has promised, and that in great variety of language, that *whosoever, relinquishing every false ground of hope, shall come to Jesus as a perishing sinner, and rely on him alone for salvation, shall not be disappointed.* For such a reliance, therefore, there is a complete warrant. These promises are true, and will be fulfilled, whether we trust in them or not; and whosoever still continues to trust in his own righteousness, or in the general mercy of his Creator, without respect to the atonement, refusing to build upon the foundation which God has laid in Zion, is guilty of the greatest of all sins; and if God give him not repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, the stone which he has refused will fall upon him, and grind him to powder.

But "until a man through the law is dead to the law," says Mr. Brine, "he hath no warrant to receive Christ as a Saviour, or to hope for salvation through him."\* If, by receiving Christ, were meant the *claiming an interest in the blessings of his salvation*, this objection would be well-founded. No man, while adhering to his own righteousness as the ground of acceptance with God, has any warrant to conclude himself interested in the righteousness of Jesus. The Scriptures every where assure him of the contrary. But the question is, Does he need any warrant to be *dead to the law*; or, which is the same thing, to relinquish his vain hopes of acceptance by the works of it, and to choose that Rock for his foundation which is chosen of God, and precious? To "receive" Christ, in the sense of Scripture, stands opposed to *rejecting* him, or to such a non-reception of him as was practised by the body of the Jewish nation, John i. 11, 12. An interest in spiritual blessings, and, of course, a persuasion of it, is represented as *following* the reception of Christ, and, consequently, is to be distinguished from it: "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." The idea that is generally attached to the term, in various cases to which the reception of Christ bears an allu-

\* Motives to Love and Unity, pp. 38, 39.



sion, corresponds with the above statement. To receive a *gift* is not to believe it to be my own, though, after I have received it, it is so; but to have my pride so far abased as not to be above it, and my heart so much attracted as to be willing to relinquish every thing that stands in competition with it. To receive a *guest* is not to believe him to be my particular friend, though such he may be; but to open my doors to him, and make him heartily welcome. To receive an *instructor* is not to believe him to be my instructor any more than another's; but to embrace his instruction, and follow his counsel. For a town, or city, after a long siege, to receive a *king*, is not to believe him to be their special friend, though such he may be, and in the end they may see it; but to lay down their arms, throw open their gates, and come under his government. These remarks are easily applied; and it is no less easy to perceive that every sinner has not only a warrant thus to receive Christ, but that it is his great sin if he receive him not.

II. EVERY MAN IS BOUND CORDIALLY TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE WHATSOEVER GOD REVEALS.

It may be presumed that, if God reveal any thing to men, it will be accompanied with such evidence of its being what it is, that no upright mind can continue to doubt of it. "He that is of God heareth God's words."

It will be allowed, by those with whom I am now reasoning, that no man is justifiable in disbelieving the truth of the gospel, or in positively rejecting it: but then it is supposed that a belief of the gospel is not saving faith; and that, though a positive rejection of Divine truth is sinful, yet a spiritual reception of it is not a duty. I hope it has been made to appear, in the former part of this piece, that a real belief of the doctrine of Christ is saving faith, and includes such a cordial acquiescence in the way of salvation as has the promise of eternal life. But be this as it may, whether the belief of the gospel be allowed to include a cordial acquiescence in God's way of salvation or not, such an acquiescence will be allowed to include saving faith. "Acting faith," says Mr. Brine, is no other than suitable thoughts of Christ, and a hearty choice of him as God's appointed way of salvation.\* If, therefore, it can be proved that a cordial approbation of God's way of saving sinners is the duty of every one, it will amount to proving the same thing of saving faith.

I allow there is a difficulty in this part of the work, but it is that which attends the proof of a truth which is nearly self-evident. Who could suppose that Mr. Brine, after such an acknowledgment concerning faith, could doubt of its being the duty of all mankind? Ought we not, if we think of Christ at all, to think *suitably* of him? and are we justifiable in entertaining low and unsuitable thoughts of him? Is it not a matter of *complaint*, that the ungodly Jews *saw* "no form nor comeliness in him, nor beauty, that they should desire him?" And with respect to a *hearty choice* of him, as God's appointed way of salvation, if it be not the duty of sinners to choose him, it is their duty to refuse him, or to desire to be accepted of God by the works of their hands, in preference to him? Mr. Brine would censure men for this. So does Mr. Wayman. Speaking of self-righteous unbelievers, he says, "They plainly declare that Christ is not all and in all to them, but that he comes in but at second-hand; and their regard is more unto themselves, and their dependence more upon their own doings, than upon the Mighty One upon whom God hath laid our help."† But why thus complain of sinners for their not *choosing* Christ, if they be under no obligation to do so? Is there no sin in the invention of the various false schemes of religion, with which the Christian world abounds, to the exclusion of Christ? Why,

\* Johnson's Mistakes Noted and Rectified, p. 34.

† Further Inquiry, p. 160.

then, are *heresies* reckoned among *the works of the flesh*? Gal. v. 20. If we are not obliged to think suitably of Christ, and to choose him whom the Lord and all good men have chosen, there can be no evil in these things; for where no law is, there is no transgression.

“A hearty choice of God’s appointed way of salvation” is the same thing as falling in with its grand designs. Now the grand designs of the salvation of Christ are *the glory of God, the abasement of the sinner, and the destruction of his sins*. It is God’s manifest purpose, in saving sinners, to save them in this way; and can any sinner be excused from cordially acquiescing in it? If any man properly regard the character of God, he must be willing that he should be glorified: if he knew his own unworthiness, as he ought to know it, he must also be willing to occupy that place which the gospel way of salvation assigns him; and if he be not wickedly wedded to his lusts, he must be willing to sacrifice them at the foot of the cross. He may be averse from each of these, and, while an unbeliever, is so; but he will not be able to acquit himself of guilt; and it is to be lamented that any who sustain the character of Christian ministers should be employed in labouring to acquit him.

If a way of salvation were provided which did *not* provide for the glory of God, which did *not* abase, but flatter the sinner, and which did *not* require him to sacrifice his lusts, he would feel no want of power to embrace it. Nominal Christians, and mere professors, in all ages, have shown themselves able to believe any thing but the truth. Thus it was with the carnal Jews; and thus our Lord plainly told them,—“I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.”—“Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye *are not of God*.” This is the true source of the innumerable false schemes of religion in the world, and the true reason why the gospel is not universally embraced.

Unbelievers are described as “disallowing” of him who is “chosen of God, and precious.” Now either to allow or disallow supposes a claim. Christ claims to be the whole foundation of a sinner’s hope; and God claims, on his behalf, that he be treated as “the head of the corner.” But the heart of unbelievers cannot allow of the claim. The Jewish builders set him at nought, and every self-righteous heart follows their example. God, to express his displeasure at this conduct, assures them that their unbelief shall affect none but themselves; it shall not deprive the Saviour of his honours; “for the stone which they refuse,” notwithstanding their opposition, “shall become the head of the corner.” What can be made of all this, but that they *ought* to have allowed him the place which he so justly claimed, and to have chosen him whom the Lord had chosen? On no other ground could the Scripture censure them as it does, and on no other principle could they be characterized as *disobedient*; for all disobedience consists in a breach of duty.

Believers, on the other hand, are described as thinking highly of Christ; reckoning themselves unworthy to “unloose the latchet of his shoes,” or that he should “come under their roof;” treating his gospel as “worthy of all acceptance,” and “counting all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of him.” They are of the same mind with the blessed above, who sing his praise, “saying with a loud voice, WORTHY is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” In fine, they are of the same mind with God himself: him whom God has chosen they choose; and he that is *precious*

in his sight is *precious* in theirs, 1 Pet. ii. 4—7. And do they over-estimate his character? Is he not worthy of all the honour they ascribe to him, of all the affection they exercise towards him; and that whether he actually receive it or not? If all the angels had been of the mind of Satan, and all the saints of the spirit of the unbelieving Israelites, who were not gathered; yet would he have been “glorious in the eyes of the Lord.” The belief or unbelief of creatures makes no difference as to his worthiness, or their obligation to ascribe it to him.

It is allowed by all, except the grossest Antinomians, that every man is obliged to love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength; and this notwithstanding the depravity of his nature. But to love God with all the heart is to love him *in every character in which he has made himself known: and more especially in those wherein his moral excellences appear with the brightest lustre.* The same law that obliged Adam in innocence to love God in all his perfections, as displayed in the works of creation, obliged Moses and Israel to love him in all the glorious displays of himself in his wonderful works of providence, of which they were witnesses. And the same law that obliged them to love him in those discoveries of himself obliges us to love him in other discoveries, by which he has since more gloriously appeared, as *saving sinners through the death of his Son.* To suppose that we are obliged to love God as manifesting himself in the works of creation and providence, but not in the work of redemption, is to suppose that in the highest and most glorious display of himself he deserves no regard. The same perfections which appear in all his other works, and render him lovely, appear in this with a tenfold lustre; to be obliged to love him on account of the one, and not of the other, is not a little extraordinary.

As these things cannot be separated in point of obligation, so neither can they *in fact.* He that loves God for any excellency, as manifested in one form, must of necessity love him for that excellency, let it be manifested in what form it may; and the brighter the display, the stronger will be his love. This remark is verified in the holy angels. At first they loved their Maker for what they saw in his works of creation. They saw him lay the foundation of the earth, and they “SHOUTED FOR JOY.” In process of time they witnessed the glorious displays of his moral character in the government of the world which he had made; and now their love increases. On every new occasion, they cry, “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD OF HOSTS: THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY.” At length, they beheld an event to the accomplishment of which all former events were subservient; they saw the Messiah born in Bethlehem. And now their love rises still higher. As though heaven could not contain them on such an occasion, they resort to the place, and contemplate the good that should arise to the moral system, bursting forth into a song: “GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD-WILL TOWARDS MEN.” All this was but the natural operation of love to God; and, from the same principle, they took delight in attending the Redeemer through his life, strengthening him in his sufferings, watching at his tomb, conducting him to glory, and *looking into* the mysteries of redemption. With a heart like theirs, is it possible to conceive that we should continue impenitent or unbelieving? If, in our circumstances, we possessed that love to God by which they were influenced, it would melt us into holy lamentation for having sinned against him. If the gospel invitation to partake of the water of life once sounded in our ears, we should instantly imbibe it. Instead of making “light of it,” and preferring our “farms” and our “merchandise” before it, we should embrace it with our whole heart. Let any creature be affected towards God as the holy angels are, and if he had a thousand souls to be saved, and the invitation extended to every one

that is willing, he would not hesitate a moment whether he should rely on his salvation. It is owing to a want of love to God that any man continues impenitent or unbelieving. This was plainly intimated by our Lord to the Jews: "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not." It is impossible to love God, and not to embrace the greatest friend of God that ever existed; or to love his law, and not approve of a system which above all things tends to magnify and make it honourable.

"The affections included in Divine love," says an able writer, "are founded on those truths for which there is the greatest evidence in the world. Every thing in the world that proves the being of God proves that his creatures should love him with all their hearts. The evidence for these things is in *itself* very strong, and level to every capacity. Where it does not beget conviction, it is not owing to the weakness of men's capacities; but the strength of their prejudices and prepossessions. Whatever proves that reasonable creatures are *obliged* to love God and his law, proves that sinners are *obliged* to exercise a suitable hatred of sin, and abasement for it. A sinner cannot have due prevalent love to God and hatred of sin, without prevalent *desire of obtaining deliverance from sin, and the enjoyment of God*. A suitable desire of ends so important cannot be without proportionable desire of the *necessary means*. If a sinner, therefore, who hears the gospel have these suitable affections of love to God and hatred of sin, to which he is obliged by the laws of natural religion, *these things cannot be separated from a real complacency in that redemption and grace which are proposed in revealed religion*. This does not suppose that natural religion can discover or prove the peculiar things of the gospel to be true; but when they are discovered, it proves them to be infinitely desirable. A book of laws that are enforced with awful sanctions cannot prove that the sovereign has passed an act of grace or indemnity in favour of transgressors: but it proves that such favour is to them the most desirable and the most necessary thing in the world. It proves that the way of saving us from sin which the gospel reveals is infinitely suitable to the honour of God, to the dignity of his law, and to the exigences of the consciences of sinners."\*

"If any man has a taste for moral excellency," says another, "a heart to account God glorious for being what he is, he cannot but see the moral excellency of the *law*, and love it and conform to it, because it is the image of God; and so he cannot but see the moral excellency of the *gospel*, and believe it, and love it, and comply with it; for it is also the image of God: he that can see the moral beauty in the original, cannot but see the moral beauty of the image drawn to life. He, therefore, that despises the gospel, and is an enemy to the law, even he is at enmity against God himself, Rom. viii. 7. Ignorance of the glory of God, and enmity against him, make men ignorant of the glory of the law and of the gospel, and enemies to both. Did men know and 'love him that begat, they would love that which is begotten of him,' 1 John v. 1. 'He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God,' John viii. 47."†

III. THOUGH THE GOSPEL, STRICTLY SPEAKING, IS NOT A LAW, BUT A MESSAGE OF PURE GRACE; YET IT VIRTUALLY REQUIRES OBEDIENCE, AND SUCH AN OBEDIENCE AS INCLUDES SAVING FAITH.

It is no uncommon thing to distinguish between a formal requisition and that which affords the *ground* or *reason* of that requisition. The *goodness* of God, for instance, though it is not a law or formal precept, yet virtually requires a return of gratitude. It deserves it; and the law of God formally

\* M'Laurin's Essay on Grace, 332.

† Bellamy's True Religion Delineated, p. 332.

requires it on his behalf. Thus it is with respect to the gospel, which is the greatest overflow of Divine goodness that was ever witnessed. A return suitable to its nature is required *virtually* by the gospel itself, and *formally* by the Divine precept on its behalf.

I suppose it might be taken for granted that the gospel possesses some degree of virtual authority; as it is generally acknowledged that, by reason of the dignity of its author, and the importance of its subject-matter, it deserves the *audience* and *attention* of all mankind; yea, more, that all mankind who have opportunity of hearing it are obliged to believe it. The only question therefore is, whether the faith which it requires be spiritual, or such as has the promise of salvation.

We may form some idea of the manner in which the gospel ought to be received, from its being represented as an *embassy*. "We are ambassadors for Christ," saith the apostle, "as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye *reconciled* to God." The object of an embassy, in all cases, is peace. Ambassadors are sometimes employed between friendly powers for the adjustment of their affairs; but the allusion, in this case, is manifestly to a righteous prince, who should condescend to speak peaceably to his rebellious subjects, and, as it were, to entreat them for their own sakes to be reconciled. The language of the apostle supposes that the world is engaged in an unnatural and unprovoked rebellion against its Maker; that it is in his power utterly to destroy sinners; that if he were to deal with them according to their deserts, this must be their portion: but that, through the mediation of his Son, he had, as it were, suspended hostilities, had sent his servants with words of peace, and commissioned them to persuade, to entreat, and even to beseech them to be reconciled. But *reconciliation* to God includes every thing that belongs to true conversion. It is the opposite of a state of *alienation and enmity* to him, Col. i. 21. It includes a justification of his government, a condemnation of their own unprovoked rebellion against him, and a thankful reception of the message of peace; which is the same for substance as to *repent and believe the gospel*. To speak of an embassy from the God of heaven and earth to his rebellious creatures being entitled to nothing more than an *audience*, or a decent *attention*, must itself be highly offensive to the honour of his majesty; and that such language should proceed from his professed friends must render it still more so.

"When the apostle beseecheth us to be 'reconciled' to God, I would know," says Dr. Owen, "whether it be not a part of our duty to yield obedience? If not, the exhortation is frivolous and vain."\* If sinners are not obliged to be reconciled to God, both as a Lawgiver and a Saviour, and that with all their hearts, it is no sin to be unreconciled. All the enmity of their hearts to God, his law, his gospel, or his Son, must be guiltless. For there can be no neutrality in this case: not to be reconciled is to be unreconciled; not to fall in with the message of peace is to fall out with it; and not to lay down arms and submit to mercy is to maintain the war.

It is in perfect harmony with the foregoing ideas, that those who acquiesce in the way of salvation, in this spiritual manner, are represented, in so doing, as exercising OBEEDIENCE; as "obeying the gospel," "obeying the truth," and "obeying Christ," Rom. x. 16; vi. 17. The very end of the gospel being preached is said to be for "obedience to the faith among all nations," Rom. i. 5. But *obedience* supposes previous obligation. If repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, were not duties required of us, even prior to all consideration of their being blessings bestowed upon us, it were incongruous to speak of them as exercises of *obedience*. Nor

\* Display of Arminianism, chap. x.

would it be less so to speak of that impenitence and unbelief which expose men to "eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," as consisting in their not *obeying the gospel*, 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. The passage on which the former part of this argument is founded (viz. 2 Cor. v. 19, 20) has been thought inapplicable to the subject, because it is supposed to be *an address to the members of the church at Corinth*, who were considered by the apostle as believers. On this principle Dr. Gill expounds the reconciliation exhorted to, submission to *providence*, and obedience to the *discipline and ordinances* of God. But let it be considered whether the apostle be here immediately addressing the members of the church at Corinth, beseeching them, at that time, to be reconciled to God; or whether he be not rather *rehearsing to them what had been his conduct, and that of his brethren in the ministry, in vindication of himself and them from the base insinuations of false teachers*; to whom the great evils that had crept into that church had been principally owing. The methods they appear to have taken to supplant the apostles were those of underhand insinuation. By Paul's answers, they appear to have suggested that he and his friends were either subtle men, who, by their *soft and beseeching* style, ingratiated themselves into the esteem of the simple, catching them, as it were, *with guile* (2 Cor. i. 12; xii. 16); or weak-headed enthusiasts, "beside themselves," (chap. v. 13,) going up and down "beseeching" people to this and that (chap. xi. 21); and that, as to Paul himself, however great he might appear in his "letters," he was nothing in company: "His bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible."

In the First Epistle to this church, Paul generously waved a defence of himself and his brethren; being more concerned for the recovery of those to Christ who were in danger of being drawn off from the truth as it is in Jesus, than respecting their opinion of him; yet when the one was accomplished, he undertook the other; not only as a justification of himself and his brethren, but as knowing that just sentiments of faithful ministers bore an intimate connexion with the spiritual welfare of their hearers. It is thus that the apostle alludes to their various insinuations, acknowledging that they did indeed *beseech, entreat and persuade* men; but affirming that such conduct arose not from the motives of which they were accused, but from the "love of Christ."—"If we are beside ourselves, it is for your sakes."

If the church in chap. v. 19, 20, be an immediate address to the *members* of the church at Corinth, those which follow, in chap. vi. 1, must be an address to its ministers; and thus Dr. Gill expounds it. But if so, the apostle in the continuation of that address would not have said, as he does, "In all things approving *ourselves* as the ministers of God;" his language would have been, "In all things approving *yourselves*," &c. Hence it is manifest that the whole is a vindication of their preaching and manner of life against the insinuations of the Corinthian teachers.

There are two things which may have contributed to the misunderstanding of this passage of Scripture; one is the supplement *you*, which is unnecessarily introduced three times over in chap. v. 20, and vi. 1. If any supplement had been necessary, the word *men*, as it is in the text of chap. v. 11, might have better conveyed the apostle's meaning. The other is the division of the fifth and sixth chapters in the midst of the argument.\*

IV. THE WANT OF FAITH IN CHRIST IS ASCRIBED IN THE SCRIPTURES TO MEN'S DEPRAVITY, AND IS ITSELF REPRESENTED AS A HEINOUS SIN.

It is taken for granted that whatever is not a sinner's duty, the omission of it cannot be charged on him as a sin, nor imputed to any depravity in him. If faith were no more a duty than *election or redemption*, which are

\* See Dr. Guyse on the place.

acts peculiar to God, the want of the one would be no more ascribed to the evil dispositions of the heart than that of the other. Or if the inability of sinners to believe in Christ were of the same nature as that of a dead body in a grave to rise up and walk, it were absurd to suppose that they would on this account fall under the Divine censure. No man is reprov'd for not doing that which is naturally impossible; but sinners are reprov'd for not believing, and given to understand that it is solely owing to their criminal ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion from God.

*Voluntary ignorance* is represented as a reason why sinners believe not. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."—"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." To the same purpose we are taught by our Lord in the parable of the sower, "when any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart;" and this, as Luke expresses it, "lest they should believe and be saved."

If men, even though they were possessed of the same principles as our first father in Paradise, would nevertheless be blind to the glory of the gospel, with what propriety is their blindness attributed to the god of this world? Is he ever represented as employing himself in hindering that which is naturally impossible, or in promoting that which is innocent?

*Pride* is another cause to which the want of saving faith is ascribed, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek." "God is not in all his thoughts." We have seen already that *seeking* God is a spiritual exercise, which implies faith in the Mediator; and the reason why ungodly men are strangers to it is the haughtiness of their spirits, which makes them scorn to take the place of supplicants before their offended Creator, and labour to put far from their minds every thought of him. "How can ye believe," said our Lord to the Jews, "who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

If believing were here to be taken for any other faith than that which is spiritual or saving, the suggestion would not hold good; for we are told of some who *could* and *did* believe in Christ, in some sense, but who did not confess him; for they "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God," John xii. 43. It was *pride* that blinded the minds of the "wise and prudent of this world" to the doctrines of Christ; and what is it but this same proud spirit, working in a way of self-conceit and self-righteousness, that still forms the grand objection to the doctrine of salvation by mere grace?

*Dishonesty* of heart is that on account of which men receive not the word of God, so as to bring forth fruit. This is fully implied in the parable of the sower, recorded in the eighth chapter of Luke. The reason why those hearers represented by the good ground received the word, and brought forth fruit, rather than the others, was that they had "good and honest hearts;" plainly intimating that the reason why the others did not so receive it was that their hearts were not *upright* before God. Indeed, such is the nature of Divine truth, that every heart which is honest towards God must receive it. An honest heart must needs approve of God's holy law, which requires us to love him with all our powers; and this because it is no more than giving him the glory *due* to his name. An honest heart will approve of being justified wholly for Christ's sake, and not on account of any of its own works, whether legal or evangelical; for it is no more than relinquish-

ing a claim which is *justly* forfeited, and accepting as a free gift that which God was under no obligation to bestow. Further, An honest heart must rejoice in the way of salvation as soon as he understands it, because it provides a way in which mercy can be exercised *consistently with rightcousness*. A right spirit would revolt at the idea of receiving mercy itself in a way that should leave a blot upon the Divine character. It is the glory of Christ that he has not an honest man for an enemy. *The upright love him.*

We are not ignorant who it is that must now give men honest hearts, and what is the source of every thing in a fallen creature that is truly good; but this does not affect the argument. However far sinners are from it, and whatever Divine agency it may require to produce it, no man who is not disposed to deny the accountableness of creatures to the God that made them will deny that it is their duty; for if we are not obliged to be upright towards God, we are obliged to nothing; and if obliged to nothing, we must be guiltless, and so stand in no need of salvation.

Finally, *Aversion of heart* is assigned as a reason why sinners do not believe. This truth is strongly expressed in that complaint of our Lord in John v. 40, "Ye will not, or *ye are not willing*, to come unto me, that ye might have life." Proudly attached to their own righteousness, when Jesus exhibited himself as "the way, the truth, and the life," they were stumbled at it; and thousands in the religious world are the same to this day. They are willing to escape God's wrath, and to gain his favour; yea, and to relinquish many an outward vice in order to it; but to *come to Jesus* among the chief of sinners, and be indebted wholly to his sacrifice for life, they are *not willing*. Yet, can any man plead that this their unwillingness is innocent?

Mr. Hussey understands the foregoing passage of barely owning Christ to be the Messiah, which, he says, would have saved them as a nation from temporal ruin and *death*; or, as he in another place expresses it, "from having their brains dashed out by the battering rams of Titus," the Roman general.\* But it ought to be observed that the life for which they were "not willing" to come to him was the same as that which they thought they had in the Scriptures; and this was "eternal" life.—"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me:" and, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." This was the same as saying, These very Scriptures, in which ye think ye have eternal life, testify of me, as the only way to it; but such is the pride and aversion of your hearts, that ye will not come to me for it.

Dr. Gill, in general, opposed these principles; yet frequently, when his system was out of sight, he established them. His exposition of this passage is a proof of this remark. He tells us that the "perverseness of their wills was blameworthy, being owing to the corruption and vitiosity of their nature; which being blameworthy in them, that which follows upon it must be so too."

There is no inconsistency between this account of things and that which is given elsewhere, that "no man *can* come to (Christ) except the Father draw him." No man *can* choose that from which his heart is averse. It is common, both in Scripture and in conversation, to speak of a person who is under the influence of an evil bias of heart, as unable to do that which is inconsistent with it. "They have eyes full of adultery, and *cannot* cease from sin."—"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be. So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God."

On account of this different phraseology, some writers have affirmed that

\* Glory of Christ Revealed, pp. 527, 615.



men are under both a moral and a natural inability of coming to Christ, or that they *neither will nor can* come to him: but if there be no other inability than what arises from aversion, this language is not accurate; for it conveys the idea, that if all aversion of heart were removed, there would still be a natural and insurmountable bar in the way. But no such idea as this is conveyed by our Lord's words: the only bar to which he refers lies in that *reluctance* or *aversion* which the *drawing* of the Father implies and removes. Nor will such an idea comport with what he elsewhere teaches. "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Why do ye not understand my speech? *Because ye cannot hear my word.*" These cutting interrogations proceed on the supposition that they *could have received the doctrine of Christ, if it had been agreeable to their corrupt hearts; and its being otherwise was the ONLY reason why they could not understand and believe it.* If sinners were naturally and absolutely unable to believe in Christ, they would be equally unable to disbelieve; for it requires the same powers to reject as to embrace. And, in this case, there would be no room for an inability of another kind: a dead body is equally unable to do evil as to do good; and a man naturally and absolutely blind could not be guilty of shutting his eyes against the light. "It is indwelling sin," as Dr. Owen says, "that both disenablenth men unto, and hinders them from believing, and that alone. Blindness of mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made blind by sin, and cannot see his excellency; obstinate, and will not lay hold of his righteousness; senseless, and take no notice of their eternal concernments."\*

*A voluntary and judicual blindness, obstinacy, and hardness of heart,* are represented as the bar to conversion, Acts xxviii. 27. But if that spirit which is exercised in conversion were essentially different from any thing which the subjects of it in any state possessed, or ought to have possessed, it were absurd to ascribe the want of it to such causes.

Those who embraced the gospel and submitted to the government of the Messiah were baptized with the baptism of John, and are said, in so doing, to have "justified" God; their conduct was an acknowledgment of the justice of the law, and of the wisdom and love of the gospel. On the other hand, those who did not thus submit are said to have "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized," Luke vii. 29, 30. But no Christian, I suppose, (certainly no Baptist,) thinks it was their sin not to be baptized while they continued enemies to Christ; and probably very few, if any, serious Pædobaptists would contend for its being the duty of *adults* to be baptized in Christ's name, without first embracing his word. How then can this passage be understood, but by supposing that they *ought* to have repented of their sins, embraced the Messiah, and submitted to his ordinances? Nor can the force of the argument be evaded by distinguishing between different kinds of repentance and faith; for a profession of true repentance, and of faith unfeigned, was required in order to baptism.

Finally, *Unbelief is expressly declared to be a sin of which the Spirit of truth has to convince the world,* John xvi. 8, 9. But unbelief cannot be a sin if faith were not a duty. I know of no answer to this argument but what must be drawn from a distinction between believing the report of the gospel and saving faith; allowing the want of the one to be sinful, but not the other. But it is not of gross unbelief only, or of an open rejection of

\* On Indwelling Sin, Chap. XVI.

Jesus as the Messiah, that the Holy Spirit has to convince the world; nor is it to a bare conviction of this truth, like what prevails in all Christian countries, that men are brought by his teaching. When he, the Spirit of truth, cometh, his operations are *deeper* than this amounts to: it is of an *opposition of heart* to the way of salvation that he convinces the sinner, and to a cordial acquiescence with it that he brings him. Those who are born in a Christian land, and who never were the subjects of gross infidelity, stand in no less need of being thus convinced than others. Nay, in some respects they need it more. Their unbelieving opposition to Christ is more subtle, refined, and out of sight, than that of open infidels; they are less apt, therefore, to suspect themselves of it; and consequently stand in greater need of the Holy Spirit to search them out, and show them to themselves. Amongst those who constantly sit under the gospel, and who remain in an unconverted state, there are few who think themselves the enemies of Christ. On the contrary, they flatter themselves that they are willing at any time to be converted, if God would convert them; considering themselves as lying at the pool for the moving of the waters. But "when he, the Spirit of truth, cometh," these coverings will be stripped from off the face, and these refuges of lies will fail.\*

V. GOD HAS THREATENED AND INFLICTED THE MOST AWFUL PUNISHMENTS ON SINNERS FOR THEIR NOT BELIEVING ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

It is here taken for granted that nothing but sin can be the cause of God's inflicting punishment, and nothing can be sin which is not a breach of duty.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; *but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" This awful passage appears to be a kind of *ultimatum*, or last resolve. It is as if our Lord had said, This is your message . . . go and proclaim it to all nations: whosoever receives it, and submits to my authority, assure him from me that eternal salvation awaits him; but whosoever rejects it, let him see to it . . . damnation shall be his portion! *Believing* and *not believing*, in this passage, serve to explain each other. It is saving faith to which salvation is promised, and to the want of this it is that damnation is threatened.

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

But if this mode of reasoning were admitted, we should find it very difficult, if not impossible, to prove any thing to be evil from the threatenings of God against it. A multitude of plain texts of Scripture, wherein sin, as any common reader would suppose, is threatened with punishment, might, in this manner, be made to teach nothing with regard to its being the procuring cause of it. For example, Psal. xxxvii. 18, 20, "The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be for ever. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." But it might be said, as the uprightness of the upright is not the procuring cause of his enjoying an everlasting inheritance, so neither will this prove that the wicked-

\* See Charnock's excellent discourse, on Unbelief the Greatest Sin, from the above passage, Vol. II. of his Works.

† Mr. Brine's Motives to Love and Unity, pp. 31, 32.

ness of the wicked, or the enmity of the Lord's enemies, is the procuring cause of their being consumed. Again, Psal. cxlvii. 6, "The Lord lifteth up the meek; he casteth the wicked down to the ground." But it might be alleged, that as the meekness of the former is not the procuring cause of his being lifted up, so it cannot be from hence inferred that the wickedness of the latter is the procuring cause of his being cast down. Again, Psal. cxlv. 20, "The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy." But it might be said, as the love of the one is not the procuring cause of his preservation, so it cannot be proved from hence that the wickedness of the other is the procuring cause of his destruction; and that these declarations contain only the "descriptive characters" of those who are saved, and of those who perish.

In this manner almost all the threatenings in the book of God might be made to say nothing *as threatenings*; for the mode in which they are delivered is the same as that in the passage in question. For example, "What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper."—"He that showeth no mercy shall have judgment without mercy."—"Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."—"Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."—"Behold, the day cometh that shall burn like an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble."—"Bring hither those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me."—"The fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." But none of these awful threatenings declare that the respective crimes which are mentioned are the procuring cause of the evils denounced. Though it is said concerning the "false tongue," that "sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper," *shall be given him*; yet it does not say that these shall be given him *because of his falsehood*; and so on of the rest. And thus they may be only "descriptive characters" of those who shall be damned; and all these things may, for aught these denunciations prove, be blameless. If this reasoning be just, it cannot be inferred, from the laws of England declaring that a murderer shall be put to death, that it is *on account* of his being a murderer. Neither could our first parents justly infer, from its being told them, "The day ye eat thereof ye shall surely die," that it should be *on that account*.

The truth is, though eternal life be the *gift of God*, yet eternal death is the proper *wages* of sin; and though faith is not represented in the above passage as the procuring cause of salvation, yet unbelief is of damnation. It is common for the Scriptures to describe those that shall be saved by something which is pleasing to God, and by which they are made meet for glory; and those that shall be lost by something which is displeasing to God, and by which they are fitted for destruction.

John iii. 18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, *because* he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Two things are here observable. First, *Believing* is expressive of saving faith, seeing it exempts from *condemnation*. Secondly, The want of this faith is a sin on account of which the unbeliever stands condemned. It is true that unbelief is an *evidence* of our being under the condemnation of God's righteous law for all our *other sins*; but this is not all: unbelief is *itself* a sin which greatly aggravates our guilt, and which, if persisted in, gives the finishing stroke to our destruction.

That this idea is taught by the evangelist appears, partly from his dwelling upon the dignity of the character offended, the "only begotten Son of God;" and partly from his expressly adding, "this is *the condemnation*, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Luke xix. 27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." If Christ, as wearing his mediatorial crown, has not a right to unreserved submission and hearty obedience, he has no right to be angry; and still less to punish men as his enemies for not being willing that he should reign over them. He has no right to reign over them, at least not over their hearts, if it be not their duty to obey him from their hearts. The whole controversy, indeed, might be reduced to an issue on this argument. Every sinner ought to be Christ's friend, or his enemy, or to stand by as neutral. To say he ought to be his enemy is too gross to be defended. To plead for his being neutral is pleading for what our Lord declares to be impossible: "He that is not with me is against me." There is, therefore, no room for any other position than that he ought to be his cordial friend; and this is the plain implication of the passage.

2 Thess. ii. 10-12, "Whose coming is—with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." From hence we may remark two things: First, That faith is here called a *receiving the love of the truth*; and that it means saving faith is manifest, seeing it is added, "that they might be saved. Secondly, That their not receiving the love of the truth, or, which is the same thing, not believing with such a faith as that to which salvation is promised, was the "cause" of their being given up of God, and carried away with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. The loose and cold-hearted manner in which merely nominal Christians held the truth would occasion the introduction of the grand papal apostacy, by which great numbers of them would be swept away. And this, assuredly, ought to afford a lesson to nominal Christians of the present day, who, owing to the same cause, are fast approaching to infidelity. But unless we suppose that these professors of religion ought to have "received the love of the truth," there is no accounting for the awful judgments of God upon them for the contrary.

VI. OTHER SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, WHICH SUSTAIN AN INSEPARABLE CONNEXION WITH FAITH IN CHRIST, ARE REPRESENTED AS THE DUTY OF MEN IN GENERAL.

Though this controversy has been mostly carried on with respect to the duty of *faith*, yet it, in reality, extends to the whole of spiritual religion. Those who deny that sinners are obliged to believe in Christ for salvation will not allow that it is their duty to do any thing truly and spiritually good. It is a kind of maxim, with such persons, that 'none can be obliged to act spiritually, but spiritual men.' *Spiritual* exercises appear to me to mean the same as *holy* exercises, for the "new man," which is created after God, is said to be "created in righteousness and *true holiness*:" and as to two kinds of true holiness, the Scriptures, I believe, are silent. But as my opponents affix different ideas to the term spiritual, to prevent all disputes about it, I shall proceed on a ground which they will not refuse. *Whatever has the promise of spiritual blessings is considered as a spiritual exercise.* With this criterion of spirituality in view, let the following passages of Scripture be carefully considered. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simpli-

city? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." "Wisdom crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men. O ye simple, understand wisdom; and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things." "Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold." "Hearken unto me, O ye children; for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to *fear* the Lord thy God, to walk in *all* his ways, and to *love* him, and to *serve* the Lord thy God with *all thy heart, and with all thy soul?*" "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." "Rend your *heart*, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "*Repent* ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

We may remark on these passages, First, The persons addressed were *unconverted sinners*, as appears by their characters; fools—scorners—haters of knowledge—uncircumcised in heart—impenitent. Secondly, The things to which they were exhorted were things *spiritually good*. This appears, in part, from the names by which the exercises themselves are distinguished; namely, such understanding as originates in the fear of the Lord—fearing—loving—serving God with all the heart, and with all the soul—circumcision of the heart—repentance—conversion: and, partly, from the blessings of salvation being promised to them; these are expressed by the terms, blessedness—life—favour of the Lord—the blotting out of sin.

More particularly, *The love of God* is a spiritual exercise; for it has the promise of spiritual blessings. "All things work together for good to them that love God." "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But the love of God is required of men without distinction. The people of Israel, like all other people, were composed of good and bad men; but they were all required to "love" Jehovah, and to "cleave" to him, and that "with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength," Deut. vi. 5; xxx. 20. The moral part of those precepts which God gave to them on tables of stone was binding on all mankind. Even those who had no other means of knowing God than were afforded by the works of nature, with, perhaps, a portion of tradition, were required to *glorify him as God, and to be thankful*, Rom. i. 21.

The love of God, as is here intimated, is either a holy *thankfulness* for the innumerable instances of his goodness, or a cordial approbation of his *glorious character*. It is true there are favours for which the regenerate are obliged to love him, which are not common to the unregenerate; but every one has shared a sufficient portion of his bounty to have incurred a debt of gratitude. It is generally allowed, indeed, by our opponents, that God ought to be loved as our Creator and Benefactor; but this, they suppose, is not a spiritual exercise. There is a kind of gratitude, it is granted, which is not

spiritual, but merely the effect of natural self-love, and in which God is no otherwise regarded than as subservient to our happiness. But this does not always respect the bestowing of temporal mercies; the same feelings which possessed the carnal Israelites, when they felt themselves delivered from Pharaoh's yoke, and saw their oppressors sinking in the sea, are still the feelings of many professors of religion, under a groundless persuasion of their being elected of God, and having their sins forgiven them. Gratitude of this sort has nothing spiritual in it; but then neither is it any part of duty. God no where requires it, either of saints or sinners. That which God requires is a *spiritual* exercise; whether it be on account of temporal or spiritual mercies is immaterial; the object makes no difference as to the nature of the act; that *thanksgiving* with which the common mercies of life are received by the godly, and by which they are *sanctified* to them, (1 Tim. iv. 3—5,) is no less of a spiritual nature, and is no less connected with eternal life, than gratitude for the forgiveness of sin. This thankful spirit, instead of being an operation of self-love, or regarding God merely in subserviency to our own happiness, greatly consists in self-abasement, or in a sense of our own unworthiness. Its language is, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" This is *holy* gratitude; and to be destitute of it is to be "unthankful, unholy."

With respect to a *cordial approbation of the Divine character, or glorifying God as God*, and which enters into the essence of holy love, there can be no reasonable doubt whether it be obligatory on sinners. Such is the glory of God's *name*, that nothing but the most inexcusable and deep-rooted depravity could render any intelligent creature insensible to it. Those parts of Scripture which describe the devout feelings of godly men, particularly the Psalms of David, abound in expressions of affection to the *name* of the Lord. "How excellent is thy *name* in all the earth!" "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy *name* give glory." "O magnify the Lord with me; and let us exalt his *name* together." "Sing unto God, sing praises to his *name*; let them that love thy *name* say continually, The Lord be magnified." "Blessed be his glorious *name* for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

This affection to the *name* of the Lord, as it is revealed in his word and works, and particularly in the work of redemption, lies at the foundation of all true desire after an interest in his mercy. If we seek mercy of any one whose character we disesteem, it is merely for our own sakes; and if he be acquainted with our motives, we cannot hope to succeed. This it is that leads us to mourn for sin as sin, and not merely for the inconvenience to which it exposes us. This it is which renders salvation through the atonement of Christ so acceptable. He that loves only himself, provided he might be saved, would care little or nothing for the honour of the Divine character; but he that loves God will be concerned for his glory. Heaven itself would be no enjoyment to him if his admission must be at the expense of righteousness.

"God is to be loved," says Dr. Gill, "for himself, because of his own nature and the perfections of it, which render him amiable and lovely, and worthy of our strongest love and affection; as these are displayed in the works of creation and providence, and especially of grace, redemption, and salvation, to all which the psalmist has respect, when he says, 'O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy *name*;' nature, and perfections, 'in all the earth'" Psal. viii. 1. As God is great in himself, and greatly to be praised, great and greatly to be feared, so great and greatly to be loved, for what he is in himself. And this is the purest and most perfect love of a creature towards

God; for if we love him only for his goodness towards us, it is loving ourselves rather than him, at least a loving him for ourselves, and so a loving ourselves more than him.\* But this "most pure and perfect love" is manifestly the duty of all mankind, however far they are from a compliance with it. "Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory *due* unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."—"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands."—"Kings of the earth, and all people; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens, old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord, *for his name alone is excellent*: his glory is above the earth and heaven."—"Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee!"

That *love to Christ* is a spiritual exercise may, I suppose, be taken for granted. The *grace* or favour of God is *with all* who possess it *in sincerity*, Eph. vi. 24. But love to Christ is the duty of every one to whom the gospel is preached. On no other principles could the apostle have written as he did; "If any one love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, Maran-atha!" It is worthy of notice, that this awful sentence is not denounced against sinners as positively *hating* Christ, but as *not loving* him; plainly implying his *worthiness* of a place in our best affections, and that, were it possible for us to be indifferent towards him, even that indifference would deserve the heavy curse of the Almighty at the last judgment. Paul appears to have felt as a soldier would feel towards the best of princes or commanders. If, after David's return from his engagement with Goliath, when the women of Israel were praising him in their songs, any of the sons of Belial had spoken of him in the language of detraction, it would have been natural for one of a patriotic spirit, deeply impressed with an idea of the hero's worth, and of the service he had rendered to his country, thus to have expressed himself: If any man love not the son of Jesse, let him be banished from among the tribes of Israel. Of this kind were the feelings of the apostle. He had served under his Lord and Saviour for many years; and now, sensible in a high degree of the glory of his character, he scruples not to pronounce that man who loves him not "accursed!"

The *fear of God* is a spiritual exercise; for it has the promise of spiritual blessings, Psal. xxxiv. 7, 9; ciii. 11, 13, 17. But it is also a duty required of men, and that without the distinction of regenerate or unregenerate. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would *fear* me, and keep all my commandments always!"—"Fear before him all the earth."—"Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him *that ought to be feared*."—"Who would not *fear* thee, O King of nations?"—"Fear thou God."—"Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."—"Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and *fear* the Lord your God:"—"and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to *fear* the Lord your God:"—"Serve the Lord with *fear*, and rejoice with trembling."—"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying,—*Fear God*, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth!"—"Who shall not *fear* thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy." To say of men, "They have no fear of God before their eyes," is to represent them as under the dominion of depravity.

It may be objected that the Scriptures distinguish between that holy fear of offending God which is peculiar to his children, and a mere dread of the misery threatened against sin which is found in the wicked. True; there is a fear of God which is not spiritual; such was that of the slothful servant; and the same is found in hypocrites and devils (Luke xix. 21; James ii. 19): this, however, is no part of duty, but rather of punishment. God does not require this, either of saints or sinners. That which he requires is of a *holy* nature, such as is expressed in the passages before quoted, which is spiritual, and has the promise of spiritual blessings. It resembles that of a dutiful child to his father, and is therefore properly called *filial*; and though none are possessed of it but the children of God, yet that is because none else are possessed of a right spirit.

*Repentance*, or a *godly sorrow for sin*, is a spiritual exercise; for it abounds with promises of spiritual blessings. But repentance is a duty required of every sinner. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."—"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." The "hardness of heart" which our Lord found in the Jews, and which is the opposite of repentance, "grieved" him; which it would not, had it not been their sin, Mark iii. 5. Finally, A *hard and impenitent heart treasures up wrath against the day of wrath*; but impenitence could be no sin if penitence were not a duty, Rom. ii. 5.

Repentance, it is allowed, like all other spiritual exercises, has its counterfeit, and which is not spiritual; but neither is it that which God requires at the hands of either saints or sinners. What is called natural, and sometimes legal, repentance, is merely a sorrow on account of *consequences*. Such was the repentance of Saul and Judas.

In order to evade the argument arising from the addresses of John the Baptist, of Christ and his apostles, who called upon the Jewish people "to repent and believe the gospel," it has been alleged that it was only an *outward* repentance and acknowledgment of the truth to which they were exhorted, and not that which is spiritual, or which has the promise of spiritual blessings. But it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that such repentance and faith are any where required of sinners, or that it is consistent with the Divine perfections to require them. An outward repentance and reformation of manners, as distinguished from that which consists in godly sorrow, is only *repentance in appearance*. Whatever sorrow there is in it, it is not on account of sin, but its consequences; and to suppose that Christ or his servants required this would be doing them infinite dishonour. It is no other than supposing them to have betrayed the authority of God over the human heart, to have sanctioned hypocrisy, and to have given counsels to sinners which, if taken, would leave them still exposed to everlasting destruction.

The case of the Ninevites has been alleged as furnishing an example of that repentance which is the duty of men in general, and which Christ and his apostles required of the Jews. I do not know that the repentance of the Ninevites was genuine, or connected with spiritual blessings; neither do my opponents know that it was not. Probably the repentance of some of them was genuine, while that of the greater part might be only put on in conformity to the orders of government; or, at most, merely as the effect of terror. But whatever it was, even though none of it were genuine, the object *professed* was *godly sorrow for sin*; and if God treated them upon the supposition of their being sincere, and it repented him of the evil which



he had threatened, it is no more than he did to Pharaoh, Abijah, Ahab, and others.\* It is a very unjust conclusion to draw from his conduct, that their repentance was such as he approved, and the whole which he required at their hands. So far from it, there might be nothing in any of them which could approve itself to him as the searcher of hearts: and though for wise reasons he might think it proper, in those instances, to overlook their hypocrisy, and to *treat* them on the supposition of their repentance being what they professed it to be; yet he might still reserve to himself the power of judging them at the last day according to their works.

The object of John the Baptist was not to effect a mere outward reformation of manners; but to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Such was the effect actually produced by his ministry, and by that of Christ and the apostles. The repentance which they called upon sinners to exercise was such as entitled those who possessed it to Christian "baptism," and which had the promise of "the remission of sins," Mark i. 4; Acts ii. 38.

It is plainly intimated by the apostle Paul, that all repentance except that which worketh in a way of godly sorrow, and which he calls *repentance to salvation*, NEEDS TO BE REPENTED OF. It is the mere *sorrow of the world, which worketh death*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. But that which requires to be repented of cannot be commanded of God, or constitute any part of a sinner's duty. The duty of every transgressor is to be *sorry at heart* for having sinned.

*Humility*, or *lowliness of mind*, is a spiritual disposition, and has the promise of spiritual blessings. "Though the Lord is high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly."—"He giveth grace unto the humble."—"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:" yet this disposition is required as the duty of all. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.—Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Humility does not consist in thinking less or more meanly of ourselves than is true. The difference between one that is lowly and one that is proud lies in this; the one thinks justly of himself, and the other unjustly. The most humble Christian only thinks of himself "soberly, as he ought to think." All the instances of humility recorded of the godly in the Scriptures are but so many examples of a *right spirit*, a spirit brought down to their situation. "Carry back the ark of God into the city," says David: "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." This was very different from the spirit of his predecessor, when he was given to expect the loss of the kingdom; yet it was no more than was the duty of Saul, as well as of David; and all his proud and rebellious opposition served only to increase his guilt and misery. The spirit of the publican was no more than was becoming a sinner, and would have been becoming the Pharisee himself.

Finally, If whatever has the promise of spiritual blessings be a spiritual exercise, every thing that is *right*, or which *accords with the Divine precept*, must be so; for the Scriptures uniformly promise eternal life to every such exercise. They that "do good" shall come forth to the resurrection of life. He that "doeth righteousness is righteous." The giving of a "cup of cold water" to a disciple of Christ because he belongs to him will be followed with a disciple's reward. Nay, a "blessing" is pronounced upon

\* Exod. viii. 8, 9; 2 Chron. xiii., with 1 Kings xv.; 1 Kings xxi. 27, 29.

those who are "not offended" in him. But though these things are spiritual and are characteristic of the godly, yet who will say they are not binding on the ungodly? Are they excused from "good," from "doing right," from bestowing "a cup of water" on a disciple of Jesus, because he belongs to him? At least, are they allowed to be "offended" in him?

If God's law be spiritual, and remain in full force as a standard of obligation—if men, while unconverted, have no real conformity to it—if regeneration be the writing of it upon the heart, or the renewal of the mind to a right spirit—all these things are clear and consistent. This is for the same thing, in different respects, to be "man's duty and God's gift;" a position which Dr. Owen has fully established;\* and somewhere remarks that he who is ignorant of it has yet to learn one of the first principles of religion. In short, this is rendering the work of the Spirit what the Scriptures denominate it—"leading us by the way that we should go," Isa. xlvi. 17. But if that which is bestowed by the Holy Spirit be something different in its nature from that which is required in the Divine precepts, I see not what is to be made of the Scriptures, nor how it is that *righteousness*, *goodness*, or any thing else which is required of men, should be accompanied, as it is, with the promise of eternal life.

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## PART III.

### ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS.

THE principal objections that are made to the foregoing statement of things are taken from—the nature of original holiness, as it existed in our first parents—the Divine decrees—particular redemption—the covenant of works—the inability of man—the operations of the Spirit—and the necessity of a Divine principle in order to believing.

It may be worthy of some notice, at least from those who are perpetually reproaching the statement here defended as leading to Arminianism, that the greater part of these objections are of *Arminian* original. They are the same, for substance, as have been alleged by the leading writers of that scheme, in their controversies with the Calvinists; and from the writings of the latter it were easy to select answers to them. This, in effect, is acknowledged by Mr. Brine, who, however, considers these answers as insufficient, and therefore prefers others before them.†

It also deserves to be considered whether objections drawn from such subjects as the above, in which we may presently get beyond our depth, ought to weigh against that body of evidence which has been adduced from the plain declarations and precepts of the Holy Scriptures. What if, by reason of darkness, we could not ascertain the precise nature of the principle of our first parents? It is certain we know but little of original purity. Our disordered souls are incapable of forming just ideas of so glorious a state. To attempt, therefore, to settle the boundaries of even *their* duty, by an abstract inquiry into the nature of their powers and principles, would be improper; and still more so to make it the medium by which to judge of *our own*. There are but two ways by which we can judge on such a subject; the one is from the *character of the Creator*, and the other from *Scripture testimony*. From the former, we may infer the *perfect purity* of the

\* Display of Arminianism, Chap. X.

† Arminian Principles of a Late Writer Refuted, p. 6.

creature, as coming out of the hands of God; but nothing can be concluded of his inability to believe in Christ, had he been in circumstances which required it. As to the latter, the only passage that I recollect to have seen produced for the purpose is 1 Cor. xv. 47, "The first man was of the earth, earthy," which Mr. Johnson, of Liverpool, alleged to prove the *earthiness* of Adam's mind, or principles: but Mr. Brine sufficiently refutes this, proving that this Divine proposition respects the *body*, and not the *principles*, of our first father;\* and thus Dr. Gill expounds it.

With regard to the doctrine of *Divine decrees*, &c., it is a fact that the great body of the divines who have believed those doctrines have also believed the other. Neither Augustine nor Calvin, who each in his day defended predestination, and the other doctrines connected with it, ever appear to have thought of denying it to be the duty of every sinner who has heard the gospel to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Neither did the other Reformers, nor the puritans of the sixteenth century, nor the divines at the synod of Dort, (who opposed Arminius,) nor any of the nonconformists of the seventeenth century, so far as I have any acquaintance with their writings, ever so much as hesitate upon this subject. The writings of Calvin himself would now be deemed Arminian by a great number of our opponents. I allow that the principles here defended may be inconsistent with the doctrines of grace, notwithstanding the leading advocates of those doctrines have admitted them; and am far from wishing any person to build his faith on the authority of great men: but their admission of them ought to suffice for the silencing of that kind of opposition against them which consists in calling names.

Were a difficulty allowed to exist as to the reconciling of these subjects, it would not warrant a rejection of either of them. If I find two doctrines affirmed or implied in the Scriptures, which, to my feeble understanding, may seem to clash, I ought not to embrace the one and to reject the other because of their supposed inconsistency; for, on the same ground, another person might embrace that which I reject, and reject that which I embrace, and have equal *Scriptural authority* for his faith as I have for mine. Yet in this manner many have acted on both sides: some, taking the general precepts and invitations of Scripture for their standard, have rejected the doctrine of discriminating grace; others, taking the declarations of salvation as being a fruit of electing love for their standard, deny that sinners without distinction are called upon to believe for the salvation of their souls. Hence it is that we hear of *Calvinistic* and *Arminian texts*; as though these leaders had agreed to divide the Scriptures between them. The truth is, there are but two ways for us to take: one is to reject them *both*, and the Bible with them, on account of its inconsistencies; the other is to embrace them *both*, concluding that, as they are both revealed in the Scriptures, they are both true, and both consistent, and that it is owing to the darkness of our understandings that they do not appear so to us. Those excellent lines of Dr. Watts, in his Hymn on Election, one should think, must approve themselves to every pious heart:—

But, O my soul, if truth so bright  
Should dazzle and confound thy sight,  
Yet still his written will obey,  
And wait the great decisive day.

Had we more of that about which we contend, it would teach us more to suspect our own understandings, and to submit to the wisdom of God. Abraham, that pattern of faith, might have made some objections to the

\* Johnson's Mistakes Noted and Rectified, pp. 18—23.

command to offer up his son, on the ground of its inconsistency with the promise, and might have set himself to find some other meaning for the terms; but he "believed God," and left it to him to reconcile his promise and his precepts. It was not for him to dispute, but to obey.

These general remarks, however, are not introduced for the purpose of avoiding a particular attention to the several objections, but rather as preparatory to it.

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF HOLINESS POSSESSED BY MAN IN INNOCENCE.

The objection drawn from this subject has been stated in the following words: "The Holy principle connatural to Adam, and concreated with him, was not suited to live unto God through a mediator; that kind of life was above the extent of his powers, though perfect; and therefore as he in a state of integrity had not a capacity of living unto God, agreeably to the nature of the new covenant, it is apprehended that his posterity, while under the *first* covenant, are not commanded to live unto God in that sort, or, in other words, to live by faith on God through a Mediator."\*

The whole weight of these important conclusions rests upon the first two sentences, which are mere unfounded assertions. For the truth of them no *proof* whatever is offered. What evidence is there that "the principle of holiness concreated with Adam was not suited to live unto God through a mediator?" That his circumstances were such as not to need a mediator, is true; but this involves no such consequence. A subject, while he preserves his loyalty, needs no mediator in approaching the throne: if he have offended, it is otherwise; but a change of circumstances would not require a change of principles. On the contrary, the same principle of loyal affection that would induce him while innocent to approach the throne with modest confidence, would induce him after having offended to approach it with penitence, or, which is the same thing, to be sorry at heart for what he had done; and if a mediator were at hand, with whose interposition the sovereign had declared himself well pleased, it would at the same time lead him to implore forgiveness in his name.

Had Cain lived before the fall, God would not have been offended at his bringing an offering without a sacrifice; but after that event, and the promise of the woman's Seed, together with the institution of sacrifices, such a conduct was highly offensive. It was equally disregarding the threatening and the promise; treating the former as if nothing were meant by it, and the latter as a matter of no account. It was practically saying, God is not in earnest. There is no great evil in sin, nor any necessity for an atonement. If I come with my offering, I shall doubtless be accepted, and my Creator will think himself honoured. Such is still the language of a self-righteous heart. But is it thus that Adam's posterity, while "under the first covenant," (or, rather, while vainly hoping for the promise of the first covenant, after having broken its conditions) are required to approach an offended God? If the principle of Adam in innocence was not suited to live to God through a mediator, and this be the standard of duty to his carnal descendants, it must of course be their duty either not to worship God at all, or to worship him as Cain did, without any respect to an atoning sacrifice. On the contrary, is there not reason to conclude that the case of Cain and Abel was designed to teach mankind, from the very outset of the world, God's determination to have no fellowship with sinners but through a mediator, and that all attempts to approach him in any other way would be vain and presumptuous?

It is true that man in innocence was unable to repent of sin, or to believe

\* Mr. Brine's *Motives to Love and Unity*, pp. 50, 51.

in the Saviour; for he had no sin to repent of, nor was any Saviour revealed or needed. But he was equally unable to repent with such a *natural* sorrow for sin as is allowed to be the duty of his posterity, or to believe the history of the gospel in the way which is also allowed to be binding on all who hear it. To this it might be added he was unable to perform the duty of a father, for he had no children to educate; nor could he pity or relieve the miserable, for there were no miserable objects to be pitied or relieved. Yet we do not conclude from hence that his descendants are excused from these duties.

"That Adam in a state of innocence," says Dr. Gill, "had the power of believing in Christ, and did believe in him as the second person of the Trinity, as the Son of God, cannot well be denied, since with the other two persons he was his Creator and Preserver. *And his not believing in him as the Mediator, Saviour, and Redeemer, did not arise from any defect of power in him, but from the state, condition, and situation in which he was, and from the nature of the revelation made unto him*; for no doubt Adam had a power to believe every word of God, or any revelation that was or might be made unto him."\*

The reader will perceive the origin of this objection, if he look into Dr. Owen's *Display of Arminianism*, Chap. VIII. He there complains of the "attempt of Arminians to draw down our first parents, even from the instant of their forming, into the same condition wherein we are engaged by reason of corrupt nature." He mentions several of their maxims and sentiments, and, among others, two of their sayings; the one of the *Remonstrants*, in their Apology, and the other of the six *Arminian* Collocutors at the Hague. "The will of man," say the former, "had never any spiritual endowments." "In the spiritual death of sin," say the latter, "there are no spiritual gifts properly wanting in will, because they were never there." "The sum is," adds the Doctor, ironically, "man was created with a nature not only weak and imperfect, unable by its native strength and endowments to attain that supernatural end for which he was made, and which he was commanded to seek; but depraved also with a love and desire of things repugnant to the will of God, by reason of an inbred inclination to sinning! It doth not properly belong to this place to show how they extenuate those gifts also with which they cannot deny but that he was endued, and also deny those which he had; as a *power to believe in Christ*, or to assent unto any truth that God should reveal unto him: and yet they grant this privilege unto every one of his posterity, in that depraved condition of nature whereinto by sin he cast himself and us. We have all now, *they tell us*, a power of believing in Christ; that is, Adam by his fall obtained a supernatural endowment far more excellent than any he had before!"

That there are differences between the principle of holiness in innocent Adam and that which is wrought in believers may be admitted. The production of the former was merely an expression of the Creator's *purity*, the latter of his *grace*; that was capable of being lost, this is secured by promise: the one was exercised in contemplating and adoring God as the Creator and Preserver; the other, not only in these characters, but as the God of salvation. The same may be allowed concerning the *life* promised to Adam in case of obedience, and that which is enjoyed through a Mediator. The one will be greater than the other; for Christ came not only that we might have life, but that we might have it "more abundantly:" but these differences are merely circumstantial, and therefore do not affect the argument. The joy of *angels* is greatly increased by man's redemption; but it does not follow

\* Cause of God and Truth, Part III. Chap. III.

that their principles are different from what they were prior to that event. A life of joy in heaven is far more glorious than a life of communion with God on earth; yet the principles of saints on earth and saints in heaven are not therefore of a different *nature*.

That the principle of holiness in Adam, and that which is wrought in believers, are *essentially* the same, I conclude from the following reasons:—

First, *They are both formed after the same likeness*, THE IMAGE OF GOD. "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him." "Put ye on the new man, which *after God* is created in righteousness and true holiness." If God be immutable in his nature, that which is created after him must be the same for substance at all times and in all circumstances. There cannot be two specifically different images of the same original.

Secondly, *They are both a conformity to the same standard*, THE MORAL LAW. That the spirit and conduct of man in innocence was neither more nor less than a perfect conformity to this law, I suppose, will be allowed; and the same may be said of the spirit and conduct of Jesus Christ *so far as he was our exemplar*, or the model after which we are formed. God's law was within his heart. It was "his meat and drink to do his will." He went to "the end of the law for righteousness;" but it does not appear that he went beyond it. The superiority of his obedience to that of all others lay, not in his doing more than the law required, but in the dignity of his person, which stamped infinite value on every thing he did. But if such was the spirit and conduct of Christ, to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed, it must of necessity be ours. This also perfectly agrees with those Scriptural representations which describe the work of the Spirit as "writing God's law in the heart" (Psal. xl. 8; Jer. xxxi. 33); and with those which represent the ultimate state of holiness to which we shall arrive in heaven as no more than a conformity to this law and this model: "The spirits of just men *made perfect*."—"We shall be *like him*."

Thirdly, *The terms used to describe the one imply that it is of the same nature as the other*. Conversion is expressed by a *return* to God, (Isa. lv. 7,) which denotes a recovery to a right state of mind after a departure from him. Regeneration is called a "washing," which expresses the restoring of the soul to purity, from which it had degenerated; and hence the same Divine operation is in the same passage called the "renewing" of the Holy Spirit.

But "this renovation," it has been said, "is spoken of the mind, and not of a principle in the mind."\* The renewal of the mind must either be natural or moral. If the former, it would seem as if we had divested ourselves of the use of our natural faculties, and that regeneration consists in restoring them. If the latter, by the mind must be meant the *disposition* of the mind, or, as the Scripture speaks, "the *spirit* of our minds," Eph. iv. 23. But this amounts to the same thing as a principle in our minds. There is no difference between a mind being restored to a right state and condition, and a right state and condition being restored to the mind.

Fourthly, *Supreme love to God, which is acknowledged to be the principle of man in innocence, would necessarily lead a fallen creature to embrace the gospel way of salvation*. This is clearly intimated in our Lord's reasoning with the Jews: "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not." This reasoning on the contrary hypothesis was invalid: for if receiving the Messiah was that to which a principle of supreme love to God was unequal, a non-reception of him would afford no proof of its absence. They might have had the love of God in them, and yet not have received him.

\* Motives to Love and Unity, p. 22.

The love to God which was possessed by Adam in innocence was equal to that of the holy angels. His being of the "earth, earthy," as to his body, no more proves his inferiority to them, as to the principles of his mind, than it proves the inferiority of Christ in this respect, who before his resurrection was possessed of a natural and not a spiritual body. But it cannot be denied that the angels are capable of understanding, believing, and approving of the gospel way of salvation. It is above all others their chosen theme; "which things the angels desire to look into." It is true they do not embrace the Messiah as *their Saviour*, because they do not stand in need of salvation; but give a free invitation and their principles to a being that wants a Saviour, and he would not scruple a moment about accepting it. It is not possible for a creature to love God without loving the greatest friend of God, and embracing a gospel that more than any thing tends to exalt his character; neither is it possible to love mankind with a holy and affectionate regard towards their best interests without loving the Friend of sinners, and approving of a doctrine that breathes "good-will to men."

#### CONCERNING THE DECREES OF GOD.

A general invitation to sinners to return to God, and be saved through Christ, it has been thought, must be inconsistent with an election of some and a consequent rejection of others. Such has been the mode of objecting used by the adversaries to the doctrines of discriminating grace;\* and such is the mode of late adopted by our opponents.

In general, I would observe, if this mode of reasoning prove any thing, it will prove too much: it will prove that it is not the duty of some men to attend the means of grace, or in any way to seek after the salvation of their souls, or to be in the least degree concerned about it; for it may be pleaded that God cannot have made it their duty, or have invited them to attend the means of salvation, seeing he is determined not to bestow salvation upon them. And thus we must not only be driven to explain the general invitation to many who never came to the gospel supper of a mere invitation to attend the means of grace, but must absolutely give it up, and the Bible with it, on account of its inconsistency.

Further, This mode of reasoning would prove that the use of means in order to obtain a temporal subsistence, and to preserve life, is altogether vain and inconsistent. If we believe that the *future states* of men are determined by God, we must also believe the same of their *present states*. The Scriptures teach the one no less than the other. "God hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation." Our "*cup*" is measured, and our "*lot*" assigned us, Psal. xvi. 5. There is also "an appointed time for man upon earth;" his days are as "the days of an hireling." "His days are determined, the number of his months is with God;" he has "appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." Yet those who reason as above, with regard to things of another life, are as attentive to the affairs of this life as other people. They are no less concerned than their neighbours for their present accommodation; nor less employed in devising means for the lengthening out of their lives, and of their tranquillity. But if the purpose of God may consist with the agency of man in present concerns, it may in those which are future, whether we can perceive the link that unites them or not; and if our duty, in the one case, be the same as if no such purpose existed, it is so in the other. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever."

It was the duty of Pharaoh to have followed the counsel of Moses, and to

\* See Owen's Death of Death, Book IV. Chap. I.

have let the people go; and his sin to pursue them into the sea; yet it was the purpose of God by this means to destroy him, Exod. vii. 1—4. Moses "sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land;" and it was, doubtless, the duty of Sihon to have complied with the request; yet it appears by the issue that the Lord had determined to give his country to Israel for a possession, and therefore gave him up to hardness of heart, by which it was accomplished, Deut. ii. 26—30.

If the days of man are determined, and his bounds appointed that he cannot pass them, it must have been determined that the generation of the Israelites which went out of Egypt should die in the wilderness; yet it was their duty to have believed God, and to have gone up to possess the land; and their sin to disbelieve him, and turn back in their hearts to Egypt. And it deserves particular notice, that this their sin is held up, both by David and Paul, as an example for others to shun, and that in spiritual concerns, 1 Cor. x. 6—12. It was the determination of God that Ahab should fall in his expedition against Ramoth-gilead, as was plainly intimated to him by Micaiah; yet it was his duty to have hearkened to the counsel that was given him, and to have desisted from his purpose, 1 Kings xxii. 15—22. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was determined of God, and frequently foretold by the prophets; yet the inhabitants were as frequently counselled to return from their evil ways, that they might avoid it. Jeremiah particularly entreated Zedekiah to follow his counsel, that he might save the city and himself from ruin, chap. xxxviii. 20.

However such things may grate upon the minds of some, yet there are cases in which we ourselves are in the habit of using similar language, and that without any idea of attributing to God any thing inconsistent with the greatest perfection of moral character. If a wicked man be set on mischievous pursuits, and all the advices and warnings of his friends be lost upon him, we do not scruple to say, It seems as if God had determined to destroy him, and, therefore, has given him up to infatuation. In the use of such language, we have no idea of the determination of God being unjust or capricious. On the contrary, we suppose he may have *wise* and *just* reasons for doing as he does; and, as such, notwithstanding our compassion towards the party, we acquiesce in it.—Whenever we speak of God as having determined to destroy a person, or a people, we feel the subject too profound for our comprehension; and well indeed we may. Even an inspired apostle, when discoursing of God's rejection of the Jewish nation, though he glances at the merciful aspect which this awful event wore towards the Gentiles, and traces some great and wise designs that should be answered by it; yet feels himself lost in his subject. Standing as on the brink of an unfathomable abyss, he exclaims, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" He believed the doctrine of Divine decrees, or that God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will;" but he had no idea of making these things any part of the *rule of duty*; either so as to excuse his countrymen from the sin of unbelief, or himself from using every possible means that might accomplish their salvation. On the one hand, he quoted the words of David as applicable to them; "Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them." On the other he declares, "I speak to you Gentiles"—"if by *any means* I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them!"

There were those in that day, as well as in this, who objected, If things be as God hath purposed, "Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" This was no other than suggesting that the doctrine of decrees must needs operate to the setting aside of the *fault* of sinners; and this is



the substance of what has been alleged from that day to this. Some, because they cannot conceive of the doctrine but as drawing after it the consequence assigned to it by this *replier against God*, reject it; others appear to have no objection to the consequence itself, stamped as it is with infamy by the manner in which the apostle repelled it, and therefore admit the doctrine as connected with it! But so did not Paul. He held fast the doctrine of decrees, and held it as comporting with the *fault* of sinners. After all that he had written upon God's electing some, and rejecting others, he, in the same chapter, assigns the failure of those that failed to their "not seeking justification by faith in Christ; but as it were by the works of the law, stumbling at that stumbling-stone."

"God's word," says Mr. Brine, "and not his secret purpose, is the rule of our conduct."\* "We must exactly distinguish," says Dr. Owen, "between man's duty and God's purpose; there being no connexion between them. The purpose and decree of God is not the rule of our duty; neither is the performance of our duty, in doing what we are commanded, any declaration of what is God's purpose to do, or his decree that it should be done. Especially is this to be seen and considered in the duty of the ministers of the gospel; in the dispensing of the word, in exhortations, invitations, precepts, and threatenings committed unto them; all which are perpetual declaratives of our duty, and do manifest the approbation of the thing exhorted and invited to, with the truth of the connexion between one thing and another; but not of the counsel or purpose of God in respect of individual persons, in the ministry of the word. A minister is not to make inquiry after, nor to trouble himself about, those secrets of the eternal mind of God, viz. whom he purposeth to save, and whom he hath sent Christ to die for in particular; it is enough for them to search his revealed will, and thence take their *directions*, from whence they have their *commissions*. Wherefore there is no conclusion from the universal precepts of the word, concerning the things, unto God's purpose in himself concerning persons: they command and invite all to *repent* and *believe*; but they know not in particular on whom God will bestow repentance unto salvation, nor in whom he will effect the work of faith with power."†

#### ON PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

Objections to the foregoing principles, from the doctrine of election, are generally united with those from particular redemption; and, indeed, they are so connected that the validity of the one stands or falls with that of the other.

To ascertain the force of the objection, it is proper to inquire wherein the peculiarity of redemption consists. If the atonement of Christ were considered as the literal payment of a debt—if the measure of his sufferings were according to the number of those for whom he died, and to the degree of their guilt, in such a manner as that if more had been saved, or if those who are saved had been more guilty, his sorrows must have been proportionably increased—it might, for aught I know, be inconsistent with indefinite invitations. But it would be equally inconsistent with the free *forgiveness* of sin, and with sinners being directed to apply for mercy as *supplicants*, rather than as claimants. I conclude, therefore, that an hypothesis which in so many important points is manifestly inconsistent with the Scriptures cannot be true.

On the other hand, if the atonement of Christ proceed not on the principle of commercial, but of moral justice, or justice as it relates to *crime*—if its grand object were to express the Divine displeasure against sin, (Rom. viii.

\* Certain Efficacy, &c., p. 151.

† Death of Death, Book IV. Chap. I.

3,) and so to render the exercise of mercy, in all the ways wherein sovereign wisdom should determine to apply it, consistent with righteousness (Rom. iii. 25)—if it be in itself equal to the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to embrace it—and if the peculiarity which attends it consist not in its insufficiency to save more than are saved, but in the sovereignty of its application—no such inconsistency can justly be ascribed to it.

If the atonement of Christ excludes a part of mankind *in the same sense* as it excludes fallen angels, why is the gospel addressed to the one any more than to the other? The message of wisdom is addressed to *men*, and not to devils. The former are invited to the gospel supper, but the latter are not. These facts afford proof that Christ, by his death, opened a door of hope to sinners of the human race as *sinner*s; *affording a ground for their being invited, without distinction, to believe and be saved.*

But as God might send his Son into the world to save men, rather than angels, so he may *apply* his sacrifice to the salvation of some men, and not of others. It is certain that a great part of the world have never heard the gospel; that the greater part of those who have heard it disregard it; and that those who believe are taught to ascribe not only their salvation, but faith itself, through which it is obtained, to the *free gift of God*. And as the application of redemption is solely directed by sovereign wisdom, so, like every other event, it is the result of *precious design*. That which is actually done was *intended* to be done. Hence the salvation of those that are saved is described as the *end* which the Saviour had in view: "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Herein, it is apprehended, consists the peculiarity of redemption.

There is no contradiction between this peculiarity of *design* in the death of Christ, and a universal obligation on those who hear the gospel to believe in him, or a universal invitation being addressed to them. If God, through the death of his Son, have promised salvation to all who comply with the gospel; and if there be no *natural* impossibility as to a compliance, nor any obstruction but that which arises from aversion of heart; exhortations and invitations to believe and be saved are consistent; and our duty, as preachers of the Gospel, is to administer them, without any more regard to particular redemption than to election; both being secret things, which belong to the Lord our God, and which, however they be a rule to him, are none to us. If that which sinners are called upon to believe respected the particular design of Christ to save them, it would then be inconsistent; but they are neither exhorted nor invited to believe any thing but what is revealed, and what will prove true, whether they believe it or not. He that believeth in Jesus Christ must believe in him as he is revealed in the gospel, and that is as the Saviour of *sinner*s. It is only *as a sinner*, exposed to the righteous displeasure of God, that he must approach him. If he think of coming to him as a favourite of Heaven, or as possessed of any good qualities which may recommend him before other sinners, he deceives his soul: such notions are the bar to believing. "He that will know his own particular redemption before he will believe," says a well-known writer, "begins at the wrong end of his work, and is very unlikely to come that way to the knowledge of it.—Any man that owns himself *a sinner* hath as fair a ground for his faith as any one in the world that hath not yet believed; nor may any person, on any account, exclude himself from redemption, unless, by his obstinate and resolved continuance in unbelief, he hath marked out himself."\*

\* Elisha Coles on God's Sovereignty, on Redemption.

“The preachers of the gospel, in their particular congregation,” says another, “being utterly unacquainted with the purpose and secret counsel of God, being also forbidden to pry or search into it, (Deut. xxix. 29,) may justifiably call upon every man to believe, with assurance of salvation to every one in particular, upon his so doing; knowing and being fully persuaded of this, that there is enough in the death of Christ to save every one that shall do so; leaving the purpose and counsel of God, on whom he will bestow faith, and for whom in particular Christ died, (even as they are commanded,) to himself.”—“When God calleth upon men to believe, he doth not, in the first place, call upon them to believe that Christ died for them; but that ‘there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,’ but only of Jesus Christ, through whom salvation is preached.”\*

OF SINNERS BEING UNDER THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

Much has been said on this subject, in relation to the present controversy.† Yet I feel at a loss in forming a judgment wherein the force of the objection lies, as it is nowhere, that I recollect, formed into a regular argument. If I understand Mr. Brine, he supposes, First, That all duty is required by the law either as a rule of life or as a covenant. Secondly, That all unconverted sinners being under the law as a covenant, whatever the revealed will of God now requires of them is to be considered as the requirement of that covenant. Thirdly, That the terms of the covenant of works being “*Do, and live,*” they cannot, for this reason, be “*Believe, and be saved.*”

But, allowing the distinction between the law as a rule of life and as a covenant to be just, before any conclusion can be drawn from it, it requires to be ascertained in what sense unbelievers are under a covenant of works, and whether, in some respects, it be not their sin to continue so. That they are *under the curse* for having broken it is true; and that they are still labouring to substitute something in the place of perfect obedience, by which they may regain the Divine favour, is true also; but *this latter ought not to be.*‡ A self-righteous attachment to a covenant of works, or, as the Scripture expresses it, a being “of the works of the law,” is no other than the working of unbelief, and rebellion against the truth. Strictly speaking, men are not now under the covenant of works, but under the *curse* for having broken it. God is not in covenant with them, nor they with him. The law, as a covenant, was recorded, and a new and enlarged edition of it given to Israel at Mount Sinai; not, however, for the purpose of “giving life” to those who had broken it; but rather as a preparative to a better covenant. Its *precepts* still stand as the immutable will of God towards his creatures; its *promises* as memorials of what might have been expected from his goodness, in case of obedience; and its *curses* as a flaming sword that guards the tree of life. It is stationed in the oracles of God as a faithful watchman, to repel the vain hopes of the self-righteous, and convince them of the necessity of a Saviour, Rom. vii. 10; Matt. xix. 17. Hence it was given to Israel by the hand of Moses, *as a mediator*, Gal. iii. 19-21.

But if unbelievers be no otherwise under the covenant of works than as they are exposed to its curse, it is improper to say that whatever is required of them in the Scriptures is required by that covenant, and as a term of life. God requires nothing of fallen creatures as *a term of life*. He requires them to love him with all their hearts, the same as if they had never

\* Dr. Owen's Death, &c., B. IV. Chap. I.

† Mr. Brine's Motives, &c., pp. 37-42.

‡ The sinner's hope, that he can be justified by the law he has broken, is an *illegal* hope; and a just view of the extent, strictness, spirituality, and equity of the law would cut it up by the roots.—RYLAND.

apostatized, but not with a view to regain his lost favour; for were they henceforward perfectly to comply with the Divine precepts, unless they could atone for past offences, (which is impossible,) they could have no ground to expect the bestowment of everlasting life. It is enough for us that the revealed will of God to sinners says, *Believe*; while the gospel graciously adds the promise of *salvation*.

ON THE INABILITY OF SINNERS TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST, AND DO THINGS SPIRITUALLY GOOD.

This objection is seldom made in form, unless it be by persons who deny it to be the duty of a sinner to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. Intimations are often given, however, that it is absurd and cruel to require of any man what it is beyond his power to perform; and as the Scriptures declare that "no man *can* come to Christ, except the Father draw him," and that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," it is concluded that these are things to which the sinner, while unregenerate, is under no obligation.

The answer that has frequently been made to this reasoning is, in effect, as follows: Men are no more unable to do things spiritually good than they are to be subject to the law of God, which "the carnal mind is not, nor *can* be." And the reason why we have no power to comply with these things is, we have lost it by the fall; but though we have lost our ability to obey, God has not lost his authority to command.—There is some truth in this answer, but it is apprehended to be insufficient. It is true that sinners are no more and no otherwise unable to do any thing spiritually good than they are to yield a perfect submission to God's holy law; and that the inability of both arises from the same source—the original apostacy of human nature. Yet if the nature of this inability were direct, or such as consisted in the want of *rational faculties, bodily powers, or external advantages*, its being the consequence of the fall would not set aside the objection. Some men pass through life totally insane. This may be one of the *effects* of sin; yet the Scriptures never convey any idea of such persons being dealt with, at the last judgment, on the same ground as if they had been sane. On the contrary, they teach that "to whom much is given, of him much shall be required." Another is deprived of the sight of his eyes, and so rendered unable to read the Scriptures. This also may be the *effect* of sin; and, in some cases, of his own personal misconduct; but whatever punishment may be inflicted on him for such misconduct, he is not blameworthy for not reading the Scriptures after he has lost his ability to do so. A third possesses the use of reason, and of all his senses and members; but has no other opportunity of knowing the will of God than what is afforded him by the light of nature. It would be equally repugnant to Scripture and reason to suppose that this man will be judged by the same rule as others who have lived under the light of revelation. "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."

The inability, in each of these cases, is *natural*; and to whatever degree it exists, let it arise from what cause it may, it excuses its subject of blame, in the account of both God and man. The law of God itself requires no creature to love him, or obey him, beyond his "strength," or with more than all the powers which he possesses. If the inability of sinners to believe in Christ, or to do things spiritually good, were of this nature, it would undoubtedly form an excuse in their favour; and it must be as absurd to exhort them to such duties as to exhort the blind to look, the deaf to hear, or the dead to walk. But the inability of sinners is not such as to induce

the Judge of all the earth (who cannot do other than right) to abate in his demands. It is a fact that he does require them, and that without paying any regard to their inability, *to love him*, and *to fear him*, and *to do all his commandments always*. *The blind* are admonished to *look*, *the deaf to hear*, and *the dead to arise*, Isa. xlii. 18; Eph. v. 14. If there were no other proof than what is afforded by this single fact, it ought to satisfy us that the blindness, deafness, and death of sinners, to that which is spiritually good, is of a different nature from that which furnishes an excuse. This, however, is not the only ground of proof. The thing speaks for itself. There is an essential difference between an ability which is independent of the inclination, and one that is owing to nothing else. It is just as impossible, no doubt, for any person to do that which he has no mind to do, as to perform that which surpasses his natural powers; and hence it is that the same terms are used in the one case as in the other. Those who were under the dominion of envy and malignity "*could not speak peaceably*;" and those who have "*eyes full of adultery cannot cease from sin*." Hence, also, the following language, "*How can ye, being evil, speak good things?*"—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither *can* he know them."—"The carnal mind is enmity against God; and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be."—"They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God."—"No man *can* come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." It is also true that many have affected to treat the distinction between natural and moral inability as more curious than solid. "*If we be unable*," say they, "*we are unable*. As to the nature of the inability, it is a matter of no account. Such distinctions are perplexing to plain Christians, and beyond their capacity."—But surely the plainest and weakest Christian, in reading his Bible, if he pay any regard to what he reads, must perceive a manifest difference between the blindness of Bartimeus, who was ardently desirous that "*he might receive his sight*," and that of the unbelieving Jews, who "*closed their eyes, lest they should see, and be converted, and be healed*;" and between the want of the natural sense of hearing, and the state of those who "*have ears, but hear not*."

So far as my observation extends, those persons who affect to treat this distinction as a matter of mere curious speculation, are as ready to make use of it as other people where their own interest is concerned. If they be accused of injuring their fellow creatures, and can allege that what they did was not *knowingly*, or of *design*, I believe they never fail to do so; or, when charged with neglecting their duty to a parent or a master, if they can say in truth, that they were *unable* to do it at the time, *let their will have been ever so good*, they are never known to omit the plea; and should such a master or parent reply, by suggesting that their want of ability arose from want of *inclination*, they would very easily understand it to be the language of reproach, and be very earnest to maintain the contrary. You never hear a person in such circumstances reason as he does in religion. He does not say, "*If I be unable I am unable*; it is of no account whether my inability be of this kind or that;" but he labours with all his might to establish the difference. Now if the subject be so clearly understood and acted upon where interest is concerned, and never appears difficult but in religion, it is but too manifest *where the difficulty lies*. If, by fixing the guilt of our conduct upon our father Adam, we can sit comfortably in our nest, we shall be very averse from a sentiment that tends to disturb our repose by planting a thorn in it.

It is sometimes objected that the inability of sinners to believe in Christ is not the effect of their depravity; for that Adam himself, in his purest state, was only a *natural man*, and had no power to perform spiritual duties.

But this objection belongs to another topic, and has, I hope, been already answered. To this, however, it may be added, "the natural man, who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," (1 Cor. ii. 14,) is not a man possessed of the holy image of God, as was Adam, but of mere natural accomplishments, as were the "wise men of the world," the philosophers of Greece and Rome, to whom the things of God were "foolishness." Moreover, if the inability of sinners to perform spiritual duties were of the kind alleged in the objection, they must be equally unable to commit the opposite sins. He that, from the constitution of his nature, is absolutely unable to understand, or believe, or love a certain kind of truth, must, of necessity, be alike unable to *shut his eyes* against it, to disbelieve, to reject, or to hate it. But it is manifest that all men are capable of the latter; it must therefore follow that nothing but the depravity of their heart renders them incapable of the former.

Some writers, as has been already observed, have allowed that sinners are the subjects of an inability which arises from their depravity; but they still contend that this is not *all*, but that they are both *naturally* and *morally* unable to believe in Christ; and this they think agreeable to the Scriptures, which represent them as both *unable* and *unwilling* to come to him for life. But these two kinds of inability cannot consist with each other, so as both to exist in the same subject and towards the same thing. A moral inability supposes a natural ability. He who never, in any state, was possessed of the power of seeing, cannot be said to *shut his eyes* against the light. If the Jews had not been possessed of natural powers equal to the knowledge of Christ's doctrine, there had been no justice in that cutting question and answer, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye *cannot* hear my word." A total physical inability must, of necessity, supersede a moral one. To suppose, therefore, that the phrase, "No man *can* come to me," is meant to describe the former; and, "Ye *will not* come to me that ye may have life," the latter; is to suppose that our Saviour taught what is self-contradictory.

Some have supposed that, in attributing physical or natural power to men, we deny their *natural depravity*. Through the poverty of language, words are obliged to be used in different senses. When we speak of men as *by nature* depraved, we do not mean to convey the idea of sin being an essential part of human nature, or of the constitution of man as man: our meaning is that it is not a mere effect of education and example; but is, from his very birth, so interwoven through all his powers, so ingrained, as it were, in his very soul, as to grow up with him, and become natural to him.

On the other hand, when the term *natural* is used as opposed to *moral*, and applied to the powers of the soul, it is designed to express those faculties which are strictly a part of our nature as men, and which are necessary to our being accountable creatures. By confounding these ideas we may be always disputing, and bring nothing to an issue.

Finally, it is sometimes suggested that to attribute to sinners a natural ability of performing things spiritually good is to nourish their self-sufficiency; and that to represent it as only *moral* is to suppose that it is not insuperable, but may after all be overcome by efforts of their own. But surely it is not necessary, in order to destroy a spirit of self-sufficiency, to deny that we are men and accountable creatures, which is all that natural ability supposes. If any person imagine it possible, of his own accord, to choose that from which he is utterly averse, let him make the trial.

Some have alleged that "natural power is only sufficient to perform natural things, and that spiritual power is required to the performance of spiritual things." But this statement is far from accurate. Natural power is as

necessary to the performance of spiritual as of natural things; we must possess the powers of men in order to perform the duties of good men. And as to spiritual power, or, which is the same thing, a right state of mind, it is not properly a faculty of the soul, but a quality which it possesses; and which, though it be essential to the *actual performance* of spiritual obedience, yet is not necessary to our being under *obligation* to perform it.

If a traveller, from a disinclination to the western continent, should direct his course perpetually towards the east, he would in time arrive at the place which he designed to shun. In like manner, it has been remarked by some who have observed the progress of this controversy, that there are certain important points in which false Calvinism, in its ardent desire to steer clear of Arminianism, is brought to agree with it. We have seen already that they agree in their notions of the original holiness in Adam, and in the inconsistency of the duty of believing with the doctrines of election and particular redemption. To this may be added, they are agreed in making the *grace of God* necessary to the accountableness of sinners with regard to spiritual obedience. The one pleads for graceless sinners being free from obligation, the other admits of obligation, but founds it on the notion of universal grace. Both are agreed that where there is no grace there is no duty. But if grace be the ground of obligation, it is no more grace, but debt. It is that which, if any thing good be required of the sinner, cannot justly be withheld. This is, in effect, acknowledged by both parties. The one contends, that where no grace is given, there can be no obligation to spiritual obedience; and therefore acquits the unbeliever of guilt in not coming to Christ that he might have life, and in the neglect of all spiritual religion. The other argues, that if man be totally depraved, and no grace be given him to counteract his depravity, he is blameless; that is, his depravity is no longer depravity; he is innocent in the account of his judge; consequently, he can need no saviour; and if justice be done him, will be exempt from punishment, (if not entitled to heaven,) in virtue of his personal innocence. Thus the whole system of grace is rendered void; and fallen angels, who have not been partakers of it, must be in a far preferable state to that of fallen men, who, by Jesus taking hold of their nature, are liable to become blameworthy and eternally lost. But if the essential powers of the mind be the same whether we be pure or depraved, and be sufficient to render any creature an accountable being whatever be his disposition, grace is what its proper meaning imports—*free favour*, or *favour towards the unworthy*; and the redemption of Christ, with all its holy and happy effects, is what the Scriptures represent it—*necessary to deliver us from the state into which we were fallen antecedently to its being bestowed*.\*

#### OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Scriptures clearly ascribe both repentance and faith wherever they exist to Divine influence.† Whence many have concluded that they cannot be *duties* required of sinners. If sinners have been required from the pulpit to repent or believe, they have thought it sufficient to show the absurdity of such exhortations by saying, A heart of flesh is of *God's giving: faith is "not of ourselves; it is the gift of God:"* as though these things were inconsistent, and it were improper to exhort to any thing but what can be done of ourselves, and without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The whole weight of this objection rests upon the supposition *that we do not stand in need of the Holy Spirit to enable us to comply with our duty*. If this principle were admitted, we must conclude either, with the Arminians and Socinians, that "faith and conversion, seeing they are acts of obedience,

\* Rom. v. 15-21; Heb. ix. 27, 38; 2 Thess. i. 10.

† Ezek. xi. 19; 2 Tim. ii. 25; Eph. i. 19; ii. 8.

cannot be wrought of God;”\* or, with the objector, that, seeing they are wrought of God, they cannot be acts of obedience. But if we need the influence of the Holy Spirit to *enable us to do our duty*, both these methods of reasoning fall to the ground.

And is it not manifest that the godly in all ages have considered themselves insufficient to perform those things to which nevertheless they acknowledge themselves to be obliged? The rule of duty is what God requires of us; but he requires those things which good men have always confessed themselves, on account of the sinfulness of their nature, insufficient to perform. He “desireth truth in the inward part:” yet an apostle acknowledges, “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God.”—“The Spirit,” saith he, “helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for *as we ought*: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The same things are required in one place which are promised in another: “Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart.”—“I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.” When the sacred writers speak of the Divine precepts, they neither disown them nor infer from them a self-sufficiency to conform to them, but turn them into prayer: “Thou hast *commanded* us to keep thy precepts diligently. Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!” In fine, the Scriptures uniformly teach us that all our sufficiency to do good or to abstain from evil is from above; repentance and faith, therefore, may be duties, notwithstanding their being the gifts of God.

If our insufficiency for this and every other good thing arose from a natural impotency, it would indeed excuse us from obligation; but if it arise from the sinful dispositions of our hearts, it is otherwise. Those whose eyes are “full of adultery, and (*therefore*) cannot cease from sin,” are under the same obligations to live a chaste and sober life as other men are: yet, if ever their dispositions be changed, it must be by an influence from without them; for it is not in them to relinquish their courses of their own accord. I do not mean to suggest that this species of evil prevails in all sinners; but sin in some form prevails and has its dominion over them, and to such a degree that nothing but the grace of God can effectually cure it. It is depravity only that renders the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit necessary. “The bare and outward declaration of the word of God,” says a great writer,† “ought to have largely sufficed to make it to be believed, if our own blindness and stubbornness did not withstand it. But our mind hath such an inclination to vanity that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God, and such a dulness that it is always blind and cannot see the light thereof. Therefore there is nothing available done by the word without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit.”

#### ON THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE PRINCIPLE IN ORDER TO BELIEVING.

About fifty years ago much was written in favour of this position by Mr. Brine. Of late years much has been advanced against it by Mr. Booth, Mr. M'Lean, and others. I cannot pretend to determine what ideas Mr. Brine attached to the term *principle*. He probably meant something different from what God requires of every intelligent creature; and if this were admitted to be necessary to believing, such believing could not be the duty of any except those who were possessed of it. I have no interest in this question further than to maintain, that the *moral state or disposition of the soul has a necessary influence on believing in Christ*. This I feel no difficulty in admitting on the one side, nor in defending on the other. If faith were an

\* See Owen's Display of Arminianism, Chap. X.

† Calvin: See Institutes, Book III. Chap. II.



involuntary reception of the truth, and were produced merely by the power of evidence; if the prejudiced or unprejudiced state of the mind had no influence in retarding or promoting it; in fine, if it were wholly an intellectual and not a moral exercise; nothing more than rationality, or a capacity of understanding the nature of evidence, would be necessary to it. In this case it would not be *duty*; nor would unbelief be a *sin*, but a mere mistake of the judgment. Nor could there be any need of Divine influence; for the special influences of the Holy Spirit are not required for the production of that which has no holiness in it. But if on the other hand faith in Christ be that *on* which the *will* has an influence; if it be the same thing as *receiving the love of the truth that we may be saved*; if aversion of heart be the only obstruction to it and the removal of that aversion be the kind of influence necessary to produce it; (and whether these things be so or not, let the evidence adduced in the Second Part of this Treatise determine;\*) a contrary conclusion must be drawn. The mere force of evidence, however clear, will not change the disposition of the heart. In this case therefore, and this only, it requires *the exceeding greatness of Divine power* to enable a sinner to believe.

But as I design to notice this subject more fully in an *Appendix*, I shall here pass it over, and attend to the *objection* to faith being a duty which is derived from it. If a sinner cannot believe in Christ without being renewed in the spirit of his mind, believing, it is suggested, cannot be his *immediate* duty. It is remarkable in how many points the system here opposed agrees with Arminianism. The latter admits believing to be the duty of the unregenerate, but on this account denies the necessity of a Divine change in order to it. The former admits the necessity of a Divine change in order to believing, but on this account denies that believing can be the duty of the unregenerate. In this they are agreed, that the necessity of a Divine change and the obligation of the sinner cannot comport with each other.

But if this argument have any force, it will prove more than its abettors wish it to prove. It will prove that *Divine influence* is not necessary to believing; or, if it be, that faith is *not the immediate duty of the sinner*. Whether Divine influence change the bias of the heart in order to believing, or cause us to believe without such change, or only *assist* us in it, makes no difference as to this argument: if it be antecedent and necessary to believing, believing cannot be a duty, according to the reasoning in the objection, till it is communicated. On this principle, Socinians, who allow faith to be the sinner's *immediate* duty, deny it to be the gift of God.†

To me it appears that the necessity of Divine influence, and even of a change of heart, prior to believing, is perfectly consistent with its being the immediate duty of the unregenerate. If that disposition of heart which is produced by the Holy Spirit be *no more than every intelligent creature ought at all times to possess*, the want of it can afford no excuse for the omission of any duty to which it is necessary. Let the contrary supposition be applied to the common affairs of life, and we shall see what a result will be produced:—

I am not possessed of a principle of common honesty:

But no man is obliged to exercise a principle which he does not possess:  
Therefore I am not obliged to live in the exercise of common honesty.

While reasoning upon the absence of moral principles, we are exceedingly apt to forget ourselves, and to consider them as a kind of natural accomplishment, which we are not obliged to possess, but merely to improve in case of being possessed of them; and that till then the whole of our duty consists either in *praying* to God to bestow them upon us, or in *waiting* till

\* Particularly Propositions IV. V.

† Narrative of the York Baptists, Letter III.

he shall graciously be pleased to do so. But what should we say, if a man were to reason thus with respect to the common duties of life? Does the whole duty of a dishonest man consist in either *praying* to God to make him honest, or *waiting* till he does so? Every one, in this case, feels that an honest heart is *itself* that which he ought to possess. Nor would any man, in matters that concerned *his own interest*, think of excusing such deficiency by alleging that the poor man *could not* give it to himself, nor act otherwise than he did, till he possessed it.

If an upright heart towards God and man be not *itself* required of us, nothing is or can be required; for all duty is comprehended in the acting-out of the heart. Even those who would compromise the matter by allowing that sinners are not obliged to *possess* an upright heart, but merely to *pray* and *wait* for it, if they would oblige themselves to understand words before they used them, must perceive that there is no meaning in this language. For if it be the duty of a sinner to *pray* to God for an upright heart, and to *wait* for its bestowment, I would inquire whether these exercises ought to be attended to *sincerely* or *insincerely*, with a true desire after the object sought or without it. It will not be pretended that he ought to use these means insincerely; but to say he ought to use them sincerely, or with a desire after that for which he prays and waits, is equivalent to saying he ought to be *sincere*; which is the same thing as possessing an upright heart. If a sinner be destitute of all desire after God and spiritual things, and set on evil, all the forms into which his duty may be thrown will make no difference. The carnal heart will meet it in every approach and repel it. Exhort him to repentance: he tells you he cannot repent; his heart is too hard to melt, or be anyway affected with his situation. Say, with a certain writer, he ought to *endeavour* to repent: he answers he has no heart to go about it. Tell him he must pray to God to give him a heart: he replies, Prayer is the expression of desire, and I have none to express. What shall we say then? Seeing he cannot repent, cannot find in his heart to *endeavour* to repent, cannot *pray* sincerely for a heart to make such an endeavour, shall we deny his assertions, and tell him he is not so wicked as he makes himself? This might be more than we should be able to maintain. Or shall we allow them, and acquit him of obligation? Rather ought we not to return to the place whence we set out, admonishing him, as the Scriptures direct, to "repent and believe the gospel;" declaring to him that what he calls his inability is his sin and shame; and warning him against the idea of its availing him another day; not in expectation that of his own accord he may change his mind, but in hope "that God, peradventure, may give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." This doctrine, it will be said, must drive sinners to *despair*. Be it so: it is such despair as I wish to see prevail. Until a sinner despair of any help from himself, he will never fall into the arms of sovereign mercy; but if once we are convinced *that there is no help in us*, and that this, so far from excusing us, is a proof of the greatest wickedness, we shall then begin to pray as *lost sinners*; and such prayer, offered *in the name of Jesus*, will be heard.

Other objections may have been advanced; but I hope it will be allowed that the most important ones have been fairly stated; whether they have been answered the reader will judge.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.

FIRST, *Though faith be a duty, the requirement of it is not to be considered as a mere exercise of AUTHORITY, but of INFINITE GOODNESS, binding us to pursue our best interest.* If a message of peace were sent to a company of rebels who had been conquered, and lay at the mercy of their injured sovereign, they must of course be required to repent and embrace it, ere they could be interested in it; yet such a requirement would not be considered, by impartial men, as a mere exercise of authority. It is true the authority of the sovereign would accompany it, and the proceeding would be so conducted as that the honour of his government should be preserved; but the grand character of the message would be mercy. Neither would the goodness of it be diminished by the authority which attended it, nor by the malignant disposition of the parties. Should some of them even prove incorrigible, and be executed as hardened traitors, the mercy of the sovereign in sending the message would be just the same. *They* might possibly object that the government which they had resisted was hard and rigid; that their parents before them had always disliked it, and had taught them from their childhood to despise it; that to require them to embrace *with all their hearts* a message the very import of which was that they had transgressed *without cause, and deserved to die*, was too humiliating for flesh and blood to bear; and that if he would not pardon them without their cordially subscribing such an instrument, he had better have left them to die as they were; for instead of its being good news to them, it would prove the means of aggravating their misery. Every loyal subject, however, would easily perceive that it *was* good news, and a great instance of mercy, however they might treat it, and of whatever evil, through their perverseness, it might be the occasion.

If faith in Christ be the duty of the ungodly, it must of course follow that every sinner, whatever be his character, is completely *warranted* to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul. In other words, he has every possible encouragement to relinquish his former attachment and confidences, and to commit his soul into the hands of Jesus to be saved. If believing in Christ be a privilege belonging only to the regenerate, and no sinner while unregenerate be warranted to exercise it, as Mr. Brine maintains,\* it will follow either that a sinner may know himself to be regenerate before he believes, or that the first exercise of faith is an act of presumption. That the bias of the heart requires to be turned to God antecedently to believing has been admitted, because the nature of believing is such that it cannot be exercised while the soul is under the dominion of wilful blindness, hardness, and aversion. These dispositions are represented in the Scriptures as a bar in the way of faith, as being inconsistent with it;† and which consequently require to be taken out of the way. But whatever necessity there may be for a change of heart in order to believing, it is neither necessary nor possible that the party should be *conscious* of it till he has believed. It is necessary that the eyes of a blind man should be opened before he can see; but it is neither necessary nor possible for him to know that his eyes are open till he does see. It is only by surrounding objects appearing to his view that he knows the obstructing film to be removed. But if regeneration be necessary to *warrant* believing, and yet it be impossible to obtain a consciousness of it till we have believed, it follows that the

\* Motives, &amp;c., pp. 38, 39.

† See Prop. IV.

first exercise of faith is without foundation ; that is, it is not faith, but presumption.

If believing be the *duty* of every sinner to whom the gospel is preached, there can be no doubt as to a *warrant* for it, whatever be his character ; and to maintain the latter, without admitting the former, would be reducing it to a mere matter of discretion. It might be *inexpedient* to reject the way of salvation, but it could not be *unlawful*.

Secondly, Though believing in Christ is a compliance with a duty, yet it is not *as a duty*, or by way of *reward* for a virtuous act, that we are said to be *justified by it*. It is true God does reward the services of his people, as the Scriptures abundantly teach ; but this *follows* upon justification. We must stand accepted in the Beloved, before our services can be acceptable or rewardable. Moreover, if we were justified by faith *as a duty*, justification *by faith* could not be, as it is, opposed to justification *by works* : “ To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” The Scripture doctrine of *justification by faith*, in opposition to the works of the law, appears to me as follows : By believing in Jesus Christ, the sinner becomes vitally *united* to him, or, as the Scriptures express it, “ joined to the Lord,” and is of “ one spirit with him ;” and this union, according to the Divine constitution, as revealed in the gospel, is the ground of an interest in his righteousness. Agreeable to this is the following language : “ There is now, therefore, *no condemnation* to them that are *in Christ Jesus*.”—“ Of him are ye *in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto us *righteousness*,” &c.—“ That I may be found *in him*, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.” As the union which, in the order of nature, precedes a revealed interest in Christ’s righteousness, is spoken of in allusion to that of marriage, the one may serve to illustrate the other. A rich and generous character, walking in the fields, espies a forlorn female infant, deserted by some unfeeling parent in the day that it was born, and left to perish. He sees its helpless condition, and resolves to save it. Under his kind patronage the child grows up to maturity. He now resolves to make her his wife ; *casts his skirt over her, and she becomes his*. She is now, according to the public statutes of the realm, interested in all his possessions. Great is the transition ! Ask her, in the height of her glory, how she became possessed of all this wealth ; and, if she retain a proper spirit, she will answer in some such manner as this : It was not mine, but my deliverer’s ; his who rescued me from death. It is no reward of any good deeds on my part ; it is *by marriage* ; . . . it is “ of grace.”

It is easy to perceive, in this case, that it was necessary she should be voluntarily married to her husband, before she could, according to the public statutes of the realm, be interested in his possessions ; and that she now enjoys those possessions *by marriage* : yet who would think of asserting that her consenting to be his wife was a meritorious act, and that all his possessions were given her as the reward of it ?

Thirdly, From the foregoing view of things, we may perceive *the alarming situation of unbelievers*. By unbelievers, I mean not only avowed infidels, but all persons who hear, or have opportunity to hear, the gospel, or to come at the knowledge of what is taught in the Holy Scriptures, and do not cordially embrace it. It is an alarming thought to be a *sinner* against the greatest and best of beings ; but to be an *unbelieving sinner* is much more so. There is deliverance from “ the curse of the law,” through him who was “ made a curse for us.” But if, like the barren fig-tree, we stand from year to year, under gospel culture, and bear no fruit, we may expect to fall

under the curse of the Saviour; and who is to deliver us from this? "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so *great* salvation?"

We are in the habit of pitying heathens, who are enthralled by abominable superstition, and immersed in the immoralities which accompany it; but to live in the midst of gospel light, and reject it, or even disregard it, is abundantly more criminal, and will be followed with a heavier punishment. We feel for the condition of profligate characters; for swearers, and drunkards, and fornicators, and liars, and thieves, and murderers; but these crimes become tenfold more heinous in being committed under the light of revelation, and in contempt of all the warnings and gracious invitations of the gospel. The most profligate character, who never possessed these advantages, may be far less criminal, in the sight of God, than the most sober and decent who possesses and disregards them. It was on this principle that such a heavy woe was denounced against Chorazin and Bethsaida, and that their sin was represented as exceeding that of Sodom.

The gospel wears an aspect of mercy towards *sinners*; but towards *unbelieving* sinners the Scriptures deal wholly in the language of threatening. "I am come," saith our Saviour, "a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. *If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not*—(that is, not at present); for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." It will be of but small account, in that day, that we have escaped a few of "the lusts of the flesh," if we have been led captive by those of the "mind." If the greatest gift of Heaven be set at nought by us, through the pride of science, or a vain conceit of our own righteousness, how shall we stand when he appeareth?

It will then be found that a price was in our hands to get wisdom, but that we had "no heart to it;" and that herein consists our sin, and hence proceeds our ruin. God called, and we would not hearken; he stretched out his hand, and no man regarded; therefore he will laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh. It is intimated, both in the Old and New Testament, that the recollection of the means of salvation having been within our reach will be a bitter aggravation to our punishment. "They come unto thee," saith the Lord to Ezekiel, "as the people come, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them."—"And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come!) *then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.*" To the same purpose our Saviour speaks of them who should reject the doctrine of his apostles: "Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out of the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: *notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*"

Great as is the sin of unbelief, however, it is not unpardonable; it becomes such only by persisting in it till death. Saul of Tarsus was an unbeliever, yet he "*obtained mercy*;" and his being an unbeliever, rather than a presumptuous opposer of Christ against conviction, placed him within the pale of forgiveness, and is, therefore, assigned as a reason of it, 1 Tim. i. 13.

This consideration affords a hope even to unbelievers. O ye self-righteous despisers of a free salvation through a Mediator, be it known to you that there is no other name given under heaven, or among men, by which you can be saved. To him whom you have disregarded and despised you must either voluntarily or involuntarily submit. "To him every knee shall bow"

You cannot go back into a state of non-existence, however desirable it might be to many of you; for God hath stamped immortality upon your natures. You cannot turn to the right hand, or to the left, with any advantage: whether you give a loose to your inclination, or put a force upon it by an assumed devotion, each will lead to the same issue. Neither can you stand still. Like a vessel in a tempestuous ocean, you must go this way or that; and go which way you will, if it be not to Jesus, as utterly unworthy, you are only heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. Whether you sing, or pray, or hear, or preach, or feed the poor, or till the soil, if *self* be your object, and *Christ* be disregarded, all is sin,\* and all will issue in disappointment: "the root is rottenness, and the blossom shall go up as the dust." Whither will you go? Jesus invites you to come to *him*. His servants beseech you, in his name, to be reconciled to God. The Spirit saith, *Come*; and the bride saith, *Come*; and "whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." An eternal heaven is before you in one direction, and an eternal hell in the other. Your answer is required. Be one thing or another. Choose you, this day, whom ye will serve. For our parts, we will abide by our Lord and Saviour. If you continue to reject him, so it must be: "nevertheless, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come *nigh* unto you!"

Finally, *From what has been advanced, we may form a judgment of our duty, as ministers of the word, in dealing with the unconverted.* The work of the Christian ministry, it has been said, is to *preach the gospel*, or to hold up the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as the only way of a sinner's salvation. This is, doubtless, true; and if this be not the leading theme of our ministrations, we had better be any thing than preachers. "Woe unto us, if we preach not the gospel!" The minister who, under a pretence of pressing the practice of religion, neglects its all-important principles, labours in the fire. He may enforce duty till duty freezes upon his lips; neither his auditors nor himself will greatly regard it. But, on the contrary, if by *preaching the gospel* be meant the insisting solely upon the blessings and privileges of religion, to the neglect of exhortations, calls, and warnings, it is sufficient to say that such was not the practice of Christ and his apostles. It will not be denied that they preached the gospel; yet they warned, admonished, and entreated sinners to "repent and believe;" to "believe while they had the light;" to "labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life;" to "repent, and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out;" to "come to the marriage supper, for that all things were ready;" in fine, to "be reconciled unto God."

If the inability of sinners to perform things spiritually good were natural, or such as existed independently of their present choice, it would be absurd and cruel to address them in such language. No one in his senses would think of calling the blind to look, the deaf to hear, or the dead to rise up and walk; and of threatening them with punishment in case of their refusal. But if the blindness arise from the love of darkness rather than light; if the deafness resemble that of the adder, which stoppeth her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely; and if the death consist in alienation of heart from God, and the absence of all desire after him, there is no absurdity or cruelty in such addresses.

But enforcing the duties of religion, either on sinners or saints, is by some called *preaching the law*. If it were so, it is enough for us that such was the preaching of Christ and his apostles. It is folly and presumption to affect to be more evangelical than they were. All practical preaching, however, is not preaching the law. That only, I apprehend, ought to be cen-

\* Prov. xv. 8, 9; xxviii. 9; xxi. 4.

sured as preaching the law, in which our acceptance with God is, in some way or other, placed to the account of our obedience to its precepts. When eternal life is represented as the reward of repentance, faith, and sincere obedience, (as it too frequently is, and that under the complaisant form of being "*through* the merits of Christ,") this is preaching the law, and not the gospel. But the precepts of the law may be illustrated and enforced for evangelical purposes; as tending to vindicate the Divine character and government; to convince of sin; to show the necessity of a Saviour, with the freeness of salvation; to ascertain the nature of true religion; and to point out the rule of Christian conduct. Such a way of introducing the Divine law, in subservience to the gospel, is, properly speaking, preaching the gospel; for the end denominates the action.

If the foregoing principles be just, it is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal auditors to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; but **IT IS AT OUR PERIL TO EXHORT THEM TO ANY THING SHORT OF IT, OR WHICH DOES NOT INVOLVE OR IMPLY IT.** I am aware that such an idea may startle many of my readers, and some who are engaged in the Christian ministry. We have sunk into such a compromising way of dealing with the unconverted as to have well nigh lost the spirit of the primitive preachers; and hence it is that sinners of every description can sit so quietly as they do, year after year, in our places of worship. It was not so with the hearers of Peter and Paul. They were either "pricked in the heart" in one way, or "cut to the heart" in another. Their preaching commended itself to "every man's conscience in the sight of God." How shall we account for this difference? Is there not some important error or defect in our ministrations? I have no reference to the preaching of those who disown the Divinity or atonement of Christ, on the one hand, whose sermons are little more than harangues on morality, nor to that of gross Antinomians on the other, whose chief business it is to feed the vanity and malignity of one part of their audience, and the sin-extenuating principles of the other. These are errors the folly of which is "manifest to all men" who pay any serious regard to the religion of the New Testament. I refer to those who are commonly reputed *evangelical*, and who approve of addresses to the unconverted. I hope no apology is necessary for an attempt to exhibit the Scriptural manner of preaching. If it affects the labours of some of my brethren, I cannot deny but that it may also affect my own. I conceive there is scarcely a minister amongst us whose preaching has not been more or less influenced by the lethargic systems of the age.

Christ and his apostles, without any hesitation, called on sinners to "repent, and believe the gospel;" but we, considering them as poor, impotent, and depraved creatures, have been disposed to drop this part of the Christian ministry. Some may have felt afraid of being accounted legal; others have really thought it inconsistent. Considering such things as beyond the *power* of their hearers, they seem to have contented themselves with pressing on them things which they *could* perform, still continuing the enemies of Christ; such as behaving decently in society, reading the Scriptures, and attending the means of grace. Thus it is that hearers of this description sit at ease in our congregations. Having done their duty, the minister has nothing more to say to them; unless, indeed, it be to tell them occasionally that something more is *necessary* to salvation. But as this implies no guilt on their part, they sit unconcerned, conceiving that all that is required of them is "to lie in the way, and to wait the Lord's time." But is this the religion of the Scriptures? Where does it appear that the prophets or apostles ever treated that kind of inability which is merely the effect of reigning aversion as affording any excuse? And where have they descended, in their

exhortations, to things which might be done, and the parties still continue the enemies of God? Instead of leaving out every thing of a spiritual nature, because their hearers *could* not find in their hearts to comply with it, it may safely be affirmed they exhorted to *nothing else*; treating such inability not only as of *no account*, with regard to the lessening of obligation, but as rendering the subjects of it worthy of the severest rebuke. "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they *cannot* hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach, and they have no delight in it." What then? Did the prophet desist from his work, and exhort them to something to which, in their present state of mind, they *could* hearken? Far from it. He delivers his message, whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." And did this induce him to desist? No: he proceeds to read their doom, and calls the world to witness its justice: "Hear, O earth! behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it," Jer. vi. 10-19. Many of those who attended the ministry of Christ were of the same spirit. Their *eyes were blinded*, and their *hearts hardened*, so that they *COULD NOT BELIEVE*; yet, paying no manner of regard to this kind of inability, he exhorted them "to believe in the light while they had the light." And when they had *heard and believed not*, he proceeded, without hesitation, to declare, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Such also were many of Paul's hearers at Rome. *They believed not*; but did Paul, seeing they *could not* receive the gospel, recommend to them something which they *could* receive? No; he gave them "one word" at parting: "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."

When did Jesus and his apostles go about merely to form the *manners* of men? Where do they exhort to duties which a man may comply with and yet miss of the kingdom of heaven? If a man "kept their sayings," he was assured that he "should never see death." In addressing the unconverted, they began by admonishing them to "repent and believe the gospel;" and in the course of their labours exhorted to all manner of duties; but all were to be done *spiritually*, or they would not have acknowledged them to have been done at all. Carnal duties, or duties to be performed otherwise than "to the glory of God," had no place in their system.

The answer of our Lord to those carnal Jews who inquired of him what they "must do to work the works of God," is worthy of special notice. Did Jesus give them to understand that as to believing in him, however willing they might be, it was a matter entirely beyond their power? that all the directions he had to give were that they should attend the means and wait for the moving of the waters? No: Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This was the *gate at the head of the way*, as the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* has admirably represented it, to which sinners must be directed. *A worldly-*



*wise* instructor may inculcate other duties, but the true *evangelist*, after the example of his Lord, will point to this as the first concern, and as that upon which every thing else depends.

There is another species of preaching which proceeds upon much the same principle. Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, are allowed to be duties, but not *immediate* duties. The sinner is considered as *unable* to comply with them, and therefore they are not urged upon him; but instead of them he is directed to "pray for the Holy Spirit, to enable him to repent and believe;" and this it seems he *can* do, notwithstanding the aversion of his heart from every thing of the kind. But if any man be required to pray for the Holy Spirit, it must be either sincerely, and in the name of Jesus; or insincerely, and in some other way. The latter, I suppose, will be allowed to be an abomination in the sight of God; he cannot therefore be required to do this; and as to the former, it is just as difficult and as opposite to the carnal heart as repentance and faith themselves. Indeed it amounts to the same thing; for a sincere desire after a spiritual blessing presented in the name of Jesus is no other than "the prayer of faith."

Peter exhorted Simon to pray, not with an impenitent heart that he might obtain repentance, but with a penitent one that he might obtain *forgiveness*; and this no doubt is the only way in which it was to be obtained, "through Jesus Christ." "*Repent*," saith he, "and pray to God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Our Saviour directed his disciples to pray for the "Holy Spirit;" but surely the prayer which they were encouraged to offer was to be *sincere*, and with an eye to the Saviour; that is, it was "the prayer of faith," and therefore could not be a duty directed to be performed antecedently and in order to the obtaining of it.

The mischief arising from this way of preaching is considerable. First, It gives up a very important question to the sinner, even that question which is at issue between God and conscience on the one hand, and a self-righteous heart on the other; namely, whether he be obliged *immediately* to repent and believe the gospel. "I could find nothing in the Scriptures," says he, "that would give me any comfort in my present condition; nothing short of 'repent and believe,' which are things I *cannot* comply with: but I have gained it from my good minister. Now my heart is at ease. I am not obliged *immediately* to repent and sue for mercy in the name of Jesus. It is not therefore my sin that I do not. All I am obliged to is to pray God to help me to do so; and that I do." Thus, after a bitter conflict with Scripture and conscience, which have pursued him through all his windings, and pressed upon him the call of the gospel, he finds a shelter in the house of God! Such counsel, instead of aiding the sinner's convictions, (which, as "labourers with God," is our proper business,) has many a time been equal to a victory over them, or at least to the purchase of an armistice. Secondly, It *deceives* the soul. He understands it as a compromise, and so acts upon it. For though he be in fact as far from sincerely praying for repentance as from repenting, and just as unable to desire faith in Christ as to exercise it, yet he does not think so. He reckons himself very desirous of these things. The reason is, he takes that *indirect* desire after them, which consists in wishing to be converted (or any thing, however disagreeable in itself) that he may escape the wrath to come, to be the desire of grace; and being conscious of possessing this, he considers himself in a fair way at least of being converted. Thus he deceives his soul; and thus he is helped forward in his delusion! Nor is this all: he feels himself set at liberty from the *hard* requirement of *returning immediately to God by Jesus Christ, as utterly*

*unworthy*; and, being told to pray that he may be enabled to do so, he supposes that such prayer will avail him, or that God will give him the power of repenting and believing in answer to his prayers; prayers, be it observed, which must necessarily be offered up with an impenitent, unbelieving heart. This just suits his self-righteous spirit; but, alas, all is delusion!

"You have no relief then," say some, "for the sinner." I answer, If the gospel or any of its blessings will relieve him, there is no want of relief. But if there be nothing in Christ, or grace, or heaven that will suit his inclination, it is not for me to furnish him with any thing else, or to encourage him to hope that things will come to a good issue. The only possible way of relieving a sinner, while his heart is averse from God, is by lowering the requirements of heaven to meet his inclination, or in some way to model the gospel to his mind. But to relieve him in this manner is at my peril. If I were commissioned to address a company of men who had engaged in an unprovoked rebellion against their king and country, what ought I to say to them? I might make use of authority or entreaty, as occasion might require; I might caution, warn, threaten, or persuade them; but there would be a point from which I must not depart: *Be ye reconciled to your rightful sovereign*; lay down arms, and submit to mercy! To this I must inviolably adhere. They might allege that they *could* not comply with such hard terms. Should I admit their plea, and direct them only to such conduct as might consist with a rebellious spirit, instead of recovering them from rebellion, I should go far towards denominating myself a rebel.

And as Christ and his apostles never appear to have exhorted the unconverted to any thing which did not include or imply repentance and faith, so *in all their explications of the Divine law, and preaching against particular sins, their object was to bring the sinner to this issue*. Though they directed them to no means, in order to get a penitent and believing heart, but to repentance and faith themselves; yet they *used means with them* for that purpose. Thus our Lord expounded the law in his sermon on the mount, and concluded by enforcing such a "hearing of his sayings and doing them" as should be equal to "digging deep, and building one's house upon a rock." And thus the apostle Peter, having charged his countrymen with the murder of the Lord of glory, presently brings it to this issue: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Some years ago I met with a passage in Dr. Owen on this subject, which, at that time, sunk deep into my heart; and the more observation I have since made, the more just his remarks appear. "It is the duty of ministers," says he, "to plead with men about their sins; but always remember that it be done with that which is the proper end of law and gospel; that is, that they make use of the sin they speak against to the discovery of the *state* and *condition* wherein the sinner is, otherwise, haply, they may work men to formality and hypocrisy, but little of the true end of preaching the gospel will be brought about. It will not avail to beat a man off from his drunkenness into a sober formality. A skilful master of the assemblies lays his axe at the root, drives still at the heart. To inveigh against particular sins of ignorant, unregenerate persons, such as the land is full of, is a good work; but yet, though it may be done with great efficacy, vigour, and success, if this be all the effect of it, that they are set upon the most sedulous endeavours of mortifying their sins preached down, all that is done is but like the beating of an enemy in an open field, and driving him into an impregnable castle not to be prevailed against. Get you, at any time, a sinner at the advantage on the account of any one sin whatever; have you any thing to take hold of him by, bring it to his *state* and *condition*, drive it up to the head, and there

deal with him. To break men off from particular sins, and not to break their hearts, is to deprive ourselves of advantages of dealing with them.”\*

When a sinner is first seized with conviction, it is natural to suppose that he will abstain from many of his outward vices, though it be only for the quiet of his own mind: but it is not for us to administer comfort to him on this ground; as though, because he had “broken off” a few of “his sins,” he must needs have broken them off “by righteousness,” and either be in the road to life, or at least in a fair way of getting into it. It is one of the devices of Satan to alarm the sinner, and fill him with anxiety for the healing of outward eruptions of sin; while the inward part is overlooked, though it be nothing but sin. But we must not be aiding and abetting in these deceptions, nor administer any other relief than that which is held out in the gospel to sinners *as sinners*. And when we see such characters violating their promises, and falling anew into their old sins, (which is frequently the case,) instead of joining with them in lamenting the event, and assisting them in healing the wound by renewed efforts of watchfulness, it becomes us rather to probe the wound; to make *use* of that which has appeared for the detecting of that which has not appeared; and so to point them to the blood that cleanses from all sin. “Poor soul!” says the eminent writer just quoted, “it is not thy sore finger, but thy hectic fever, from which thy life is in danger!” If the cause be removed, the effects will cease. If the spring be purified, the waters will be healed, and the barren ground become productive.

I conclude with a few remarks on the *order* of addressing exhortations to the unconverted. There being an established order in the workings of the human mind, it has been made a question whether the same ought not to be preserved in addressing it. As, for instance, we cannot be convinced of sin without previous ideas of God and moral government, nor of the need of a Saviour without being convinced of sin, nor of the importance of salvation without suitable conceptions of its evil nature. Hence, it may be supposed, we ought not to teach any one of these truths till the preceding one is well understood; or, at least, that we ought not to preach the gospel without prefacing it by representing the just requirements of the law, our state as sinners, and the impossibility of being justified by the works of our hands. Doubtless, such representations are proper and necessary, but not so necessary as to render it improper, on any occasion, to introduce the doctrine of the gospel without them, and much less to refrain from teaching it till they are understood and felt. In this case a minister must be reduced to the greatest perplexity; never knowing when it was safe to introduce the salvation of Christ, lest some of his hearers should not be sufficiently prepared to receive it. The truth is, it is never unsafe to introduce this doctrine. There is such a connexion in Divine truth, that if any one part of it reach the mind and find a place in the heart, all others, which may precede it in the order of things, will come in along with it. In receiving a doctrine, we receive not only what is expressed, but what is *implied* by it; and thus the doctrine of the cross may *itself* be the means of convincing us of the evil of sin. An example of this lately occurred in the experience of a child of eleven years of age. Her minister, visiting her under a threatening affliction, and perceiving her to be unaffected with her sinful condition, suggested that “It was no small matter that brought down the Lord of glory into this world to suffer and die, there must be something very offensive in the nature of sin against a holy God.” This remark appears to have sunk into her heart, and to have issued in a saving change.† Divine truths are like chain-shot; they

\* On the Mortification of Sin, Chap. VII.

† Dying Exercises of Susannah Wright, of Weekly, near Kettering.

go together, and we need not perplex ourselves which should enter first; if any one enter, it will draw the rest after it.

Remarks nearly similar may be made concerning *duties*. Though the Scriptures know nothing of duties to be performed without faith, or which do not *include* or *imply* it; yet they do not wait for the sinner's being possessed of faith before they exhort him to other spiritual exercises; such as "seeking" the Lord, "loving" him, "serving him," &c., nor need we lay any such restraints upon ourselves. Such is the *connexion* of the duties as well as the truths of religion, that if one be truly complied with, we need not fear that the others will be wanting. If God be sought, loved, or served, we may be sure that Jesus is embraced; and if Jesus be embraced, that sin is abhorred. Or should things first occur to the mind in another order, should sin be the immediate object of our thoughts, if this be abhorred, the God against whom it is committed must, at the same instant, be loved, and the Saviour who has made a sacrifice to deliver us from it embraced. Let any part of truth or holiness but find a place in the heart, and the rest will be with it. Those parts which, in the order of things, are required to precede it, will come in by way of *implication*, and those which follow it will be *produced* by it. Thus the primitive preachers seem to have had none of that scrupulosity which appears in the discourses and writings of some modern preachers. Sometimes they exhorted sinners to "believe" in Jesus; but it was such belief as *implied* repentance for sin: sometimes to "repent and be converted;" but it was such repentance and conversion as *included* believing: and sometimes to "labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life;" but it was such labouring as comprehended both repentance and faith.

Some have inferred from the doctrine of justification by faith in opposition to the works of the law, that sinners ought not to be exhorted to any thing which comprises obedience to the law, either in heart or life, except we should preach the law to them for the purpose of conviction; and this lest we should be found directing them to the works of their own hands as the ground of acceptance with God. From the same principle, it has been concluded that faith itself cannot include any holy disposition of the heart, because all holy disposition contains obedience to the law. If this reasoning be just, all exhorting of sinners to things expressive of a holy exercise of heart is either improper, or requires to be understood as merely preaching the law for the purpose of conviction; as our Saviour directed the young ruler to "keep the commandments, if he would enter into life." Yet the Scriptures abound with such exhortations. Sinners are exhorted to "seek" God, to "serve" him with fear and joy, to "forsake" their wicked way, and "return" to him, to "repent" and "be converted." These are manifestly exercises of the heart, and addressed to the unconverted. Neither are they to be understood as the requirements of a covenant of works. That covenant neither requires repentance nor promises forgiveness. But sinners are directed to these things under a promise of "mercy" and "abundant pardon." There is a wide difference between these addresses and the address of our Lord to the young ruler; that to which *he* was directed was the producing of a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law, which was naturally impossible; and our Lord's design was to show its impossibility, and thereby to convince him of the need of gospel mercy; but that to which the above directions point is not to any natural impossibility, but to the very way of mercy. The manner in which the primitive preachers guarded against self-righteousness was very different from this. They were not afraid of exhorting either saints or sinners to holy exercises of heart, nor of connecting with them the promises of mercy. But though they exhibited the promises of eternal life to any and every spiritual exercise, yet they never

taught that it was on account of it, but of mere grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. The ground on which they took their stand was, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Hence they inferred the impossibility of a sinner being justified in any other way than for the sake of him who was "made a curse for us;" and hence it clearly follows, that whatever holiness any sinner may possess before, in, or after believing, it is of no account whatever as a ground of acceptance with God. If we inculcate *this* doctrine, we need not fear exhorting sinners to holy exercises of heart, nor holding up the promises of mercy to all who thus return to God by Jesus Christ.

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## APPENDIX:

ON THE QUESTION WHETHER THE EXISTENCE OF A HOLY DISPOSITION OF HEART BE NECESSARY TO BELIEVING.

It is not from a fondness for controversy that I am induced to offer my sentiments on this subject. I feel myself called upon to do so on two accounts. First, The leading principle in the foregoing treatise is implicated in the decision of it. If no holy disposition of heart be presupposed or included in believing, it has nothing holy in it; and if it have nothing holy in it, it is absurd to plead for its being a *duty*. God requires nothing as a duty which is merely natural or intellectual, or in which the will has no concern. Secondly, Mr. M'Lean, of Edinburgh, in a second edition of his treatise on *The Commission of Christ*, has published several pages of animadversions on what I have advanced on this subject, and has charged me with very serious consequences; consequences which, if substantiated, will go to prove that I have subverted the great doctrine of justification by grace alone, without the works of the law,—pp. 74-86. It is true he has made no mention of my name, owing, as I suppose, to what I had written being contained in two *private* letters, one of which was addressed to him. I certainly had no expectation, when I wrote those letters, that what I advanced would have been *publicly* answered. I do not pretend to understand so much of the *etiquette* of writing as to decide whether this conduct was proper; but if it were, some people may be tempted to think that it is rather dangerous to correspond with authors. I have no desire, however, to complain on this account, nor indeed on any other, except that my sentiments are very partially stated, and things introduced so much out of their connexion, that it is impossible for the reader to form any judgment concerning them.

I have the pleasure to agree with Mr. M'L. in considering the belief of the gospel as saving faith. Our disagreement on this subject is confined to the question, *What the belief of the gospel includes*. Mr. M'L. so explains it as carefully to exclude every exercise of the heart or will as either included in it, or having any influence upon it. Whatever of this exists in a believer he considers as belonging to the *effects* of faith, rather than to faith itself. If I understand him, he pleads for such a belief of the gospel as has nothing in it of a *holy* nature, nothing of conformity to the moral law "in heart or life;" a *passive* reception of the truth, in which the will has no concern; and this because it is opposed to the *works of the law* in the article of justification,—pp. 83-86. On this ground he accounts for the apostle's language in Rom. iv. 5, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the *ungodly*;" understanding, by the terms "he that worketh not," one that has done nothing yet which is pleasing to God; and, by the term "ungodly,"

one that is actually an enemy to God. He does not suppose that God justifies unbelievers; if, therefore, he justifies sinners while in a state of enmity against him, there can be nothing in the nature of faith but what may consist with it. And true it is, if faith have nothing in it of a holy nature, nothing of conformity to the Divine law "in heart or life," nothing of the exercise of any holy disposition of heart, it cannot denominate the subjects of it *godly*. Godliness must, in this case, consist merely in the fruits of faith; and these fruits being subsequent to justification, the sinner must of course be justified antecedently to his being the subject of godliness, or while he is actually the enemy of God.

If Mr. M'L. had only affirmed that faith is opposed to works, even to every good disposition of the heart, as the *ground of acceptance with God*; that we are not justified by it *as a work*; or that, whatever moral goodness it may possess, it is not *as such* that it is imputed unto us for righteousness; there had been no dispute between us. But this distinction he rejects, and endeavours to improve the caution of those who use it into a tacit acknowledgment that their views of faith were very liable to misconstruction; in other words, that they border upon the doctrine of justification by works in so great a degree as to be in danger of being mistaken for its advocates,—p. 76. He is not contented with faith being opposed to works in point of justification; it must also be opposed to them in its own nature. "Paul," he affirms, "did not look upon faith as a work." In short, if there be any possibility of drawing a certain conclusion from what a writer, in almost every form of speech, has advanced, it must be concluded that he means to deny that there is any thing holy in the nature of faith, and that could it be separated from its effects, (as he supposes it is in justification,) it would leave the person who possessed it among the enemies of God.

Notwithstanding the above, however, Mr. M'L. allows faith to be a *duty*. He has largely (and, I believe, successfully) endeavoured to prove that "faith is the *command* of God;" that it is "part of obedience to God;" that "to believe all that God says is *right*;" and that unbelief, which is its opposite, is "a great and heinous sin."\* But how can these things agree? If there be nothing of the exercise of a holy disposition in what is *commanded* of God, in what is *right*, and in what is an exercise of *obedience*, by what rule are we to judge of what is holy and what is not? I scarcely can conceive of a truth more self-evident than this; that God's commands extend only to that which *comes under the influence of the will*. Knowledge can be no further a duty, nor ignorance a sin, than as each is influenced by the moral state of the heart; the same is true of faith and unbelief. We might as well make the passive admission of light into the eye, or of sound into the ear, duties, as a passive admission of truth into the mind. To receive it into the *heart*, indeed, is duty; for this is a *voluntary* acquiescence in it: but that in which the will has no concern cannot possibly be so.

Mr. M'L. sometimes writes as if he would acknowledge faith to be not only a duty, but to "contain virtue," or true *holiness*; seeing, as he observes, "it is the root of all Christian virtues, and that which gives glory to God, and without which it is impossible to please him." Nay, the reader would imagine, by his manner of writing, that he was pleading for the holy nature of faith, and that I had denied it; seeing I am represented as having made the "too bold" and "unfounded assertion" that *mere belief contains no virtue*. The truth is I affirmed no such thing, but was pleading for the contrary; as is manifest from what Mr. M'L. says in the same note: "But why so solicitous to find virtue or moral excellence in faith?" It is true I contended that

\* Belief of the Gospel Saving Faith, pp. 34-44.

if the belief of the gospel were a mere exercise of the understanding, uninfluenced by the moral state of the heart, it could contain no virtue, nor be the object of a Divine command; but I supposed it to be a persuasion of Divine truth arising from the state of the heart, in the same sense as unbelief, which Mr. M'L. justly calls "its opposite," is not a mere mistake of the judgment, but a persuasion arising from aversion to the truth. From the above, however, it would seem that we are agreed in making faith in Christ something which comprehends "true virtue," or, which is the same thing, true holiness. Yet Mr. M'L. will not abide by all or any of this; if he would, indeed, there would be an end of the dispute. But he proceeds to reason in favour of that very "unfounded assertion" for making which I am unwarrantably accused of having been "too bold." Thus he reasons in support of it:—"If mere belief contain no virtue, it would not follow that unbelief could contain no sin; for such an argument proceeds upon this principle, that if there be no virtue in a thing, there can be no sin in its opposite; but this does not hold true in innumerable instances. There is no positive virtue in abstaining from many crimes that might be mentioned; yet the commission of them, or even the neglect of the opposite duties, would be very sinful. There is no moral virtue in taking food when hungry; but wilfully to starve oneself to death would be suicide: and, to come nearer the point, there is no moral virtue in believing the testimony of a friend, when I have every reason to do so; yet, in these circumstances, were I to discredit his word, he would feel the injury very sensibly. Now, supposing there was no more virtue contained in believing the witness of God than in believing the witness of men, to which it is compared, it does not follow that there would be no sin in unbelief, which is to make God a liar. To deny that faith is the exercise of a virtuous temper of heart is to refuse some praise to the creature; but to deny that unbelief is a sin is to impeach the moral character of God.—And why so solicitous to find virtue or moral excellence in faith?"

Now whether this reasoning be just or not, it must be allowed to prove that Mr. M'L., notwithstanding what he has said to the contrary, does *not* consider faith as containing any virtue. It is true what he says is under a hypothetical form, and it may appear as if he were only allowing me my argument, for the sake of overturning it; but it is manifestly his own principle which he labours to establish, and not mine; the very principle on which, as he conceives, depends the freeness of justification. I cannot but express my surprise that so acute a writer should deal so largely in inconsistency.

Mr. M'L. cannot conceive of any end to be answered in finding moral excellence in faith, unless it be to give some "praise to the creature." He doubtless means, by this insinuation, to furnish an argument against it. As far as any thing which is spiritually good in us, and which is wrought by Him who "worketh all our works in us," is praiseworthy, so far the same may be granted of faith; and as we should not think of denying the one to contain moral excellence for the sake of humbling the creature, neither is there any ground for doing so with respect to the other.

But there are other ends to be answered by maintaining the holy nature of faith, and such as Mr. M'L. himself will not deny to be of importance. First, It is of importance that faith be considered as a duty: for if this be denied, Christ is denied the honour due to his name. But it is impossible to maintain that faith is a *duty*, if it contain no holy exercise of the heart. This, I presume, has already been made to appear. God requires nothing of intelligent creatures but what is holy. Secondly, It is of importance that the faith which we inculcate be *genuine*, or *such as will carry us to*

*heaven*. But if it have no holiness in its nature, it is *dead*, and must be unproductive. Mr. M'L. considers true faith as the *root* of holiness; but if it be so, it must be holy itself; for the nature of the fruit corresponds with that of the root. If the difference between a living and dead faith do not consist in this, that the one is of a holy nature, and the other not so, I should be glad to be informed wherein it does consist; and whether the nature of the one be the same as that of the other, the difference between them arising merely from circumstances. Thirdly, It is of importance that unbelief be allowed to be a sin; as it is that which, by Mr. M'L.'s acknowledgment, "impeaches the moral character of God." But if there be no holiness in faith, there can be no sin in its opposite. It is true Mr. M'L. denies the principle of this argument, and speaks of "innumerable instances" of things which have no virtue, and yet the opposite of them is sin. This, I am persuaded, is not true. Whatever is the *proper* opposite of sin is holiness. The instances which are given do not prove the contrary; as abstinence from various crimes, eating when we are hungry, and believing a human testimony. There may, indeed, be no holiness in these things as they are performed by apostate creatures; but if they were performed as God requires them to be, (which they should be, in order to their being the *proper opposites* to the sins referred to,) they would be holy exercises. God requires us to abstain from all sin, *from a regard to his name*; to "eat and drink, and do whatever we do," even the giving credit to the testimony of a friend, "when we have *reason* to do so," "to *his glory*." These things, thus performed, would be exercises of holiness.

I am aware that those who have opposed the doctrine of total depravity have argued that, as being "without natural affection" is sin, so the being possessed of it must be virtue. To this it has been justly answered, that though a being *without natural affection* argues the highest degree of depravity, (as nothing else could overcome the common principles of human nature,) yet it does not follow that mere natural affection is virtuous; for if so, virtue would be found in mere animals. This answer is just, and sufficient to repel the objection on the subject of human depravity; but it will not apply to the case in hand. The question there relates to a matter of *fact*, or what men actually are; but here to a matter of *right*, or what they ought to be. Whatever is capable of being done by a moral agent, *with an eye to the glory of God*, ought to be so done; and if it be, it is holy; if not, whatever may be thought of it by men, it is sinful. Natural affection itself, if *subordinated to him*, would be sanctified, or rendered holy; and the same may be said of every natural inclination or action of life. It is thus that God should be served, even in our civil concerns; and "holiness to the Lord" written, as it were, upon the "bells of the horses."

I have known several persons in England who have agreed with Mr. M'L. as to faith belonging merely to the intellectual faculty, and the moral state of the heart having no influence upon it; but then they either denied, or have been very reluctant to admit, that it is duty. "The mind," say they, "is *passive* in the belief of a proposition: we cannot believe as we will, but according to evidence. It may be our duty to *examine* that evidence; but as to faith, it, being altogether involuntary, cannot be a *duty*." And if it be a mere passive reception of the truth, on which the state of the will has no influence, I do not perceive how this consequence can be denied. But then the same might be said of unbelief: If evidence do not appear to us, how can we believe? It may be our sin not to examine; but as to our not believing, it, being altogether involuntary, cannot be a sin.—By this mode of reasoning the sin of unbelief is explained away, and unbelievers commonly avail themselves of it for that purpose. As both these consequences (I can



the denying of faith being a duty, and unbelief a sin) are allowed by Mr. M'L. to be utterly repugnant to the Scriptures, it becomes him, if he will defend the premises, to show that they have no necessary connexion with them.

The above reasoning might hold good, for aught I know, *in things which do not interest the heart*; but to maintain it in things which do, especially in things of a *moral and practical nature*, is either to deny the existence of prejudice, or that it has any influence in hindering belief.

The author of *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners*, though he pleads for faith as including our *receiving* Christ, and *coming* to him, yet is decidedly averse from all holy disposition of the heart preceding it, not only as affording a warrant, but as any way necessary to the thing itself. And as he unites with Mr. M'L. in considering the sinner as an enemy to God at the time of his being justified, he must, to be consistent, consider faith as having no holiness in its nature. His method of reasoning on the priority of repentance to believing would seem to denote the same thing. He allows speculative repentance, or a *change of mind* which has "no holiness" in it, to be necessary to believing; giving this as the reason: "While a sinner is either stupidly inattentive to his immortal interests, or expecting justification by his own obedience, he will not come to Christ. It should seem, then, that *aversion of heart* from the gospel plan, or a *desire* to be justified by one's own obedience, is no objection to coming to Christ; and that a sinner *will* come to him, notwithstanding this, provided he be right in speculation, and his conscience sufficiently alarmed. If so, there certainly can be nothing spiritual or holy in the act of coming. The respect which I feel towards both Mr. Booth and Mr. M'Lean is not a little; but there needs no apology for opposing these sentiments. Truth ought to be dearer to us than the greatest or best of men.

Mr. M'L. writes as if he were at a loss to know my meaning. "By a *corresponding temper of heart*," he says, "cannot be meant some good disposition *previous* to faith; for as the question relates to faith itself, that would be foreign to the point." I have no scruple in saying, however, that I consider it as *previous* to faith; and as to what is suggested of its irrelevancy, the same might be said of unbelief. Were I to say that unbelief includes the exercise of an evil temper of heart, and that herein consists the sin of it, I should say no more than is plainly intimated by the sacred writers, who describe unbelievers as "stumbling at the word, *being disobedient*," I Pet. ii. 8. Yet Mr. M'L. might answer, By an evil temper of heart you cannot mean any thing *previous* to unbelief; for as the question relates to unbelief itself, that would be foreign to the point. Neither can you mean that it is the immediate and inseparable *effect* of unbelief; for that is fully granted; and it is not the effect, but the *nature*, or essence, of unbelief, that is the point in question. Your meaning, therefore, must be this: that unbelief, in its very *nature*, is a temper or disposition of heart disagreeing with the truth.—To this I should answer, I do *not* consider unbelief as an evil temper of heart, but as a persuasion *arising out of it and partaking of it*; and the same answer is applicable to the subject in hand.

I shall first offer evidence that faith in Christ is a persuasion influenced by the moral state of the heart, and partaking of it; and then consider the principal objections advanced against it.

If what has been said already, on duty being confined to things in which the will has an influence, be just, the whole of the second part of the foregoing treatise may be considered as evidence in favour of the point now at issue; as whatever proves faith to be a duty proves it to be a *holy* exercise of the soul towards Christ, arising from the heart being turned towards him.

In addition to this, the following particulars are submitted to the reader:—

First, Faith is a *grace of the Holy Spirit*. It is ranked with hope and charity, which are spiritual or holy exercises. Indeed, whatever the Holy Spirit as a *Sanctifier* produces, must resemble his own nature. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." As "the wisdom which is from above is pure," and of a practical nature, so faith which is from above resembles its Divine origin.

Secondly, It is that in the exercise of which we "give glory to God," Rom. iv. 20. If faith be, what Mr. M'L. acknowledges it to be, a *duty*, and an exercise of *obedience*, its possessing such a tendency is easily conceived; but *if it be a passive reception of truth*, on which the moral state of the heart has no influence, how can such a property be ascribed to it? There is a way in which inanimate nature glorifies God, and he may get himself glory by the works of the most ungodly; but no ungodly man truly *gives* glory to him; neither does a godly man, but in the exercise of holiness.

Thirdly, Faith is represented as depending upon *choice*, or *the state of the heart* towards God: "Said I not unto thee, If thou *wouldest* believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"—"How can ye believe, *which receive honour one of another*, and *seek not the honour that cometh from God only*?"—"If thou *canst* believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." If faith be a mere passive reception of the truth into the understanding, on which the state of the will has no influence, what fair interpretation can be given to these passages? If a disposition to *seek the Divine honour* be not necessary to believing, how is it that the want of it should render it impossible? And if believing had no dependence upon choice, or the state of the heart, how is it that our Saviour should suspend his healing of the child upon the parent's being *able* to exercise it? Did he suspend his mercy on the performance of a natural impossibility, or upon something on which the state of the heart had no influence?

Fourthly, Faith is frequently represented as *implying repentance for sin*, which is acknowledged on all hands to be a holy exercise. It does not come up to the Scripture representation to say repentance is a fruit of faith. There is no doubt but that faith, where it exists, will operate to promote repentance, and every other holy exercise. It is true, also, that a conviction of the being and attributes of God must, in the order of nature, precede repentance, because we cannot repent for offending a being of whose existence we doubt, or of whose character we have no just conception; but *the faith of the gospel*, or a believing in Jesus for the salvation of our souls, is represented in the New Testament as *implying repentance* for sin. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."—"And ye, when ye had seen it, *repented not that ye might believe*."—"If, peradventure, God will give them repentance *to the acknowledging of the truth*." Whenever the Scriptures speak of repentance as followed by the remission of sins, it will be allowed that faith is supposed; for repentance without faith could not please God, nor have any connexion with the promise of forgiveness: and it is equally evident, that when they speak of faith as followed by justification, repentance is supposed; for faith without repentance would not be genuine. It is impossible to discern the glory of Christ's mediation, or to believe in the necessity, the importance, the loveliness, or the suitableness of his undertaking, while we *feel* not for the dishonour done to God by the sin of creatures, and particularly by our own sin. Ignorance, therefore, is ascribed to *obduracy* or *insensibility* of heart.\* Indeed it is easy to perceive that where there is no sense of the evil and demerit of sin, there can be no "form nor comeliness" discerned in the Saviour, "nor beauty, that we should desire him;" and

\* Eph. iv. 18.

while this is the case, the servants of Christ will have to lament, "Who hath believed our report?"

Fifthly, Faith is often expressed by terms which indicate the exercise of *affection*. It is called *receiving* Christ, which stands opposed to *rejecting* him, or *receiving him not*; and which is descriptive of the treatment he met with from the body of the Jewish nation. It is called "*receiving the love of the truth, that we may be saved*;" and by salvation being thus connected with it, it is implied that no other reception of the truth is saving. Christ's word is said to have "*no place*" in unbelievers; which implies that in true believers it *has place*, and which is expressive of more than a mere assent of the understanding. The good ground in the parable is said to represent those "who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." It is here intimated that no one receives the word to purpose but in the exercise of an *honest and good heart*.\*

Sixthly, Belief is expressly said to be *with the heart*. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe *in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For *with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—"If thou believest *with all thine heart*, thou mayest." It is allowed that the *heart*, in these passages, does not denote the affections to the exclusion of the understanding; nor does the argument require that it should; but neither does it denote the understanding to the exclusion of the affections, (which is required by the argument on the other side,) but the *inmost soul*, in opposition to the mouth, with which confession is made unto salvation. Doing any thing *with the heart*, or *with all the heart*, are modes of speaking never used in Scripture, I believe, for the mere purpose of expressing what is internal, or mental, and which may pertain only to the understanding; they rather denote the quality of *unfeignedness*, a quality repeatedly ascribed to faith, and which marks an *honesty of heart* which is essential to it, 1 Tim. i. 5; 2 Tim. i. 5.

Seventhly, The want of faith is ascribed to *moral causes*, or to *the want of a right disposition of heart*. "Ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye *will not* come to me that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the *love of God* in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye *receive me not*; if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"—"Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words; ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God." If a holy disposition were unnecessary to believing in Christ, neither the want of it, nor the existence of the contrary, could form any obstruction to it.

Lastly, *Unbelief is not a mere error of the understanding, but a positive and practical rejection of the gospel*. It is actually treating God as a liar, and all the blessings of the gospel with contempt. But faith is the opposite of unbelief; therefore it is not a mere assent of the understanding, but a practical reception of the gospel, actually treating God as the God of truth, and the blessings of the gospel as worthy of all acceptance. This statement of things is clearly taught us by the pointed address of our Lord to the Jews, quoted under the foregoing argument. "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."—"If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" If faith

\* John i. 12; 2 Thess. ii. 10; John viii. 37; Luke viii. 15.

were a mere exercise of the understanding, why do not men as readily believe the truth as they believe a lie? Surely truth is not less evident to the mind, nor less consistent, than falsehood. It is evident that their not believing the truth was owing to the aversion of their hearts, and nothing else, and, by what follows, it is equally evident that the belief of the truth is owing to the removal of this aversion, or to the heart's being brought to be on the side of God: "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God."

I proceed to the consideration of *objections*. The first and principal objection that Mr. M'L. alleges against this statement of things is, that it *affects the doctrine of justification by grace alone, without the works of the law*. "The Scriptures pointedly declare," he says, "that God justifies sinners 'freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ,' and that this justification is received 'through faith in (Christ's) blood.' Faith in this case is always distinguished from and opposed to the works of the law; not merely of the ceremonial law, which was peculiar to the Jews, but of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, which says, 'Thou shalt not covet,' and which requires not only outward *good actions, but love*, and every good disposition of the heart, both towards God and our neighbour; so that the *works* of this law respect the heart as well as life. The distinction, therefore, between *faith* and *works* on this subject is not that which is between *inward* and *outward* conformity to the law; for if faith be not in this case distinguished from and opposed to our conformity to the law, both outwardly and inwardly, it cannot be said that we are 'justified by faith, without the deeds of the law,' or that God 'justifieth the ungodly.' Faith, indeed, as a principle of action, 'worketh by love;' but it is not *as thus working* that it is imputed for righteousness; for it is expressly declared that righteousness is imputed to him that '*worketh not, but believeth* on him that justifieth the *ungodly*.' 'It is of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*;' and grace and works are represented as incompatible with each other; for to him that '*worketh* is the reward not reckoned of *grace*, but of *debt*.' Now when men include in the very nature of justifying faith such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart, as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary (no matter under what consideration) to a sinner's acceptance with God, it perverts the apostle's doctrine upon this important subject, and makes justification to be at least 'as it were by the works of the law.'"\*

There is no dispute whether justification be of *grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ*; nor whether justification by faith be opposed to justification by the works of the law, even those works which are internal, as well as those which are external. But it is apprehended that, in order to maintain these doctrines, there is no necessity to explain away the holy nature of faith, or to maintain that it consists in mere speculation, which it must if it have nothing of the disposition of the heart in it.

If considering faith as arising from the disposition of the heart be unfriendly to justification by grace without the works of the law, it must be on one or other of these suppositions: First, either that, should there be any holiness in us antecedently to justification, it must be imputed unto us for righteousness. Or, secondly, If it be not so in fact, yet it will be so in the view of awakened sinners.

The first of these suppositions, so far from being friendly to the doctrine of justification by grace, utterly subverts the grand principle on which the necessity of it is founded. The grand principle on which the apostle rests the doctrine is this: "It is written, Cursed is every one that continueth

\* On the Commission, pp. 83, 84.

not in *all things* written in the book of the law to do them." This declaration goes to an utter denial of the possibility of a sinner's being justified by the works of his hands. But if the foregoing supposition be true, the declaration must be false; for, according to this, the holiness of one that has *not* continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them, provided we have any, is admissible to his justification. On the other hand, if the declaration be true, the supposition is false; for according to the apostle's doctrine, it must follow that whatever holiness any creature may possess before, in, or after his believing, unless he could produce a righteousness conforming in *all things* to God's righteous law, it will avail him nothing in respect of justification. I have no idea of any holiness antecedently to justification, any further than what is necessarily implied in the nature of justifying faith; but if it were otherwise, and a sinner could produce a series of holy actions performed in a course of years, all must be reckoned as loss and dung in respect of his being accepted of God. He that would win Christ must be "found in him."

If antecedent holiness destroy the freeness of grace, I know of no solid reason why *consequent* holiness should not operate in the same way; and then, in order to be justified by grace, it will be necessary to continue the enemies of God through life. It is not the priority of *time* that makes any difference, but that of *causation*. Holiness may precede justification as to time, and it may be necessary on some account that it should precede it, and yet have no causal influence on it. The self-abasement of the publican preceded his going down to his house "justified;" yet it was not *on this ground* that his justification rested. Holiness, on the other hand, may follow justification as to time, and yet, for any thing that this will prove, may be that which is accounted for righteousness. The righteousness of Christ was imputed to Old Testament believers, long before it was actually wrought; and good was promised to Abraham, on the ground that God "knew him, that he would command his children and his household after him."

It was the denial of personal holiness being necessary to justification as a *procuring cause*, and not any thing which regarded the *time* of it, that excited those *objections* against the doctrine as leading to licentiousness which are repelled in the Epistle to the Romans, and which have been pleaded in this controversy. The doctrine here defended is liable to the same; not *justly*, indeed; neither was that of the apostle: but so long as we maintain that acceptance with God is wholly out of regard to the righteousness of another, and not for any thing done by us, before, in, or after believing, a self-righteous spirit will be offended, and reproach the doctrine as immoral.

The argument for the necessity of a sinner's being an enemy to God, at the time of his justification, in order to its being wholly of grace, resembles that of some divines, who for the same purpose have pleaded for our being justified from *eternity*. They seem to have supposed that if God justified us before we had any existence, or could have performed any good works, it must be on the footing of *grace*. Yet these divines maintained that some men were ordained to condemnation from eternity; and that as a punishment for their sin, which God foresaw. But if an eternal decree of condemnation might rest upon foreseen evil, who does not perceive that an eternal decree of justification might equally rest upon foreseen good? The truth is, the freeness of justification does not depend upon the date of it.

Mr. M'Lean charges the sentiment he opposes as a *perversion* of the apostle's doctrine, and with making justification to be, at least, "*as it were*, by the works of the law." Yet he is fully aware that whatever is pleaded in behalf of the holy nature of faith, it is not supposed to justify us *as a work*, or *holy exercise*, or as being any part of that which is accounted unto us for

righteousness; but merely as that which *unites to Christ*, for the sake of whose righteousness alone we are accepted. I have no idea of merit, either of condignity or congruity, or of justification being bestowed as a *reward* to believing, any more than he has. But I shall be told this is "a caution which intimates an apprehension that my idea of faith is very liable to such a misconstruction."\* And was the apostle's doctrine liable to no misconstruction? and did he use no caution to guard against it? Is Mr. M'L.'s doctrine liable to none? and does he never use caution for the same purpose? What else does he mean when, discoursing on God's justifying the ungodly, he adds, "Faith, indeed, as a principle of action, *worketh by love*; but it is not *as thus working* that it is imputed for righteousness?"† I confess I am not able to discern the difference between this distinction and that which he discards; for if there be any meaning in words, either in the apostle's or his, faith *does* work by love, and that from its first existence; and its thus working belongs to it as genuine justifying faith: but though it always possessed this property, and without it could not have been genuine; yet it is not *on this account*, or in a way of reward, that we are said to be justified by it.

If he allege that the property of *working by love* does not belong to the nature of faith, as justifying; and that, in the order of time, we are justified by it previously to its thus working, he must contradict the apostle, who speaks of "receiving the love of the truth, *that we may be saved*," and pronounces those persons *unbelievers* who do not thus receive it, 2 Thess. ii. 10-12. His own words also will, in this case, be ill adapted to express his ideas. Instead of saying, "Faith indeed *worketh by love*; but it is not *as thus working* that it justifies;" he ought to have said to this effect: Faith indeed *worketh by love*; but it is not till it has first performed its office in respect of justification, which it does previously to its working at all.

The Scriptures constantly represent *union with Christ* as the foundation of our interest in the blessing of justification: "Of him are ye *in Christ* Jesus, who of God is made unto us—righteousness."—"That I may be found *in* him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ."—"We are accepted in the Beloved."—"There is—no condemnation to them that are *in Christ* Jesus." Now, faith in him being that by which this union is effected, hence arises the necessity of it in order to justification. It is that by which, as in a marriage, we are joined to the Lord, and so by his gracious constitution of things are interested in all he is, and all he possesses. And thus it is supposed that living faith, or faith that "*worketh by love*," is necessary to justification; not as being the ground of our acceptance with God—not as a virtue of which justification is the reward; but as that without which we could not be united to a living Redeemer.

But we are told, "If any thing holy in us be rendered necessary to our being accepted of God, (no matter under what consideration,) we pervert the apostle's doctrine, and to make justification to be at least, *as it were*, by the works of the law." Is Mr. M'L. sure that he does not pervert, or at least sadly misapply, the apostle's words? Whatever be the meaning of the phrase "*as it were*," it does not describe the principles of those who renounce all dependence upon their own holiness, and plead for the holy nature of faith only as being necessary to render it genuine, and consequently to unite us to a holy Saviour. The characters there referred to were ungodly men, who relied upon their own works for justification, "*stumbling at that stumbling-stone.*"

\* On the Commission, p. 76.

† Ibid, p. 84.

That we may judge whether this assertion be well founded, it is necessary to examine the evidence on which it rests; and this, if I mistake not, is confined to the phraseology of a single passage of Scripture. If this passage (Rom. iv. 4, 5) do not prove the point for which it is alleged, I know of no other that does: and, what is more, the whole tenor of Scripture teaches a doctrine directly opposite; that is to say, that REPENTANCE PRECEDES FORGIVENESS. But, waving this, we will attend to the passage itself. If by "him that worketh not," and the "ungodly" whom God justifieth, be meant persons who, at the time, had *never done any good thing* in the sight of God, and who were actually under the dominion of *enmity* against him, Mr. M'L.'s assertion will be granted him; but if these terms be meant to describe persons who work not *with respect to justification*, and who, in their dealings with God for acceptance, come not as righteous, but as *ungodly*, no such consequence will follow. On the contrary, it will follow, that if the apostle's doctrine be perverted, it is Mr. M'L. that has perverted it.

That the apostle is speaking of *believers* we are expressly told in the passage itself. He that "worketh not" is said, at the same time, to "believe;" but whenever this can be said of a man, it cannot with truth be affirmed of him that he has done nothing good in the sight of God, or that he is under the dominion of enmity against him. By Mr. M'L.'s own account he has, by the influence of Divine grace, done "what is *right*, in giving credit to what God says;" he has "obeyed the gospel;" he has complied with "the *command* of God," that we should believe in him whom he hath sent. It may, however, be truly affirmed of him, that he *worketh not with respect to justification*; for it is the nature of faith to overlook and relinquish every thing of the kind. Whatever necessity there may be for a writer in vindication of the truth to enumerate these things, they are such as the subject of them thinks nothing of at the time, especially as the ground of his acceptance with God. All his hopes of mercy are those of a *sinner*, an *ungodly* sinner.

"Him that worketh not" stands opposed, by the apostle, to "him that worketh; to whom," he says, "the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt," Rom. iv. 4. And is this a description of actually working for God? The character referred to is either *real* or *supposed*: either that of a self-righteous sinner, who would at last be dealt with on the footing of that covenant to which he adhered; or of a perfect conformist to the Divine law. If it be the former, "he that worketh" undoubtedly means not one that *actually labours for God*, but one that *worketh with a view to justification*; and, consequently, "he that worketh not" must mean, not one that has actually wrought nothing for God, but one that worketh not *with a view of being justified by it*. Or if, on the other hand, the character be allowed to be only a *supposed* one; namely, a perfect conformist to the Divine law; yet, as what is done by him that so worketh is done *with a view to justification*, it is on this account properly opposed to the life of a believer, who, whatever he may do, does nothing with *such an end*, but derives all his hopes of acceptance with God from the righteousness of another.

To this may be added the *examples* which the apostle refers to for the illustration of his doctrine. These are Abraham and David; and let the reader judge whether they be not decisive of the question. It is of Abraham's justification that he is speaking. He it is that is held up as a pattern of justification by faith, in opposition to the works of the law. Of him it was supposed "that he worked not, but believed on him that justifieth the ungodly." If Abraham, therefore, at the time when he is said to have "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," had never done any good thing, and was actually the enemy of God, Mr. M'L.'s position is

established. But if the contrary be true, it is overturned. To determine this, the reader has only to consult Gen. xv. 6; xii. 1, and Heb. xi. 8. He will there perceive that it was several years after his departure from Haran (at which time the apostle bears witness to his being a believer) that he is said to have "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Hence it is manifest that the character described by the apostle is not that of an enemy, but a friend of God; and that it is not merely applicable to a Christian at the first moment of his believing, but through the whole of life. We have to deal with Christ for pardon and justification more than once; and must always go to him as "working not, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly."

Nor is the example of David less decisive than that of Abraham. When the "blessedness" of which the apostle speaks "came upon him," he was not in a state of *enmity* to God; but had been his friend and servant for a series of years. The thirty-second appears, evidently, to be one of his penitential Psalms, composed after his fall in the case of Uriah. Yet he also is supposed to have "worked not, but believed on him that justifieth the ungodly." And it is worthy of notice, that the very principle inculcated through this whole Psalm is, *the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness*, a principle which requires to be disowned, before the position maintained by Mr. M'L. can be admitted.

It has been said that the term *ungodly* is never used but to describe the party as being under *actual enmity* to God at the time. I apprehend this is a mistake. Christ is said to have died for the "ungodly." Did he then lay down his life only for those who, *at the time*, were actually his enemies? If so, he did not die for any of the Old Testament saints, nor for any of the godly who were then alive, not even for his own apostles. All that can in truth be said is, that, whatever were their characters at the time, he died for them *as* ungodly; and thus it is that he "justifieth the ungodly." Gospel justification stands opposed to that which is in ordinary use: the one acquits the righteous, the worthy, the deserving; the other, the unrighteous, the unworthy, the *ungodly*.

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

By the manner in which Mr. M'L. speaks of "pardon and acceptance with God," uniting them together, and denying all holy affection to be necessary to either, it is manifest that he denies the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness; a doctrine taught not only in the thirty-second Psalm, from



which the apostle argued the doctrine of *free* justification, but also in the whole tenor of Scripture.\*

Secondly, By rejecting this doctrine he finds in the gospel "relief for the mere sinner." This "mere sinner" is described as "awakened," and as "*viewing himself* merely as a guilty sinner." At the same time, however, he is supposed to be destitute of all "holy affection." It may be questioned whether this account of things be consistent with itself, or whether any "mere sinner" ever "views himself merely as a guilty sinner;" for such views include a just *sense* of the evil of sin, and of his own utter unworthiness of the Divine favour, which no "*mere sinner*" ever possessed. But passing this, whatever be his "awakenings," and whatever the load of "guilt" that lies upon his conscience, seeing he is allowed to be destitute of all "holy affection," he must be, in fact, no other than a *hard-hearted enemy to true religion*. He has not a grain of regard to God's name, nor concern for having offended him; nor the least degree of attachment to the atonement of Christ on account of its securing *his* honour; in a word, his whole affection centres in himself. This character wants "relief." And what is it that will relieve him? Pardon and acceptance with God, *through the atonement of Jesus?* If so, he needs neither to climb to heaven, nor to descend into the deep; the word is nigh him. But *this* is not what he wants; for he sees "no form nor comeliness in *him*, nor beauty, that he should *desire him*." Is it to be *saved from his sins*? No: it is to be saved *in* them. It is to obtain ease to his troubled conscience, and exemption from the dread of Divine wrath, without relinquishing his self-righteous lusts, and *submitting* to the righteousness of God. And is it true that such a character stands in need of "relief?" He may think he does, and may labour hard to obtain it; but surely he needs to be *wounded* instead of healed, and *killed* rather than made alive. Nay, in such a state of mind, is it *possible* that he should be "relieved" by the gospel "as it in Jesus?" Rather, is it not self-evident that, to relieve him, we must assimilate our doctrine to his inclinations? It were as absurd to suppose that a *hard-hearted* sinner should be relieved by the true gospel, as that the *whole* should find relief in a physician.

Thirdly, The *hard-hearted* sinner is not only to be "relieved" by the assurance of "pardon and acceptance with God;" but this is supposed to be derived "*directly* from the atonement." If by this were meant *mercy for the sake* of the atonement, it were unobjectionable; but the meaning is that the mere sinner is pardoned *without repentance* or any "*holy affection to Christ*." There must be no consciousness of any thing of the kind previously to forgiveness; for then it would not be "direct, but through the medium of a good opinion of his own heart or character." And does Mr. M'L. really believe in all this? What then will he make of the concurrent language of the Old and New Testament? "Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*: and let him *return unto the Lord*, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—"Preaching the baptism of *repentance for the remission of sins*."—"Repent ye therefore, and be *converted*, that your *sins may be blotted out*."—"To turn them from the *power of Satan unto God*, that they may receive *forgiveness of sins*." What can be made of this language? Shall we say, it is the voice of the *law* directing a sinner what he must do *in order to be accepted by his own obedience*?† An ingenious mind will seldom be at a loss for something to say; but let us take heed lest we be found perverting the Scriptures in support of an hypothesis. If there be any meaning in

\* 1 Kings viii. 29-50; Prov. xxviii. 13; Isa. lv. 6-8; Matt. iii. 2; Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3; xxiv. 47; Acts ii. 38; iii. 19: v. 31; xxvi. 18.

† See Mr. M'L.'s Simple Truth, pp 21-26.

language, it is manifest that these exhortations are addressed to sinners as the means, not of legal, but of evangelical justification,—justification of which *the forgiveness of sins* is an essential branch.

From the foregoing, and many such passages, it is evident that when we are said to be justified by faith, it is such a faith as involves repentance; equally so as, when we are said to be forgiven on repentance, it is such repentance as involves believing.

Nay, more, if Mr. M'L. believe as above, what can be made of his own writings? How are we to understand his note in page 92, containing a brief but judicious answer to Mr. John Barclay? He there proves that no man is pardoned or accepted of God till he sustain a different character from that which belongs to him *merely as a sinner*; that is, till he is a *believer*; and that “the assurance of a man’s own justification is *not* founded merely upon the *direct* testimony of God, but also upon the testimony of his own conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Spirit that he believes the gospel testimony.” Mr. Barclay might reply to him as he does to others. He might say, concerning the awakened sinner, that, on Mr. M'L.’s principles, “Though Christ died for *sinners*, for the *ungodly*, yet he does not believe that Christ’s death will be of any benefit to him as a *mere sinner*, but as possessed of *faith*; nor does he expect any satisfaction as to the salvation of his soul purely and *directly* from the atonement; but through the medium of a better opinion of himself, a consciousness that he is a believer. This sentiment, if he is really concerned about the salvation of his soul, must set him upon attempts that he may obtain this faith in order to be justified; and all his endeavours, prayers, and religious exercises will be directed to that end.”—If Mr. M'L. can answer this objection, he will answer his own.

After all, there is a way of deriving relief, as “mere sinners, directly from the atonement;” but this is what a *mere sinner*, in Mr. M'L.’s sense of the terms, never does. They are believing sinners only, sinners possessed of “holy affection” to Christ, who are thus rendered dead to every thing in themselves, and alive to him. By Mr. M'L.’s reasoning, it should seem as though impenitent and unhumiliated sinners not only derived their comfort in this way, but as if they were the only persons that did so! To derive relief, as mere sinners, directly from the atonement, it is not necessary that we should *possess* no holy affection towards Christ; but that, whatever we possess, we make *nothing* of it as a ground of acceptance, “*counting* all things but loss and dung that we may *win* and be *found in him*.” And this manner of deriving relief is not peculiar to the time of our first believing, but belongs to a “life of faith on the Son of God.”

Again, It is supposed that the including of holy affection in the nature of faith, and rendering it necessary to acceptance with God, (no matter under what consideration,) must, of necessity, lead the sinner from Christ, to rely on something good in himself. It is true, that if any holiness in us were required *as a ground of acceptance with God*, it would be so; and the same would be true of the requirement of a faith without holiness, provided it were required *to this end*. That faith, whatever be its nature, is required, and is necessary to precede justification, Mr. M'L. will not deny. He denies its being necessary as *that on account of which* we are justified; and so do I; but whatever be the place which it occupies, it is allowed to be necessary. Now if the necessity of a holy faith be more favourable to self-righteousness than of one which has nothing holy in it, it must be either because it is of the *nature* of holiness, rather than of unholiness, so to operate; or because the depravity of the heart can find an *occasion* for glorying in the one case, which it cannot in the other. To suppose the former is the same as supposing that it is of the nature of holy affection to Christ to reject his salvation,

of godly sorrow for sin to render us more attached to it, and of humility of heart to lift us up with pride. With respect to the latter, I cannot answer for it that the proud spirit of a merely "awakened sinner" shall not make a righteousness of a supposed holy faith; nor can Mr. M'L. answer for it that he shall not do the same of his "simple belief." Whether faith have any holiness in it, or not, seeing he is taught to consider it as necessary to justification, and told that God makes so great account of it, that without it the atonement itself will avail him nothing, there is no wonder if his unhumiliated heart should take up its rest in his supposed believing, instead of looking to the doctrine of the cross. An unrenewed sinner will make a righteousness of any thing rather than submit to the righteousness of God. But this I can answer for, if he really have repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, his mind will not be employed in self-admiration. And this, I am persuaded, is more than Mr. M'L. can say respecting a faith in the nature of which there is nothing holy; for if faith have no holiness in its nature, the sinner must and will, in the very exercise of it, admire himself. It is only in the exercise of a holy disposition of heart that the attention is turned another way; if this, therefore, be absent, there is nothing to counteract a self-righteous spirit; and if, at the same time, the sinner be flattered with having gained more clear and evangelical views of faith than the generality of professing Christians, there is every thing to feed it. To make the requirement of a speculative assent of the judgment, in which there is no holiness, necessary to the destruction of self-righteousness, is supposing that this spirit cannot exist unless it have true *holiness* to feed upon; but every one knows that, in "mere sinners," it reigns uncontrolled; and that, according to the degree in which true holiness exists, it is so far counteracted. It is natural that it should be so; for it is essential to this principle to sink us into our native nothingness, and to embrace the Saviour as all in all.

From these considerations I conclude, that instead of its being necessary for a sinner to be *in an ungodly state of mind*, in order to his believing in Christ, and being *justified as ungodly*, the direct contrary is true. To believe in Christ, as "justifying the ungodly," is to forego all claim and expectation of favour on the ground of our own deservings; to feel that unto us belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face; and that the only hope which remains for us is in the free mercy of God through Jesus Christ: but this no man ever did whose heart was still under the dominion of enmity; for the thing itself is a contradiction. Enmity necessarily blinds the mind, both to its own deformity, and to the glory of the Saviour. An enemy of God, therefore, and a self-righteous unbeliever, are one and the same character.

I cannot but express my surprise that it should ever have entered into the heart of wise and good men, to imagine that a faith which implies contrition and self-annihilation in its very nature (the spirit of the publican) should be supposed to be favourable to self-righteousness; while that which may consist with a hard heart, a proud spirit, and perfect enmity to God, (the very temper of the Pharisee,) is pleaded for as necessary to root it up! Why, then, did not the Pharisee go down to his house "*justified*," rather than the publican? The one *had humbled himself*; for God to justify him, therefore, would, it seems, be inconsistent with the freeness of his grace. As to the other, assuredly he was not wanting in *ungodliness*, nor had he ever wrought a single *work* for God, notwithstanding all his boasting. He was "a mere sinner," and if Christ's death will prove a benefit to such, why was it not so to him? At least, he came very near to the character which, according to Mr. M'L.'s doctrine, God should justify. "No," it will be said, "he did not *believe*." It seems, then, that something more is necessary,

after all, than being "a mere sinner." Yet why should it? Did not Christ "die for *sinner*s, for the *ungodly*?" Why should he not, as "a mere sinner," become a partaker of his benefits? Or if not, why does Mr. M'L. write as if he should? "He did not *believe*." . . . True; nor, while he was under the dominion of such a spirit, *could he believe*. Ere he could come to Jesus, or believe in him, he must have *heard and learned* another lesson.\*

It is further objected, that to suppose faith to include in it any holy disposition of heart, is *confounding it with its effects*, and making those to be *one* which the Scriptures declare to be *three*; namely, faith, hope, and charity. I do not know that the Scriptures any where teach us that *all* holy disposition is the effect of faith. It is not more so, I apprehend, than *all* unholy disposition is the effect of unbelief; but *unbelief itself is the effect of unholy disposition*, as I suppose will be allowed: *all* unholy disposition, therefore, cannot be the effect of unbelief. Mr. M'L. has proved that faith also is not only a principle of evangelical obedience, but is *itself an exercise of obedience*: *all* obedience, therefore, by his own account, is not the effect of faith; for nothing can be an effect of itself. And, unless it be impossible to *obey* God without any holy disposition of heart to do so, it will equally follow that *all holy disposition* cannot be the effect of faith. With respect to the confounding of what the Scriptures distinguish, whatever distinction there is between faith, hope, and charity, it makes nothing to Mr. M'L.'s argument, unless they can be proved to be so distinct as that nothing of the one is to be found in the other. Faith must not only have no love in it, but no hope; hope must include neither faith nor love; and love must possess neither faith nor hope. But are they thus distinct? On the contrary, it may be found, upon strict inquiry, that there is not a grace of the Holy Spirit which does not possess a portion of every other grace. Yet faith is not love, nor hope, nor joy, nor long-suffering, nor gentleness, nor goodness, nor meekness, nor patience; each has a distinctive character; and yet each is so blended with the other, that, in dissecting one, you must cut through the veins of all.

"Some affirm," says Mr. M'L., "that faith, hope, and love are three, considered only in respect of their objects."† I had, indeed, suggested that they are three considered with respect to their objects, but never thought of affirming that they are three in that view *only*. They may be three in many other respects, for aught I know. My argument only required me to point out a sense in which they were distinct, provided they were not so in respect of their holy nature. I see no solidity in Mr. M'L.'s objection to an objective distinction; and it is rather extraordinary that what he substitutes in its place, from Mr. Sandeman, is a distinction merely objective.

Mr. M'L. thinks that faith, hope, and love are distinct as to their *nature*; and that the *excellence* ascribed to love consists in its being holy; whereas faith is not so. But what becomes of *hope*? Love is not said to excel faith only: hope, therefore, is required to have no holiness in it, any more than faith. And has it none? Mr. M'L., when asked whether hope did not imply *desire*, and desire *love*, answered, "Yes; hope is a modification of love." It was replied, "Then you have given up your argument?"

It has been further objected, that the reception of God's testimony is compared to the reception of human testimony; and that as a disposition of heart, whether holy or unholy, is not necessary to the one, so neither is it to the other. It is allowed that the testimony of man may, in many cases, be believed merely by the understanding, and without being at all influenced by the state of the heart; but it is only in cases with which *the heart has no concern*. If the admission of a human testimony respected things of which

\* John v. 44; xii. 39, 40; vi. 45.

† On the Commission, p. 82, Note.

there was no sensible evidence—things the belief of which would require a total relinquishment of a favourite system, and the pursuit of an opposite course of action—things which the greater part of those about us disregarded, and which, if true, might be at a considerable distance—objections would arise against the admission of it, which, if it were otherwise, would have no existence. Nor could they be removed while the heart remained averse. The fact, it is true, might become so notorious as to silence opposition, and, in the end, extort conviction; but conviction, thus extorted, would not be faith. Faith implies that we *think well* of the testifier, or possess a confidence in his veracity; but conviction may consist with both ill opinion and ill will. It is the persuasion of sense, rather than of faith. Such was that of some of the chief rulers, that Christ was the Messiah, John xii. 42, 43. The miracles which he wrought silenced their opposition, and planted in their consciences a conviction that it must be so. It is true this conviction is called *believing*, but it is only in an improper sense; it was not that faith which is connected with justification or salvation. Whatever conviction any man may have of the truth, while it is against the grain of his heart, he is not a believer in the proper sense of the term; nor do the Scriptures acknowledge him as such. It is only the *receiving the love of the truth* that will prove *saving*; and he that does not thus receive it is described as an *unbeliever*, 2 Thess. ii. 10–12. If Micaiah's testimony of what God had revealed to him had been in favour of the expedition against Ramoth-gilead, Ahab could have believed it; for, a little before this, he had believed a prophet who spake good concerning him, 1 Kings xx. 13, 14. Or if it had been delivered by a person against whom he had no prejudice, and on a subject that neither favoured nor thwarted his inclinations, he might have believed it merely with his understanding, uninfluenced by any disposition of his heart; but as it was, while four hundred prophets were for him to one against him, and while sensible that appearances were in his favour, he believed it not, and even bade defiance to it. It is possible he might have some *misgivings*, even while he was ordering Micaiah to prison; and when the arrow pierced him, his *fears* would rise high. As death approached, he would *feel* the truth of what he had been told, and be possessed, it is likely, of tremendous *forebodings* of an hereafter: but all this was not faith, but *involuntary conviction*; a species of conviction this, which neither possesses nor produces any good, and which has not a promise made to it in the oracles of truth.

It is acknowledged, by the author of *A Dialogue between David and Jonathan*, that “after all we can say of the speculative knowledge of practical truth, we must still remember that it implies some very essential imperfection and error.” But if practical truth require something more than speculative knowledge to enter into it, why is not the same acknowledged of believing it? Can spiritual things require to be *spiritually discerned*, and yet be believed while the heart is wholly carnal?

Lastly, It is objected that the word of God is represented as the means of regeneration: “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.”—“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” And as it is supposed that the word must be *understood* and *believed*, before it can have any saving influence upon us; so it is concluded that regeneration must rather be preceded by faith, than faith by regeneration; or, at least, that they are coeval. This objection has been advanced from several quarters and for several purposes. In answer to it, I would, in the first place, offer two or three general remarks.

First, Whether regeneration influence faith, or faith regeneration, if either

of them influence the other, they cannot be coeval. One must be prior to the other, at least in the order of nature; as the effect is ever preceded by the cause.

Secondly, Whatever weight this objection may possess, it ought not to be made by any one who denies *the belief of the gospel to be saving faith*. For, allowing the word, *understood* and *believed*, to be that by which we are regenerated, still, if this belief be not faith, but something merely presupposed by it, faith may, notwithstanding, be preceded by regeneration. If faith be the same thing as coming to Christ, receiving him, and relying upon him for acceptance with God, all this, in the order of things, follows upon believing the truth concerning him; no less so than *coming to God follows a believing that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. We may, therefore, be regenerated by a perception and belief of the truth, and, as the immediate effect of it, come to Jesus, and rely upon him for salvation.

Thirdly, It may be questioned whether this objection ought to be made by those who admit the necessity of a spiritual discernment of the glory of Divine things in order to believing. That this is a principle clearly established in the Scriptures cannot be denied. *Seeing* the Son is necessary to believing in him. Unbelief is attributed to spiritual blindness (2 Cor. iv. 4); and those who believed not the "report" of the gospel are described as "seeing no form nor comeliness" in the Saviour, nor "beauty, that they should desire him."

Mr. M'L., speaking of the saving truth of the gospel, says, "It is no sooner *perceived* and *believed* than it takes possession of the will and affections," p. 82. This, I should think, is allowing that *perception* is distinct from believing, and necessarily precedes it. But if a spiritual perception of the glory of Divine truth precede believing, this may be the same, in effect, as regeneration preceding it. Allowing that the word requires to be *perceived*, ere the will and affections can be changed, it does not follow that it must also be *believed* for this purpose; for the perception itself may *change us into the same image*; and, in virtue of it, we may instantly, with our whole heart, set to our seal that God is true.

Now I apprehend that all my opponents are included under one or other of these descriptions; and if so, I might very well be excused from any further answer. The word of God may be allowed to be the means of regeneration, and yet regeneration may precede believing.

I do not wish, however, to dismiss the subject without stating my views of it, and the grounds on which they rest. To me it appears that the Scriptures trace a change of heart to an origin beyond either belief or perception, even to that Divine influence which is the *cause* of both; an influence which is with great propriety compared to the power that at first "commanded the light to shine out of darkness."

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

First, The Scriptures represent the dominion of sin in the heart as *utterly inconsistent* with a spiritual perception and belief of the gospel; and so long as it continues, as rendering both the one and the other impossible. Spiritual blindness is ascribed to aversion of heart. "Their eyes have they closed."

—“They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”—“The ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness,” obduracy, or callousness of the heart, Eph. iv. 18. The obstinacy and aver- sion of the heart is the film to the mental eye, preventing all spiritual glory entering into it. The natural man, therefore, “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, neither *can* he know them.” Hence it will follow, that unless the Holy Spirit effect that which he has declared to be impossible, his influence must consist, not in causing the mind to see *notwithstanding* the obstruction, but in removing the obstruction itself out of the way. If it be said, though it be impossible with men, yet it may be possible with God, I answer, those things which are impossible with men, but possible with God, are not such as are impossible *in their own nature*. Where this is the case, the power of God is never introduced as accomplishing them, any more than the power of man. We should not, for instance, think of affirming that the heart while carnal, and in a state of “enmity against God,” can by his almighty power be made to love him, and be “subject to his law;” for this is in itself impossible. But the impossibility of the natural man receiving the things of the Spirit of God, while they appear “foolishness” to him, is manifestly of the same nature as this, and is described in the same language.\* God does not cause the mind while carnal to be subject to his law, but imparts that which removes the obstruction, “taking away the stony heart out of our flesh, and giving us a heart of flesh.” And thus it is supposed to be in respect of spiritual discernment: God does not cause the natural man to receive spiritual things, and thereby render him spiritual; but removes the obstructing film by imparting a spiritual relish for those things. Thus it is that “spiritual things are *spiritually* discerned.”

Secondly, Though holiness is frequently ascribed in the Scriptures to a spiritual perception of the truth, yet that spiritual perception itself, in the first instance, is ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. “The Lord *opened the heart* of Lydia, and she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul.”—“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.”—“The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same *anointing teacheth* you of all things.”—“Ye have an unction from the *Holy One*, and ye know all things.”

Finally, Every thing which proves that spiritual blindness and unbelief have their origin in the depravity of the heart, proves that whatever may be said of particular volitions being caused by ideas received into the mind, original biasses are not so;† and every thing which proves spiritual percep-

\* Compare 1 Cor. ii. 14, with Rom. viii. 7.

† President Edwards (than whom no man will be allowed to have possessed a clearer insight into these difficult subjects) speaks with great caution on the will being determined by the understanding. He denies that it is so, if by the understanding be meant what is called *reason* or *judgment*; and only allows it “in a large sense, as including the whole faculties of perception or apprehension.” And even when taken in this large sense, he rather chooses to say, that “*the will always is as the greatest apparent good, or as what appears most agreeable, is*, than to say that the will is *determined* by the greatest apparent good, or by what seems most agreeable; because an appearing most agreeable or pleasing to the mind, and the mind’s preferring and choosing, seem hardly to be properly and perfectly distinct.”—*On the Will*. Thus also he writes in his *Treatise on the Affections*:—“Spiritual understanding consists, primarily in a *sense* of heart of *spiritual beauty*. I say in a *sense* of heart; for it is not speculation merely that is concerned in this kind of understanding; nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting distinctly and separately in this matter. When the mind is sensible of the sweet beauty and amiableness of a thing, that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the idea of it; and this sensibleness of the amiableness or delight-

tion and faith to be holy exercises proves that a change of heart must of necessity precede them; as no holy exercise can have place while the heart is under the dominion of carnality. And whether these principles have not been sufficiently proved in the foregoing pages the reader must determine.

It is thus, I apprehend, that God *reveals* the truth to us by his Spirit, in order to our discerning and believing it. "Blessed art thou, Simon-Barjona: flesh and blood hath not *revealed* these things unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."—"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and *revealed* them unto babes."—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, (that is, into the heart of the worldly man,) the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath *revealed* them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, *but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.* Which things also we (as ministers) speak, not in the words that man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned.*" This *revelation* from above communicates no new truths, but imparts a holy susceptibility of spirit, *a spirit which is of God,* (and which stands opposed to the *spirit of the world,*) by which those truths that were already revealed in the Scriptures, but which were *hid* from us by our pride and hardness of heart, become manifest. Thus faith is the gift of God. Believing itself, I should think, cannot with any propriety be termed a gift; but he gives us that from which it immediately follows; namely, "a heart to know him, a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear," Jer. xxiv. 7; Deut. xxix. 4.

I see nothing inconsistent between this statement of things and that of James and Peter. We are as properly said to be "born again by the word of God," as we are said to be born into the world by means of our parents; yet as, in this case, the instrumentality of man was consistent with the inspiration of him "who quickeneth all things," and who, by an immediate though mysterious operation of his hand, *gave us life*; so I conceive it is in the other. The term "regeneration," in the sacred writings, is not always used in that strict sense in which we use it in theological discussion. Like almost every other term, it is sometimes used in a more strict and sometimes in a more general sense. Thus repentance is sometimes distinguished from faith; at other times, it comprehends the whole of that which is necessary to forgiveness, and must therefore comprehend believing. And thus regeneration is sometimes expressive of that operation in which the soul is passive; and in this sense stands distinguished from conversion, or actual turning to God by Jesus Christ. At other times, it includes not only the first impartation of spiritual life, but the whole of that change which denominates us Christians, or by which we are brought as into a new moral world. When

fulness of beauty carries in the nature of it *the sense of the heart*; or an effect and impression the soul is the subject of, as a substance possessed of taste, inclination, and will."

"There is a distinction to be made between a mere *notional understanding*, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and *the sense of the heart*, wherein the mind does not only *speculate* and *behold*, but *relishes* and *feels*. That sort of knowledge, by which a man has a sensible perception of amiableness and loathsomeness, or of sweetness and nauseousness, is not just the same sort of knowledge with that by which he knows what a triangle is and what a square is. The one is mere speculative knowledge, the other sensible knowledge, in which more than the mere intellect is concerned, the heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul, as a being that not only beholds, but has inclination, and is pleased or displeased. And yet there is the nature of instruction in it; as he that hath perceived the sweet taste of honey knows much more about it than he who has only looked upon and felt it."



the term is introduced as a *cause* of faith, or as that of which believing in Jesus is a proof, (as it is in John i. 12, 13, and 1 John v. 1,) we may be certain it stands distinguished from it; but when the same things are ascribed to it which peculiarly pertain to faith, we may be equally certain that it includes it. Thus we read of "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; *that, being justified* by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." If regeneration did not here include faith in Jesus Christ, it would not I conceive stand connected as it does with *justification*, which is peculiarly ascribed to faith.

Regeneration, taken in this large sense of the term, is undoubtedly "by the word of God." It is by means of this that a sinner is first convinced of sin, and by this, as exhibiting mercy through Jesus Christ, he is kept from despair. It is by this only that he can become acquainted with the character of the Being he has offended, the nature and demerit of sin, and the way in which he must be saved from it. These important truths, viewed with the eye of an enlightened conscience, frequently produce great effects upon the soul even previously to its yielding itself up to Christ. And the impartation of spiritual life, or a susceptibility of heart to receive the truth, may generally, if not always, *accompany* the representation of truth to the mind. It was while Paul was speaking that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. It is also allowed that when the word is received into the soul, and finds place there, it "worketh effectually," and becomes a principle of holy action, "a well of water springing up to everlasting life." All I contend for is *that it is not by means of a spiritual perception, or belief of the gospel, that the heart is for the first time effectually influenced towards God*; for spiritual perception and belief are represented as the *effects*, and not the *causes*, of such influence.

A spiritual perception of the glory of Divine things appears to be the first sensation of which the mind is conscious; but it is not the first operation of God upon it. Spiritual perception is that which the Scriptures call *αἰσθήσεις*, *judgment*, or *sense*, or *the judgment arising from holy sensibility*, Phil. i. 9. It is that in spiritual things which a delicate sense of propriety is in natural things, in which the mind judges as it were instinctively from a feeling of what is proper. It is by this "unction from the Holy One" that we perceive the glory of the Divine character, the evil of sin, and the lovely fitness of the Saviour; neither of which can be properly known by mere intellect, any more than the sweetness of honey or the bitterness of wormwood can be ascertained by the sight of the eye. Nor can one be perceived but in connexion with the other. Without a sense of the glory of the object offended, it is impossible to have any just perception of the evil nature of the offence; and without a sense of the evil nature of the offence, it is equally impossible to discern either the necessity or the fitness of a Saviour: but with such a sense of things, each naturally, and perhaps instantaneously, follows the other. Hence arise the exercises of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" and in the order in which the Scriptures represent them.

Much has been said of this statement of things, as involving the absurdity of a *godly unbeliever*. Scripture declarations and promises, expressive of the safety of the regenerate, have been urged, and a conclusion drawn, that if regeneration precede believing, men may be in a safe state without coming to Christ.\* It will be allowed, I suppose, that spiritual perception necessarily precedes believing, or that *seeing the Son* goes before *believing in him*;

\* Mr. Booth's *Glad Tidings*, &c., pp. 176, 180.

also that a belief of the doctrine of Christ precedes our coming to him for life, as much so as believing that God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, precedes coming to him. But it were as easy to produce a number of declarations and promises which express the safety of those who *know* Christ and believe his doctrine, as of those who are regenerate; and it might with equal propriety be said, There is but little, if any, occasion for those who *know* Christ to believe in him; or for those who believe his doctrine to come to him for eternal life, seeing they are already in a state of salvation.—The truth appears to be, these things are inseparable; and when promises are made to one, it is as connected with the other. The priority contended for is rather in order of nature than of time; or if it be the latter, it may be owing to the disadvantages under which the party may be placed as to the means of understanding the gospel. No sooner is the heart turned towards Christ than Christ is embraced. It is necessary that the evil humours of a jaundiced eye should be removed, before we can see things as they are; but no sooner are they removed than we see. And if there be a priority in order of time owing to the want of opportunity of knowing the truth; yet where a person embraces Christ so far as he has the means of knowing him, he is in effect a believer. The Bereans “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so: therefore,” it is said, “many of them believed.” And had they died while engaged in this noble pursuit, they would not have been treated as unbelievers. This principle, therefore, does not involve the absurdity of a *godly unbeliever*. But if its opposite be true, the absurdity of an *ungodly believer* must undoubtedly be admitted. Indeed, those who plead for it avow this consequence; for although they allow that none but believers are justified, yet they contend that at the time of justification the party is absolutely and in every sense ungodly; that is, he is at the same instant both a believer and an enemy of God!

I shall conclude with a reflection or two on the consequences of the principle I oppose, with respect to addressing the unconverted.

First, If the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness be given up, we shall not be in the practice of urging it on the unconverted. We shall imagine it will be leading souls astray to press it before and in order to believing; and afterwards it will be thought unnecessary; as all that is wanted will come of itself. Thus it will in effect be left out of our ministry; but whether in this case we can acquit ourselves of having deserted the examples, and of course the doctrine, of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, deserves our serious consideration.

Secondly, For the same reason that we give up the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness, we may give up *all* exhortations to things spiritually good as *means of salvation*. Instead of uniting with the sacred writers in calling upon the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to return to the Lord, that he may have mercy upon him, we shall consider it as tending to make them Pharisees. Indeed, Mr. M'L. seems prepared for this consequence. If I understand him, he does not approve of unconverted sinners being exhorted to *any thing spiritually good*, any otherwise than as holding up to them the language of the law for convincing them of sin. It is thus he answers the question, “Are unbelievers to be exhorted to obedience to God’s commandments?” referring us to the answer of our Lord to the young ruler, which directed him to keep the commandments if he would enter into life.\* It is easy to perceive that his scheme requires this construction of the exhortations of the Bible; for if he

\* Simple Truth, p. 21, Second Edition.

allow that sinners are called to the exercise of any thing spiritually good, *in order to their partaking of spiritual blessings*, he must give up his favourite notion of God's justifying men while in a state of enmity against him. True it is that all duty in some sort belongs to the law; considering it as the eternal standard of right and wrong, it requires the heart in every modification. Repentance, faith, and all holy exercises of the mind are in this sense required by it. But as a covenant of life it does not admit of repentance, and much less hold up the promise of forgiveness. When God says, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin," this is not the language of the law *as a covenant of life*. Mr. M'L. tells us, in the same page, that "there is no promise of life to the doing of any good thing, except *all* the commandments be kept." How then can the law as a covenant of life so much as admit of repentance, and much less hold up a hope that in case of it iniquity shall not be our ruin? The Scriptures exhort on this wise: "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—"Labour not for the meat that perisheth; but for that which endureth unto everlasting life."—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Is this the mere language of the law, and designed to suggest what they must do if they would be justified by the works of it?

It should seem that, if Mr. M'L. was called to visit a dying sinner, he would be careful not to use any such language as this; or if he did, it must be ironically, teaching him what he must do, on his own self-justifying principles, to gain eternal life. If he be serious, he has only to state to him what Christ has done upon the cross, and assure him that if he believes it, he is happy. Far be it from me that I should disapprove of an exhibition of the Saviour as the only foundation of hope to a dying sinner, or plead for such directions as fall short of believing in him. In both these particulars, I am persuaded Mr. M'L. is in the right, and that all those counsels to sinners which are adapted only to turn their attention to the workings of their own hearts, to their prayers, or their tears, and not to the blood of the cross, are delusive and dangerous. But does it follow that they are to be exhorted to nothing spiritually good unless it be for their conviction? Mr. M'L., to be consistent, must not seriously exhort a sinner to *come off* from those refuges of lies, to *renounce* all dependence on his prayers and tears, and to *rely upon Christ* alone as necessary to justification, lest he make him a Pharisee; for this would be the same thing as exhorting him to *humble himself*, and *submit himself to the righteousness of God*; exercises in which the mind is active, and which are spiritually good.

Why should we be wise above what is written? why scruple to address such a character in the language of inspiration?—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The sacred writers *warn* and *exhort* as well as *teach*. While they exhibit the Saviour, they expostulate, entreat, and persuade men to embrace him with all their hearts; and this without any apparent apprehensions of undermining the doctrine of free justification.

If it be said, The exercises included in the foregoing exhortations *imply faith*, I grant it. Without faith in Christ, neither repentance, nor any other

spiritual exercise, would be followed with forgiveness. Those who seek the Lord must be exhorted to seek him in the way in which he is to be found; those that *call upon him* must do so *in the name of Jesus*; the *way* and *thoughts* to be forsaken respect not merely a course of outward crimes, but the self-righteous schemes of the heart; and *returning to the Lord* is nothing less than returning home to God by Jesus Christ. But this does not prove that the exhortation, unless it be to teach them what they must do to be justified by a covenant of works, is improperly addressed to the unconverted. It is manifestly intended for no such purpose, but as a direction to obtain salvation.

The Scriptures sometimes give directions as to the way of our obtaining the remission of sins, and acceptance with God; and sometimes of being saved in general, or of obtaining everlasting life; and we ought to give the same. If they direct us to seek for pardon, it is by repentance;\* if for justification, it is by believing;† and if for eternal salvation, it is by a life of evangelical obedience.‡ When they speak of pardon, justification is supposed;§ and when they exhort to repentance in order to it, believing in the *name* of Jesus is supposed.|| On the other hand, when they speak of justification, they include forgiveness;¶ and when they exhort to believing in order to it, it is to such a believing as comprehends repentance.\*\*

Many of these directions, on the principle I oppose, must be omitted; but if they be, some of the most essential branches of the Christian ministry will be neglected.

\* Isa. lv. 6, 7; Acts viii. 22.

† Acts xiii. 39; Rom. iv. 4, 5; ix. 32.

‡ Rom. ii. 7; Heb. xi. 14.

§ Psal. xxxii. 1, 2, compared with Rom. iv. 6, 7.

|| Luke xv. 4, 7; Acts xiii. 38; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14.

¶ Rom. iv. 6, 7.

\*\* Mark i. 15; Matt. xxi. 32; Acts xvi. 31, compared with xx. 21; Luke xiii. 3.

A  
DEFENCE OF A TREATISE  
ENTITLED  
THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.  
CONTAINING  
A REPLY TO MR. BUTTON'S REMARKS  
AND  
THE OBSERVATIONS OF PHILANTHROPOS.

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.—JESUS CHRIST.  
By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.—PAUL.

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PREFACE.

THE prevalence of truth and righteousness is, doubtless, an object of great importance; nor is the former any less necessary to the latter than both are to the interests of mankind. If controversy is of any use, it is because it tends to bring truth to light. It too often unhappily falls out, however, that the parties themselves are not the first who are convinced by each other's reasonings; but, on the contrary, are as far, and perhaps farther, asunder when they leave off than when they began: this is not very difficult to be accounted for, though it is much to be lamented. Perhaps there are very few controversies wherein there is not room for mutual concessions. The backwardness so generally discovered to this by writers, and the determination that too commonly appears on both sides to maintain, at all events, their own principles, have given much disgust to many readers, and made them almost ready to despair of edification by reading controversy.

But though it must be granted that such conduct affords a just ground of disgust towards a writer, yet there is not the same reason for being disgusted with controversial writing. Whatever be the prejudices of the parties, and their rigid adherence to their own opinions, if a controversy is carried on with any good degree of judgment, truth is likely to come out between them; and what avails it on whose side it is found, if it is but found? The obstinacy of the writers is a sin, but it is a sin that belongs to themselves; the reader may get good, notwithstanding this, sufficient to repay him for all his trouble.

For my own part, I never imagined myself infallible. I all along thought that though at the time I could see no mistakes in the piece I had written, (if I had I should certainly have corrected them,) yet no doubt other people, who would look at it with different eyes from mine, would discern some; and I trust it has been my desire to lie open to instruction from every quarter. It would be the shame and folly of any man, especially of one of my years, to act otherwise.

I will not pretend to be free from that spirit which easily besets a person engaged in controversy: but thus much I can say, I have *endeavoured* to

read each of my opponents with a view to conviction; and it becomes me to acknowledge that I have not been altogether disappointed. There are some passages which, if I had the piece to write over again, I should expunge, and others which I should alter; I should endeavour, in some places, to be more explicit, and in others more upon my guard against every appearance of unkind reflection.\* There are also some lesser matters, which I shall acknowledge in their place. Justice requires me to say thus much; but as to the main sentiment endeavoured to be established, notwithstanding what has been written, I must say, it appears to me unshaken. If, in my judgment, *that* had been overthrown, the attention of the reader should not have been called upon by the present reply.

In the publications of both my opponents† I see different degrees of merit;

\* In a *second edition* of the publication to which Mr. F. refers these alterations were made; and the piece, as it appears in the present volume, is printed from the corrected edition.

† “*Both your opponents—but why not reply to Dr. WITHERS?*” Because his Letter appears to me to contain nothing like an answer to that against which it is written. The utmost I can gather, that looks any thing like evidence, may be summed up in a very small compass. “There can be no duty,” it is said, “without a voluntary compact. If a compact with God cannot be found on holy record—if it be evident that man is destitute of the powers essential to the existence of such a compact, it cannot be his duty to believe.”—pp. 21, 26. It might have been added with equal propriety—*nor to do any thing else which is enjoined him.* But I would ask, to whom are we *unprofitable* servants, as doing no more than our *duty*? To men, with whom we make compacts, or to God? If Dr. W.’s reasoning be just, it is not the *duty* of children to be subject to their parents.

Again, Men are not all bound to have an equal “number of ideas, to believe without evidence, examination, or beyond their natural capacities,”—pp. 40, 59, 73–76. This is very true; neither is there any thing in the treatise which Dr. W. has opposed that asserts the contrary.

I had said, if men are not obliged to approve of what God reveals, they may be right in disapproving it. Much is said to expose this to ridicule. It is said to be “either an *identical proposition*, or such an arbitrary combination of words as it seems will prove any thing,—pp. 85, 86. It is not the former, unless a negative and a positive idea are necessarily the same. Christ declared, saying, “*He that is not with me is against me.*” This is as much an identical proposition as that in question, and might be treated in the same manner. If there is any mistake in the argument, it must lie in my taking it for granted, upon Christ’s testimony just quoted, that though there is an evident difference between a negative and a positive idea, yet, *in this case*, the difference is not such as to admit a possibility of a medium. Every one knows *there are cases* in which a medium between ideas of that description may have place; as between my “not watching my neighbour’s house, and breaking it open.” In that case, it is not my duty to do either; but unless such a medium could be affirmed between *not* approving and *disapproving* of what God reveals, the argument still retains its force, and the syllogistical parade must appear to be only a play of words.

Dr. W. had given us reason to expect something very considerable against the distinction of *natural and moral inability*; but what does it all amount to? Why ability or inability is not, strictly speaking, predicable of the *will*, but of the *man*,—pp. 89, 90. I have looked over what I have written on that subject, and cannot find that I have any where predicated inability of the *will*, but of the *man*, through the *perversion of his will*. Be that, however, as it may, Dr. W.’s reasoning is of no force. An idle servant is enjoined a piece of labour; he replies, *I cannot do it*: he is told his inability lies in his *will*; he turns metaphysician, and gravely assures his master that inability is not predicable of the will, but of the man; and, therefore, insists upon it that he is blameless!

If Dr. W. means no more than this, that when the terms ability and inability are applied to the volitions of the mind, they are not used in a *literal*, but in a *figurative* sense, I do not know any person that will dispute what he says. At the same time it ought to be observed that these terms *are* applied to what depends upon the volitions of the mind, though it be in a figurative sense, and that both in Scripture and in common life. It is as common to say, of a person of a very covetous temper, that he is *incapable* of a generous action, as it is to say, of a person who has lost the use of his faculties, he is *incapable* of acting at all. And thus the Scriptures apply the terms. It is as expressly said of Joseph’s brethren that they *could not* speak peaceably to him, as it is said of Zacharias that he was dumb, and *could not* speak to the people, when he came out of the temple.

The ideas in these cases are really and essentially distinct; and so long as they continue to be expressed both in Scripture and in common conversation by the same word, if we would understand what we speak or write, a distinction concerning the nature of inability, amounting to what is usually meant by natural and moral, becomes absolutely necessary.

Dr. W., instead of overthrowing this sentiment, has undesignedly confirmed it; for though he can excuse a want of love to *God*, yet if any thing is directed against *himself*, the case

and for each of their persons and characters I feel a most sincere regard. I doubtless think them both beside the truth; and, I suppose, they may think the same of me. I desire to feel every degree of candour, towards all that differ from me, which a person ought to feel towards those whom he believes to be mistaken; and this, I think, should go to such a length as to entertain the most sincere good-will towards their persons, and to put the most favourable construction that can in justice be put upon their supposed mistakes. But after all, I believe truth to be important; and so long as I consider the belief of it to be every person's duty, according to his natural capacities and

is altered. Our Lord speaking of the *Pharisees*, and their blasphemous reproaches against him, says, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" Now, according to the theory of this writer, such an inability must sufficiently excuse them. But if a *Pharisee* speak evil of *him*, he is grievously provoked. Who these Pharisees are, and what they have said of Dr. W., I know not. I only ask, Is it not a pity but his philanthropy could excuse those who reproach *him*, as well as those who dishonour God?

Philanthropy\* is, doubtless, an amiable temper of mind, when regulated by rules of righteousness; but there is a sort of love which the language of inspiration deems *hatred*. If I were, merely as a member of civil society, to visit a number of convicts under a righteous sentence of death; and if, instead of persuading them of the goodness of the laws which they had violated, of the great evil of their conduct, and of the equity of their punishment, and conjuring them to justify their country, and sue for mercy;—if, I say, instead of this, I should go about to palliate their crimes, and assure them that the governor by whose laws they were condemned was the *author* of all their misfortunes—that though I believed some of them at least must certainly suffer, yet, I must acknowledge, I could see no *justice* in the affair, there being no proportion between the punishment and the crime—I might call myself a friend of mankind, and give what flattering titles I pleased to what I had been doing; but impartial spectators would deem me an enemy to truth and righteousness, an enemy to my country, yea, an enemy to the very persons whose cause I espoused.

But with the principles of Dr. W. I have no concern. There is reason to hope they are too undisguised to gain credit with serious minds. I am under no obligation to refute them; none, at least, at present. Before the sentiments of any writer are entitled to a refutation, it is requisite that he pay some regard, at least, to sobriety and truth.

Whether Dr. W. can acquit himself of *wilful and known falsehood*, I cannot tell; but this I know, he has, in very many instances, imputed *sentiments* to me of which I never thought, and *sentences* which never proceeded from my pen. The former might be imputed to *mistake*; and if there had been only an instance or two of the latter, charity might have overlooked them; but the number of gross misrepresentations is such as admits of no such construction.

Not to mention his exclamations of "punishment without guilt"—of "unmerited damnation," pp. 6, 7 (which seem to be his own sentiments rather than mine; as he believes, if I understand him, that men and devils will be eternally punished for that of which God is the *author*, (pp. 176, with 50, 55); not to mention these, I say, what could he think of himself, in taking such freedoms as the following? "You draw I know not what conclusions concerning *faith*. As though a generation of vipers had been perfectly holy, if the fulness of time had not given Jesus to his people,"—pp. 177, 178. "What combinations of deformity and weakness occur in many pious attempts to *spiritualize*, AS YOU PHRASE IT, the works of nature,"—p. 63. "To assert it to be the DUTY of all to believe that *they are of the fold of the heavenly Shepherd* is an impious absurdity,"—p. 95, note. "When you inform us that it is the duty of every man to believe that *HE is of the remnant of salvation*, you certainly are mistaken,"—p. 151. "Tremendous deformity of thought! To PERISH IF WE DO BELIEVE A LIE, TO BE DAMNED IF WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT!!!"—p. 153. "God cannot, you say, love any but his chosen, nor can *Omnipotence itself* make any but his chosen love him,"—p. 97. "You say that Omnipotence itself cannot make a man choose and delight in God,"—p. 181.

I should be glad to be informed in what pages, and in what lines, the above passages are to be found, and what authority Dr. W. had for these imputations.

In the last instance, it is true, he has referred us to the page; and there are some of the words, but nothing of the meaning, to be found in my treatise. What is there said is, that "Omnipotence itself cannot make THE FLESH choose and delight in God;" and what is there meant by the term *flesh* is sufficiently plain from other parts of the treatise.

It is possible this gentleman may exclaim, and multiply words, and pretend to infer the above passages from what I have advanced. I do not believe that any one of them can be fairly inferred from any thing I have written. But suppose he thinks they can; in order to acquit himself of falsehood, it is not enough that in his opinion they may be inferred from what I have said; they must be proved, the chief of them, to be MY WORDS, and all of them MY SENTIMENTS; and the places where they are to be found particularly specified. Any thing short of this will amount to an acknowledgment of the charge, and will require no further notice in a way of reply.

\* Alluding to the title of his book.

opportunities to understand it, I cannot subscribe to the innocence of error. God is the Governor of the mind as well as of the actions. He governs the former by rule as well as the latter; and all deviations from that rule must arise either from its not being sufficiently level to our capacities, or from inattention, prejudice, or some other criminal cause.

I am far from wishing, in any case, to impute blame to another, further than I am willing, on a similar supposition, to take it to myself. I am liable to err as well as others; but then I apprehend, so far as I do err, that it is owing to a want of diligence or impartiality, or to some such cause, which God forbid that I should ever vindicate by pronouncing it innocent!

If I am in error, in the sentiments here defended, it will be the part of candour in my opponents to allow that I sincerely believe what I write; but it would be a spurious kind of candour to acquit me of all blame in the affair. If I have erred, either God has not sufficiently revealed the thing in question, so as to make it level with my capacity, or else I have not searched after truth with that earnestness and impartiality which I ought.

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## REPLY TO MR. BUTTON.

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### SECTION I.

#### INTRODUCTION, GENERAL REMARKS, ETC.

WHEN the former treatise was published, I did not flatter myself with the thought of its meeting with no opposition. The sentiments there maintained I knew to be different from those of many whose characters I sincerely respected. I also knew they had the same right to examine as I had to advance. Any person, therefore, who might think me mistaken, and should be so disposed, was there invited to point out my mistakes; with the addition of only this single caution—that he would not only *call* them mistakes, but *prove* them such.

Mr. Button has accepted the invitation. He had a right to do so. He has “attempted,” he says, “not barely to call the sentiments he opposes by the name of mistakes, but to prove them such by solid, Scriptural evidence.” I have no objection to his attempt; but I do not think he has succeeded in it. The leading sentiments in the former treatise, which are charged as “mistakes,” still appear to me in the light of Scriptural and important truths. In defending them against Mr. B.’s exceptions, I hope I shall give him no just cause of offence. I am sure it is my desire to avoid every thing of a personal nature, and to attend simply to the inquiry, “What is truth?” Before we enter upon the subject, however, it will be proper to notice some other things. Although, in writing the pamphlet on which Mr. B. has animadverted, it was my study to avoid wounding the character, or misrepresenting the sentiments of any one, whether dead or living; yet if any thing therein be capable of such a construction, it becomes me to explain or retract it. Accordingly, I freely acknowledge that the passage alluded to in



my preface, if applied to the body of those from whom I differ, is too severe. I am happy to say, I consider neither Mr. B. on the one hand, nor Philanthropos on the other,\* (whatever be the tendency of their principles, if pursued in their consequences,) as deserving that censure. I did not mean it indiscriminately of all whose sentiments I opposed; and I suppose the world, by this time, does not want evidence that it is true of some of them.

While truth and justice require the above acknowledgment, there are several other charges to which they equally oblige me to plead Not guilty. I am accused (p. 4) of having made a personal attack upon Mr. Brine; but, I conceive, without any reason. I do not think I remembered, at the time of writing, that Mr. Brine had used such a mode of expression; nor are they the express words of any author, though it is a manner of speaking which has been too frequently used. However, suppose I had it in recollection, and purposely omitted the mentioning of any name, surely a censure passed upon a certain mode of speaking, though exemplified *nearly* in the words of some one author, is yet far enough off from a personal attack; and I should suppose the omission of the name would render it still farther.

Ought I to be accountable for it, if any persons have said that "this book will cure some of their Gillism and Brineism?"—Preface, p. v. I have a high opinion of the respectable characters alluded to. At the same time, the successors of these worthy men ought not to set them up as the standards of orthodoxy. In some things they differed from one another; and, on this subject, from almost all who had gone before them, from hundreds of men whom they loved, and whom they knew to be their equals in piety and respectability. Yea, in some parts of *this controversy*, they took different grounds. Though Mr. Brine maintained the argument from Adam's incapacity to believe, yet Dr. Gill, when contending with the Arminians, gave it up.† But they were great and upright men, and thought for themselves; and it is to be hoped that others may do the same.

Mr. B. blames me for desiring people to read my book, p. 6. I only desired they would read it before they condemned it. And what law is that which will condemn a man before it hears him?

I am accused (p. 103) of seeming to avail myself of the numbers I have on my side; but whoever reads my treatise will perceive that I there found my argument, not upon the number of those who have been on my side, but upon the great works which God has wrought by them. These all went forth in the use of "precepts, prohibitions, and promises," which the author of the *Further Inquiry*, whom I was there opposing, represents as irreconcilable with the covenant of grace.

Truth obliges me to repeat what I asserted, that the main objections against us originated with Arminius, or his followers. But I do not thereby insinuate, as Mr. B. (p. 75) says I do, "that all who oppose my ideas of faith are Arminians."

I speak with the greatest sincerity when I say I have a high esteem for Mr. B. and many others of his sentiments. I do not account them as adversaries, but as brethren in Christ, as fellow labourers in the gospel; and "could rejoice (as was said before) to spend my days in cordial friendship with them." The most cordial friendship, however, does not require us to suppress what we believe to be a part of our sacred commission, but rather to endeavour to *speak the truth in love*.

Having said thus much in my own defence, I shall now proceed to make a few *general* remarks upon Mr. B.'s publication.

\* Philanthropos also complained of this passage, p. 9.

† Cause of God and Truth, Part III. Chap. III. § 6.

In the first place, I think it cannot fairly be called an answer to my treatise, were there no other reason than that, although something is said concerning most of the leading topics in dispute, yet the main arguments under those topics are frequently left unnoticed. This will appear to any person who will inspect the contents of both performances, and compare what each has advanced under every topic.

Further, Mr. B. has taken great pains to prove a number of things which I never thought of denying. Thus he labours to convince us that faith is the gift of God, the effect of spiritual illumination; that the apostle, in 2 Thess. ii. 13, meant such a faith as is connected with sanctification of the Spirit (p. 12); that God has decreed only to punish for *sin*, for the breach of his commands (p. 88); that Christ's obedience was gloriously superior to that of Adam (p. 78); that human depravity shall not prove an absolute bar to an elect soul's believing (p. 60); that supreme love to God would not lead a heathen to embrace Christ in any sense, because Christ is not revealed even in an external manner,—p. 85. Since my sentiments are the same as Mr. B.'s, respecting these things, his labour in proving them seems to me to be lost.

The far greater part of Mr. B.'s *quotations* I heartily approve. They are in no wise contradictory to what I have advanced. Many others, particularly from Dr. Owen, which seem to be contrary, would be found otherwise if the connexion and scope were consulted. But it is easy to foresee that a particular discussion of this kind would lead off from the point in hand, and spin out the controversy to an unnecessary length. I shall, therefore, treat all that is said as if it were Mr. B.'s own, and no further attend to any quotations than as they contain argument which requires to be considered.\*

It seems to me that Mr. B. very frequently confounds the *thing* with the *cause* which produces it, and hereby loses himself and the argument in a maze of obscurity. This seems especially to be the case when he enters upon the subject of that *spiritual life* which we derive from Christ,—pp. 12,

\* I ought to observe, that although Calvin, Perkins, Goodwin, Owen, Charnock, Bunyan, M'Laurin and others, are amongst the number of Mr. B.'s authorities, they are all decidedly against him in the main point in debate. Indeed, I believe, no writer of eminence can be named, before the present century, who denied it to be the duty of men in general to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls.

I think Mr. Hussey was the first person who, by the general tenor of his writings, laid the foundation for this sentiment. And yet even Mr. Hussey did not, that I recollect, expressly avow it. On the contrary, he allowed it to be "the *duty* of those who were not effectually called to *hear spiritually*, and *open their hearts to Christ*; though, as he justly asserted, the preaching of this as their duty would not effect a *cure*."—*Operations of Grace*, p. 442.

Mr. Hussey was, doubtless, a man of considerable eminence, in some respects. Mr. Beart, in his *Eternal Law, and Everlasting Gospel*, I think has given as fair and as candid an account of his writings as could well be given. But Mr. Hussey, though in some respects a great man, was nevertheless possessed of that warm turn of mind which frequently misleads even the greatest of men, especially in defending a favourite sentiment.

Mr. Brine is the only writer of eminence who has expressly defended the sentiment. Dr. Gill took no active part in the controversy. It is allowed that the negative side of the question was his avowed sentiment, and this appears to be implied in the general tenor of his writings. At the same time, it cannot be denied that, when engaged in other controversies, he frequently argued in a manner favourable to our side; and his writings contain various concessions on this subject, which, if any one else had made them, would not be much to the satisfaction of our opposing brethren. However they may be inclined to represent us as verging towards Arminianism, it is certain that Dr. Gill, in his answer to Dr. Whitby, the noted Arminian, frequently makes use of our arguments; nor could he easily have gone through that work without them. (See his *Cause of God and Truth*, Part I. pp. 63, 69, 118, 159, 160, 165. Part II. pp. 88, 211, 215, 222, 226. First Edition.) And the very title of Mr. Brine's chief pamphlet against our sentiment, which he called *Motives to Love and Unity among Calvinists differing in Opinion*, as well as the most explicit acknowledgments therein contained, might teach those who pay any deference to his judgment not to claim to themselves the title of Calvinists exclusively.

28, 70, 91. If Mr. B. means that spiritual dispositions are not duties, considered as *under the idea of blessings*, that is what I have all along asserted. But if he mean that nothing can be our duty which is derived from Christ, and is a new-covenant blessing, then he not only asserts that which is irreconcilable with the prayers of the godly in all ages, (who have ever prayed for *grace* to perform what they acknowledged to be their *duty*;) but also contradicts his own sentiments. He allows that the principle of grace in believers is a conformity to the *law*, though not to the *law only*,—p. 68. Be it so: *so far*, then, as it is a conformity to the law, *so far* it was always incumbent upon us; and yet I hope Mr. B. will not deny that our conformity to the law is derived from Christ, is a new-covenant blessing, and is wrought in the believer's heart by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Whether I have been so unhappy as, at times, to express myself in a manner not sufficiently explicit, or whether Mr. B. has been wanting in calm and close attention; so it is, that he sometimes proceeds upon a total misunderstanding of the argument. This will appear to an attentive reader, if he please to compare pages 10, 11, of mine, with 12, 13, of his remarks; and 59, 60, with 54; also 131, with 89, concerning Adam.

The places are too numerous to recite wherein principles appear to me to be *assumed* instead of being proved, and conclusions to be drawn from premises which are themselves the very subject in debate. Thus we are told, "Pharaoh had an express *command* to let the people go;" therefore it was his duty to have complied,\*—p. 88. Very well; what then? Mr. B.'s meaning must be to add, "But there is no express command to believe in Christ; therefore," &c. I answer that this is begging the question. I suppose there *is* such a command; but whether there is or not, the contrary ought not to be taken for granted.

Mr. B. does not fail to make his own *reasonings* and *observations* in one place the data of his conclusions in another. Thus we are told, "There is no command for special faith, AS WE HAVE ENDEAVOURED TO PROVE; *therefore* no one shall be condemned for the want of it,"—p. 89. Again, in the same page, "Adam had not faith or any other spiritual disposition, AS I HAVE ALREADY OBSERVED, *therefore*," &c.—But passing general remarks, let us follow Mr. B. in what he has advanced under each of the particular topics in debate.

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## SECTION II.

### ON THE NATURE AND DEFINITION OF FAITH.

I HAVE the happiness to find Mr. B. agreeing with me that faith in Christ is not a persuasion of our interest in him. But though he agrees with me in this point, yet he is far from being satisfied with the definition I have given. He objects that it makes no mention of "supernatural illumination and assistance," (p. 12,) and proposes one that shall include those ideas. If, by this, he only means to maintain that the Holy Spirit is the sole *author*, or *cause* of faith, no one, I should think, who has read my former treatise, can entertain a doubt of my maintaining the same doctrine.

\* In no one case do the Scriptures speak so strongly of God's abandoning a man to the hardness of his own heart as in that of Pharaoh; yet the Lord God of the Hebrews said, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?" (Exod. x. 3,) plainly showing that the want of a better mind was no excuse for his refusal to obey.—R.

But though this is a truth which I verily believe, yet I must still be excused from thinking it necessary to a *definition*. Definitions are designed, I apprehend, to express the *nature*, and not the *causes*, of things. Thus, if *man* were to be defined a rational creature, created of God, the last part of the definition would be superfluous.

What Mr. B.'s ideas of faith are it is difficult to learn. Mr. Brine says, "Acting faith is no other than suitable thoughts of Christ and a hearty choice of him as God's appointed way of salvation;"\* and Mr. Button says, "I do think that every man is bound cordially to receive and heartily to approve of the gospel,"—p. 49. But it seems special faith is something distinct from all this; so distinct that this has "nothing to do" with it (p. 54); yea, so distinct that a person may do all this, and yet perish everlastingly. And yet it is not a believing of our interest in Christ; what then is it? Mr. B. tells us what is its *cause* and what are its *effects*; but what the thing *itself* is we have yet to learn.

Sometimes I think I can understand him, but I am soon again at a loss. "It is such a reception of the truth," says he, "as transforms the soul into the image of Christ,"—p. 49. Very well; then it seems it is a reception of the truth, after all; such a reception as is productive of real and transforming effects. This is the very thing for which I plead. Yes; "but a person may cordially receive the truth, and yet not be transformed into the image of Christ,"—p. 18. Indeed! Then how are we to distinguish true faith from that which is counterfeit or partial? According to this, there is no difference as to the thing itself, only a difference in its cause and effects.

But did not "Christ's hearers at Nazareth, and the stony-ground hearers, cordially receive the truth?"—p. 18. I answer, No; the latter did not *understand* it, (Matt. xiii. 23; I Cor. ii. 14,) and therefore could not cordially receive it; and as to the former, they gazed upon the Lord Jesus, and bare him witness "that he was right," as Dr. Gill says, "in applying Isaiah's prophecy to the Messiah, but not that he himself was the Messiah;" much less did they cordially receive his gospel. The Scripture declares, concerning the gospel, that if we confess it with the mouth, and *believe it in the heart*, we shall be saved; but it seems to me the tendency of Mr. B.'s reasoning is to prove the contrary.

But true faith "is such a belief as brings Christ into the soul: *that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*,"—p. 19. Answer: If by bringing Christ into the soul is meant his having the supreme place in our best affections, (which, I apprehend, is what the apostle intended in the passage referred to,) then what Mr. B. affirms is freely granted; nor is it in any way inconsistent with what he opposes.

"Ought sinners to realize truth," Mr. B. asks, "*so as to affect their own hearts*?"—p. 21. This, I suppose, he thinks is self-evident absurdity. He himself, however, allows it to be every man's duty to love God with *all his heart*; and when he shall inform me how this is to be done without the heart's being affected, I will answer the foregoing question. But is it "our duty to do that which God claims as his prerogative?" I answer, It is God's prerogative to write his law in the human heart; and yet every one ought to have that law within his heart, or, in other words, to love it with his whole soul. How strange it is that the same thing, in different respects, should be denied to be *God's gift* and *our obedience*! I sincerely wish Mr. B. had attentively considered the arguments which I quoted from Dr. Owen. Those arguments, doubtless, ought to have been solidly answered before any excla-

\* The reader may see a larger definition of faith in a letter from Mr. Brine to Mr. Ryland, of Warwick, in the Second Part of Serious Remarks on the Different Representations of Evangelical Doctrine, &c. by J. Ryland, of Bristol, pp. 13, 14.—R.

mations were made of the absurdity of making that the duty of men which it is God's own work effectually to produce.

"Devils and wicked men, it is said, believe the goodness of gospel blessings for *others*, though not for *themselves*,"—p. 17. By their believing them to be *good* for others, Mr. B. appears evidently to mean *advantageous* or *profitable*; and, in that sense, there is no doubt but what he says is true: that is no proof, however, that they believe in their real intrinsic *excellence* and *glory*. Cain believed the *advantage* which his brother Abel had in bringing a lamb for an offering, and hated him accordingly; but he did not believe his own condition as a sinner to be such as that his offering, being presented without respect to the Mediator, *deserved* to be rejected. Properly speaking, he did not believe in the *necessity* of a mediator, much less in the *fitness* and *glory* of such a way of approaching the Deity. The scriptures speak of those who believe not as *blind to the glory* of the gospel, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Whatever goodness wicked men believe to be in the blessings of the gospel, they do not believe the life and portion of the godly to be *so* good as, all things considered, to be preferred before their own.

Mr. B., it seems, thinks that "a man may pursue evil *as evil*,"—p. 23. In this I do not differ from him. Nay, I believe that unregenerate persons, without any exception, pursue evil as evil. If any ask me to explain my assertion, quoted by Mr. B., that "human nature cannot pursue evil as evil," I refer them to the note in the very same page whence the quotation is taken. Unregenerate men pursue evil as that which is agreeable to their sinful inclinations. In so doing they pursue it as a moral evil and as a natural good. He who pursues evil, considered as moral, acts against his conscience. This was the case with Felix in dismissing Paul. But no one pursues moral evil itself under the notion of its being *unlovely*. The instances Mr. B. has produced do not prove this. People do not take poison, or pursue death itself, under any other notion than that of its being a good. The Gentoo women, who voluntarily cast themselves into the fire at their husbands' death, are no more in love with death, for its *own sake*, than we are, but are struck either with the *honour* of so dying, or with the hope of being the happier hereafter. People are not guilty of suicide, but under the notion of its containing a sort of good. They consider it as adapted to release them from a burden which they conceive themselves unable to sustain, not considering what follows death in the world to come.

But does not every man "believe that he shall *die*? and yet does he act accordingly?"—p. 22. To this I reply, Death is more an object of *intuition* than of faith. If people did not *see* the death of their fellow creatures, and had no other evidence that they must die but the testimony of God, they would be as apt to disbelieve that as they are other things. And even as it is, if they realized death, *and what follows*, it would have an effect upon their spirit and life very different from what it has.

Mr. B. produces a number of *quotations* for the purpose of giving us a better definition of faith than that which he opposes,—p. 26. But some of these were never designed by their authors as definitions, but rather as *descriptions* of faith. Those of them which represent it as "such a believing of the testimony of God in the sacred Scriptures as, in a way of trust and dependence, to resign ourselves up to Jesus Christ," do not in any wise contradict what I have advanced. On the contrary, I should be very willing to let the above stand as a definition of faith. Nor have I any objection to have it prefaced with its being "a grace of the Holy Spirit," &c., excepting this, that it does not appear to me at all necessary to introduce the *author*, or *cause*, of any thing in a definition of that thing.

At the same time, I would not wish to contend about words. I therefore

acknowledge that it may be of use, when discoursing about faith in certain connexions, to speak of it in a more large or extensive meaning. That might be the case, for aught I know, with respect to some of Mr. B.'s authorities. But what if they had a mind to bring into their definitions the *cause* and the *effects* of faith? And if another, with a view to simplify the subject, define it merely by what it is in itself considered, without any design, however, of denying either cause or effect, does it follow that his definition must be defective?

Wherein does the definition of Coverdale, Ferrar, Hooper, Taylor, Philpot, Bradford, Crome, Sanders, Rogers, and Lawrence differ from mine, except in this, that they mean to define not only the thing itself, but its cause and effects? "It is," say they, "not only an opinion, but a certain *persuasion*, wrought by the Holy Ghost, which doth illuminate the mind and supple the heart to submit itself unfeignedly to God,"—p. 27. The thing *itself* they make to be neither more nor less than PERSUASION.

It never was my design to exclude the idea of *trust* or *confidence* in Christ. Whether that be of the essence of faith itself, or an effect which instantaneously follows, I always supposed them inseparable. It was before allowed that "it is in this large sense, including not only the belief of the truth, but the actual outgoing of the soul towards Jesus Christ in a way of *dependence* upon him, that faith in him is generally to be taken in the New Testament;" and it was in this sense that I undertook to prove it incumbent on men in general.

Those with whom I contend will allow it to be the duty of every one, where the gospel comes, to believe it. I knew this would be allowed, when I penned the former publication. My whole design, in the *first part*, was to reason upon *their own principles* with those who differ from me. They allow it to be every one's duty to believe the gospel. I therein endeavoured to prove that, in allowing this, they allow that to be the duty of men which is of the essence of special faith. The arguments used in proof of this have not, I think, been overthrown. I therefore earnestly entreat Mr. B., and those of his sentiments, to consider attentively the following questions: Can any person truly believe the gospel, and yet perish everlastingly? and can those scriptures which were produced before, in proof of the contrary,\* be fairly explained upon such a supposition?

Mr. B. thinks I have mistaken the meaning of John iii. 36, and 1 John v. 20, where I suppose a believing *on Christ*, and a *not believing Christ*, are spoken of as *opposites*, in such a way as implies that there is no medium between them. Mr. B. thinks, it seems, that they are not opposites,—p. 24. According to what he has said, the criterion of true faith lies in the terms *in* or *on*; for he observes that "it is not said, He that believeth not *on* the Son, &c. No: it is not for the want of *special faith* he is condemned, but because he believes not what he says,"—p. 25. To this I answer—First, The term *on* is used to express such a faith as is not connected with salvation, John xii. 42. Secondly, Suppose it were otherwise, and the phrase believing *on* Christ were to be the criterion of special faith, this would make against Mr. B. rather than for him. For it is said of the unbelieving Jews, that "though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not *on him*" (John xii. 37); plainly intimating that they had such evidence as *ought* to have induced them to believe *on* him. On the other hand, Christ says, the Spirit shall reprove the world of *sin*, because they believe not *on* me. And, contrary to what Mr. B. asserts, men are expressly said to be "condemned,

\* 1 John v. 1; Mark xvi. 16; Rom. x. 9; Acts viii. 37. See the Scriptures urged in my former treatise.

because they believe not *on* the name of the only-begotten Son of God," John iii. 18.

Mr. B., before he concludes his Fourth Letter, throws in one argument against faith being a duty: "If," says he, "this faith be the duty of man, and is required by the law, it is then undoubtedly a *work*; and when the apostle says, 'By grace ye are saved through faith,' we must consider him as joining grace and works together,"—p. 29. To this it is replied, Every thing required by the law, I should think, is not a *work*. That sacred standard of right and wrong requires a holy state of mind as well as the exercises of it. But supposing it *is* a work, does not Mr. B. maintain the same? Only a few pages back, he quoted several definitions of faith from certain eminent divines; most of whom speak of it as a *coming* to Christ, a *trusting* in him for salvation. Now is not this a *work*, or *exercise*, of the mind? And yet we are saved by *grace* notwithstanding; for God does not save us out of regard to faith as our act, but on account of him in whom it terminates.

A poor invalid, who derives his subsistence wholly from the public, may be said, with the greatest propriety, to live, not by his own works, but upon the generosity of others. This, however, does not imply that he is not *active* in his applications for relief; or that every such application may not, in some sense, be called a *work*. Yet it plainly appears he does not live upon his applications, considered as *acts*, or *exercises*, but upon what, through those means, he freely receives; and it would be contrary to the common use of language to say that he lived partly by grace and partly by works.

Before I conclude this section, it may not be amiss to drop a few additional thoughts concerning the defining of faith; these, however, have no immediate reference to Mr. B., but are merely added with a view, if it might be, to throw some further light upon the subject.

I. Faith, in its most general sense, signifies a credit of *some testimony*, whether that testimony be true or false.

II. When we speak of the *faith of the gospel* as a belief of the *truth*, it is not to be understood of *all kinds* of truth, nor even of all kinds of *Scripture* truth. A true believer, so far as he understands it, *does* believe all Scripture truth; and to discredit any one truth of the Bible, knowing it to be such, is a damning sin; but yet it is not the credit of a chronological or historical fact, for instance, that denominates any one a true believer. The peculiar truth, by embracing of which we become believers in Christ, is *the gospel*, or the *good news* of salvation through his name. The belief of this *implies* the belief of other truths; such as the goodness of God's government, as the Lawgiver of the world; the evil of sin; our lost and ruined condition by it; our utter insufficiency to help ourselves, &c.; but it is the soul's embracing, or falling in with, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, that peculiarly denominates us true believers.

III. True faith *includes a spiritual understanding* of the glory of the gospel, but it includes *something more*. It does not appear to me to have its seat barely in the understanding, but in the whole soul. It is the whole soul's yielding up its own false notions and dependences, and falling in with God's way of salvation by Jesus Christ. By a spiritual discernment of the glory of the gospel we *see the Son*; and by the whole soul's concurring with it we *believe in him*. It is with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness. If it is said, The *heart* here is not opposed to the understanding, but to the *mouth*, with which confession is made unto salvation, I answer, This is true; then neither is it used, I apprehend, for the understanding, to the exclusion of the affections, but for the whole soul, in distinction from the mouth, by which our faith is openly professed.

IV. Though, as I attempted to prove in my former treatise, true faith does

not include an *assurance* of our interest in Christ, yet it is ever attended with an *application* of the truths of the gospel to our own particular cases. "When the Scriptures teach," says the excellent Mr. Downname, "we are to receive instruction, for the enlightening of our own mind; when they admonish, we are to take warning; when they reprove, we are to be checked; when they comfort, we are to be cheered and encouraged; when they commend any grace, we are to desire and embrace it; when they command any duty, we are to hold ourselves enjoined to do it; when they promise, we are to hope; when they threaten, we are to be terrified, as if the judgment were denounced against us; and when they forbid any sin, we are to think that they forbid it unto us. By which application we shall make all the rich treasures contained in the Scriptures wholly our own, and in such a powerful and peculiar manner enjoy the fruit and benefit of them, as if they had been wholly written for us, and for none other else besides us."—*Guide to Godliness*, p. 647.

These observations may be considered as an addition to what was written before; and I believe they will be found to be perfectly consistent with it.

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### SECTION III.

REPLY TO MR. B.'S FIFTH AND SIXTH LETTERS, WHEREIN HE REMARKS ON THOSE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHERE FAITH IS SUPPOSED TO BE COMMANDED OF GOD.

To prove that faith in Christ is the duty of unconverted sinners, divers passages of Scripture were produced, which represent it as the *command* of God. In answer to these, Mr. B. observes, in general, that commands are sometimes used which do not imply duty, but denote some extraordinary exertion of Divine power, as when God said to the Israelitish nation, "*Live,*" &c.,—p. 31. But are the commands in question to be so understood? Mr. B. does not pretend to say any such thing. He adds,

"Commands sometimes denote *encouragement*; as in Isa. li. 17, 'Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem,' &c.; Acts xvi., 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;' and John xiv. 1, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me,'—p. 32. Very true; but do they denote *merely* encouragement? Can the idea of duty be excluded? Was it not the duty of the Jews, for instance, when Babylon fell into the hands of Cyrus, and a proclamation was issued in their favour, to bestir themselves? Would it not have been their sin to have neglected the opportunity, and continued careless in Babylon? Was it not the duty of the jailer to follow the apostle's counsel? and would it not have been sinful to have done otherwise? Was it not the duty of the disciples to place an equal confidence in the testimony of Christ as in that of the Father? and would it not have been sinful to have distrusted him? "These passages," says Mr. B., "do not appear *so much* to carry in them the nature of injunctions as of directions and encouragements." But do they carry in them the nature of injunctions *at all*? or can that idea be excluded from them? It seems, he himself thinks it cannot, or he would not have so expressed himself.

Mr. B. now proceeds to consider the particular passages produced. He remarks, on the second Psalm, that "kissing sometimes denotes no more than civil homage and subjection; as in 1 Sam. x. 1, where we are told that Samuel anointed Saul, and *kissed* him; which was not, I presume," says he,



“a spiritual act, but nothing more than a token of allegiance, loyalty, &c.”—p. 34. I think with him the case of Samuel’s kissing Saul serves for a fine illustration of the passage;\* and if Christ had been a *civil governor*, and *nothing else*, then it is allowed that civil homage, subjection, and loyalty would have been the whole of his due; but not otherwise. According to the nature of his government must be the kind of subjection required. If Christ’s kingdom had been of this world, or somewhat like what the Jews expected it to be, such an exposition as the above might be admitted; but if his government be *spiritual*, then subjection and loyalty to him must be the same.

The comment on Jer. vi. 16 (p. 35) I think needs but little reply. It may deserve to be considered whether, if the people there addressed had been of Mr. B.’s sentiments, they might not have found some more plausible and less mortifying answer than that which they were obliged to give. Surely they might have replied, “Stand in the ways, and *see!*” we have not a capacity for spiritual *discernment*. “Ask for the good old way, and *walk* therein!” it was never *discovered* to us. All that we are obliged to is diligently to attend public ordinances, and this we have done from our youth up; what more would the prophet have?—But these were sentiments, it seems, of which they had never heard. They were obliged, therefore, to speak out the honest, though awful truth, “WE WILL NOT WALK THEREIN.”

John xii. 36, “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.” “These,” it is said, “are evidently words of direction to inquiring people,”—p. 37. That they were inquiring people, is true; but not such as inquired from any thing of a right spirit, which is what Mr. B. must mean to suggest. They are called *the people* (ver. 34) in distinction from the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus;† and it immediately follows what sort of people they were: “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart,” &c.

Lest the foregoing remark should not suffice, it is supposed that the passage may speak only of such a believing as falls short of special faith,—p. 38. But unless it can be proved that the phrase *children of light* is ever used of any but true believers, this supposition is inadmissible.

Mr. B. speaks frequently of Christ’s addresses being by way of “*ministerial direction*.” Be it so: I do not see how this alters the case, unless we could suppose that Christ, as a preacher, *directed* people to a way in which it was not their duty to walk. In short, if there were not another passage in the Bible besides the above, that were, in my opinion, sufficient to prove the point contested.

John vi. 29, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” From the connexion of this passage it was observed that the phrase *work of God* could not be understood of a work which God should *work* in them, but of a work which he *required* of them.‡ Mr. B., however, takes it in the first sense, and thinks it “very clear and plain, from the whole context, that this special faith is no duty,” p. 41. To which I only say, that

\* See Dr. Jenning’s *Antiquities*, Vol. I.

† See Dr. Gill on verse 34.

‡ The reader is desired to observe, I never denied, but constantly maintained, that faith, wherever it exists, *is* the effect of Divine influence; as is every thing else in us which is truly good; but I as well maintain that it is man’s duty, and that *this* passage means the latter, and not the former.

which appears so *plain* to Mr. Button, did not appear so to Mr. Brine. Mr. Brine, it seems, felt difficulties where Mr. Button feels none. Though he agrees with Mr. Button that special faith is not a duty, yet he undoubtedly felt a difficulty in the passage in question. He felt the force of that remark, that the meaning of the answer must be determined by that of the question; and he did not suppose, when they asked, What shall we do that we may work the works of God? that they were inquiring what they must do that they might work such works as were peculiar to an arm of Omnipotence.

Mr. Brine, therefore, never pretended to understand it of a work which should be *wrought* in them, but of "an ACT ACCEPTABLE AND PLEASING TO GOD."—*Motives, &c.*, p. 42.

Dr. Gill, in his *Cause of God and Truth*, (Part I. p. 154,) understands the passage as speaking of such a faith as is not connected with salvation. Mr. Brine never pretended to this, but allows it to speak of special faith. The Doctor, however, does not suppose that the *work of God* means a work that was to be wrought in them, but a work that was required of them. He there explains it, not of an operation of God, but of what was enjoined by his "*will and commandment.*"

But Mr. Button thinks it "strange, if faith in Christ were the *first* great duty incumbent upon them, that they should *first* be directed to labour for that which should endure to everlasting life, as they were in verse 27,"—p. 40. It is replied, Labouring for that which should endure to everlasting life *includes* faith in Christ, that being the only way in which eternal life can be obtained; and it is no unusual thing first to lay down a *general* direction, and then proceed to that which is more *particular*.

John v. 23, It is the Father's will "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." As Mr. B. has not thought proper to answer what was advanced from this passage, it need only be replied, that, according to his sense of it, Christ ought to be honoured in one character, but not in another,—p. 42.

As to what is said of Isaiah lv. 6, (the seventh verse, I observe, is passed over,) that "Arminians have quoted it," (p. 42,) what is that to the purpose? It has some meaning; and one should suppose that their quoting it has not destroyed that meaning. Mr. B. must excuse me in not being satisfied with a *part* of an exposition upon it from Dr. Gill. The whole of the Doctor's words, I observe, are not quoted. *Abundant pardon* was never promised to such an attendance as this quotation makes to be their duty.

Simon Magus was exhorted to pray for *the pardon of sin*. Mr. B. asks, "Who denies it?"—p. 43. I answer, Many, who deny that faith is the duty of the unregenerate, deny that it is their duty to pray at all; and especially to pray for *spiritual blessings*, such as the forgiveness of sin. I rejoice, however, that Mr. B. is not of that sentiment.

But it was asked, In *whose name* ought Simon to have prayed for that blessing? To this we have received no answer. It was likewise asked whether spiritual blessings ought to be sought in the only way in which they can be found, or in any other. In answer to this, we are told "they may be sought after in the use of means without special faith; and that is all which is here exhorted to." Is Mr. B. sure of that? If so, Simon was barely exhorted to do as Cain did,—to bring an offering without respect had to the great atonement for acceptance,—to do that by which it was impossible to please God. After all, are we to understand Mr. B. that sinners ought not to seek spiritual blessings *in the name of Christ*, but *in some other way*? Surely he will not affirm this, and yet I do not see how he can avoid it.

But we are told that Simon was not exhorted to "find or get pardon of sin, but to pray for it." This is true, but not to the purpose. Faith in Christ

is not the finding or getting of pardon, but the *means* of obtaining it. We *come* to Christ that we may have *life*. The one is the way in which we find or enjoy the other. This is further confirmed by the passage which we shall next consider.

Rom. ix. 31, 32, "Because they sought it not by faith," &c. "By faith is here meant," says Mr. B., "not the grace, but the doctrine of faith, the gospel, as appears clearly by its being opposed to the *law*,"—p. 43. Suppose it were so, seeking righteousness by the gospel, in opposition to the law, would amount to the same thing as the other. But this is not the case: faith is not here opposed to the *law*, but to the *works* of the law; and is, therefore, here to be understood of the right way of seeking righteousness, which is *in the name of Christ*.

Concerning those passages which exhort men to put their *trust* in the Lord, Mr. B. remarks that "trust is a natural duty; but what," he asks, "has this to do with evangelical trust?"—p. 44. Why did he not answer what was said on that subject? Why did he pass over that dilemma? As to what he says on the fourth Psalm, that the persons there addressed were "good men," (p. 45,) it is replied, They certainly were wicked who are addressed in the second verse; and there is no notice given, in any part of the Psalm, of a change of person. To understand *sacrifices of righteousness* of sacrifices *righteously obtained* appears to me to be putting a low sense upon the phrase, and what I think is not at all countenanced by similar phraseology in Scripture. The same mode of speaking occurs in Deut. xxxiii. 19, and in Psal. li. 19, neither of which passages can well be thought to mean barely that the sacrifices should not be obtained by robbery.

Mr. B. thinks, it seems, that the declaration, "Whosoever will let him come," is not indefinite, but limited, and so is not a warrant for any sinner to come to Jesus Christ. "All," says he, "have not a *will*; therefore it is not a warrant for every man,"—p. 46. That multitudes of men are unwilling to forego self-will, self-conceit, and self-righteousness, and to venture their souls wholly upon the Lord Jesus, is a melancholy fact; but to conclude *thence* that they have no warrant so to do is a very extraordinary species of reasoning. If "whosoever will let him come" be not an indefinite mode of expression, Mr. B. should have pointed out what sort of language should have been used for such a purpose.

A generous benefactor, in the hard season of the year, procures a quantity of provision to be distributed amongst the poor of a country village. He orders public notice to be given that EVERY POOR MAN WHO IS WILLING TO RECEIVE IT SHALL IN NO WISE MEET WITH A REFUSAL. A number of the inhabitants, however, are not only poor, but proud, and *cannot* find in their hearts to unite with the miserable throng in receiving an alms. Query, Would it be just for such inhabitants to allege that they had no *warrant* to apply, or that the declaration was limited, seeing it extended only to such as were *willing*; and, for their parts, they were *unwilling*? If it were expedient to give such objectors a serious answer, they might be asked, In what language could the donor have expressed himself to have rendered this declaration more indefinite?

If it is insisted that, to make an invitation indefinite, it should be addressed to men simply *as sinners*, it is replied, If that would put the matter out of doubt, the Scripture is not wanting in that mode of speaking any more than in the other: "Hearken unto me, ye *stout-hearted and far from righteousness*. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry." "Let the *wicked* forsake his way, and the *unrighteous man* his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy

upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." For other passages to the same purpose, I ask leave to refer to the former treatise.

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#### SECTION IV.

REPLY TO MR. B.'S SEVENTH LETTER, ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF MEN TO EMBRACE WHATEVER GOD REVEALS.—HIS CHARGE OF ILLIBERALITY, &c. &c.

It was observed, in my former publication, that every man was bound cordially to receive, and heartily to approve whatever God reveals. A definition of faith was also quoted from Mr. Brine, wherein he says, "Acting faith is no other than suitable thoughts of Christ, and a hearty choice of him as God's appointed way of salvation." And thence it was argued, that if faith was not incumbent on men in general, then they were right in not thinking suitably of Christ, &c.

Mr. B. here expresses his "astonishment," and without hesitation charges me with "illiberality,"—p. 48. To this I answer, I apprehended this to be a *consequence* naturally arising from the sentiments I opposed; but never imagined that they who imbibed these sentiments *held* or *asserted* this consequence: yet as Paul urged the *consequences* of denying the resurrection, in order to show the erroneousness of the premises from which those consequences followed, I apprehended I might do the same. Such a mode of reasoning is universally practised by both inspired and uninspired writers. The Corinthians might have charged the apostle with illiberality, and have had, for aught I see, as good reason for so doing as Mr. B. had for charging it upon me. He had said, "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." They might have exclaimed against these consequences, and said of him who urged them, He *knows* these are sentiments which we never asserted, or even imagined.

Mr. B., instead of exclaiming in this sort, should have *invalidated* those consequences, but this he has not attempted; and unless he will maintain it to be men's duty to *stand neuter*, (which our Lord declared to be impossible,) and neither think nor choose at all in the affair, I do not see how they can be fairly removed. The difficulty stands thus: "If true faith is no other than suitable thoughts of Christ, and a hearty choice of him as God's appointed way of salvation," as Mr. Brine affirms, then it is either men's duty to think suitably of Christ, or it is not; to choose him as God's appointed way of salvation or not. If it is, the point is given up; if it is not, then it must be *right* in them either not to think suitably of Christ, or not to think at all; either to choose some other way of salvation, or not to choose at all.

It is not sufficient for Mr. B. to allege that he *disclaims* these sentiments; that he allows an opposition to God's way of salvation to be sinful: I *know* he does, and it is with pleasure I acknowledge it: but the question is, Is he herein *consistent with himself*? The Corinthians could have said the same in respect of *Christ not being raised*; none of them thought of asserting that, though they asserted what must necessarily infer it. If it is men's *sin* to oppose and reject the Lord Jesus Christ, it must be their duty to choose and accept him, or else to stand neuter, and so be neither for him nor against him.

Much the same might be said in reply to what Mr. B. frequently speaks

of as due to the gospel, viz. "a veneration for it." This veneration either amounts to a hearty *choice* of Christ as God's appointed way of salvation—to a being on *his side*—or it does not. If it does, this implies special faith; for to *choose* that way is the same thing as to be *willing* to be saved in that way (which Mr. B. allows is the case with no unregenerate man); and to be on *Christ's side* is the same thing as to be a real Christian. If it does not, then I should be glad to know what sort of a veneration for the gospel that must be which can consist with an *unwillingness* to fall in with its grand designs, and a reigning *aversion* from its great Author and Object?

What Mr. B. says (p. 49) of "peace being made," and "the work being done," is a great and glorious truth, on which depends all my salvation and all my desire. I rejoice with him in the doctrines of everlasting love and the eternal settlements of grace. But as the covenant between the Father and the Son before time does not supersede a believer's actually covenanting with God in time,\* so neither, as I apprehend, does peace being made by the blood of Christ's cross supersede a peace taking place between God and us on our believing. God, as the Lawgiver of the world, is represented as "angry with the wicked every day." Every unbeliever is said to be under "condemnation;" he is "under the law," as a covenant of works; and being of the works of the law, he is under the *curse*. On the contrary, those who believe in Christ are "not under the law, but under grace;" their sins are "forgiven" for Jesus' sake; there is no "condemnation" to them; God is represented as being *pacified* towards them for all that they have done against him.† This pacification, however, is not founded upon their faith, or returning to God; but upon the atonement of Christ, in which their faith terminates: hence, though they are said, being justified by faith, to have *peace* with God; yet it is "through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When I spake of the gospel's "publishing a way wherein God can and will make peace with sinners on terms infinitely honourable to himself," &c., I had no respect to *terms* and *conditions*, to be performed by us, that should entitle us to blessings annexed to such performance. My meaning was rather this, that Christ having obeyed the law and endured the curse, and so fulfilled the *terms* of his eternal engagement, God can in a way honourable to all his perfections pardon and receive the most guilty sinner that shall return to him in Christ's name.

In respect of *terms* and *conditions*, as applied to faith in Christ, though I believe such faith to be incumbent on men in general, yet, properly speaking, I do not suppose either that or any thing else in us to be the condition of salvation; unless by condition is barely meant *that to which the promise of salvation is made*, and *without which we cannot be saved*. In this sense I should have no objection to its being so called; and I should think Mr. B. could have none, any more than myself. But as it is a term liable to abuse, and apt to convey very different sentiments, I had rather express my ideas in other language than go about to qualify it by an explanation.

Dr. Owen does not reject the word *condition*, but puts an explanation upon it suited to his sentiments. "It is the appointment of the Lord," says he, "that there should be such a connexion and coherence between the things purchased for us by Jesus Christ, that the one should be a means and way of attaining the other; the one the *condition*, and the other the thing promised upon that condition; but both equally and alike *procured for us by Jesus Christ*; for if either be omitted in his purchase, the other would be

\* See Jer. l. 5; Isa. xliv. 5.

† Psal. vii. 11; John iii. 18; Gal. iii. 10; Rom. vi. 14; 1 John ii. 12; Rom. viii. 1; Ezek. lvi. 66; Rom. v. 1.

vain and fruitless.”—*Death of Death*, Book II. Chap. I.\* Whatever words may be used, I know of no difference in this matter between Dr. Owen’s sentiments and my own.

That the gospel is an *embassy of peace*, addressed to sinners indefinitely, and that any sinner whatever has a warrant to apply to the Saviour, and a promise of acceptance on his application, is evident from the whole current of Scripture. To oppose Arminianism by the denial of this well-known truth must be an unsuccessful attempt. Instead of destroying, it is the most effectual method to establish it. No Arminian, so long as he has a Bible in his hand, can ever be persuaded that the language of Scripture exhortations to repentance and faith in Christ is not indefinite. If, then, his system is acknowledged to stand or fall with the universality of such exhortations, he will not desire a greater concession. He is well satisfied of this, that if general invitations speak the language of Arminianism, the Bible must be written upon Arminian principles. Such a concession, therefore, tends to confirm him in his sentiments; and, I believe, such a way of speaking and writing amongst the Calvinists has been more than a little advantageous to the Arminian cause.

God gathers his elect out of mankind by a gospel equally addressed to one man as to another. No one, on his first application to Christ, comes to him considering himself as an elect person, or as having any peculiar privilege belonging to him above the rest of mankind; but every such person applies to Christ merely as a poor, guilty, self-ruined sinner; and if the gospel did not speak an indefinite language to sinners, considered as such, he could have no hope. If it is said, Yes; he feels himself a sensible *sinner*, and so considers himself as hereby warranted to apply for mercy: I answer, This is supposing that a person may have solid evidence to conclude himself elected before he has believed in Christ; that is, while he is an unbeliever; than which nothing surely can be more unscriptural and dangerous. The heart of every man who has heard the gospel either does, or does not, fall in with God’s way of salvation by Jesus Christ. If it does, he is a believer; if it does not, he is an unbeliever, and has no revealed warrant to conclude himself an object of Divine favour. A being *sensible* of our guilty and lost condition is absolutely necessary to an application to the Saviour; not, however, as affording us a *warrant* to come to Christ, but as being necessary to the act itself of coming. A right spirit does not give us a warrant to do a right action; but it is essential to our compliance with the warrant which we already have.

Mr. B. thinks I have given a wrong sense to 2 Cor. v. Suppose it should be so, I apprehend the weight of the proposition does not rest upon that passage. I am not convinced, however, by what has been said concerning it; but enough has been said upon that part. If the reader choose carefully to look over the 4th, 5th, and 6th chapters of that Epistle, and to compare what each of us has said upon it, he may be better enabled thereby to judge of the meaning than by any thing that can be further advanced upon the subject.

Mr. B. thinks that “faith itself is not called *obedience*, but that obedience is the *fruit* of faith,”—p. 53. That faith is productive of obedience is

\*See also Dr. Owen on Heb. viii. 10. Vol. III. p. 269. “Unto a full and complete interest in all the promises of the covenant, faith on our part, from which evangelical repentance is inseparable, is required. But whereas these also are wrought in us by virtue of that promise and grace which are absolute, it is a mere strife about words to contend whether they may be called conditions or no. Let it be granted, on the *one* hand, that we cannot have an actual participation of the relative grace of this covenant, in adoption and justification, without faith or believing; and, on the *other*, that this faith is wrought in us, given unto us, bestowed upon us, by that grace of the covenant which depends on no condition *in us*, as unto its discriminating administration; and I shall not concern myself what men will call it.”—R.

readily allowed; but I also apprehend that faith itself is so called. Unbelief, in our first parent, was the root of all the evil which followed after it; yet unbelief was itself an evil: so it is supposed that faith is not only the root of evangelical obedience, but is an instance of obedience itself. These thoughts are founded upon such phrases as "obeying the truth," "obeying the gospel," &c.,\* which, I suppose, mean a real believing it, and falling in with its grand designs.

These passages were quoted before, to which Mr. B. makes no other reply than by barely asserting that "they none of them prove faith to be an act of obedience, but only show that obedience is the fruit of faith,"—p. 53. Obeying the gospel, in Rom. x. 16, is supposed by the inspired penman to be of similar import with *believing its report*; but it will hardly be said that believing the gospel report is not faith itself, but a fruit of it. "The passage," Mr. B. adds, "in Rom. i. 5, 'By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith,' must I think, to every common understanding, clearly appear to point out the grand design of the gospel ministry, which is, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, to bring men to obedience to Christ the object of faith, and to the doctrine of faith." Very true; and we apprehend that faith in the doctrine is that obedience which is required to the doctrine of faith; and that a rejecting of every rival and false confidence, and a being willing to receive Christ, that he may teach, save, and rule us in his own way, is that obedience which is due to him.

Obedience to the gospel, and disobedience to it, are doubtless to be considered as *opposites*. The former is true special faith, having the promise of eternal salvation, Heb. v. 9; the latter, therefore, cannot mean, as Mr. B. explains it, (p. 54,) the want of merely such a reverential regard to the gospel as a man may have, and yet perish everlastingly.

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## SECTION V.

REPLY TO MR. B.'S EIGHTH LETTER, ON THE CAUSES TO WHICH THE WANT OF FAITH IS ASCRIBED.

Mr. B. here commences a new mode of opposition. Instead of an answer to those scriptures which were produced to prove that *ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion from God*, are assigned as the causes of men's not believing, he has presented us with some other parts of Scripture, which he thinks ascribe it to other causes. Such a method of reasoning, I should think, can have but little tendency to convince a serious inquirer after truth. It will be natural for such an inquirer to say, supposing Mr. B. to have proved what he has undertaken, namely, that the want of faith is to be ascribed to the sovereign will of God, and that alone, what are we to do with those scriptures which ascribe it to other causes?

One passage of Scripture under this head is entirely passed over, (Luke vii. 29, 30,) a passage too that was particularly recommended to the attention of the Baptists; and a number of others are but very slightly touched. All the answer that I can find to what was advanced on this part of my treatise is included in the following passage: "That human depravity, that ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, aversion to God, and the like, often prevent a sinner's *attending to the gospel*, (which the Holy Spirit useth as a means to

\* Rom. x. 16; vi. 17.

convey faith into the hearts of his people, for faith cometh by hearing, Rom. x. 17,) and that these things are of a criminal nature is certain; but what then? Does this prove faith a duty? and the want of it a sin for which man shall be damned? By no means: so far as human depravity prevails man is criminal; and the things aforementioned prevailing are certain *evidences* of the person's being destitute of special faith: but to say that these things are an *absolute bar to faith*, as Mr. F. does, is a great mistake; neither these things, nor a thousand worse things, if worse can be named, shall be an *absolute bar* to any elect soul's believing,"—pp. 59, 60.

To this it is replied, If the reader please to review my treatise, he will instantly perceive that I was speaking of what was a bar to *men's believing*, not to *God's causing them to believe*. Christ did not say, how can *God cause you to believe*, who receive honour one of another? but "how can ye believe?" It is granted that *with God* all things are possible: but if the pride and aversion of men's hearts be that which renders believing impossible to *them*, that is sufficient to decide the question in hand; and this was certainly the whole of my design. In the very page before that in which is the passage to which Mr. B. objects, I had said, "We know that *blindness of mind* is not such an obstruction but what is overcome by the grace of God *in the elect*; but that being removed in the elect does not disprove, but imply, that it is a remaining obstruction to the rest." I suppose Mr. B. must have read this passage just before that on which his remark is made; how, therefore, he could so strangely mistake my meaning I am at a loss to conceive.

Surely Mr. B. could not think the above a sufficient answer to that against which it is written. "Human depravity," he admits, "prevents a sinner's *attending to the gospel*;" but he will not allow that it hinders him from believing. By "*attending to the gospel*," I suppose, he may mean something more than merely attending *upon* it; but yet he cannot mean any thing *spiritually good*: if he did, and allowed that human depravity prevented it, that would be giving up a main point in the debate. I suppose, therefore, he means no more than such an attention to the gospel as may be exercised without any real love to it, or desire after an interest in its blessings. But will Mr. B. pretend to say that this is all that is meant in the passages to which I had referred? Did Christ barely tell the Jews (John v. 44) that they could not attend to the gospel who received honour one of another, and sought not the honour which cometh from God only? Would this have been *true* upon Mr. B.'s principles? Attending to the gospel, in his sense of it, is what men in an unregenerate state *can* do, and that in the exercise of a proud spirit. Did the want of "an honest and good heart" keep the three sorts of hearers, in the parable of the sower, from attending to the gospel? So far from this, Mr. B. elsewhere informs us that the stony-ground hearers "*cordially received the truth*,"—p. 19. Though I think, in this matter, he goes too far; yet thus much is certain—that a mere attention to the gospel was not the thing wherein they were wanting. When Christ blamed the Jews, saying, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," did he barely mean, Ye will not give attention to the gospel? Surely not!

Mr. B. admits that "pride, aversion to God, and the like, where they prevail, are certain *evidences* of a person's being destitute of special faith," but denies, it seems, that they have any causal influence to prevent his believing. And yet if there be any meaning in words, surely the forecited passages must convey the latter idea as well as the former. When Christ told the Jews, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," did he mean that their unwillingness was merely an *evidence* of their not coming to him, and not that which had any causal influence upon them to prevent their coming? Surely not!



As the above passage, which I have transcribed from Mr. B., is the only answer he has made to my Fourth Proposition, I cannot but consider it as unanswered. He has advanced something, however, of an *opposite* tendency, which I shall now consider.

It was affirmed that the want of faith in Christ is ascribed, in the Scriptures, to men's *depravity*. Mr. B. thinks this position contrary to John x. 26, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep;" which passage, he thinks, ascribes the want of faith to "non-election,"—p. 55. To this I reply, On some occasions Mr. B. would make nothing of such a term as *because* (p. 63); and were I to follow his example, I might say, It means no more than this: Your unbelief, if you persist in it, will be a certain *evidence* that you are not of my sheep.—No complaint could justly be made if the matter were left here, especially as the above are the very words of Mr. Henry, which Mr. B. has quoted for a different purpose. But, waving this, be it observed the truth which they did not believe was, *that Jesus was the Christ*. "If thou *be the Christ*," said they, "tell us plainly." Jesus answered, I have told you, and *ye believed not*: the works that I do, in my Father's name, they bear witness of me; but ye *believe not, because ye are not of my sheep*." This text, therefore, if it prove any thing for Mr. B., will prove too much; it will prove that non-election is the cause of that which he acknowledges to be sinful; namely, a discrediting of *Jesus being the Christ*.

Further, Though Christ's people are sometimes called sheep simply on account of their being given to him in eternal election, as in verse 16 of this chapter; yet this is not always the case. They sometimes bear that name as being not only elected, but called; as the *followers* of Christ; and thus they are represented in the context: "I know my sheep, and am *known* of mine;" they "follow" the Shepherd, for they "know his voice;" they "go in and out, and find pasture." And in the next verse to that in question, "My sheep *hear my voice*, and I know them, and *they follow me*." All those who looked for redemption in Israel readily embraced Christ as the Messiah as soon as they heard of him; they knew his voice as soon as they heard it, and followed him: but others, though they were of the house of Israel, yet, not being the real people of God, rejected him as the Messiah, the great Shepherd of the sheep. "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God," John viii. 47. There appears to me a great probability of this being the meaning of the passage.

But suppose a being not of Christ's sheep, here, to mean the same as not being of the number of the elect, this can be no otherwise assigned as the cause of their not believing than as we assign the absence of the sun as the cause of darkness. BECAUSE of God's forbearing to execute vengeance, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do *evil*; but no one, it is hoped, will think evil excusable on that account. See Dr. Gill's *Cause of God and Truth*, Part II. pp. 100, 222; Part III. p. 77, First Edition.

Mr. B. assigns man's *natural incapacity* as another reason of his not believing, and says, "Sacred Scripture *every where* abounds with passages to this purpose,"—p. 55. Well, if this assertion can be made good, something will be effected to purpose. In proof of it, however, no more than *two* passages are produced; viz. John vi. 44, "No man *can* come unto me," &c.; and I Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither *can* he know them," &c. It is true, if these *two* will prove the point, they are equal to two hundred; but it were as well not to speak of such great numbers, unless more were produced. To what Mr. B. says, on both these passages, it is replied, If the term *cannot* will prove this their inability to be natural and innocent, it will prove the same of the inability of those who are in the flesh, and *cannot* please God, and of those whose

eyes are full of adultery, and who *cannot* cease from sin. Mr. B. takes no notice of what was said before on these modes of speaking; but instead of that, puts us off with barely informing us that "this is sufficient *for him*;" and with asking his reader, "Does not this seem to strike you at once that our Lord is here representing man's natural inability?"—pp. 56, 57.

Mr. B. thinks I am strangely inconsistent, in maintaining that man's inability consists wholly in the evil state of his heart, or *will*, and yet allowing it to be *total*; and elsewhere seems to wonder greatly at the same thing. I also might wonder that one who professes to believe in the *total* depravity of human nature should object in such a manner. Must not that inability be total which proceeds from, or rather consists in, total depravity?

If by *total* Mr. B. means *unable in every respect*, I grant I do not think man is, in that sense, totally unable to believe in Christ. But an inability *in one respect* may be so great in degree as to become total.\* It is thus in things which relate merely to a natural inability. A man may have books, and learning, and leisure, and so may not, *in every respect*, be unable to read; and yet, being utterly blind, he is totally unable notwithstanding. In respect of the inability in question, those that are in the flesh are totally unable to please God; and yet their inability lies wholly in the evil state of their hearts towards God, and not in his being so difficult to be pleased, that if his creatures were to do all they ought to do, it would be to no purpose. Men, by nature, are totally unable to love God with their heart, soul, mind, and strength; and yet, as Mr. B. allows this to be their duty, he cannot say their incapacity for so doing is natural and innocent. We consider men as spiritually *dead*; and we consider spiritual death as a *total* privation of all real good; and this we may do without considering them as destitute of such faculties as, if the state of their hearts were but what it ought to be, would infallibly discern and embrace things of a spiritual nature.

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## SECTION VI.

### REPLY TO MR. B.'S NINTH LETTER, ON PUNISHMENTS BEING THREATENED AND INFLICTED FOR THE WANT OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

In proof of this point, reference was had to Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." This passage had been explained by Mr. Brine as only giving the *descriptive characters* of the saved and the lost. To prove the contrary, I produced a number of threatenings in the word of God, delivered against *sin*, in the same mode of speaking as the above passage is directed against unbelief. Mr. Button thinks that these also are mere descriptive characters; and that if the Scriptures used no other modes of speaking, we could not justly infer that the punishments therein threatened were

\* When we say the depravity of man is *total*, we do not mean that it is incapable of augmentation, but that it amounts to a total privation of all real good. The depravity of the fallen angels is total; and yet they are capable of adding iniquity to iniquity.

I would wish Mr. B. to remember that a moral inability, whether virtuous or vicious, may be as *total* as a natural inability. And I would also beg him to examine whether he can form a clear idea of a person being under a *moral* inability to perform any action which he *is*, and *always was*, naturally unable to perform? For instance, can he conceive of a man born blind, as having a violent and invincible aversion from light? I own it appears to me inconceivable; and it seems equally absurd to suppose that sinners should be capable of *aversion* from a plan of salvation which was utterly unsuited to their *natural* powers.

on account of the crimes therein specified,—p. 62. This is very extraordinary indeed. As though, from such a threatening as “God shall destroy thee, O thou false tongue,” we were not warranted to conclude that falsehood is a crime, and the procuring cause of the punishment threatened! If this reasoning be just, it cannot be inferred, from the laws of England, declaring that a murderer shall be put to death, that it is *on account* of his being a murderer. Neither could our first parents justly infer from its being told them, The day ye eat of the fruit ye shall surely die, that it should be *on account* of their so eating!

John iii. 18, “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten son of God!” In urging this passage I had grounded pretty much on the term *because*. But Mr. B. produces another text of Scripture where that term is used, and cannot, he thinks, denote a procuring cause,—pp. 63, 64. The passage to which he refers is John xvi. 17, “The Father himself loveth you, *because* ye have loved me.” To this it is replied, Suppose a word, *in one instance*, be understood in a peculiar sense, is this sense to be urged as a rule of interpreting that word in other places? If it is, Mr. B. would be puzzled, notwithstanding what he said in p. 62, to prove that sin is the procuring cause of damnation. This is the method taken by the adversaries to the proper Deity and satisfaction of Christ.

But, further, I apprehend the term *because*, even in this passage, is to be taken in its proper sense, as denoting the ground or reason of a thing. The love of God has (with great propriety, I think,) been distinguished into *natural* and *sovereign*: the former is God’s necessary approbation of every intelligent creature in proportion as it bears his holy likeness; the latter is his free favour, fixed upon his elect without the consideration of any thing in them or done by them. The one is exercised towards an object while that object continues pure, and ceases when it becomes impure: thus God loved those angels, when holy, who are now fallen under his most awful displeasure. The other, not being founded on any thing in the creature, removes not from its object, but abideth for ever. The propriety of the above distinction may be argued from the doctrine of reconciliation by the death of Christ. To be reconciled is to be *restored to favour*. Now the *sovereign* favour of God was not forfeitable; we could not, therefore, be restored to that; but his necessary approbation, as the Lawgiver of the world, was forfeitable; and to that we are restored by the death of Christ\*.

The godly are the objects of God’s natural love as bearing his holy likeness. “If any man *love me*,” says Christ, “he will keep my words, and *my Father will love him*, and we will come and make our abode with him. If ye *keep my commandments*, ye shall abide in *my love*; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” And thus, in the passage referred to, “The Father himself loveth you, *because* ye have loved me.” All this may be affirmed without making inherent qualities any part of our justifying righteousness, or in the least injuring the doctrine of God’s sovereign, eternal, and immutable love to his elect.†

Mr. B.’s expositions of divers passages of Scripture are founded upon the supposition that nothing more than an *external* acknowledgment of the Messiah was required of the Jews. Thus he interprets Luke xix. 27, “Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me” (p. 65); and John v. 43, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not,—p. 85. In reply to these interpreta-

\* The reader will remember I am reasoning with those who *allow* of the love of God to elect sinners being sovereign and unforfeitable.

† See Mr. R. Hall’s *Help to Zion’s Travellers*.

tions, I might refer the reader to what was said before on the second Psalm; namely, that if Christ had been a mere civil governor, or such a Messiah as the Jews expected, then an external submission might have been sufficient; but not otherwise.

I seriously wish Mr. B. to consider the import of his own words in page 85. "Supreme love to God," he says, "would have led the Jews to have embraced Christ as the Son of God and the Messiah; but not to embrace him in a way of special faith." What is special faith, unless it is to embrace Christ in his *true* character, AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES? Surely it is not a receiving of him under some representation in which he is not THERE exhibited. To receive him as the Messiah is to fall in with the *ends* and *designs* of his mission; and these were the glory of God and the salvation of sinners in a way that should abase their pride and destroy their idols. Nothing short of this can, with any propriety, be called a receiving him as the Messiah. I believe the Scripture knows nothing, and makes nothing, of any thing else. "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." No intimation is here given that there is a third class of people who neither receive Christ spiritually nor reject him. According to the New Testament, they who received him were true Christians; and they who heard the gospel, and were not true believers, received him not.

Mr. B.'s remarks upon 2 Thess. ii. 10—12 conclude his Ninth Letter,—p. 65. Notwithstanding what he has there said, I continue to think that sinners are culpable for *not receiving the love of the truth*. Mr. B. supposes that their not receiving the love of the truth is only mentioned as an *evidence* of their being the non-elect; though he, at the same time, explains God's sending them strong delusions, as a giving them up to *judicial* blindness. But it ought to be remembered that God does not give men up to *judicial* blindness because they are not elected, nor merely from the "sovereignty of his will;" but as a punishment of former sins. I would therefore ask, What is the sin for which the persons in the text are thus punished? The apostle himself answers, "Because they received not the love of the truth."

Further, I cannot grant that a not receiving the love of the truth is an *evidence* of non-election, since it is true of the elect while unbelievers as well as of the non-elect.

In the punishing of sinners in this life, God frequently adapts the nature of the punishment to that of the crime. Of this the text in question is an awful illustration. Because men *believe not the truth*, God sends them a strong delusion, that they may *believe a lie*; and because they have pleasure in *unrighteousness*, he suffers them to be deceived with all deceivableness of *unrighteousness*.

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## SECTION VII.

### REPLY TO MR. B.'S TENTH LETTER, ON SPIRITUAL DISPOSITIONS.

BEING about, in my former essay, to prove spiritual dispositions incumbent on men in general, I thought it best, at entering upon that subject, to express my own ideas of the term *spiritual*. It appeared to me that, when applied to the dispositions of the mind, it always signified *TRULY HOLY*, in opposition to *carnal*. At the same time, I supposed my views on this subject, might not be universally granted. I never meant, therefore, to lay them

down as the *data* of the argument; but proposed rather to proceed upon undisputed principles. On that account I passed over this part of the subject without dwelling upon it; which Mr. B. calls "giving it up,"—p. 70. The criterion, as he acknowledges, by which it was proposed to judge of spiritual dispositions, was *their having the promise of spiritual blessings*. This was the ground on which I all along proceeded; trying the matter wholly by Scripture evidence, endeavouring to prove that *those things are required of men in general to which spiritual and eternal blessings are abundantly promised*. But Mr. B. has passed all this over, and has only carried on what I should think an unnecessary dispute about what he calls "natural and spiritual holiness." Surely he could have but very little concern with that on which I grounded no argument: his business was to attend to that upon which the whole was rested. But instead of fairly discussing the subject upon that ground, he has taken up the whole of his letter in finding fault with my definition of spiritual dispositions; though no other end is answered by it, that I can perceive, than to show that he is of one opinion, and I of another.

In one part of his letter, Mr. B. gave us some reason to hope that he would have left this manner of writing, and have come to the argument: "I shall add no more," says he, "on this head; especially as Mr. F. soon gives it up, by saying, 'If this, (that is, the defining of spiritual dispositions to be such as are *truly holy*\*) however plain it may appear to me, should not be universally allowed, I may go upon a more undisputed ground.'" Mr. B. asks, "And what ground is this?"—He then answers himself, "Why, says Mr. F., 'the criterion by which I shall all along judge of what are spiritual dispositions will be *their having the promise of spiritual blessings*.' Whether these dispositions be incumbent on carnal men, let us now inquire." Thus far Mr. B. in his quotation from mine. Would not the reader now expect that he was about to enter upon a fair discussion of the subject, upon the forementioned criterion, to which he could have no reasonable objection? And yet, strange as it is, he never touches the subject upon that ground; but though he had said he "should add no more" upon the other, yet immediately returns, saying nothing but the same things over and over again.

When we come to Mr. B.'s remarks on the capacity of man in innocence for spiritual obedience, we shall take notice of what is here offered in support of a distinction of holiness into natural and spiritual. At present, I may reply to some other things included in this letter.

Spiritual dispositions were said to be such as were **TRULY HOLY**. Mr. B. finds great fault with this, as it might be supposed he would.

And yet I see not wherein it differs from the apostle's account of the *new man*, that it is created *after God* in righteousness and **TRUE HOLINESS**, (Eph. iv. 24.) to which the same objections might be made as to the above. That God is *immutable* in his nature Mr. B. will allow; and that his *image* must be the same is equally evident. That which is created *after him* must ever be the same in one period as in another. If the image of God is not now what it was formerly, it must be owing to an alteration in the nature of his moral perfections. There cannot be two essentially different *images* of the same Divine *original*.

Further, It was said, "Whenever applied to the dispositions of the mind, *spiritual* stands opposed to *carnal*; and that in the criminal sense of the word." Mr. B. remarks this is a mistake; "for," says he, "*spiritual*, in

\* I suppose it must be entirely by mistake that Mr. B. has represented me (in p. 70) as maintaining the distinction of "natural and spiritual holiness," and as informing my readers that this distinction "appears plain to me." I have ventured, therefore, to alter what he had enclosed in a parenthesis to what I suppose he intended to write.

I Cor. ii. 14, is opposed to *natural*. ‘The *natural* man receiveth not the things of the *Spirit* of God,’ &c.,—p. 67. But I apprehend that the word “natural” (ψυχικός) in the text is of the same import with carnal. To say that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God is equal to saying that the carnal man receiveth them not; or he who, whatever be his acquisitions in science, is under the influence of that corrupt nature which we all derive from Adam. Having nothing in him which is *truly good*, nothing correspondent with Divine truths, all his vain labour and toil about these truths is to as little purpose as that of the men of Sodom about Lot’s door. This, I take it, is the purport of Mr. B.’s quotation from Calvin,—p. 58.

Depravity, though it is, strictly speaking, no part of our *nature*, yet is become natural, as it were, to us; and hence it is common for us to call a carnal, unconverted state, a *state of nature*; and the Scripture speaks of our being *by nature* the children of wrath. A state of nature, in this use of the term, is evidently put not for the state of man as *created*, but as *fallen*. And, respecting the text in question, it does not appear probable that the Holy Spirit would have here used a term to have expressed the nature of man in its purest state which he everywhere else, when applying it to the dispositions of the mind, uses to express a state of abominable iniquity.\*

Dr. Gill says of the law that “it requireth *spiritual* service and obedience.” This I quoted before, supposing it expressive of my own sentiments; but Mr. B. assures me I am mistaken, and that Dr. Gill meant no such thing. By “*spiritual* service and obedience,” it is said, he meant “a serving it with our minds; a worshipping God in spirit and in truth; a loving it with all our hearts and souls, as well as a performance of all the outward acts of religion and duty,”—p. 71. What was Dr. Gill’s meaning I cannot tell, nor is it worth while to dispute about it, as the opinion of the greatest uninspired writer is not decisive; otherwise I should think he had no such distinctions in his mind as Mr. B. imputes to him. But be his meaning what it might, there certainly is no difference between worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and the exercise of “spiritual principles and dispositions, such as flow from Christ Jesus.” Suppose we follow Mr. B. in his distinction of holiness into natural and spiritual, and of spirituality into legal and evangelical; a worshipping of God in spirit and in truth must belong to the latter and not to the former. It must be not only spiritual, but “evangelically spiritual;” for Christ is speaking of *true worshippers* under the *gospel* dispensation; and they are said to be such as *the Father seeketh to worship him*. See John iv. 23, 24. The above distinctions appear to me to be more curious than just; but be they ever so just, they will not furnish us with an answer to the argument upon the forecited passage.

If I understand what Mr. B. means by a spirituality which is different in nature from that which is evangelical, it is what is so called, not on account of its *nature*, but of the *subject* over which it extends, viz. the *spirit* or *mind* of man. But he should have considered, that when the law is called spiritual,† (which it is only in one passage,) it is not in opposition to *corporeal*, but to *carnal*; just as the principle of holiness in the hearts of believers, or the *spirit*, is opposed to the *flesh*. This was noticed before, to which Mr. B. has made no reply.

“According to Mr. F.,” it is said, “there is no alteration made in religion by the interposition of Christ to be incarnate, and his mediation; no change in the abolishing of the old covenant and the establishing of the new; no

\* See James iii. 15, “Earthly, SENSUAL, devilish;” and Jude 19, “SENSUAL, having not the Spirit.”

† Πνευματικός, Rom. vii. 14.

alteration in the nature of our obedience,"—p. 73. I hope the enclosing of this passage in reversed commas and ascribing it to me was without design. The passage was taken by Mr. B. from Dr. Owen *on the Spirit*,—p. 461. He has given us it at large in p. 68 of his remarks. Dr. Owen delivered it as containing the sentiments of those against whom he was writing, who held the gospel to be only a sort of new edition of the law of nature. I must do myself the justice, however, to deny their being my *sentiments* any more than my words. I have acknowledged the contrary in p. 119. Nor are they so much as *consequences* deducible from any thing I have advanced. Mr. B. might, with equal propriety, go about to prove a difference between the principles of the Old and New Testament saints; since the religion under the law is different from that under the gospel, though they agree (as Dr. Owen, in the same passage, observes) in their "author, object, and end." "No," Mr. B. will reply, "these are doubtless the same." Then we might retort, in his own mode of reasoning, If so, "there is no change made by abolishing the Mosaic dispensation; no difference between that and the gospel dispensation, and no alteration thereby made in religion."

But Mr. B.'s arguments and objections upon this subject will be considered more particularly in the two following sections.

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## SECTION VIII.

REPLY TO MR. B.'S ELEVENTH LETTER, ON THE STATE OF MAN IN INNOCENCE;  
WHETHER HE WAS INCAPABLE OF DOING THINGS SPIRITUALLY GOOD.

UPON this single point, of Adam's incapacity to do things spiritually good, Mr. B. rests almost all his arguments. He seems very desirous of taking this matter for granted, and actually does take it for granted in various places; arguing and exclaiming upon the supposition of this sentiment being true, though he knows that will not be granted him. Hence his answer to my reply to the objection on the necessity of a Divine principle in order to believing,—p. 94. If I held Mr. B.'s sentiment in this matter, then I should not be able upon that ground to establish my own! This is the amount of what he has there advanced. Hence, also, his exclamation of my imputing *cruelty* to the Holy One (pp. 56, 88, 95); that is, that it would be "cruel and shocking for God to require that which is beyond the powers of man in his present or primitive state." I grant it; but that is what I never affirmed. If our principles are charged with absurdity, they should be proved to be inconsistent with *themselves*, or with some *allowed* principle, and not barely with those of our opponents.

I can see no force in the quotation from Mr. Brine, (p. 57,) wherein a *cannot* and a *will not*, in respect of coming to Christ, are said to be distinct things, unless this sentiment is first taken for granted. "We *cannot* come to Christ," he says, "as we are destitute of a principle of life; and we *will not*, as we are the subjects of vicious habits." Now, I would ask, what is the want of a principle of life, but the want of a holy bias of mind to glorify God? And this is no otherwise a different thing from aversion of heart from him than as a negative evil differs from one that is positive. The want of a principle of honesty in an intelligent being is no excusable thing, any more than positive villany. I know of no answer that can be made to this way of reasoning, but by maintaining that a principle of life is something different from a principle of uprightness towards God; something different, in its nature, from

what man, in his most upright condition, could possess. If this were asserted, I should no otherwise reply than by asking for *proof*. In the above argument, this sentiment is assumed as if it were a truth allowed on both sides, whereas that is not the case. Supposing the notion of Adam's incapacity to do things spiritually good were a truth, to take it for granted in such a manner as this is contrary to all fair reasoning. It is no other than begging the question. But I am not yet convinced that the thing itself is true; and if the foundation is bad, the superstructure must fall.

Two things here require a discussion: viz. What evidence has Mr. B. produced in support of this his favourite hypothesis? and what has he done towards overturning the arguments for the contrary?

I. WHAT EVIDENCE HAS MR. B. PRODUCED IN SUPPORT OF THIS HIS FAVOURITE HYPOTHESIS? The subject we are now discussing is of a *fundamental* nature, in respect of the main question between us. It is the cornerstone upon which the whole fabric of Mr. B.'s scheme is founded; we have reason to expect, therefore, that this should be well laid in solid Scriptural evidence. However some truths may be more fully revealed than others, I should think I ought to suspect that system whose first and fundamental principles are not well supported.

Let us examine what Mr. B. has offered. He apprehends the phrases *new man—new heart—new spirit—new creature*, &c. imply this sentiment, and are inconsistent with that which he opposes,—p. 83. To this it is replied, The whole force of this argument rests upon the supposition that the term *new*, in these passages, stands opposed to a state of primitive purity; whereas every one knows that the *new* heart stands opposed to the *stony* heart; and the *new* man to the *old* man, which is "*corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.*"\*

Further, Mr. B. thinks this sentiment supported by a passage in Rom. vii. 6, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in *newness* of spirit, and not in the *oldness* of the letter,"—p. 73. But his sense of the passage, if it prove any thing for him, will prove too much. He maintains that spiritual dispositions are a conformity to the law, though not to the law *only* (p. 68); but the apostle says they were *delivered from* the law of which he speaks. Yet Mr. B. will not say that we are, by grace, delivered from all obligation to the requirements of the moral law. To suit his sentiments, therefore, it should rather have been said, we serve *partly* in newness of the spirit, and *partly* in the oldness of the letter.

Whether "the oldness of the letter" be here to be understood of the manner in which the converted Jews used formerly to worship God, tenaciously adhering to the *letter* of their ceremonial law, instead of entering into its *spirit*, or design, and of worshipping God in *spirit* and in truth; or whether it mean the moral law, in its particular form of a covenant of works, (which seems to agree with the scope of the place,) it certainly does not mean that for which Mr. B. produces it. The "oldness of the letter," in which they once served, is not here put for that way of serving God which was exercised in a state of *innocence*, but in a state of *wregeneracy*. It was *when they were in the flesh* (v. 5) that this sort of service was carried on, to which the other is opposed. It must be such a sort of service, therefore, as could have in it no *real conformity to the law*, seeing they that are in the flesh cannot please God; the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not *subject to the law of God*, neither indeed can be.

It is very common for Mr. B. to apply that which is spoken of man as

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 26; Eph. iv. 22—24; 2 Cor. v. 17.



now born into the world to man in a state of innocence. Thus he has applied a passage in Dr. Owen, p. 81. The Pelagian figment, that "what we have by nature we have by grace, because God is the author of nature," means what we have "*by natural propagation*;" as the Doctor himself explains it, as we are now born into the world.—*On the Spirit*, p. 452.

I do not recollect any other passages of *Scripture* on which Mr. B. has pretended to ground his fundamental principle; *fundamental* I call it, because, as was said before, it lies at the foundation of all his other principles wherein we differ. I wish Mr. B. and the reader seriously to consider whether the above passages convey such a sentiment; whether they can fairly be applied to the support of it; and if not, whether that which lies at the foundation of his hypothesis has any foundation in the word of God.

But Mr. B., though he has not, that I recollect, produced any other *Scriptural* evidence for the sentiment in question than what has been noticed, yet has attempted to argue the matter out by *reason*. I had said, "It appears to me that the *Scripture* knows nothing of natural holiness, as distinguished from spiritual holiness; that it knows but of one kind of real holiness, and that is a conformity to the holy law of God." In answer to this, Mr. B. does not pretend to inform us where the *Scripture* does make this distinction, or from what parts of it such a distinction may be inferred; but only asserts that "there is a difference," and goes about to inform us wherein that difference consists,—pp. 67, 68. Let us now attend to what is there advanced. The sum of the supposed difference is made to consist in *three* things.

1. "The one was possessed by Adam in innocence, and would have been conveyed, by natural generation, to his posterity; the other we derive from Christ by the influence of the Holy Spirit." Answer: This does not prove them to be of a different nature, but merely to spring from different *causes*, and to flow through different *channels*. Man, in innocence, enjoyed the approbation of his Maker; so do believers, as justified in Christ's righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit. *Divine approbation*, in itself considered, is the same thing in the one case as in the other; but the means by which it is enjoyed are very different.

2. "Natural holiness consists in conformity to the holy law of God; spiritual holiness to the law and gospel too." Answer: That all holiness is a conformity to some law, or rule of action, given by God to his creatures, is certain; and if spiritual holiness is a conformity to the gospel in something wherein it is not a conformity to the moral law, then the gospel must, after all, be a *new law*, or a *new rule of action*. But what necessity for this? "If the pure and holy law of God requires every man cordially to receive and heartily to approve of the gospel," (as Mr. B., in p. 49, says it does,) then what room is there for the above distinction? A cordial reception and hearty approbation of the gospel are the very essence of conformity to it.

3. "Natural holiness was liable to be lost; but spiritual holiness never was liable to, never was, never can be, lost." Answer: This proves nothing to the point, unless the reason why spiritual holiness cannot be lost is owing to its *nature* or *kind*, and not to the promise and perpetual preservation of the Holy Spirit. A principle the same in nature may be produced in one subject, and left to the conduct of that subject to preserve it in being; while, in another subject in different circumstances, its existence may be infallibly secured by the promise and power of God. It is generally supposed that the elect angels were *confirmed* in their state of original purity. Supposing this to have been the case, that confirmation, though it rendered their holiness like that in believers, inadmissible, yet it did not, in the least, alter its *nature*. It had not been a confirmation if it had. Nor is there any reason, that I know of, to conclude that the holiness in the elect angels was of a different

nature from that which originally existed in those who fell. I have no notion of any principle in my soul that is, in its own nature, necessarily immortal. My experience teaches me that I should as soon cease to love Christ and the gospel, and every thing of a spiritual nature, as Adam ceased to love God, were it not for the perpetual influence of his Holy Spirit.

That none of the above differences make any thing in proving the point is equally evident from Mr. B.'s *own principles*, as from what has been now alleged. He supposes spiritual holiness, or the holiness which is in believers, to be a conformity to the *law*, though not to the law *only*. Very well; so far, then, as spiritual holiness is a conformity to the law, it is and must be the same in nature as what he calls natural holiness; and yet they differ in all the circumstances above mentioned. That *conformity to the law* of which believers are now the subjects, and which must have been incumbent upon them while unbelievers, is "derived from Christ as their Head, and comes by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and not by natural generation;" neither "can it ever be lost," so as to become totally extinct. These are things, therefore, which do not affect the *nature* of holiness; and so are insufficient to support a distinction of it into two kinds, the one essentially different from the other.

Upon the whole, I think Mr. B., in treating upon this subject, has proceeded in much the same manner as when discussing the definition of faith. In order to prove that holiness in the hearts of believers is something *essentially* different, or different in its *nature*, from what was possessed by man in innocence, he proves, or rather asserts, from Dr. Owen, that it "is an EFFECT OF ANOTHER CAUSE, and differs in the OBJECTS of its vital acts; there being *new revelations* now, which were not before,"—pp. 76, 77. All this is allowed; and it proves what Dr. Owen meant it to prove, viz. that we are not, after the manner of the Socinians, to make Christianity a mere revival of the law of nature. It proves that there are "some differences," as he expresses it, between the life of Adam and that of a believer; but it does not prove an essential difference in their principles; nor did the Doctor mean it, I should suppose, to prove any such thing.—*On the Spirit*, p. 241.

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## SECTION IX.

### THE CAPACITY OF MAN IN INNOCENCE TO BELIEVE, AND TO DO THINGS SPIRITUALLY GOOD, FURTHER CONSIDERED.

WE now proceed to the *second* question, viz. WHAT HAS MR. B. DONE TO OVERTURN THE ARGUMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT WHICH HE HAS UNDERTAKEN TO ANSWER? Some things he has passed over: he has said nothing, for instance, to what was advanced on the case of Cain and Abel; or on the difference between an *essential* and a *circumstantial* incapacity in our first parents to believe in Christ. I had attempted to prove that the spirit and conduct of Adam in innocence were nothing more nor less than a perfect conformity to the holy law of God; that the same might be said of Jesus Christ, *so far as he was our example*; and, consequently, the same of Christians, *so far as they are formed after that example*. In proof of the *last two* positions, several passages of Scripture were produced. On these Mr. B. has made some remarks.

Psal. xl. 8, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." What Mr. B. says (p. 79) of the *will* of the Father extending to Christ's laying down his life as a sacrifice for sinners, I think is true, but

nothing to the purpose. I was speaking of Jesus Christ, *so far as he was our example*; but what have his sufferings, “as a sacrifice for sinners,” to do in this matter? Was he designed here to be *our example*? Surely not. If the moral law be allowed to be “herein included,” that is sufficient. And if this were *not* allowed, since Mr. B. acknowledges “that the Lord Jesus Christ throughout his life yielded obedience to the moral law,” and has pointed out no other obedience, *wherein he was our example*, than this,\* the point is given up, and all the questions in pages 78 and 81 are to no purpose.

Jer. xxxi. 33, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,” &c. Mr. B. thinks the term *law* here includes *the law of faith*, or the gospel, and also what the apostle in Rom. vii. 23, calls “the law of the mind,” and especially as the apostle, when he quotes the passage in Heb. viii. 10, uses the plural word *laws*,”—pp. 80, 81. The plural word *laws*, in Scripture, and in common speech, signifies no more than the different *parts* or *branches* of the same law, and is of the same import with the word *commandments*. I think with Mr. B. that each of the above ideas is included; not, however, as so many *distinct laws* put into the heart. For God to *write his law in the heart* is only another mode of speaking for giving us a *heart to love* that law; and if the law “requires a cordial reception and hearty approbation of the gospel,” (as Mr. B. in page 49 owns it does) then, in a fallen creature to whom the gospel is preached, a heart to love that law must include a heart to embrace the gospel; and a heart to love the law and embrace the gospel is the principle of holiness, called *the law of the mind*.†

An argument was drawn from the term *renewed*, as applied to our regeneration. On this Mr. B. remarks as follows: “I think at the resurrection the same body that dies will be raised, but I think the state in which it will rise will be more than *circumstantially*, it will be *essentially* different from that in which it was laid in the grave; except corruption and incorruption, dishonour and glory, weakness and power, natural and spiritual, are essentially the same,”—p. 83. So far from this making for Mr. B., one need not desire a better argument against him. He thinks, he says, that the *same body* that dies will be raised; I think so too, or it would not have been called a *resurrection*: let him only acknowledge that the *same principle* that was lost is restored, or it would not have been represented as a *renovation*, and we are satisfied. Let him but allow this, and he is welcome to dwell upon as many differences, as to *causes* and *objects*, as he can find. If this be but granted, all that he can say besides cannot prove an *essential* difference. It is very extraordinary for Mr. B. to suppose that it can. That which is essential to any thing is that without which it would not be that thing. If corruption,

\* It is true Christ was our example in his conforming to *positive institutions*; but this is included in obedience to the moral law, which requires a compliance with whatever God shall at any time think proper to enjoin; and will hardly be supposed to require a *distinct principle* for the performance of it.

† After Mr. B. has acknowledged that “the law of God requires a cordial reception of the gospel,” it is somewhat surprising that he should reason as follows:—“If the law commanded faith, in relation to Christ crucified, it must then acquaint us with Christ crucified. It would be an unreasonable law to enjoin an act about such an object, and never discover one syllable of that object to us,”—p. 92. It certainly would be unreasonable to require faith without a revelation of the object; and where that is not revealed, we do not suppose it incumbent. But if the *gospel* reveal the object of faith, the moral law may require it to be embraced, Mr. B. himself being judge. If the law cannot reasonably require faith towards an object which itself doth not reveal, then what will become of his *natural* and *common* faith in a crucified Christ, which he allows is required by the law? Does the law *reveal* Christ as the object of this kind of faith any more than the other? Mr. B. cannot say it does. The above quotation, I suppose, is taken from Mr. Charnock. I have not the *first* edition of his works, and so cannot follow Mr. B. in his references; but if Mr. Charnock’s meaning were what the connexion of his words, as introduced by Mr. B. seems to represent, it is certainly contrary to the whole tenor of his writings; and I believe no such thought ever entered his heart as to question whether faith in Christ were the *duty* of sinners.

dishonour, or weakness belonged to the essence of the body, then it could not be the *same body* without them. These cause a difference as to the circumstances and condition of the body; they do not, however, so alter its essence but that it is *the same body* through all its changes.

What is here advanced does not suppose that "corruption and incorruption, natural and spiritual, are essentially the same." Doubtless they are different and opposite qualities; but the question is, do these qualities cause an essential difference in the *bodies* to which they pertain? If any one were disposed to prove an essential difference between the principles of saints on earth and saints in heaven, he might easily accomplish his purpose, according to Mr. B.'s mode of reasoning. He might say, 'They are more than *circumstantially*, they are *essentially* different; the one are weak, the other strong; these are exercised in believing, those in seeing; these are attended with opposing carnality, those are freed from all opposition. Now here is an essential difference; unless weakness and strength, faith and sight, remaining impurity, and perfect holiness, are essentially the same!

If Mr. B. should reply that he did not plead for an essential difference between the *body* when it dies and when it is raised, but between the *state* of the body at those different periods; I answer, then what he has said is mere trifling, nothing at all to the purpose. His design was to illustrate an essential difference between the *principles* of man in innocence and those in believers, and not barely in the *state* and *circumstances* of those principles; otherwise there had been no dispute between us.

The only question, it was before observed, to which the whole ought to be reduced was this, WHETHER SUPREME LOVE TO GOD WOULD NOT NECESSARILY LEAD A FALLEN CREATURE, WHO HAS THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO HIM, TO EMBRACE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND HIS WAY OF SALVATION. The arguments which were thought sufficient to establish this question in the affirmative were urged in the former treatise. To this Mr. B. has made no other reply than the following: "Supreme love to God will lead a man to embrace any revelation God makes of himself; but it will not, it cannot, lead a man to embrace what *God does not reveal*. Supreme love to God would lead no fallen creature to embrace Christ in a way of special faith, without Christ being revealed, and revealed in an *internal* manner, by the Holy Ghost. There is no true believing without revelation, without evidence,"—pp. 85, 86. Special faith, then, it seems, consists in believing something which is not revealed *in the Scriptures*, and of which there is *there* no evidence. Well, if this be special faith, we need have no further dispute about it; for I shall agree with him that it is what no man is in the least obliged to.

Mr. B. in the outset, the reader will remember, allowed that a believing of our interest in the blessings of the gospel was not essential to true faith, (p. 10,) and yet what is here advanced cannot, one should think, proceed upon any other supposition. His view of the subject, so far as I understand it, supposes that common faith, such as a man may have and perish, consists in believing *no more* than what is *already* revealed in the Bible; and that special faith consists in believing *our personal interest in it*. But this being no where revealed in the Scriptures, any otherwise than by giving descriptive characters, an immediate revelation from heaven becomes necessary to acquaint the party with his peculiar privilege, before he can believe himself entitled to it.

That there is an *internal* as well as an external revelation is readily allowed; but I apprehend this revelation to consist in the eyes of the understanding being enlightened; and that not to discover any *new truth* which was never before revealed, but that which was already sufficiently made known in the Holy Scriptures, and which nothing but our criminal blind-

ness could conceal from our minds. See Eph. i. 17, 18. I think, with Mr Brine, that "to imagine that God now affords such light as will enable us to make discoveries of truths not already revealed to us in his word is *real enthusiasm*, and has nothing to support it in the Holy Scriptures."\*

Perhaps I shall be told that Mr. Briue made an *internal revelation* the ground of an obligation to believe in Christ. I suppose he did, when engaged in *this* controversy; but when engaged with a *deist*, in the piece referred to, he probably forgot what in other instances had escaped from his pen, and nobly defended the Christian religion from *irrationality* or *enthusiasm*.†

A great deal of Mr. B.'s reasoning tends, in my opinion, rather to degrade a state of primitive purity than to exalt that in which we are placed through Christ. I cannot perceive that he represents the latter to any better advantage than we do. All the difference is, that he seems to think meanly of supreme love to God, as if it were something vastly inferior to that of which Christians are now the subjects. Thus he tells us, from Mr. Charnock, "that a new creature doth exceed a rational creature, *considered only as rational*, more than a rational doth a brute,"—p. 85. True; but is man in his primitive state to be considered *only as rational*? Does he not continue to be a rational being, notwithstanding he has lost his primitive purity? Did Mr. Charnock, in the place referred to, mean to represent man in a state of primitive purity as being *merely rational*? "Adam in a state of innocence," as Dr. Owen observes, "besides his natural life, whereby he was a living soul, had a supernatural life with respect to its *end*, whereby he *lived unto God*."—*On the Spirit*, p. 240.‡

\* Christian Religion not destitute of Arguments, p. 44.

† It is somewhat singular that Mr. B. should charge me with making it the duty of any man to believe without evidence. This nearly amounts to what others have asserted, that I make it incumbent on them to believe a *lie*. The definition of faith which I have heretofore given is the *belief of the truth*. If truth and falsehood, then, are the same thing, the charge may be well founded, but not otherwise. If a persuasion of a personal interest in the blessings of the gospel were what denominated us believers, there might be something plausible in Mr. B.'s mode of reasoning; but this *he* does not pretend to maintain. Dr. Withers appears, in some places, to maintain this idea; and considers *faith*, as generally used in Scripture, to signify "either an *assent to the Bible*," as containing the history of our Lord, and other important matters; or else denoting "the *knowledge*, the *assurance*, of an interest in its present and promised blessings" (p. 73); and, from pages 153 to 156, he presents us with a long list of scriptures, as if to confirm this second idea of faith; but which evidently only prove (what I never thought of doubting) that believers may have a consciousness of their having passed from death unto life, and not that it is this consciousness which denominates them believers. Indeed, he himself tells us in a note (p. 155) that a man *may* be a believer without this consciousness. What is it, then, which constitutes him a believer in that sense which is connected with a title to eternal life? He will hardly assert that every one who assents to the Divine inspiration of the Bible is in a state of salvation. And as to an assurance of being interested in the blessings of the gospel, (supposing this were a just idea of faith,) he could not be ignorant that I never made it incumbent upon all who hear the gospel: but one should think a man must be a believer before he can be conscious of it, or of anything in him that is truly good, or possess any well-grounded persuasion of an interest in Christ; and if so, such a consciousness, or persuasion, cannot be that which denominates him a believer.

‡ In a Testimony in favour of the principles maintained by the Norfolk and Suffolk Association, we are told "he was, while he stood, an upright gardener." Can this be the image of God mentioned Gen. i. 27?—R.

## SECTION X.

REPLY TO MR. B.'S TWELFTH LETTER, ON DIVINE DECREES, THE USE OF MEANS, PARTICULAR REDEMPTION, ETC.

THE objection from *Divine decrees* is, to all intents and purposes, GIVEN UP. I had said, "The destruction of Pharaoh was determined of God to be at the time, place, and manner in which it actually came to pass; and yet who will say that he ought not to have taken the counsel of Moses, and let the people go?" To this Mr. B. replies, "But Pharaoh had an *express command* to let the people go; therefore he was undoubtedly criminal for not doing it: so it may be said of the rest of the instances produced and therefore these are nothing to the purpose,"—p. 88. I might ask, then, What would have been to the purpose? The very circumstance of an express command, so far from destroying the propriety of the above instances, is one thing that renders them in point. The question here was not, *Is faith a commanded duty?*—that was discussed elsewhere\*—but *CAN it be such, consistently with the Divine decrees?* I undertook to prove that it *could*; inasmuch as the compliance of Pharaoh and Sihon with the messages which were sent them was a commanded duty, notwithstanding the Divine decrees concerning them. Mr. B., on the contrary, undertakes to prove that it *cannot*,—that to suppose faith in Christ a commanded duty must clash with the decrees of God. Now, how does he prove his point? Why, by acknowledging that if the command be *express, it may be consistent with those decrees*; that is, in other words, by giving up the very point in question. If I understand Mr. B.'s mode of reasoning, it amounts to what is usually called reasoning in a circle. In the contents, it is intimated that faith cannot be a commanded duty, *because it is inconsistent with the Divine decrees*; in the page to which those contents refer it is suggested to be inconsistent with the Divine decrees, *because it is not commanded!* After all, if the thing itself were inconsistent, no command, however *express*, could make it otherwise.

Mr. B. here, and in several other places, allows that men ought to *use the means*, and be diligently concerned about their eternal salvation; to *strive* to enter in at the strait gate, &c.,—pp. 36–43. He has said nothing, however, to inform us how this is more consistent with the doctrine of decrees than an obligation to believe is. But, passing this, it is observable, that what one evangelist calls striving to enter another calls *entering* (Luke xiii. 24; Matt. vii. 13); and, indeed, it must appear very extraordinary, if men ought to *strive* to do that which they are not obliged to do. Further, using the means of salvation, waiting and praying for a blessing upon them, ought to be attended to either with the heart or without it. If *without* it, it will be but poor *striving* to enter in at the strait gate—far enough from the sense of the passage just cited, which denotes such a striving as that of a person in an *agony*; if *with* it, this amounts to something spiritually good, and shall certainly terminate in salvation.

What our brethren can mean, in consistency with their own sentiments, by making it the duty of men to *use the means of salvation*, is difficult to say. Mr. B. will not allow it to be a bare attendance, but "a diligent waiting, and seeking of spiritual blessings,"—pp. 36–43. And in the exposition upon Isa. xlii. 18, "Look, ye blind," &c., the purport of the exhortation

\* In proof that faith in Christ is *expressly commanded*, the reader is referred to Prop. I. Part II. of the former Treatise, and to Section II. of this.

is said to be, "that they (unconverted sinners) would make use of their external hearing and sight which they had, that they might attain to a spiritual hearing and understanding of Divine things,"—p. 102. But a real, diligent use of means always implies a true desire after the end. It is an abuse of language to call any thing short of this by that name. Men, continuing wicked, may attend what are properly called the means of grace; but they never attend them *as* the means of grace. It is impossible a man should use means to obtain that after which he has no real desire; but a wicked man has no real desire to be saved from that from which the gospel saves us. Using the means of grace, therefore, and *waiting* upon God, are spiritual exercises, and have salvation plentifully connected with them in the Bible. "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."\* Many of our brethren, who scruple to exhort sinners to things of a spiritual nature, will yet counsel them to *watch* at wisdom's gates, and *wait* at the posts of her doors; but these are as much spiritual exercises as believing in Christ. Those who *watch* daily at wisdom's gates, *waiting* at the posts of her doors, are *blessed*. They shall *find* him whom they seek; and, finding him, they "*find life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.*"† The language of wisdom is, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."‡

It is true, in some instances, persons are spoken of, not according to what they do, but according to what they *profess* to do; and, after this manner of speaking, hypocrites are said to *seek* the Lord, and to "delight to know his ways, as a nation that did righteousness."§ That is, they did those things which are the usual expressions of a delight in God and a desire to seek his face, *as if* they had been a righteous people; but as to the things themselves, they are, strictly speaking, spiritual exercises, and are constantly so to be understood throughout the Bible. That manner of seeking God which is practised by hypocrites will hardly be pretended to be the duty of men in general; and, except in those cases, neither seeking God's face nor waiting upon him, I believe, are ever used in the Scripture for such an attendance on God's worship as a man may practise and perish notwithstanding: it is certain, however, this cannot be said of a "*diligently waiting, and seeking of spiritual blessings.*" To use our external hearing and sight, *that we may attain to a spiritual hearing and understanding of Divine things*, is not "WITHIN THE COMPASS OF A NATURAL MAN." The end of every action determines its nature; to read and hear, therefore, with a true desire that we may attain to a spiritual hearing and understanding, are themselves spiritual exercises. In this matter I entirely coincide with Mr. Brine, that "no unsanctified heart will ever pray to God for grace and holiness; but that this is men's *dreadful sin*, and justly exposes them to *direful* vengeance."—*Motives to Love and Unity*, pp. 36, 37.

If to this should be objected the words of our Lord, that "many will *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able," I answer, What is there spoken respects not the present state, but the period "when the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door,"—Luke xiii. 24, 25.

The case of the man waiting at the pool of Bethesda has often been applied to that of an unconverted sinner attending the preaching of the gospel; but let it be closely considered whether such an application of the passage be warrantable from the tenor of Scripture, and whether the characters to whom it is thus applied are not hereby cherished in a thought with which they are apt to flatter themselves; viz. that, for their parts, their hearts are so good that they would fain repent and be converted, but cannot, because

\* Luke xi. 10.

† Prov. viii. 34, 35.

‡ Prov. viii. 17.

§ Isa. lviii. 2.

God is not pleased to bestow these blessings upon them. No one can imagine that I wish to discourage people from reading or hearing the word of God. God's ordinances are the means by which he ordinarily works; and whatever be their motives, I rejoice to see people give them attendance. At the same time, I think, we should be careful lest we cherish in them an opinion, that when they have done this, they are under no further obligations. By so doing we shall furnish them with an unwarrantable consolation, and contribute to shield them against the arrows of conviction.

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION. I had said, "If it were essential to true saving faith to claim a personal interest in Christ's death, the objection would be unanswerable." Mr. B. replies, "But he who has faith *has* a personal interest, whether he can claim it or not; therefore the objection is equally unanswerable on this ground; for it is making it the duty of all to have that which is an undoubted evidence of a personal interest, whether they have that interest or not, which appears to me very absurd and ridiculous."—p. 90. Perhaps so; but if the same spiritual dispositions which are bestowed by the gospel are required by the law, (which Mr. B. has scarcely attempted to *disprove*, though he has said so much about it,) there can be nothing absurd or ridiculous in it.

The matter entirely rests upon the solution of this question, DOES THE SCRIPTURE REPRESENT ANY THING AS THE DUTY OF MANKIND IN GENERAL WITH WHICH ETERNAL HAPPINESS IS CONNECTED? I only wish Mr. B. had fairly tried the matter by this criterion, and had been willing to be decided by the issue. There is scarcely a truth in the sacred Scriptures capable of a clearer demonstration. This was the ground which Mr. B. declined in his Tenth Letter,—p. 70. In addition to what was said in my former treatise, I shall now only add as follows:—

I hope Mr. B. will allow that every man ought to *love God's law; do his commandments; do righteousness; be of a meek, lowly, pure, and merciful spirit; and bear so much good will, surely, to Christ, as to give a disciple a cup of cold water for his sake; at least, he must allow, he does allow, that men ought not to be offended in him; for he himself confesses, "they ought not to despise, if they cannot embrace him,"*—p. 96. And yet these are all evidences of an interest in Christ and eternal blessedness.\*

Mr. B. further objects that I "make faith warrantable and incumbent where there is an *impossibility*,"—p. 90. Well, whenever Mr. B. can find a man, or a body of men, whose salvation he can be assured is impossible, he is welcome from me to assure them they have no warrant, and are under no obligation, to believe in Christ. In some sense, the salvation of every sinner is *possible*; as no one knows what will be his end, every man while in the land of the living is in the field of hope. And that was all I meant by *possibility*. Mr. B. allows that, "inasmuch as we *know not* who are and who are not the elect, it is the duty of every one, where the gospel of salvation comes, to be concerned, seek, inquire," &c.—p. 88. But what solid reason can be given for the consistency of this, which will not equally apply to the other? If it be said, These are things *expressly* commanded; I answer, This is allowing that if *faith in Christ is expressly commanded, it may be consistent with the subject in question; which is giving up the point.*

But further, Though I admit that the salvation of some men is *impossible*, that it is *certain* they will perish; yet I conceive it is not such a kind of impossibility as to render exhortations to believe in Christ inconsistent. It is no otherwise impossible for them to be saved than it was for Sihon, king of the Amorites, to have enjoyed the blessings of a peace with Israel. If

\* Psal. cxix. 165; Rev. xxii. 14; 1 John ii. 29; Matt. v. 3-9; xi. 6; Mark ix. 41.



there is an *infinite* worth and fulness in the sufferings Christ, in themselves considered—if the particularity of redemption does not consist in any want of sufficiency in the death of Christ, but in God's sovereign purpose to render it effectual to the salvation of some men, and not of others; and in Christ's being the covenant Head and Representative of some men, and not of others—then the matter must be supposed to rest upon the same footing with all the rest of the Divine purposes. And as it was the duty of Sihon to have accepted the message of peace, and to have trusted in the goodness of him by whose order it was sent him, notwithstanding the purpose of God concerning him; so it may be the duty of every sinner to accept of the message of peace which is sent him by the preaching of the gospel, and trust in Christ for the salvation of his soul.

Objections equally plausible might be made to that case as to this. One might say, What end could be answered by a message of peace being sent? Peace was not ordained for him, but destruction; and his country was previously assigned to Israel for a possession; for him, therefore, to have received the message of peace, and trusted in the goodness of the God of Israel, would have been trusting in an impossibility. If told, the purposes of God are a great deep which we cannot fathom; that if we knew the whole system, we should see it otherwise; that there was no *natural* impossibility in the affair, no *such* impossibility as to cause any inconsistency in it; and that, in the present state, we must take the *revealed* and not the *secret* will of God for the rule of our duty; he might have replied, like Mr. B., True; but God's secret will is the rule of his conduct to us; and surely he has not decreed by giving Sihon up to hardness of heart, to leave him destitute of a right spirit, and then punish him for the want of it; this would be *cruel* and *shocking!*—p. 88.

After all that Mr. B. has said, it is evident from the above manner of speaking that he does, in fact, make the decrees of God rules of human action; and herein lies a considerable part of the difference between us. We believe the doctrine of Divine predestination as fully as he does, but dare not apply it to such purposes.

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## SECTION XI.

REPLY TO MR. B.'S THIRTEENTH LETTER ON THE TENDENCY OF THESE PRINCIPLES TO ESTABLISH THE DOCTRINES OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY, DIVINE GRACE, THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT, ETC.

I HAD observed that the sentiment I opposed, as well as that which I attempted to establish, “represented man as utterly *unable* to do things SPIRITUALLY GOOD; but then it made THAT inability to be no part of his depravity, but altogether innocent in its nature.” Mr. B. quotes this passage, not, however, as I wrote it, but very differently in sense as well as in words, and then finds fault with that which he himself had inserted,—p. 96. I never imagined that he would maintain men's aversion from all “moral good” to be innocent, nor even their *aversion* from spiritual things; though I did not suppose he would have allowed that aversion to make any part of their *inability*. Mr. B. complains of being injured, in that he is represented as maintaining the inability of man to things spiritually good to be altogether innocent. What I affirmed was, that “the sentiment, when it spake *consistently* with itself, did so.” I think so still; for it appears to me an incon-

sistency for a man to be "both naturally and morally unable" to come to Christ. Something has been said upon this subject already; but as this is a subject on which Mr. B. frequently insists, let us examine it more particularly.

In the first place, Supposing men's inability to do things spiritually good to be partly natural, and partly moral, then, after all, it must follow that they are *in part* to blame for their non-compliance with those things; and so consequently the contrary must *in part* have been their duty. That this sentiment follows from the position of Mr. B. is certain; but whose cause it will subserve I cannot tell; it seems to suit neither. Mr. B., beyond doubt, means all along to deny every thing spiritually good being either *in whole* or *in part* the duty of carnal men. I have attempted on the other hand to maintain that such obedience is not merely *in part*, but *fully*, incumbent upon them. And one should think it either is incumbent upon them, or it is not; but the above position implies that it is neither.

Further, I question if both these kinds of inability can possibly obtain in the same instance. Where there is, and always was, an entire natural inability, there appears to be no *room* for an inability of a moral nature. It would sound uncouth to affirm of any of the brute creation, that they are morally as well as naturally unable to credit the gospel. It would be equally uncouth to affirm of a man in his grave, that he is unwilling as well as unable to rise up and walk.

That men are capable of *hating* spiritual things nobody will dispute. But it is impossible that there should subsist any aversion from what there is an entire natural inability to understand. We cannot hate that of which we have no idea, any more than love it. A brute, be his savage disposition ever so great, is incapable of aversion from every thing superior to his nature to understand. The same may be said of any being, intelligent or unintelligent.

I may be told, perhaps, that a *poor* man may be of such a temper of mind, that if he had a *natural* ability to relieve the distressed, he would still be under a *moral* inability. Be it so; it is not proper to say he is morally as well as naturally unable to relieve the indigent. It might with truth be said that he *is* morally unable to do such kind actions as are within his reach, and we may conclude he *would be* equally so to relieve the indigent, if his wealth were to increase. But this does not prove that moral inability can exist without natural ability. Besides, the inability of the *poor* man to relieve the distressed is not *in every respect* total, and so is not of equal extent with that pleaded for in carnal men, as to the discernment of spiritual things. No man, however poor, is destitute of those faculties and powers of mind by which generous actions are performed. It is impossible, perhaps, to find a man naturally unable in every respect to do good in some way or other to his fellow creatures; or if a man of that description could be found, he must be utterly void of reason; and in that case he cannot be said to be morally as well as naturally unable to do good.

Those who possess great natural ability are capable of being the subjects of greater moral inability and guilt than others whose capacities are less. It is not in some men's power to be so wicked as others. And where there is and always was an *entire* natural incapacity, there is no place for an incapacity of a moral nature *in any degree*. Mr. B. denies that men either have or ever had any natural ability for the embracing of spiritual things. We reply, If so, they would be equally incapable of *rejecting* as of embracing them. The *aversion* of the human mind from things of that nature I conceive to be a strong additional argument in our favour; for which argument my thanks are due to Mr. Button. The above obser-

vations may be considered as a further reply to the quotation from Mr. Brine, —p. 57.

Can Mr. B. seriously pretend to maintain that his sentiments represent *human depravity* in an equal light with ours? It seems he wishes to have it thought so; but with what colour of evidence it is difficult to conceive. We suppose men's aversion is so great as to amount to a *total* moral inability, and so to render Divine influence absolutely necessary. But Mr. B. expresses his surprise that we should call this inability *total*,—pp. 56, 93. It seems, then, he does not think that the chain of men's native aversion from God and spiritual things is strong enough to keep them from coming to Christ, without having something else in conjunction with it.

But if this cannot be maintained, he seems certain of the advantage in one respect at least. "We certainly," says Mr. B., "lay man much *lower* than he does;" and this he thinks has a tendency to abase his *pride*, while our sentiments tend to gratify and promote it,—p. 96. It is true Mr. B. does lay man *lower* than we do; but it is observable that, so far as that is the case, it is not in the character of a *sinner*, but of a *creature of God*; not on account of what he has made himself, but on account of what God has made him; and if this is the way in which we are to be humbled, it might be done still more effectually if we were reduced to the condition of a stock or a stone.

In reply to what is said on the doctrine of *grace*, and the *work of the Spirit*, (pp. 1, 93, 97,) little need be said in addition to the above. Though Mr. B. sometimes speaks of men's inability as being *partly innocent* and *partly criminal*; yet, as was said before, it was manifestly his design all along to prove men *wholly* excusable in their omission of every thing spiritually good. But suppose it were otherwise; suppose they were only *in part* excusable; if it be a more glorious instance of grace, and a greater exertion of Divine influence, to save one who is partly innocent than one who is entirely to blame, it must be upon this principle, that, in proportion as criminality is lessened, the glory of Divine grace in salvation is increased; and if so, then the most glorious display of grace that could be manifested in our salvation, must be upon the supposition of our being altogether innocent!

"*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you,*" says Christ to his disciples, "*say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do,*" Luke xvii. 10. From this passage two things are observable: First, That obedience to God cannot merit any thing at his hands. Secondly, The reason why there is no such thing as merit in our obedience is, that all the good we have done, or may do, is *commanded*, is our *duty*. Hence it follows, 1. That the very idea of *duty* excludes merit, and cuts off boasting. 2. That the more attached we are to our duty, as such, the more distant we are from all pretence of merit or boasting. The very way to extirpate the notion of human merit is to consider all which we do as being our *duty*. 3. That if it were possible to perform any thing which does not come under the idea of duty, then would there be some ground for merit. If the foregoing observations be just, it scarcely needs asking, Which sentiment is it that cuts off boasting, that of faith being considered as a *duty*, or the opposite?

Perhaps it may be said, in answer to this, that when a man is enlightened by the Spirit of God, it is then his duty to believe. But I think, if it be not incumbent before, it will be difficult to prove it so at all. In this case the work of the Spirit upon the heart must constitute the ground of duty, and then it is necessary that the person should *know* that he is the subject of

this work, before he can see it is his duty to believe. But by what evidences can he obtain this knowledge? Surely not by his impenitency and unbelief; and yet, till he has repented and believed, he can have nothing better.

If it be as Mr. B. represents, the work of the Spirit must consist in giving us *new natural powers*. If we have no natural power to embrace spiritual things till we are regenerated, then regeneration must be the creation of natural power. And what this is different from creating a *new soul* is difficult to determine. Be that as it may, the creating of natural power cannot be a spiritual exertion any more than the creation of a leg or an arm, and so cannot be reckoned amongst the special spiritual operations of the Holy Spirit. Whatever *grace* there may be in it, it is no part of the grace of the *gospel*: it is no part of *salvation*. It is not any thing that became necessary through *sin*; for it is supposed that man was as destitute of it in his created as in his fallen state. One should think, therefore, it can be nothing which is given us *in behalf of Christ as Mediator*, or for which we shall have to praise him in *that* character to eternity.

Among a catalogue of other bad consequences imputed to my sentiments, they are said to be "distressing to saints,"—p. 105. 'This, for aught I know, may be just. They certainly have a tendency to convince both saint and sinner of abundance of sin, which the sentiments here opposed make to be no sin. It is no wonder, therefore, that true saints, by discerning their great obligations, both before and after conversion, to love the Lord Jesus Christ, should now be greatly distressed in a way of godly sorrow. Looking upon him whom they pierced, they mourn, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. But this, so far from being brought as an objection, ought to be considered as a corroboration. That which tends to soothe and quiet the minds of men, by giving diminutive representations of the causes of reflection and grief, is not the gospel. The gospel gives *peace* which passeth all understanding, and this is consistent with the exercise of the most pungent grief; but that quietness of mind which arises from a diminution of blame-worthiness rather deserves the name of *ease* than of *peace*, and is much more to be dreaded than desired.

It was acknowledged, in the former treatise, "that many who have dealt in addresses to unconverted sinners have dabbled in Arminianism." Mr. B. hence repeatedly represents me as acknowledging that they *tend* that way,—p. i. Pref. and p. 100. This I must beg leave absolutely to deny. There is no such acknowledgment, nor any thing like it; but the very reverse. Mr. B. cannot be ignorant that many who have maintained the doctrines of grace have more than dabbled in Antinomianism, and yet that is no proof that the doctrines of grace are really of that *tendency*.

As to the use that is made of my concession concerning the *manner* of addressing sinners, such as "Come to Christ now, this moment," &c., I might refer the reader for answer to the passage itself; yea, to that part of it which Mr. B. has quoted. Surely he had no reason to conclude that I thought a believing in Christ was a matter that might safely be deferred. He professes to maintain that men ought to be perfectly holy, in some sense or other; but does he ever say to his auditory, Be perfectly holy now, this moment?

One remark more on this subject requires a reply. I had attempted to remove the supposed absurdity of addresses to *dead* sinners, by observing that we supposed spiritual death to be altogether a criminal affair. Mr. B. answers, from Mr. Wayman, "It was man's sin to destroy a *moral* life, but it is not man's sin that he hath not a *spiritual* one. It is God's eternal grace that gives life,"—p. 102. To this it is replied, This position requires a higher

authority to support it than Mr. Wayman.\* If we admitted this sentiment as true, then, it is granted, our manner of address to unconverted sinners would be inconsistent; but we deny it. In order to prove our conduct absurd, it should be proved to be inconsistent with some *allowed* principle, and not barely with the principles of our opponents.

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## SECTION XII.

SOME SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS RECOMMENDED TO MR. B. AND THE READER.

THERE is great danger, in all disputes, of running into extremes. Mr. B. thinks my sentiments “the high road to *Arminianism*,” (p. 100.) and perhaps to “*something worse*,”—p. 2. I am not convinced, at present, of their having any such tendency. However, it becomes me to watch against every thing that might lead me aside from the simplicity of the gospel, be that what it may; and I hope I shall so far take Mr. B.’s advice. I hope also, in my turn, I may be allowed, without offence, to suggest a few serious hints to the same end. Mr. B. seems to think all the danger of erring to lie on one side (pp. i. ii. Pref.); it is allowed there is danger on that side, but not on that side only. In general, then, I wish Mr. B. to consider whether his principles do not tend to lead him farther than he seriously intends to go. Particularly,

*If, in the course of his ministry, he avoids giving the carnal part of his auditory to understand that God requires any thing of them which is spiritually good, whether it will not be natural for them so to understand it as to reckon themselves not at all obliged to love God, to be truly holy, to be the subjects of any internal religion whatever; and whether they do not, in fact, so understand it.* Whatever difference there is between these things in the opinion of the preacher, I incline to think not one *hearer* in a hundred makes any account of it. They understand it of every thing which concerns the *heart*. The generality of those who would be offended with us for enjoining spiritual obedience upon our carnal auditors would, I apprehend, be equally offended with Mr. B., were he to signify that they ought to worship God *in spirit and in truth*, or to *love* him with their whole heart. Were any thing of this sort delivered, and nothing added to explain it away, it is likely the preacher would be interrogated in some such manner as this: How can unregenerate sinners *love* God, or worship him *in spirit and in truth*? You might as well call to the dead to come forth, or bid people take wings and fly to heaven. Their business is to attend the means, and if God please to give them a heart to love him, well and good; but if not, to what purpose are all your harangues about what people *ought* to do? Cease this legal business, preach the doctrines of the gospel, and leave the Holy Spirit to do his own work.

In the above, no respect whatever is had in a personal way to Mr. B. or any of his friends. What is written is founded upon such facts as have fallen under my observation; and I suppose that the same causes are usually productive of the same effects in one place as in another.

\* “It is not man’s sin that he *hath not* a spiritual one:”—If spiritual life be what we never had, then we cannot be said to be *spiritually dead*; for death is not a mere negative, but a privative idea. “It is God’s eternal grace that gives life.”—True; and is it not God’s eternal grace that gives to a fallen creature a conformity to his *holy law*? and yet it does not follow from thence that it is not man’s duty to have it.

Further, It may be well for Mr. B. to consider, *while he professes to allow that men ought to do whatever was in the power of man in a state of innocence, whether his sentiments do not insensibly lead him to excuse men from every thing but what may be done by a wicked mind, without any true love to God, or regard for his glory.* Mr. B., when asked in controversy "whether any internal religion is now required of men towards God or not," answers in the affirmative,—p. 72. But is it a matter which his views of things would ever, of their own accord, lead him to dwell upon? I am glad to see the frankness with which he expresses himself concerning the law of God being *exceedingly broad.* "If the principles I have advanced," says he, "contradict this truth, let them for ever be discarded,"—p. 95. Mr. B.'s meaning, in this ingenuous sentence, cannot be supposed to amount to less than this—that if he perceived his present sentiments to clash with the spirituality of the law, he would disown them; and if he found them to have such a *tendency*, he would at least suspect them. Now I desire, in this matter, to be determined by *facts*; and by facts that cannot fairly be disputed. I ask, then, in what manner do Mr. B.'s sentiments lead him to **EXPOUND SCRIPTURE?** How has he expounded the second Psalm and the sixth of Jeremiah? What has he made these passages to require more than *external obedience?* It is not the tendency of all he says concerning the addresses of Christ and his apostles to their carnal auditors to reduce them to the capacity, not of a right spirit, such as man possessed in a state of innocence, but of an *apostate mind?* Are they not all along made to mean no more than what may be done without any real love to God, or regard for his glory? Is not such a sense put upon Isa. xlii. 18, "Look, ye blind," &c., as that its requirements shall be "**WITHIN THE COMPASS OF NATURAL MEN, WHO ARE INTERNALLY DEAF AND BLIND?**"—p. 103.

This is certainly a serious matter; and I hope Mr. B. will seriously consider it. If he does indeed believe the law to be spiritual, and to require internal religion, it is hoped he will, on all proper occasions, acknowledge it, and not attempt to bring down the precepts of the Bible to the dispositions of an apostate creature; otherwise people may be ready to say he holds the spirituality of the law as some others do the doctrines of grace, who never think proper to mention them, except when an occasion offers to explain them away.

If any thing in the preceding pages should be thought unkind, or exceeding the liberty we are allowed to use with a Christian brother, I hope for Mr. B.'s forgiveness. I can truly say, If there is, it is unknown to me. It has been my endeavour, all along, to make him feel nothing, except it be the force of truth.

Before I conclude, I would beg leave to recommend a few serious hints to the *reader.* Whoever he is, and whatever his opinion may be in reference to this controversy, let me entreat him to put one serious question to his own soul, "**Dost thou believe on the Son of God?**" Let him remember that nothing less than his eternal salvation or destruction hangs upon the answer; that the question *must* be answered, sooner or later; that there is no medium between being Christ's friend and his enemy; and that it is not taking this or the other side of a dispute that will denominate any man a Christian. Neither let him evade the question by answering that he has already been acknowledged as a believer in Christ, is a member of a Christian church, perhaps a preacher of the gospel, and has long been in the habit of taking this matter for granted, and of sitting in judgment upon other men and other things. All this may be true; and yet things may issue in a dreadful disappointment!

But supposing the reader a real Christian, still there is great reason for

prayer and watchfulness. Reading controversies may be advantageous, or it may be hurtful; and that according to the spirit with which it is attended to. Every man had need to read with some degree of judgment of his own; and yet if he set out with a determination to receive nothing but what shall accord with his own present view of things, he is likely to derive no real good, and perhaps much harm. He may meet with what confirms him in his sentiments, and those sentiments may be on the side of truth; but if he have such a determination, though his creed is right, his faith is wrong; especially if it lead him to despise others who think differently, and to glory over them as being confuted. On the other hand, he may meet with that which contradicts his sentiments; he may reject it with abhorrence; and, in so doing, think his heart very much established with grace, so as not to be carried away with every wind of doctrine; and yet all may amount to nothing but a being *wise in his own eyes*.

We are never so safe as when we go about these matters with prayer, fear, and trembling. The subject here discussed is not a mere matter of speculation; it enters deeply into our spiritual concerns, relating both to this life and that to come. It is a matter, therefore, that is well worthy of earnest prayer, and of serious and impartial attention. If truth is but sought in this manner, it will be found. "*The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.*"

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## REPLY TO THE OBSERVATIONS OF PHILANTHROPOS.

It may appear somewhat extraordinary that the same sentiments should be liable to opposition from two gentlemen of such contrary principles as Mr. BUTTON and PHILANTHROPOS. It may be less surprising, however, when it is considered that there are certain points in which the most opposite extremes are known to meet. An attentive reader will perceive a great affinity in the tendency of their reasonings on various subjects. If I am not greatly mistaken, they both particularly agree in denying faith in Christ to be a duty required by the *moral law*; and in excusing the sinner, unless *grace* is bestowed upon him, in his non-compliance with every thing spiritually good.

As to the *spirit* of Philanthropos, he has treated me with candour and respect. Though I quite disapprove of many of his sentiments, and though I think he has written in some places (pp. 88, 92, 93) in a manner bordering on irreverence, yet, so far as it concerns myself, what he has advanced has never, that I remember, "given me a moment's pain." He has examined with freedom what I advanced. I respect him for so doing. I can, with the less fear of offence, use a like freedom in return.

Complaint is made of the use of the terms Arminian, Calvinist, &c.,—pp. 52–56. When I have used the former of these terms, I am not conscious of ever having used it as "a term of reproach." As to calling P., or any other person, an Arminian, I never desire to affix to an honest man a name by which he would not call himself. For my own part, though I never mean to set up any man as a standard of faith, and though in some things I think differently from Calvin, yet as I agree with him in the main, particularly in the leading sentiments advanced in the former treatise, and as it served to avoid unnecessary circumlocution, I have used the term Calvinist, and have no objection to being so called by others. Whether P. is an Arminian or

not is of very little account with me; it is not very difficult, however, to discern the leading features of his scheme in the works of those who have chosen to be called by that name. But complaint is further made of the Arminian divines being misrepresented,—p. 52. Though I have no better an opinion of Arminius's doctrine of the Spirit's work, as given us by P., (p. 53,) than I had before, and though I believe it would be no difficult matter to prove that the generality of Arminian divines have carried matters further than Arminius himself did, (as P. seems in part to admit,\*) yet I acknowledge what I said on that subject, in the passage referred to, was too strong, though, at the time I wrote, I was not aware of it.

To what is said in p. 10, I have no material objection. What I meant was merely to disown that any sinner was encouraged by the gospel to hope for eternal life, without returning home to God by Jesus Christ. The omission of part of Isa. lv. 7, as also the mistake respecting the prayer of the publican, were altogether without design.

There are some remarks which, I think, are made merely for want of considering that those with whom I was in debate were professed Calvinists. Thus, in p. 30, I am corrected for taking for granted that which should have been proved. Had the controversy been with P., or those of his sentiments, the observation had been just; or had I called any sentiment, which was professedly a subject in debate, a "gospel doctrine," as P. has done, (p. 38,) perhaps the complaint had been made with greater propriety.

I need not have any dispute with P. concerning the *definition* of faith; for though he tells his correspondent that I "do not suppose faith to include in it *confidence*," yet he knows I, all along, maintain confidence, or trust, to be incumbent on men in general. God ought, no doubt, to be trusted, or confided in, for the fulfilment of whatever he has *promised*, be that what it may. I acknowledged before that "faith in Christ, as generally used in the New Testament, was to be taken in a large sense; as including not only the belief of the truth, but the actual outgoing of the soul towards Christ in a way of *dependence* upon him,"—p. 23. My views of *trust*, or confidence, will be seen more fully in the Third Section of this Reply.

By what I said of believing the gospel report, and of this report *extending* not only to general truths, but to the particular description of their intrinsic nature, I certainly did not mean, as P. has understood me, "that all poor sinners, who are brought to the enjoyment of salvation, must have the very same ideas of whatever God hath reported concerning Christ and his salvation; and this to the very same *extent*,"—p. 17. My intention was to prove that a real belief of the gospel report carried in it a belief of its *glory* and *importance*, and so included more than it was frequently supposed to do. Many persons, observing that people would avow the general doctrines of Christianity, and yet live in a course of sin, have hence concluded that a belief of the gospel was no more than a man might have, and perish everlastingly. It was this opinion that I meant to oppose; and by proving that a real belief of the gospel is a belief of its *intrinsic nature*, as well as of its general truths, I suppose I proved what was there intended, viz. that it extends further than the faith of any wicked man, let him have assorted his notions with ever so much accuracy.

\* If I am not misinformed, the Remonstrants, in their *Apology*, maintained that "that ought not to be commanded which is wrought in us; and cannot be wrought in us which is commanded; that he foolishly commandeth that to be done of others who will work in them what he commandeth."—Chap. 9, p. 105. And to the same purpose Episcopius: "That it is a most absurd thing to affirm that God either effects by his power, or procureth by his wisdom, that the elect should do those things that he requireth of them."—Disp. pri. 8. Thes. 7. These sentiments, if I understand them, amount to the same thing as "*denying the necessity of the Spirit of God to enable us to do our duty.*" The above passages are taken from Dr. Owen's Display of Arminianism, c. X.



There is a great difference between a want of ideas, through a natural weakness of intellect or lack of opportunity to obtain them, and a positive rejection of what God has revealed. There is an equal difference between a Christian of weak capacity believing the intrinsic excellency of the gospel, and "being able to *describe* it, or even to ascertain all the general truths of Christianity." The weakest Christian believes and lives upon THAT in the gospel of which a wicked man, whatever be his intellects and advantages, has no idea. "We ALL, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." But "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."

P. allows the necessity of believing the gospel, (p. 16,) and yet seems, afterwards, rather to wish to set this idea aside, and to place the essence of faith in *trusting* or *confiding* in Christ for salvation,—pp. 17, 18. But shall we not talk without meaning, if we talk of confiding in Christ without respect had to something testified, or some *rule* by which our confidence is to be directed? If we dispense with the *truth of God*, as the warrant and rule of our confidence, however it may become very extensive, and fit professors of opposite ways of thinking, it will be found, at the great day, no better than a building erected upon the sand.

As to the question, "To what *degree*, or *extent*, must a poor sinner believe the truth of the gospel?" (p. 16,) it is not for me to answer it. If I were asked, "To what degree of *holiness* must a man arrive in order to *see the Lord*?" I should be equally unable to reply. That men have different natural capacities and opportunities is certainly true, and according to the different degrees of these are their obligations both to receive God's truth and to exert themselves for his glory. That there is also great *contrariety* of sentiment is equally true: and how far the mercy of God may extend, through the death of his Son, in passing over the errors of men's minds, or those of their conduct, is not for me to say; but I think it is our business to maintain a *rule* for faith as well as for practice.

But, waving lesser remarks, the substance of what is advanced may, I think, be reduced to the following heads:—Whether regeneration is prior to coming to Christ, as a cause is prior to its effect;—whether moral inability is or is not excusable;—whether faith in Christ is required by the moral law;—and whether an obligation upon all those to whom the gospel is preached to believe in Christ, and the encouragements held out to them to do so, is inconsistent with a limitation of design in his death. On each of these subjects I shall make a few remarks.

## SECTION I.

### WHETHER REGENERATION IS PRIOR TO OUR COMING TO CHRIST.

THOSE writers whose sentiments I made free to examine generally maintain a distinction between the principle and the act of faith. I did not dispute this matter, but admitted it; and, upon those principles, endeavoured to prove the point then in question. P. greatly disapproves of this distinction, and asks "wherein the distinction lies;" and where the Scripture teaches us to make it,—p. 14. The difference between a principle and an actual exertion was supposed to be illustrable by a principle of *honesty* being previous to an upright conduct; but P. thinks this will not answer the end, because

faith is purely *mental*; it being *with the heart* that man believeth. Although this is true, yet I see not how it affects the matter. A principle of honesty is as necessary to a *purpose* to act uprightly (which is a mental exertion) as it is to the action itself.

It is not supposed, however, that there is a distinct principle wrought in the heart, which may be called a principle of *faith*, in distinction from other graces; but rather a new turn or bias of mind, previously to all acts or exercises whatsoever, internal or external, which are spiritually good. And if faith is an act of the mind at all, if especially it be taken for the soul's *coming* to Christ, as P. contends, then, unless *an evil tree can bring forth good fruit* there must be a new bias of mind previously to such an act. Again, coming to Christ, if it be a duty, (and P. will allow it is,) must be something *pleasing* to God; and, if this may be done prior to the Spirit of God dwelling in us, then it should seem, notwithstanding what the Scripture affirms to the contrary, that they *who are in the flesh MAY please God*; for every man is in the flesh, till the Spirit of God dwelleth in him, Rom. viii. 8, 9.

One should think that not only Scripture, but a common observation of the workings of our own minds, might teach us the need of a bias of mind different from that which prevails over men in general, in order to their coming to Christ. Whoever be the *cause* of such a bias, let that at present be out of the question: suppose it is man himself, still a turn of some sort there must be; for it will hardly be said that the same thoughts and temper of mind which lead a man to despise and reject the Saviour will lead him to esteem and embrace him! That a turn of mind is necessary to our coming to Christ seems evident, then, from the nature of things; and if so, our mistake must lie, if any where, in ascribing it to the Spirit of God.

Whether the first beginning of God's work upon the mind consist in giving us a *spiritual discernment*, whereby *spiritual things*, or the importance and glory of Divine truth, are discerned, or whether it consist in a Divine energy attending the word itself, causing it to break in as it were upon the mind, and bear down every opposition before it, are questions each of which has its difficulties. But whatever difficulties might attend a discussion of these questions, and whatever might be the issue, it would very little, if at all, affect the *present controversy*. If it is said, It *does* affect it—for if the first beginning of God's work upon the mind is *by* the word, it must be by the word *believed*; I answer, first, that this may be questioned. The word, it is true, must be *understood*, in a measure, in order to have any effect; but it is a question with me whether a person must believe the gospel before it can have any effect upon him. We know that truth frequently maintains a long struggle with darkness and error before they are overcome; during which time it may be said that God has been at work upon the mind by means of his word; and yet that word cannot be said to be *believed* till the opposition drops, and the soul becomes a captive; in other words, till the heart is brought to set seal that God is true. If it is insisted that that degree of *conviction* which exists in the mind, while the heart remains unsubdued, is properly called *believing* the word so far as it goes, I shall not dispute about terms, but shall at the same time insist that it is not such believing as to denominate any person a *believer*. But, secondly, P. insists that true faith in Christ is something more than believing the Divine testimony; that it is the soul's actual *coming* to Christ; now if so, though the word should be allowed to be instrumental in the renewal of the mind, yet that renewal must precede believing, or the soul's application to the Saviour. So that, granting him all he can desire, it will not prove that regeneration follows upon believing, in his sense of the word.

The great question between us is this, WHETHER THE HOLY SPIRIT OF

GOD IS THE PROPER AND EFFICIENT CAUSE OF A SINNER'S BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST; OR WHETHER IT BE OWING TO HIS HOLY INFLUENCE, AND THAT ALONE, THAT ONE SINNER BELIEVES IN CHRIST RATHER THAN ANOTHER. If the first beginning of God's work upon the mind is *by* the word, let it but be granted that it is by the *agency* of the Holy Spirit causing that word to be embraced by one person, as it is not by another, and so as to become effectual, and we are satisfied. If this is but granted, it will amount to the same thing as that which we mean by regeneration preceding our coming to Christ, since the cause always precedes the effect.

But if I rightly understand P., he leaves out the agency of the Holy Spirit in the act itself of believing; maintaining that the Spirit is not given till after we have believed,—p. 22. If there is any Divine agency in the matter, it can be only a sort of grace which is given to men in common; and this can be no reason why one man believes rather than another; it is the man himself, after all, who is the proper cause of his own believing. It is owing to himself, it seems, that the good work is begun; and then God promises to carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ.

I cannot but think this sentiment highly derogatory to the honour of the Holy Spirit, and contrary to the tenor of the sacred Scriptures. In proof of this let the following observations be duly considered:—

I. The Scriptures not only represent salvation as being “through faith,” but they ascribe *faith itself* to the operation of the Spirit of God. Those who come to Christ are described as having first “heard and learned” of the Father, and as being *drawn* by him; nor can any man come to him, except it be *given* him of the Father. Nor can this *learning* be applied to the mere outward ministry of the word; for *all* who are thus *taught of God* do not come to Christ. *Faith*, as well as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness, is a *fruit* of the Spirit. “We believe according to the working of his mighty power;” a power equal to that which raised our Lord from the dead. *Faith* is expressly said to be “of the operation of God.” We are not only saved “by grace through faith,” but even “*that* is not of ourselves; *it is the gift of God.*”

If regeneration be brought about by any exertion of ours, it is not only contrary to all ideas of generation, (to which undoubtedly it alludes,) but also to the express testimony of Scripture, which declares that “we are born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”\*

Those parts of Scripture which speak of the instrumentality of the word in our sanctification take care to ascribe all to the *agency* of the Holy Spirit. They who understand the gospel, and who are changed into the same image, are represented as so doing “by the Spirit of God.” Christ did not pray that the truth might sanctify men, but that God would sanctify them *by* his truth. If the word become effectual, it is when it comes “not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.” If it bring about the *salvation* of those who believe, it is *the power of God* to that end.†

II. The Scriptures represent *all the great instances of conversion as effects of some peculiar outpourings of the Spirit of God*. We may instance *two* periods; the time of the great conversion in the Apostles' days, and the time of latter-day glory yet to come. Of the *former* of these periods it was promised, “The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing *in the day of thy power.*” And again, “In that day will I pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of

\* John vi. 44, 45, 65; Gal. v. 22; Eph. i. 19; Col. ii. 12; Eph. ii. 8; John i. 13.

† 2 Cor. iii. 18; John xvii. 17; 1 Thess. i. 5; Rom. i. 16.

supplications, and they shall mourn."—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened," &c. These promises were gloriously accomplished soon after Christ's ascension, when thousands of those who had voted for the crucifixion of the Messiah became captives to a conquering grace!

The Lord Jesus himself preached to these very people; yet, though he was the greatest of all preachers, he laboured in vain. They believed not his report. He was a rock out of a dry ground in their eyes. How came they to believe the apostles rather than him? To what cause can it be ascribed but to *the arm of the Lord being revealed*? To what cause can we ascribe their superior success, not only in Judea, but throughout the Gentile world, except to the *Spirit being poured down from on high*, in consequence of Christ's ascension? Christ told his disciples that they should do the works that he did, and *greater* works than those, "because," says he, "I go unto my Father." Yes; hence it was that the Spirit of truth was sent, not only to comfort believers, but to *convince the world of sin*.\*

The *prayers* of the apostles and primitive ministers show that their hope of success did not arise from the phibleness of men's tempers, or the soundness of the gospel in their dispositions, but from the power of Almighty God attending their ministrations. "The weapons of their warfare," however lined in the purpose, "were mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." To God they sent up their earnest and unmed petitions before they opened their commission. Meeting in an upper room, "they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." And afterwards, we find the apostle Paul requesting his Thessalonian hearers to pray for him and his associates in the work of the ministry, "that the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified."

The great accessions to the church of God in the *latter days* are ascribed to the same cause. In the *Old* chapter of Isaiah, after abundance of such promises of a large and glorious increase, after the multitudes of conversions in Christ had been vigorously compared to a cloud, and the *flockings* of doves in their windows, the whole is thus concluded: "Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." A large one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: *I the Lord will hasten it in his time*! When the seventh angel sounded, and voices were heard, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms our Lord, and of his Christ," the four-and-twenty elders immediately fell upon their faces, and blessed him who was, who is, and is to come, because he had *taken to him his great power, and reigned*!

But if the Spirit of God is not the cause why one sinner believes in Christ rather than another, then he is not the cause why there are more believers at one period of time than at another. And if so, to what purpose are the before-mentioned *prayers* and *promises*? As to the *former*, however strongly they speak of *latter-day* glory, and of *God's taking to him his great power, and reigning*, they are, after all, mere predictions of what *will* be, rather than promises of what *shall* be. The same may be said of the promises concerning the success of the gospel after Christ's ascension. As to the *latter*, to what purpose was it to *pray* for what they already had? They had a gospel adapted to the condition of lost sinners; and as to *Divine* grace, if any thing of that be necessary to a reception of it, their hearers are supposed to have had a sufficiency of that already bestowed upon them, otherwise it would have been a mockery to address them. Now, if things are so, might not the apostles have expected some such an answer to their prayers as was

\* Isa. liii. 1. xlii. 17. John xiv. 17; xv. 26.

\* 1 Cor. x. 4. Acts i. 14. 2 Thess. iii. 1.

given to Dives? "They have Moses and the prophets," yea, Christ and the apostles, "let them hear them;" I have given them grace sufficient already; I shall do nothing more in order to their conversion, nothing at all, until they have believed.

III. The Scriptures represent God as having a *determinate design* in his goings forth in a way of grace, a design which shall never be frustrated. "My counsel," saith the Lord, "shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."—"I will work, and who shall let?" In the sending forth of his gospel, particularly, he speaks on this wise: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." But the scheme of P., if I understand it, supposes no such design. On the contrary, it supposes that God, in sending his Son into the world, and the gospel of salvation by him, never *absolutely* determined the salvation of one soul; that, notwithstanding any provision which he had made to the contrary, the whole world, after all, might have eternally perished: the Son of God might never have seen of the travail of his soul; the gospel might have been a universal savour of death unto death; and the whole harvest of the Divine proceedings "an heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow."

To say that God designed to save *believers*, and therefore his design is not frustrated, is to say true, but not sufficient. For how if there had been no believers to save? And there might have been none at all according to this scheme; and so, instead of the serpent's head being bruised by the Seed of the woman, Satan might at last have come off triumphant; and the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier of men might have been baffled in all the works of their hands!

IV. The character of the converted, during their carnal state, is frequently such as proves that their conversion is to be ascribed to sovereign, discriminating, and efficacious grace. It is not owing to any excellency in the objects, either *natural* or *moral*, that they are converted rather than others. The apostle appeals to the Corinthians in respect of the former kind of excellences: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish—the weak—and the base things of this world, to confound the wise, the mighty," &c. And all this is said to be, "that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him," continues the apostle, "*are ye in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord."

God bestows converting grace without any respect to *moral qualities*. The chief of sinners are frequently brought to believe in Christ before others, who are far behind them in iniquity. Numberless examples might be produced of this. I shall only instance the case of those two famous, or rather infamous, cities, Jerusalem and Corinth. The one had been guilty of shedding the Redeemer's blood, and the other was a sink of abominations. And yet there were more believers in these cities than in almost any other. How this can be accounted for, but upon the supposition of sovereign and invincible grace, is difficult to say. For whether the depravity of man is sufficient to overcome any grace that is not invincible or not, it will be allowed, surely, to have a *tendency* that way. And if so, one should think, the greater the depravity of any man is, the more improbable must be his conversion. The worst of sinners, therefore, believing before others, appears to be alto-

gether inexplicable on the scheme here opposed; but to sovereign and omnipotent grace every mountain becomes a plain; and to this the conversions in both these cities are attributed in Scripture. Of the one it was promised, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." As to the other, they were reminded that, though they had been of the worst of characters, yet now they were "washed—they were sanctified by the Spirit of God." And, before their conversion, the apostle was encouraged in preaching, by this testimony, "I have much people in this city."

V. The Scriptures represent the grace given by the Holy Spirit as being *effectual*, or as producing *certain* and abiding effects. One great difference between the covenant made with the whole nation of Israel at Sinai, and that which God promised to make with his elect under the gospel, appears to consist in this: that the former only propounded things by way of moral suasion, but the latter not only admits of this, but provides for its becoming effectual: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers—which covenant they brake.—But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." This seems to constitute one essential difference between the law and the gospel; on account of which the one is called the *letter*, and the other the *spirit*. The one is a mere inefficient rule of right and wrong, the other makes provision for the bestowment of the Holy Spirit. It is observable, also, that these promises, which respect the *first beginning* of real good in the soul, are in every respect *absolute*. When promises are made of things which *follow after* our believing, they are generally, if not always, connected with something good in the subject: thus it is promised that the *righteous* shall hold on his way, and that they that *endure to the end* shall be saved. But nothing of that kind is mentioned here.

If it is objected that, after mention made of some such things in the prophecy of Ezekiel, it is added, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," I reply, It is granted that nothing is more reasonable than that every man should pray to God to create in him a clean heart, and renew in him a right spirit; and yet nothing is more certain than that no man ever did so pray, in sincerity and truth, while under the dominion of sin. And if God, in the bestowment of a new heart, were to wait for this, not an individual would be found amongst the fallen race of man to be a recipient of his favour.\* But how, then, are we to understand the passage before cited? I answer, Does not the Lord there speak of what he would do for his *church*, in a way of increasing it *with men like a flock*? If giving a *new heart*, in the former part of the chapter, is to be understood of regeneration, God might make promises to them to renew souls for their enlargement, and these promises might be fulfilled in answer to *their* prayers, though not in answer to the prayers of the unregenerate.

VI. The apostle Peter styles those to whom he wrote, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, *unto obedience*." *Obedience*, it should seem, *in all its parts*, according to this passage, is that of which election and the sanctification of the Spirit are the proper causes. By the former they are *chosen to it*, through the latter

\* ————— Grace  
Comes unprevented, unimplor'd, unsought.  
Happy for man so coming! He her aid  
Can never seek, once dead in sins, and lost.—MILTON.

they are *fitted for it*. Now P. must admit that faith in Christ is not only the root of evangelical obedience, but that itself, being a duty, is a *part* of obedience. Hence it is that believing in Christ is called *obeying* him, (Rom. x. 16; vi. 17; i. 5; Heb. v. 9,) and the contrary is represented as *disobeying* him, 2 Thess. i. 8, 9; 1 Pet. iv. 17. It follows, then, that if election and the sanctification of the Spirit are the causes of our obedience, they must be the causes of our believing, and consequently must precede it, since the cause always precedes the effect. "GOD BE THANKED," says the grateful apostle, "that ye have *obeyed* from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you!"

VII. Whatever *difference* there is between us and others, we are taught in the Scriptures to ascribe it all to God, and not to boast as if it were of ourselves: "Are we better than they? no, in no wise."—"By the grace of God I am what I am."—"Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

That there is a *difference* between believers and unbelievers all will allow; but if the question be asked, "*Who maketh thee to differ?*" what must be the answer? If the scheme of P. be true, I should think it must be a person's *own self*, and not God. If he reply, "No, I do not maintain that man of *himself* can do any thing spiritually good, it is all by the *grace* of God." Be it so: this grace is supposed to be given indiscriminately to mankind in general. This, therefore, does not in the least alter the case. However the grace of God may be a *remote* cause of the good that is in me, yet it is easy to see that, upon this supposition, it is no cause whatever of the *difference* between me and another. My unbelieving neighbour had, or might have had, as much grace given him as I, but either he did not ask it, or did not improve the stock imparted to him, which I did. He resisted the Holy Spirit, but I was of a pliable temper, and yielded to his persuasions. I have, therefore, by a good improvement of the grace given or offered to me in common with my neighbour, to all intents and purposes, made myself to differ. But who am I personating?—Philanthropos?—No, surely! It is the language of his creed, not of him: no, no, whatever may escape from the lip or the pen, his *heart* must unite with ours, "NOT UNTO US, O LORD, NOT UNTO US, BUT TO THY NAME GIVE GLORY!"

If it is objected that the apostle is writing to the Corinthians concerning *spiritual gifts* and advantages, and cutting off their vain boastings on that score, and not concerning spiritual dispositions, I answer, There is in my opinion considerable evidence of the contrary.\* But be that as it may, the *reasoning* with which this is effected is equally applicable to the latter as the former. If there is any force in the apostle's reasoning, it certainly implies thus much, that if in any thing whatever we do make ourselves to differ, then we have so far a ground for boasting; and if as believers we make ourselves to differ from unbelievers, then boasting in the affairs of our salvation, after all, is not excluded; no, not by *the law of faith*.

I remember a noted writer admits as much as this, and maintains that though the primitive Christians had no reason to boast or glory in their enjoyment of spiritual gifts, seeing they were immediately infused without human industry, and were dispensed by God and by his Spirit according to his good pleasure; yet that is not the case in respect of virtue and pious dispositions: in these he avers we may boast; yes, in these we may glory in ourselves.† But I have too good an opinion of the humility of P. to imagine

\* See Gill's "Cause," &c., P. II. C. IV. No. XV., and Guyse's paraphrase and note on the text.

† Whitby, on 1 Cor. iv. 17. 'Tis true the Doctor observes, "that we having our faculties

that such sentiments can occupy his bosom. I cannot persuade myself that he has so learned Christ. I will venture to repeat it, whatever his hostile *creed* may affirm, his *heart*, especially in his near addresses to God, must accord with the apostle: "Of him," yes, *of him*, "are ye in Christ Jesus."—"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."\*

But it is time for me to attend to the REASONINGS and OBJECTIONS of P. upon this subject. Are there not passages of Scripture, it may be asked, which represent the Spirit as being given to us *after* we believe? Yes, there are; and to some of them P. refers us,—p. 22.† To which it is replied, The Holy Spirit is said to be given in other respects as well as for the purpose of regeneration. The Spirit was given for the endowing of the primitive Christians with extraordinary gifts and grace, (see Acts xix. 2,) and this is evidently the meaning of John vii. 39. The Spirit which they that believed on him were to receive was *not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. But surely the eleven apostles were not till then, in every sense, destitute of the Spirit of God. Further, the Holy Spirit was given as the Enlightener, Comforter, and Sanctifier of true Christians. Thus Christ promised to send them the Comforter to guide them into all truth; and this, it is apprehended, is the meaning of Eph. i. 13, 14, "After ye believed, ye were sealed," &c. The apostle prayed for these Ephesians (ver. 17) that God would give them the *Spirit of wisdom*, &c. We might as well infer from this that they were at that time destitute of the Spirit of God, as from the other that they were so in every sense till after they believed. Much the same might be said of the other passages produced.

That men are the *children of God by faith in Christ Jesus* is true; but I apprehend the godly sustain that character on two accounts. One is from their bearing the image of their heavenly Father, which is communicated in regeneration; the other is from their sharing the rights, privileges, and inheritance of the sons of God, which follow upon believing. The one is a work of grace upon us, the other an act of grace towards us. Both are mentioned by the evangelist John. (chap. i. 12, 13); and the former, I apprehend, is there represented as being prior to the latter.

As to the *consequence* which P. observes must follow—as that a man must be "regenerated and condemned at the same time," (p. 22,) I answer, This proceeds upon the supposition of a *period of time* taking place between regeneration and coming to Christ. When we speak of one being prior to the other, we mean no more than as a cause is prior to an effect which immediately follows. A blind man must have his eyes open *before* he can see; and yet there is no period of time between the one and the other. As soon

from God, the action may well be ascribed, and the whole glory must be due, to him." Indeed! If the *whole* be due to him, how is it that we are entitled to a part? Besides, how does this ascribe to God the glory of our being made to *differ*, seeing one is possessed of these faculties as well as another?

\* The hinge of a great part of the controversy between us turns on the solution of the above subject. That there is a difference between one man and another cannot be called in question. This difference is either to be ascribed to the grace of God, or to the goodness of the creature. If to the former, the supposition of God's making no difference between one man and another must be given up; if to the latter, then boasting is not excluded, but cherished, even by the law of faith.

It may seem as if we were wanting in our LOVE TO MANKIND; and, by the name my opponent has assumed, he seems to wish to remind us of it, and to suggest the superiority of his system in point of *philanthropy*. But it is not for human passions to govern the Divine conduct. We should rejoice in the salvation of the whole human race, if it pleased God; but the whole human race will not be finally saved. That is a fact admitted on both sides, and a fact which the utmost flow of philanthropy cannot alter; the question then with us is, Who deserves the praise of the difference between one man and another? If God has made no difference, we must have made it ourselves; and to us must belong the glory of that difference to eternal ages.

† These are John vii. 38, 39; Eph. i. 13, 14; Gal. iii. 2, 14



as his eyes are opened he sees. And thus it is supposed a man must be "born again," in order to "see the kingdom of God." A man of a wicked temper of mind must be *turned* to be of another spirit, before he can love or choose that which is lovely: but yet there is no supposable period of time between them; for no sooner is he turned than he is of another spirit, and does love and choose different objects from what he did before.

If, however, P. should not be satisfied with this answer, let him reflect, that if an absurdity remains, it is such a one as attends his own principles equally with ours. He supposes we receive the Spirit *after* believing, and refers us for proof to Eph. i. 13, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,"—p. 22. Now the Scripture is express, "He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his." We might therefore retort, and ask, In what condition is a man when he has believed, and before he has received the Spirit of Christ? He is supposed to be a believer, and therefore shall not come into condemnation; but yet, not having the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. To what master then does he belong? and to what world must he go, if he should happen to die in this condition? "But this is mere trifling!" Be it so: it is such as, when used against us, occupies the place of reasoning.

But "if men are regenerated before they come to Christ, then believing in Christ is not the *means* of a sinner's recovery, but only a *consequence* of that recovery,"—p. 23. Coming to Christ is the means of a sinner's enjoying the forgiveness of sins, with various other blessings, all included in the term *life* (John v. 49); but that is no proof that it is the means of his regeneration; which it cannot be, unless, contrary to every law of nature to which *regeneration* alludes, spiritual motion can precede and be the means of spiritual life. Perseverance is the means of our enjoyment of eternal glory; but it does not thence follow but that perseverance is a consequence of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

But if regeneration precede our coming to Christ, then "men are excusable, it is supposed, in not coming; and it must be absurd to exhort them to it while they are unregenerate,"—p. 22. If I understand this reasoning, the amount of it is this: If men are so bad that none but God can turn their hearts, then their badness becomes excusable; and if, in our exhorting them, no hope is to be placed *in them*, then neither is there any to be placed *in God!* Were I to enter the company of a malicious rebel, with a view to persuade him to go and cast himself at the feet of his abused sovereign, I should have no hope of succeeding, or of bringing him to a compliance, while he remained under the dominion of such a spirit. "Why, then," it may be asked, "do you exhort him to it, till you see his spirit changed?" Why? What if I go in hope of being instrumental in the changing of his spirit? Suppose I urge upon him the goodness of the law he has broken, his wicked and unreasonable revolt, his great and imminent danger, and, above all, the clemency of the prince towards returning rebels; suppose I conjure him, therefore, to go and submit to mercy; may not all this be done without imagining that going and submitting to mercy is a matter so easy that it may be done by a person possessing a mind still under the dominion of wickedness? May it not rather be done in the hope that such means may be succeeded to the reducing him to a right spirit?\*

\* But might we not, upon these principles, as well let them alone? Some, I am aware, of very different sentiments from P., would say we might; and that such a mode of exhorting is only setting them to *work*, which tends to fill them with an idea of their *own righteousness*. It is granted, if the *works* to which they are directed are mere *external* things, such as are "within the compass of a carnal heart," and such as they may go on in with ease, then it may tend to lift them up with pride and self-sufficiency. But if things which are spiritually good are pressed upon them, and they go about a compliance, it is so far

This also may serve for a reply to what P. observes on "exhorting those who are in doubt of their conversion to apply to Christ,—p. 25. I think, with him, it is much better to direct such persons immediately to apply to Christ, than to set them about examining the evidences of their regeneration to the neglect of that. And though he is pleased to call this "absurd and ridiculous" upon my principles, yet he has not condescended to back that assertion with any thing like evidence. If regeneration were that which constituted our *warrant* to apply to Christ, his reasoning would be just; but if it is only a begetting in us a *right spirit*, a spirit to comply with the warrant which we already have, then there is no weight in it. All right action, whether corporeal or mental, must proceed from a right spirit; yet if a man were in doubt whether he was of a right spirit, which would be reckoned the most ridiculous, to exhort him to right action, or to set him to examine his spirit by rules of theory, and bid him wait till he found he was of a good spirit, and then perform a good action? The latter would be pernicious, or, to say the least, perplexing; but a compliance with the former would be attended with both safety and satisfaction.

P. frequently makes mention of a passage from Mr. Caleb Evans, which I also had quoted, and which is as follows: "The calls and invitations, the promises and threatenings of the word of God, are means which every one knows are in their own nature adapted to remove a moral indisposition of the mind, just as much as the prescription of a physician, or the operations of a surgeon, are suited to remove any natural disorder of the body." He also frequently speaks as if the reason why the gospel, rather than the law, succeeded to the conversion of a sinner was because of this fitness, adaptedness, or innate tendency of which it is possessed,—p. 67. But, it should be observed, Mr. Evans's words are not spoken simply of the *gospel*; they are spoken of the *threatenings* as well as the promises in the word of God, which, I should think, are no part of the gospel; though, as P. some where expresses it, they are necessarily attendant on it, and so make a part of the ministerial message.

Further, Our dispute is not whether the gospel be a suitable means in the hand of the Holy Spirit to convert a sinner, but whether it is sufficient, in virtue of this its suitableness, to effect the change without an almighty and

from having a tendency to promote self-righteousness, that it is the most likely means to destroy it. People who never *try* to repent, pray, &c., generally think they can do these things at any time. Putting a person to the experiment is the most likely way to convince him of his insufficiency, or, in other words, of his dreadful depravity; and, if this is but effected, he will then cry in earnest to the strong for strength. I believe it is God's usual way thus to convince people of their insufficiency. While Saul went on in *external* services, he was at ease, alive, and in high spirits, not doubting but that all was right, and that he was doing God service; but a view of his great obligations to things spiritually good discovered to him a world of iniquity of which he had never thought. It was from this period that his self-righteousness received its fatal wound; yes, then it was that *sin revived*, and *he died*, Rom. vii. 9. Now if this is God's usual method of working, surely we ought not, as ministers, to set ourselves against it, but rather to concur with it.

It is worthy of remark, how well our opponents here agree amongst themselves. 'Tis true they differ in some respects: some think coming to Christ a matter so easy that an unregenerated heart may somehow or other accomplish it; the others cannot think so, and therefore confine their exhortations to things of an external nature. But both agree in this, that men should not be exhorted to any thing but what may be done by an unregenerate heart; that is, by a heart at enmity with God. "Surely," says P., "it cannot be sin for men, as depraved, not to attempt that which the word tells them they *cannot* perform,"—p. 23. And the reasonings of Mr. Button are frequently of the same tendency. But whether such a position be agreeable or contrary to the word of God, let the following passages, amongst many others, determine: Jer. vi. 8–11, 15, 16; Matt. xii. 34; John v. 44, 45; viii. 43–46; Rom. viii. 8; 2 Pet. ii. 14. If Mr. Button should here complain, and say he has acknowledged that "*internal religion* is required of men in general," I answer, If Mr. B., or any other minister, does, indeed, exhort the carnal part of their auditory to any thing more than what is "within the compass of a carnal heart," then it is acknowledged they are not affected by what is above advanced.

invincible agency attending it. A sword is a suitable instrument to cause a wound; but it does not thence follow that it is of itself sufficient to effect this without a hand to wield it. Three things I would here beg leave to offer: 1. The Holy Spirit can and does make use of the *law* as well as the gospel, in a sinner's conversion. "I had not known sin," says the apostle, "but by the law."—"The law is a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ." 2. If the success of the gospel is to be attributed to its suitableness, then, I suppose, it must be on account of its containing *good tidings*; and so tending to slay men's native enmity, and to conciliate their hearts to God. But the Scripture represents the human heart as equally prone to abuse God's mercy as to despise his severity. "Let favour be shown to the wicked," says the prophet, "yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." The reason why men hate God is not because they consider him, in every sense, as their enemy; if so, could you but persuade them that God loved them, and Christ died for them, their enmity would subside. But is that indeed the case? Do not the generality of men consider God as their friend? Nor can you persuade them that they are under his displeasure. Yet this has no tendency to remove their enmity. What they hate in God is that from which their hearts are wholly averse, and that is, his *true character*. 3. The success which has attended the gospel is not ascribed to its supposed fitness to conciliate a sinner's heart, but to the power of Almighty God attending it. I hope this last has been sufficiently proved already. God ordered Moses to take a rod, and smite the rock. The rod, to be sure, was the means of breaking the rock; not, however, on account of its being *equal* to such an effect; the rock rather had a tendency to break the rod than the rod the rock. But an almighty energy attended it from Him with whom all things are possible.

That the gospel is suited to the state of men, as fallen, is granted (p. 23); it is suited to their forlorn *circumstances*, but *not* to their evil *propensities*. It could not be of God if it were. But to make believing in Christ something that may be done by a wicked mind is to reduce the gospel to the latter, rather than the former; and this contrary to the apostle's declaration, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God."

P. observes, that if believing is the effect of regeneration, then men certainly "ought to be taught this truth;" and seems greatly to tremble for the consequences of such teaching,—p. 22. It is granted there is a way of conveying this sentiment which is very pernicious; nevertheless, I see no reason why we should scruple the publishing of the sentiment itself in the course of our ministry. To tell a sinner he *cannot* love God, repent of sin and come to Christ, is only another mode of telling him that he has the very heart of a devil. "But this is killing work." It is granted; and all my hope is that God will please to succeed my labours, first to kill, and then to make alive. A conviction of our being utterly lost must precede an application to the Saviour. So long as a sinner can find any hope or any help in himself, he will never fall at the feet of Christ, as utterly undone. The whole need not a physician, but those that are sick. If it tends to drive sinners to *despair*, it is such a despair as lies at the foundation of gospel hope. The sinner may be *alive* without the law; but if he live to God, the commandment must first come, sin revive, and *he die*, Rom. vii. 9. So far from shunning to declare this sentiment, humiliating as it is, I should on that account rejoice to see it propagated throughout the earth. That which renders it peculiarly offensive is one thing on account of which it appears to me to be a truth: and that is, its laying the sinner absolutely at the Divine discretion, and cutting off all hope whatever but what shall arise from the sovereignty of God.

## SECTION II.

## ON NATURAL AND MORAL INABILITY.

ON this subject I find it difficult to collect the real sentiments of P. Sometimes he seems to admit of the distinction, and allows that I have written upon it with "perspicuity,"—p. 63. At other times he appears utterly to reject it, and to reason upon the supposition of there being no difference between the one and the other, and that to command a person to perform any thing with which it is not in the power of his heart to comply (for this, he must know, is the only idea we have of moral inability) is as unreasonable, unless grace is bestowed, as to "command a stone to walk or a horse to sing,"—p. 44. If this is indeed the case, the distinction ought to be given up. Be that, however, as it may, whether there be any real difference between natural and moral inability in point of blame-worthiness or not, P. knows that I suppose there is; by what rule of fair reasoning, therefore, he could take the contrary for granted, it is difficult to determine.

But, passing this, from the whole of what P. has written on this subject, I observe, there are *three* things which, somehow or other, either severally or jointly, are supposed to constitute even a moral inability blameless. One is, men could not *avoid* it; they were depraved and ruined by Adam's transgression; another is, its being so great in degree as to be *insuperable*; and the last is, if *grace* is not given sufficient to deliver us from it. "If," says he, "men could never *avoid* it, and *cannot deliver themselves from it*, and the *blessed God will not deliver them*, surely they ought not to be punished for it, or for any of its *necessary* effects,"—p. 67.

The *first two* of these suppositions, be it observed, are admitted by P. as *facts*. Men *are*, he acknowledges, born in sin, and "their inability to do things spiritually good is real and total,"—pp. 44, 57. They cannot love God, nor keep his holy law. Now these facts either do excuse mankind in their want of conformity to the law, or they do not. If they do not, why are they produced? If they do, there is no need for what respects the *last* supposition. There is no need, surely, for *grace* to deliver men from a state wherein they are already *blameless*. The *justice* of God, one should think, would see to that, and prevent the innocent from being condemned. But let us give each of these subjects a separate consideration.

I. *Men being BORN IN SIN, or inheriting their evil propensities from Adam's fall.* It has been observed already that P. admits the *fact*; now to admit this fact is, I should think, to admit a *constituted union* having taken place between Adam and his posterity, and yet the whole of what he says upon this subject proceeds upon the supposition of no such *union* existing; for he, all along, speaks of Adam and his descendants in a *separate* capacity. Thus he insists upon it that "*we* could not be to blame for what *we* could not avoid;" with many passages of the like kind. Very true; but if the notion of a union between Adam and his posterity be admitted, then it cannot properly be said *we* could not avoid it; for, in that case, he was the head, and we the members; the whole constituting one body, or, as it were, one person. A union of this nature must either be admitted or denied; if admitted, why consider the descendants of Adam in a *separate* capacity?—if denied, why speak of inheriting any thing from him, unless it were by ill example?

Infants are not to blame in a *personal* capacity; but if there be a union between the parent of mankind and his posterity, through which their depravity is derived, as it is supposed there is, they must be to blame *relatively*. No one, I suppose, can be to blame in a personal capacity, till he is capable of the knowledge of right and wrong; but it does not follow thence that, till then, he is *in every sense* blameless, for that would be the same thing as to be sinless; and if so, I see not how they can be said to be born *in sin*. If there is not blame somewhere, it will be very difficult to account for the misery and death to which infants are exposed, and for the apostle's mode of reasoning, who first asserts that before the Mosaic law *sin* was in the world, and then proves this assertion by the reign of *death*, "even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

That this is a difficult and awful subject is allowed; and so is the introduction of moral evil into the world, be it upon what hypothesis it may. It is a subject, however, which, in my apprehension, I must either admit, or reject the authority of the Bible; and when I had done that, my difficulties, instead of being diminished, would be abundantly increased. I therefore admit it upon the credit of Divine revelation; and herein, it seems, I have the happiness to agree with P. He admits that men become sinners in consequence of Adam's fall. The question, then, between us seems to be this: Whether to be a *sinner* is the same thing as to be a subject of *blame*; or whether there be a sort of sin which has nothing blameworthy in it, and a sort of sinners, who, nevertheless, are blameless beings.

P. admits of our being born with *impure propensities*, and yet supposes these propensities in themselves to be blameless. He reckons the whole blame to lie, not in being the subject of these propensities, but in the *exercise* and *indulgence* of them,—pp. 65, 66. I confess I cannot understand how this can consist either with his own sentiments, or with the nature of things. Not with his own sentiments; for he allows that "men are *ruined* and *depraved* by Adam's fall." But how can we be ruined and depraved by that which does not in any sense constitute us blameworthy? What though we derive impure propensities from him, yet if these propensities are innocent, how can they *ruin* us? how can they *deprave* us? Our depravity must consist in, and our ruin arise from, that which constitutes blame, and that alone; and if blame lies merely in the *indulgence* of impure propensity, and not in being the subject of the thing itself, why then it is there we have to look for the *beginning* of depravity and ruin, and no where else. How far these sentiments will agree likewise with the doctrine of human depravity, which P. assures us he by no means intended to oppose, may deserve his attention.

Further, I see not how the above sentiments can consist with the *nature of things*. If blame does not lie in being the subject of an evil disposition, because as individuals we could not avoid it; then, for the same reason, it cannot lie in the *exercise* of that disposition, unless that also can be avoided. And this is what P. seems to allow; for he extends blamelessness not only to evil dispositions, but to all their "necessary *effects*,"—p. 67. Now there is either a possibility of that *exercise* being totally avoided, or there is not; there is either a possibility, for instance, of a person living all his life without a *foolish thought*, or there is not. If there is, then there is a possibility of going through life in a sinless state; and if so, how are we depraved by Adam's fall? If there is not, then it must follow that the exercise of evil dispositions may be blameless as well as the dispositions themselves; and, contrary to the decision of Holy Scripture, that "the thought of foolishness" is not sin.

We may go on to distinguish an evil propensity from its *exercise*, till we

use words without ideas; for what is an evil propensity but an evil bias, or a bias of the soul towards evil? and whether it is possible to conceive of an inactive propensity in a rational being is doubtful with me. But suppose we may, the common sense of mankind never teaches them so to distinguish them as to excuse the one, and place all blameworthiness in the other. An impure propensity is an impure temper of mind, and a propensity to revenge is the same thing as a revengeful temper; but tempers of this description are so far from being excusable, that there is nothing mankind are more apt to censure. 'Tis true they cannot censure them but as they see them *discovered*, because they have no other method of knowing the evil stock but by its evil branches; but when they do discover them, they seldom fail to curse both root and branch.\*

Neither do people think of excusing a churlish, haughty, or covetous temper in any man, because of his father's being so before him. On the contrary, they often turn that very circumstance to his reproach. You are a villain, say they, *by nature*, and all your *family* were so before you.—If men offend one against another, strict inquiry is made whether the offence proceeded from an evil disposition, or from mere inadvertency; and, according as this is found, allowances are made. But I know not that it is ever asked how the party *came by* his evil disposition: that is a matter introduced into *divinity*, where God is the object offended; but it cannot be admitted into the common affairs of life between man and man. Now if the common sense of mankind never leads them to take this circumstance into consideration in matters between themselves, it is at least a presumptive argument that it will not bear advancing in matters of offence against God. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

That evil dispositions are in themselves blameworthy, notwithstanding their derivation from our first parents, not only accords with the common sense of mankind, but also with *the word of God*. The word of God requires us to *love* him with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength; but to love God in this manner supposes the absence of all evil propensity to rebel against him, and of every approach towards a spirit of contrariety to him. It must follow then, so long as this holy law of God is allowed to be an "infallible test of right and wrong," (p. 67,) that such a propensity is in itself sinful, being directly contrary to its righteous requirements. It is not merely a something which "*leads* to evil tempers," (as P. speaks, p. 66,) but it is itself an evil temper of the mind; a temper that can take no delight in God, or in any thing that bears his holy likeness.

Further, His idea of blameworthiness, if I understand it, agrees to nothing but *positive* acts of sin; the *exercise* or *indulgence* of an evil propensity can agree to nothing else. Now, according to this, there is no such thing as sin or blame in that universal want of love to God which has place in all unregenerate men, and to an awful degree in good men; for that, strictly speaking, is not so much a positively evil disposition as it is the absence of a good one. But if the law of God is the "test of right and wrong," this must nevertheless be found sinful; for it is the very reverse of what that law requires. If there is nothing blameworthy in the want of a heart to love God, nor even in a propensity to hate him, then surely the moral law must be

\* 'Tis true there are certain propensities which constitute a part of our nature as men, and which, therefore, are simply *natural*; the *excessive* indulgence whereof is nevertheless sinful. Thus *emulation* in itself is natural, but carried to excess it becomes *pride*. Thus also the *love of pleasure* is in itself natural, but carried to excess it becomes *voluptuousness*, &c. &c. But P. cannot justly pretend that when he makes blame to consist not in the propensity itself, but in the exercise or indulgence of it, he means these natural propensities, because he speaks of them as derived from Adam's fall, which these are not, and calls them *impure*, whereas these, in themselves considered, are a part of human nature in its purest state.

abrogated by man's apostacy, and can be no longer to us "the standard of right and wrong."

The law is said to have entered "that the *offence* might abound;" and "by the *law* is the knowledge of *sin*." The only certain rule, therefore, of determining what is *sin*, is to inquire into the extent of that unerring rule. Now the law, as given in the decalogue, requires love to God with all the heart, without making any allowance for our being born destitute of a disposition so to do. It should seem, therefore, that God considered the want of a disposition to love him as *offensive*; and gave the law, which requires such a disposition, that that offence might abound or be made manifest. But if there be nothing blameworthy in it, there can be nothing *offensive*; and if no offence exists, none can be *made to abound*.

P. allows my "reasonings on the extent of the moral law to be very conclusive." This I should think is rather extraordinary, but this is not all; he thinks "it would most certainly contribute much, under the blessing of God, to the conversion of sinners, if a due regard were always paid to it,"—p. 67. But, according to the reasoning above, I see no such tendency it could have. For the carnal mind of man is "enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be;" and they were born in this condition. How then could it promote rational conviction? Whatever tendency it might have to bring them to love the *Saviour*, it must be at the expense of their regard for the Lawgiver. Yea, it must fill them with greater enmity against him to hear of his requiring *that* of them which is not reasonable in their present circumstances should be required. If they are taught to consider the Lawgiver of the world as resembling a cruel Egyptian task-master, and the Saviour as one who came into the world to deliver them by repealing his rigorous edicts, then they may love the one and hate the other. But if the Saviour is viewed in his true character, as not coming to abrogate the law, but to *magnify and make it honourable*, to condemn the sinner's conduct while he saves his soul, then they cannot hate the one without equally hating the other.

"I do not know," says P., "that the Scripture ever blames man, much less condemns him, because he is born impure, or because he is the subject of impure propensities,"—p. 65. As to the actual execution of condemnation, it is not for me to say how far the mercy of God will be extended. If those who die before their evil propensities are reduced to action are all saved, I suppose they are saved through the mediation of Christ, and not taken to heaven on the footing of personal innocency. But in respect to *blame-worthiness*, I remember a man who once took blame and shame to himself for his original impurity, bringing it in amongst his penitential confessions that he was *shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin*, and that surely with an intention not to excuse, but to aggravate his crimes. In the same Psalm, and in the next sentence, after acknowledging the depravity of his *nature*, the penitent psalmist adds, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts:" which, I should think, must intend the *opposite* of that in which he had just confessed himself to have been conceived and shapen. Further, we are said to have been, "by nature, the children of wrath;" but one should suppose there could be no *wrath* due to us, if no blame were found in us.

P. asserts, that, in respect of the impurity of our nature, we are under a *natural inability* of avoiding it; which, therefore, must be innocent,—p. 65. But to call such an inability as this *natural*, is, I apprehend, to apply the term in such a manner as tends to produce a confusion of ideas. Whatever defect attends any man, which is simply natural, it must belong to some constituent part of his *nature*, or of that which constitutes him a *man*. If the definition which I have heretofore given of natural ability be just, (and

this P. has fully acknowledged, p. 64,) it must be either a defect in "rational faculties, or bodily powers, or opportunity to put those faculties or powers in exercise." But neither purity nor impurity, come by them how we may, are any constituent parts of human nature; a defect, therefore, in that matter, cannot, with propriety, be called a natural defect. The depravity of our hearts is not owing to natural weakness, either of body or mind, nor yet to the want of opportunity to know and glorify God. When we speak of it as being the *sin of our nature*, we use the term in a very different sense from what we do when speaking of *natural* inability. By the *sin of our nature*, we mean not any thing which belongs to our nature as human, but what is, by the fall, so interwoven with it as if it were, though in fact it is not, a part of it; and so deeply rooted in our souls as to become *natural*, as it were, to us.

But it will be said, It must be a *natural* inability; for it is not at our option whether we will be born pure or impure; it is, therefore, what we cannot avoid, in any sense whatever.—To this it is replied, as before, There is no justice, or fairness, in considering mankind as united to Adam, or not united, just as it may serve a purpose. If they are not to be considered as *one*, why speak of inheriting impure propensities? If they are, why speak of them in a separate capacity? To admit of a union between Adam and his posterity, and, at the same time, keep exclaiming, *We* could not avoid being sinners—*we* are not to blame, and ought not to suffer—is as unreasonable as if a criminal should complain, at the hour of execution, that he was to be hanged by the *neck* for what he had stolen with his *hands*. Whatever difficulty may attend us in this part, it is a difficulty that belongs not to the doctrine of natural and moral inability, but to that of *original sin*; a difficulty, therefore, which affects us no more than it does those who differ from us.

II. The next thing which P. considers as contributing to render even a moral inability blameless is its being so great in degree as to become *insuperable*. According to my principles, he says, our moral inability is invincible; and insists upon it, that if so, it is excusable. "No man," says he, "blames a lion because he has not the disposition of a lamb; and if a lion had the *understanding* of a man, yet *if he could not alter* his native ferocity, he would certainly be as unblamable as he is without understanding." The same reasoning holds good in all other instances,—p 68. To all which it is replied, If the mean that they *cannot but sin, though they would do otherwise never so fain*, it is granted all this reasoning is fair and just; it would then be a natural inability, and therefore excusable. But if this were all he meant, it would amount to nothing. If he mean any thing to the purpose, and thing different from that which he opposes, it must be this: that *if their hearts are so set in them to do evil, that though they could do otherwise if they would, yet they will not, but will be sure, in every instance, to choose the wrong path; THEN they must, of course, be excusable*. And if this be what he maintains, his reasoning appears to me not only inconsistent, but extravagant.

P. must know, surely, that when the terms *cannot, inability, &c.* are used in these connexions, they are used not in a *proper*, but in a *figurative* sense; that they do not express the state of a person hindered by something extraneous to his own will, but denote what we usually mean by the phrase *cannot find in his heart*; that depravity is not *natural* to us, in the same sense as ferocity is to a lion; that it is rather the ruin and disgrace of our nature than any part of it; and that therefore such comparisons are but ill adapted to illustrate the subject.

We suppose that the propensities of mankind to evil are so strong as to become invincible by every thing but omnipotent grace; but whether that is allowed or not, I think it must be allowed that they are such as to render



spiritual exercises very *difficult*; at least, they have *some tendency* that way. Now if the above reasoning be just, it will follow that, in proportion to the *degree* of that difficulty, the subjects thereof ought to be excused in the omission of spiritual exercises. P. supposes that, in this case, there is no difference between natural and moral inability; and his argument proceeds, all along, upon this supposition. Now we know that, in all cases where impediments are simply natural, it is not at all more evident that an entire inability amounts to a full excuse, than that a *great difficulty* excuses in a *great degree*. If, therefore, such reasoning be just, it must follow that men are excusable in exact proportion to the strength of their evil propensities; that is, they are excusable in just the same proportion as, according to the common sense of mankind, they are internally wicked, or culpable!

If we suppose a man, for example, in his younger years to have had but very little aversion to Christ, and his way of salvation; he is then *exceedingly wicked* for not coming to him. As he advances in years, his evil propensities increase, and his aversion becomes stronger and stronger; by this time, his guilt is *greatly diminished*. And if it were possible for him to become so much of a devil as for his prejudices to be utterly invincible, he would then, according to P., be *altogether innocent!*\*

P. thinks this matter so plain, it seems, that he even tells his correspondent, "neither he nor his friend (meaning me) could imagine that a command given, and not obeyed, renders the subjects of such command criminal, unless these subjects have power, or might have power, to obey such command,"—p. 43. If by "power" he had meant natural ability, I should certainly have accorded with the sentiment; but it is very plain he means to apply it to moral as well as natural ability, and then he is certainly mistaken. For I not only can imagine that to be the case, but do verily believe it. Yea, I can scarcely think that P. himself can believe the contrary; at least he will not, he cannot, abide by its just and necessary consequences. If what he says be true, it is either *possible that no offences should come*, or else no *woe* is due to those by whom they come, Luke xvii. 1. It must likewise follow that every man has, or might have, power to live entirely blameless through life, both towards God and towards man; for be it so that some degree of imperfection will continue to attend him, yet that imperfection, being supposed to be "a necessary effect" of the fall, cannot be *blame-worthy* (p. 67); and so it is possible for a fallen son of Adam to live and die blameless, and consequently, to appear in his own righteousness without *fault* before the throne of God. These consequences, however antisciptural and absurd, are no more than must inevitably follow from the position of Philanthropos.

"According to my principles," I am told, "men's moral inability is *invincible*,"—p. 68. If I have used that term in the former treatise or the present, it is for want of a better. It is easy to see that my principles do not so much maintain that the moral inability of men is such as to render all their attempts to overcome it vain, as that sin hath such a dominion in their heart as to *prevent any real attempts* of that nature being made. If a whole country were possessed by a foreign enemy, and all its posts and avenues occupied by his forces, and all the inhabitants dead that so much as wished to oppose him; in that case, to say his power was become invincible by any opposition *from that country* would hardly be proper; seeing all opposition *there* is subdued, and all the country are of one side. *Invincible* is a relative term, and supposes all opposition made, though made in vain. But moral inability is of such a nature, where it *totally* prevails, as to prevent all real and direct opposition being made. It is the same thing as for the "hearts of the sons of

\* See President Edwards on the Will, Part III. Sect. III.

men" to be "*fully* set in them to do evil"—to be "*full of evil* while they live;" for "every imagination of the heart" to be "*only evil*, and that continually." Now if we say this moral indisposition is invincible, it is for the want of a better term. What we affirm is this, rather: that, suppose it were conquerable, there is nothing of real good in the sinner's heart to conquer it. If sin is conquered by any efforts of ours, it must be by such as are *voluntary*. It is not enough that we be "rational beings," and that conscience suggests to us what ought to be (p. 66); we must *choose* to go about it, and that in good earnest, or we shall never effect it. But where the thoughts of the *heart* are only evil, and that continually, it is supposing a plain contradiction to suppose ourselves the subjects of any such volition or desire.

III. But it will be said, Though moral inability is total, yet it is conquerable by THE GRACE OF GOD; and this grace is given to every one in the world, or would be given, were he to ask it; and this it is which renders men inexcusable,—p. 66. Without this, P. avows that "any man, be his practices as vile as they may, may excuse himself from blame; and all real good whatever may be denied to be the duty of an unprincipled mind,"—p. 59. This seems to be his last and grand resort, and what he often dwells upon. The discussion of this subject will finish the present section.

I bless God that moral inability is indeed conquerable by the grace of God, though I question whether it is, or ever was, conquered by what P. calls by that name. But suppose, for argument's sake, we grant him his hypothesis, I question if it will answer his end. This grace is either *actually given* to all mankind, or *would be given* upon their application. If actually given, I should be glad to know what it is. Is it light in the understanding, or love in the heart? Is it any thing, or productive of any thing, that is truly good? If so, how does this accord with the description given of men, that their minds are *darkness*, their hearts *enmity*, and that there is none of them that *doeth good*, no, not one? Or is it something for which there is no name, a sort of *seed* sown in the heart, which, if neglected, will perish, but, if watered by human industry, will be productive? If so, the difficulty is not at all removed; for then the question is, whether a mind so depraved as to be *totally* unable to do any thing spiritually good will ever be inclined to improve that grace, to water the seed, so as that it may bring forth fruit.

If the latter member of the position be adopted, viz. that all mankind *might have* grace sufficient to overcome their moral inability, if they would apply for it; still the question returns, will a mind *totally* destitute of any thing spiritually good, and *fully* set upon doing evil, apply to God for grace to such an end? Is it not inconsistent for a tree that is *wholly* evil to bring forth good fruit? Or are we to imagine, after all, that Satan will rise up against himself? To apply to God in any right manner for grace, for the cure of an evil propensity, must suppose a desire to have that propensity cured; but to suppose a person totally under the dominion of a propensity, and at the same time properly and directly desiring to have such propensity removed, is what some people would call by the hard name of self-contradiction.†

Further, I query if the hypothesis of P., instead of answering his end, will not be found subversive of itself, and destructive of his main design. Making this supposed grace the only thing which constitutes men accountable beings is making it *debt*, surely, rather than *grace*. I have too good an opinion of the humility and integrity of P. to imagine he *intends* merely to compliment the Almighty in calling it *grace*; but I think it becomes

\* Eph. v. 8; Rom. viii. 7; iii. 12.

† See President Edwards on the Will, Part III., Sect. V., on sincere endeavours.

him to examine his scheme, and see whether it amounts to any thing less. Grace is free favour towards the unworthy. It supposes the subject destitute of all claim whatever, and the author to be free to give or to withhold. But all that this supposed grace amounts to is, not to prove that God has done any thing more than he was bound to do, but barely that he has done what we had a right to expect, or else be at liberty to throw off his yoke with impunity. It does not, therefore, at all prove Jehovah to be *gracious*; if it serve for any thing, it can be only to justify his character from the imputation of *injustice* and *cruelty*, or from being what P. calls "a merciless tyrant,"—p. 88.

"But further, I question if even *this* end will be answered by it. I question if it will not be found, upon the principles and reasonings of P., that this supposed grace, instead of being any real favour towards mankind, is the greatest curse that could ever befall them. If Christ had never come, and no grace had been given in him, then according to the reasoning of P. men had never been responsible for any part of their conduct. They would, it is true, have been born depraved, and lived depraved; but having no *power* to avoid it, or to free themselves from it, "where," he asks, "would have been their criminality?"—pp. 44, 57. He does not scruple to acknowledge, that if no grace were provided, "any man, be his practices as vile as they might, might excuse himself from blame; and all real good whatever might be denied to be the duty of an unprincipled mind,"—p. 59. Now if things are so, that men without the bestowment of grace would have been free from criminality, surely the righteousness of God could never have suffered them to be sent to hell, and the goodness of God, we may suppose, would have raised them to eternal life; and so they might have been innocent and happy, if Jesus had never died: but now, alas! in consequence of his coming, and of *grace* being given them, to deliver them from something wherein they were never blame-worthy—now they lie all exposed to inexcusable blame and everlasting ruin!\*

P. speaks of the "almighty and all-gracions God being represented as *contriving* to make poor sinners miserable under the colour of invitations," &c.,—p. 45. I delight not in the use of such expressions; they appear to me, to say the least, as bordering on irreverence. But if such language must be used, and such consequences urged, let the reader judge to whose sentiments they belong, to those of P. or mine.

"That Christ died for our *sins*, according to the Scriptures," is allowed by P., and, I should think, by every Christian, to be a fundamental doctrine of Christianity,—p. 34, note. The apostle, doubtless, considered this, and his resurrection from the dead, in such a light, when he concluded, that if the opposite were true, the *faith* of the Corinthians *was vain, and they were yet in their sins*, 1 Cor. xv. 3—17. But fundamental as these sentiments are, if the scheme of P. be true, the first of them must, of necessity, be false. If his sentiments are true, Christ did not come into the world *to save men from sin, but rather to put them into a capacity of sinning; as it is in consequence of his death, and that alone, that guilt becomes chargeable upon*

\* When I consider the above positions, I am entirely at a loss to understand the following passage:—"It is granted, sir, that God might justly have left man in the state he was born in, and brought into by Adam's sin, whatever state that be,"—p. 57. What such a state would have been P. does not determine; he seems here to consider it, however, as deserving some *sort of punishment*; otherwise there is no meaning in that comparative mode of speaking, which he so frequently uses, of being *punished more severely*. But does P. really mean what he writes? Compare this passage with what he has asserted in pages 44, 57, 59, and it amounts to nothing less than this—*that it would have been just in God to have punished the human race by acquitting them of all blame, and bringing them in guiltless!*

*them.* So far from being *yet in their sins*, if Christ had neither died for them, nor risen from the dead, they had then been incapable of sinning at all, and ought not to have been accountable to God, let their practices have been what they might!

It is possible the reader may be startled at the imputation of such consequences as the above; and, truly, they are of such a nature as ought to startle not the reader only. "But are not things carried to an extreme?" If they are, it is unknown to me; but let us go over the ground again and see. P. supposes, 1. That man was so reduced by the fall as to be "*really and totally unable to do good*,"—p. 57. 2. That if he had been left in this condition, he would not have been to blame for not doing it, but that his inability would have been his excuse (pp. 44, 57, 59); yea, "let his practices have been as vile as they might, he would have been excusable,"—p. 59. But, 3. That God has not left him in this condition. He has sent his Son to die for all men universally; and by giving, or at least offering, his Spirit to all men, he removes the inability which they derived from the fall; and they become accountable beings, and are inexcusable if they do not comply with things spiritually good,"—p. 66. If words have any meaning, I should think these are the real sentiments of P. Now if these be true, it must follow that *Christ did not die for the sins of any man* except it were Adam, since none of the fallen race could have *sinned* if he had never died. The reasonings of P. suppose that men are not chargeable with *sin* or *blame-worthiness*, independently of the death of Christ and the grace of the gospel; and if so, it could not be to atone for *sin* that he laid down his life; for prior to the consideration of this, there was no sin for which he could have to atone.

If I have unhappily adopted an indefensible mode of reasoning, let it be fairly confuted. Till I see that done I shall continue to think the sentiments of P. on this subject eversive of one of the fundamental principles of Christianity.

There is a thought on which P. repeatedly insists. It is this, that, "supposing it to be just to punish men eternally for that depravity which they derive from their first parents, (this, however, is more than he in fact will allow,) yet it is very hard that any *addition* should be made to the obligations they lie under, and that punishments should be annexed to these obligations which they have no power either to regard or avoid,"—p. 45. He often speaks of the injustice of punishing those who enjoy gospel opportunities, and neglect them, "*more severely* than if they had never enjoyed them, if they had not *power* sufficient to have embraced them,"—p. 57. To all which I reply,

It seems, if men had but *power* to comply, all this injustice would subside. Well, we affirm they *have power*. They have the same natural ability to embrace Christ as to reject him. They *could* comply with the gospel *if they would*. Is any thing more necessary to denominate them accountable beings? We believe not; and perhaps, in fact, P. believes the same. In some places, however, he appears to think there is. Well, what is it? If any thing, it must be an *inclination* as well as an ability. Now would P. be willing to have his objection thus stated:—It is hard that new obligations should be laid upon persons who have no *inclination* to what they already lie under? If so, it will afford final unbelievers a powerful plea at the last day. "No," it will be said, "*they might have had an inclination if they would*;" but let it be considered whether any thing like this is revealed in Scripture, and whether it is not repugnant even to common sense. *If they had been willing, they might, or would, have been willing*; that is the amount of it, which is saying just nothing at all. But, passing this,

Whoever be right, he or I, neither of us ought to take his own hypothesis for granted, and proceed to charge the consequences upon the other. And yet this is what P. has done. The whole force of his reasoning in p. 45, and divers other places, rests upon the supposition of that being true which is a matter of dispute, viz. that natural power is not power, and is not sufficient to denominate men accountable beings. His statement of the above objection takes this for granted; whereas this is what we positively deny, maintaining that natural power *is* power, properly so called, and is, to all intents and purposes, sufficient to render men accountable beings; that the want of inclination in a sinner is of no account with the Governor of the world; that he proceeds in his requirements, and that it is right he should proceed, in the same way as if no such disinclination existed. If this can be solidly disproved, let it; it will be time enough then to exclaim of injustice and cruelty, and to compare the Divine Being to an Egyptian task-master, or to "a wicked Rehoboam,"—p. 92.\*

The question appears to me to be this, *Is it unrighteous in God to do right because he knows men will be sure to take occasion thence to do wrong and aggravate their own destruction?* God knew assuredly that all the messages sent to Pharaoh would only harden his heart and aggravate his ruin; *I am sure*, said Jehovah to his servant, *that the king of Egypt will not let you go; no, not by a mighty hand:* and yet he did not in the least hold himself obliged either to give him grace that should soften his heart, or to discontinue his messages, which, without such grace, were certain to issue in the aggravation of his ruin. "But Pharaoh could have complied if he would." We grant it; and so could they who reject Christ. They are under no other necessity in the one case than Pharaoh was in the other.

Whatever dissimilarity there may be between the condition of *fallen angels* and that of sinners in the present life who will finally perish, the case of the former sufficiently serves to refute the supposition of P. The redemption of man has certainly been an *occasion* of a world of guilt to those revolted spirits. Had not Christ come, Satan could never have had an opportunity to have sinned in the manner he has in tempting him, instigating his murderers, and all along opposing the spread of his kingdom. But would it be right, therefore, for Satan, in behalf of himself and his associates, to plead in this manner at the great assize—Why were we not confined to the deep? Seeing no mercy was designed for us, where was the justice of suffering us to range in the world, where it was certain we should only increase our guilt, and so be punished the *more severely*? Surely our first revolt was enough for us, without being suffered to go any further.

If the reasoning of P. on this subject, particularly in p. 57, prove any thing, it will prove not merely that sinners ought not to be punished *more severely*, but that, if it were not for grace provided for them, they ought not to be punished *at all*. In that case, one should think, the greatest grace would have been to have let them alone, and left them under the ruins of the fall; then had they been blameless and harmless, without rebuke, and consequently unexposed to misery, either here or hereafter.

After all, I question if P. really means any thing more by his notion of grace than we do by natural ability. We allow that men can come to Christ,

\* I wish P. had spoken of the Divine Being, here and in some other places, in language more becoming a worm of the dust. I have no objection to the consequences of a sentiment being fairly pointed out and thoroughly urged; but suppose such a consequence as this had been just, it might have been urged in more sober language. Surely it is too much for a creature to talk of his Creator being wicked! But I have no conviction, at present, of such a consequence being just. If it be, it must be upon this supposition, that not *capacity* and *opportunity*, but *inclination* to do good, is analogous to the straw with which the Israelites ought to have been furnished for the making of brick.

and do things spiritually good, *if they will*. He is not satisfied, it seems, with this; they must have something of *grace* given, or offered, or otherwise they cannot be accountable beings. Well, what does it all amount to? Does he mean that they must have something of real good and holy inclination in them? I question if he will affirm this. Does he mean that this supposed grace does any thing *effectually* towards making them willing? No such thing. What, then, does he mean? Nothing that I can comprehend more than this—that men may come to Christ *if they will*. His whole scheme of grace, therefore, amounts to no more than our natural ability. We admit that men in general are possessed of this ability; but then we have no notion of calling it *grace*. If we must be accountable beings, we apprehend this to be no more than an exercise of *justice*. And in fact our opponents, whatever terms they use, think the same; for though they call it grace, and so would seem to mean that it is something for which we had no claim, yet the constant drift of their writing proves that they mean no such thing; for they all along plead that it would be unjust and cruel in God to withhold it, and yet to treat them as accountable beings. P. does not scruple to compare it to the conduct of an Egyptian task-master, who required brick without straw. What end, therefore, they can have in calling this power by the name of *grace* it is difficult to say, unless it be to avoid the odium of seeming to ascribe to Divine grace nothing at all.

For my part, I apprehend that whatever grace is provided for or bestowed upon men, they are altogether inexcusable, without any consideration of that nature whatever. Some of the principal reasons for which are as follow:—1. The term *grace* implies that the subject is totally unworthy, altogether inexcusable, and destitute of any claim; and all this previously to, and independent of, its bestowment; otherwise grace is no more grace. 2. The heathen, in their ignorance of God, are said to be *without excuse*; and that not from the consideration of grace bestowed upon them, unless by “grace” is meant simply the means of knowledge by the works of creation, answering to the testimony of conscience within them. “That which may be known of God,” says the apostle, “is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them 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.” 3. The manner in which the godly have prayed for *grace* to fulfil their *duty*, and to preserve them from *sin*, shows that they considered themselves as obliged to duty, and as liable to sin, antecedently to its bestowment. “Thou hast commanded us that we should keep thy precepts diligently: Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!”—“We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities.”—“Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.”—“Oh that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!”—“Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins: then shall I be innocent from the great transgression.” 4. Fallen angels are under a moral inability to love God, or to do any thing that is really good, and no grace is provided for them; yet they are without excuse.

P. informs us of some unsuccessful conferences which he has frequently had with unconverted sinners, in endeavouring, upon Calvinistic principles, to fix blame upon their consciences,—p. 60. If I had had the pleasure of being a by-stander in one or more of those conferences, I imagine I should have seen a very *easy* conquest: and no wonder; people seldom manage to the best advantage those principles which they do not believe. We too often see this exemplified; when a controversy is written in the form of a dialogue.

I do not apprehend that P. intended to plead the cause of the infernal regions in their *continued* enmity to, and rebellion against, the Most High; but if I am not greatly mistaken, the purport of his reasoning is fully of that tendency. There is only one particular wanting, viz. deriving their depravity from a predecessor, to render all their iniquities, according to his reasoning, entirely excusable. They cannot *now* find in their hearts to do aught but evil; and no grace being bestowed upon them to deliver them, wherein can consist their blame? It is true each of them brought his depravity upon himself, without deriving it from another: and this may prove them to have been to blame in their *first revolt*, but not *in any thing that follows*. They sinned, to be sure, *at the beginning*: but if the reasoning of P. be just, I do not see how they can have sinned *from* it. He insists upon it that in these cases there is no difference between a natural and moral inability; "for what we cannot do, we cannot do,"—p. 60. Now, in all cases of natural inability, the party is excusable, even though he may, by his own fault, have brought that inability upon himself. If a man, by debauchery or excess, bring upon himself an utter disability for all future employment, it is not *then* his duty to do the same business which it was before. It is true it does not excuse his former intemperance, for in that he was to blame; but it excuses his present cessation from business; for that he is not to blame, nor can any person blame him. This will hold good in all cases of natural inability whatever; and if there is no difference between that and what is of a moral nature, the same reasoning will apply to the fallen angels. They were certainly to blame for their first revolt, by which they contracted their inability; but how can they be to blame for continuing what they are? Their propensity to evil is now become invincible, and no grace is bestowed upon them to deliver them from it; how, then can they be to blame? And if truth is of a like force in all places, and at all times, why should not the plough-boy's argument, as it is called, "What we cannot do, we cannot do," be as *irrefragable* in the language of an apostate angel as in that of an apostate man?

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### SECTION III.

#### ON FAITH IN CHRIST BEING A REQUIREMENT OF THE MORAL LAW.

I FIND it difficult to come at the real sentiments of P. touching the moral law. Sometimes he speaks of it as "an invariable rule of human conduct, and infallible test of right and wrong" (p. 67); at other times he speaks of it as wholly abrogated, as if "final misery was not brought upon sinners by their transgression of the law, but by their rejection of the overtures of mercy,"—p. 86. In his Ninth Letter he admits that men "are bound, as subjects of God's moral government, to embrace whatever he reveals,"—p. 89. One should think that if so, a rejection of the overtures of mercy must *itself* be a transgression of the law. And yet he all along speaks of our obligations to obey the gospel as arising, if not wholly, yet chiefly, from the gospel itself. He does not seem willing to deny the thing in full; for he cautiously uses the terms "wholly and chiefly;" and yet if his arguments, especially from the contrary nature of the two dispensations, (p. 90,) from the silence of Scripture, &c. &c., prove any thing, they will prove that our

obligations to obey the gospel must arise wholly and *entirely* from the gospel itself, and not from the moral law.\*

The purport of all the reasoning of P. on this subject supposes me to maintain THAT MEN ARE EXHORTED AND INVITED TO SUCH AND SUCH THINGS MERELY AS MATTER OF DUTY, WITHOUT ANY PROMISE OF SALVATION ON THEIR COMPLIANCE. Hence he speaks of "binding men down in chains of darkness;" of their "seeking the salvation of their souls in vain" (p. 46); with various things of the kind: whereas I have given sufficient proof of the contrary throughout the former treatise. It is, all along, supposed that eternal salvation is promised by a faithful God to any and every exercise of what is spiritually good; and that if every sinner who hears the gospel were truly to come to Christ for salvation, every such sinner would undoubtedly be saved.

It must be upon this mistaken supposition that P. denies the gospel upon our principles to be in itself "good news," (p. 92,) or in its own nature a "real privilege,"—p. 87. But unless the aversion of men's hearts from embracing the gospel (if grace is not provided, to enable them to do so) makes that to be no privilege which would otherwise be so, such a consequence cannot justly be imputed to our sentiments. This, however, will not be admitted; yet P. seems to take it for granted, and proceeds to draw consequences from it, as an undoubted truth.

There is some force in what P. has advanced on the subject of *trust* (p. 32); and, for any thing I yet perceive, he is right in supposing that the venture of the four lepers into the Syrian camp could not properly be called by that name. It should be considered, however, that the above case, which I produced for illustration, was not designed as a *perfect representation* of a sinner's application to Christ. I never supposed it possible for a soul to apply to Christ, and be disappointed. Whether the resolution of the lepers can be called *trust* or not, it never was my design to prove that a sinner has no greater encouragement to apply to Christ than they had in their proposed application to the Syrians. On the contrary, the purport of the argument in that place was thus expressed: "If it would be right to venture, even in such a case as that, surely Christ's having promised, saying '*Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,*' cannot make it otherwise,"—p. 133.

I admit there is no doubt of a sinner's acceptance who, from his heart, applies at the feet of Christ, as one who is utterly lost, and righteously condemned; yet I do not feel the force of my opponent's censure, when, speaking of coming to Christ with a "*peradventure he will save my life,*" he calls it the mere language of *heathenism*. A heathen's having used such language does not prove it to be the mere language of *heathenism*; nor is it so. Peter exhorted the sorcerer, saying, "Repent therefore of this wickedness, *if perhaps* the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." Though there be no doubt of one who truly comes to Christ being accepted, yet there may be some doubt concerning a person's coming in the spirit of the gospel; and I believe it is not usual for a person, on his first application to Christ, to be able to decide upon that matter. On these accounts, I should think it is usual for a sinner, on his first application to the Saviour, to pray to the Lord, *if so be* that the evils of his heart and life may be forgiven him. It is not the way of a contrite sinner to come as a claimant, but as a suppliant: "He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope."

*Trust*, according to my present apprehensions, when used to express faith in Christ, refers, like that, to a Divine *testimony*, or *promise*. That for which every sinner who hears the gospel ought to trust in Christ is this; that *if he*

\* That there is a sense in which our obligation to comply with the gospel does arise from the gospel itself is allowed. On this subject I have given my thoughts in the former treatise.



truly come to him, he shall surely be accepted of him; for this is testified, or promised. He ought not so to trust in Christ as to depend upon being saved by him whether he come to him in the spirit of the gospel or not, (for that would be trusting in a falsehood,) but so as to give up every false object of confidence, and make trial of the Divine veracity.

If there is any difference between the manner in which a sinner *ought* to trust in Christ, and in which a saint *does* trust in him, it appears to be this: the former ought to trust in God's promise, that *if he come, he shall be accepted*, and so make the trial: the latter may be conscious that he *has come to Christ*, and *does* fall in with his gospel and government; and if so, he trusts in his promise for *the happy issue*. There are seasons, however, in which true saints are in great darkness about their evidences for glory. At those times they find it necessary to exercise renewed acts of trust on Christ in the manner *first* described. Not possessing a certain consciousness that they do fall in with his gospel and government, all they can do is to consider that the promise is still in force, "*Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;*" and so make trial afresh of the Redeemer's veracity.

P. seems to think that his sentiments lay a proper foundation for trust to every poor sinner, and that ours do not. But what has any sinner to trust in upon his principles more than upon ours? According to our principles, any sinner may trust that he shall be saved *if he come to Christ*; and what do his do more? They do not warrant a sinner to trust that he shall be saved *whether he come to Christ or not*; for though P. supposes Christ died for all, yet he maintains that many of those for whom he died will finally perish. I see no advantage whatever, therefore, attending his scheme, in laying a more solid and extensive foundation for a sinner's trust than ours.

If I am not very much mistaken, P. has greatly confounded two very different things, viz. an *obligation* and an *encouragement* to believe. The one, I suppose, arises from the moral law; the other from the gospel. That the *encouragements* held out to sinners to return to God by Jesus Christ belong to the law, is what I never affirmed. P. has quoted various scriptures, in his Ninth Letter, of an encouraging nature; and these, doubtless, are the language of the gospel. But the question is, does our *obligation* to believe arise from these encouragements, or from the *injunctions* with which they are connected? The encouragement of the prodigal to return, and make a frank acknowledgment to his father, arose from his father's well-known clemency, and there being bread enough in his house, and to spare; but that was not the ground of his obligation. It had been right and fit for him to have returned, whether such a ground of encouragement had existed or not.

As to those encouragements being improper without a *provision of mercy*, if it were possible for any returning sinner to be refused admittance for want of a sufficiency in the death of Christ, this might be admitted, but not else. And if by a provision of mercy is meant no more than a provision of pardon to all who believe, and supposing, for argument's sake, every man in the world should return to God in Christ's name, that they would all be accepted, I have no objection to it. At the same time, it is insisted that no man ever did come to Christ, or ever can find in his heart to do so, but whom the Father draws. But more of this hereafter: at present I shall offer a few arguments for the following position: Though the *encouragements* of a sinner to come to Christ arise wholly from the gospel, yet his *obligation* so to do arises from the moral law.

I. All obligation must arise from *some law*. If, therefore, our obligations to believe in Christ do not arise from the moral law, they must arise from the gospel as a *new law*; but the gospel, as P. admits, is simply *good news*,

(p. 5,) and *news*, whether good or bad, relates not to precepts or injunctions, but to *tidings* proclaimed.

II. Sin is defined, by an inspired apostle, to be "*the transgression of the law*," 1 John iii. 4. If this be a perfect definition, it must extend to *all sin*; and consequently to *unbelief*, or a rejection of God's way of salvation. But if unbelief be a transgression of the law, faith, which is the opposite, must be one of its requirements.

III. If love to God *include* faith in Christ wherever he is revealed by the gospel, then the moral law, which expressly requires the former, must also require the latter. In proof that love to God includes faith in Christ, I ask leave to refer the reader to pages 351–353, and 377 of the former treatise.

P. allows my "reasonings on the extent of the moral law, are very conclusive;" but what he calls "analogical reasonings, in this and other places, from the law to the gospel, he cannot think to be equally conclusive, unless the dispensation of the law and that of the gospel were the same,"—p. 67. If I understand what he refers to by analogical reasons, it is the argument contained in those pages to which I have just now referred the reader. I might here ask, Is what was advanced in those pages answered? I do not recollect that any thing like an answer to it is attempted by any one of my opponents. If the reasoning is inconclusive, I should suppose its deficiency is capable of being detected. Let P. or any other person prove, if he is able, that supreme love to God would not *necessarily* lead a fallen creature, who has heard the gospel of Christ, to embrace him as God's way of salvation; or let him invalidate those arguments, in the pages referred to, in which the contrary is maintained. Let him consider, also, whether, if he succeed, he will not, in so doing, invalidate the reasoning of our Lord to the Jews, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not."

That the law and the gospel are two very different dispensations is allowed. The one is a mere inefficient rule, requiring what is right, but giving no disposition to a compliance; the other provides for the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, by which we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. The gospel makes effectual provision for the *producing* of those dispositions which the law simply *requires*. The law condemns the sinner, the gospel justifies him. On these accounts, the former is fitly called *the LETTER which KILLETH*, and the latter *the SPIRIT which GIVETH LIFE*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. For these reasons also, with others, the gospel is a *better* covenant. All this may be allowed without making it a new law, requiring a kind of obedience that shall be within the compass of a carnal mind, and different in its nature from that required by the moral law.

IV. Unbelievers will be accused and convicted by Moses; their unbelief must, therefore, be a breach of the law of Moses. After our Lord had complained of the Jews, that "they would not come unto him that they might have life;" that though he was come in his "Father's name, yet they received him not;" he adds, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even MOSES, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me." It is very plain, I think, from this passage, that the thing for which Moses would accuse them was a rejection of Christ and the way of salvation by him; which, according to our Lord's reasoning, implied a rejection of the writings of Moses.\* From hence, therefore, it is inferred that a compliance with the gospel is what the

\* By Moses's accusing them, I apprehend, is meant the law of Moses, which condemns the Jews to this present time for not believing in that Prophet whom Moses foretold, Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

'law of Moses requires, and a noncompliance with it is a matter for which that law will accuse and condemn.\*

P. has brought many proofs of the invitations of Scripture being *enforced* on gospel principles. This is a matter I should never have thought of denying. But if an invitation to believe in Christ, enforced by gospel motives, will prove that faith is not a requirement of the moral law, then invitations to love God, to fear him, and to lie low before him, enforced in the same manner, will prove the same of them. Love, fear, and humility are enforced upon gospel principles as well as faith in Christ. Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, are prepared for them who *love* God. The exhortations to *fear* God are not more numerous than the promises of mercy to those who are of such a spirit. Men are exhorted to *humble* themselves under the mighty hand of God, with the encouragement that he will lift them up. These are all gospel motives; yet P. will not deny that the dispositions enforced are requirements of the moral law. Even *relative duties*, such as those of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, &c., which certainly are of a moral nature, are nevertheless enforced by gospel motives.

But "how can the gospel answer the end of recovering miserable men," it is asked, "if it contain *new injunctions*, equally impossible, if not more so, than the moral law itself; and these injunctions enforced by more awful punishments?"—p. 93. I might ask, in return, How can the gospel have a tendency to recover *sinful* men from their *evil propensities*, if it is a kind of law which requires only such exercises as may consist with those propensities? It can have no such tendency, unless tolerating an evil has a tendency to destroy it.

"But is not the gospel adapted, as a means, to recover lost sinners?" Yes, it is. By the cross of Christ, it exhibits the *evil of sin* in stronger colours than all the curses of the law could paint it; and so has a tendency, in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to *convince the world of sin*. Nor is this all; it exhibits a *Saviour* to the guilty soul, to keep him from despair, which, at the same time, tends to conquer his heart with a view of God's free and self-moved goodness. A person thus conquered would admire the free and sovereign grace of the gospel, but he would abhor the thought of a gospel that should make Jehovah stoop to the vile *inclinations* of his apostate creatures. His prayer would be,—"*Incline*" not thy testimonies to my heart—but "*my heart to thy testimonies.*"

\* If I understand P., he considers the moral law as a system of government now no longer in force; and the gospel as a new system of government, more suited to the state of fallen creatures, which has taken place of it; for he supposes that "final misery is not now brought upon men by their transgression of the moral law, but by their rejection of the overtures of mercy,"—p. 86. Final misery, we are sure, must be brought upon men by *sin*, be it against what law it may; and whatever law it is the breach of which subjects us to final misery, that must be the law that we are under. If this is not the moral law, then men are not under that law, nor can it be to us "the standard of right and wrong." If the gospel be a new system of government, taking place of the moral law, then all the precepts, prohibitions, promises, and threatenings, the neglect of which subjects men to final misery, must belong to the former, and not to the latter.

How far these sentiments accord with the Scripture account of either law or gospel, let the reader judge. Let it be considered, also, whether it is not much more consistent with both to conceive of the former as the guardian of the latter, enjoining whatever regards are due to it, and punishing every instance of neglect and contempt of it. Such a view of things accords with the passage in John v., just cited, and is in no wise contradicted by those Scriptures to which we are referred in page 86. On the contrary, one of those passages, viz. 2 Thess. i. 8, in my opinion, tends to establish it, and is in direct contradiction to the hypothesis of P. Vengeance is said to be taken on men, not *merely* for their disobedience to the gospel, but as well for their *ignorance of God*, which is distinguished from the other, and is manifestly a breach of the moral law.

But "could the gospel have a tendency to recover lost sinners, if it contained *new injunctions* equally impossible, if not more so than the moral law itself?" I own, I think it could not. And who supposes it could? Surely P. must have here forgotten himself. Does he not know that those are his own sentiments rather than mine; so far, at least, as relates to the gospel containing *new injunctions*. I suppose the gospel, strictly speaking, to contain no injunctions at all, but merely the good tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ; and that, whatever precepts or injunctions are to be found respecting its being embraced, they are the diversified language of the moral law, which obliges men, as P. himself allows, to "embrace whatever God reveals," —p. 89.

Sometimes the word *gospel* is used, in a large sense, for the whole of the Christian dispensation, as contained in the New Testament, or the whole of that religion taught by Christ and his apostles, whether doctrinal or practical. In this use of the word we sometimes speak of *the precepts of the gospel*. But when the term *gospel* is used in a strict sense, it denotes merely the *good news* proclaimed to lost sinners through the mediation of Christ. In this view it stands opposed to the moral law, and, in itself, contains no injunctions at all. If the gospel were a new system of government, taking place of the moral law, one should think there would be no further need of the latter; whereas Christ, in his sermon on the mount, maintained its perpetuity, and largely explained and enforced its precepts. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

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## SECTION IV.

### ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

THE extent of Christ's death is well known to have been a matter of great controversy. For my part, I cannot pretend to so much reading upon the subject as to be fully acquainted with the arguments used on either side. If I write any thing about it, it will be a few plain thoughts, chiefly the result of reading the sacred Scriptures.

I think no one can imagine that I am under any obligation from the laws of controversy to follow P. into a long and laboured defence of the limited extent of Christ's death. All that can be reasonably thought incumbent upon me is to treat of it so far as respects its consistency or inconsistency with indefinite invitations. On this score I might very well be excused from entering upon any defence of the subject itself, or answering the arguments advanced for the contrary. Whatever notice is taken of either will be rather in compliance with what has been done by my opponent than in conformity to the laws of disputation.

I suppose P. is not ignorant that Calvinists in *general* have considered the particularity of redemption as consisting not in the *degree* of Christ's sufferings, (as though he must have suffered more if more had been finally saved,) or in any *insufficiency* that attended them, but in the sovereign purpose and design of the Father and the Son, whereby they were constituted or appointed the price of redemption, the objects of that redemption ascertained, and the ends to be answered by the whole transaction determined. They suppose the sufferings of Christ, in themselves considered, are of *infinite* value, sufficient to have saved all the world, and a thousand worlds, if it had pleased God to have constituted them the price of their redemption,

and to have made them effectual to that end. Further, whatever difficulties there may appear in these subjects, they in general suppose that there is in the death of Christ a sufficient ground for indefinite calls and universal invitations, and that there is no mockery or insincerity in the Holy One in any one of these things.\*

These views of the subject accord with my own. I know not but that there is the same objective fulness and sufficiency in the obedience and sufferings of Christ for the salvation of sinners as there is in the power of the Holy Spirit for their renovation; both are infinite; yet both are applied under the direction of infinite wisdom and uncontrollable sovereignty. It is allowed that the death of Christ has opened a way whereby God can consistently with his justice forgive any sinner whatever who returns to him by Jesus Christ. If we were to suppose, for argument's sake, that all the inhabitants of the globe should thus return, it is supposed not one soul need be sent away for want of a sufficiency in Christ's death to render his pardon and acceptance consistent with the rights of justice. But great and necessary as this mercy is, if nothing more than this had been done, not one of the human race had ever been saved. It is necessary to our salvation that a *way* and a *highway* to God should be opened: Christ is such a way, and is as free for any sinner to walk in as any highway whatever from one place to another: but, considering the depravity of human nature, it is equally necessary that some effectual provision should be made for our *walking* in that way.† We conceive that the Lord Jesus Christ made such a provision by his death, thereby procuring the certain bestowment of faith, as well as all other spiritual blessings which follow upon it; that, in regard of all the *sons* who are finally brought to glory, he was the *Surety* or *Captain* of their salvation; that their salvation was, properly speaking, the end or design of his death. And herein we suppose consists the particularity of redemption.

I think I might reduce all that is necessary to be said upon this subject to two questions:—*First*, Had our Lord Jesus Christ any *absolute determination* in his death to save any of the human race? *Secondly*, Supposing such a determination to exist concerning some which does not exist concerning others, is this consistent with indefinite calls and universal invitations? The discussion of these two questions will contain the substance of what I shall advance upon the subject; but as pretty much is required to be said, I shall subdivide the whole into *four* lesser sections.

SECT. I. *Containing a discussion of the first question, Whether our Lord Jesus Christ had any absolute determination in his death to save any of the human race.*

If the affirmative of this question be proved; if it be shown that Christ had such an absolute purpose in his death; the limited extent of that purpose must follow of course. The reason is plain: an *absolute* purpose must

\* "The obedience and sufferings of Christ," says Witsius, "considered in themselves, are, on account of the infinite dignity of the person, of such value as to have been sufficient for redeeming not only all and every man in particular, but many myriads besides, had it so pleased God and Christ that he should have undertaken and satisfied for them." And again, "The obedience and sufferings of Christ are of such worth that all without exception who come to him may find perfect salvation in him; and it was the will of God that this truth should without distinction be proposed both to them that are to be saved, and to them that are to perish; with a *charge* not to neglect so great salvation, but to repair to Christ with true contrition of soul; and with a most *sincere* declaration that all who come to him shall find salvation in him, John vi. 40." *Economy*, Vol. I. Chap. IX. To the same purpose speaks Peter Du Moulin, in his *Anatomy of Arminianism*, Chap. XXVII. § 9. And Dr. Owen, in his *Death of Death*, Book IV. Chap. I.; also in his *Display of Arminianism*, Chap. IX.

† I use the metaphor of a *way* the rather because it conveys an idea sufficiently clear and is frequently applied to Christ in the Scriptures, John xiv. 4—6; Isa. xxxv. 8; Jer. vi. 16.

be effectual. If it extended to all mankind, all mankind would certainly be saved. Unless, therefore, we will maintain the final salvation of all mankind, we must either suppose a limitation to the absolute determination of Christ to save, or deny any such determination to exist. The scheme of P. concurs with the latter, supposing that by the death of Christ a merely conditional provision of redemption is made for all mankind. I own I think otherwise; some of the reasons for which are as follow:—

1. The *promises* made to Christ of the certain efficacy of his death. One of our grand objections to the scheme of P. is, that, in proportion as he extends the objects for whom Christ died beyond those who are actually saved, he diminishes the *efficacy* of his death, and renders all the promises concerning it of no account. His scheme, instead of making redemption universal, supposes that Christ's death did not properly redeem any man, nor render the salvation of any man a matter of certainty. It only procured an offer of redemption and reconciliation to mankind in general. We apprehend this is diminishing the efficacy of Christ's death, without answering any valuable end. Nor is this all: such an hypothesis appears to us utterly inconsistent with all those scriptures where God the Father is represented as *promising* his Son a reward for his sufferings in the salvation of poor sinners. God the Father engaged, saying, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast (or shalt have) the dew of thy youth." Yes: he engaged that he should "see his seed;" that "the pleasure of Jehovah should prosper in his hand;" that he should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; and by his knowledge," it was added, "shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." It was promised to Christ, as the reward of his sufferings, that "kings should see, and arise: princes also," it was added, "shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful; and the Holy One of Israel shall choose thee: thus saith *Jehovah*, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people: to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth, and to them that sit in darkness, Show yourselves."—"Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim!" But what security, I ask, was there for the fulfilment of these promises, but upon the supposition of the certain salvation of some of the human race? How could it be certain that Christ should *justify many*, if there was no effectual provision made that *any* should *know* and believe in him? and what propriety was there in assigning his *bearing their iniquities* as his REASON and EVIDENCE of it, if there is no necessary connexion between our iniquities being borne away and our persons being justified?

2. The *characters* under which Christ died. He laid down his life as a *shepherd*; and for whom should we expect him to die *in that character*? For the *sheep*, no doubt. So the Scriptures inform us: "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—"I lay down my life for the sheep." Those for whom Christ laid down his life are represented as being his sheep prior to their coming to the fold: "These," saith the blessed Redeemer, "I must bring; and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." As sheep are committed into the hands of a shepherd, and as he becomes responsible for their preservation or restoration, so Christ is represented as the *great Shepherd of the sheep*, whose blood was shed by *covenant*; and who, by fulfilling that covenant, was entitled to a discharge, which, as the representative of those for whom he died, he enjoyed in his resurrection from the dead, John x. 11, 15, 16; Heb. xiii. 20.

Again, Christ laid down his life as a *husband*; and for whom should we expect him to die in *that character*? For his bride, surely. So the Scriptures inform us: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The love of a husband, of which his death is here supposed to be the *RESULT*, is certainly *discriminating*. If it is said, True; but *the church* here means actual believers—I reply, If they were actual believers, I should suppose they were not *unsanctified*; for faith purifies the heart: but Christ "gave himself that he might sanctify them with the washing of water by the word." Besides, he did not die for believers, *as such*; for "while we were yet enemies Christ died for us:" but he died for the church, *as such* considered. This is evident, because his death is represented as resulting from his love, which he exercises as a *husband*. I conclude, therefore, *the church* cannot, in this place, be understood of those only who actually believed.

Again, Christ laid down his life as a *surety*. He is expressly called "the surety of a better testament." He needed not to be a surety in behalf of the Father, to see to the fulfilment of his promises, seeing there was no possibility of his failing in what he had engaged to bestow; but there was danger on our part. Ought we not, therefore, to suppose that, after the example of the high priest under the law, Christ was a surety *for the people to God*? and if so, we cannot extend the objects for whom he was a surety beyond those who are finally saved, without supposing him to fail in what he has undertaken. In perfect conformity with these sentiments, the following scriptures represent our Lord Jesus, I apprehend, as having undertaken the certain salvation of all those for whom he lived and died. "It became him for whom are all things—in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." He died, not for the Jewish nation only, "but that he might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."—"The children being partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same."—"Here am I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me." Though we receive not the "power (or privilege) to become the sons of God" till after we believe in Christ; yet, from "before the foundation of the world," were we "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; and so, in the esteem of God, were considered as *children*, even while as yet we lay *scattered abroad* under the ruins of the fall.

Once more, Christ laid down his life as a *sacrifice of atonement*; and for whom did the priests under the law offer up the sacrifice? For those, surely, on whose behalf it was *sanctified*, or set apart for that purpose. Some of the Jewish sacrifices were to make atonement for the sins of an individual; others for the sins of the whole nation; but every sacrifice had its special appointment, and was supposed to atone for the sins of those, and those only, on whose behalf it was offered. Now Christ, being about to offer himself a sacrifice for sin, spake on this wise: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." For their sakes, as though he had said, who were *given* me of the Father, I set myself apart as a victim to vengeance, that I may consecrate and present them faultless before the presence of my Father, John xvii. 9, 19.

3. Such *effects* are ascribed to the death of Christ as do not terminate upon all mankind. Those for whom Christ died are represented as being *redeemed* by the shedding of his blood: "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." But redemption includes *the forgiveness of sin*, (Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14,) and we know that to be a bless-

ing which does not terminate upon all mankind.\* Further, it is not only ascribed to the death of Christ that pardon and acceptance are procured for all who return in his name; but that any return at all is attributed to the same cause: "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He gave himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it." Our "old man" is said to be "crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." But we see not these effects produced upon all mankind; nor are all mankind his peculiar people.

4. Christ is said to have borne the sins of *many*; and the blood of the new covenant was "shed for *many*, for the remission of sins." The term *many*, it is allowed, when opposed to *one* or to *few*, is sometimes used for an unlimited number; in one such instance it is put for all mankind. But it is self-evident that, when no such opposition exists, it is always used for a limited number, and generally stands opposed to *all*. Who the *many* are in Isa. liii. 12, whose sins he bare, may be known by comparing it with the verse foregoing: "By his knowledge (that is, by the knowledge of him) shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death; he was numbered with the transgressors, he bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." There is no reason, that I know of, to be given why the *many* whose sins he bore, should be understood of any other persons than the *many* who by his knowledge are justified, and who, it must be allowed, are not all mankind.

5. The *intercession* of Christ, which is founded upon his death, and expressive of its grand design, extends not to all mankind: "I pray for them," says Christ; "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me, for they are thine." The intercession of the priests under the law, so far as I know, was always in behalf of the same persons for whom the oblation was offered. The persons prayed for by our Lord must either mean those who were *then* believers, to the exclusion of the unbelieving world; or all who *should* at any period of time believe, to the exclusion of those who should finally perish. That Christ prayed for those who then believed in him is granted; but that his intercession was confined to them, and excluded all that did not believe in him, cannot be admitted for the following reasons:—(1.) Christ prays for all that were *given* him of the Father; but the term *given* is not applied to believers *as such*; for men are represented as *given* of the Father prior to their coming to Christ, John vi. 37. (2.) The Scripture account of Christ's intercession does not confine it to those who are actually believers, which it must have done if the sense I oppose be ad-

\* P. I suppose has felt the force of this reasoning heretofore, and therefore, if I am rightly informed, he disowns a *universal redemption*; supposing that, properly speaking, Christ did not, by laying down his life, redeem any man; that no person can be said to have been redeemed till he has believed in Christ. It is true we receive this blessing when we believe, as we then *receive the atonement*. It is then that we *have* redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; but as it does not follow, from our receiving the atonement when we believe, that atonement was not properly made when Christ hung upon the cross, so neither does it follow from our *having* redemption when we believe, that Christ did not properly redeem us when he laid down his life. Certain it is that the passage before cited (Gal. iii. 13) refers not to what takes place on our believing, but to what was done at the time when Christ was made a curse for us by hanging upon the tree.

Though I apprehend, for the reasons above, that being redeemed from the curse of the law does not necessarily suppose the subject to be in the actual possession of that blessing; yet to understand it of any thing less than such a virtual redemption as effectually secured our enjoyment of deliverance in the fulness of time, is to reduce it to no meaning at all. We must either allow it to mean thus much, or say with P., that Christ, in laying down his life for us, did not redeem any man; but this, at present, appears to me to be contradicting, rather than explaining, Scripture.



mitted. When he hung upon the cross, he prayed for his *enemies*; and herein most evidently fulfilled that prophecy, "He poured out his soul unto death, he was numbered with the transgressors, he bore the sin of many, and *made intercession for the transgressors.*" (3.) It is expressly said, John xvii. 20, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who *shall* believe in me through their word."

6. If the doctrine of eternal, personal, and unconditional *election* be a truth, that of a special design in the death of Christ must necessarily follow. I do not suppose P. will admit the former; but I apprehend he will admit, that if the former could be proved a Scripture truth, the latter would follow of course. I might then urge all those scriptures and arguments which appear to me to prove the doctrine of election. But this would carry me beyond my present design. I only say the following scriptures, among many others, appear to me to be conclusive upon that subject, and such as cannot be answered without a manifest force being put upon them. "God the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy."—"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth."—"All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me."—"Whom he did foreknow he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—"I have much people in this city."—"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."—"Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience."—"Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."—"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."—"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."—"Except the Lord of hosts had left us a seed we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah."—"At this present time also there is a remnant, according to the election of grace. The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."\*

The above passages must be allowed to speak only of a *part* of mankind. This part of mankind must be styled the *chosen* of God, *given* of the Father, &c., either because of their actually being believers, or because it was foreseen that they would believe, or, as we suppose, because God eternally purposed in himself that they should believe and be saved. It cannot be on account of the *first*, seeing they were chosen *before the foundation of world*, and given to Christ prior to their believing in him. It cannot be on account of the *second*, because then what he had done for us must have been according to something good in us, and not according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. It would also be contrary to all those scriptures recited above, which represent our being chosen and given of the Father as the *cause* of faith and holiness. If our *conformity to the image of the Son of God*, our *faith, holiness, and obedience*, are the *effects* of election, they cannot be the ground or reason of it. If men

\* Eph. i. 3; 2 Thess. ii. 13; John vi. 37; Rom. viii. 29; Acts xviii. 10; xiii. 48; 1 Pet. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 9; John xv. 16; Matt. xi. 25; Rom. ix. 15, 29; xi. 5, 7.

are given to Christ prior to the consideration of their coming to him, then they cannot be said to be given on account of their so coming. If, then, it cannot be on account of either the *first* or the *second*, I conclude it must be on account of the *last*.

The death of Christ is assigned as a reason why none, at the last day, shall be able to lay any thing to the *charge* of God's *elect*, Rom. viii. 33, 34. But if it extends equally to those who are condemned as to those who are justified, how does it become a security against such a charge? Whatever difference there may be, in point of security, between those who at that day are justified, and those who are condemned, the death of Christ is not supposed to have had any influence towards it. The security of the elect should rather have been ascribed to what they themselves have done in embracing the Saviour than to any thing done by him, seeing what he did was no security whatever. It was no more than a cipher in itself considered. The efficacy of the whole, it seems, rested, not upon what Christ had done, but upon what they themselves had done in believing in him.

7. The character of the redeemed in the *world above* implies the sentiment for which we plead. Not only did the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders (which seem to represent the church militant) adore the Lamb, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;" but it is witnessed of those who are without fault before the throne of God, that *they were redeemed* (or *bought*) *from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb.* But if all of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation were bought by the blood of Christ, there could be no possibility of any being bought *from among* them.

The above are some of the reasons which induce me to think there was a certain, absolute, and consequently limited, design in the death of Christ, securing the salvation of all those, and only those, who are finally saved. The reader will now judge of the confident manner in which P. asks, "What end can it answer to take all these pains to vindicate a doctrine which God has never revealed?"—p. 36.

SECT. II.—*Wherein some notice is taken of the arguments of P. for the contrary hypothesis.*

The limited extent of Christ's death is said to be "inconsistent with Divine goodness, and with the *tender mercies of God over all his works*,"\*—p. 73. To this it is replied, Fallen angels are a part of God's works as well as fallen men; but Christ did not die for them; if, therefore, his death is to be considered as the criterion of Divine goodness, and if the exercise of punitive justice is inconsistent with that attribute, then, suppose we were to admit that Christ died for all mankind, still the psalmist's assertion cannot be true, and the difficulty is never the nearer being removed.

That God loves all mankind I make no doubt, and all the works of his hands, *as such* considered, fallen angels themselves not excepted; but the question is whether he loves them *all alike*; and whether the exercise of punitive justice be inconsistent with universal goodness. It is going great lengths for a weak worm to take upon him to insist that Divine goodness must be exercised in such a particular instance, or it can have no existence at all. I dare not say there is no love, no goodness, in all the providences

\* Surely it is of vast importance to remember that the death of Christ was intended, not to prevent the Divine character from being reproached on account of the strictness of his law in condemning *all* transgressors, but to prevent it from being censured on account of the exemption of *any* transgressors from deserved punishment. Whatever considerations prove the necessity, or infinite expediency, of the atonement, must prove it was altogether optional, and an instance of infinite and sovereign goodness in God to provide a Lamb for a sin-offering.—R.

of God towards mankind, nor yet in his giving them the means of grace and the invitations of the gospel, though he does not do all for them which he *could* do to incline them to embrace them, and has neither purposed nor provided for such an end. On the contrary, I believe these things, in themselves considered, to be instances of Divine goodness, whatever the issue of them may be through men's depravity.

But if Christ did not die for all mankind, it is said, "his tender mercies cannot be exercised towards them; no, not in the good things of this life; for these only increase their misery: nor in life itself; for every moment of it must be a dreadful curse,"—p. 73. But, horrid as these consequences may appear, a denier of God's *foreknowledge* would tell P. that the same consequences followed upon his own scheme, and in their full extent. He would say, You pretend to maintain the tender mercies of God over all his works; and yet you suppose him perfectly to know, before any of these works were brought into being, the part that every individual would act, and the consequent misery that would follow. He was sure that millions of the human race would so act, place them under what advantages he would, as that they would certainly involve themselves in such a condition that *it were better for them never to have been born*. He knew precisely who would come to such an end, as much as he will at the day of judgment. Why then did he bring them into existence? Surely they had better never have been born; or if they must be born, why were they not cut off from the womb, seeing he was sure that every moment of time they existed would only increase their misery? Is this goodness? Are these his tender mercies? . . . I tremble while I write! For my part, I feel difficulties attend every thing I think about. I feel myself a poor worm of the dust, whose understanding is infinitely too contracted to fathom the ways and works of God. I wish to tremble and adore; and take comfort in this—that what I know not now, I shall know hereafter.

But "it is no where *expressly said* that Christ died only for a part of mankind,"—p. 71. It is expressly said that he gave himself that he might purify unto himself *a peculiar people*; that he laid down his life for *the sheep*; that he loved *the church*, and gave himself for it; that he died that he might gather *together in one the children of God* that were scattered abroad; and that those who are without fault before the throne of God were bought *from among men*. But be it so that we no where expressly read that Christ did not die to redeem all mankind; the Scriptures do not so much deal in negatives as in positives; their concern is not so much to inform mankind what is not done, as what is done. I know not that it is any where *expressly said* that all mankind are not to be baptized; yet I suppose P. well understands that part of our Lord's commission to be restrictive.

There was no necessity for the apostles to publish the Divine purposes to mankind in their addresses to them. These were not designed as a rule of action, either for the preachers or the hearers. It was sufficient for them both that Christ was ready to pardon and accept of any sinner whatever that should come unto him. It was equally sufficient, on the other hand, if, after people believed, they were taught those truths which relate to the purposes of grace on their behalf, with a view to cut off all gloying in themselves, and that they might learn to ascribe the whole *difference* between themselves and others to the mere sovereign grace of God. Hence it is that the chief of those scriptures which we conceive to hold forth a limitation of design in the death of Christ, or any other doctrine of *discriminating* grace, are such as were addressed to believers.

But the main stress of the argument seems to lie in the meaning of such general expressions as *all men—world—whole world, &c.* If these are dis-

cussed, I suppose I shall be allowed to have replied to the substance of what P. has advanced; and that is all I can think of attending to.

It is admitted, as was before observed, that there is in the death of Christ a sufficient ground for indefinite calls and universal invitations; that God does invite mankind without distinction to return to him through the mediation of his Son, and promises pardon and acceptance to whomsoever shall so return. There have been and now are many considerable writers, who are far from disowning the doctrine of particular redemption, (or that the salvation of those who are saved is owing to an absolute and consequently limited design in the death of Christ,) who yet apprehend that a way is opened for sinners, without distinction, being invited to return to God with the promise of free pardon on their return. And they suppose the above general expressions are intended to convey to us this idea. For my part, though I think with them in respect to the thing itself, yet I question if these general expressions are so to be understood. The terms *ransom*, *propitiation*, &c. appear to me to express more than this, and what is true only of those who are finally saved. To die *for us* appears to me to express the design or intention of the Redeemer. Christ's death effected a real *redemption, through which we are justified*. He *redeemed* us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*, and thereby secured the *blessing* to come upon us in due time, Rom. iii. 24; Gal. iii. 13, 14. Such a meaning, therefore, of the general expressions above mentioned does not appear to me agreeable; much less can I accede to the sense put upon them by Philanthropos.

The rule of interpretation mentioned by P. (p. 76) I approve. His sense of the passages referred to I apprehend to be "contradicted by other scriptures—contrary to the scope of the inspired writers—and what involves in it various absurdities."

The following observations are submitted to the judgment of the impartial reader:—

1. It is the usual language of Scripture, when speaking of the blessings of salvation extending to the Gentiles, to describe them in *indefinite terms*: "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."—"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."—"And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord."—"And I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," &c:—"Thy Maker is thy Husband (the Lord of hosts is his name); the God of the whole earth shall he be called."—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee."—"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."—"Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."—"All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name."—"All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed."

These passages, with many others, express blessings which cannot be understood universally, as P. himself must acknowledge. Now, I ask, would not these furnish a contender for the universal and final salvation of all mankind with as good an argument as that which P. uses against us? Might he not say, "The subject in question can require no figures. Surely the great God could not intend to impose upon his poor, ignorant creatures. He could receive no *honour* from such an imposition. It would be no glory to you, sir, to ensnare a fly or a gnat. We are infinitely more below Deity

than a fly or a gnat is inferior to us. He cannot, then, be honoured by deceiving us. And we may say, with reverence, that his justice, and all his moral perfections, require that he should be explicit in teaching ignorant men on subjects of such importance as this?"—p. 40.\*

2. The *time* in which the New Testament was written renders such a sense of the indefinite terms there used very possible and very probable. The Jews, it is well known, were at that time very tenacious of *exclusive privileges*. Their prejudices taught them to expect a Messiah whose blessings should be confined to their own peculiar nation. The generality of even those who believed were exceedingly jealous, and found it hard work to relinquish their peculiar notions, and be reduced to a level with the Gentiles. It seems highly proper, therefore, that the Holy Spirit should, in some sort, cut off their vain pretensions; and this he did, not only by directing the apostles to the use of indefinite language, but by putting words into the mouth of Caiaphas, their own high priest. He bore witness for God, though he meant no such thing, how that Jesus "should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one *the children of God that were scattered abroad.*"

3. The *scope* and *connexion* of several of the passages produced countenance such an interpretation.

1 Tim. ii. 6, "He gave himself a ransom for all," &c. This is a passage on which considerable stress is laid. The whole passage reads as follows: "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity."

I allow it to be the revealed will of God that every man who hears, or has opportunity to hear, the gospel, should return to him by Jesus Christ; and whosoever so returns shall surely be saved. But I apprehend, let us understand by the *will* of God in this place what we may, we can never make it applicable to all men universally. By the *truth* which God will have all men to come to the knowledge of, is plainly intended that of *the one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*; which is here opposed to the notion of *many gods* and *many mediators* among the heathens. But in no sense can it be said to be God's will that all men universally should come to the knowledge of the *latter branch* of this truth,

\* P. speaks of *reverence*; and I have no doubt but that in general he feels it; but surely, in this place, he must have forgotten himself. Surely a greater degree of sobriety would have become a creature so ignorant and insignificant as he describes himself, than to determine what kind of language God shall use in conveying his mind to men. There is no doubt but God's word, in all its parts, is sufficiently explicit. Every thing that relates to the *warrant* and *rule* of a sinner's application for salvation, especially, is plain and easy. The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err. And if some truths, which do not affect either his right to apply to the Saviour, or his hope of success on application, should be expressed in figurative language, I hope such a mode of expression will not be found to reflect upon the moral character of God.

I wish, especially, that P. had written with more sobriety in what he says of God's "*deceiving* and *insnaring* us." What deception is there in the case? Do we suppose it possible for a poor sinner, encouraged by the invitations of the gospel, to apply to Christ, and there meet with a repulse? No such thing. To what purpose then is it asked, "How can any man believe the promises of God, if he be not assured that God is in earnest, and means to fulfil them?"—p. 49.

unless it be his will that millions of the human race should believe in him of whom they have never heard.

I should think the latter part of verses 6, 7 determines the meaning. The phrase, "to be testified *in due time*" doubtless refers to the gospel being preached among "all nations," though not to all the individuals of any one nation, "before the end of the world." Hence it follows, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher—a teacher of the *Gentiles* in faith and verity." God does not now, as if the apostle had said, confine his church, as heretofore, amongst the Jews. Your prayers, hopes, and endeavours must now extend over all the world. God will set up his kingdom in all the kingdoms of the earth. Seek the welfare and eternal salvation of men, therefore, without distinction of rank or nation. There is not a country under heaven which is not given to the Messiah for his inheritance; and he shall possess it *in due time*. In due time the gospel shall be testified throughout all the world; for the ushering in of which glorious tidings I am appointed a *herald*, an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.\*

I have seen nothing at present sufficient to convince me but that this is the meaning of I John ii. 2, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." John, the writer of the Epistle, was a Jew, an apostle of the *circumcision*, in connexion with Peter and James, Gal. ii. 9. The Epistles of Peter and James were each directed to the Jews (1 Pet. i. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 1; James i. 1); and Dr. Whitby acknowledges concerning this Epistle,† that, "it being written by an apostle of the circumcision, it is not doubted but it was written to the Jews." The same is intimated by several passages in the Epistle itself. 'The *fathers*, to whom he writes, (chap. ii. 13, 14,) knew Christ *from the beginning*. In verse 18 of the same chapter he appears plainly to refer to our Lord's prophecies concerning the awful end of the Jewish nation, and to the false prophets that should come into the world previously to that event. He insists much upon Christ's being *come in the flesh*; which was a truth more liable to be denied by the Jews than by the Gentiles. Finally, the term itself, which is rendered *propitiation*, plainly alludes to the Jewish *mercy-seat*. It is true that many things in it will equally apply to Jews and Gentiles. Christ is the *Advocate* of the one as well as of the other: but that is no proof that the Epistle is not directed to believing Jews; as the same may be said of many things in the Epistle of James, which also is called a *catholic* or *general* Epistle, though expressly addressed *to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad*.‡

After all, I wish it to be considered whether the text refers to any other than *believers* of either Jews or Gentiles. In my opinion it does not; and if so, the argument from it in favour of the universal extent of Christ's death, is totally invalidated. My reasons for this opinion, are as follow: the term *propitiation* is not put for what Christ is unto us considered only as laying down his life and offering himself a sacrifice, but for what he is unto us *through faith*. He is "set forth to be a *propitiation, through faith in his blood*," Rom. iii. 25. He cannot, therefore, one should think, be a propiti-

\* "He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—Whether the *ransom* of Christ extends further than the *testimony* of the gospel or not is a question which I do not pretend to determine; be that, however, as it may, neither supposition will suit the scheme of P. If it does *not*, his point is given up. If it *does*, if it includes the whole heathen world, it is to be hoped they are somewhat the better for it, not only in this world, but in that to come. But if so, either they must go to heaven without regeneration, or regeneration in those cases is not by *faith*.

† Preface to his *Annotations on the First Epistle of John*.

‡ Had not an argument been drawn from the *title* of this Epistle in favour of its being written to both Jews and Gentiles, I should have taken no notice of it; as these *titles*, I suppose, were given to the Epistles by uninspired writers.

ation to any but *believers*. There would be no propriety in saying of Christ that he is set forth to be an expiatory sacrifice *through faith in his blood*, because he was a sacrifice for sin prior to the consideration of our believing in him. The text does not express what Christ *was* as laying down his life, but what he *is* in consequence of it. Christ being our propitiation, certainly *supposes* his being a sacrifice for sin; but it also supposes something more; it includes the idea of that sacrifice becoming *the medium of the forgiveness of sin, and of communion with God*. It relates, not to what has been called the impetration, but to the application of redemption. Christ is our propitiation in the same sense as he is *the Lord our righteousness*, which also is said to be *through faith*: but how he should be a propitiation *through faith* to those who have no faith it is difficult to conceive.

The truth seems to be this: Christ is that of which the Jewish mercy-seat (or propitiatory) was a type. The Jewish mercy-seat was the *medium of mercy and communion with God* for all the worshippers of God of old, Ex. xxv. 22. Christ is that in reality which this was in figure, and is not, like that, confined to a single nation. He is the medium through which *all believers of all ages and nations* have access to God and receive the *forgiveness of their sins*. All this perfectly agrees with the scope of the apostle, which was to encourage backslidden *believers* against despair.

Though it is here supposed the apostle personates believing Jews, and that *the whole world* means the Gentiles; yet, if the contrary were allowed, the argument would not be thereby affected. Suppose him by *our sins* to mean *the sins of us who now believe, whether Jews or Gentiles*, still it amounts to the same thing; for then what follows is as if he had added, And not for ours only, but for the sins of all that ever came, or shall come, unto God by him from the beginning to the end of time.

P. objects the want of other passages of Scripture, in which the term "*whole world* signifies the *elect*, or those that *believe*, or those that are saved, or any thing contradictory to the sense he has given,"—p. 81. The term *whole world* is certainly used in a limited sense by the apostle Paul, when he says of the Christians at Rome that their faith was spoken of *throughout the whole world*. Though Rome was at that time, in a sort, the metropolis of the known world, and those who professed Christianity in that famous city were more conspicuous than those who professed it in other places; yet there were many countries not then discovered, in which the news of their faith could not possibly have arrived. Besides, it is evident from the drift of the apostle that the faith of the Romans was spoken of in a way of *commendation*; but it is not supposable that the whole world universally would so speak of it. By the *whole world*, therefore, can be meant no more than the *believing* part of it in those countries where Christianity had begun to make its way. Further, Christ is called "the God of the whole earth," Isa. liv. 5. The *whole earth* must here mean *believers*; as it expresses, not his universal government of the world, but his tender relation of a *husband*, which it was here foretold he should sustain towards the Gentile as well as the Jewish church. Again, the gospel of Christ preached in the world is compared to leaven hid in three measures of meal till *the whole* was leavened, Matt. xiii. 33. This, doubtless, implies that the gospel, before it has finished its operations, shall spread throughout the *whole world*, and leaven it. But this will never be true of all the individuals in the world, for none but true *believers* are leavened by it.

But P. thinks the phrase *whole world*, in 1 John ii. 2, ought to be interpreted by a like phrase in chap. v. 19, and yet he himself cannot pretend that they are of a like meaning, nor does he understand them so. By the *whole world* in the one place he understands all the inhabitants that ever

were, or should be, in the world, excepting those from whom they are distinguished; but, in the other, can only be meant the wicked of the world, who, *at that time*, existed upon the earth.

The most plausible argument advanced by P. is, in my opinion, from 2 Cor. v. 15, on which he observes that the phrase *they who live is distributive*, and must, therefore, include only a part of the *all* for whom Christ died,—p. 78. Whether the following remarks are sufficient to invalidate the argument of P. from this passage the reader is left to judge.

(1.) The context speaks of the GENTILES being interested in Christ as well as the Jews. “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”—“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” ver. 16, 17, compared with Gal. vi. 15.

(2.) It does not appear to be the desire of the apostle to affirm that Christ died for all that were dead, but that all were dead for whom Christ died. P. wonders, and it seems has much ado to keep up his good opinion of my integrity, for what I said in a note on this subject before,—p. 26. That it is the main design of the apostle to speak of the *condition* of those for whom Christ died I conclude, partly from his having been describing the condition of sinners as subject to the *terrors* of Divine vengeance (ver. 11,) and partly from the phraseology of ver. 14. The apostle’s words are, “If one died for all, then were (*they*) all dead;” which proves both that the condition of those for whom Christ died was the subject of the apostle’s main discourse, and that the extent of the term *all*, in the latter part of this verse, is to be determined by the former, and not the former by the latter.

But “has the little word *all* lost its meaning?” No, certainly; nor does what is here advanced suppose that it has. The *main design* of a writer is not expressed in every word in a sentence; and yet every word may have its meaning. Though I suppose that the term here may refer to Jews and Gentiles, yet that does not necessarily imply that it was the apostle’s *main design* here to speak of the extent of Christ’s death.

(3.) Though our hypothesis supposes that all for whom Christ died shall finally live, yet it does not suppose that they all live *at present*. It is but a part of those for whom he died, viz. such as are called by his grace, who live not unto themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again.

There are some other passages produced by P., particularly Heb. ii. 9, and 2 Pet. ii. 1; but I am ready to think he himself does not place much dependence upon them. He is not unacquainted with the scope of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, nor of the word *man* not being in the text. Nor need he be told that the apostle Peter, in the context of the other passage, appears to be speaking nothing about the purchase of the Saviour’s blood; that the name there given to the purchaser is never applied to Christ; and that if it is applied to him in this instance, it is common to speak of things, not as they actually are, but as they are professed to be: thus apostates are said to be *twice dead*, as if they had been spiritually alive; though, in fact, that was never the case, but barely the matter of their profession. See also Matt. xiii. 12, and Luke viii. 18.

SECT. III.—*On the consistency of the limited extent of Christ’s death, as stated above, with universal calls, invitations, &c.*

Here we come to the second question, and to what is the only part of the subject to which I am properly called upon to reply. If a limitation of design in the death of Christ be inconsistent with exhortations and invitations to mankind in general, it must be because it is inconsistent for God to exhort and invite men to any thing with which he has not made gracious provision, by the death of his Son, to enable them to comply.



When I deny a gracious provision being necessary to render exhortations consistent, I would be understood to mean, 1. Something more than a provision of pardon in behalf of all those who shall believe in Christ. 2. More than the furnishing of men with motives and reasons for compliance; or ordering it so that these motives and reasons shall be urged upon them. If no more than this were meant by the term, I should allow that such a provision is necessary. But, by a gracious provision, I mean that, be it what it may, which removes a moral inability to comply with the gospel, and which renders such a compliance possible without the invincible agency of the Holy Spirit.

What has been said before may be here repeated, that the doctrine of a limitation of design in the death of Christ stands or falls with that of the Divine *purposes*. If the latter can be maintained, and be maintained to be consistent with the free agency of man and the entire use of means, then it will not be very difficult to defend the former. I confess that the subject is profound, and I enter upon it with fear and trembling. It is a subject on which I dare not indulge a spirit of speculation. Perhaps the best way of studying it is upon our knees. I hope it will be my endeavour to keep close to what God has revealed concerning it. There are, doubtless, many questions that might be started by a curious mind which it would be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to solve. Nor is this to be wondered at. The same difficulty attends us, in our present state, respecting almost all the works of God. No man could solve one half of the difficulties that might be started concerning God's goodness in creating the world, when he knew all that would follow. The same might be said of a thousand things in the scheme of Divine Providence. Suffice it for us, at present, that we know our littleness; that when we come to see things as they are, we shall be fully convinced of all that has been told us, and shall unite in the universal acclamation, HE HATH DONE ALL THINGS WELL!

That there is a consistency between the Divine decrees and the free agency of men I believe; but whether I can account for it is another thing. Whether it can be accounted for at all, so as to enable us clearly to comprehend it, I cannot tell. Be that as it may, it does not distress me: I believe in both, because both appear to me to be plainly revealed. Of this I shall attempt to give evidence in what follows.

1. The *time of man's life* is appointed of God. "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of a hireling? His days are determined, the number of his months is with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." And yet men are exhorted to use means to prolong their lives, and actually do use those means, as if there was no appointment in the case. God determines to send afflictions to individuals and families; and he may have determined that those afflictions shall terminate in death; nevertheless, it is God's revealed will that they should use means for their recovery, as much as if there were no determination in the affair. Children were exhorted to honour their parents, "that their *days might be long* in the land which the Lord their God had given them." He that desired life, and loved *many days*, was exhorted to keep his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile. If, by neglect or excess, any one come to what is called an untimely end, we are not to suppose either that God is disappointed or the sinner exculpated.

2. Our *portion in this life* is represented as coming under the Divine appointment.\* It is a *cup*, a *lot*, a *heritage*. David spoke of his portion as

\* P. calls this in question (p. 47); and seems to admit that if this could be proved, it would prove the consistency of the Divine purposes concerning men's eternal state with their obligations to use the means of salvation.

laid out for him by *line*. "The lines," says he, "are fallen to me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage." The times before appointed are *determined*, and the bounds of our habitation are *fixed*, Acts xvii. 26. It is a satisfaction to a humble mind that his *times* and concerns are in *God's hand*, and that he has the *choosing of his inheritance*, Psal. xxxi. 15; xlvii. 4. And yet, in all the concerns of life, we are exhorted to act with discretion, as much as if there were no Divine Providence.

The purposes of God extend to the *bitter* part of our portion as well as to the sweet. Tribulations are things to which we are said to be *appointed*. Nor is it a mere *general* determination: of all the ills that befell an afflicted Job, not one came unordained. Cutting and complicated as they were, he calmly acknowledged this, and it was a matter of relief under his trouble: "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him." Nevertheless, there are things which have a tendency to fill up this cup with either happiness or misery; and it is well known that men are exhorted to pursue the one, and to avoid the other, the same as if there were no Divine purpose whatever in the affair.

God appointed to give Pharaoh and Sihon up to their own hearts' lusts, which would certainly terminate in their destruction; and yet they ought to have accepted of the messages of peace which God sent to them by the hand of Moses. But here, I am told, I have obviated my own reasoning, by observing, elsewhere, that the "predeterminations of God concerning those persons were founded on the foresight of their wicked conduct, of which their noncompliance with these messages of peace was no inconsiderable part,"—p. 47. By this it should seem, then, that P. admits the reality of Divine decrees, and that the final state of every one is thereby determined of God; only that it is upon the *foresight* of faith or unbelief. In that case, he seems to admit of a consistency between the purposes of God to punish some of the human race, and their being universally invited to believe and be saved. And yet, if so, I see not the propriety of some of his objections against the doctrine of decrees. The thing against which he, in some places, reasons, is not so much their unconditionality, as the *certainty* of their issue. "All must be sensible," says he, "that the Divine decrees *must stand*,"—p. 50. Be it so: must they not *stand* as much upon his own hypothesis as upon ours?

As to the *conditionality* of the Divine decrees, it is allowed that, in whatever instances God has determined to *punish* any of the sons of men, either in this world or in that to come, it is entirely upon the foresight of evil. It was so in all the punishments that befell Pharaoh and Sihon. But there was not only the exercise of punitive *justice* discovered in these instances, but, as well, a mixture of *sovereignty*. If the question be asked, Why did God *punish* these men? the answer is, On account of their sin. But if it be asked, Why did he punish them *rather than others in themselves equally wicked*? the answer must be resolved into mere sovereignty. He that stopped a persecuting Saul in his vile career could have turned the heart of a Pharaoh; but he is a debtor to none; he hath said he "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." The apostle Paul considered the destruction of Pharaoh as not merely an instance of *justice*, but likewise of *sovereignty* (Rom. ix. 17); and concludes, from his example, "therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth:" which, I should suppose, can intend nothing less than leaving them to the hardness of their hearts. The 19th verse, which immediately follows, and contains the objections of that day, is so nearly akin to the objections of P., (p. 50,) that I wonder he should not perceive it, and learn instruction by it.

3. Events which imply *the evil actions of men* come under the Divine

appointment. The visitations with which Job was afflicted were of *God's sending*. He himself knew this, and acknowledged it. And yet this did not hinder but that the Sabeans and Chaldeans acted as free agents in what they did, and that it was their duty to have done otherwise. Assyria was *God's rod* to Judah, and the staff in *their hands* was *his indignation*. And yet Assyria ought not so to have oppressed Judah. Pride, covetousness, and cruelty were their motives; for all which they were called to account and punished. Our Lord was "delivered according to *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*" His worst enemies did nothing to him but what "his hand and his counsel determined before to be done." And yet this did not hinder but that with "wicked hands" they crucified and slew him, that the contrary of all this was their duty, and that the invitations and expostulations of our Lord with them were founded in propriety and sincerity. God did not determine to give Judas a heart to forbear betraying his master, when tempted by the lure of gain: on the contrary, he determined to give him up to his own heart's lust. The Son of man, in being betrayed, went "as it was *determined*;" and yet there was a woe due to, and denounced against, the horrid perpetrator, notwithstanding.

Exclamations may abound, but facts are stubborn things. It is likely we may be told, If this be the case, we need not be uneasy about it; for it is as God would have it.—"If God has ordained it, why should we oppose it?"—p. 50. But such a mode of objecting, as observed before, though of ancient, is not of very honourable extraction. If it be not identically the same which was made to the apostolic doctrine, it is certainly very nearly akin to it. I can discern no difference except in words: "Thou wilt say, then, Why doth he yet *find fault*? for who hath resisted his will?" To which it was thought sufficient to reply, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

After all, surely there is a wide difference between an *efficient* and a *permissive* determination in respect to the existence of moral evil. To assign the former to the Divine Being is to make him the author of sin; but not so the latter. That God does permit evil is a fact that cannot be disputed; and if we admit the perfection of his moral character, it must be allowed to be consistent with his righteousness, whether we can fully conceive of it or not. But if it be consistent with the righteousness of God to permit evil, it cannot be otherwise to determine so to do, unless it be wrong to determine to do what is right.\*

\* Were it not for the candour which P. has discovered in other instances, and his solemn appeal to "the searcher of hearts that misrepresentation was not his aim," I should almost think he must take pleasure in representing my sentiments on the Divine decrees in as shocking a light as he is able. What I should express in some such manner as this:—God commands men in general to believe in Christ, though he knows they are so obstinately wicked that they cannot find in their heart so to do; and he has determined not to do all that he is able to remove their obstinacy—he will express for me thus: "God commands all to believe in Christ; and yet knows that they are not, nor ever were, and determines they *never shall be able* to do it,"—p. 49. P. will allow, I suppose, that God has not determined to enable men, in the present state, perfectly to love him, with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength; and yet if this were put into a positive form—if it were said that God has determined that men, in the present state, *shall not love him* with all their hearts, but that *they shall* continue to break his law—it would wear a very different appearance.

That there is a conformity between God's revealed will and his decrees I admit. There is no contradiction in these things, in themselves considered, however they may appear to short-sighted mortals. That there is, however, a real distinction between the secret and revealed will of God is not very difficult to prove. The will of God is represented in Scripture, I. As that which **CAN NEVER BE FRUSTRATED.**—"Who hath resisted his will?"—"He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth even that he doeth."—"Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."—"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."—"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."—"Of a truth, Lord, against thy holy child Jesus—both Herod and Pontius Pilate,

4. Our Lord declared, concerning those who should *blaspheme against the Holy Spirit*, that their sin should not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that to come. And there is no doubt, I think, but that some of the Jews were guilty of this sin, if not before, yet after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Their destruction then was inevitable. And yet the apostles were commissioned to preach the gospel to "every creature," without distinction; and Christ's promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," continued of universal force. The primitive ministers made no scruple to call men to repent and believe, wherever they came. It is true they seem to have been forbidden to pray for the forgiveness of the *sin itself*, (1 John v. 16,) for that would have been praying in direct contradiction to God's revealed will; but as they knew not the hearts of men, nor who had, and who had not, committed that sin, they were never forbidden, that I know of, to pray for men's souls without distinction. They certainly did so pray, and addressed their auditors as if no such sin had existed in the world, Acts xxvi. 29; Col. i. 28. P. will allow that the exhortations and invitations of the gospel were addressed to men indefinitely; and if so, I should think they must have been addressed to some men whom at the same time it was not the *intention* of Christ to save.

5. God has not determined to give men sufficient grace in the present state to love him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as themselves; or, in other words, to keep his law perfectly. He has not made provision for it by the death of his Son. I suppose this may be taken for granted. If, then, a gracious provision is to be made the ground and rule of obligation, it must follow that all commands and exhortations to perfect holiness in the present state are utterly unreasonable. What meaning

with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." 2. As that which MAY BE FRUSTRATED or disobeyed.—"That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."—"He that doeth the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The former belongeth unto *God*, being the rule of his own conduct, and to us is *secret*; the latter belongeth to us and to our children for ever; being the rule of our conduct, "that we may do all the words of his law;" and this is fully *revealed*.

It was God's will, in some sense or other, to permit Job, at the devil's request, to be deprived of his property by the Sabeans and Chaldeans; otherwise he would not have said to Satan as he did—"All that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand." And yet the conduct of these plunderers was certainly contrary to his revealed will, and to every rule of reason and equity. Nevertheless, God was not under obligation to do all he could have done to restrain them. It was not, therefore, at all inconsistent with his righteous disapprobation that he willed to permit their abominations. It was the will of God that Joseph should go down into Egypt. God is said to have sent him. The very thing which his brethren meant for evil God meant for good. They fulfilled his secret will in what they did, though without design; but they certainly violated his revealed will in the most flagrant manner.

If the commission of evil were the *direct end*, or *ultimate object*, of the secret will of God, that would certainly be in opposition to his revealed will; but this we do not suppose. If God wills not to hinder sin in any given instance, it is not from any love he has to sin, but for some other end. A master sees his servant idling away his time. He secretes himself, and suffers the idler to go on without disturbance. At length he appears, and accosts him in the language of rebuke. The servant, at a loss for a better answer, replies, How is this? I find you have been looking on for hours. It was your secret will, therefore, to let me alone, and suffer me to idle away your time; and yet I am reproved for disobeying your will! It seems you have two wills, and these opposite to each other. How can I obey your commands, unless I knew you would have me to obey them? Idleness, it seems, was agreeable to you, or you would not have stood by so long, and suffered me to go on in it undisturbed. *Why do you yet find fault? who hath resisted your will?*

Would any one admit of such a reply? And yet, for aught I see, it is as good as that for which my opponent pleads. In this case it is easy to see that the master does not will to permit the servant's idleness *for idleness' sake*, but for another end. Nor does the servant do wrong, *as influenced by his master's will*, but by his own; and therefore his objections are altogether unreasonable and wicked. "These things hast thou done," said God to such objectors, "and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes!"

can there be, upon this supposition, in such scriptures as the following? "Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would love me, and fear me, and keep *all* my commandments always!"—"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in *all* his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul!"—"Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If God's law continues to be an "invariable rule of human conduct, and infallible test of right and wrong," as P. says it does, then either there is a gracious provision made for perfection in the present state, or God requires and exhorts men to that for which no such provision is made.

6. If I am not misinformed, P. allows of the *certain perseverance of all true believers*. He allows, I suppose, that God has determined their perseverance, and has made gracious and effectual provision for it. He will not say so of hypocrites. God has not determined that they shall *continue in his word*, hold out to the end, and finish their course with joy. Nevertheless, the Scriptures address all professors alike, with cautions and warnings, promises and threatenings, as if there were no decree, nor any certainty in the matter, about one or the other. "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," on the one hand, are exhorted to "fear, lest, a promise being left them of entering into rest, any of them should seem to come short of it," and are warned, from the example of the unbelieving Israelites, to "labour to enter into rest, lest any man fall, after the same example of unbelief." The disciples of Christ were charged, upon pain of eternal damnation, "if their right hand or right eye caused them to offend, to cut it off, or pluck it out." Whatever some may think of it, there would be no contradiction in saying to the best Christian in the world, "If you deny Christ, he will deny you!" 2 Tim. ii. 12. Such as proved to be mere professors, on the other hand, were addressed by Christ in this manner, "If ye *continue* in my word, then shall ye be my disciples indeed;" and when any such turned back, and walked no more with him, though no such provision was made for their perseverance as is made for true believers, yet their falling away was always considered as their *sin*. Judas, and Demas, and many others, fell under the Divine displeasure for their apostasy.

I confess these things may look like contradictions. They are, doubtless, profound subjects; and, perhaps, as some have expressed it, we shall never be fully able, in the present state, to explain the *link* that unites the appointments of God with the free actions of men; but such a link there is: the fact is revealed abundantly in Scripture; and it does not distress me, if in this matter I have, all my life, to walk by faith, and not by sight.

From the above cases I conclude, that, however difficult it may appear to us, it is proper for God to exhort and invite men to duties with which he has not determined to give them a moral ability, or a heart, to comply; and for which compliance he has made no effectual provision by the death of his Son; and if it is so in these cases, I further conclude it may be so in the case in hand.

Two remarks shall conclude this part of the subject:—

(1.) Whether P. will allow of some of the foregoing grounds, as proper data, may be doubted. I could have been glad to have reasoned with him wholly upon his own principles; but where that cannot be, it is right and just to make the word of God our ground. If he can overthrow the doctrine supposed to be maintained in these scriptures, it is allowed that, in so doing, he will overthrow that which is built upon them; but not otherwise. In the last two arguments, however, I have the happiness to reason from principles which, I suppose, P. will allow.

(2.) Whether the foregoing reasoning will convince P., and those of his principles, or not, it may have some weight with considerate Calvinists. They must *either* give up the doctrine of predetermination, *or*, on this account, deny that men are obliged to act differently from what they do; that Pharaoh and Sihon, for instance, were obliged to comply with the messages of peace which were sent them; *or else*, if they will maintain both these, they must allow them to be consistent with each other; and if Divine decrees and free agency are consistent in some instances, it becomes them to give some solid reason why they should not be so in others.

#### SECT. IV. *General Reflections.*

I am not insensible that the cause I have been pleading is such as may grate with the feelings of some of my readers. It may seem as if I were disputing with PHILANTHROPY itself. To such readers I would recommend a few additional considerations:

1. The same objection would lie against me if I had been opposing the notion of universal *salvation*; and yet it would not follow thence that I must be in the wrong. The feelings of *guilty* creatures, in matters wherein they themselves are so deeply interested, are but poor criterions of truth and error.

2. There is no difference between us respecting *number* or *character* of those that shall be finally saved. We agree that whoever returns to God by Jesus Christ shall certainly be saved; that in every nation they that fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted. What difference there is respects the *efficacy* of Christ's death, and the *causes* of salvation.

3. Even in point of *provision*, I see not wherein the scheme of P. has the advantage of that which he opposes. The provision made by the death of Christ is of two kinds: (1.) A provision of pardon and acceptance for all believers. (2.) A provision of grace to enable a sinner to believe. The former affords a  *motive* for returning to God in Christ's name; the latter excites to a *compliance* with that motive. Now in which of these has the scheme of P. any advantage of that which he opposes? Not in the *former*: we suppose the provisions of Christ's death altogether sufficient for the fulfilment of his promises, be they as extensive as they may; that full and free pardon is provided for all that believe in him; and that if all the inhabitants of the globe could be persuaded to return to God in Christ's name, they would undoubtedly be accepted of him. Does the scheme of P. propose any more? No: it pretends to no such thing as a provision for *unbelievers* being forgiven and accepted. Thus far, at least, therefore, we stand upon equal ground.

But has not P. the advantage in the *latter* particular? does not his scheme boast of a universal provision of *grace*, sufficient to enable every man to comply with the gospel? Yes, it does; but what it amounts to it is difficult to say. Does it effectually produce, in mankind in general, any thing of a right spirit—any thing of a true desire to come to Christ for the salvation of their souls? No such thing, that I know of, is pretended. At most, it only amounts to this, that God is ready to help them out of their condition, *if they will but ask him*; and to give them every *assistance* in the good work, if they will but be in earnest, and set about it. Well: if this is the whole of which P. can boast, I see nothing superior, in this either, to the sentiment he opposes. We consider the least degree of a right spirit as plentifully encouraged in the word of God. If a person do but truly *desire* to come to Christ, or *desire the influence of the Holy Spirit to that end*, we doubt not but grace is provided for his assistance. God will surely "give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Where, then, is the superiority of his system? It makes no effectual provision for begetting a right disposition in those who are so utterly destitute of it that they will not seek after it. It only encourages

the well-disposed; and as to these, if their well-disposedness is real, there is no want of encouragement for them in the system he opposes.

4. Whether the scheme of P. has any advantage of that which he opposes, in one respect, or not, it certainly has a disadvantage in another. By it the redemption and salvation of the whole human race is left to uncertainty; to such uncertainty as to depend upon the fickle, capricious, and perverse will of man. It supposes no effectual provision made for Christ to *see of the travail of his soul*, in the salvation of sinners. P. has a very great objection to a sinner's coming to Christ with a *peradventure* (p. 33); but it seems he has no objection to his Lord and Saviour coming into the world, and laying down his life, with no better security. Notwithstanding any provision made by his scheme, the Head of the church might have been without a single member, the King of Zion without a subject, and the Shepherd of Israel without any to constitute a flock. Satan might have triumphed for ever, and the many mansions in glory have remained eternally unoccupied by the children of men!\*

5. Do we maintain that Christ, in his death, *designed* the salvation of those, and only those, who are finally saved? The same follows from our opponents' own principles. They will admit that Christ had a certain foreknowledge of all those who would, and who would not, believe in him; but did ever an intelligent being design that which he knew would never come to pass?

6. The scheme of P., though it professedly maintains that Christ died to atone for the sins of all mankind, yet, in reality, amounts to no such thing. The sin of mankind may be distinguished into two kinds: that which is committed simply against God as a Lawgiver, antecedently to all considerations of the gift of Christ, and the grace of the gospel; and that which is committed more immediately against the gospel, despising the riches of God's goodness, and rejecting his way of salvation. Now does P. maintain that Christ made atonement for both these? I believe not; on the contrary, his scheme supposes that he atoned for neither: not for the *former*; for he abundantly insists that there could be nothing of the nature of *blameworthiness* in this, and consequently nothing to require an atonement: not for the *latter*; for if so, atonement must be made for *impenitency* and *unbelief*; and, in that case, surely these evils would not prove the ruin of the subject.

7. If the doctrine of the *total* depravity of human nature be admitted, (and it is so, professedly,) the scheme of P. would be utterly inadequate for the salvation of one soul. Supposing Christ to have died for *all the world*, in his sense of the phrase, yet if all the world are so averse from Christ that they will not come unto him that they may have life, still they are never the nearer. It is to no purpose to say, There is grace provided for them, if they will but ask it; for the question returns, Will a mind, utterly averse from

\* P. observes, on Heb. ii, 9, that "it is undoubtedly a greater instance of the *grace* of God that Jesus Christ should die for *all* than only for a *part* of mankind;" and this he thinks "an argument of no little force in favour of his sense of the passage,"—p. 50. It is true, if Christ had made *effectual* provision for the salvation of all, it would have been a greater display of grace than making such a provision for only a part;† but God has other perfections to display, as well as his grace; and the reader will perceive, by what has been said, that to make provision for all in the sense in which P. contends for it, is so far from magnifying the grace of God, that it enervates, if not annihilates, it. Where is the grace of taking mankind from a condition in which they would have been for ever *blameless*, and putting them into a situation in which, at best, their happiness was uncertain, their guilt certain, and their everlasting ruin very probable?

† Yet, would *grace* have appeared so *evident*, if no one of our race had suffered the penalty of the law! Would every surmise have been precluded that its infliction would have been too great a stretch of severity? Would it have been equally *clear* that either the removal of guilt, or the conquest of depravity, was solely of grace?

coming to Christ for life, sincerely desire grace to come to him? Nor is it of any use to suggest that the gospel has a tendency to beget such a desire; for be it so, it is supposed there is no *certainty* of its producing such an effect. Its success depends entirely upon the will of man in being pliable enough to be persuaded by it; but if man is totally depraved, there can be no pliability in him. Unless the gospel could exhibit a condition that should fall in with men's evil propensities, the aversion of their hearts would for ever forbid their compliance. Such a scheme, therefore, instead of being more extensive than ours, is of no real extent at all. Those good men who profess it are not saved according to it; and this, in their near addresses to God, they as good as acknowledge. Whatever they say at other times, they dare not then ascribe to themselves the glory of their being among the number of believers rather than others.

If the supposed universal extent of Christ's death had a universal efficacy, it would be worth the while of A LOVER OF ALL MANKIND to contend for it; but if it proposes finally to save not *one soul more* than the scheme which it opposes—if it has no real advantage in point of *provision* in one respect, and a manifest disadvantage in another—if it enervates the doctrine of the *atonement*, confessedly leaves the salvation of those who are saved to an *uncertainty*, and, by implication, renders it *impossible*—then to what does it all amount? If P. holds that Christ died for all, it is neither so as to *redeem* all, nor so much as to procure them the *offer* of redemption; since millions and millions for whom Christ suffered upon his principles have died, notwithstanding, in heathen darkness.\*

\* It seems to me a poor and inconsistent answer which is commonly given by our opponents upon this subject. They affirm that Christ died with a view to the salvation of the whole human race, *how wicked soever they have been*; and yet they suppose that God, *for the sin of some nations*, withholds the gospel from them. The giving of Christ to die for us is surely a *greater* thing than sending the gospel to us. One should think, therefore, if, notwithstanding men's wickedness, God could find it in his heart to do the greater, he would not, by the self-same wickedness, be provoked to withhold the less. Besides, on some occasions, our opponents speak of the gospel as a system *adapted to the condition of sinners*, yea, to the *chief of sinners*; and if so, why not to those nations who are the chief of sinners? P. observes very justly, however inconsistent with some other things which he elsewhere advances, that the gospel takes men's fallen, polluted, and depraved state for granted, and is properly adapted to remove it (p. 23): how is it, then, that that which renders them proper objects of gospel invitations should be the very reason assigned for those invitations being withheld?

Whether there may not be a mixture of punitive justice in God's withholding the gospel from some nations I shall not dispute. At the same time, supposing that to be the case, it may be safely affirmed that the same punishment might, with equal justice, have been inflicted upon other nations who have all along enjoyed it; and that it is not owing to their having been better than others that they have been so favoured. One might ask of Jerusalem and Corinth, Chorazin and Bethsaida, Were they less infamous than other cities? rather, were they not the reverse? And may we not all who enjoy the gospel, when we compare ourselves with even heathen nations, adopt the language of the apostle, "Are we better than they? No, in no wise!"

If it be said, The providence of God is a great deep, and we cannot thence draw any conclusions respecting his designs; I answer, by granting that the providence of God is indeed a great deep; and if our opponents will never acknowledge a secret and revealed will in God in any thing else, one should think they must here; seeing Christ's revealed will is, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature," without distinction; and yet, by their own confession, it is his secret purpose to withhold it from some, even whole nations. As to drawing conclusions hence concerning God's designs, I should think it no arrogance so to do, provided we do not pretend to judge thence concerning events which are future. We are warranted to consider God's providences as so many expressions of what have been his designs. "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." It is true we cannot thence learn his *revealed will*, nor what is the path of duty; nor are we to go by that in our preaching, but by Christ's commission. It were well if Christian ministers could be excited and encouraged to enter into the most dark and heathenish corners of the earth to execute their commission. They ought not to stand to inquire what are God's designs concerning them; their work is to go and *do as they are commanded*. But though the providence of God is not that from which we are to learn his revealed will, yet when we see



P. thinks *success* to be a proof of the goodness of a doctrine,—pp. 4, 5. I think it is a matter deserving considerable attention; but cannot consider it as decisive; especially as certain questions might be asked concerning it which it would be difficult to answer; as, What is real success? and what was it, in the ministry of a preacher, which was blessed to that end? If, however, that is to be a criterion of principles, then we might expect, if the scheme of P. be true, that in proportion as the doctrines maintained by Calvin and the first Reformers began to be laid aside, and those of Arminius introduced in their stead, a proportionable blessing should have attended them. Surely he cannot complain that the universal extent of Christ's death, with various other kindred sentiments, is not generally embraced. The number of advocates for these sentiments has certainly been long increasing. If, therefore, these are gospel truths, the Christian world in general may be congratulated for having imbibed them; and one should think a glorious harvest might be expected as the effect. But, I suppose, were we to be determined by fact, as it has occurred in our own country, both in and out of the establishment, it would be far from confirming this representation. I question if P. himself will affirm that a greater blessing has attended the ministry in the Church of England, since little else but these sentiments have sounded from its pulpits, than used to attend, and still attends, the labours of those whom he is pleased to style "INCONSISTENT CALVINISTS." As to Protestant Dissenters, if such of them as maintain the universal extent of Christ's death have been, more than others, blessed to the conversion of sinners, and if their congregations, upon the whole, have more of the life and power of godliness among them than others, it is happy for them; but if so it is, I acknowledge it is news to me. I never knew nor heard of any thing sufficient to warrant a supposition of that nature.

P. thinks my "views of things, after all, open a wide door to licentiousness" (p. 60); but that if we were to admit what he accounts opposite sentiments, it would "be the most likely way to put a stop to *real* and *practical* Antinomianism,"—p. 51. I reply, as before, Surely he cannot complain that the universal extent of Christ's death, with other kindred sentiments, is not generally embraced; and will he pretend to say that real and practical Antinomianism has been thereby rooted up? Since the body of the Church of England have embraced those principles, have they been better friends to the law of God than before? and has a holy life and conversation been gradually increasing among them as the old Calvinistic doctrines have fallen into disrepute? Further, do the body of those Protestant Dissenters who reject what are commonly called the Calvinistic doctrines discover more regard to holiness of life than the body of those who embrace them? God forbid that we should any of us boast; by the grace of God we are what we are; and we have all defects enow to cover our faces with shame and confusion! But, without invidious reflections, without impeaching the character of any man or body of men, I am inclined to think, that if such a comparison were made, it would fail of proving the point which P. proposes. It is a well-known fact, that many, who deny the law of God to be a rule of life, do, at the same time, maintain the universal extent of Christ's death.

P. seems to have written with the benevolent design of bringing me and

events turn up, we may conclude that, for some ends known to himself, these were among the *all things* which he *worketh after the counsel of his own will*.

Far be it from me to pretend to fathom the great deep of Divine Providence! But when I read in my Bible that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," and that the apostle Paul was encouraged to continue his ministry in one of the most infamous cities in the world by this testimony, "I have much people in this city," I cannot but think such passages throw a light upon those darker dispensations.

others over to his sentiments; and I thank him for his friendly intention. Could I see evidence on his side, I hope I should embrace his invitation. But it is a presumptive argument, with me, that his views of things must be, somehow or other, very distant from the truth, or they could not abound with such manifest inconsistencies. A scheme that requires us to maintain that we are saved wholly by *grace*, and yet, so far as we *differ from others*, it is not the Spirit of God, but we ourselves, that cause the difference; that to be born *in sin* is the same thing as to be born *blameless*, or, in other words, *free from it*; that if vice is so predominant that there is no virtue to oppose it, or not virtue sufficient to overcome it, then it ceases to be vice any longer; that God is *obliged* to give us *grace*; (or, in other words, we may *demand* that of him to which we can lay no *claim*, or else insist upon it that we are not accountable beings;) that God so loved mankind as to give his Son to die—not, however, to save them from *sin*—but to deliver them from a blameless condition, put them into a capacity of being blameworthy, and thus expose them to the danger of everlasting destruction;—a scheme, I say, that requires us to maintain such inconsistencies as these, must be, somehow or other, fundamentally wrong. What others may think I cannot tell; but, for my part, I must withhold my assent, till more substantial and consistent evidence is produced.

If I have not taken notice of every particular argument and text of Scripture advanced by P., I hope I shall be allowed to have selected such as were of the greatest force, and by which the main pillars of his system are supported.

If I have, in any instance, mistaken his meaning, I hope he will excuse it. I can say, I have taken pains to understand him. But whether I have always ascertained his meaning or not, and whether the consequences which I have pointed out as arising from his sentiments be just or not, I can unite with him in appealing to “the searcher of hearts, that misrepresentation has not, in any one instance, been my aim.”

As I did not engage in controversy from any love I had to the thing itself, so I have no mind to continue in it any further than some good end may be answered by it. Whether what I have already written tends to that end, it becomes not me to decide; but, supposing it does, there is a point in all controversies beyond which they are unprofitable and tedious. When we have stated the body of an argument, and attempted an answer to the main objections, the most profitable part of the work is done. Whatever is attempted afterwards must either consist of little personalities, with which the reader has no concern; or, at best, it will respect the minutiae of things, in which case it seldom has a tendency to edification. To this I may add, though I see no reason, at present, to repent of having engaged in this controversy, and, in similar circumstances, should probably do the same again, yet it never was my intention to engage in a controversy for life. Every person employed in the ministry of the gospel has other things, of equal importance, upon his hands. If, therefore, any or all my opponents should think proper to write again, the press is open; but unless something very extraordinary should appear, they must not conclude that I esteem their performances unanswerable, though I should read them without making any further reply. The last word is no object with me; the main arguments, on all sides of the controversy, I suppose are before the public; let them judge of their weight and importance.

A reflection or two shall conclude the whole. However firmly any of the parties engaged in this controversy may be persuaded of the goodness of his cause, let us all beware of *idolizing* a sentiment. This is a temptation to which controversialists are particularly liable. There is a lovely *proportion*

in Divine truth; if one part of it be insisted on to the neglect of another, the beauty of the whole is defaced; and the ill effects of such a partial distribution will be visible in the spirit, if not in the conduct, of those who admire it.

Further, Whatever difficulties there may be in finding out truth, and whatever mistakes may attend any of us in this controversy, (as it is very probable we are each mistaken in some things,) yet, let us remember, *truth itself is of the greatest importance*. It is very common for persons, when they find a subject much disputed, especially if it is by those whom they account good men, immediately to conclude that it must be a subject of but little consequence, a mere matter of speculation. Upon such persons religious controversies have a very ill effect; for finding a difficulty attending the coming at the truth, and at the same time a disposition to neglect it and to pursue other things, they readily avail themselves of what appears to them a plausible excuse, lay aside the inquiry, and sit down and indulge a spirit of scepticism. True it is that such variety of opinions ought to make us very diffident of ourselves, and teach us to exercise a Christian forbearance towards those who differ from us. It should teach us to know and feel what an inspired apostle acknowledged, that *here we see but in part*, and are, at best, but in a state of *childhood*. But if all disputed subjects are to be reckoned matters of mere speculation, we shall have nothing of any real use left in religion. Nor shall we stop here: if the same method of judging of the importance of things were adopted respecting the various opinions in useful science, the world would presently be in a state of stagnation. What a variety of opinions are there, for instance, concerning the best modes of *agriculture!* but if any person were to imagine from this that agriculture itself must be a matter of no importance, and that all those articles therein which have come under dispute must be matters of mere idle speculation, what a great mistake would he be under! And if a great number were to imbibe the same spirit, and, seeing there were so many opinions, resolve to pay no attention to any of them, and to live in the total neglect of all business, how absurd must such a conduct appear, and how pernicious must be the consequences! But a neglect of all Divine truth, on account of the variety of opinions concerning it, is fully as absurd, and infinitely more pernicious. As much as the concerns of our bodies are exceeded by those of our souls, or time by eternity, so much is the most useful human science exceeded in importance by those truths which are sacred and Divine.

Finally, Let us all take heed that our attachments to Divine truth itself be on account of its being *Divine*. We are ever in extremes; and whilst one, in a time of controversy, throws off all regard to religious sentiment in the gross, reckoning the whole a matter of speculation, another becomes excessively affected to his own opinions, whether right or wrong, without bringing them to the great criterion, the word of God. Happy will it be for us all if truth be the sole object of our inquiries, and if our attachment to Divine truth itself be, not on account of its being what we have once engaged to defend, but what God hath revealed. This only will endure reflection in a dying hour, and be approved when the time of disputing shall have an end with men.

THE  
REALITY AND EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE, WITH THE CER-  
TAIN SUCCESS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM,

CONSIDERED IN

A SERIES OF LETTERS:

CONTAINING

REMARKS UPON THE OBSERVATIONS OF THE REV. DAN. TAYLOR ON MR.  
FULLER'S REPLY TO PHILANTHROPOS.

BY AGNOSTOS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE readers of the controversy between Mr. Fuller and Mr. Dan Taylor will recollect that, at the close of this controversy, a pamphlet appeared, consisting of Letters addressed to Mr. Fuller, and bearing the signature of AGNOSTOS. As these Letters now make their appearance among Mr. Fuller's writings, it will be proper to state, for the information of readers in general, that, with the exception of one or two pages, they were written by Mr. Fuller himself. His reason for concealing his name in this publication may be stated in a few words. The controversy had already been extended to a considerable length. Mr. Fuller, while unwilling that it should terminate without his making some additional remarks, conceived that these remarks, if appearing to proceed from the pen of a third person, would be less likely to prolong the discussion, and would be read with greater interest by the public, who, he conceived, already began to be wearied by its prolixity. As this reason for concealment no longer exists, the Editor has inserted these observations in the body of Mr. Fuller's Works, and has cast them into the shape of Letters *written* by Mr. Fuller instead of Letters *addressed* to him, by changing the second person, wherever it was necessary, into the first. This, with a few other trifling changes and omissions unavoidably arising from the form which the Letters now assume, constitutes the whole of the alterations which have been made in them. The Letters were deemed too important to be left out of a complete edition of Mr. Fuller's Works, but could not, with propriety, appear in their original form.

## LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE lately been engaged in a religious controversy, in which my original design was directed against what I considered as an abuse of the doctrines of discriminating grace; but in executing this design, I have sustained an attack from an opposite quarter. At this I am not much surprised, as the principles which I maintain are equally repugnant to Arminianism as to Pseudo-Calvinism.

Having carefully attended to this controversy in all its parts, I must confess myself still of opinion that in the main I have engaged on the side of truth, and that the arguments which I have advanced have not yet been solidly answered.

Mr. Dan Taylor, who, under the signature of Philanthropos, animadverted on my first publication, and to whose animadversions I have written a reply, has taken up his pen again. In addition to his first *Nine Letters*, he has written *Thirteen* more upon the subject; yet it appears to me that he has not answered my main arguments, but, in fact, has in various cases sufficiently refuted himself.

Mr. T. appears to have been hurt by what I said concerning his want of *reverence*, and the resemblance of his objection to that made against the apostle in Rom. ix. He submits it "to the judgment of those who are accustomed to think deliberately how far any part of this was just; whether I did not arrogate a great deal more to myself than I ought to have done; whether I ought not, prior to these charges, to have proved myself possessed of apostolical authority, powers, and infallibility, and to have proved, by apostolical methods, that the particular sentiments against which he there objected came from heaven,"—XIII. 135.\* Now I hope not to be deemed arrogant, if I profess to have thought at least with some degree of "deliberation" upon the subject; and I declare I cannot see the propriety of any thing Mr. T. here alleges. I did not compare *him* to those who blasphemously opposed the apostle's doctrine; the comparison respected barely his mode of reasoning, and not his person or character. Nor does what I have alleged require that I should prove myself possessed of apostolical infallibility. The whole of what is said amounts to no more than this, that the resemblance of his objection (IX. 50) to that made by the adversaries of the apostle, in Rom. ix. 19, ought to make him suspect whether the sentiments he maintains are not too near akin to theirs; and whether the sentiments he opposes are not of the same stamp with those of the apostle; otherwise, how is it that they should be liable to have the same objections made against them?†

As to what I said concerning *reverence*, I observe that in one place (XIII. 6) he *thinks* me for it, and hopes he "shall profit by it;" but, presently after, talks of *pardoning* me, and before he has done, charges it to a want of *candour* or *justice* (XIII. 135); and all through his piece frequently glances at it in a manner that shows him to have been quite displeased. Now what

\* The references to Mr. Taylor's two publications are distinguished by the numerals IX. and XIII. Thus by (XIII. 135) is meant the 135th page of Mr. Taylor's *Thirteen Letters*; and by (IX. 50) is meant the 50th page of his *Nine Letters*. The references to the latter publication are to the second edition.

† It is a good mode of reasoning to argue from the similarity of the opposition made to any doctrine in the days of the apostles with that which is made to a doctrine in the present day. Mr. Caleb Evans has thus, I think, solidly and excellently defended the doctrine of the atonement in four sermons on 1 Cor. ii. 23, 24.

can any one make of all this put together? There was either occasion for what I wrote, or there was not. If there *was*, why talk of *pardoning* me? and why charge me with a want of *candour* or *justice*? If there was *not*, and Mr. T. thinks so, why does he *thank* me for it? How are we to reconcile these things? Does the one express the state of mind Mr. T. would be thought to possess, and the other what he actually feels? or did he set out in a mild and amiable spirit, but, before he had done, lose his temper, and not know how to conceal it?

I would not wish, however, to spend much time in pointing out the defects of my opponent's temper. We all, particularly when engaged in controversy, need to *take good heed to our spirits*. And, perhaps, few can be long employed in so difficult an affair, without affording their antagonist an opportunity to say, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." If this does not provoke retaliation, it may be of use to the person reprov'd, but is of very little consequence to the public, especially after the first dispute is over. Let us wave this subject in future, and pass on to such things as are of more general importance.

I do not intend minutely to particularize every article of debate between myself and Mr. T., though if I were, I am persuaded the far greater part of his observations might be proved to be destitute of propriety. I would only notice in this Letter one or two which seem to fall under the head of *general remarks*, and then proceed to the consideration of the main subjects wherein we differ.

It is matter of "wonder" to Mr. T. that I should be "unable to pronounce to what *degree* or *extent* a poor sinner must believe the truth of the gospel in order to be happy; or to what *degree* of holiness a man must arrive in order to see the Lord,"—XIII. 7. It should seem then to be no difficulty with *him*. Well, how does he solve it? why by acknowledging *that it is not any degree of faith in the gospel which is necessary to salvation, nor any degree of holiness any more than faith, but the reality of it, without which no man shall see the Lord!!!* Mr. T. has a mind surely to make other people wonder as well as himself!

Again, I was thronged with opponents. I did not therefore think it necessary to make a formal reply to every single argument; such a plan must have swelled the publication to an enormous size: I therefore only selected the main subjects in debate, and attempted a fair discussion of them, with the arguments adduced in support of them. Mr. T. seems to complain of this my *systematical* way of treating the subject, as he calls it (XIII. 8); and sometimes singles out a particular argument of his, of which I have taken no notice, and insinuates as if it was because I felt it unanswerable,—XIII. 14. But is it not wonderful that he should complain of me, and, at the same time, be guilty of the same thing himself? He has omitted making any reply to nearly as much in mine as I have in his, and to things also of considerable force. My reasonings he has entirely passed over; as also my argument on the non-publication of the gospel. If Mr. T. looked upon *me* as obliged to answer every particular argument, notwithstanding the number of my opponents, what can be said for his *own* omissions, who had only *one* to oppose?

In my next I will begin to attend to the main subjects on which we differ; viz. *The work of the Spirit—the excusableness of sinners on the non-provision of grace—the extent of the moral law—and the design of Christ's death.*

## LETTER II.

I WOULD now proceed to the *first* of the four main subjects in debate between myself and Mr. Taylor—THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT. There has been pretty much said between us on the *order* of regeneration and faith, and the instrumentality of the word in regeneration. I did not wish to contest that matter, be it which way it might, provided the *agency* of the Holy Spirit was but acknowledged. Mr. T., however, chooses to dwell upon this subject; yet it seems rather extraordinary that in all his replies he has taken no notice of what I advanced in p. 211.

Mr. T. seems to think that *regeneration* includes the *whole change* that is brought about upon a person in order to his being denominated a true Christian; and not merely the *first beginning* of it,—XIII. 11. I think in this I may agree with him, so far at least as to allow that the term is to be understood in such a large sense in some places in the New Testament; and if that is the case, I feel no difficulty in concurring with him that regeneration is *by the word of truth*. But this, perhaps, may not satisfy my opponent, after all. He denies that men are enlightened previously to their believing the gospel (XIII. 12); and yet one would think that a person must understand any thing before he believes it; and if so, his mind cannot be said to be illuminated by faith. But still it is *by the word*: here Mr. T. will allow of no *difficulties*; or, if I will talk of difficulties, he will impute it to my forsaking my Bible,—XIII. 12. Well, have but patience with him, in twelve pages further, when he begins to feel difficulties himself, we shall find him atoning for this severity by commending me for the same thing upon which he here puts so heavy a construction,\*—XIII. 24.

I attempted to prove that Mr. T.'s sentiments leave out the agency of the Holy Spirit in the act itself of believing; or that "if there is any Divine agency in the matter, it is only a sort of grace given to men in common; which, therefore, can be no reason why one man, rather than another, believes in Christ." Thus I stated it in p. 212. Mr. T., in reply, complains that I have wronged him in representing him as leaving out the agency of the Holy Spirit in the act itself of believing; and informs us that he distinguishes between "the *operations* and *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit,"—XIII. 27. But wherein have I wronged him? I have allowed him to maintain a sort of Divine agency, or grace, which is given to men in common; but this certainly can be no cause why one man, rather than another, believes in Christ. And with this Mr. T.'s own account, (XIII. 13,) so far as I can understand him, perfectly agrees.

I maintain that it is owing to Divine agency, and to that *alone*, that one sinner, rather than another, believes in Christ. I must confess that Mr. T. writes, on this subject, in a confused and contradictory manner (XIII. 23); and well he may; his system will not admit it, and yet his heart knows not

\* Whatever Mr. T. thinks, some have thought that considerable difficulties would attend our supposing *all* Divine illumination to be by the word; nor are these objections drawn from "metaphysical speculations," but from the word itself. Thus they reason:—1. It is a fact that evil propensity in the heart has a strange tendency to blind the mind,—Eph. iv. 18. 2. It is promised by the Holy Spirit, "I will give them an heart to know me," Jer. xxiv. 7. But a heart to know God must be prior to that knowledge, and cannot, therefore, be produced by means of it. 3. "The natural man" is said *not to receive* "the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But if a spiritual discernment is necessary, in order to knowing spiritual things, that discernment cannot be produced *by* those spiritual things, unless the consequent can produce its antecedent. I wished not, however, to dispute about the order of things, but rather to attend to what is of far greater importance.

how to deny it. First, he goes about to qualify my question: "If by the term *alone*," says he, "be meant that no sinner would believe in Christ without Divine operations, I freely grant it." True, he might; but that is *not all* I plead for, nor what my words evidently intend; and this he knows very well, and ought not, therefore, to have made such an evasion. What *he* allows may be held without admitting that it is owing to the Holy Spirit that one sinner, rather than another, believes in Christ. He adds, "But if he mean that men are *passive* in this matter, when the Spirit, by the word, operates on the mind, that I do not believe." This is another evasion. My words do not imply that men are passive in believing in Christ. I conceive that men become active, when the Spirit operates upon their minds, though they were passive *in* that operation. The very idea of operation upon a subject implies that subject to be passive in such operation. The immediate effect may be activity. But, to suppose that the subject on whom the operation is performed is not passive in being the subject of the operation, is to suppose that he himself, and not the Spirit, puts forth that operation by which grace is produced. That the mind, in receiving Christ, is active, I allow; but this is no way inconsistent with the Holy Spirit being the proper, sole, efficient cause of such activity. There was no dispute whether "man was the subject of faith and unbelief," as his answer seems to represent (XIII. 24); but whether the blessed Spirit was the *sole, efficient, and proper cause* of our believing.

After all that Mr. T. says, in order to get over this difficulty, (XIII. 24, 25,) what does it amount to? "If the Spirit, by the word, bring me to believe, and not another, whatever is the cause or the obstruction, that is, in a general sense, done for me which is not done for another, and demands everlasting grateful acknowledgments." Of this general sense, or meaning, I can make no meaning at all. It certainly does not ascribe the difference between one sinner and another to God, but to the creature; and this is the very spirit and tendency of his whole system, which ought to sink it in the esteem of every humble, considerate mind. But the Holy Spirit "does that for those who do not believe which is sufficient for the purpose, and which would bring them to faith and happiness, if they were not to abuse it,"—XIII. 25. So far as relates to objective evidence being presented, (and which is sufficient to render men who are in possession of their natural faculties inexcusable,) we are, in this matter, agreed. But in reference to the work of the Spirit itself, if its success does indeed depend upon the pliability of the subject, then, so far, salvation is not of grace; for the very turning point of the whole affair is owing to the creature, and to his own good improvement of what was given to him in common with others. To speak of that being done which is sufficient, *if not abused*, is saying nothing at all. For how if the human heart should be so depraved as that it will be sure to abuse every word and work of God short of that which is omnipotent? That men resist the Holy Spirit, and abuse the grace of the gospel, is true; but the question is, *not* whether this their abuse is their wickedness, but how came Mr. T., or any other man, to be so pliable and well-disposed as not to resist it?\*

"I cannot prove," says Mr. T., "that the Holy Spirit does not do as much, or more, in this (general) sense, for some who do not repent and believe, as

\* In page 23 of his *Thirteen Letters*, Mr. T., speaking of believing in Christ, says he does "not apprehend that any man has any will or power, or any concern about the matter, till the Holy Spirit work, awaken, and produce these in the mind." But the Holy Spirit, he thinks, operates sufficiently in all men; *he does that for those who do not believe which is sufficient for the purpose*; yea, he supposes he does as much, or more, in this sense, for some who do not repent and believe, as for some who do,—p. 25. Mr. T. must allow that no man can ever do what he has neither *will nor power* to perform. The mind must be either active or passive in the production of the will and power of which he speaks. If *passive*, his whole system is overthrown; if *active*, the supposed prior activity is while they have neither *will nor power* to act, which is absurd.



for some who do. Truth itself informs us that what was done, without effect, for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, would have been effectual for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom,"—XIII. 25. Truth, indeed, does inform us of *something* being done for those cities; but it makes no mention of the work of the Spirit in or upon them, but merely of the mighty works, or miracles, which were wrought among them. These *ought* to have led them to repentance, though they did not. "But did not Christ speak as if Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom would have repented had they enjoyed the same means?" Yes, he did; and so did God speak concerning his people Israel: "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he became their Saviour." Again, "I looked that my vineyard should have brought forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." Again, "Thou art not sent unto a people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel: surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee."—"Last of all he sent his son, saying, They will reverence my son." But do these speeches prove that God really thought things would be so? Rather, are they not evidently to be understood of God's speaking, after the manner of men, of what might have been expected, according to human appearance?

"I do not remember," says Mr. T., "that the Scripture ever ascribes the final misery of sinners to the want of Divine influences," &c.,—XIII. 27. True; nor do my sentiments suppose *that* to be the cause of final misery. His reasoning on this subject (XIII. 32) is extravagant. It is sin, and sin alone, which is the cause of any man's ruin. He might as well say that a man is brought *into* misery *because* he is not brought *out* of it. The destruction of fallen angels is no more ascribed to the want of Divine mercy than that of fallen men.

Mr. T. thinks the cases of wicked men being restrained from wickedness, godly men growing in grace, &c., may illustrate the subject in question,—XIII. 30. I think so too. I also think with him concerning men's obligations to these things; that much more might be done than what is done: but that if they *are* done, it is to be ascribed to God, because it is he who works all our works in us; I think the same of faith in Christ. These are not things wherein we differ; but the question is, though in words Mr. T. ascribes these things, as well as faith, to God, whether his system does not ascribe them to the creature. This it certainly does; and he as good as acknowledges it, (XIII. 52,) where (in contradiction to what he here asserts) he pleads for men's being able, *independently of the grace of the gospel*, to abstain from gross abominations.

Mr. T. has not thought proper to controvert my arguments for a special and *effectual* influence of the Holy Spirit; but thinks that these may be admitted, without destroying his sentiments; only observing, that if he were to follow me through those reasonings, he "should question the propriety of the turn I give to a few passages of Scripture,"—XIII. 26. It will be time enough to reply, when we know what he has to object against my sense of those passages. But how is it that Mr. T. would have it thought that his sentiments are unaffected by those arguments? Had he but admitted the sentiment established by those arguments, it would have saved him much trouble which he has taken, in trying to account for God's doing the same for one man as for another, and yet *making men to differ*. If God works *effectually* on some, that is more than he will pretend that he does upon all; and this will perfectly account for a difference between one sinner and another. And if this way of God's making men to differ be admitted in *some* instances, it must in *all*, seeing one believer, as much as another, is taught to ascribe the difference between him and others to God alone.\* But

\* Rom. iii. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 10; John xiv. 22; 1 Cor. iv. 7.

Mr. T. does not believe an *effectual* influence; such an influence admitted would be destructive of his whole system. He supposes an effectual influence would be destructive of free agency and moral government,—XIII. 129. That it would be destructive of either, according to the Scriptural account of them, has not yet been proved; but that it would destroy his notions concerning them is admitted; and this proves that an effectual influence is inconsistent with his sentiments.

If Mr. T.'s reasonings (XIII. 33) prove any thing, they prove that God will furnish every man in the world with the means of salvation; but so far is this from corresponding with *fact*, that the gospel was never preached to the far greater part of mankind who have hitherto lived; and some of whom, Mr. T. supposes, would have really believed and been saved, had they but heard it,—XIII. 25.

I shall close my remarks on this part of the debate with a few observations on the resistibleness or irresistibleness of the Holy Spirit. I apprehend he is both resistible and irresistible, in different respects. The following observations are submitted to the reader's attention:—1. God has so constituted the human mind, that words, whether spoken or written, shall have an effect upon it. 2. The Holy Spirit speaks to men in his word; he has written to them the great things of his law. 3. It would be strange if God's word should not have some effect upon people's minds, as well as the words and writings of men. It would be very strange if neither the warnings nor exhortations, the threatenings nor the promises of God, should have any effect upon the mind; whereas the same things among men are constantly known to inspire them with various feelings. 4. The influence of the word upon the mind, seeing that word is indited by the Holy Spirit, may be called, in an indirect and figurative sense, the influence of the Holy Spirit. It was with this kind of influence that he *strove* with the antediluvians in the ministry of Noah, &c., (Gen. vi. 3,) and was resisted by the Israelites; that is, they resisted the *messages* which the Holy Spirit sent unto them by Moses and the prophets; and their successors did the same by the messages sent them by Christ and his apostles, Acts vii. 51. And thus the admonitions of parents, the events of providence, and the alarms of conscience, as well as the word preached and written, may each, in an indirect sense, be said to be the strivings of the Holy Spirit. This influence *ought* to suffice to bring us to repent of sin, and believe in Christ, and were it not for the resistance that is made to it, *would* have such an effect; but through the perverseness of the human heart it *never has*. It is a great sin to resist and overcome it; but it is such a sin as every man, while unregenerate, is guilty of. 5. Besides this, it has been allowed, by many of the most steady and able defenders of the doctrine of efficacious grace, that the Holy Spirit may, by his immediate but more *common* influence, impress the minds of unregenerate men, and assist reason and natural conscience to perform their office more fully; so that, notwithstanding the bias of the will is still in favour of sin, yet they are made sensible of many truths contained in the word of God, and feel somewhat of that alarming apprehension of their danger, and of the power of the Divine anger, &c., which all impenitent sinners will experience in a much superior degree at the day of judgment. But sinners, under these common awakenings only, continue destitute of that realizing sense of the *excellence* of Divine things which is peculiar to those who are effectually renewed in the spirit of their minds; and to which the power of sin has entirely blinded the minds of the unregenerate. 6. From the depravity or perverseness of the human heart arises the necessity of a *special* and *effectual* influence of the Holy Spirit. The influence before mentioned may *move* the soul, but it will not bring it home to God. When

souls are effectually turned to God, it is spoken of as the result of a special exertion of almighty power. "God, who *commanded* the light to shine out darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—"Thy people *shall* be willing in the day of thy *power*."—"I *will* put my law in their inward part, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."—"Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

These observations may account for several things which Mr. T. has remarked (particularly in XIII. 28, 29) without supposing that the special operations of the Holy Spirit are ever finally overcome.

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### LETTER III.

THE second general subject in debate respects the nature of that *inability* of which mankind are the subjects, in respect of compliance with the will of God; or, more particularly, original sin, human depravity, and the *grace of God*. On these subjects Mr. T. has written his Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Letters. He sets out with an observation on *free agency*, which discovers, in my opinion, the ground of a great many other of his mistakes. He supposes that a *moral*, as well as *natural*, ability to comply with the commands of God is necessary to render us free agents. Hence he does not seem to consider man as a free agent in respect to keeping, or not keeping the *law*, but barely "with regard to those objects which God in his *gospel* presents to him, as a fallen creature, to recover him from his fallen state" (XIII. 36); and yet he speaks, in the same page, of his thus being a "subject of God's *moral government*." Strange, indeed, that he should not be a free agent in respect of the moral law, and yet that he should be a subject of God's moral government; yea, and that the moral law should, notwithstanding, be to him "a rule of life,"—XIII. 61. If we are not free agents in respect of the moral law, we cannot be the subjects of God's moral government, but, rather, of some supposed evangelical government.

A free agent is an *intelligent being, who is at liberty to act according to his choice, without compulsion or restraint*. And has not man this liberty in respect of the *law* as well as of the *gospel*? Does he, in any instance, break the law by compulsion, or against his will? Surely not. It is impossible the law should be broken in such a way; for where any thing is done without or against volition, no equitable law, human or Divine, will ever blame or condemn. Mr. T.'s great mistake in these matters lies in considering a *bias of mind* as destructive of free agency. If a bias of mind to evil, be it ever so deep-rooted and confirmed, tends to destroy free agency, then the devil can be no free agent, and so is not accountable for all his enmity against God. The same may be said of those who are, as Mr. T. expresses it, become "unimpressible," (XIII. 28,) and *cannot cease from sin*. It is not sufficient to say that "they *had* power to receive the word till they wilfully resisted and rejected the truth;" if Mr. T.'s notion of free agency be just, they ought to have had power *at the time*, or else not to have been accountable. Mr. T. constantly reasons from *natural* to *moral* impotency, and, in these cases, admits of no difference between them; but he knows that, in respect of the former, if a man is unable to perform any thing that is required of him *at the time*, he is, to all intents and purposes, excusable; yea, though

he may have brought his impotency upon himself by his own crimes. If, for example, a man destroys both health and reason by mere debauchery and wickedness, so as to become a poor ghastly idiot, can any one suppose that, *in that state of mind*, it is just to require him to perform the business of a man, or to punish him for his omission, under the pretence that he *once had* reason and strength, but, by his wickedness, had lost them. No: far be it from either God or man to proceed in this manner! If, then, there is no difference between natural and moral impotency, those who are become "unimpressible," and are given up of God to sin, (as were Judas and the murderers of our Lord,) are not free agents, and so are not accountable beings.

Further, If a bias of mind to *evil*, be it ever so confirmed, tends to destroy the free agency of the subject, the same would hold true of a bias to *good*; which Mr. T. indeed seems to allow; for he asks, (XIII. 51,) "Are not free agents capable of sinning?" as if it were essential to free agency to be capable of doing wrong. But has Mr. T. forgot that neither God, nor Christ, (even when upon earth,) nor saints in glory, are capable of doing wrong? The bias of their minds is so invariably fixed to holiness, that it is impossible they should, in any instance, deviate from it; and yet will he deny them to be the subjects of free agency?

Mr. T.'s ideas of free agency have probably led him into some others, respecting the nature of *that sin* which men commit as the effect of Adam's transgression,—XIII. 52. His language on that subject, all along, implies that all the sin which men commit as the effect of Adam's transgression must be *involuntary*; as though it were something that operated within them, entirely *against*, or at least *without*, their consent. If this supposition were true, I should not wonder at his pleading for its innocence. If men were under *such* a necessity as this of sinning, I should coincide with Mr. T. in denying that they were accountable for that part of their conduct. But the truth is there is no such sin in existence. Sins of *ignorance*, under the law, were not opposed to *voluntary*, but to *presumptuous* sins, Numb. xv. 27–31. There are many sins that men commit which are not presumptuous, but none which are, in every sense, *involuntary*. Mr. T. perhaps will allege the apostle's assertions, in Rom. vii., that what he *would not*, that *he did*. He makes much ado (XIII. 42) about this, and my supposed inconsistency, but all he there says was, I think, sufficiently obviated in my first treatise. After all, Mr. T. does not really think there *are* any *sins* besides what are *voluntary*. Though he talks of believers being guilty of such sins, and of Christ's dying to atone for them, (XIII. 52,) yet he would not allow it to be just for any man, *in his own person*, either to be blamed or punished for them: no; he contends that it is the *concurrence of our wills that denominates us blameworthy* (XIII. 41); which is undoubtedly true in respect of all personal blame.

When Mr. T. reviewed my first publication, he spoke much in praise of the distinction between *natural* and *moral inability*, and of the *perspicuity* of the manner of stating it,—IX. 9, 63, 64. Surely he must not, at that time, have understood what he applauded; and having since discovered this sword to have two edges, the *one* equally adapted to cut up *Arminianism* as the *other* is to destroy *Antinomianism*, he has now changed his mind, and is striving to prevent its efficacy by giving another meaning to the terms, and thus involving the subject in darkness and confusion.\*

\* Had these terms, or the distinction they are used to specify, been a new invention of my own, there would have been less room to have complained of this treatment; but it appears to me a strange, unwarrantable freedom, when we reflect that both had been used, in exactly the same sense, by a great number of respectable theological writers. Whereas

By *natural power*, Mr. T. now understands a power that is barely adapted to the performance of *natural things*; and by *moral power*, a power for *moral things*,—Letter VI. But *natural power*, as I, and *all* others who have heretofore written upon the subject, have used it, is as much conversant with *spiritual* as with *natural things*; yea, and as much with *wicked things* as with either of them. It requires the same members, faculties, and opportunities to do *good* as to do *evil*; to perform *spiritual* as to perform *natural* actions. To pretend, therefore, to distinguish the use of these terms by the objects with which they are conversant, can answer no end but to perplex the subject.

But *is natural power sufficient for the performance of moral and spiritual actions?* Mr. T. says no; and so say I in one respect. But he concludes, therefore, that if God require any thing of a moral or spiritual nature of any man, it is but right that he should furnish him with *moral power* for the performance of it. Thus he all along represents moral ability as if it were some distinct faculty, formed by the Creator for the performance of moral actions, while *natural power* is given for the performance of natural actions; and thus the reader is led to imagine that God is as much obliged to furnish sinful men with the one as with the other, in order to render them accountable beings. Whereas *moral power* is not power, strictly speaking, but a heart to use the power God has given us in a right manner. It is *natural power*, and that only, that is properly so called, and which is necessary to render men accountable beings. To constitute me an accountable being, it is not necessary that I should be *actually disposed* to holy actions, (which is the same thing as possessing a moral ability,) but barely that *I could do such actions if I were disposed*. Indeed, notwithstanding all that Mr. T. has written to the contrary, and by whatever names he calls this power, *natural* or *moral*, he himself means nothing more. He does not mean to plead for its being necessary that men should be *actually possessed* of holiness, in order to their being free agents, but merely that they *might* possess it *if they would*. He only pleads, in fact, for what I allow; and yet he thinks he pleads for something else, and so goes on, and loses himself and his reader in a maze of confusion. It is not enough for Mr. T. that I allow men may return to God *if they will*; they must have the power of *being willing if they will* (XIII. 57); but this, as we shall soon see, is no more than having the power of being *what they are!* I represented this matter in as forcible a manner as I could in my Reply (p. 482); and it is a poor answer that Mr. T. makes to it, (XIII. 58,) as though I were out of my province in writing about the *meaning* of my opponent. Surely it is a lamentable thing if the meaning of an author cannot be come at by all he writes upon a subject. If what I imputed to him was not his meaning, why did he not give it in his next performance? “Is it uncandid to conclude he had no other meaning to give?”

Mr. T.'s new sense of them is entirely unprecedented; though, no doubt, the most rash and ignorant of the Pseudo-Calvinists would find it suited to subserve their denial of all obligation upon natural men to perform any thing spiritually good. But let men, as they value their souls, be first well assured such an evasive distinction will be admitted at the day of judgment, before they dare to apply it to this sin-extenuating purpose. I do not charge Mr. T. with intending to put weapons into the hands of deluded Antinomians; but I beseech him to consider how readily they would make their advantage of such a distinction, if once admitted.

## LETTER IV.

WHEN I affirm natural power to be sufficient to render men accountable beings, Mr. T. puts me upon *proof* (XIII. 56); and, what is more, supposes that I have acknowledged the contrary in my former treatise. Whether I have not *proved* this matter already—whether Mr. T. has not *allowed* me to have proved it—and whether what I say elsewhere is not in perfect *consistency* with it—shall be examined. Meanwhile, let us follow Mr. T. in his *three-fold* argument for the supposed innocence of *moral impotence*: “If men could never avoid it, cannot deliver themselves from it, and the blessed God will not deliver them, surely they ought not to be punished for it, or for any of its necessary effects.”\* Mr. T. complains heavily of my treating these subjects *separately*, which he wished to have considered *conjointly*. Well, there was an answer, though short, in my Reply, to the whole conjointly considered; and if he would solidly have answered *that* only, he might have been excused from all the rest.

But further, I can see no justice whatever in his complaint. If three things all together constitute a moral inability blameless, it must be on account of some *tendency* that each of those three things has to such an end, separately considered. What Mr. T. has said of man’s being composed of *body, soul, and spirit*, (XIII. 38,) does not prove the contrary to this; because, though *body* does not constitute a man, nor *soul*, nor *spirit*, separately considered, yet each of them forms a *component part* of human nature. If it could be proved that body, soul, and spirit had neither of them any *part* of human nature, separately considered, that would prove that, all together, they could not constitute a man. Suppose A. owes B. thirty pounds, and proposes to pay him in *three* different articles. Accordingly, A. lays down ten pounds in cash, ten pounds in bills, and ten pounds in grain. B. refuses each of these articles in payment; “for,” says he, “your cash is all counterfeit, your bills are forged, and your grain is damaged to such a degree as to be worth nothing.” A. replies, not by admitting that, unless each article can be proved to be of value, separately considered, he cannot in justice desire the whole to be accepted, but by complaining of B.’s unwarrantable manner of separating the articles, and examining them apart, as if he should say, “Though the cash may be counterfeit, the bills forged, and the grain worthless, *separately* considered, yet *all together* they make up the value of thirty pounds!

Further, Though all these three things are in *one place* mentioned together, yet Mr. T. did not all along consider them conjointly, nor has he done so now. There need not be a greater proof of his understanding these subjects *distinctly* than his attempting to defend them so, which he has done in what follows:—

First, He undertakes to prove that the circumstance of men being born impure, or inheriting their propensities from their first parent, does excuse them in being the subjects of those propensities,—XIII. 39. *Original sin*, to be sure, is a mysterious subject. There is a difficulty attending the existence of evil in the souls of all mankind upon every hypothesis; but it becomes us, as Mr. T. observes, to hearken to “Scripture evidence,” and to admit it as decisive; and, after all, I believe the Scriptural account of the matter will be found to have the fewest difficulties of any. Some, with

\* This, the reader will observe, is Mr. T.’s own way of stating it, (XIII. 37,) who always chooses to represent *moral* inability in terms which are properly applicable to *natural* inability only; and hereby it is that his positions wear the face of plausibility.

Pelagius, deny the thing itself, and maintain that human depravity comes entirely by *imitation*. Others admit the fact, that we "are depraved by Adam's transgression," but deny the guilt of such depravity on that account; this appears to be the case with Mr. T. Others admit the *fact* of such depravity, yet, notwithstanding, acknowledge its *guilt*; this is my sentiment. Though Mr. T. admits that men are born "impure," and that this impurity is their "depravity," a depravity which David, in Psal. li. 5, "confessed and lamented;" yet he maintains all this to be *blameless*;\* and all along seems to claim it as a matter of justice, either to stand upon his own ground, or to receive the grace of the gospel as an equivalent for it. The depravity of our nature, then, is not the *fault*, but the *misfortune* of it. It is, however, allowed to be that which is "our *ruin*, in that it deprives us of happiness and exposes us to *misery*," (XIII. 41,) that is, to *undeserved* misery; for such it must be, "be the misery what it may," if it be inflicted without blameworthiness in the subject. Surely such a constitution must have been very *unrighteous*, and men must have been very much injured, after all, to be *ruined* by *that* in the guilt of which they have no concern either personal or relative. Mr. T. may well represent it as an inducement for God to give his Son to die for them, (XIII. 81,) if it were only to make them amend for such an injury; and especially as he considers God himself as the author of our native depravity, in constituting the union between Adam and his offspring, —XIII. 62. To be sure his scheme is so far consistent. There is only this difficulty remaining, how shall we reconcile all this with the *Scriptures*; and with either the *justice* of the Lawgiver, or the *grace* of the Saviour? for it seems to me that both law and gospel must surely be overthrown by such an hypothesis.

The Scriptures represent God as a just Being, who will by no means inflict punishment where there is no guilt. "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the chil' ren of men. To crush under feet all the prisoners of the earth"—"to subvert a man in his cause, Jehovah approveth not."—"Surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." Surely then we might conclude, even though an apostle had never told us so, that *death* would not have *passed upon all men by one man's sin*, if, in that sin, somehow or other, *all* had not *sinned*. Surely death would not have reigned in the world over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, if *sin* had not thus been *in the world* as its procuring cause. This argument (from Rom. v. 13, 14) was urged before; why did not Mr. T. reply to it? "Is it uncandid to conclude, it was because no reply could be made?"

Further, The Scriptures represent the whole world as "guilty before God"—as void of every claim, except it be that of "shame and confusion of face." Jehovah speaks of himself as being at perfect *liberty* to save or not to save men; and as being determined to exercise it too: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Once more, The Scriptures represent the gift of Christ as being of mere *grace*, and the greatest instance of *love* that ever was displayed; and that

\* By the way, is it not rather extraordinary that Mr. T., after distinguishing between *impurity* and *sin*, *impure propensities* and *evil dispositions*, *depravity* and *blameworthiness*, *confessing* iniquity and taking shame and blame to ourselves on account of it, should exclaim against dealing in *metaphysics*? Verily, a man had need be endued with something more than metaphysical skill to make distinctions where there is no difference. "I do not understand relative blame," says Mr. T. Then, obviating an objection of mine, he asks, "But how then can they be said to be born in *sin*?" and answers, "If I use the expression, I mean they are born impure,"—XIII. 40. Be it so; what does David *mean*? He did not say, "I was born impure," but, "I was shapen in *iniquity*, and in *sin* did my mother conceive me."

because it was altogether *contrary to our deserts*. Christ is no where represented as dying for us out of pity for the injury that we had received from the first covenant, but, on the contrary, as being actuated by mere self-moved goodness: "Herein is love, *not that we loved God*, but that God loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—"Christ died for the *ungodly*."—"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us." So also the whole of our salvation is always represented, not as making us amends for an injury, but as of mere *grace*, which God might without any blemish on his character have for ever withheld. The whole Epistle to the Romans is written with the very design to cut off all claim, to prove that *all are under sin*; and therefore that justification and salvation are altogether of sovereign grace. The Epistle to the Ephesians is written in much the same strain, especially the second chapter, wherein the apostle rises in gradation from what they were by practice to what they were "by nature," namely, "children of wrath even as others;"\* and all this to prove, what he immediately asserts, that "by *grace* we are saved." Yes, the whole tenor of Scripture breathes this language: "I wrought for my name's sake."—"Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you!"

But do not "the children of traitors" frequently suffer for their fathers' crimes, even though they were no way concerned in their guilt?—XIII. 40. Answer, It is not just for the children of a traitor to suffer the loss of any *natural* right, or to be exposed to *death*, or any *punishment*, for that in the guilt of which they have no concern; neither do they where they are under just laws, Deut. xxiv. 16. There is no such union subsisting between a parent and a child as between Adam and his posterity. They are not *one* in law; the one therefore cannot justly suffer punishment for the other's crimes. No one pretends that it is right to punish them with *death*, or any corporeal punishment. God, to be sure, has a right to inflict death where he pleases; as upon the children of Achan; and that because all men have forfeited their lives to him; and such an instance of displeasure upon a man's family might tend to deter others from the like wickedness; but the children of a traitor have not forfeited their lives to a civil government, and therefore they cannot justly be taken away. The only thing that befalls them is *loss*; and as to that, they may *miss of what would have been* their social privileges, such as honours and property, had their father died in possession of them; but as they were never theirs, properly speaking, they could not be deprived of them. They had no *natural* right to them, nor any right at all but by their relation to their parent; and the parent, having deprived himself of them, could not convey them to his posterity.†

\* But "the words *by nature*;" says Mr. T., "relate not to our birth, but to the state in which we lived in sin before our conversion,"—XIII. 42. Let the reader look at the passage, (Eph. ii. 3,) and judge if it is not a gradation from what we are by *practice* to what we are by *nature*. But suppose it to relate in a general way to our unconverted state, the question is, How came that state to be called a state of *nature*, but because it is not accidentally acquired by mere imitation, but is the state in which we are born into the world?

† Perhaps as near a resemblance as any to that of the Divine conduct, in relation to Adam and his posterity, will be found in God's treatment of a *nation*, or body politic. God, in his providence, deals with a nation as if it were *one person*. Thus God covenanted with Israel, not merely with those who existed at the time, but with their unborn posterity, Deut. xxix. 14, 15. And thus the crimes of a nation often accumulate from generation to generation, like those of an individual from youth to age. Moab, or the nation of the Moabites, is said to have been "at ease from his youth, and to be settled upon his lees," &c.; that is, from his first beginning to be a nation. At last, Divine vengeance falls upon some one generation, like a judgment befalling a man in his old age for the crimes of his whole life. Individuals, in such seasons, may be comparatively innocent; but yet, being members of a society which, *as such*, is deeply involved in sin, they partake of a kind of *relative guilt*. Considered as individuals, they are answerable only for their own personal faults, but, as mem-



But it is suggested that we might as well be "*commended* for what Christ did," and for the effects of our constituted union with *him*, as *blamed* for what Adam did, and the effects of our constituted union with *him*,—XIII. 39. This objection has been thought as plausible as any thing Mr. T. has advanced; and yet, if I am not greatly mistaken, there is one part of it at least that will entirely overthrow his own hypothesis. Admitting that we in no sense are praiseworthy on account of what Christ has done, I question if it will follow that we are in no sense blameworthy for what Adam did. It does not appear to me a just conclusion, that because favours may be conferred without *merit*, therefore punishment may be inflicted without *demerit*. But suppose this did follow, and that we are in no sense blameworthy for the sin of Adam, yet it does not follow that we are not blameworthy for any of its *effects*. The case from which Mr. T. argues will prove the very reverse of this. He supposes that we are not praiseworthy for the *effects* of our union with Christ, (XIII. 39.) than which there can hardly be a greater mistake. Is not all heart holiness, and indeed every thing in us that is truly *commendable* and *praiseworthy*, the *effect* of our union with Christ? I hope Mr. T. will not deny this, though he so strangely overlooked it. Now if holiness of heart may be and is *commendable*, notwithstanding its being the effect of our union with Christ, then, according to his own reasoning, unholiness of heart may be blameworthy, notwithstanding its being the effect of our union with Adam.

It ought to be observed, too, that *this* is the very question in debate between us in this place. The point that I endeavoured to prove was, *not* that we are to blame for Adam's transgression, (this was only a question that occurred incidentally,) *but* that a *moral inability* or *evil propensity of heart in an intelligent creature is blameworthy*, NOTWITHSTANDING *his having been the subject of it*. So I had stated it in my Reply, and this I hope has been fully proved; and that from Mr. T.'s own premises.

It may be further remarked, upon this subject, that though the holiness of believers is the necessary or certain effect of their union with Christ, yet they are not the subjects of it by compulsion, or any kind of *natural necessity*; but what they are they freely choose to be;—and will it not hold equally true concerning the unholiness of sinners, that though it may be the effect of Adam's fall, yet, as they freely choose to be what they are, it is improper to represent it as that which they possess by a *natural necessity*?

But whether the words *natural necessity*, or *inability*, be retained or given up in this matter, Mr. T. insists upon it that our depravity comes upon us *according to the nature of things*; that is, if I understand him, according to the *established law*, or *settled order* of things; and this he thinks equivalent to a *natural necessity*, and must therefore denominate it blameless,—XIII. 62. But if Mr. T. can *thus* prove our native depravity blameless, I think I can, by the same mode of reasoning, prove all the fruits of it to be blame-

bers of society, it is otherwise. Thus the returning captives confessed their national guilt, saying, "We have done wickedly, and all this is come upon us because of our sins," Neh. xi. 33, 37. Both Ezra and Nehemiah, no doubt, joined in this confession, though we have no reason to think that their conduct, as individuals, had been such as to draw down the vengeance of God upon their country. God speaks of the whole human race, in relation to their first head, as he would speak of a nation. Speaking to Israel, he says, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" And thus of the whole human race, "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions," Eccles. vii. 29. This is undoubtedly spoken of the whole species; but it cannot be said of the whole species that they were made *upright*, any otherwise than as having a kind of existence in their first parent. Mr. T. himself, when he can get out of a difficulty no other way, will acknowledge such a union between Adam and his posterity, as that what was possessed by him was possessed by them. He talks of God originally giving man power to keep the law, and of this making man's condemnation for the breach of it a matter of justice,—XIII. 130.

less too. Is there not a *settled order*, or an *established law*, of some sort, for the operations of the human mind, and indeed for all human actions? Is it not according to the *laws of nature*, according to *the nature of things*, that a man always chooses *that* which, all things considered, appears in the view of his own mind the most agreeable; and pursues, if he have opportunity, that which, all things considered, is the object of his choice? It is impossible that a man should choose, in any instance, that which at the same time and in the same respects, all things considered, appears in the view of his mind disagreeable, and refuse that which is agreeable. And it is equally impossible that he should act in contradiction to his prevailing choice. An evil tree, according to *the nature of things*, will bring forth evil fruit; and a good tree will bring forth good fruit; and no less certainly will "wickedness proceed from the wicked," according to the proverb of the ancients and the manifest implication of our Lord's words, Matt. xii. 33, 34. But does it thence follow that the evil fruit produced by a bad heart comes by a natural necessity, and is blameless? Which way will Mr. T. take? Will he *deny* an established order in the human mind, and maintain that we choose totally at random, without any respect to what is agreeable or disagreeable in the view of the mind; that we act without any necessary connexion with our prevailing choice; and that we must do so, in order to be free agents? Or will he *admit* of such a connexion in the operations of the mind, and instead of placing all blame in actions, and none in the state of the mind, as he seems to have done all along hitherto, will he now exculpate from blame all *those acts* which necessarily arise from choice, and all those volitions which necessarily arise from the view of the mind, and throw all the blame upon the state of the mind itself? He must either do this, or else allow that what comes to pass according to *established laws* may, nevertheless, be blameworthy.

Mr. T. imputes our pollution by the sin of Adam to the "direction of the all-wise Creator, who constituted the union between Adam and his offspring,"—XIII. 62. This, to be sure, is the way to prove it innocent; for God cannot be the *author of confusion* in the universe any more than in *the churches*. But let us beware lest we *charge God foolishly*. That God was the author of the union referred to is admitted; but that he is the author of whatever that union may be the occasion of is not true. May not God be the author of an established connexion between the understanding, will, affections, and actions, without being the author of the depravity of any action that takes place through the medium of that connexion?

I affirmed that *love to God with all the heart* must, of necessity, imply the absence of all evil propensity to rebel against him. This Mr. T. denies; telling us that I have not *proved* it, and that he apprehends I am not capable of proving it (XIII. 42); that is, of proving that a perfect degree of love implies the absence of all aversion! This reminds me of what is said elsewhere, that I have "taken it for granted that regeneration *ALLUDES* to that law of nature wherein life precedes motion;" but Mr. T. does "not think it will be easy to prove it,"—XIII. 15. It is very true, nothing is more difficult of *proof* than that which is self-evident.

The apostle Paul declared that "to be carnally-minded is death—because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they who are in the flesh," adds he, "cannot please God." But to be carnally-minded, according to Mr. T., does not deserve death; and the very reason which the apostle gives for its being death serves, according to his opinion, to prove it innocent; and if so, (unless God be a hard master,) why should not they be able to *please* him? Paul meant to deny that the carnal mind is subject to the law of God *in fact*; but Mr. T.'s reasoning tends to a denial of its being subject to it *in right*

Paul considered unconverted sinners as incapable of *pleasing* God on account of their carnality; Mr. T.'s argumentation implies that God is, *on that account*, incapable of being *displeased* with them.

When I reasoned thus, "If blame does not lie in being the *subject* of an evil disposition, (or impure propensity, if Mr. T. can tell the difference,) because, as individuals, we could not avoid it; then, for the same reason, it cannot lie in the *exercise* of that disposition, unless that also can be avoided." Mr. T. replies that to indulge denotes *the concurrence of our wills*; but our wills had nothing to do with the state in which we were born,—XIII. 41. But this is no answer to the argument. I was not combating any argument of his arising from the concurrence or non-concurrence of our wills, but from what he calls the *want of power*. Men, by his own confession, have not power to go through life free from every degree of the indulgence of their propensities; for that, according to his ideas, would be to keep the law perfectly: but he does not pretend that men can do this; no, not even by the grace of God,—XIII. 61. But if the want of power excuses in the one case, it does in the other; for he maintains that "no man is to blame for what he could never avoid,"—XIII. 48. And so the exercise of an evil propensity may be as blameless as the propensity itself. But, passing this,

Mr. T. thinks, it seems, that if the *will concur* with an evil propensity, then it becomes blameworthy. I wish that he would abide by this doctrine. If I could depend upon that, I would ask him whether he can conceive of an evil propensity in his own mind any otherwise than as the very state and bias of his will towards evil? To talk of an involuntary propensity in the mind of a rational being is to talk without meaning, and in direct contradiction to the plainest dictates of common sense. If, then, the concurrence of the will denominates a thing blameworthy, we need have no more dispute whether an evil disposition in a rational being be in *itself* blameworthy, seeing the concurrence of the will is included in the very nature of a propensity. Whatever may be said about our propensities at the time we were born, of which we can form but little idea, the question between us is, whether an impure propensity in a rational being may not be blameworthy, *notwithstanding* its being received by derivation? and Mr. T. seems to think that whatever impurity obtains the concurrence of the will is criminal. But this is no more than may be said of all propensity in a rational being; the thing itself being expressive of the bias of the will.

Here I expect Mr. T. will not be satisfied. Yet why should he not? Because he has a notion in his mind that it is necessary not only that we should be voluntary *in* a propensity, but that we should choose to be of such a propensity before we are so, in order to denominate us blameworthy. It is a leading principle with Mr. T., that men *might have* a moral ability to do good *if they would*; and that if this were not the case, they would not be blameworthy: that is, they might have a *good disposition*, if they were but *well-disposed*! "I confess," says Mr. T., "it appears to me as equitable to condemn a porter because he does not calculate eclipses by the strength of his body, or a feeble philosopher because he does not perform the business of a porter by his refined understanding, as to condemn a man who has only *natural* ability, and never had, and never *could have* any other, because he does not perform moral and spiritual duties,"—XIII. 56. To this also the Monthly Reviewers bear their testimony of applause.\* And elsewhere Mr.

\* The Monthly Reviewers, having pronounced Mr. T.'s cause to be *good*, and particularly applauded the above passage, add, "Here is a distinction between what is called a *moral* and a *natural* power, with which these writers perplex themselves. Perhaps if they introduced the term *rational*, which separates man from the brute, it might assist them a little in the contest."—*Review for Sept.* 1788. I cannot tell what use the Reviewers wish to

T. says, "It is to very little purpose to allege that Pharaoh and others *could* have complied, *if they would*; if they could never *will* to comply, they could not justly be punished,"—XIII. 57. So then the blame does not lie in the choice of any evil, but in the choice of that choice. Pharaoh's evil, it seems, did not lie in refusing the Divine message, but in that, though he could have had a pliable disposition, yet he would not; he was not disposed to be of a good disposition! But still an objection returns: That indisposition, by which he refused to be of a good disposition, could not be blameworthy, unless he could have chosen to be of a better. But whither will this way of reasoning lead us? If a choice, or propensity, cannot be blameworthy, unless it be governed by a previous act of choice, neither can *that* act of choice be blameworthy, unless it is governed by another, and that by another, and so on, in an infinite series. This is metaphysical indeed, or rather hyper-metaphysical. A little while ago, it was thought sufficient if an exercise had but the *concurrence of the will*, that is, if we had but the power of *doing what we please*; but now, it seems, that is a matter that "is very little to the purpose," unless we have also the power of *choosing what we please*.

"Pharaoh," Mr. T. maintains, "*could have willed* to comply with the messages that were sent him, or he was not blameworthy." If no more were meant by this than that he was possessed of the faculty or *power* of choice, which faculty, were it not for the evil bias with which it is polluted,

have made of the term *rational*, nor whether they are serious, or not, in their advice; but if these gentlemen mean to suggest that the term *rational* would do to supersede the terms *natural* and *moral*, by answering all their purposes, I cannot, for my part, acquiesce in their opinion.

I am not inclined to think the Monthly Reviewers destitute of *rational* powers; and yet it is pretty evident they are, somehow or other, *unable* to do justice to Calvinistic writings; or so much as to read them with impartial attention. Let any unprejudiced person look over their Review, and he will see that if any thing controversial is written in favour of Arminianism, or Antitrinitarianism, it is generally much applauded; but if any thing comes out in favour of Trinitarianism or Calvinism, either its weaknesses are exposed, or cold water is thrown upon the subject. See the review of Bampton's *Lectures*, and Burder's Pamphlet, Sept. 1788. Were I to look over other numbers of the Review, I might soon add many instances of similar conduct; though perhaps few more illiberal than their treatment of Mr. Newton's *Cardiphonia*, Sept. 1781. Vol. LXV. p. 202.

Indeed, one need go no further in proof of this than to their review of this controversy. In the review of Mr. Taylor's *Nine Letters*, (July, 1787, p. 85,) they say, "This pamphlet may be of some use in enlarging the conceptions of those narrow-minded Christians who think the kingdom of heaven no larger than the synagogue of their own little flock."—Astonishing! when the matter of debate between myself and Mr. T. was *not, in the least*, about the *extent* of the kingdom of heaven. It did not, in the least, respect either the *character* or *number* of those that are good men here, or that shall be saved hereafter; but the *CAUSE* of their salvation. Is it possible for gentlemen, of only common sense and erudition, to write in this manner upon any subject, except religion? No; mere *rational* powers would there have taught them better. But here prejudice and supercilious contempt get the better of their understandings, and impel them to write in such a manner as must, in the end, cause their censures to rebound to their own dishonour.

Though the above critique (if it may be so called) displays the grossest ignorance of the subject; yet I really do not think it was for want of *rational* powers. The reviewers are, generally speaking, men of very good abilities; but religion is not their province, nor are they *able* to treat the subject with impartiality. Now as they unite with Mr. T. in thinking that if a man has no *moral power*, that is, no disposition to do right, and cannot find in his heart so much as to use means that he may have such a disposition, then he cannot justly be blamed, they might, one should think, consider the above as a kind apology on their behalf. Should they reply by maintaining either that they *have* a moral ability or disposition to do justice to Calvinistic writings, or at least *might have*, if they would use the means, I should answer, As to the *former*, facts contradict it; and as to the *latter*, if they know of any means that persons, utterly void of an inclination, may use, in order to give themselves such inclination, I should be glad if they would begin, and make the experiment.

If, in future, we should see in the Monthly Review such manifest partiality against Calvinistic writings as we have seen heretofore, we shall then conclude that the Monthly Reviewers cannot find in their heart to do justice, nor so much as to use the means that they may have a disposition to do justice; and if so, then, according to the reasonings which they so highly applaud, we must bring them in guiltless.

is equal to the choice of any object that might be presented, I should have no objection to it. But this is not Mr. T.'s meaning: natural power to choose is nothing with him; he is here pleading the necessity of a *moral* power, in order to our being accountable beings. Here, then, I must infer that Mr. T. does not understand the meaning of his own expressions, no, nor the Monthly Reviewers either; or, rather, that the expressions have no meaning at all. What does Mr. T. maintain? that Pharaoh *could find in his heart*, at the time, to will a compliance? No, he will not say so; for that were the same as *being willing*: but that would contradict fact; for we know he was *not willing*. What, then, does Mr. T. mean? He must mean this, if any thing, that he *could have been willing if he would*; that is, *he could have willed if he had willed*: but this is no meaning at all, being a mere identical proposition.

It is possible Mr. T. may here exclaim against such a method of reasoning, and appeal to common sense and common equity, "that no person is blameworthy for the omission of what he could not perform." It is granted to be a dictate of common sense and common equity that no person should be blamed for the omission of that which he could not do if he would; but not that he should be excused for the neglect of that which he could not *WILL if he would*; for there is no such thing in being. So far is this from being a dictate of common sense, there is no sense in it, nor do they that talk of it understand what they mean.\*

"When people puzzle themselves upon this subject," says a judicious writer, "and insist we are not accountable, and cannot be blamed, any further than we have a *moral* as well as a *natural* power to do otherwise than we do, what their minds run upon is only *natural* power after all. They may say they know what we mean by moral power, viz. that disposition to do a thing which is necessary in order to our doing it; and they mean the same. But, however, when they get into the dispute, they get bewildered, and lose sight of the distinction. They do not suppose an impenitent sinner, going on still in his trespasses, has a *present actual* disposition, and a sufficiently strong one, to hearken to and obey the gospel. But something like this seems to be in the bottom of their minds, viz. that he must be *able* to be disposed; or he must have such a disposition as *would* be sufficient, *if he was disposed* to make a good use of it. Now this is only to use the word *disposition* improperly, and to conceive of it as a mere natural power; a price in our hands, which may be used well or ill, and which will turn to our benefit or condemnation, accordingly as we are disposed to improve it. The disposition they think of is not in the least degree virtuous, nor any ways necessarily connected with virtuous conduct. But it may lie still, or go wrong, and will do so, unless a man is disposed, and exerts himself to make it act, and keep it right. The sinner is not helped out of his difficulty in the least by having such a disposition as this. Yea, should we go further, and say the impenitent sinner might have a heart to embrace the gospel, *if* he would take proper pains in order to it; and he might do this, *if* he was so disposed; and he might be so disposed, *if* he would try; and he could try, *if* he had a mind for it; yet if, after all, he *has not* a mind to try, to be disposed, to take any proper pains, to get a heart to embrace the gospel, or do any thing that is good, he is still in as bad a situation as any body supposes him to be in. There is no more hope of his coming to good, so long as this is the case with him, no more possibility of it, nor do we say any

\* The reader may consult, on this subject, President Edwards *On the Will*; particularly Part IV. Sect. III. IV. XIII. In that piece he will find this notion, with many others upon which Mr. T.'s system rests, thoroughly refuted.

thing more in his favour, than if we had only said, as the Scripture does of the fool, *There is a price in his hand to get wisdom; but he has NO HEART TO IT*. Pushing the sinner's moral depravity and impotence back in this manner may get it out of sight of those who cannot see above two or three steps; but this is all the good it can do. There is still a defect in him some where; and such a one as will prove his everlasting ruin, unless removed by such grace as he never yet has experienced."\*

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### LETTER V.

THE *second* thing which Mr. T. defends is what he had written on men's inability to deliver themselves from an inability; he conceives it must furnish them with an excuse, "If they cannot deliver themselves from it." This takes up the former part of his Fifth Letter. To be sure we are now got into the regions of metaphysics, if not beyond them; but it ought to be remembered that these modes of speaking are of Mr. T.'s own invention. I had before urged the consequences of Mr. T.'s opinion on this subject, as a sufficient refutation of it; but he replies by resuming his old complaint, that I consider those subjects *separately* which ought to have been considered *conjointly*. This is all that he has advanced in answer to what I have written from p. 113-215.

It should seem that, in *certain circumstances*, Mr. T. will admit a moral inability, though real and total, to be blameworthy. That is, 1. Where a person brings it upon himself by his own personal wickedness,—XIII. 28. 2. Where grace is offered to deliver him from it, and he refuses it. In these cases, it seems, Mr. T. will not become the sinner's advocate, but admits him to be guilty,—XIII. 47. But let it be closely considered, *if the thing itself* is not blameworthy, let us come by it in what manner we may, and though grace should or should not be provided to deliver us from it, whether either of the above circumstances will make it so. We may blame a man for his conduct in bringing his mind *into* such an "unimpressible" state; but the state of the mind itself is not *thereby* made culpable. Mr. T. often appeals to common equity among men, whether it is right to punish a man for the omission of what was never within the compass of his power; but it is as plain a dictate of common equity, that a man is not to blame for the omission of what he has not the power to perform *at the time*, as that he is not to blame for what *never was* in his power. If once he had power, he was then to blame, but not since he lost it; for, as Mr. T. says, "what a man cannot do he cannot do" Samson was to blame for losing his hair, and thereby his strength; but not for being unable, *when he had lost it*, to repel the enemy and preserve his eyes. Neither does the possibility of having our moral impotency removed make any alteration as to the *thing itself*. If our opposition of heart to God, in itself considered, is not blameworthy, the circumstance of our having grace offered to deliver us from it cannot make it so. Suppose a man to be fallen into some deep pit, and that he is weak and incapable of getting out, but some kind friend offers him his hand; *now*, says Mr. T., the man is to blame if he does not get out. I answer, He is to blame for rejecting help; but that does not prove him to blame for his own personal *inability*. Thus, by shifting the argument from one to the other of these *three* subjects, and dwelling upon none, Mr. T. shuts out blame-

\* Smalley on *Inability to comply with the Gospel*, &c., pp. 20, 21.

worthiness from all moral impotence, *in itself* considered, and so no man is to blame for the enmity of his heart to God, be it ever so great. Though the carnal mind is *enmity against God*, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be; though their ear is uncircumcised, and they *cannot* hearken; though they, being evil, *cannot* speak good things; though they have eyes full of adultery, and *cannot* cease from sin; and though upon this account it be *impossible* but that offences will come; yet there is no harm in all this, nothing for which God should speak in such a tone of displeasure; the whole of their blameworthiness consists either in their *getting into* such a state of mind, or in neglecting to use the means of *getting out!* And thus my argument, after all, stands its ground, that, according to Mr. T.'s principles, men are excusable in proportion to the strength of their evil propensities.

Let us next follow Mr. T. in his defence of the *third* branch of his position concerning the non-provision of *grace*. The reader will remember that the question here is *not* whether grace is or is *not* provided, *but* whether, *supposing* it is *not*, men are excusable in their non-compliance with the gospel. Mr. T.'s views upon this subject are as a millstone about the neck of his system, that must needs sink it in the esteem of all who understand the argument, and expect to be saved by *grace alone*. He talks much of grace, of free grace, and of salvation by grace; and yet it is not more evident that the sun shines at noonday than that he makes the whole of our salvation a *debt*, a debt which God, of his "*universal benevolence*," is excited to pay, from the consideration that "we did not bring everlasting misery upon ourselves, nor was it ever in our power to avoid it,"—XIII. 81.

It is a pity that we should cover our ideas by improper words. It is evident Mr. T. means to appeal to the Divine *justice*; only he has not courage sufficient to say so, and therefore uses the term *benevolence*. Yet if this be the truth, that men are pitiable creatures, much injured by the fall, but no way concerned in the guilt of it, nor in any of its certain effects—and if this be a consideration with the great Jehovah to save them—what a gospel have we sent us at last, and what a representation of the Divine character! The Father sends his Son to atone for men's guilt, and deliver them from everlasting misery, from the consideration that there was nothing in that guilt, antecedently to his sending his Son and offering them grace, that properly deserved such misery, or indeed any misery at all! The covenant which God originally made with man is so severe, that if he abide by it, he must deal *crudely* with his rational offspring; so severe that he cannot stand to it throughout, but is induced, with a view to make the sons of Adam amend for the injury done them by their father's fall, to send them a Saviour, and to offer them assistance that they may make their escape! Surely all this is but the just picture of the Divine character and conduct, according to Mr. T.'s scheme. But is this the real character and conduct of God? Is mercy indeed built up upon the ruins of equity, or does the *grace* of the second covenant imply a reflection upon the *justice* of the first? Is this the character of that God who declares that men who never heard the gospel of *grace* are *without excuse*—that *all the world* are become *guilty before him*—that salvation is altogether of *grace*—that he is not only at liberty to "have mercy on whom he will have mercy," but will exercise that liberty, and "will have compassion on whom he will have compassion?"

I urged these consequences in my *Reply*, that, according to Mr. T.'s scheme, "making this supposed *grace* the only thing which constitutes men accountable beings was making it *debt* rather than *grace*." And what has Mr. T. said in answer to this objection?—XIII. 49. "I. When I speak of *grace*," says he, "I wish to speak of *real*, not *supposed* *grace*." That may

be, and I hope it is so; but the question is, will his hypothesis coincide with the wishes of his heart on this subject? "2. Suppose," says Mr. T. to his friend, "we excuse Mr. F.'s play on the word *grace*, which is not in the sentence to which he is making this laboured reply, and his change of *punished* for *accountable*; yet still the position to which he refers does not speak of *grace* as the *only* thing which renders men accountable. You remember, sir, the position is, 'if men could not avoid it,' &c." Mr. T. seems all along to represent me as having bestowed great pains to unravel one poor little period; whereas what I have written about *grace* is not merely in reply to that single period, but to the whole of what Mr. T. had written upon the subject, which in that period happens to be nearly expressed. But he denies that he has represented *grace* as the *only thing* which renders men accountable; how he can make this denial good is more than I can conceive. He advances *three* things which, together, would make men *not* accountable. The first *two* of these he admits actually to exist (IX. 44, 57, 59); the last, therefore, must be the *only* thing left which can render men accountable, or, if he likes it better, punishable. But where is the answer, after all, to my objection? Has he proved his notion of *grace* to be any more than *debt*? Not at all, nor so much as attempted it. "Is it uncandid to conclude that it was because he felt the attempt would have been in vain?" It was further objected, that, according to Mr. T.'s scheme, there was no need for Christ to have died at all; and that if the Divine Being had but let men alone, and had not provided any *grace* for them, they had been all very innocent; and if justice had but been done them, very happy. To this Mr. T. replies, by asking, 1. Whether I can prove that, without the bestowment of *grace*, there would ever have been any men to be free from criminality? "Can he prove," says he, "that Adam would not have died immediately, according to the threatening, if *grace* had not been given in the promise?"—XIII. 50.—"According to the threatening," that is begging the question. The question is whether that threatening implied in it the immediate and actual execution of corporal death. If what Mr. T. says elsewhere is true, namely, that Adam's posterity were by his fall "exposed to *misery*, whatever that misery be," (XIII. 41,) it could not; for non-existences could never be exposed to misery of any kind. If in Adam *all died*; if by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death *passed upon all men*, for that all have sinned; this must imply the existence of all men; for death cannot pass upon non-entities. But it is asked, 2. "Suppose Adam had not died, can Mr. F. prove that Adam's posterity would have been sent to hell for their father's sin, or for any of its necessary consequences?" Suppose they had not, and ought not, then it only tends to confirm my reasoning, rather than to refute it; which was to prove that if things are as Mr. T. represents, men might have been innocent and happy if Jesus had never died; and so that the gift of Christ and the gospel was no real benefit, but rather a curse upon the world, as it is this only that has rendered men capable of sinning, so as to become *everlastingly* miserable.

The remaining questions (XIII. 52) have, for the substance of them, been already discussed. Neither are they in point to the present subject in debate. They contain a question of *fact*; but that which is now in discussion is a question of *right*. Were I to admit the universal extent of Christ's death as a *fact*, and the utmost advantages as resulting from it, still I should reprobate, with all the powers of my soul, the principles upon which Mr. T. pleads for it, as destructive of the *grace* of the gospel, and hostile to the throne of God.

Mr. T. had maintained, (IX. 57, 59,) "1. That man was so reduced by the fall as to be totally unable to do any thing really good. 2. That if he



had been left in this condition, he would not have been to blame for not doing it, but that his inability would have been his excuse; yea, *let his practices have been as vile as they might*, upon the supposition of grace not being provided, he declares that *he would have been excusable*, and that all real good whatever might be denied to be the duty of the unprincipled mind." Hence I concluded that if it were so, then Christ did not die for the *sins* of any man, because antecedently to the consideration of his death, and of grace being given in him, there was no *sin* or blameworthiness to atone for. What a bustle does Mr. T. make concerning this conclusion! calling it a "wonderful passage," and the reasonings "*mere parade*;" imputing it to the "imbecility of the human mind and to the disadvantageous situation to which the most upright disputant may be reduced," &c.—XIII. 52. I smile at this friendly apology; but must own it appears to me more adapted to himself than his opponent. I before wrote in the language of diffidence: the consequences of Mr. T.'s sentiments appeared so eversive of the whole gospel, that I could hardly help suspecting I must have mistaken him, somehow or other. Accordingly, I gave him a fair opportunity to clear himself if he could. But it is now time for that language to be laid aside. He has tried to defend his hypothesis, but it is absolutely indefensible.

What has Mr. T. said in answer to my reasoning? Why he has, as usual, asked a number of *questions*.\* "Suppose Christ had never come, and no grace had been provided, does not Mr. F.," he asks, "allow that man is a free agent, and therefore might have sinned voluntarily,"—XIII. 51. Yes, I do: I suppose the devil to be a free agent, though his heart is, and ever will be, invariably set in him to do evil; but the question here is, not what *I* allow, but what *Mr. T.* allows. Though *I* allow man to be a free agent, independently of the grace of the gospel, *he* does not: *he* considers *moral* as well as *natural* necessity as inconsistent with free agency; that if no grace were provided, "let a man's *practices be as vile as they might*, he would be excusable." And it was from *his* supposition, and not from mine, that I was reasoning.

But he asks, further, "Is nothing done wrong in this world but what is the necessary and unavoidable effect of Adam's transgression? Are not all our *voluntary* sins justly chargeable upon us?"—XIII. 52. I answer, I know of no such necessity as impels men to sin *involuntarily*; and as to the evils that are *now* done in the world, or not done, they are nothing at all to the point; nor whether they are done in consequence of Adam's transgression or not. Suppose they are done simply in consequence of men's own free agency, will Mr. T. allow that they would have had that free agency, and have been accountable beings, without the death of Christ and the grace of the gospel? If he will *not*, the consequence still remains unmoved, that, according to him, "Christ did not come into the world to save men from sin, but rather to put them into a capacity of sinning, as it is in consequence of his death, and that alone, that guilt becomes chargeable upon them." But if, on the other hand, he *will* allow this, he must in so doing disallow of the substance of all his former reasonings. Particularly he must disown that extravagant language, that "if my principles are true, *let a man's practices be as vile as they may*, he may excuse himself from blame."

"Mr. F. justly observes," says Mr. T., "that I suppose fallen man really and totally unable to do good, and I explained my meaning by saying *spiritually* good; but is there no medium between doing what is *spiritually* good and going to the utmost lengths of wickedness? Are men under the neces-

\* Mr. T., it seems, expected to be answered in a way of direct reply. But it would fill a volume of no small size only to give a direct answer to all his and Mr. Martin's questions.

sity of working all abominations because they cannot without Divine grace serve God spiritually? Do not men work these abominations? Did not Christ die to atone for them? Did he not then die for OUR SINS?—XIII. 52. Now Mr. T. thinks he has escaped the charge. But let it be observed, though in *one* place he had used the term *spiritual*, yet in another he extended blamelessness to "PRACTICES, be they AS VILE as they MAY," if my sentiments were true, that is, if grace were not provided. Now, whatever medium there may be between not doing things *spiritually good* and working all abominations, there is none I should think between *vile practices* and abominations. Mr. T. therefore is as far off as ever from removing the shocking consequences of his sentiments.

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## LETTER VI.

PERHAPS Mr. T. will again complain that too much is made of the *Ratio ex concessis* and the *Reductio ad absurdum*,—XIII. 53. Well, it is not my wish to bear too hard upon him; though, after all, it would have discovered a commendable frankness, consonant to his own profession, (XIII. 15,) to have confessed that he had said rather too much, instead of complaining of me for having improved it against him. But let us take it as he has *now* stated it, that *without the grace of God* men cannot do any thing really or *spiritually good*; but they may do some things otherwise good, or, at least, refrain from gross immoralities; and this is all they are obliged to do antecedently to the bestowment of grace; and, consequently, the whole of their sin consists in the contrary of this; and these are all the sins for which there was any need for Christ to atone. Now will Mr. T. stand to *this* hypothesis? It is the only ground left him to stand upon, in supporting the body of his system. And, in order to possess *this*, he must retract his extravagant sentence in p. 59 of his *Nine Letters*; and perhaps much more. Let him soberly consider whether he can stand his ground even here without giving up at least the *three* following sentiments, each of which he has hitherto avowed, and for one of them most strenuously contended.

1. That the moral law is *spiritual*, and requires love to God with all the heart; and that this law is the rule of life to fallen men antecedently to and independently of the consideration of the bestowment of grace. If nothing but an abstinence from gross abominations is incumbent on men, antecedently to the bestowment of grace, then either the moral law does not require the heart, or men are not under it as the rule of life.

2. That if unconverted sinners are preserved from the *greatest lengths of wickedness*, it is to be ascribed to the preventing and restraining grace of God. This Mr. T. has hitherto avowed,—XIII. 30. But if he will maintain the above hypothesis, this also must be given up. The whole of Mr. T.'s argument (XIII. 52) goes upon the supposition, that if grace had never been bestowed or provided, yet men might have refrained from gross abominations; for it is brought to prove that men would not have been *utterly* blameless without the provision of grace; and so that there were *some* sins for Christ to die for, antecedently to the consideration of his death and the grace of the gospel. But if so, their being preserved from gross wickedness is not, and ought not, to be ascribed to the *grace* of God.

3. That Christ died for the sins of the whole world. I need not prove to the reader that Mr. T. maintains this sentiment; but if he will abide by the above hypothesis, this (all-important as he accounts it) must be given up.

It is well known that the far greater part of the world die in infancy; but dying infants, according to the above hypothesis, (and indeed according to all that he has written,) can have no sin in any sense whatever, for which Christ could have to atone. He could not, therefore, die for them; and as they make the greatest part of the human race, it must follow that Christ did not die for the sins of one half of the world after all. Thus Mr. T. by his notion of men being excusable on account of their *moral inability* is driven to a most painful dilemma; he is driven to maintain, EITHER that men, antecedently to the death of Christ and the grace of the gospel, are not free agents *at all*—are not accountable beings, no, not for even “*the vilest of practices*” (as he did in his *Nine Letters*)—and then it *follows* that Christ did not die to atone for the *sins* of any man, but only for Adam’s first transgression, there being no sins for which he could have to atone; and that his death, and the grace of the gospel, must be a curse to the world rather than a blessing; as it is in consequence of this, and this alone, that guilt becomes chargeable on men: ELSE, according to what he has advanced in his *last performance*, that men without the grace of the gospel would have been free agents *in part*; that they would have been capable of performing the externals of religion, and refraining from *gross abominations*; that they as fallen creatures are accountable for the contrary of these, and for that *only*; and that it is for sins of this description only that Christ could have to atone;\* and then it *follows* that the law as a rule of life to *fallen men* is *not spiritual*; that if men are preserved from gross abominations, it is not to be ascribed to preventing grace; and that Christ did not die for the sins of all mankind.

Mr. T., it has been observed, has hitherto allowed that the moral law is *spiritual*, and as such is the rule of life to fallen men (XIII. 60); but his other sentiments will not suffer him consistently to abide by this. To be consistent with them, he must either deny the *spirituality* of the law, or else its *justice* and *goodness*; that is, he must deny that it is fit to be a rule of life to fallen men. Mr. T. admits the law at present to be *spiritual*; it must not, however, take cognizance of the *state* of the *heart* or *mind*; the mind may be the subject of an evil propensity, and yet be innocent, (XIII. 42); so, then, the *carnal mind*, which is enmity against God, is nevertheless in that respect blameless! All that is forbidden is “the *indulgence* of evil propensity, and the neglect of grace by which he might be delivered from it.” Nor are these all the subtractions that Mr. T.’s scheme requires. Even *here* it is not just that it should require any more than men *can*, some way or other, find in their hearts to give; for he lays this down as a maxim, that *no man ought to be punished for what he cannot avoid*,—XIII. 53. But if it is not right that the law should require any more than men can in every sense perform, or punish them for their defects, then it must follow that either men can now perform all the law requires of them, or else that the law is unreasonable, and so can be neither *just* nor *good*, nor fit to be a rule of life to fallen men. Which way will Mr. T. turn himself in this case? Will he affirm that men now *can* in every sense perform all that the law requires? Sometimes he seems as if he would; for he speaks of the law as forbidding only the *indulgence* of sin, and of grace as being provided to deliver us from that,—XIII. 41. Here, if his words have any meaning, they must mean that men may through the grace of God comply with all the law requires. And yet, in other places, he allows that no man since the fall possesses an ability, either naturally or by the grace of God, perfectly to

\* It is true Mr. T. talks of Christ having to atone for sins of other descriptions; but, surely, it is quite absurd to speak of his dying to atone for sins for which we were never blameworthy or accountable.

keep the law,—XIII. 60, 61. But what in and out work is here! One of these positions must be retracted; and Mr. T. is welcome to retract which of them he pleases. He may choose his ground. Neither will support him without giving up the *spirituality, justice, and goodness* of the law as a rule of life to fallen men.

If he retract the *former*, and allow that men *cannot*, even with the grace of the gospel, keep the law perfectly; then he must *either* maintain the law to be unreasonable, *or* give up all his former reasonings, and allow that it is right that God should require men to do that which they are, and always were, and always will be, in this life, *mortality unable* to do. If he choose to retract his other position, (XIII. 61,) and maintain that, by the grace of God, men *are* now able to comply with all that the law requires, and to avoid all that it forbids, still he is never the nearer. This sentiment is as hostile to the *native* justice and goodness of the law as any position Mr. T. has advanced. For as to what men are able to do *by the grace of God*, that is nothing to the purpose. In order to justify the law, it is necessary that we should, in some sense, be able to obey it, prior to, and independently of the provisions of the gospel. To introduce the bestowment of grace, in order to vindicate the equity of the law, is injustice to both law and gospel; to the former as supposing it, in itself, unjust; to the latter as rendering it not grace, but debt. Suppose the king and parliament of Great Britain should enact a law, requiring the inhabitants of any particular town to pay *one thousand pounds* annually, by way of tax. At the time of the law being enacted those inhabitants were well able to pay it, and afterwards became poor, and entirely unable. The government, however, still continue the law in force, notwithstanding their pecuniary inability. But the Prince of Wales, with the concurrence of the king and parliament, graciously remits, or offers to remit, to these poor inhabitants, what shall be sufficient for the payment of the tax. Quere, 1. Does this remittance render the law which continued to require a thousand pounds, when the inhabitants were unable to pay it, in *itself*, just or good? 2. Is it to the honour of the prince, any more than of the king and parliament, to call such a remittance by the name of *grace*, when its only purpose is to screen the government from the charge of *injustice*? I am persuaded that such a piece of conduct as Mr. T.'s system ascribes to the great God, is what the honourable characters before mentioned would scorn to be engaged in. Such a law, undoubtedly, ought to be repealed. Should it be urged, for its continuance, that it should stand as it was, for the purpose of convincing the inhabitants of their *sin* in not complying with it, (XIII. 130,) they would reply, Convince us of sin! No: that it can never do, but rather convince us of its own cruelty and its maker's tyranny.—But perhaps you have not done so much towards complying with it as you might have done.—Be it so: this can be no proper means of convincing us of *sin*: let us have a law equal to our capacity, and then, so far as we fall short of it, that will be a proper means of conviction, but no other.

The reader will not suppose that I am pleading for the repeal of God's law; I suppose men's natural abilities are still equal to its demands: but my design is barely to show that, according to the tendency of Mr. T.'s principles, the law cannot be either just or good, and the gospel is not grace, but debt.

Mr. T. often talks of his opponent taking his threefold argument, and answering it conjointly. When an author advances contrary positions, it is very difficult to know what are his real sentiments; otherwise Mr. T. has sufficiently answered himself. 1. He allows that men are unable to keep God's law perfectly,—XIII. 60. 2. He will not pretend to say that they

ever could so keep it, since they were intelligent beings,—XIII. 60. And, 3. What is more, he does not profess to hold that grace is provided sufficient to enable them to keep it,—XIII. 61. Here, then, all the three members of Mr. T.'s position concur, respecting men's inability to keep the law perfectly. "They could never avoid it, cannot deliver themselves from it, and the blessed God has not made such provision as is necessary to deliver them;" and yet Mr. T. allows that they *ought* to keep it, notwithstanding (XIII. 60); and, it should seem, their not keeping it is their *sin*, of which the law is a proper means to convince them,—XIII. 130. The reader is here left to make his own reflections.

But "is it right for a man to be eternally punished for what he could never possibly avoid? This is the question," says Mr. T., "to which I think Mr. F., with all his ingenious labour, has not attempted to give a direct answer. Yet nothing is done till a direct answer be given,"—XIII. 51. I reply, 1. If there be any weight in Mr. T.'s reasoning, it must affect *all* punishment, as well as *eternal* punishment;\* and if so, the sentence of corporal death, which, in consequence of Adam's transgression, has passed upon all men, and is executed upon millions who have never actually sinned, must be an unrighteous sentence. 2. If man, as a fallen, polluted creature, is blameless, he must, if justice be done him, as such, be unexposed to punishment, either here or hereafter, and consequently must, as such, need no Saviour at all. To speak, therefore, of the fall as rendering a saviour necessary, as Mr. T. himself seems to do, (XIII. 140, 142,) or to say, with the apostle, that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," must be altogether improper. But perhaps Mr. T. will still complain of the want of a direct answer. Well, if another form will please him better, let it stand thus:

The fall and its necessary effects are what Mr. T. calls unavoidable by us: Christ, by laying down his life, delivered us from the fall and its necessary effects;† Christ died, therefore, to deliver us from what Mr. T. calls unavoidable. But Christ would not have died to deliver us from a punishment which we never deserved. I do conclude, therefore, that we deserve everlasting misery for that which, in Mr. T.'s sense of the word, is unavoidable.

\* My good opinion of Mr. T.'s integrity and piety makes me utterly at a loss how to account for the insinuation that it has been generally acknowledged, by the "unhappy men" who deny the eternity of future punishment, and hold with "universal salvation, that, before a man can be of their sentiments, he must be a Calvinist." To be sure we cannot be certain that no one person who embraced the general restitution scheme was weak or wicked enough to drop such an expression, though I never heard of such an instance. But to justify the manner in which this innuendo is brought in, it ought, at least, to have been a common repeated acknowledgment, made by some of the most eminent patrons of that system. Surely the late bishop of Bristol was never led into it by *his* Calvinism; nor have I ever heard of Dr. Priestley, or Dr. Chauncey, as suggesting that this was the effect of their former Calvinism. It is very evident that they were first far from Calvinism before they espoused that notion. I wish Mr. T. (if this paragraph could indeed be his writing, and was not added to his manuscript by some unknown person, devoid of conscience, to blacken Calvinism at any rate) would favour us with the names of "these unhappy men who have so frequently said" it. Were it needful, I could name a member of Mr. T.'s own church who has pleaded for universal salvation without being led into it by previous Calvinism.

But the *Monthly Review* for July, 1789, has afforded an opportunity of appealing to Mr. T.'s conscience still more forcibly on this article. Does Mr. T. believe that the gentlemen by whom he himself is there abused, for his "sulphurous discourse" on the eternity of future punishment, could never have treated a Scriptural doctrine with so much contempt, if the reviewer had not once been a Calvinist?—*Monthly Review*, p. 95.

† Rom. v. 15–21; 1 Cor. xv. 22; 1 Thess. i. 10.

## LETTER VII.

THERE is one question more which Mr. T. holds up in his Sixth Letter, the solution of which goes a great way towards the deciding of the controversy between us: this is, whether natural power is, to all intents and purposes, sufficient to render us accountable beings in respect of moral or spiritual exercises.

This question I promised to discuss before we had done. Previously, however, to entering upon it, let it be observed, that if natural power *is* sufficient for the above purpose, and that antecedently to, and independently of, the bestowment of grace; then five parts out of six, at least, of Mr. T.'s Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Letters are to no purpose. All his exclamations against men being required to perform what they have no *power* to accomplish, blamed for their omission of it, &c. &c., entirely rest upon the supposition that *natural* power is *not* power; or, at least, not *such* power as to render men accountable for omitting moral and spiritual exercises. All Mr. T.'s exclamations likewise, in his *Nine Letters*, upon the cruelty of punishing men *more severely*, rest upon this supposition, that *natural power* is of no account; for the cruelty against which he there exclaims consists in punishing men "for not doing what it never was in their power to do,"—XIII. 58. Now if the contrary of this can be proved, the body of Mr. T.'s system will be overturned.

When I affirm that "natural power is, to all intents and purposes, sufficient to render men accountable beings," Mr. T. calls for *proof* (XIII. 56); yea, and suggests that I have acknowledged the contrary in my first treatise. Whether I have not proved this matter *already*, and whether Mr. T. has not *allowed* me to have proved it, we will now inquire.

1. I have proved that *natural strength* is the *measure of men's obligation to love God*; being that rule according to which we are required to love him: "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with *all thy strength*." To this Mr. T. has made no reply; but, on the contrary, has allowed my reasoning to be "very conclusive,"—IX. 67.

2. I have proved that men are obliged to the performance of all duty, and are inexcusable for their omission of it, antecedently to, and independently of, the bestowment of *grace*,—*Reply*, p. 220. To this also Mr. T. has made no reply; but, on the contrary, has told us that he "wishes to oppose nothing contained in it, so far as the present subject is concerned,"—XIII. 59. Mr. T., therefore, has fully allowed me to have proved my point, and consequently to have proved that the body of his own reasoning is fallacious. Surely Mr. T. must have engaged in a controversy which he does not sufficiently understand; how else could he allow of these sentiments, and at the same time maintain their opposites?

To the above arguments might be added the universal *silence of Scripture* in respect of the internal operations of grace being necessary to render men accountable beings, as to moral and spiritual exercises. The Scripture is not silent upon what it is that renders us moral agents; but never, that I remember, gives us the least hint of *grace*, or the Spirit's operations, being necessary to that end. Whenever God speaks of men in a way of *complaint* or *censure*, he urges their enjoyment of natural powers, outward advantages, means, and opportunities, as what rendered it fit and reasonable for better things to have been expected at their hands. Rehearsing what he had done for Israel, and complaining of their ungrateful returns, he says, "What was

there more to be done to my vineyard,\* that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. v. 1-7. It is plain here that God reckoned himself to have done enough for them to warrant an expectation, speaking after the manner of men, of better returns; and yet here is no mention of any thing but external privileges, means, and opportunities, which were bestowed upon them. It is true God is said to have *given his good Spirit to instruct them*; but the meaning of that is, he inspired his servants the prophets, and sent them with repeated messages of instruction; or, as it is explained in the same place, "He testified against them by his Spirit in the prophets," Neh. ix. 20, 30. These messages and messengers were what Stephen accused them with having *always resisted*. "Which of the prophets," said he, "have not your fathers persecuted?" and this he justly calls a *resistance of the Holy Spirit*, Acts vii. 51, 52. When Christ complained of Chorazin and Bethsaida, he made no mention of the *internal* operations of his grace, as the ground of his just expectations, but barely of the "mighty works" which he had wrought among them, Matt. xi. 20-24. So when the apostle pronounces the heathen to be "without excuse," and informs us wherefore they were so, he makes no mention of grace which they either had, or might have had, but of the evidence afforded to them by the visible creation, by which he intimates that the invisible power and Godhead of its Creator might have been known, had they been but of a right temper of mind, Rom. i. 19, 26.†

But Mr. T. thinks I have contradicted all this by asserting that "natural ability is *not*, of itself, sufficient for the performance of good." Cannot Mr. T., then, discern the difference between what is sufficient to render us *accountable beings*, and what is sufficient for the *actual performance* of good? If a man is possessed of reason and conscience, he has that which, to all intents and purposes, renders him an accountable being, and any court upon earth would treat him as responsible for any trust which might be reposed in his hands; but if he is not possessed of *integrity*, he has not that in him which is sufficient for the security of his master's property, or any service which is truly virtuous.

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## LETTER VIII.

ANOTHER question in debate between myself and Mr. T. is whether faith in Christ be a requirement of the moral law. On this subject Mr. T. has written his Seventh and Eighth Letters. If I understand the force of this question in the present controversy, it is this: that it involves the doctrine of a provision of grace in order to make it equitable. Mr. T. considers faith as an additional obligation to those required by the moral law, and therefore thinks it a hard and inequitable requirement, if grace is not provided to enable us to comply,—IX. 46.

On this subject Mr. T. admits that "the moral law—demands that whatever is revealed in the gospel, or any other dispensation, be received by all rational creatures to whom that revelation is made,"—XIII. 69. This is all that I have pleaded for. I do not suppose the moral law *expressly*, but *radi-*

\* See Trueman's Discourse of Natural and Moral Impotence, p. 179.

† See Bellamy's True Religion Delineated.

cally, or remotely, to require faith in Christ. I only contend that *that love* which the moral law expressly requires would lead a person possessed of it to embrace the gospel. And herein, it seems, we are agreed.

But Mr. T. seems to think it very improper on this account to say that faith in Christ is a requirement of the moral law; as improper as to say that circumcision, baptism, and the Lord's supper are requirements of that law, on account of their being *remotely* required by it,—XIII. 70. In short, he seems to consider faith in Christ as a part of positive law, and therefore not, strictly speaking, moral. To which it is replied,

Supposing faith in Christ to be a part of positive law, yet if compliance with it is justly "demanded by the moral law," which Mr. T. says it is, then it would not follow that it is such an additional obligation on men as to require additional grace, in order to render it equitable. But further,

If I understand the nature of *positive* law, as distinguished from *moral*, it is that which arises, not from the *nature of things*, but from the *mere will* of the lawgiver. I am not acquainted with any one *positive* law, the opposite of which might not have been enjoined in equal consistency with the moral character of God. But it is not so with respect to *moral* obligations; they are such as it would be contrary to the moral character of God not to require, or to require their opposites. Now surely the requirement of faith in Christ, where the gospel is proclaimed, has *this* property attending it. It would be inconsistent with the perfections of God to allow men to reject the gospel of his Son, or to feel indifferent towards it.

Surely Mr. T. is much mistaken in supposing that whatever is strictly moral is universally and alike binding in all times, places, and circumstances,—XIII. 71. Obedience to parents and love to children, with many other duties of the moral law, are binding on persons who have parents to obey and children to love, but not on those who have none.

Mr. T., in the beginning of his Seventh Letter, takes pains to reconcile his admitting the law to be "an infallible test of right and wrong," and, at the same time, affirming that "final misery is not brought upon sinners by their transgression of the law, but by their rejection of the overtures of mercy,"—XIII. 65-68. In the *former* of these sentiments we are both agreed. As to the *latter*, admit that the rejection of mercy *aggravates* men's destruction, and therefore is a *cause* of it, which the scriptures he has cited undoubtedly prove; but that sinners perish *merely* for rejecting the gospel, and *not for transgressing the law*, wants proof. Perhaps it might be much easier proved that men will not be punished for rejecting the gospel any further than as such rejection involves in it a transgression of the law. Mr. T. complains (XIII. 77) of my supposing that he makes the gospel a new system of government, taking place of the moral law, and is persuaded I had no authority for such a supposition. And yet, without this supposition, I do not see the force of what he labours to illustrate and establish as above. If Mr. T. here means any thing different from what I admit, it must be to maintain that the death of Christ has, in such sort, atoned for the sins of the whole world, as that no man shall be finally condemned for his breaking the moral law, but merely for the sin of unbelief. If this is not his meaning, I ask his pardon for misunderstanding him. If it is, this is, to all intents and purposes, making the gospel a new system of government, taking place of the moral law.

It may, in a sense, be said of a rebel who refuses to lay down his arms and submit to mercy, (which is a case more in point than that of a condemned criminal in the hands of justice,) that when he comes to be punished, he will die because he refused the king's pardon; but it is easy to see that the word *because* is, in this connexion, used improperly. It does not mean



that the refusal of mercy is the crime, and the only crime, for which he suffers; no, this is not the direct or procuring, so much as the *occasional* cause of his punishment. REBELLION is that for which he suffers; and his refusal of mercy is no further a procuring cause of it than as it is a perseverance in *rebellion*, and, as it were, the completion of it.

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## LETTER IX.

THE last article in debate between myself and Mr. Taylor concerns *the extent of Christ's death*. On this subject I stated my own views by way of explanation; offered evidence that Christ, in his vicarious sufferings and death, had an absolute determination to save some of the human race; noticed Mr. T.'s arguments; endeavoured to show the consistency of a limitation of design in the death of Christ with the indefinite call of the gospel, &c.; and concluded with some general reflections upon the whole. On these subjects Mr. T. has followed me, and I shall attempt to follow him with a few additional remarks.

In stating my sense of the limited extent of Christ's death, I admitted that the sufferings of Christ were sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, had the race of mankind or the multitude of their offences been a thousand times more numerous than they are, if it had pleased God to render them effectual to that end. I do not consider the necessity of an atonement as arising from the number of sins, but from the nature of them. As the same *sun* which is necessary to enlighten the present inhabitants of the earth is sufficient to enlighten many millions more; and as the same perfect *obedience* of Christ, which was necessary for the justification of one sinner, is sufficient to justify the millions that are saved; so, I apprehend, the same infinite *atonement* would have been necessary for the salvation of one soul, consistently with justice, as for the salvation of a world.

I admit that "the death of Christ has opened a way whereby God can forgive any sinner whatever who returns to him by Jesus Christ;" and that in perfect consistency with the honour of the supreme Lawgiver, and the general good of his extensive empire. "If we were to suppose, for argument's sake, that all the inhabitants of the globe should thus return," I do not conceive that "one soul need be sent away for want of a sufficiency in the death of Christ to render their pardon and acceptance consistent with the rights of justice." All the limitation I maintain in the death of Christ arises from pure *sovereignty*; it is a limitation of *design*.

Now, seeing the above is conceded, whence arises the propriety of all those arguments in Mr. T.'s piece which proceed upon the supposition of the contrary? The latter part of his Ninth Letter, which is taken up in exposing the consequences of maintaining an indefinite invitation without a *universal provision*, overlooks the above concessions. I have admitted the necessity of a universal provision as a ground of invitation; and that in *two* respects:—1. A provision of pardon in behalf of all those who shall believe in Christ. 2. A provision of means and motives to induce them to believe. And if no more than this were meant by the term *provision*, I should not object to it. And if by *Christ dying for the whole world* were meant no more than this, I should not wish to have any dispute about it. Now if Mr. T. had been disposed to attend to *things*, and not merely to *words*, and to keep to the point in hand, he should have proved that *this provision*, which I admitted, was insufficient to render the invitations of the gospel

consistent, and should have pointed out wherein the provision for which he pleads has the advantage of it. Mr. T. was reminded of this in my *Reply*, p. 231; but I do not recollect that he has taken any notice of it.

I do not see, I confess, but that the parable of the marriage-feast, Matt. xxii. 4, 5, is as consistent with my hypothesis as with that of Mr. T.,—XIII. 134. I never supposed but that *all things were ready*; or that even those who *made light of it*, if they had come in God's way, would have been disappointed. All I suppose is that provision was not made effectually to persuade every one to embrace it; and that, without such effectual persuasion, no one ever did, or will, embrace God's way of salvation.

Mr. T. proceeds to draw some conclusions, which he thinks very unfavourable to my sentiments. "We have no authority," says he, on this scheme, to ascribe the limitation to any cause *but want of love*." This, he apprehends, is highly derogatory to the honour of God, especially as *love* is his darling attribute,—XIII. 80. But all this reasoning proceeds upon the supposition that God must be accused of want of love to his rebellious creatures, unless he does, for their salvation, all that he *could* do consistently with justice. Now, let it be observed, Mr. T. sometimes tells us that he does not oppose the doctrine of an absolute determination for the salvation of some of the human race,—XIII. 92. But if he admit *this* as consistent with what he has advanced, then he must admit that God *could* have actually saved the whole world in the same absolute way, and not have suffered any of the human race to perish; and all this, too, in consistency with justice. And yet he does not. What then? According to Mr. T., all must be ascribed to *want of love*. Further, Mr. T., I should think, will not deny that God *could* have spread the gospel, and that consistently both with his own justice and with man's free agency, all over the earth, and at every period of time since the fall of man; and yet he has not. Yea, before the coming of his Son, he suffered all nations but one, for many ages, to walk in their own ways; this, according to Mr. T.'s reasonings, must all be ascribed to *want of love*, and so lie as a reproach upon God's character.\*

Mr. T.'s own scheme, as well as mine, supposes that God does *not* do *all that for some men which he could*, and which is necessary to their salvation. *He* supposes that if what was done for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, without effect, had been done for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, it would have

\* An objection much like the above was once urged by Mr. Wesley against Mr. Hervey.—"Will God," said Mr. W., "deny what is necessary for the present comfort and final acceptance of any one soul that he has made? Would you deny it to any if it were in your power?"—To which the ingenious Mr. Hervey replied, "To show the error of such a sentiment, and the fallacy of such reasoning, I shall just mention a recent melancholy fact. News is brought that the Prince George man of war, Admiral Broderick's own ship, is burnt and sunk, and above four hundred souls that were on board are perished. Six hours the flames prevailed, while every means were used to preserve the ship and crew; but all to no purpose. In the mean time, shrieks and groans, bitter moanings and piercing cries, were heard from every quarter. Raving, despair, and even madness, presented themselves in a variety of forms. Some ran to and fro, distracted with terror, not knowing what they did, or what they should do. Others jumped overboard from all parts; and, to avoid the pursuit of one death, leaped into the jaws of another. Those unhappy wretches who could not swim were obliged to remain upon the wreck, though flakes of fire fell on their bodies. Soon the masts went away, and killed numbers. Those who were not killed thought themselves happy to get upon the floating timber. Nor yet were they safe; for the fire having communicated itself to the guns, which were loaded and shotted, they swept multitudes from this their last refuge.—What say you, sir, to this dismal narrative? Does not your heart bleed? Would you have stood by, and denied your succour, if it had been in your power to help? Yet the Lord saw this extreme distress. He heard their piteous moans. He was able to save them, yet withdrew his assistance. Now, because you would gladly have succoured them if you could, and God Almighty could, but would not send them aid; will you, therefore, conclude that you are above your Lord? and that your *loving-kindness* is greater than his? I will not offer to charge any such consequence upon you. I am persuaded you abhor the thought."—*Letters to Mr. Wesley*, pp. 288, 289.

been effectual,—XIII. 25. And yet this was not done. To what is this to be imputed? Surely God could have sent the gospel to the one as well as to the other. I see not what cause Mr. T. will find to impute this to but what he calls a *want of love*.

But Mr. T. suggests that the conduct of our blessed Saviour, according to my scheme, would resemble that of a person who should invite another to an entertainment without a *design* that he should partake of it,—XIII. 84. But if a comparison must be made, ought it not rather to be with a person who sincerely invites his neighbours to a plentiful banquet, and never designed any other but that whoever comes shall be entertained with a hearty welcome; but did not design, after all fair means were used, and repeated insults received, to do all that perhaps he could to overcome their pride and prejudice, and so bring them to the entertainment. If this would destroy the sincerity of the invitation, so would *foreknowledge*; and it might as plausibly be objected, How can any being act sincerely in inviting men to partake of *that* which he knows, at the same time, they never will enjoy? Mr. T.'s scheme appears to him to have many advantages; particularly, he thinks it is consistent with the general tenor of Scripture, clears the conduct of the Father of mercies from the appearance of cruelty, and leaves the obdurate sinner justly condemned. But admitting, for argument's sake, that the Divine conduct is thereby cleared of the appearance of cruelty, the worst is that *this is all*. His scheme barely goes to vindicate the Almighty from *cruelty*. It is *justice* only; there is no *grace* in it: nothing that God had a right to withhold. That which we have hitherto called the *grace* of the gospel amounts, then, to no more than *this*: it bestows a benefit upon intelligent creatures, without which they could not possibly avoid being everlastingly miserable; and that upon this consideration, that "they did not bring this misery upon themselves, nor was it ever in their power to avoid it,—XIII. 82. If the Divine Being will do this, he shall be complimented with the character of *benevolent*, XIII. 80; but if not, he must be reproached "as not *loving*, but *hating*, a great part of his rational offspring." O Mr. Taylor! does any one maintain that men, considered as the *offspring* of God, are the objects of his hatred? Do not *men* sustain a more disagreeable character than *this*? That deists and Socinians should write in this strain is no wonder; but how came the language of infidelity to escape your pen?

Excuse this apostrophe. Utterly as I disapprove of his Arminian tenets, (which, under the plausible pretext of *extending* the grace of the gospel, appear to me to *enervate* if not *annihilate* it, and to leave little or nothing of GRACE but the name,) I still entertain a high degree of personal respect and esteem for my opponent.

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## LETTER X.

Mr. T., in his Ninth Letter, remarks on the evidence I offered for an *absolute determination* in the death of Christ to *save some* of the human race. "This sentiment," Mr. T. says, "whether true or false, I do not wish to oppose,"—XIII. 92. He would not dispute, it seems, about Christ's dying with a view to the certain salvation of some, provided I would admit that, in another respect, he died *for all mankind*. Here, then, we seem to come nearer together than we sometimes are. The sense in which he pleads for the universal extent of Christ's death is only to lay a foundation for this *doctrine*, that *men, in general, may be saved if they will*; and this is what I

admit: I allow that the death of Christ has opened a way whereby God can, consistently with his justice, forgive any sinner whatever who returns to him by Jesus Christ; and if this may be called dying for men, which I shall not dispute, then it is admitted that Christ died for all mankind. But I say, *they will not come to Christ for life*; and that if Christ had died for no other end than to give them this offer, not one of them would have accepted it.

I hold as much as Mr. T. holds to any good purpose. I admit of a *way* being opened for the salvation of sinners without distinction; and, what is *more*, that an effectual provision is made in the death of Christ that *that way* shall *not* be *unoccupied*; that he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Without *this* provision, I suppose, *no one* would ever have been saved; and the tendency of my reasoning is to prove that *all* who *are* saved are saved in consequence of it.

Mr. T., I observe, is not disposed to controvert the doctrine of eternal, personal, and unconditional election,—XIII. 100. I am allowed, therefore, to take that doctrine, together with a special design in the death of Christ for the salvation of the elect, for granted. "This sentiment," Mr. T. says, "whether true or false, he does not wish to oppose." If any thing is necessary to be *proved*, in this place, it is that *NONE* but *those whose salvation Christ absolutely designed in his death are eventually saved*; or, in other words, that *WHOEVER* are saved are indebted to *sovereign and efficacious grace for their salvation*. Now, let the reader turn to my *Reply to Philanthropos*, and he will perceive that several of those scriptures which prove the doctrine of election prove also that *none else are finally saved*. The apostles addressed *all* the believing Ephesians, Thessalonians, &c. as having been "chosen in Christ" before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy; as "*chosen to salvation* through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth;" as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience;" as being "saved and called with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to God's own purpose and grace, given them in Christ before the world began." But if *SOME* were saved in consequence of such a purpose in their favour, and *OTHERS* without it, the apostles had no just ground to write as they did, concerning them all, without distinction. When we are told that "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," this implies, as strongly as any thing can imply, that *no more* believed, and were saved, than such as were ordained to eternal life. Christ returned thanks to his Father that he had "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so Father," said he, "for so it seemed good in thy sight." And again, we are assured, by the apostle Paul, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

To the above passages I shall add only one more: 1 Cor. i. 26-29, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are *called*; but God hath *chosen* the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." The reasoning of the apostle, in this passage, plainly supposes the following things:—1. That there is a *special* and *effectual vocation*, which is peculiar to all Christians. The *common* call of the gospel extends alike to rich and poor, wise and foolish, noble and ignoble; but the *effectual* operations of the Holy Spirit do not: it is the latter, therefore, and not the former, which is here meant. 2. That this vocation, common to all true Christians, corresponds, as to the objects of it with election. The

same persons, and *all* of them, said to be *called*, are, in the same passage, said to be *chosen*; which agrees with the same apostle's account of the matter, in Rom. viii. 30, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." 3. Vocation not only corresponds with election as to the objects of it, but is itself an *effect* of it. The reason given why the foolish, weak, and despised ones of the world were called, rather than others, is God's sovereign *choice* of them before others. Some might have supposed, if the apostle had not been so particular in his expressions, that the minds of the weak and illiterate, though under a disadvantage in one respect, yet possessed an advantage in another, in that they were more free from prejudice; and that Paul had meant to ascribe their embracing Christ before others to the unprejudiced state of their minds; but such a supposition is entirely precluded by the apostle's language. He does not say the weak and foolish have *chosen God*, but God hath *chosen them*; nor would the other mode of expression have corresponded with the end assigned, to prove that "no flesh shall glory in his presence."

Many worthy men, who have maintained the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, have at the same time admitted that Christ might be said, in some sense, to have died for the whole world. They distinguished between the *sufficiency* and *efficiency* of his death; and considered the indefinite language of the New Testament, relative to that subject, as expressing the former of these ideas. Thus the English Reformers, who composed the Thirty-nine Articles, appear to have viewed the subject. They fully avowed the doctrine of predestination, and at the same time spoke of Christ's dying for all mankind. Mr. T. on this ground affirms that "the doctrine of the universality of our Saviour's death both is, and ever since the Reformation has been, the doctrine of the Established Church,"—XIII. 141. I believe, in the sense above mentioned, it has been so; and if this was all that Mr. T. pleaded for, he might debate the point with whomsoever he pleased, I should not interest myself in the dispute. But the views of Cranmer, Latimer, Hooper, Usher, and Davenant, were very different from those of Mr. Taylor. They, as well as Fraser of Scotland and Bellamy of New England, and many other anti-episcopal divines who have agreed with them in this point, never imagined that any besides the elect would finally be saved. And they considered the salvation of all that are saved as the effect of predestinating grace, as their works abundantly testify.

Mr. T. may say, the question is, not whether more than those whose salvation is absolutely determined *will be* eventually saved, but whether they *might be*. "If," says he, "any such election be maintained as supposes that all the rest of mankind never enjoyed the possibility of happiness, nor had any provision of happiness made for them, but were necessarily, either from eternity or from their birth, exposed to eternal misery, such election as this I deliberately consider as opposite to the spirit and design of the gospel, and to the tenor of Scripture,"—XIII. 100. To this it is replied, All such terms as *necessary, cannot, impossible, &c.*, when applied to these subjects, are used improperly. They always denote, in strict propriety of speech, an obstruction arising from something distinct from the state of the will. Such terms, in their common acceptation, *suppose a willingness* in us to perform an action, or obtain an end, but that we are hindered by some insurmountable bar from without. Such an idea is always annexed to the use of such terms; and Mr. T. certainly has this idea in his use of the terms *necessary* and *impossible*, in this place. His meaning is to oppose that doctrine which represents a part of mankind as placed in such circumstances, as that, though they should be willing to embrace Christ, or at least willing to use means that they may be willing to embrace him, yet it would be all in vain. But

such a doctrine nobody maintains; at least, I had no such ideas of the subject. I have no such notion of election, or of the limited extent of Christ's death, as that it shall be in vain for any of the sons of men *truly* to seek after God. If they are *willing* to be saved *in God's way*, nothing shall hinder their salvation; and (if there were any meaning in the expression) if they were but truly willing to use means that they might be willing, all would be clear before them. Now, where this is the case, it cannot be said, in strict propriety of speech, that no *provision* is made for their happiness, or that any man's salvation is *impossible*, or his destruction *necessary*; seeing the way of salvation is open to him, if he will but walk in it. All that can be said in truth is that there is a *CERTAINTY* in these things. It is *certain* that none will be saved but those who choose to be saved in God's way. It is *certain* that no one will choose that which is opposite to the prevailing bias of his heart. Yea, it is *certain* that, whatever means there may be adapted to the turning of his heart, a man who is *wholly* averse from God will never make use of them with such a design. To make use of a means, with a view to accomplish an end, must imply the existence of a desire after such end; but a desire after *this* end exists not till the end is accomplished. A desire after a change of heart is, in some degree, the very thing desired. Besides, if, as Mr. T. says, "men have no *will* nor *power*, nor any concern about the matter" of believing in Christ, "till the Holy Spirit work, awaken, and produce these in his mind," (XIII. 23,) then it is *certain*, even from his own premises, that no sinner ever sincerely applied to God for grace before he had it, unless he could be supposed so to apply without will, or power, or any concern about it. These things, I say, are *certain*, according to the nature and constitution of all intelligent beings; and there are other things equally certain, as consequences of them, which are confirmed by Scripture testimony. It is *certain* that none are willing to be saved in God's way but those who are made willing in the day of his power; it is *certain* that whenever God makes a sinner willing in the day of his power, he is only working things after the counsel of his own will, executing his own eternal purpose; and hence it is *certain* that such, and only such, will eventually be saved.

If Mr. T. objects against the *certainly* of any man's destruction, and will have it that this amounts to the same thing as *necessity* and *impossibility*; let him consider, that as he admits the doctrine of Divine *foreknowledge*, he must allow, therefore, that God certainly foreknew the final state of every man. But certain foreknowledge must imply a *certainly* of the event foreknown. If an event is certainly foreknown, the future existence of that event must be certain. If there was an uncertainty respecting the future existence of an event, there must, in the nature of things, be an equal degree of uncertainty in the foreknowledge of that event. Certain foreknowledge, therefore, implies a certainty of the event foreknown.

But foreknowledge, it is alleged, has no *causal influence* upon the thing foreknown,—XIII. 10S. Be it so; neither has any purpose in God, that I embrace, any influence towards a sinner's destruction, except in a way of punishment for his sin. The scheme which Mr. T. opposes, so far from representing man as "for ever unable to improve one single mercy of God to any good purpose," represents him as not only possessing great advantages, but as able to comply with every thing that God requires at his hand; and that all his misery arises from his "*voluntary*" abuse of mercy, and his *wilful* rebellion against God. It is not a want of *ability*, but of *inclination*, that proves his ruin.\* If Mr. T. had kept these things in view,

\* Though Mr. T. talks of men as having "no *will* nor *power* to believe in Christ, nor any concern in the matter," prior to the Spirit's work, (XIII. 23,) yet that is what I have never affirmed. On the contrary, I maintain that men have the same *power*, strictly speaking,

(which, surely, he ought to have done,) he could not have represented my sentiments in such a light as he has done,—XIII. 106, 108.

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## LETTER XI.

MR. TAYLOR often speaks of the language of Scripture, as if its whole current was in his favour, as if his opponent was engaged in a controversy in which he had forsaken the word of God. Now suppose it were allowed that the language of several passages of Scripture, taken in their most literal and plain meaning, proves Christ, in some sense, to have died for all mankind; still, if we will give fair scope to *other parts of Scripture*, it appears evident that, in some sense, he died for only a part of mankind. Several of these passages I had produced; to which Mr. T. has said scarcely any thing that deserves being called an answer.

When I argued from Christ's being said to "lay down his life for his sheep"—"to give himself for his church, that he might sanctify it," &c. &c., could Mr. T. think it sufficient to say, "We are no where informed that he died for those *only*; this is no proof that he did not die for all mankind: it is certain that, if Christ died for all, he died for these, because the greater number includes the less, and the whole includes its parts?"\* Did not I argue, particularly from Eph. v. 25, 26, that the death of Christ is there represented as the *result* of his love to the church, in the character of a husband, and which must, therefore, be *discriminating*;—that the *church* could not here mean actual believers, because they are considered as *unsanctified*; he died *that he might* sanctify them;—that Christ did not die for believers as such;—he laid down his life for his *enemies*;—that, therefore, it must mean all the *elect* of God—all those that are finally saved? And has Mr. T. answered this reasoning? No, nor attempted it. If, as he often suggests, my cause has so very slender a share of Scriptural evidence to support it, is it not a pity but he had given a fair answer to those scriptures which were adduced?

I argued, further, from Christ's dying in the character of a *surety*, that he might "bring many sons unto glory;" might "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad," &c. Mr. T.'s answer to this argument is exceedingly trifling and unfair. I did not, "take for granted" that Christ absolutely intended the salvation of all for whom he died, but brought the argument which he quotes in order to prove it. Nor did I rest my argument from the passages of Scripture there cited upon my "*apprehensions*," but upon the *Scriptures themselves*, which surely prove none the less for being introduced in that form. Mr. T.'s remark upon the *Jewish*

before they are wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, as after; and before conversion as after; that the work of the Spirit endows us with no new rational powers, nor any powers that are necessary to moral agency; and that, so far from our having "no concern in the matter," we were all deeply *concerned* in *rejecting* Christ, and the way of salvation by him.

\* XIII. 93. "Go, preach the gospel," said Christ, "to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Believers *only*, say the Baptists, you see, are to be baptized.—No, say others, this is no proof that believers *only* are to be baptized. It might be the design of Christ that they should baptize all the world, for aught this passage proves. It is certain, if *all* are to be baptized, *believers* are, because the greater number always includes the less, and the whole includes its parts. What would Mr. T., as a Baptist, say to this reasoning? It is exactly the same as his own. This very answer I made to Mr. T. before, when he called out for *express testimony* for what I supposed to be a *negative* truth; which answer, I presume, he *totally misunderstood*; otherwise, he could not have given a reply so foreign to the argument.

*sacrifices* (XIII. 94) shows an uncommon inattention to the argument. I observed, by way of introduction, that "sacrifices were offered on account of those, and those only, on whose behalf they were *sanctified*, or set apart; that every sacrifice had its special appointment, and was supposed to atone for the sins of those, and those only, on whose behalf it was offered." All this, I supposed, would be granted by Mr. T. These observations were my *data*. I then proceeded to apply this reasoning, and to prove who those were for whom Christ was *sanctified*, or set apart, as a sacrifice. For this purpose I quoted John xvii. 19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth:"—*they* who were *given him* of the Father. But Mr. T., instead of answering this argument, never looks at it; but takes up a part of my *premises*, without touching upon the conclusion, and then charges me with "reasoning in a circle!" Considering Mr. T.'s abilities and experience in polemical divinity, is it not astonishing that things so indigested should proceed from his pen?

I further argued from the certain *effects* of Christ's death extending not to all mankind, particularly the effect of *redemption*. Mr. T.'s answer to this argument is abundantly more worthy of notice than his answers to those that went before,—XIII. 95. Nor shall I urge it upon him, that his denial of *general redemption*, while he pleads for the *universal extent of Christ's death*, indicates an idea of redemption as *novel* and unprecedented as my interpretation of the term *propitiation*, which he endeavours to explode on account of its peculiarity,—XIII. 115, 116. Yet, after all, there is great reason from the context to conclude that what is spoken in Gal. iii. 13, of Christ's having "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," respects what was effected by the blood of Christ *alone*, when upon the cross, antecedently to our believing in him. When the apostle speaks of *redemption*, he says, he "hath *redeemed us*, being made a curse for us." When he speaks of blessings resulting from his death, but which do not take place before believing, he immediately changes his manner of speaking, as in verse 14, "That the blessing of Abraham *might* come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we *might* receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." We are also said to be "justified *through* the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. iii. 24. But would it not be making the apostle speak very awkwardly to understand redemption, not of what was obtained by the death of Christ *alone*, but of what has its existence *through faith*. Can Mr. T. suppose that the apostle meant to say, We are justified through the *forgiveness of sins*?

I argued, further, from Christ's bearing the sins of *many*; particularly from Isa. liii. 12; and I supposed the meaning of the term *many*, in verse 12, might be decided by its meaning in verse 11. "There is no reason," I observed, "that I know of, to be *given*, why the *many* whose sins he bore should be understood of any other persons than the *many* who *by his knowledge are justified*, and who are not all mankind." To this Mr. T., among other things, replies, "*I do not know*, is no argument at all. This may be said on any subject. If the truth lie on the side of Mr. F. he must show us that he *does* know, and *how* he knows it, by fair and allowed rules of interpretation,"—XIII. 97. This, to be sure, is talking in a high strain; but to what purpose? I should have thought explaining a term according to its allowed meaning in the context, *except some good reason could be given for the contrary*, was a fair and allowed rule of interpretation.

Again, I argued from the *intercession* of Christ, in John xvii. 9, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world," &c., which, like that of the priests under the law, was in behalf of the same persons for whom the oblation was offered. Mr. T. here, as usual, calls out for more *proof*, without attending to what is



given,—XIII. 99. He questions two things: *first*, whether this prayer is to be considered as a specimen of Christ's intercession, which he seems to consider as confined to *heaven*; he means, I suppose, to his state of exaltation. But is not his prayer upon the cross expressly called, in prophecy, making "*intercession* for the transgressors?" Isa. liii. 12. But, *further*, he calls for proof that the death and intercession of Christ are of equal extent,—XIII. 99. The intercession of the priests under the law, being on the behalf of the same persons on whose account they offered the oblation, was mentioned. Whether this be a *sufficient* ground to rest the argument upon, or not, one should think it has *some* weight in it; but of this Mr. T. takes no notice.

Finally, I argued from Rev. v. 9; xiv. 3, 4, where Christians are said to be *redeemed*, or *bought*, from among men, which should seem to imply that all men are not redeemed, or bought. Mr. T. here goes about to refute some things upon which I built nothing,—XIII. 101, 102. Whether the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders, represent the church militant or the church triumphant, or whether the persons in question represent the whole church triumphant, or only a part of it, are matters that signify but little, if any thing, to the point in hand. If the whole or a part of the church triumphant were *bought*, or "*redeemed* by blood, from amongst men," that is sufficient. Mr. T. deals plentifully, I observe, in such language as, if I had used it, he would have held up in italics to great advantage; such as "*I do not remember—I think—and I think.*" I do not mention this as improper language: I only mean to remind him that he should not have been so severe upon me for using the same. As to what he has said upon this passage, I think, upon the whole, it is as forcible as any thing that can be said on his side the question; though it is certain that the natural meaning of the word ἡγορεύθησαν, they were bought, and its only meaning, that I recollect, in the New Testament, must be utterly cashiered, and I apprehend the natural meaning of the whole passage greatly forced, to admit of his interpretation.

P. S. I do not recollect that the *whole world*, or *all*, or *all men*, are ever said to be *purchased*, or *bought*, or *redeemed* by the blood of Christ; or that we ever read of Christ's *redeeming*, *buying*, or *purchasing* any but *his church*. Mr. T. does not pretend that all mankind are *redeemed*; but I think, if we take our notions from the New Testament, it is evident that *buying* or *purchasing*, when applied to what Christ has done for us, is as much confined to the church as redemption. Ἀγοράζω and περιποιέω, which are used to express the ideas of *buying*, *purchasing*, or *acquiring by price*, are applied to the church of God only; as well as λυτρόμαι, to *redeem*, Luke xxiv. 21; Tit. ii. 14; and λύτρον, a *ransom*, Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45. In 1 Tim. ii. 6, Christ is said to give himself a ransom for all, ἀντίλυτρον ἑπὲρ πάντων; but that will be considered in the next Letter. It is said of the *church of God* that he *purchased* it with his own blood; περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος, Acts xx. 28. The final deliverance of the whole collective body of the saved, from all remains of natural and moral evil, is called ἀπολύτρωσις τῆς περιποιήσεως, the redemption of the *purchased possession*, or of the *people acquired*, or *purchased*, Eph. i. 14. On which Calvin remarks, *Periποίησις, quam latine vertimus acquisitam hereditatem, non est regnum cœlorum, aut beata immortalitas, sed ipsa ecclesia.\** Thus, in 1 Pet. ii. 9, they are styled, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, a *people acquired*, or *purchased to himself in a peculiar manner*; or a *people for a peculiar possession*. Paul says, 1 Thess. v. 9, "God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to the περιποίησιν σωτηρίας, obtain-

\* Περιποίησις, which we render the *purchased possession*, is not the kingdom of heaven, or a blessed immortality, but the *church itself*.

ing, or *acquiring*, of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that we should live with him." And 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14, he says, "Beloved of the Lord, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, unto περιπατήσω δοξης, the *obtaining*, or *acquisition*, of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let the impartial judge if these passages do not strongly favour the peculiarity of design in Christ's death. And thus it is said of Christians, τιμῆς ἠγοράσθητε, *ye are bought with a price*, 1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23.

If 2 Pet. ii. 1, should be alleged as an objection, I hope I have given a sufficient reason why that passage is not to be understood of the Saviour's blood, but of God's deliverance in a way of providence. It is such a reason, at least, as Mr. T. has not attempted to answer.

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## LETTER XII.

MR. T., in his *Nine Letters*, offered arguments for the universal extent of Christ's death. He argued from the *goodness* of God over all his works, and from various passages of Scripture which speak of the death of Christ in indefinite language. The principal of these passages and arguments I have considered in my *Reply*. Mr. T., in the Eleventh Letter of his last publication, defends his former arguments.

Before I enter on a discussion of particulars, I would observe, that although Mr. T. pleads for the universal extent of Christ's death, yet he pleads for it in no other sense than as laying a foundation for sinners, without distinction, being invited to return home to God by Jesus Christ, with the promise of forgiveness and acceptance on their return. He does not pretend that there is provision made by the death of Christ for the *certain* salvation of all men. Now the thing itself for which he pleads is no more than I have admitted. It is true I have supposed that this being done for men in general, cannot with propriety be called dying *for* them. At the same time, I have allowed that "many considerable writers, who are far from denying that the salvation of all the saved is owing to an absolute, and consequently limited, design in the death of Christ, have supposed that it might; and that the indefinite language of Scripture, concerning the death of Christ, is intended to convey to us this idea." The thing itself I do not controvert; only it appeared to me that the terms *ransom*, *propitiation*, *dying for us*, &c., were intended to convey something more than this, and what is true only of the finally saved. Now, admitting that I am mistaken in my supposition—admitting that the terms *propitiation*, *ransom*, &c. are applicable to mankind in general, and are designed to express that there is a way opened for sinners, without distinction, to return home to God, and be saved—nothing follows from it but that I have misunderstood certain passages of Scripture, by considering them as conveying an indefinite, but not a universal idea. In regard to the sentiment itself, I do not see that Mr. T. pleads for more than I have admitted, except in one instance: we agree that a way is opened, by the death of Christ, for the salvation of sinners, without distinction; and that any man may be saved, if he is willing to come to Christ, that he may have life. Here I stop; but Mr. T. goes a step farther, and maintains that such a provision of grace is made by the death of Christ that all men have power *to be willing if they will*: but of this, I am satisfied, no meaning can be made.

I now proceed to particulars, by observing, that whether my sense of the passages of Scripture adduced by Mr. T. be just or not, it does not appear to me that he has invalidated it. He argues in general from Psal. cxlv. 9, "His tender mercies are over all his works." I answered that the death of Christ was not the criterion of God's goodness; that fallen angels were a part of God's works as well as fallen men. Mr. T. replies by observing that fallen angels were not here *intended*,—XIII. 106. Then it seems Mr. T. can sometimes discern a restriction in the word *all*, though a *universal* term. Perhaps it may be sufficient to observe, that whether the phrase *all his works* intends all fallen angels or not, it intends more than that part of God's works for which Christ died. Is it not evident from the context that it denotes God's providential goodness towards the whole animate creation? Is it not said of them, in verse 16, that "their eyes wait on *him*; he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing?"

But Mr. T. contends that "there is no *goodness*, no *mercy*, no *tender mercy*, exercised towards a person who is placed in such a situation that he could not avoid sinning and being damned, and whose damnation is necessarily increased by calls and commands to repent, and believe in Christ; when the great God, whose commands these are, has provided no mercy for him, nor intends to give him the least assistance, though he knows the poor sinner cannot, nor ever possibly could, obey these calls and commands, any more than he can fly to the moon,"—XIII. 106. To this shocking representation I have only to say, This is not *my* hypothesis, nor any thing like it; and if Mr. T. thinks it is, it is time to give over controverting the matter with him. The whole passage is mere declamation, founded on the abuse of the terms *cannot*, *could not*, &c. If, instead of "*cannot*, and *never could*," he had said *will not*, and *never would*, his account of the poor sinner's case would not have appeared so plausible; and yet this he knows is the whole of our meaning. "Yes, but if they could never *will* to comply," says Mr. T., "that amounts to the same thing," (XIII. 57;) that is, unless they have the power of being *willing*, *if they will*! Of this I shall only say, that when Mr. T. can make sense of it, it will be time enough to answer it.

What follows has much more of argument in it. "If the tender mercies of God are over all his works, and if no man can enjoy any mercy but through Jesus Christ, is it not a natural and reasonable conclusion that God has given his Son to die for all mankind?"—XIII. 105. I must observe however, by the way, that "if no *man* can enjoy any mercy but through Jesus Christ," I cannot but consider this as a full proof that the whole race were unworthy of all mercy, and that God might consistently with his justice and essential goodness have withheld it from them, and treated them as worthy of death; for I have no idea that God needed the death of his Son to induce him to do *that*, the omission of which would have exposed him to the charge of cruelty. If Mr. T. had always remembered this consideration, (which I think he cannot controvert,) it would have induced him to expunge a great deal of declamation in his letters. Having noted this, I confess I think that much mercy is exercised towards men in general through Jesus Christ; and, consequently, that his death was productive of effects which terminate on all. Nor do I question whether the opening of a way for the salvation of all who shall come unto God by him, and for men without distinction to be invited thus to come, is owing to the death of Christ; and if this can be called dying *for all* mankind, I should admit without hesitation that he died for all. All I contend for is that Christ, in his death, absolutely designed the salvation of all those who are finally saved; and that, besides the objects of such absolute design, such is the universal depravity of human nature, not one soul will ever believe and be saved.

I am surprised at Mr. T.'s manner of treating the argument drawn from the objections that might be urged by a denier of God's foreknowledge, asking whether I would seriously avow them,—XIII. 107. One would think he need not be told that I seriously disapprove of that mode of reasoning as well as of his, and only meant through that to show the tendency of his own. Such a way of arguing is fair and upright, and is used by writers of every description; it therefore ought not to have been called a *finesse*. Mr. T., in what he has said on this subject, as in many other places, gives sufficient proof of two things. 1. That he is combating a scheme which his opponent does not hold. 2. That to reason with him upon such terms as *cannot, unable, or unavoidable*, and the like, is to no purpose; for that he either cannot, or will not, understand our ideas concerning them.

Mr. T. now enters on a defence of his arguments from the terms *all men, world, whole world, &c.*,—XIII. 110. I apprehend that to understand these terms as denoting men *universally* was contrary to other scriptures—to the scope of the inspired writers *in the places where those expressions are found*—and involved in it various absurdities. Mr. T. wishes I had given some instances of these contradictions and absurdities. This I certainly attempted in a great deal of what followed; but Mr. T. has never yet fairly refuted my remarks.

I pass over some less important matters, and observe what is advanced from I Tim. ii. 6, "He gave himself a ransom for all." Mr. T. here complains that I have not answered his reason for understanding the term *all* universally; and I might as well complain of him for his not considering my reasons for understanding it otherwise. I remember that he had argued (IX. 79) from the use of the term *all* in the context, and the cogency of the apostle's argument, "Pray for *all*, because Christ died for all." I cannot but think, with Mr. Robinson, that "this passage *ought not* to be urged in the Arminian controversy; for a part of this period fixes the sense to *ranks* or degrees of men. Pray for *kings* and for all that are *in authority*. The meaning then is, pray for all *ranks* and degrees of men; for God will save some of *all orders*. Christ gave himself a ransom for persons of all *degrees*."\* The arguments I had advanced in my Reply, to prove that this passage could not be understood of men universally, he has not answered, but runs off into a declamation concerning the secret and revealed will of God, the substance of which I had endeavoured to obviate in my Reply, p. 230, note.

Little more I think need be said on I John ii. 1. What each of us has advanced upon it is before the public. My sense of the passage, which Mr. T. calls "a strange notion," (XIII. 15,) surely is not more strange or singular than *his* notion of *redemption*. He must produce some better proof for another sense of the passage than "appealing to the understanding and conscience of *his friend*."†

It is wonderful that Mr. T. should plead for the *universal* spread of the gospel in the time of the apostles, and for the faith of the Romans being celebrated *in all parts*,—XIII. 116. In all parts of the Roman empire it might, and in some other nations; but can any man persuade himself that it was spoken of at Mexico or Otaheite?

Mr. T. thinks that the *whole earth* (Isa. liv. 5) is to be understood *universally*, and that God is there called the *God of the whole earth* as a creator,

\* Notes upon *Claude*, Vol. II. pp. 269, 270.

† It may not be inexpedient to inform some readers that Mr. T.'s letters were written to an old and intimate friend of *his own*, who entirely agrees with him in sentiment, and at whose request Mr. T. first commenced this controversy; ‡ though, as that gentleman had some slight acquaintance with Mr. Fuller, Mr. T. all along speaks to him of Mr. F. as the friend of his correspondent.—R.

‡ The late Rev. George Birley, of St. Ives, Huntingdonshire.—B.

supporter, and judge, in distinction from the tender character of a husband. But as he is called both the *Maker* and the *Husband* of the church there addressed, so it seems very evident he is described towards the *whole earth*. He who had heretofore been called "the Holy One of Israel," shall now be called "the God of the whole earth." See Henry's exposition.

The term *whole*, in Matt. xiii. 33, undoubtedly is to be understood restrictively; for though the gospel will spread over all nations before the end of the world, yet not so as to renew every individual in them, much less every individual that has existed at every period,—XIII. 117.

Mr. T. is astonished to find me asserting that he himself does not understand the terms *whole world* in 1 John ii. 2, and the same terms in chap. v. 19, in the same sense, seeing he has declared the contrary,—XIII. 118. Perhaps I had better have said, Mr. T. *cannot, upon due consideration*, understand those terms as parallel, seeing he considers them in the former as meaning all the individuals in the world *that ever did or shall exist*, except the persons from whom they are there distinguished; whereas he cannot pretend that the latter mean any more than the world of ungodly men who *at that time existed*.

Another passage that has been considered by both of us is 2 Cor. v. 15, "If one died for all, then were all 'dead,'" &c.—XIII. 118. Mr. T. here complains, as he does in other places, of my not drawing my conclusions in form. I thought the conclusions I meant to draw were obvious to every attentive reader, and omitted drawing them out at length for the sake of brevity. I observed, 1. That the context speaks of the *Gentiles*, as well as the Jews, being interested in Christ. I supposed, therefore, it might be understood of men of all nations, in distinction from its being confined to the Jews. 2. That the apostle meant to affirm, not that Christ died for all that were dead, but that all were dead for whom Christ died.

In proof of this, I argued from the apostle's describing the *terrors* of Divine vengeance to which they were subject; and from the phraseology of verse 14, "If one died for all, then were *they* all dead." For this Mr. T. has corrected me, charging me with misquoting the Scripture. The words of the apostle are, *ὅτι εἰ εἰς ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ἀρα οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον*. Not having had those advantages for literary improvement which I should have been glad to enjoy, I was not forward, by a formal criticism, to tell my readers that I had acquired some small acquaintance with the original language, so as to be able to judge of the propriety of a translation; but I knew that the article *οἱ*, here used, has been thought by very competent judges\* to be anaphorical or relative, and that the passage should be read, "if one for all died, then *they* all, or *those* all, were dead." Nothing can be more exact than this translation, unless Mr. T. would insist on having *οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον* rendered *THE all were dead*; and then he must equally complain of our common translators, for rendering *οἱ ζῶντες* in the next verse, *they who live*, instead of *THE living*. But would not Mr. T. be ashamed to insinuate on this account, to "the inattentive reader," that they have "interlined and abused" the original language of Scripture? I am so well assured of Mr. T.'s learning, that I am hardly able to consider his "hope" that I quoted the passage wrong "through mistake," as any other than "a *finesse*." 3. I observed, on the distributive *they who*, that my hypothesis, though it supposes that all for whom Christ died shall finally live, yet does not suppose that they all live *at present*. Here, I think Mr. T. certainly misunderstands me. His original argument is this: by the language of the text it appears that Christ died for more than actually live. My answer is, that, upon *my* hypothesis, Christ died for more

\* Beza, Piscator, and Gill. See Gill's Cause of God and Truth, Part I. No. XXXIX.

than actually live at any period of time; part of them being, at every period, in a state of unregeneracy.

I have gone over the passages in debate between us merely to prove that, whether my sense of those passages be just or not, Mr. T. has not invalidated it. At the same time, I cannot forbear repeating that, even allowing Mr. T. to have proved the universal extent of Christ's death in the most forcible manner, he has not proved that any thing more is done, towards the salvation of men in general, than what I admit, or that renders the salvation of *one* individual more probable. I have all along supposed that there *is* that done for them by Christ which renders their salvation no otherwise *impossible*, nor their destruction *unavoidable*, than as it is rendered so by their own temper of mind: no other obstacle could prevent their believing to the saving of their soul but an evil heart, obstinately persisting in its departure from the living God.

Mr. T. sums up his evidence on this subject in *five* topics of argument.—The silence of Scripture on the limited extent of Christ's death; the willingness of the blessed God that all should turn, and live; those who are not saved being more miserable than if Christ had not died; the unlimited expressions used concerning the death of Christ; and such passages as distinguish between those for whom he died and those who are finally saved,—XIII. 120.

With regard to the *first*, the Bible is *not* silent concerning a *special design* in the death of Christ, as in all the other works of God, in behalf of all who are finally saved. I hope this has been proved in Letters X. and XI., and in my *Reply*. It is true there are no such express words that I know of in the Bible; but if the idea is there conveyed, that is sufficient. Mr. T. says, indeed, that "if a doctrine is not *mentioned* in Scripture, there is good reason to believe that doctrine is not true; that we admit this on all other subjects, and ought to admit it on this." But so far is this from being fact, that we never find *express mention* of a *Divine providence*, and yet we all allow the Scripture to be full of it. Reasoning from positive institutions to doctrines, as Mr. T. has done, (XIII. 109,) is very unfair.

Mr. T.'s *second* topic of argument is taken from the universality of Divine love to man, and the willingness of the blessed God that all should turn and live. It is admitted that God's love to man is in one sense universal. He bears good-will towards them, as the work of his hands; but it does not follow thence that he must do all that he could do for their salvation. If God loves all mankind, he must have loved the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom, as well as those of Chorazin and Bethsaida; but though as Mr. T. thinks, (XIII. 25,) if the same things which were done for the latter without effect had been done for the former, they would have been effectual yet they were not done. As to God's willingness that all should turn and God's will, as live, has been observed, sometimes expresses what he *approves*, and sometimes what he *purposes*. God wills, approves, and desires a sinner's turning unto him. It is that which, through the whole Bible, is required of him; and whosoever thus returns shall live, I may add, God is willing to receive and forgive every sinner that returns to him through Jesus Christ. He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would repent and live. But he has *not purposed* the salvation of every sinner, or to incline his heart to embrace the salvation exhibited in the gospel. In this sense, the salvation of some is neither *desired* nor *designed*: if it were, it would be *effected*; for "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."—"Whatsoever his soul desireth, even that he doeth," Isa. xlv. 10; Job xxiii. 13. "But can God," says Mr. T., "will that which he knows to be *impossible*? which *never was possible*? which *none could make pos-*

sible, besides himself? which he was *never willing* to make possible?—XIII. 120. If, by *impossible*, Mr. T. means that which is *naturally* impossible, it is granted he cannot. But that he wills what is *morally* impossible, Mr. T. himself must allow. God wills that Christians should be holy, as he himself is holy; and that in the present life, or he would not have enjoined it upon them, 1 Pet. iv. 16; Matt. v. 48. But Mr. T. does not pretend that this is possible, even by the assistance of Divine grace,—XIII. 61.

Mr. T.'s *third* topic of argument is thus expressed:—"All who are not saved will be more miserable than if Christ had never died for sinners. If Christ did not die for them, they cannot, nor ever could, possibly avoid this. This cannot be reconciled to the Scripture account of Divine justice and goodness,"—XIII. 120. Answer, 1. This can only be said of *those* who have *heard* the *gospel* and *rejected* it, and not of "all who are not saved," that they will be more miserable than if Christ had never died. Supposing this argument, therefore, to be valid, it will not prove that Christ, in laying down his life, designed the salvation of all men universally, but merely of those to whom the gospel is exhibited. 2. It is no way inconsistent with the justice or goodness of God to suffer good to be the *occasion* of evil. The gospel was preached to the unbelieving Jews, even after it was said of them, "Hearing they shall hear, and not understand; and seeing they shall see, and not perceive;" and became the occasion of much sin and misery, Matt. xiii. 14. "But they *might* have embraced the gospel when it was *first* preached to them if they would." True: and at *last* too; or it had been absurd to have preached it to them. There was nothing that hindered their believing, first or last, but their own wicked hearts. On that account they *could not* believe, John xii. 39. Yet Christ, at the very time this was declared, exhorted them, while they had *light*, to "believe in the light, that *they might* be the children of light" (ver. 36); and their contempt of his counsel aggravated their misery.

Mr. T.'s *fourth* topic of argument is taken from the "*expressions* of Scripture, where the extent of Christ's death is directly mentioned, being all universal and unlimited." Something has been said, in the *Reply to Philanthropos*, which accounts for these indefinite modes of speech; something, too, which Mr. T. I think has not sufficiently answered. But suppose it were allowed, as has been said "before, that the language of Scripture, taken in its most literal and plain meaning, proves Christ, in some sense, to have died for all mankind; still, if we will give fair scope to other parts of Scripture, it is evident that, in some sense, he died only for a part." These scriptures have been considered in Letter X., and in the *Reply to Philanthropos*.

Lastly, Mr. T. observes that "several passages evidently distinguish between those for whom Christ died and those who will be finally saved,"—XIII. 121. The passages to which he refers are John iii. 16, "God so loved *the world* that he gave his only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and Matt. xxii. 1-11, concerning the marriage-feast, and provision being made for those who did not come; with John vi. 32, "My Father giveth *you* the true bread from heaven;" which, as he observes, was spoken to the Jews *in general* without restriction,—IX. 83.

These passages prove that there is *that* in the death of Christ which lays a foundation for any sinner to apply to God in his name; and that with an assurance of success. But this is no more than I have admitted. In the invitations of the gospel being general we are both agreed; and also in a provision of pardon and acceptance on behalf of all who believe; and that, therefore, there is no impossibility in the way of men's salvation but what

consists in the temper of their own minds. But this does not disprove either the *reality* or *necessity* of an *effectual* provision of grace in behalf of *all* who are finally saved.

I conclude this letter by recommending Mr. T. to consider whether his scheme is not inconsistent with *fact*. If I understand him, he supposes that "final misery" comes not upon any of the sons of men "by their original depravity, nor by their transgression of the law, but by their rejection of the overtures of mercy." Hence he supposes that "all who are not saved will be more miserable than if Christ had not died for sinners,"—IX. 86; XIII. 120. Though the above expression might be considered as meant only of those sinners who hear the gospel, yet his subsequent reasonings indicate that he viewed it as applicable to all mankind. He speaks all along as if our Saviour had not only died for the whole world, but as *if the whole world had heard the gospel*, and as if none could perish, consistently with the justice and goodness of God, but for their rejection of it. Thus he goes on, bearing all down before him: "If Christ died for *all*, these reasons for their final condemnation and misery are all perfectly clear and easy, because the provision being made for them, (that is, for *all*,) AND EXHIBITED TO THEM, (that is, to *all*,) they could not perish, unless by rejection of that provision. Difficulty and inconsistency is all removed,"—IX. 87. This is talking at a high rate. Thus many a writer, as well as Mr. T., has sat in his study and formed a theory, and delighted himself with its excellence. But bring it to *experience* and *fact*. Is it *FACT* that the provision of the gospel has been, or is, "exhibited to all?" Mr. T.'s system requires that it should; and he seems to wish to take it for granted that it actually has; but *facts* contradict it.

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### LETTER XIII.

THERE is, doubtless, an analogy between the works of God. Whatever variety there is in the works of creation, providence, or redemption, there are some general principles wherein they all agree. On this supposition, I argued for the consistency of sinners being exhorted and invited to return home to God by Jesus Christ, though no *such* provision be made for their return as shall remove their moral inability to comply. Thus, or to this effect, I have expressed it in my *Rcply*.\* Mr. T. here complains of the *darkness* of my reasoning,—XIII. 124. How far this is just I shall not decide; but this is pretty evident, that there must have been darkness some where, or there could not have been such answers given as there are.

I argued, in the *first* place, from the appointment of God respecting the time of human life. Men are exhorted to use means for prolonging their lives; and yet the time of their life is appointed of God; and some of them, as king Saul and Judas for instance, have been under the dominion of a *moral impotency*, in regard to preserving life. They were given up of God to their own wickedness, like those who *cannot cease from sin*; and it was the purpose of a just God, for reasons satisfactory to himself, thus to give them up.

But Mr. T. asks, "Supposing God has fixed the duration of every man's life, has he appointed (he should have said *exhorted*) men to use means to

\* I did not undertake to prove, as M. T. expresses it, "the consistency of gospel invitations where *no* provision is made." I admitted a provision, and explained in what sense I admitted it.



prolong their lives beyond that duration?"—XIII. 126. If self-preservation is a duty, and if God, at all times, exhorts us to exercise it, then it undoubtedly was the duty of Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas to have used means to prolong their lives beyond the period to which they actually lived. The former, and his armour-bearer, *ought* to have avoided the sword, and the latter the rope. But "has God told us that we shall certainly die at the time he has appointed if we do not use the means of prolonging life?" If I understand this question, it is intended to deny that the time of man's life is appointed of God, any otherwise than on condition of their using means. Doubtless, he that has appointed the end has appointed the means; and Mr. T. should remember that he had just admitted the appointment to be absolute, and professed now to be reasoning upon that supposition. But "has he assured us that all the means we use shall certainly succeed?" No; he has not: but I do not see wherein this difference between the case in hand and the call of the gospel affects the argument. But "if we die at the time God has appointed, does he charge that to our account, and say it was because we did not use means to prolong our lives?" Certainly he does not lay his own appointments to our charge; but he may the time and manner of our death, and punish us for them, so far as they were owing to our sin, even though he has appointed to give us up to that sin. This was true of Saul and Judas, who ought to have used means to live longer than they did, and exposed themselves to future punishment for using the contrary. But "does the great God declare and swear that he would not have us die naturally at the time when he has absolutely appointed that we should die? Does he say, *we might live longer if we would?* that he has called us to live longer; and, if we do not, it is because we *will not?*" Mr. T. should remember I was not reasoning from the case of those who "die naturally," but from the case of those who, through their own sin, "come to what is called an untimely end," as did Saul and Judas; and, in these instances, each of his questions may be answered in the affirmative. And a similar instance we have in the case of those Jews who died "by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence," in consequence of their refusal to submit to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, in Jer. xxvii. 13, which case I would recommend to the close attention of the Pseudo-Calvinists, as well as to that of Mr. Taylor.

I argued, in the *second* place, from the appointments of God respecting *our portion in this life*. Men are exhorted and invited to seek after those good things, and to avoid those evil things, which yet many of them are morally unable to pursue or to avoid; and God has appointed to leave them, in this case, to their own negligence and depravity.\* Mr. T.'s questions under this head, (XIII. 127,) as under the former, are not in point. The question is, not whether *all* troubles arise from indiscretion, or any particular sin, of the party; if *any* do, that is sufficient for my argument. If there are troubles which might be avoided *if we would*, and if it is the revealed will of God that we should avoid them, that is sufficient. Pharaoh and Sihon were exhorted and invited to comply with the messages of peace that were sent them; and yet they were under the dominion of a moral impotency to comply; and God had appointed to leave them to the hardness of their hearts, in which they perished, and involved themselves in ruin.

Nor is it in point for Mr. T. to allege "that no directions are given in

\* Admitting that, in some sense, Christ is given to the world in general, yet I suppose that it is in the same sense in which *the earth* is said to be *given to the children of men* (Psal. cxv. 16); in which general gift God still reserves to himself the power of disposing, in a way of special providence, of all its particular parts to particular persons, even to such a degree that every individual has a *cup* assigned him to drink—a *lot* which Providence marks out for him.

Scripture, with encouragements and promises annexed, which the great God does not give *power* to practise, and with regard to which he has not provided such a *sufficiency* as that the practice invariably answers the ends designed by it, according to the tenor of the directions and promises or encouragements connected with them,"—XIII. 128. All this is granted, both in respect to the things of this life, and also of that to come, and is no more than what perfectly accords with my views of the gospel. I never supposed but that Pharaoh and Sihon had *power*, strictly speaking, to comply with the messages that were sent to them, or that there would have been any want of *sufficiency*, on God's part, to have made good his promises, in case they had complied.

I argued, in the *third* place, from *events which imply the evil actions of men* coming under Divine appointment. The Jews, in the time of Christ, were exhorted and invited to embrace the gospel; and yet they were under the dominion of a moral impotency to comply; and it appears, from many passages of Scripture, that God had determined not to turn their hearts, but to give them over to their own ways, which would certainly issue in the crucifixion of Christ, and in their own destruction. As Jehovah had said, long before, to their forefathers, in the days of Jeremiah, "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee;" while yet the prophet says, immediately after, respecting those very persons, "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they *cannot* hearken:" so our Lord remarked to his disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all things are done in parables; that seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." Thus, of the same persons to whom the blessed Jesus had said, "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light," it is added immediately, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they *could not* believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."

Perhaps Mr. T. will say, "But they might have had grace *before* that time." Be that as it may, it makes nothing to the argument; seeing they were exhorted and invited *at the time* in which it was declared they *could not believe*.

I suppose God has willed, appointed, or ordained to permit sin. Mr. T. is not fond of saying that God permits sin. I suppose he would not object to the term *suffer*, which is applied to the existence of moral evil, Acts xiv. 16. He *suffered* all nations to walk in their own ways; and the term *permit*, as any English dictionary will inform us, conveys the same idea, "to suffer without authorizing or approving," which is the only sense in which we use it on this subject; though the word is sometimes used in a different signification, as "to allow by not forbidding," or even "to authorize." Mr. T.'s notions of what is necessary to *free agency* I have already considered in the beginning of Letter III.

The *next* topic of argument is taken from those who had sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit, being, notwithstanding, exhorted to embrace the Lord Jesus; whence I conclude that such exhortations and invitations were addressed to some men whom, at the same time, strictly speaking, "it was not the intention of Christ to save." Mr. T.'s answer to this is foreign from the point. He "hopes Mr. F. will not assert that those who sin against the

Holy Spirit do it *necessarily*, and never were or could be able to avoid it, either by their own power, or by the power of Divine grace.\* How they came to sin that sin is not the question. I did not argue from what they were *before*, or at the time, but from their state *after* having committed that sin. His accounting for the consistency of gospel invitations being addressed to them after they had sinned the unpardonable sin, by alleging that provision *had been* made for them, though now "they had sinned themselves beyond the reach of it," (XIII. 130,) is equally foreign. To argue that it is consistent to give an exhortation or invitation *to-day*, because grace might have been obtained yesterday, is absurd. If the gospel and its invitations were addressed to them when their destruction was certain, then it is not inconsistent to address those invitations even to men who, as it may afterwards prove, were at the very time, as the just reward of their iniquity, appointed to utter destruction. The indefinite call of the gospel including them as well as others, and the declaration of our Lord, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," holding good in regard to them as well as any others, it might be said with truth that there was no *natural* impossibility in the way of their salvation; that if they had repented, they would have found mercy. But the impossibility respected their being brought to repentance, Heb. vi. 4, 6. They were under the power of a *moral impotence*; or, which is the same thing, of a rooted enmity to Christ; and God had determined to leave them in that state to perish for their sin.

I argued, in the *next* place, from the *moral impotence* of all men to "love God with all their hearts, and their neighbour as themselves," which yet we are exhorted to, Deut. v. 29; Matt. v. 48. "Perhaps," says Mr. T., "these premises might be fairly disputed,"—XIII. 130. That they might be disputed is true; but surely not by Mr. T. He does not profess that grace is provided sufficient to enable men to keep the law, but barely to comply with the gospel,—XIII. 61. And surely he cannot dispute our being exhorted to it: what meaning else is there in the above-cited passages? "But admitting the premises," says Mr. T., "surely Mr. Fuller will allow that God *originally* gave man power sufficient to keep the moral law; otherwise how could man be justly condemned for breaking it? True; but what has the *original* power given to man to do with the argument which concerns men in their present state? They are *now* exhorted to love God with all their hearts: and yet they are under a moral inability to comply; and grace is not provided to enable them to comply. Compare Deut. v. 29, with xxix. 4. These are facts, and facts that are in point too. The difference between the law and the gospel, on which Mr. T. dwells, makes nothing to his purpose. The above facts will prove that a *moral ability*, which men either possess or might possess, is not necessary to render exhortations consistent.

Mr. T.'s argument, from the power that was given man originally to keep the law, for a power in men to comply with the gospel, is very just, provided it be understood of *power*, properly so called; namely, a *capacity to embrace it if they would*. But if by power he means *inclination*, (as he must, if it is of any use to him,) that is quite another thing. God is under no obligation to turn men's hearts in order to free his messages to them from the charge of inconsistency.

*Lastly*, I argued from the *certain perseverance of believers*. This subject,

\* XIII. 129. It is to very little purpose to controvert with Mr. T. so long as he is determined to affix to terms ideas which we utterly disavow. It is plain that by *necessarily* he means by *compulsion*, or in such sort as they were not *able* to avoid, let them strive ever so sincerely against it. He need not question my denying that the sin against the Holy Spirit, or any other sin, could be committed in this way. Our idea of *moral necessity* is no other than that of *certainty*, or a certain connexion between evil principles and evil practices, unless prevented by some exterior cause.

if Mr. T. admits it, must contradict his notion of a certain and effectual influence upon the mind being inconsistent with free agency, (XIII. 129.) and will prove that an absolute purpose in God to accomplish an end is inconsistent with the use of means, motives, warnings, counsels, &c.

What remains of Mr. T.'s performance has either been occasionally noticed already, or is of such a nature as not to require an answer. He drops several remarks towards the close of his piece which are very good, and in which I heartily unite with him. Whatever I may think of his sentiments, my good opinion of Mr. T.'s integrity and piety is not lessened by this controversy. Heartily desiring that every blessing may attend us all, and that we may each be led into the truth as it is in Jesus,

I remain, &c. &c.,

AGNOSTOS.

# STRICTURES ON SANDEMANIANISM,

IN

TWELVE LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

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## LETTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE been told more than once that my not answering the piece written some years since by Mr. A. M'Lean has been considered as a proof that I felt it unanswerable. But if so, I must have felt the productions of many other opponents unanswerable as well as his; for I have seldom had the last word in a controversy. The truth is, I was not greatly inclined to answer Mr. M. I felt disgusted with the illiberality of his repeatedly arraigning my motives, his accusing me of intentional misrepresentation, and his insinuating as though I could "take either side of a question as I found occasion." I contented myself, therefore, with writing a small tract, called *The Great Question answered*; in which, while complying with the desire of a friend, I endeavoured to state my views *without controversy*, and as Mr. M. had given a caricature description of what my principles would amount to, if applied in the form of an address to the unconverted, I determined to reduce them to that form; hoping also that, with the blessing of God, they might prove of some use to the parties addressed.

Whether it was owing to this tract or not, I have reason to believe that the friends of religion, who attended to the subject, did me justice at the time, and that even those who favoured Mr. M.'s side of the question thought he must have mistaken the drift of my reasoning, as well as have imputed motives to me of which I was innocent.

Whatever Mr. M. may think of me, I do not consider him as capable of either intentional misrepresentation, or taking either side of the question as he may find occasion. That my principles are misrepresented by him, and that in a great number of instances, I could easily prove; but the opinion that I have of his character leads me to impute it to misunderstanding, and not to design.

I am not conscious of any unbrotherly feeling towards Mr. M. In resuming the subject, however, after such a lapse of time, I have no mind to write a particular answer to his performance, though I may frequently notice his arguments. It is in consequence of observing the nature and tendency of the *system* that I undertake to examine it. Such an examination will not only be more agreeable to my own feelings, but more edifying to the reader, than either an attack on an individual opponent, or a defence of myself against him.

In calling the sentiments I oppose *Sandemanianism*, I mean nothing invidious. The principles taught by Messrs. Glass and Sandeman, about half a century ago, did certainly give a new turn and character to almost

every thing pertaining to the religion of Christ, as must appear to any one who reads and understands their publications. In the north it is the former of these authors who gives name to the denomination; with us it is the latter, as being most known by his writings.

I have denominated Sandemanianism *a system*, because it not only, as I have said, affects the whole of Christianity, but induces all who embrace it to separate from other Christians. Mr. Sandeman manifestly desired that the societies which were connected with him should be unconnected with all others, and that they should be considered as the only true churches of Christ. Such a view of things amounts to more than a difference on a few points of doctrine; it is a distinct species of religion, and requires, for distinction's sake, to have a name, and till some other is found by which it can be designated, it must be called after that of its author.

It is not my design to censure Sandemanianism in the gross. There are many things in the system which, in my judgment, are worthy of serious attention. If Mr. Sandeman and his followers had only taught that faith has revealed truth for its object, or that which is true, antecedently to its being believed, and whether it be believed or not; that the finished work of Christ, exclusive of every act, exercise, or thought of the human mind, is that for the sake of which a sinner is justified before God; that no qualifications of any kind are necessary to warrant our believing in him; and that the first Scriptural consolation received by the believer arises from the gospel, and not from reflecting on the feelings of his own mind towards it; they would have deserved well of the church of Christ.

Whether those against whom Mr. S. inveighs, under the name of *popular preachers*, were so averse to these principles as he has represented them, is another question. I have no doubt, however, but they and many other preachers and writers of the present times stand corrected by him, and by other writers who have adopted his principles.

Mr. Ecking (in his *Essays*, p. 33) remarks on some passages in Mr. Boston's *Fourfold State* with much propriety, particularly on such language as the following:—"Do what you *can*; and it may be, while you are doing what you can for yourselves, God will do for you what you *cannot*." Again, "Let us believe as we *can*, in obedience to God's command, and while we are doing so, although the act be at the beginning but natural, yet, in the very act, promised and purchased grace strikes in and turns it into a supernatural act of believing." From other parts of Mr. Boston's work, it appears that he did not consider grace as promised to any of the works of the unregenerate; but allowing him, by "promised grace" in this passage, to mean that which was promised to Christ on behalf of those who were given him by the Father, yet the language is unscriptural and dangerous, as giving the sinner to understand that his inability is something that excuses him, and that in doing what he *can* while in enmity to God he obeys the Divine command, and is at least in a more hopeful way of obtaining supernatural grace. The apostles exhorted sinners to *repent and believe the gospel*, and to nothing short of it, making no account of their inability. If we follow their example, God may honour his own ordinances by accompanying them with his Holy Spirit; but as to any thing being done in concurrence with the endeavours of the unregenerate, we have no such idea held out to us in the oracles of God.

It is God's ordinary method, indeed, prior to his bestowing that supernatural grace which enables a sinner to repent and believe the gospel, by various means to awaken him to reflection, and to the serious consideration of his condition as a transgressor of the Divine law. Such convictions may last for a considerable time, and may issue in true conversion: but they may

not: and so long as the gospel way of salvation is rejected or neglected, in favour of some self-righteous scheme, there is nothing truly good in them. They are as the *noise* and the *shaking* of the dry bones, but not the *breath of life*. They are the means by which God prepares the mind for a welcome reception of the gospel, but they contain no advance towards Christ on the part of the sinner. He is not nearer the kingdom of heaven, nor less in danger of the wrath to come, than when he was at ease in his sins. Nay, notwithstanding the outward reformation which such convictions ordinarily produce, he is not, upon the whole, a less sinner in the sight of God than he was before. On the contrary, "He who continues under all this light, and contrary to the plain dictates and pressing painful convictions of his own conscience, obstinately to oppose and reject Jesus Christ, is, on the account of this his impenitence and obstinacy under this clear light and conviction of conscience, (whatever alteration or reformation has taken place in him in other respects,) *more guilty, vile, and odious in God's sight than he was before.*"\*

For a minister to withhold the invitations of the gospel till he perceives the sinner sufficiently, as he thinks, convinced of sin, and then to bring them forward as something to which he is entitled, holding up his convictions and distress of mind as signs of grace, and persuading him, on this ground, to think himself one of God's elect, and warranted to believe in Christ, is doing worse than nothing. The comfort which the apostles presented to awakened sinners consisted purely in the exhibition of Christ and the invitations to believe in him. Neither the company addressed by Peter nor the Philippian jailer were encouraged from any thing in the state of their own minds, though both were deeply impressed, but from the gospel only. The *preachers* might and would take encouragement on perceiving them to be pricked in their hearts, and might hope for a good issue; but it had been at their peril to encourage *them* to hope for mercy any otherwise than as believing in the Son of God.

The Hyper-Calvinists, who set aside the invitations of the gospel to the unregenerate, abound in these things. They are aware that the Scriptures do invite sinners of some sort to believe in Christ; but then they conceive them to be sensible sinners only.—It is thus that the terms *hunger, thirst, labour, heavy laden, &c.*, as used in the Scripture invitations, are considered as denoting *spiritual* desire, and as marking out the persons who are entitled to come to Christ. That gospel invitations should be addressed to sinners as the *subjects of those wants and desires* which it is adapted to satisfy, such as the thirst for happiness, peace, rest, &c., is no more than might be expected. It had been strange if living waters had been presented to them who in *no sense* were thirsty, or rest to them who were in *no sense* weary and heavy laden; but it does not follow that this thirst and this weariness are *spiritual*. On the contrary, they who are invited to buy and eat, without money and without price, are supposed to be "spending their money for that which is not bread;" are admonished as "wicked" men to forsake their way; and invited to return to the Lord under a promise of abundant pardon on their so returning. The "heavy laden," also, are supposed as yet not to have *come to Christ*, nor *taken his yoke*, nor *learned his spirit*; and surely it could not have been the design of Christ to persuade them to think well of their state, seeing he constantly teaches that till a sinner come to him, or believe in him, he is under the curse. It is also observable that the promise of *rest* is not made to them as *heavy laden*, but as *coming to Christ with their burdens*. There is no proof that *all* who were "pricked in their

\* Hopkins's *True State of the Unregenerate*, p. 6.

hearts" under Peter's sermon, and who inquired, "What shall we do?" believed and were saved. On the contrary, it seems to be intimated that only a *part* of them "gladly received the word, and were baptized." Had they *all* done so, it would probably have been said, "Then they gladly received his word, and were baptized." Instead of this it is said, "Then *they that* gladly received his word were baptized," &c., implying that there were some who, though pricked in their hearts, yet "received not" the word of the gospel, and were not baptized; and who might leave the place under an impression that the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ was a hard saying. There are many, it is to be feared, who at this day feel guilt to be a heavy burden, and yet never bring it to Christ; but lay it down on some self-righteous resting-place, and so perish for ever.

It does not follow, however, that *all* convictions of sin are to be resolved into the operations of an awakened conscience. There is such a thing as a conviction of the *evil nature* of sin, and that by a view of the spirituality and equity of the Divine law. It was by the "commandment" that Paul perceived sin to be "exceeding sinful." Such a conviction of sin cannot consist with a rejection of the gospel way of salvation, but, as soon as it is understood, instantly leads the sinner to embrace it. It is thus that "through the law we become dead to the law, that we may live unto God."

I may add, the attention of Christians appears to have been too much drawn towards what may be called *subjective* religion, to the neglect of that which is *objective*. Many speak and write as though the truth of the gospel was a subject out of doubt and as though the only question of importance was, whether they be interested in its blessings; and there are not a few who have no doubt of their believing the former, but many doubts respecting the latter. Hence, it is probable, the essence of faith came to be placed, not in a belief of the gospel, but in a persuasion of our being interested in its benefits. If, however, we really believe the one, there is no Scriptural ground to doubt of the other; since it is constantly declared that he who believeth the gospel shall be saved.

If the attention of the awakened sinner, instead of being directed to Christ, be turned inward, and his mind be employed in searching for evidences of his conversion, the effect must, to say the least, be uncomfortable, and may be fatal; as it may lead him to make a righteousness of his religious feelings, instead of looking out of himself to the Saviour.

Nor is this all: If the attention of Christians be turned to their own feelings, instead of the things which should make them feel, it will reduce their religion to something vastly different from that of the primitive Christians. Such truths as the following were the life of their spirits: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."—"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."—"Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel."—"We have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God," &c. But by the turn of thought and strain of conversation in many religious connexions of the present day, it would seem as if these things had lost their influence. They are become "dry doctrines," and the parties must have something else. The elevation and depression of their hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, is with them the favourite theme. The consequence is, as might be expected, a living to themselves rather than to him that died and rose again; and a mind either elated by unscriptural enjoyment, or depressed by miserable despondency. It is not by thinking and talking of the sensations of hunger, but by feeding on the living aliment, that we are filled and strengthened.



Whether the above remarks will satisfy Mr. M'Lean that these are "really my fixed sentiments," and that he has greatly misunderstood the ends for which I wrote the piece on which he animadverted, and of course misrepresented my principles as to their effect on awakened sinners, I cannot tell.\* Be this as it may, I trust other readers will be under no temptation to do me injustice.

But whatever danger may arise from those principles which are too prevalent among us, they are not the only errors, nor does all the danger arise from that quarter. *Subjective* religion is as necessary in its place as *objective*. It is as true that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," as that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." It is necessary to look into ourselves for the purpose of conviction, though not for the cause of salvation; and though the evidence of the truth of the gospel is without us, and independent of our state of mind towards it, yet this is not the case with respect to evidence of an interest in its blessings. We have no warrant to expect eternal life but as being the subjects of those things to which it is promised.

I do not perceive, therefore, how it can be justly affirmed, as it lately has been, that "self-examination is not calculated to quiet the conscience, to banish slavish fear, or to remove doubts and apprehensions of our being unbelievers;" and still less how it can be maintained that "peace of mind founded on any thing in ourselves will always puff us up with pride." If the state of our souls be bad, indeed, self-examination must disquiet the conscience rather than quiet it; but are there no cases in which, through the accusations of others, or a propensity in ourselves to view the dark side of things rather than the bright one, or the afflicting hand of God, our souls may be disquieted within us, and in which self-examination may yield us peace? Did the review which Job took of his past life (chap. xxxi.) yield no peace to him? And though he was not clear when examined by the impartial eye of God, yet were all his solemn appeals respecting his integrity the workings of self-righteous pride? Was David puffed up when he said, "Lord, I have hoped in thy salvation, and have done thy commandments?" Did John encourage a confidence in the flesh, when he said, "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God?" or Peter, when he appealed to Christ, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?"

Had it been only affirmed that no peace of mind can arise from the recollection of what we have felt or done in times past, while at present we are unconscious of any thing of the kind, this had been true. Past experiences can no otherwise be an evidence of grace to us than as the remembrance of them rekindles the same sentiments and feelings anew. But to object to all peace of mind arising from a consciousness of having done the will of God, and to denominate it "confidence in the flesh," is repugnant to the whole tenor of Scripture.

A system may contain much important truth, and yet be blended with so much error as to destroy its salutary efficacy. Mr. Sandeman has expunged a great deal of false religion; but whether he has exhibited that of Christ and his apostles is another question. It is much easier to point out the defects and errors of other systems than to substitute one that is even less exceptionable; and to talk of "simple truth," and "simple belief," than to exhibit the religion of Jesus in its genuine simplicity.

In discussing the points at issue, we shall meet with some things which may be thought of too metaphysical a cast to be of any great importance;

\* See his Reply, pp. 46, 47, 153.

and had not the effects produced convinced me of the contrary, I might have thought so too. But though the principles on which the system rests are many of them so minute as almost to elude detection, yet they are not the less efficacious. The seed is small, but the branch is not so.

It has been regretted that any person who drinks thoroughly into these views is at once separated from all his former religious connexions, whatever they might be; and where the heart has been united, it must needs be a matter of regret; yet, upon the whole, it may be best. Whatever fruits are produced by this species of religion, whether good or bad, they are hereby much more easily ascertained. Its societies bear some resemblance to so many farms, taken in different parts of the kingdom, for the purpose of scientific experiment; and it must needs be apparent, in the course of fifty or sixty years' experience, whether, upon the whole, they have turned to a better account than those of their neighbours.

I will only add, in this place, that though I do not conceive of every one as embracing this doctrine who in some particulars may agree with Mr. Sandeman, (for in that case I should be reckoned to embrace it myself,) yet many more must be considered as friendly to it in the main than those who choose to be called either Sandemanians or Glassites. It has been held by people of various denominations; by Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists; and has been observed to give a distinctive character to the whole of their religion. In this view of the subject I wish to examine it; paying attention not so much to persons or names as to things, let them be embraced by whom they may.

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## LETTER II.

### A GENERAL VIEW OF THE SYSTEM, WITH ITS LEADING POINTS OF DIFFERENCE FROM THE SYSTEMS WHICH IT OPPOSES.

ALTHOUGH the writings of such men as Flavel, Boston, Guthrie, the Erskines, &c. are represented by Mr. Sandeman as furnishing "a devout path to hell," and the writers themselves as Pharisees, "than whom no sinners were more hardened, and none greater destroyers of mankind," yet he allows them to have set before us "many articles of the apostolic doctrine;" yea, and to have "asserted *almost all* the articles belonging to the sacred truth." Considering this, and that so far as these writers held with "good duties, good endeavours, and good motions" in unbelievers, preparing them for faith, we give them up, it may seem as if there could be no great difference between Mr. Sandeman and us. Yet a difference there is, and of such importance, too, as deeply to affect the doctrine, the worship, the spirit, and the practice of Christianity.

The foundation of whatever is distinguishing in the system seems to relate to *the nature of justifying faith*. This Mr. S. constantly represents as *the bare belief of the bare truth*; by which definition he intends, as it would seem, to exclude from it every thing pertaining to the will and the affections, except as effects produced by it.

When Mr. Pike became his disciple, and wished to think that by a "bare belief" he meant a *hearty persuasion*, and not a mere notional belief, Mr. S. rejected his construction, and insisted that the latter was his true meaning. "Every one," says he, "who obtains a just *notion* of the person and

work of Christ, or whose *notion* corresponds to what is testified of him, is justified, and finds peace with God simply by that *notion*.\*

This notion he considers as the effect of truth being impressed upon the mind, and denies that the mind is *active* in it. The inactivity of the mind in believing is of so much importance, in his account, that the doctrine of justification by grace depends upon it. "He who maintains," says he, "that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms, with Aspasio, that faith is a work exerted by the human mind, undoubtedly maintains, if he have any meaning to his words, that we are justified by a work exerted by the human mind.†"

Mr. Sandeman not only opposes all active endeavours previously to faith, and as tending to produce it, (in which I have no controversy with him,) but sets himself against all exhortations, calls, warnings, and expostulations with the sinner to believe in Christ. "If," says he, "it be inquired what I would say for the relief of one distressed with a sense of guilt, I would tell him, to the best of my ability, what the gospel says about Christ. If he still doubted, I would set before him all the evidence furnished me by the same gospel. Thus, and thus only, would I press, call, invite, exhort, or urge him to believe. I would urge him with evidence for the truth.‡" And when asked how he would exhort, advise, or address *stupid, unconcerned souls*, he answers, "I am of the mind that a preacher of the gospel, as such, ought to have no influence on men but by means of the gospel which he preaches.—When Paul discoursed concerning *the faith in Christ*, and as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.—It is the *duty* of every man, in every condition, to obey every Divine command. The gospel always supposes this while addressing all men as sinners; it demonstrates their danger, and discovers the remedy. Yet it is absurd to suppose that any man can love the gospel, or obey it, till he believe it. Therefore, to urge unbelievers to any shadow of that obedience as preparative to justification by faith, can have no other effect than to lead them to establish their own righteousness, and to stand in awe of the preacher,"—p. 29.

If there be any meaning in this answer, it would seem to be that *faith itself* is not a duty, and that unbelievers ought not to be exhorted to it, lest it should lead them to self-righteousness; but barely to have the evidence of truth stated to them.

Mr. S. represents the sinner as justified, and as having obtained peace to his soul, while utterly destitute of the love of God. "I can never begin to love God," says he, "till I first see him just in justifying *me* ungodly as I stand,"—p. 12. But being justified in this his ungodly state of mind, he loves God on account of it; and here begins his godliness: "It all consists in love to that which first relieved him,"—p. 8.

If he had represented the doctrine of Christ as giving relief to the guilty creature, irrespective of any consciousness of a change in himself, or as furnishing him with a ground to conclude that God can be just and the justifier of him *if he believes in Jesus*, this had accorded with Paul's gospel (Rom. iv. 24); but for a sinner to perceive himself justified, implies a consciousness that he is a believer, and such a consciousness can never be separate from a conscious love to the Divine character. If, indeed, the gospel were an expedient merely to give relief to sinners, and no regard was had in it to the glory of God, a sinner full of enmity to God might receive it, and derive peace from it; but if it be an essential property of it to secure the glory of the Divine

\* Epistolary Correspondence, Letter II.

† Letters on Theron and Aspasio, Vol. I. p. 483.

‡ Epistolary Correspondence, p. 8.

character, the belief of it must include a sense of that glory, which cannot consist with enmity against it.

Let it also be seriously considered whether it be true that a sinner is justified "ungodly as he stands?" If it be, he must have been so either *antedecently* to his "seeing" it to be so, and then it must be equally true of *all* ungodly sinners; or it becomes so *when* he sees it, and *by* his seeing it, which is the very absurdity which Mr. S. fastens on the popular preachers.

Mr. S. and many others have caught at the phrase of the apostle Paul, of "God's justifying the ungodly;" but unless they can prove that by *ungodly* the apostle meant one who was at the time an enemy of God, it makes nothing in their favour. The amount is, Mr. S.'s relief arises from his "seeing" what is not to be seen, viz. God to be just in justifying *him* ungodly as he stands; and, his relief being founded in falsehood, all his godliness, which confessedly arises from it, must be delusive. *The root is rottenness, and the blossom will go up as the dust.*

From the leading principles of doctrine above stated, it is easy to account for almost all the other peculiarities of the system. Where the root and substance of religion is placed in *knowledge*, exclusive of approbation, it may be expected that the utmost stress will be laid on the former, and that almost every thing pertaining to the latter will be decried under the name of Pharisaism, or some other odious appellation. Thus it is that those who have drunk into this system generally value themselves on their *clear views*; thus they scarcely ever use any other phrase by which to designate the state of a converted man than his *knowing the truth*; and thus all those Scripture passages which speak of *knowing the truth* are constantly quoted as being in their favour, though they seldom, if ever, mean knowledge as distinguished from approbation, but as including it.

Further, I do not perceive how a system whose first principle is "notion," and whose love is confined to "that which first relieves us," can have the love of God in it. It cannot justify God as a Lawgiver, by taking blame and shame to ourselves; for it necessarily supposes, and even professes, an abhorrence to both law and justice in every other view than as satisfied by the cross of Christ. The reconciliation to them in this view, therefore, must be merely on the ground of their becoming friendly to our interests. But if God be not justified as a Lawgiver, Christ can never be received as a Saviour. There is no more grace in justification than there is justice in condemnation: nor is it possible we should see more of the one than the other; for we cannot see things otherwise than as they are to be seen. But surely a system which neither justifies the Lawgiver nor receives the Saviour *as honouring him* cannot be of God. The love of God *as God* is not in it. Conversion, on this principle, is not *turning to the Lord*. It professes, indeed, to love God; but it is only for our own sake. The whole process requires no renovation of the spirit of the mind; for the most depraved creature is capable of loving himself and that which relieves him.

Is it any wonder that a religion founded on such a principle should be litigious, conceited, and censorious towards all who do not embrace it? It is of the nature of a selfish spirit to be so. If God himself be loved only for the relief he affords us, it cannot be surprising that men should; nor that, under the cover of loving them only for the truth's sake, all manner of bitterness and contempt should be cherished against every one who dares to dispute our dogmas.

Further, The love of God being in a manner excluded from the system, it may be expected that the defect will be supplied by a punctilious attention to certain forms; of which some will be found to arise from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures, and others which may not, yet, being regarded

to the neglect of weightier matters, resemble *the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin.*

Such, from the repeated views that I have been able to take of the system, appear to me to be its grand outlines; and I am not surprised to find that, in the course of half a century, it has landed so large a part of its votaries on the shores of infidelity, or sunk them in the abyss of worldly conformity. Those who live near them say there is scarcely any appearance of serious religion in their families, unless we might call by that name the scrupulosity that would refuse to pray with an unbeliever, but would have no objection to accompany him to the theatre. Mr. S. and his admirers have reproached many for their *devotion*; but I cannot learn that they were ever reproached with this evil in return.

The grand argument of Mr. S. against faith being an act of the mind, and against admitting of any active advance of the soul towards Christ as necessary to justification, is that it is rendering faith a *work*; and that to be justified by faith would, after all, be to be justified by a work of our own. This is the principal idea pertaining to what he calls "the very rankest poison of the popular doctrine."\* If this argument can be overturned, the greater part of his system falls with it. That it may appear in all its force, I will quote his strongest representations of it.

"Perhaps it will be thought needful that I should define with greater precision than I have hitherto done what I mean by the *popular doctrine*, especially as I have considered many as preachers thereof who differ remarkably from each other; and particularly as I have ranked among them Mr. Wesley, who may justly be reckoned one of the most virulent reproachers of that God whose character is drawn by the apostles that this island has produced. To remove all doubt concerning my meaning, I shall thus explain myself. Throughout these letters, I consider all those as teachers of the popular doctrine who seek to have credit and influence among the people by resting our acceptance with God, not simply on what Christ has done, but more or less on *the use we make of him*, the advance we make towards him, or some secret desire, wish, or sigh to do so; or on something we feel or do concerning him, by the assistance of some kind of grace or spirit; or, lastly, on something we employ him to do, and suppose he is yet to do for us. In sum, all who would have us to be conscious of something else than the bare truth of the gospel; all who would have us to be conscious of some beginning of a change to the better, or some desire, however faint, toward such change, in order to our acceptance with God; these I call the popular preachers, however much they may differ from each other about faith, grace, special or common, or about any thing else.—My resentment is all along chiefly pointed against the capital branch of the popular doctrine, which, while it asserts *almost all the articles belonging to the sacred truth*, at the same time deceitfully clogs them with the opposite falsehoods."

Again, "That the saving truth is effectually undermined by this confusion may readily be seen in the following easy view"—(this is what I call his grand argument)—"HE WHO MAINTAINS THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED ONLY BY FAITH, AND AT THE SAME TIME AFFIRMS, WITH ASPASIO, THAT FAITH IS A WORK EXERTED BY THE HUMAN MIND, UNDOUBTEDLY MAINTAINS, IF HE HAS ANY MEANING IN HIS WORDS, THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY A WORK EXERTED BY THE HUMAN MIND."

"I have all along studied to make use of every form of expression I could think of, for evincing in the most clear, palpable, and striking manner, a difference of the last importance, which thousands of preachers have laboured

\* Letters on Theron and Aspasio, p. 448.

to cover with a mist. If I have made that difference manifest to those who have any attention for the subject, my great end in writing is gained, on whatever side of it men shall choose to rank themselves. It has frequently appeared to me a thing no less amazing than provoking, when the great difference between the ancient gospel here contended for and the popular doctrine has been pointed out as clear as words could make it, to find many, after all, so obstinately stupid as to declare they saw no real difference. This I cannot account for by assigning any other cause than the special agency of the prince of darkness.\*

After this, it may be thought an act of temerity to complain of not understanding Mr. Sandeman: and indeed I shall make no such complaint, for I think I do clearly understand his meaning; but whether he has fairly represented that of his opponents, I shall take the liberty to inquire.

The popular preachers "rest our acceptance with God," it seems, "not simply on what Christ hath done, but on the active advance of the soul towards him." Do they then consider faith, whether we be active or passive in it, as forming a part of our justifying righteousness? In other words, do they consider it as any part of *that for the sake of which* a sinner is accepted? They every where declare the contrary. I question if there be one of those whom Mr. S. *ordinarily* denominates popular preachers who would not cordially subscribe to the passage in Aspasio which he so highly applauds, and considers as inconsistent with the popular doctrine, viz. "Both grace and faith stand in direct opposition to works; *all* works whatever, whether they be works of the law or works of the gospel, exercises of the heart or actions of the life, done while we remain unregenerate or when we become regenerate, they are all and every of them *equally* set aside in this great affair."† If the popular preachers maintain an active advance of the soul to be necessary to our acceptance with God, it is in no other sense than that in which he himself maintains "the bare belief of the truth" to be so; that is, not as a procuring cause, but as *that without which, according to the established order of things*, there is no acceptance. To accuse them therefore of corrupting the doctrine of justification, on this account, must be owing either to gross ignorance or disingenuousness.

Yet in this strain the eulogists of Mr. Sandeman go on to declaim to this day. "His main doctrine," says one, "appears to be this: the bare work of Jesus Christ, which he finished on the cross, is sufficient, without a deed or a thought on the part of man, to present the chief of sinners spotless before God."‡ If by *sufficient* be meant that it is that *only on account of which*, or *for the sake of which*, a sinner is justified, it is very true; and Mr. Sandeman's opponents believed it no less than he himself: but if it be meant to deny that any deed or thought on the part of man is necessary *in the established order of things*, or that sinners *are* presented spotless before God without a deed or a thought on the subject, it is very false, and goes to deny the necessity of faith to salvation; for surely no man can be said to believe in Christ without thinking of him.

Mr. Pike, who had embraced Mr. Sandeman's views of faith, yet says to him, "I cannot but conceive that you are sometimes mistaken in your representations of what you call the popular doctrine; for instance, *Upon the popular plan*, say you, *we can never have peace in our consciences until we be sensible of some beginning of a good disposition in us towards Christ*. Now, setting aside some few unguarded expressions and addresses, you will find that the general drift and purport of their doctrine is just the contrary to

\* Letters on Theron and Aspasio, Vol. II. pp. 480, 483.

† Ibid. Vol. I. p. 276.

‡ Cooper's Letters, p. 33.

this; and they labour this point, both Marshall and Hervey, to convince persons that *nothing* of this nature does or can recommend them to God, or be any part of their justifying righteousness; and their principal view is to beget or to draw forth such thoughts in the mind as lead the soul entirely out of itself to Christ alone for righteousness.\* It is observable, too, that though Mr. S. answered this letter of Mr. Pike, yet he takes no notice of this passage.

I am not vindicating either Marshall or Hervey in all their views; but justice requires that this misrepresentation should be corrected, especially as it runs through the whole of Mr. Sandeman's writings, and forms the basis of an enormous mass of invective.

By *works* opposed to grace and faith the New Testament means *works done with a view of obtaining life, or of procuring acceptance with God as the reward of them*. If acceptance, faith, or sincere obedience be recommended as being such a condition of salvation as that God may be expected to bestow it in reward of them, this is turning the gospel into a covenant of works, and is as much opposed to grace, and to the true idea of justification by faith, as any works of the law can be. But to deny the activity of the soul in believing, lest faith itself should become a work of the law, and so after all we should be justified by a work, is both antisciptural and nugatory: *antisciptural*, because the whole tenor of the Bible exhorts sinners to forsake their ways and return to the Lord, "that he may have mercy upon them;" to believe in the light, "that they may be children of light;" and to come to him "that they may have life:"—*nugatory*, because we need not go far for proof that men know how to value themselves and despise others on *account of their notions* as well as of their *actions*; and so are capable of making a righteousness of the one as well as of the other.

Further, If there be any weight in Mr. Sandeman's argument, it falls equally on his own hypothesis as on that of his opponents. Thus we might argue, He who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms, with Mr. Sandeman, that faith is a notion formed by the human mind, undoubtedly maintains, if he has any meaning to his words, that we are justified by a notion formed by the human mind.

Mr. S., as if aware of his exposedness to this retort, labours, in the foregoing quotation, to make *nothing* of the belief of the truth, or to keep every idea but that of the truth believed out of sight. So fearful is he of making faith to be any thing which has a real subsistence in the mind, that he plunges into gross absurdity to avoid it. Speaking of that of which the believer is "conscious," he makes it to be *truth* instead of the *belief* of it; as if any thing could be an object of consciousness but what passes or exists in the mind?

It may be thought that the phrase, "All who would have us to be *conscious* of something else than the bare *truth* of the gospel," is a mere slip of the pen—but it is not; for had Mr. S. spoken of belief, instead of the truth believed, as an object of consciousness, his statement would have been manifestly liable to the consequence which he charges on his opponents. It might then have been said to him, He who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms that faith is *something inherent in the human mind*, undoubtedly maintains, if he has any meaning to his words, that we are justified by something inherent in the human mind.

You must by this time perceive that Mr. Sandeman's grand argument, or, as he denominates it, his "easy view," turns out to be a mere sophism. To detect it you have only to consider *the same thing in different views*; which

\* Epistolary Correspondence, p. 24.

is what Mr. Sandeman himself does on some occasions, as do all other men. "I agree with you," says he to Mr. Pike, "in maintaining that faith is the principle and spring of every good disposition, or of every good work; but, at the same time, I maintain that faith does not justify the ungodly as a principle of good dispositions,"—p. 10. Why then may we not maintain that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirm that faith is a grace *inherent*, an *act* of the human mind, a *duty* commanded of God; and all this without affirming that we are justified by any thing inherent, any act of ours, or any duty that we perform? And why must we be supposed to use words without meaning, or to contradict ourselves, when we only maintain that we are justified by that which *is* inherent, *is* an act of the human mind, and *is* a duty; while yet it is not *as such*, but as uniting us to Christ and deriving righteousness from him, that it justifies?\*

Assuredly, there is no necessity for reducing faith to a nullity, in order to maintain the doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ. While we hold that faith justifies, *not in respect of the act of believing, but of the righteousness on which it terminates*, or that God's pardoning and receiving us to favour is in reward, not of our believing, but of his Son's obedience unto death, every purpose is answered, and all inherent righteousness is excluded.

I have been the more particular on this "easy view" of Mr. Sandeman, because it is manifestly the grand pillar of his doctrine. If this be overturned, there is nothing left standing but what will fall with a few slight touches; and whether it be so I now leave you and the reader to judge.

To establish the doctrine of free justification Mr. S. conceives it necessary to reduce justifying faith to a bare "belief," exclusive of every "advance" of the mind towards Christ, or of *coming* to him, *trusting* in him, &c., and to maintain that these terms denote the *effects* of faith in those who are already in a justified state,—p. 34.

In opposing Mr. S. many have denied that the belief of the gospel is justifying faith. Observing, on the one hand, that numbers appear to believe the truth, on whom, nevertheless, it has no salutary influence; and, on the other, that believing in Christ in the New Testament is synonymous with "receiving him," "trusting in him," and "coming to him;" they have concluded that the belief of the gospel is rather to be considered as something *presupposed* in faith than faith itself. But there can be no doubt that the belief of the gospel has, in a great number of instances, the promise of salvation; and as to those nominal Christians on whom it has no salutary influence, they believe Christ no more than the Jews believed Moses, which our Lord would not allow that they did. "If ye believed Moses," says he, "ye would believe me; for he wrote for me."

But though the belief of the gospel is allowed to have the promise of salvation, and so to be justifying, yet it does not follow that it is so *exclusive* of receiving Christ, trusting in him, or coming to him. It were easy to prove that repentance has the promise of forgiveness, and that by as great a variety of passages as are brought to prove that the belief of the gospel is saving faith; but were this attempted, we should be told, and justly too, that we are not to consider repentance in these passages as excluding, but including, faith in the Saviour. Such, then, is the answer to the argument drawn from the promises of salvation made to the belief of the gospel: belief, in these connexions, is not to be understood exclusive of receiving the Saviour, coming to him, or trusting in him, but as supposing and including them.

\* See President Edward's *Sermons on Justification*.



It is not denied that the ideas conveyed by these terms are metaphysically distinct from that of believing the gospel, nor that they are its immediate effects; but it is not in this metaphysical sense that faith is used in reference to justification. That belief of the gospel which justifies includes receiving Christ, coming to him, and trusting in him. Whatever shades of difference there be between belief and these "advances of the mind towards Christ," the Scriptures represent them, *with respect to an interest in justification and other collateral blessings*, as one and the same thing. This is manifest from the following passages: "As many as *received* him, to them gave he power (or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on his name."—"I know whom I have *believed*, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have *committed to him* against that day."—"That we should be to the praise and glory of his grace who *first trusted* in Christ. In whom ye also *trusted* after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after ye *believed* ye were sealed," &c.—"He that *cometh* to me shall never hunger, and he that *believeth* in me shall never thirst."—"Ye will not *come* unto me that ye may have life."—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

In these and many other passages it is manifest that believing, coming, trusting, &c. are used as convertible terms, and that the thing signified by them is necessary to justification. If "receiving" Christ were an effect of faith in persons already justified, why is it used as synonymous with it, and held up as necessary to our being *the sons of God*? If "coming" to Christ were an exercise of mind in one who was already in a state of justification, why is he said to come to him "that he may have life"? And why, if salvation be promised to a mere "notion" of the truth without any love to it, is it said of apostates, that "they received not the *love of the truth that they might be saved*?" Let those who have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil judge, from these things, whether a mere notion of the truth, exclusive, or, if you please, antecedent to the consideration of receiving Christ, coming to him, and trusting in him, be the faith that justifies; and whether, if the former were separate from the latter, it would not leave the sinner under condemnation.

It has been said, "In defining saving faith, some have included in its essence almost every holy temper; and by insisting so much on this faith, and giving such laboured descriptions of it, have almost inevitably led their followers to look more to their faith than to the great object of faith; to be more occupied in attending to the working of their own minds, than with that truth which reconciles the sinner to God. It is in consequence to be feared that not a few who are reckoned orthodox are in fact trusting to their faith, and not to Christ, making him merely a minister of their own self-righteousness; for we may go about to establish our own righteousness under the name of faith as well as under any other name."

I doubt not but preachers may abound in describing one part of Divine truth to the neglect of another, and may go even beyond the truth; people may also make a righteousness of their faith, as well as of other things. If no more were meant than that a sinner whose inquiry is, What must I do to be saved? ought to be directed immediately to Christ, and not to an examination into the nature of faith, I should most cordially acquiesce in it; but it does not follow that nothing should on any occasion be said of the true nature of faith. There may be a time when the same person shall come with another and very different question; namely, Am I a true believer? Such questions there must have been in the apostle's time, or there would not have been answers to them. See I John ii. 3; iii. 14, 18-21. Now in answer to such an inquiry, the true nature and genuine effects of faith

require to be stated and distinguished from that which leaves thousands short of salvation. And as to men making a righteousness of their faith, men may make a righteousness of simple belief as well as of trust, or any other idea supposed to be included in justifying faith; and whether there be not actually as much laboured description, self-admiration, and contempt of others, (things nearly akin to self-righteousness,) among the advocates of this system, as among their opponents, let the candid observer judge. If we are to say nothing about the holy nature of faith, lest men should make a righteousness of it, we must say nothing of any thing else that is holy, for the same reason, and so cease to distinguish all true religion in the mind from that which is counterfeit; but so did not the sacred writers.

To the same purpose Mr. M'Lean writes in his treatise on the *Commission*: "Now when men include in the very nature of justifying faith such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary (no matter under what consideration) to acceptance with God, it perverts the apostle's doctrine upon this important subject, and makes justification to be at least *as it were* by the works of the law."

I know not of any writer who has given such a definition of faith as these statements would represent. No more holy affection is pleaded for in faith than unholy disaffection is allowed to be in unbelief. But the design is manifestly to exclude *all* holy affection from faith, as being favourable to self-righteousness.

If, therefore, *repentance* be considered as necessary to forgiveness, seeing this must be allowed to include holy affection, it will be considered as favourable to self-righteousness. And as to distinguishing between what is necessary *in the established order of things*, from what is necessary as a *procuring cause*, this will not be admitted; for it is "no matter under what consideration;" if any thing required by the moral law be rendered necessary, "it makes justification to be at least *as it were* by the works of the law." Yet Mr. M. allows faith, whatever it is, to be a *duty*. Is it then a requirement of a *new and remedial* law? Would not the love of God, which is required by the old law, lead any sinner to believe in Christ? If not, why is unbelief alleged against the Jews as a proof that they had not the love of God in them? See John v. 42, 43. As Mr. M., however, in his piece on *the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel*, has gone far towards answering himself, I shall transcribe a passage from that performance: "It is an unscriptural refinement upon Divine grace," he there says, "and contrary to the doctrine of the apostles, to class faith and repentance with the works of the law, and to state them as equally opposite to free justification. Indeed, neither faith nor repentance is the meritorious or procuring cause of a sinner's justification any more than the works of the law are (and who that really believes and repents will imagine that they are?) But still the one is opposed to free justification, the other not. To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; and faith and repentance correspond exactly with the manifestation of Divine grace, as freely justifying the guilty through the atonement, are in their very nature opposite to all self-dependence, and lead men to glory in the Lord,"—p. 26.

We see here that there is nothing in the nature of *repentance* that clashes with a free justification, which yet must be allowed to include a portion of holy affection. Why then object to the same thing in faith? Is it because holy affection is "required by the moral law?" Be it so; it is the same in repentance as in faith; and if the one may in its very nature agree with a free justification, so may the other. The truth is, the moral law, *materially* considered, is not opposed to free justification. The love of God and man

in its own nature is as opposite to self-righteous pride as faith and repentance are. It is not the law that is against the promises, but those *works of the law done by a sinful creature with a view of obtaining life, or of procuring acceptance with God as the reward of them*. If holy affection were urged with such a view, then were it opposed to the free grace of the gospel; but while this is not the case, all such reasonings are unscriptural refinements.

If men make a righteousness of their faith, it is not owing to these representations of it, but to their own corruptions; for, let faith include what good disposition it may, it is no part of the meritorious cause of justification; and let it be simplified as it may, even till it shall contain no more of the holy nature of God than a glance of the eye, yet is it not on this account more friendly to the doctrine of grace, nor less liable to become the food of a self-righteous spirit. The way in which this spirit is cut up in the New Testament is, not by reducing faith to an unfeeling speculation, but by denouncing the curse against every one who cometh short of perfect obedience, Gal. iii. 10.

It has been further said, "Faith purifies the heart, worketh by love, and discovereth itself sincere by the performance of good works. Faith, therefore, is not holiness, love, or new obedience, unless the effect is the same with the cause, or the evidence with the thing proved." Faith certainly is not the same thing as holiness, or love, or new obedience. Neither is unbelief the same thing as unholiness, enmity, or disobedience; but it is not so distinct from either as not to partake of the same *general nature*. It is not only the root of all other sin, but is itself a sin. In like manner, faith is not only the root of all other obedience, but is itself an exercise of obedience. It is called "obeying the truth," and "obeying the gospel." To say that faith includes no holiness, (which this objection certainly does,) and yet produces it, as the seed produces the plant, is to contradict the established laws of nature, according to which every seed produces *its own body*. God can produce something out of nothing, but in the ordinary course of traduction every seed produces *after its kind*. If holiness, therefore, were not included in faith, it would not grow out of it.

Mr. M'Lean does not agree with Mr. Sandeman in considering faith as a *passive* admission of the truth, but allows it to be an *act or exercise* of the mind,—*Reply*, pp. 74, 75. A large part of his work, however, is taken up in attempting to prove that it is a mere exercise of the understanding, exclusive of every thing pertaining to the will and affections. It is no part of the question between him and me, whether, properly speaking, it has *its seat* in the understanding; for this it may have, and yet be influenced by the disposition. Unbelief has its seat in the understanding as much as belief, yet it is not denied that this is influenced by the disposition. "It arises," says Mr. M'Lean, "not merely from ignorance, but also from the *aversion* of the will, whereby the judgment is blinded, and most unreasonably prejudiced against the truth,"—p. 76. Nor had Mr. M'Lean any just ground for construing what I had said in proof of faith in Christ being *such a belief* as arises from a renewal of the spirit of the mind, as an attempt to "prove that faith is *more than belief*,"—p. 80. He *allows unbelief to arise*, in part, from disposition; yet I suppose he would not be thought, by this concession, to make it something more than unbelief. If unbelief may consist in such a discredit of the gospel as arises from aversion to it, and yet be nothing more than unbelief, faith may consist in such a credit of the gospel as arises from a renewal of the spirit of the mind, and yet be nothing more than belief.

To this may be added, if faith in Christ be a duty commanded of God, an act of the human mind, an exercise of obedience to God, (all which Mr. M.

acknowledges,) it *must* be the effect of regeneration, or it will follow that *they that are in the flesh may please God.*

Mr. M'Lean speaks much of *simple belief*, as Mr. Sandeman did of *bare belief*. Mr. S. manifestly intended hereby to exclude every "advance" of the sinner to Christ, as signified by such terms as *coming to Christ, trusting in him, &c.* from justifying faith. Such may be the intention of Mr. M'Lean; if it be not, I do not understand the use of the epithet. He cannot, however, consistently reject every "advance" of the mind to Christ as belonging to justifying faith, since he acknowledges the soul to be active in believing. But while dwelling so much on *simple belief*, why does he not dwell also on *simple unbelief*? If belief be simple, so must unbelief, for they are opposites. And I readily acknowledge there are such things as simple belief and simple unbelief; but neither of them applies to the credit or discredit of the gospel. If a stranger, who has no claim on my confidence, relate a story of something he has seen in a distant country, but which in no way concerns me, I may believe him or disbelieve him: my faith in the one case, or my unbelief in the other, would be perfectly simple. But if it be a story of deep interest, if the undoubted veracity of the party has a claim on my confidence, and if my future course of life turns upon the credit or discredit that I gave him, neither the one nor the other will be *simple*, but compounded of a number of moral principles which influence my decision: if to discredit his testimony, they are prejudices which blind me to the force of evidence; if to credit it, candour, or openness to conviction. It is thus in believing the gospel, which is a subject of the deepest interest, testified by a Being whose veracity it is a crime to question, and of such consequence to a sinner, even in this life, that, if he admit it, he must relinquish all his former courses, and live a new life. Intrenched in prejudice, self-righteousness, and the love of sin, he continues an unbeliever till these strong holds are beaten down; nor will he believe so long as a wreck of them remains sufficient to shelter him against the arrows of conviction; nor, in short, till by the renovating influence of the Holy Spirit they fall to the ground. It is then, and not till then, that the doctrine of salvation by mere grace, through a Mediator, is cordially believed.

Mr. M'Lean, in his arguing for what he calls *simple belief*, seems to be aware that it is not the proper opposite of unbelief as described in the Scriptures. Hence he some where alleges that we cannot reason from the nature of unbelief to that of belief, any more than from that of demerit to merit. But the disparity between demerit and merit, to which he refers, does not respect their *nature*, but the condition of the party who is the subject of them. Merit is the desert of good, and demerit the desert of evil: they are, therefore, properly opposites, whatever may be the condition of the party as to being equally capable of exercising them; and it is fair *in ascertaining their nature* to argue from the one to the other.

Upon the whole, I see no reason to retract what I have in substance said before, that if faith and unbelief be opposites, (which to deny were disowning that which is self-evident,) the one can be no more simple, or exclusive of the influence of the will, than the other.

## LETTER III.

## A MORE PARTICULAR INQUIRY INTO THE CONSEQUENCES OF MR. SANDEMAN'S NOTION OF JUSTIFYING FAITH

You will not conclude, from any thing I have said, or may yet say, that I accuse every one who favours this doctrine of holding all the consequences which may be proved to arise from it: it is however a fair method of trying a principle to point out other principles to which it leads, which, if contrary to the Scriptures, furnish reasons for rejecting it.

If the faith by which we are justified be a mere passive reception of light, or contain no exercise of affection, it follows,—

First, *That repentance is not necessary to forgiveness.* It is allowed, on all hands, that justification includes the forgiveness of sin. Whatever differences there be between them, they are not so different but that he who is justified is forgiven. If therefore we be justified by a mere notion of the truth antecedently to all exercise of affection, we are forgiven in the same way; that is, our sins are forgiven before we repent of them.

Mr. Sandeman, I conceive, would have avowed this consequence. Indeed he does avow it, in effect, in declaring that “he can never begin to love God till he first see him just in justifying him, ungodly as he stands.” If he cannot begin to love God, he cannot begin to be sorry for having sinned against him, unless it be for the consequences which it has brought upon himself. By being justified “ungodly as he stands,” he means to say, therefore, that he is justified and forgiven while his mind is in a state of impenitence, and that it is the consideration of this that renders him penitent.

Whether this notion be not in direct opposition to the whole current of both the Old and New Testament, let the following passages, out of many more which might be selected, determine. “I said, I will *confess* my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou *forgavest* the iniquity of my sin.”—“If thy people Israel sin against thee, and *repent*, and make supplication unto thee towards this house, then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and *forgive* thy people.”—“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso *confesseth* and *forsaketh* them shall find mercy.”—“Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*: and let him *return unto the Lord*, and he will have *mercy* upon him; and to our God, for he will *abundantly pardon*.”—“Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”—“*Repent* therefore, and be baptized, every one of you, *for the remission of sins*.”—“*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*.”—“Him hath God exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to *give repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins*.”—“If we *confess our sins*, he is faithful and just to *forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.”

I shall not stop here to inquire into the order in which the Scriptures represent repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. This I shall attend to in a letter by itself. It is sufficient at present to observe, that whatever be the order of repentance in respect of faith, it is uniformly represented in the Scriptures as necessary to *forgiveness*. Every notion, therefore, of standing forgiven in a state of impenitence, and of this being the only motive that can lead a sinner to repentance, is false and delusive.

Secondly, *On this principle, faith in Christ is not a duty, and unbelief is not a sin.* I am not sure whether Mr. Sandeman would have avowed both or either of these consequences. He, however, utterly disavows urging unbelievers to the least shadow of obedience to the gospel in order to justification, as leading them to establish their own righteousness.\* The faith, therefore, which he allows to be necessary to justification includes no obedience, which is the same thing as its being no duty. And if it be not a duty, unbelief is not a sin; for where there is no obligation, there can be no transgression.

But a system which goes to nullify the command of God to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and to excuse the sin which is threatened with eternal damnation, must be fundamentally erroneous, and, as far as it operates, subversive of true religion.

Mr. M'Lean is very far from admitting this consequence, though he retains in part the principle from which it proceeds. He allows, as we have seen already, that faith is a *duty*, an *act of obedience* to God, and a *holy exercise* of mind; yet he pleads for its containing *nothing pertaining to the will*. Is it possible then for anything to be either an *act*, or a *duty*, or to contain *obedience*, which is purely intellectual? In whatever belongs to the understanding only, exclusive of the will and affections, the soul, I conceive, is passive. There are acts, no doubt, which pertain to the intellectual, as well as to the visive faculty; but they are only such as *fall under the influence of the will*. It is an act to look, but not to see; and to collect information, but not to be informed. If, therefore, believing be an act of the mind, it must fall under the influence of the will.

Mr. Sandeman is consistent with himself, however inconsistent he may be with the Scriptures. In confining faith to the understanding, he was aware that he disowned its being an act, and therefore, in his usual strain of banter, selected some of the grossest representations of his opponents, and endeavoured to hold up acts of faith to ridicule. But Mr. M'Lean allows of faith being an act, and an act of obedience, and yet will have it that it contains nothing pertaining to the will, except in its effects. I can no otherwise account for such reasoning, in a writer of his talents, than by ascribing it to the influence of early prejudices, contracted by having drank too deeply into the system of Mr. S., and retained by a partiality for what he has once imbibed, though utterly inconsistent with other sentiments which he has since learned from the Scriptures. That nothing can contain obedience but that which includes the state or exercises of the will, or has some dependence upon it, is manifest from universal experience. Tell a man that God has commanded him to be or to do that in which he is absolutely involuntary, and that the contrary is a sin, and see whether you can fasten conviction on his conscience. Nay, make the experiment on yourself. Did you ever perceive yourself obliged to any thing in which your will had no concern, or for a moment repent of living in the neglect of it? Knowledge may be a duty, and ignorance a sin, so far as each is dependent on the will, and comprehensive of approbation, but no further. LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW, or that which comprehends the whole of duty. So much, therefore, as there is of love, in any exercise of mind, so much there is of duty or obedience, and no more. Duty *supposes* knowledge, indeed, as Christianity supposes humanity; but the essence of it consists in disposition. It may be our duty to examine, and that with care, diligence, and impartiality; but if disposition have no place in faith, it cannot be our duty to believe.

If faith be merely light in the understanding, unbelief must be merely the

\* Epistolary Correspondence, p. 29.

absence of it; and if the former include nothing pertaining to the will, neither does the latter. To say that though unbelief contain a voluntary rejection of the truth, yet faith contains no voluntary reception of it, is saying that belief and unbelief are not opposites, which is equal to denying a self-evident proposition. If the one be purely intellectual, so is the other; and if there be no obedience in the former, there is no disobedience in the latter.

Mr. M'Lean has said every thing on this subject that I could desire, except drawing the conclusion. Thus he reasons, when proving faith to be a duty. "Unbelief, which is the opposite of faith, is always represented as a very great and heinous sin against God. The unbelieving heart is termed an evil heart (Heb. iii. 12); and there are many evils in the heart of man which both occasion and attend unbelief. It is frequently ascribed to *ignorance* (Matt. xiii. 19; Rom. x. 3; xi. 7, 25); yet not to simple ignorance, from want of information or natural capacity, in which case it would be excusable (John ix. 41; xv. 22, 24); but such as arises from the agency of the god of this world, blinding the minds of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. It is wilful ignorance, occasioned by their loving darkness and hating the light (John iii. 19, 20); and so they are represented as having closed their eyes lest they should see, Matt. xiii. 15. From this it appears that unbelief is founded, not merely on simple ignorance, but *aversion* from the things of God.

"Now if unbelief be a sin, and seated in the depravity of the heart, as has been shown, it necessarily follows that faith, its opposite, must be a duty" [and have its seat also in the heart].—*Sermons*, pp. 40, 41. The words added in crotchets merely go to draw the conclusion; and whether it be fairly drawn let the reader judge.

Mr. M. cannot consistently object that, by allowing unbelief to be seated in the heart, he did not mean to grant that it was seated in the *will*, since his whole argument asserts the contrary; and he elsewhere says, "The Scriptures always represent the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit as exerted upon the *heart*; which includes not only the understanding, but the will and affections, or the prevalent inclinations and dispositions of the soul."—*Works*, Vol. II. p. 91.

I had said, (in my Appendix,) "I can scarcely conceive of a truth more self-evident than this, that God's commands extend only to that which comes under the influence of the will." Mr. M. allows this to be "a principle on which my main arguments seem to be grounded." It became him, therefore, if he were able, to give it a solid answer. And what is his answer? It is so far, he says, from being self-evident, that to him it does not appear evident at all. He should instance, then, in something which is *allowed* not to come under the influence of the will, but which, nevertheless, is a duty. Instead of this, he says, the commands of God "extend not only to what comes under the influence of the will, but also to the *belief of the revealed truths and motives by which the will itself is influenced*."—Reply, p. 70. But who does not perceive that this is proving a thing by itself; or alleging as evidence that which is the very point in dispute?

The argument was this: All duty comes under the influence of the will—But faith is a duty—Therefore faith comes under the influence of the will. To have overturned the first of these propositions, which is that which he calls in question, he should have shown by *something else than belief* something that is *allowed* not to come under the influence of the will, that it may, nevertheless, be commanded of God. But this he has not shown, nor attempted to show.

All that Mr. M'Lean has done towards answering this argument is by

labouring to fasten *certain absurdities* upon it. "If believing God with the understanding," he says, "be not a duty, it must be either because he has not given a clear revelation of the truth, and supported it with sufficient evidence, or if he has, that there is no moral turpitude in mental error,"—p. 76.

By this way of writing, it would seem as if I pleaded for men's believing without their understanding, of which I certainly have no idea, any more than of their disbelieving without it. I hold no more in respect of faith than Mr. M. does in respect of unbelief; namely, that it does not pertain to the understanding *only*. The greatest evidence or authority cannot oblige us to that in which we are absolutely involuntary. God commands us to love him with all our powers, but not beyond our powers. To love him with all our heart includes every thing that depends upon disposition, even the bowing of our understandings to revealed truth, instead of proudly rejecting it; but that is all. So far as knowledge or belief is absolutely involuntary, we might as well ascribe duty to the convulsive motions of the body as to them. And as to "mental error," if it could be proved to be *merely* mental, that is, not to arise from indolence, prejudice, aversion, or any other evil *disposition*, it would be innocent. Christ did not criminate the Jews for simply misunderstanding him, but refers to the *cause* of that misunderstanding as the ground of censure. "Why do ye not understand my speech? *because ye cannot hear my word*;" that is, because they were utterly averse from it. Mr. M'Lean acknowledges as much as this, when he speaks of the neglect of the great salvation being the effect of *perverseness* and *aversion*, and *therefore* inexcusable." What is this but admitting that if it arose from simple ignorance, it would be excusable?

Another consequence which Mr. M. endeavours to fasten upon this principle is, "If faith be not a duty unless it be influenced by the moral state of the heart, then it can be no man's duty to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son *till he is previously possessed of that moral state*,"—p. 73. But if this consequence were just, it would follow from his own principles as well as mine. He considers the illumination of the Holy Spirit as necessary to believing; but does he infer that till such illumination take place it is not a sinner's duty to believe? He also considers repentance as the fruit of faith; but does he infer that till a sinner is in possession of faith it is not his duty to repent? The truth is that God, in requiring any one duty, (be it repentance or faith, or what it may,) requires that, *as to the state of the mind*, which is necessary to it. It was not the duty of Absalom to ask pardon of David without feeling sorry for his offence; but it does not follow that while his heart was hardened he was under no obligation to ask pardon. He was under obligation to both; and so are men with regard to believing the gospel. They are obliged to be of an open, upright, unprejudiced mind, and so to believe the truth.

If faith be a duty, believing is a *holy* exercise of the mind; for what else is holiness but a conformity of mind to the revealed will of God? Mr. M. allows of a belief which is "merely natural," and that it has "no holiness in it." He also allows that that which has the promise of salvation is holy. So far then we seem to be agreed. Yet when he comes to state wherein its holiness consists, he seems to resolve every thing into the cause, and the *nature of the truth believed*,—p. 67. Each of these, indeed, affords *proof* of the holy nature of faith; but to say that it consists in either is to place the nature of a thing in its cause, and in the object on which it terminates. The objects of belief are exactly the same as those of unbelief; but it will not be alleged, I presume, that unbelief is a holy exercise!

The sum is, Mr. M. thinks he ascribes duty and holiness to faith; but



his hypothesis is inconsistent with both. And this is all that I ever meant to charge him with. It never was in my heart to "impeach his honesty," (p. 64,) though he has more than once impeached mine.

Thirdly, *On this principle, calls, invitations, and exhortations to believe have no place in the Christian ministry.* To call, invite, or exhort a man to that in which his will has no concern is self-evident absurdity. Every man must feel it, if he only make the experiment. Mr. Sandeman is aware of this, and therefore utterly gives up the practice, declaring that the whole of what he has to offer is *evidence*. He says, "I would set before him (the sinner) all the evidence furnished me by the gospel. Thus, and thus only, would I press, call, invite, exhort, or urge him to believe."\* That is, he would not press, call, invite, exhort, or urge him to believe at all. So far he is consistent with himself, though at the utmost variance with the Scriptures.

God, however, by the prophets and apostles, did not barely offer evidence, but addressed every power and passion of the human mind. Mr. Sandeman may call this "human clamour, pressing men on to the blind business of performing some task called believing;" but this will prove nothing but his dexterity, when pressed with an argument which he cannot answer, at turning it off by railery. The clamour of the prophets and apostles was such as follows: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

If this figurative language should be thought to leave the subject in doubt, the following verses express the same sentiments without a figure: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."—"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."—"Repent ye, and believe the gospel."—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me and drink!"—"While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."—"Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life."—"Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."—"Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."—"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep."—"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."—"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God

\* Epistolary Correspondence, p. 8.

did beseech (men) by us; we pray (them) in Christ's stead, (saying,) be ye reconciled to God."

Mr. Sandeman may tell us that the character of ambassadors does not belong to ordinary ministers, and may attribute the invitations used in the present day to "priestly pride, and strutting self-importance;" but this will only prove that he has reasoned himself into a situation from which he has no other way of extricating himself than by having recourse to abuse instead of argument. What does it avail him, whether ordinary ministers be ambassadors for Christ, or not? If faith be a mere *passive* reception of the truth, it were as improper for the apostles to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God as for ordinary ministers to do so. Extraordinary powers could not render that consistent which is in itself absurd.

But I need say the less on this head, as Mr. M'Lean, in the First Part of his *Thoughts on the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel*, has not only alleged the foregoing passages, with others, but shown their connexion and pertinency to the point at issue. Suffice it for me to say, that a system which requires the disuse of the most distinguished means pertaining to the ministry of the word must be fundamentally erroneous, and of a tendency to render the good news of salvation of none effect.\*

"To urge unbelievers," says Mr. Sandeman, "to any shadow of obedience to the gospel, as preparative to justification by faith, can have no other effect than to lead them to establish their own righteousness, and to stand in awe of the preacher."† Obedience to the gospel, in Mr. Sandeman's view, is the *effect* of faith; the Scriptures, however, as we have seen, make faith itself to be obedience, and unbelief to be disobedience. If by "preparative," he means any thing which contributes to the *ground* or *reason* of justification, what he says of its self-righteous tendency is true; and the same would be true of his "notion," or "bare belief;" but to represent obedience to the gospel as necessary *in the established order of things* to justification, is to represent it according to the whole current of Scripture, as is manifest from the foregoing passages; and this can have no self-righteous tendency.

He that believeth *worketh not in respect of justification*. He does not deserve what he obtains, but receives it as a free gift; and it is of the nature of faith so to receive it. We can distinguish between a man who lives by his *labours* and one that lives by *alms*; and, without denying that the latter is active in receiving them, can clearly discern that his mode of living is directly opposed to that of the other. He that should contend that living by alms actively received was the same thing as living by works, would not be reckoned a reasoner, but a driveller.

To set ourselves against the practice of the prophets and apostles, in order to support the freeness of justification, is supporting the ark with unhallowed hands; or, as Mr. M'Lean expresses it, *replying against God*. "Cannot the wicked," continues he, "be exhorted to believe, repent, and seek the Lord, and be encouraged to this by a promise of success, (Isa. lv. 6, 7,)"

\* It becomes me here to acknowledge that, in the *Appendix* to the last edition of *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*, I was guilty of an oversight, in attributing many of the foregoing sentiments to Mr. M'Lean which did not belong to him. This misstatement was owing to my having, at the time, entirely forgot his piece *On the Calls of the Gospel*, and my considering an anonymous performance, entitled *Simple Truth*, written by a Mr. Bernard, as his. It is true I had the means of knowing better, and should have been more attentive to them; in this, however, lay the whole of my fault. It never was my design, for a moment, to misrepresent Mr. M. or any other man; nor did I ever feel the least reluctance to make the most explicit acknowledgment.

I may add, though I am sorry that I mistook him, yet I am glad I was mistaken. The difference between us is so much the less, which, to any one who wishes to unite with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, as far as possible, must afford a degree of satisfaction.

† Epistolary Correspondence, p. 29.

without—making the success to depend on human merit? Are such exhortations and promises always to be suspected of having a dangerous and self-righteous tendency? Instead of taking them in their plain and simple sense, must our main care always be to guard against some supposed self-righteous use of them, till we have explained away their whole force and spirit, and so distinguished and refined upon them as to make men more afraid to comply with them than to reject them, lest they should be guilty of some exertion of mind or body, some good disposition or motion towards Christ, which is supposed to be the highest wickedness, and a despising of the work of Christ?''\*

I can assure you that, while I feel sorry to have mistaken Mr. M'Lean on this subject, I am not a little happy in being able to make such important extracts as the above from his writings. Yet when I think of some of the principles which he still avows, I feel concerned at what appears to me his inconsistency; and not merely his, but that of many others whom I sincerely esteem.

If, after what has passed, I could hope for a candid attention, I would entreat Mr. M'Lean, and others like-minded with him, to consider whether that *practical neglect* of calls and invitations to the unconverted which is said to prevail wherever these sentiments are imbibed, and which he almost acknowledges to have attended his own ministry, has not arisen from this cause.† So long as he considers faith as something in which the will has no concern, instead of my being surprised at his feeling a difficulty in carrying the principles pleaded for in his *Thoughts on the Calls of the Gospel* into execution, I should be much more surprised at the contrary. If he be able to exhort sinners to repent and believe the gospel, it is more than I should be with his professed principles. So far as I know myself, I could not possibly call or invite any man to that in which his will had no concern, without feeling at the same time that I insulted him.

It may seem a little remarkable that this system, and that of the high or Hyper-Calvinists in England, which in almost all other things are opposite, should on this point be agreed. The one confines believing to the understanding, the other represents sinners, awakened sinners at least, as being willing to believe, but unable to do so, any more than to take wings and fly to heaven. Hence neither of them holds it consistent to call on sinners to believe in Christ, nor *is it consistent with their principles*; but how it is that they do not perceive, by the uniform practice of Christ and his apostles, that these principles are anti-scriptural, I cannot otherwise account for than by ascribing it to the perverting influence of hypothesis.

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#### LETTER IV.

##### THE FAITH OF DEVILS AND NOMINAL CHRISTIANS.

YOU are aware that the apostle James speaks of some whose faith was dead, being alone; and that, in answer to their boastings, he reminded them

\* *Thoughts on Calls, &c.* p. 36.

† His words are, "However negligent I may be in urging sinners to repentance, it has always been my firm belief that not only the unconverted, but even the converted themselves, need often to be called to repentance, and that in order to forgiveness."—*Reply*, p. 36.

that the devils also believed and trembled. Hence, it has been generally thought, there must be an essential difference between the *nature* of the faith of nominal Christians and devils on the one hand, and that of true Christians on the other. But this would overturn a leading principle of the Sandemanian system. Its advocates, therefore, have generally contended that "whosoever among men believes what devils do, about the Son of God, is born of God, and shall be saved;"\* and that the design of the apostle was not to *compare*, but rather to *contrast* it with that of the nominal Christian; the latter as having no effect on the mind, the former as causing its subjects to tremble. It has also been commonly maintained, on that side of the question, that the faith of which the apostle James speaks, instead of being of a different *nature* from that of true Christians, was in reality nothing but profession, or "*saying*, I have faith." "The design of the apostle," it has been said, "is to represent that faith, whether it be on earth or in hell, if it really existed, and was not merely pretended or professed, was always productive of corresponding works."

As the whole argument seems to rest upon the question whether the faith of nominal Christians be here *compared* to that of devils or *contrasted* with it, and as the solution of this question involves a fundamental principle of the system, it is worthy of a particular examination.

The words of the apostle are as follow:—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."—"Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead."

If the design be to *contrast* the faith of devils with that of nominal Christians, the apostle must undoubtedly mean to render the latter a nonentity, or a mere pretence, and to hold up the former as a reality; and, what is more, to represent the "trembling" of the fallen spirits as a species of good fruit, good at least in its nature, and wanting nothing to render it saving but the circumstantial interference of a more favourable situation.

To this view of the passage I have several objections.—

First, The apostle does not treat the faith of nominal Christians as a nonentity, but as something which existed, though void of life, as "a dead body without the spirit." On the principle here opposed there is no such a thing as a dead faith; that which is so called being mere pretence. The party is, indeed, represented as *saying* he has faith, but the same may be alleged of the true Christian with respect to works, James ii. 18. If, hence, the faith of the one be considered as a nonentity, the works of the other must be the same.

Secondly, The place in which the faith of devils is introduced proves that it is for the purpose of *comparison*, and not of *contrast*. If it had been for the latter, it should have been introduced in verse 18, and classed with the operative belief of true Christians, rather than in verse 19, where it is classed with that of nominal Christians. The argument then would have been this: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by

\* Ecking's Essays, p. 107.

my works: the devils believe, and tremble; but thou believest, and tremblest not; therefore thy faith is a mere pretence."

Thirdly, the copulative particle "also," instead of the disjunctive, determines it to be a *comparison*, and not a *contrast*. If it were the latter, the argument requires it to have been thus expressed:—"Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; *but* the devils believe, and tremble." If *and* be rendered *and*, or *even*, instead of *also*, as it often is, yet the meaning is the same. "Thou believest there is one God: thou doest well; *and* the devils believe, and tremble; or, *even* the devils believe, and tremble." None of these forms of expression conveys the idea of contrast, but of likeness.

Judge, my friend, and let the reader judge, whether the meaning of the apostle be not expressed in the following paraphrase:—Show me, if thou canst, a faith which is of any value without works, and I will show thee a faith which is of value by its fruits. Thou believest that there is one God; a great matter truly! and may not the same be said of the worst of beings? yea, and more: for they, having felt the power of God's anger, not only believe, but tremble; whereas thy faith suffers thee to live at ease. But as theirs, with all their trembling, is of no account, neither is thine; for faith without holy fruits is dead.

If the language of the apostle may be understood as a *contrast*, it may be used to express that which subsists between other things that differ as well as these. For example, between the faith of Christians and that of Jews. But the absurdity of this would strike any reader of common discernment. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well?" Christians *also* believe, and obey! To make sense of it, it should be, *But* Christians believe, and obey. On the other hand, make an experiment in an instance of *likeness*, and the language is plain and easy. One boasts that he is not a heathen, nor a Jew, nor a deist, but a Christian; while yet he is under the dominion of avarice. A man might say to him, "Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well?" Felix the heathen was so far convinced of this, and, what is more, trembled: yet Felix's convictions were of no value, and brought forth no good fruit; neither are thine, for faith without works is dead.

There is no reason to conclude that the faith and trembling of devils differ in any thing, except in degree, from the convictions and trembling of Felix: if, therefore, the former would in our circumstances have terminated in salvation, why did not the latter, whose situation was sufficiently favourable, so terminate? The convictions of James's nominal Christian might not be so strong as those of Felix, and his might not be so strong as those of the fallen angels; but in their *nature* they were one and the same. The first was convinced that there was one God; but it was mere light without love. If, like what is said of the stony-ground hearers, a portion of joy at first attended it, yet, the gospel having no root in his mind, and being in circumstances wherein he saw no remarkable displays of the Divine majesty, it made no durable impression upon him. The second might also be convinced that there was a God, and neither were his convictions accompanied by love, but "righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come," being set before him, he "trembled." The last are convinced of the same truth, and neither are their convictions accompanied by love; but being placed in circumstances wherein the awful majesty of God is continually before their eyes, they already know in part, by sad experience, the truth of his threatenings, and tremble in expectation of greater torments.

There is just as much holiness in each of these cases as in the trembling of an impenitent malefactor under the gallows. To reckon it in any of them, therefore, among "the corresponding fruits which always attend faith

if it really exists," is to reckon as fruit that which the Scriptures reject as unworthy of the name. Of the four sorts of hearers, only one brought forth fruit.

It is remarkable that Mr. M'Lean, after what he has written, when discoursing on the parable of the sower, particularly on those who are said to have "believed for a while," should introduce the following sentiment in the form of an *objection*:—"Such as fall away have never been enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, nor really believed the gospel; but had only *professed* to believe." His answer to this objection is still more remarkable. "The Scripture," he says, "supposes them to have been once enlightened—to have received the knowledge of the truth, and of the way of righteousness—to have believed for a while—and to have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. See Heb. vi. 4; x. 26; Luke viii. 13; 2 Pet. ii. 20. And their falling away after such attainments is that which constitutes the very sin of apostacy, and by which the guilt of it is aggravated. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."—*Sermons*, p. 66.

All this I account very good, though I should not have expected it from Mr. M. But his refusing after this to admit an *essential* difference between the faith of these apostates and that of true believers is most remarkable of all. If the difference lie not in the nature of their faith, nor in the nature of the things believed, against which he also reasons, where does it lie? They must, one would think, have been true believers so far as they went, and so long as they continue to believe; and their falling away must afford an example of the apostacy of true believers. But if a person may be a true believer at one time, and an apostate at another, he can have no Scriptural ground at any period of his life, from any consciousness of believing the gospel, to conclude on his own particular salvation. Yet this is what Mr. M. has pleaded for in his treatise on the *Commission*. Moreover, if there be not an *essential* difference between the nature of the faith of apostates, and that of true believers, why does he himself when describing them write as follows? "Whatever appearances of faith there may be in false professors, they have not the same perception of the truth, nor that persuasion of it upon its proper evidence, which real believers have."—*Works*, Vol. II. p. 96. I do not say of Mr. M., as he does of me, that "he can take either side of the question as he finds occasion:" but this I say, he appears to me to feel the force of some truths which do not well comport with some of his former reasonings; and not being able, it should seem, to reconcile them, he leaves them unreconciled.

Surely it were more agreeable to the truth, and to the passages on which he discourses, to admit of an essential difference between the faith of nominal and real Christians. In discoursing on the "good ground" in the parable, he very properly represents true believers, and them only, as being "taught by the special illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit;" but surely that which is the fruit of this special influence possesses a special *nature*. Why else do we read that "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit?" and why does it denominate a man spiritual? I Cor. ii. 15. We may not, as he says, be "able to distinguish, in the first impressions of the gospel, the faith of a stony-ground hearer from that of a true believer;" but it does not follow that there is not an essential difference notwithstanding.

The unrenewed character, with all his knowledge, *knoweth nothing as he ought to know*. He perceives not the intrinsic evil of sin, and consequently, discerns not the intrinsic excellence of the knowledge of Christ. That in the gospel which pleases him is its giving relief to his troubled conscience.

Hence "all his godliness," as Mr. Sandeman says, "consists in love to that which first relieved him."

We have been told more than once that "there need be no question about *how* we believe, but *what* we believe." Mr. M'Lean will answer this, that "the *matter* or *object* of belief, even in apostates, is said to be the word of the kingdom—the truth—the way of righteousness—the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and what other object of faith have true believers?"—*Sermons*, pp. 66, 67.

I have no objection to allowing, however, that if we believe the very truth as it is in Jesus, there can be nothing wanting in the *manner* of believing it. But though this be true, and though an inquirer after the way of salvation ought to be directed to the saving doctrine of the cross, rather than to the workings of his own mind concerning it, yet there *is* in the workings of a believer's mind towards it something essentially different from those of the merely nominal Christian; and which, when the inquiry comes to be, "Am I a believer?" ought to be pointed out. He not only believes truths which the other does not, but believes the same truths in a different manner. In other words, he believes them on different grounds, and with different affections. That which he knoweth is, in measure, "as he ought to know it." He discerns spiritual things *in a spiritual manner*; which is the only manner in which they can be discerned as they are.

It might be said there need be no question about *how* we repent, or hope, or love, or pray; but *what* we repent of, what we hope for, what we love, and what we pray for. And true it is, that if we repent of sin as sin, hope for the things which the gospel promises, love the true character of God and all that bears his image, and pray for those things which are according to his will, there will be nothing wanting as to the manner; but it does not follow that there *is* no difference as to the manner of these exercises in true Christians and in merely nominal ones. Our being right as to the objects may be a *proof* of our being right as to the manner, as the needle's pointing to the magnet proves the correspondence of the nature of the one with that of the other; but as in this case we should not say it is of no account whether the needle be made of steel or of some other substance, so that it points to the magnet, neither in the other should we consider the nature of spiritual exercises as a matter of no account, but merely the objects on which they terminate.

When we read, concerning the duty of prayer, that "the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him *in truth*," and that "we know not what to pray for *as we ought*," we infer that there is something in the nature of a good man's prayers which distinguishes them from others. But there is just the same reason for inferring that there is something in the nature of a good man's knowledge which distinguishes it from that of others; for as he only that is assisted by the Holy Spirit prays *as he ought*, so he only that is taught of God knoweth any thing *as he ought to know*.

The holy nature of living faith may be difficult, and even impossible, to be ascertained but by its effects; as it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish some seeds from others till they have brought forth their respective fruits; but a difference there *is*, notwithstanding. If there need be no inquiry as to the nature of faith, but merely concerning its objects, how was it that the Corinthians, who, by their unworthy spirit and conduct, had rendered their being Christ's disciples *indeed* a matter of doubt, should be told to *examine themselves* whether they were in the faith, and should be furnished with this criterion, that if they were true believers, and not reprobates, or such as would be disapproved as dross, *Jesus Christ was in them?* On the principle here opposed, they should have examined, not themselves,

but merely their creed, or *what* they believed, in order to know whether they were in the faith.

If the faith of devils would have issued in their salvation, provided, like us, they had been placed in circumstances of hope, it will follow that faith is not produced by the grace of the Holy Spirit, but merely by Divine Providence. No one, I presume, will ascribe the belief of devils to the Holy Spirit: whatever they believe must be owing to the situation in which they are placed, and the circumstances attending them. But if faith may be the mere effect of situation and circumstances in one case, why not in another? Sandemanians have often been charged with setting aside the work of the Spirit, and have often denied the charge: but whatever may be said of their other principles, their notion of the faith of devils must sap the foundation of that important doctrine. If this notion be true, all that is necessary is that the party be placed under the influence of truth clearly stated and sufficiently impressive, and within the limits of the promise of salvation. All the change, therefore, which is necessary to eternal life may be wrought by only a proper adjustment of moral causes. Only place mankind in circumstances in which their minds shall be impressed with terror equal to that of the fallen angels, and let the promise of salvation to believers be continued as it is, and all would be saved. And with respect to the fallen angels themselves, only extend to them the promise to believers, and they are at once in a state of salvation. Such, on this hypothesis, would have been the happy condition of both men and devils; but the hope of mercy and the sense of wrath are both rendered abortive for want of being united. Providence places sinners on earth under the hope of salvation; but then they are not in circumstances sufficiently impressive, and so it comes to nothing. In hell the circumstances are sufficiently impressive, and they actually believe; but then there is no hope, and so again it comes to nothing!

Surely the parable of the rich man and Lazarus might suffice to teach us the insufficiency of all means to bring sinners to God, when we are assured that if they believed not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead. I am far from accusing all who have pleaded for the faith of devils being such as would be saving in our circumstances as *designing* to undermine the work of the Spirit; but that such is its tendency is, I presume, sufficiently manifest.

Nor is this all: not only is the influence of the Spirit set aside, in favour of the mere influence of moral suasion, but *the fruits of the Spirit* are made to consist of that which is the ordinary effect of such influence. "When any person on earth," it has been said, "believes Jesus (who is now invisible) with equal assurance as the devils, he rejoices in hope, is animated by love to him, and feels disposed to obey his will, and to resist his own evil inclinations."

There are, I grant, sensations in the human mind which arise merely from the influences of hope and fear, and which bear a near resemblance to the fruits of the Spirit; but they are not the same. The judgments of God inflicted upon the carnal Israelites in the wilderness caused the survivors to tremble, and wrought in them a great care to be more religious, and to resist their evil inclinations. "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned early after God; they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer." Such was the effect of moral influence, or of the word and works of God: but what follows? "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; *for their heart was not right with him*, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Thus, on the approach of death, we still see men greatly affected. Light as they may have made of religion before, they



now believe enough to make them tremble. At such times it is common for them to think how good they would be, and what a different life they would lead, if it would please God to restore them. And should a favourable turn be given to their affliction, they are affected in another way; they weep, and thank God for their hopes of recovery, not doubting but they shall become other men. But I need not tell you, or the reader, that all this may consist with a heart at enmity with the true character of God, and that it frequently proves so, by their returning, as soon as the impression subsides, to their old courses. The whole of this process may be no more than an operation of self-love, or, as Mr. Sandeman calls it, "a love to that which relieves them," which is something at a great remove from the love of God, and therefore is not "godliness." Godliness has respect to God, and not merely to our own relief. The distress of an ungodly mind, consisting only in a fearful apprehension of consequences, may be relieved by any thing that furnishes him with a persuasion of the removal of those consequences. It may be from an idea that he has performed the conditions of salvation; or from an impulse that his sins are forgiven; or from his imagining that he "sees God just in justifying him, ungodly as he stands." Any of these considerations will give *relief*; and no man will be so wanting to himself as not to "love that which relieves him." There may be some difference in these causes of relief: the former may be derived from something in ourselves; and the latter may seem to arise from what Christ has done and suffered: but if the undertaking of Christ be merely viewed as a relief to a sinner, we overlook its chief glory; and the religion that arises from such views is as false as the views themselves are partial.

The first idea in the doctrine of the cross is, "*Glory to God in the highest.*" Its proclaiming "*peace on earth, and good-will to men,*" is consequent on this. But that which occupies the first place in the doctrine itself must occupy the first place in the belief of it. The faith of the gospel corresponds with the gospel: "So we preached, and so ye believed." God will assert his own glory, and we must subscribe to it, before we are allowed to ask or hope for the forgiveness of our sins; as is clearly taught us in what is called the Lord's prayer. He, therefore, that views the cross of Christ merely as an expedient to relieve the guilty, or only subscribes to the justice of God in his condemnation, when conceiving himself delivered from it, has yet to learn the first principles of Christianity. His rejoicing in the justice of God, *as satisfied by the death of Christ*, while he hates it in itself considered, is no more than rejoicing in a dreaded tyrant being appeased, or somehow diverted from coming to hurt him. And shall we call this the love of God? To make our deliverance from Divine condemnation the condition of our subscribing to the justice of it proves, beyond all contradiction, that we care only for ourselves, and that the love of God is not in us. And herein, if I may adopt Mr. Sandeman's term, consists the very "poison" of his system. It is one of the many devices for obtaining relief to the mind, without justifying God, and falling at the feet of the Saviour; or, which is the same thing, without "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

The doctrine of the cross presupposes the equity and goodness of the Divine law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the exposedness of the sinner to God's righteous curse, and his utter insufficiency to deliver his soul. To believe this doctrine, therefore, must needs be to subscribe with our very heart to these principles, as they respect ourselves; and so to receive salvation as being what it is, a message of pure grace, through a mediator. Such a conviction as this never possessed the mind of a fallen angel, nor of a fallen man untaught by the special grace of God.

## LETTER V.

THE CONNEXION BETWEEN REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD AND FAITH TOWARD  
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE advocates of this system do not consider the order in which these graces are ordinarily introduced in the New Testament as being the true order of nature, and therefore generally reverse it, putting faith before repentance, and invariably placing repentance among the effects of faith. A sinner, therefore, has no spiritual sense of the evil of sin, till he has believed in the Saviour, and stands in a justified state. Then, being forgiven all trespasses, and reconciled to God through the death of his Son, he is melted into repentance.

The question is not whether the gospel, when received by faith, operates in this way; for of this there can be no doubt. Nothing produces godly sorrow for sin like a believing view of the suffering Saviour. Nor is it denied that to be grieved for having dishonoured God we must first believe that he *is*; and, before we can come to him in acceptable worship, that through a mediator he is "the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Without a mediator, repentance, even if it could have existed, must have been hopeless. I have not such an idea of the sinner being brought to repentance, antecedently to his believing in Christ for salvation, as Mr. Sandeman had of his believing antecedently to repentance. According to him, he believes and is justified, not merely *considered* as ungodly, or *without any consideration of godliness* in him, but actually "ungodly as he stands," and then, and not till then, begins to love God, and to be sorry for his sin. This is manifestly holding up the idea of an *impenitent believer*, though not of one that continues such. But the antecedency which I ascribe to repentance does not amount to this. I have no conception of a sinner being so brought to repentance as to sustain the *character* of a penitent, and still less to obtain the forgiveness of sin, previously to his falling in with the way of salvation. I believe it is not possible for a sinner to repent, and at the same time to reject the Saviour. The very instant that he perceives the evil of sin so as to repent of it, he cannot think of the Saviour without believing in him. I have, therefore, no notion of a *penitent unbeliever*. All that I contend for is, that, in the order of cause and effect, whatever may be said as to the order of time, repentance precedes as well as follows the faith of Christ; and that faith in Christ cannot exist without repentance for sin. A sense of sin appears to me essential to believing in the Saviour; so much so, that without it the latter would not only be a mere "notion," but an essentially defective one.

It is admitted, on both sides, that there is a priority of *one or other* of these graces in the order of nature, so as that one is influenced by the other; and if no other priority were pleaded, neither the idea of a penitent unbeliever on the one hand, nor an impenitent believer on the other, would follow; for it might still be true, as Mr. M'Lean acknowledges, that "none believe who do not repent," and, as I also acknowledge, that none repent who, according to the light they have, do not believe. But if we maintain, not only that faith is prior in the order of nature, but that, antecedently to any true sorrow for sin, we must "see God to be just in justifying us ungodly as we stand," this is clearly maintaining the notion of an impenitent believer.

From these introductory remarks, it will appear that I have no objection to faith being considered as contemporary with repentance in the order of

time provided the latter were made to consist in an acquiescence with the gospel way of salvation, so far as it is understood; but if it be made to include such a clear view of the gospel as necessarily brings peace and rest to the soul, I believe that repentance for sin often precedes it, even in the order of time.

Such is the connexion between repentance and faith in the Scriptures that the one commonly supposes the other. Repentance, when followed by the remission of sins, supposes faith in the Saviour (Luke xxiv. 47); and faith, when followed with justification, equally supposes repentance for sin.

Attempts have been made, by criticising on the word *μετάνοια*, to explain away, as it should seem, the proper object of repentance, as if it were a *change of mind* with regard to the gospel. "Repentance," says Mr. S., "is the change of a man's mind to love the truth, which always carries in it a sense of shame and regret at his former opposition to it."\* But this is confounding repentance and faith objectively considered. The objects of both are so marked in the apostolic ministry, that one would think they could not be honestly mistaken. Repentance is *toward God*, and faith is *toward our Lord Jesus Christ*; the one has immediate respect to the Lawgiver, the other to the Saviour.

It cannot be denied that the order in which the New Testament commonly places repentance and faith is in direct opposition to what our opponents plead for; and, what is more, that the former is represented as influencing the latter. This is manifest in the following passages: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."—"Testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."—"They repented not, *that they might believe him*."—"If God peradventure might give them repentance *to the acknowledging* of the truth." Mr. Sandeman, Mr. M'Lean, and all the writers on that side of the question, very rarely make use of this language; and when they have occasion to write upon the subject, ordinarily reverse it. To accord with their ideas it should have been said, Believe the gospel and repent.—Testifying faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance toward God.—They believed not, that they might repent.—If God peradventure may give them faith to repent.

To this I add, it is impossible, in the nature of things, to believe the gospel but as being made sensible of that which renders it necessary. The guilty and lost state of sinners goes before the revelation of the grace of the gospel; the latter, therefore, cannot be understood or believed, but as we are convinced of the former. There is no grace in the gospel, but upon the supposition of the holiness, justice, and goodness of the law. If God be not in the right, and we in the wrong; if we have not transgressed without cause, and be not fairly condemned; grace is no more grace, but a just exemption from undeserved punishment. And as faith must needs correspond with truth, it is impossible that we should believe the doctrine of salvation by grace in an impenitent state of mind, or without feeling that we have forfeited all claim to the Divine favour. We cannot see things but as they are to be seen; to suppose that we first believe in the doctrine of free grace, and then, as the effect of it, perceive the evil of sin, and our just exposedness to Divine wrath, is like supposing a man first to appreciate the value of a physician, and by this means to learn that he is sick. It is true the physician may visit the neighbourhood, or the apartments, of one who is in imminent danger of death, while he thinks himself mending every day; and this circumstance may be held up by his friends as a motive to him to consider of his condition, and to put himself under his care. It is thus that the coming

\* Letters on Theron and Aspasio, p. 408.

of Christ, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, were alleged as motives to repentance, both to Jews and Gentiles. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—"Repent ye *therefore*."—"The times past of this ignorance God winked at; but *now* commandeth all men every where to repent." But as it would not follow in the one case that the sick man could appreciate the value of the physician till he felt his sickness, neither does it follow in the other that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ precedes such a sense of the evil of sin as involves the first workings of repentance toward God.

To argue, as some have done, from the *motives* of repentance being fetched from the gospel, that it supposes their believing the gospel ere they could repent, proves too much; for it is not to repentance only, but to faith, that the coming of Christ's kingdom is held up as a motive: but to say that this supposes their belief of the gospel, is saying they must believe in order to believing.

That a *conviction of sin* (whether it include the first workings of repentance or not) is necessary to faith in Christ is a matter so evident that those who have declaimed most against it have not been able to avoid such a representation of things. It is remarkable, that when Mr. Sandeman comes to *describe* his "ungodly man," he always contrives to make him not only full of distress, but divested of all *self-righteous pride*: he represents him as conceiving that there are "none more ripe for hell than he, and as having no hope in the great propitiation."\* Thus also Mr. Ecking, when *describing* a "mere sinner," represents him as one who "feels himself in a perishing condition, and is conscious that he deserves no favour."†

We must not say that repentance, or any degree of a right spirit, so precedes faith in Christ as to enter into the nature of it; but if we will but call the sinner by a few hard names, we may describe him in coming to the Saviour as sensible of his utter unworthiness, as divested of self-righteousness, and as ripe for hell in his own eyes! In short, we may depict him as the publican who sought mercy under a humiliating sense of his utter unworthiness to receive it, so that we still call him ungodly. And to this we have no objection, so that it be understood of the character under which he is justified in the eye of the Lawgiver; but if it be made to mean that at the time of his justification he is in heart an enemy of God, we do not believe it. If he be, however, why do not these writers describe him as an enemy ought to be described? They teach us elsewhere that "an attachment to self-righteousness is natural to man as depraved;" how then came these ungodly men to be so divested of it? Why are they not represented as thinking themselves in a fair way for heaven, and that if God does not pardon them, he will do them wrong? Such is the ordinary state of mind of ungodly men or mere sinners, which is just as opposite to that which they are constrained to represent as the spirit of the Pharisee was to that of the publican.

Mr. M'Lean will tell us that "this is that part of the scheme whereby persons, previously to their believing in Christ, are taught to extract comfort from their convictions,"—*Reply*, p. 148. But whatever Mr. M. may think or say, I hope others will give me credit when I declare that we have no idea of any well-grounded comfort being taken antecedently to believing in Christ. The publican is described as *humbling himself* before God exalted him; but he did not derive comfort from this. If, instead of looking to the mercy of God, he had done this, it would have been a species of pharisaical self-exaltation. But it does not follow hence that there *was* nothing spiritually good in his self-abasement.

\* Letters on Theron and Aspasio, pp. 46, 48.

† Essays, p. 41.

But Mr. M. "believes a person may be so convicted in his conscience as to view himself *merely as a guilty sinner*; that is, as having no righteousness to recommend him to the favour of God; and that under such conviction his sense of the evil of sin will not be confined to its *punishment*; but his conscience or moral sense will tell him that he deserves punishment at the hands of a righteous God,"—p. 149.

Mr. M'Lean admits, then, the necessity of conviction of sin previously, in the order of things, to faith in Christ; only there is no holiness, and consequently no true repentance, in it. I have allowed in Letter I. that many convictions are to be resolved into the mere operations of an enlightened conscience, and do not issue in true conversion. I may add, I consider all conviction of sin which *does not in its own nature lead to the Saviour* as of this description. It matters not how deep the distress of a sinner may be, so long as it is accompanied by an unwillingness to be saved by mere grace through a mediator, there is no holiness in it, nor any thing that deserves the name of repentance. An enlightened conscience, I allow, will force us to justify God and condemn ourselves on many occasions. It was thus in Pharaoh when he said, "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." And this his sense of the evil of sin might not be "confined to its *punishment*;" his "conscience or moral sense might tell him that he deserved punishment at the hand of a righteous God." So far then are we agreed. But if Pharaoh had had a *just* sense of the evil of sin, it would not have left him where it did. There was an essential difference between what he saw by the terrors of God's judgment, and what Paul saw when "sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful." Nor can I believe that any sinner was ever so divested of self-righteous hope as to consider himself *a mere sinner*, who yet continued to reject the Saviour; for this were the same thing as for him to have *no ground* to stand upon, either false or true; but he who submits not to the righteousness of God is, in some form or other, going about to establish his own righteousness.

There is, I apprehend, an important difference between the case of a person who, whatever be his convictions, is still averse from giving up every claim and falling at the feet of the Saviour, and that of one whose convictions lead him to take refuge in the gospel, *as far as he understands it*, even though at present he may have but a very imperfect view of it. I can clearly conceive of the convictions of the former as having no repentance or holiness in them, but not so of the latter. I believe repentance has begun to operate in many persons of this description, who as yet have not found that peace or rest for their souls which the gospel is adapted to afford. In short, the question is, whether there be not such a thing as *spiritual conviction*, or conviction which proceeds from the special influence of the Spirit of God, and which in its own nature invariably leads the soul to Christ. It is not necessary that it should be known by the party, or by others, to be so at the time, nor can it be known but by its effects, or till it *has led* the sinner to believe in Christ alone for salvation. But this does not prove but that it may exist. And when I read of sin by the commandment becoming exceedingly sinful, —of our being through the law dead to the law, "that we might live unto God,"—of the law being appointed as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, "that we might be justified by faith,"—I am persuaded that it does exist, and that to say all spiritual conviction of sin is by means of the gospel is antisciptural and absurd.

In places where the gospel is preached, and where persons have long heard it, it is not supposed that they are necessarily first led to think of the law, and of themselves as transgressors of it; and then, being convinced of the exceeding sinfulness of sin by it, are for the first time led to think of

Christ. No, it is not the order of time, but that of cause and effect, for which I plead. It may be by thinking of the death of Christ itself that we are first led to see the evil of sin; but if it be so, this does not disprove the apostolic doctrine, that "by the law is the knowledge of sin." If the death of Christ furnish us with this knowledge, it is *as honouring the precept and penalty of the law*. It is still, therefore, by the law, as exemplified in him, that we are convinced.

"A spirit of grace and supplication" was to be poured "upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," in consequence of which they were to "look upon him whom they had pierced, and mourn as for an only son, and to be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Is this mourning described as following or as preceding their forgiveness? As preceding it. It is true they are said first to "look upon him whom they had pierced;" but this view of the death of the Saviour is represented as working only in a way of conviction and lamentation: the view which gave peace and rest to their souls follows upon their mourning, and is thus expressed:—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."

Judge, my friend, and let the reader judge, whether this account accords with our first viewing God as just, and justifying us ungodly as we stand, and then beginning to love him, and to repent of our having sinned against him. Judge whether it does not rather represent things in this order: first "a spirit of grace and supplication" is poured upon the sinner; next he is led to think of what he has done against the Lord and his Christ, and mourns over it in the bitterness of his soul; and then gets relief by washing, as it were, in the fountain of his blood. Such was doubtless the process under Peter's sermon, Acts ii. 37, 38.

On the connexion of repentance and faith I am at a loss to ascertain Mr. M'Lean's sentiments. He says, indeed, that I know them; and suggests that I must have intentionally misrepresented them.—*Reply*, p. 36. But if they be so plain, I can only say my understanding is more dull than he supposes; for I do not yet comprehend how he can make repentance, in all cases, a fruit of faith in Christ, and yet consider it as necessary to forgiveness. He acknowledges that "none believe who do not repent," (p. 39,) and that repentance is "necessary to forgiveness,"—p. 36. But forgiveness, though not the same thing as justification, is yet an essential part of it; if, therefore, he allow repentance to be antecedent to forgiveness, that is the same thing in effect as allowing it to be antecedent to justification, or that the faith by which we are justified includes repentance. Yet he makes faith to be such a belief as excludes all exercise of the will or affections, and consequently repentance for sin. He also considers repentance as an immediate effect of faith, (p. 38,) and opposes the idea of any effect of faith being included in it as necessary, not merely as a procuring cause, but in the established order of things, to justification. But this, so far as I am able to understand things, is making repentance to follow upon forgiveness rather than necessary to it.

Mr. M'Lean adds, "Though repentance ought to be urged upon all who hear the gospel, and though none believe it who do not repent, yet I strongly suspect that it would be leading us astray to press repentance upon them before and in order to their believing the gospel,"—p. 39. And why does he not suspect the same thing of pressing the belief of the gospel before and in order to their repentance? If indeed the gospel were withheld from sinners till they actually repent, or if it were suggested that they should first become penitents, and then think of being believers, this would be leading them astray; and the same might be said on the other side. If exhortations

to repentance were withheld till the sinner had actually believed, or it were suggested that he should first become a believer, and then think of repenting, this would be as antisciptural as the other. But why should we not content ourselves with following the examples of the New Testament,—“Repent, and believe the gospel?” As Mr. M’Lean’s placing faith before repentance does not require him to avoid telling sinners of the evil nature of sin till they have believed, nor to consider them as believers while they are impenitent, why does he impute such consequences to me, for placing repentance before faith?

Mr. M’Lean refers to a passage in the preface to the first edition of *The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation*, as favouring these extravagant constructions. I had said, “No sort of encouragement or hope is held out in all the book of God to any sinner *as such* considered.” That which I meant, at the time, was merely to disown that any sinner was encouraged to hope for eternal life without returning to God by Jesus Christ. Thus I explained it in my answer to *Philanthropos*; but, as I perceived the idea was not clearly expressed in the preface, and that the words were capable of an ill construction, I altered them in the second edition, and expressed my meaning as follows: “There is no dispute concerning who ought to be encouraged to consider themselves as entitled to the blessings of the gospel. Though sinners be freely invited to the participation of spiritual blessings, yet they have no interest in them, according to God’s revealed will, while they continue in unbelief.” I cannot consider Mr. M’Lean’s *other* references to the first edition, after a second was in his hand, as fair or candid; and *this* appears to me unfair and uncandid in the extreme.

It has been common to distinguish repentance into *legal* and *evangelical*; and I allow there is a foundation in the nature of things for this distinction. The former arises from the consideration of our sin being a transgression of the holy, just, and good law of our Creator; the latter from the belief of the mercy of God as revealed in the gospel, and the consideration of our sin being committed notwithstanding, and even against it. But it appears to me to have been too lightly taken for granted that all *true* repentance is confined to the latter. The law and the gospel are not in opposition to each other; why then should repentance arising from the consideration of them be so opposite as that the one should be false and the other true?

If we wish to distinguish the false from the true, or that which needs to be repented of from that which does not, we may perhaps, with more propriety, denominate them *natural* and *spiritual*; by the former understanding that which the mere principles of unrenewed nature are capable of producing, and by the latter that which proceeds from the supernatural and renovating influence of the spirit of God.

*Natural* repentance, thus defined, is sorrow for sin chiefly with respect to its consequences, accompanied, however, with the reproaches of conscience on account of the thing itself. It is composed of remorse, fear, and regret, and is often followed by a change of conduct. It may arise from a view of the law and its threatenings, in which case it hath no hope, but worketh death, on account of there being nothing but death held out by the law for transgressors. Or it may arise from a partial or false view of the gospel, by which the heart is often melted under an idea of sin being forgiven when it is not so; in this case it hath hope, but this being unfounded, it notwithstanding worketh death in a way of self-deception.

*Spiritual* repentance is sorrow for sin *as sin, and as sin committed against God*. It may arise from a view of the death of Christ, through which we perceive how evil and bitter a thing it is, and, looking on him whom we have pierced, mourn as one mourneth for an only son. But it may also arise

from the consideration of our sin being a transgression of the holy, just, and good law of God, and of our having dishonoured him without cause. Such a sense of the evil nature of sin as renders it *exceedingly sinful* includes the essence of true repentance; yet this, in the apostle, did not arise from the consideration of the gospel, but *of the commandment*. It was therefore *legal* repentance; yet as its tendency was to render him "dead to the law" as a medium of justification, and to bring him to Christ *for life*, it was spiritual. It was repentance *unto life*.

The chief ground on which repentance toward God has been denied to precede faith in Christ in the order of nature, is, that no man can repent of sin till he entertain the hope of forgiveness. Nay, it has been said, "No man can repent unless he knows himself to be of God; and as this cannot be known till he hath received Christ, faith must precede repentance." If the principle that supports this argument be true, we neither have, nor ought to have, any regard to God or man but for our own sake. But if so, the command ought not to have been, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself:" but, thou shalt love thyself with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy God and thy neighbour so far as they are subservient to thee.—Moreover, if so, the world, instead of being greatly depraved, is very nearly what it ought to be; for it is certainly not wanting in self love, though it misses the mark in accomplishing its object.

Some have allowed "that it is our duty to love God supremely, whether he save us or not; but that, nevertheless, the thing is impossible." If it be *physically* impossible, it cannot be duty; for God requires nothing in respect of obedience but that we love him *with all our strength*. If it be only *morally* impossible, that is the same as its being so owing to the corrupt state of our minds. But we are not to suppose that God, in saving sinners, any more than in judging them, consults their depraved spirit, and adapts the gospel to it. On the contrary, it is the design of all that God does for us to restore us to a right spirit. His truth must not bend to our corruptions; but our hearts must be "inclined to his testimonies." So far, therefore, as any man is renewed by the Spirit of God, so far is he brought to be of God's mind, and does what he ought to do. God's law is written in his heart.

Further, If the principle that supposes this argument be true, it will hold good in reference to men as well as to God. And is it true that a man who is under just condemnation for breaking the laws, and who has no hope of obtaining a pardon, ought not to be expected to repent for his crime, and, before he die, to pray God to bless his king and country? On this principle, all confessions of this kind are of necessity mere hypocrisy. Even those of the dying thief in the gospel, so far as they respect the justice of his doom from his countrymen, must have been insincere; for he had no hope of his sentence being remitted. What would an offended father say, if the offender should require, as the condition of his repentance, a previous declaration of forgiveness, or even of a willingness to forgive? A willingness to forgive *might* be declared, and it would heighten the criminality of the offender if after this he continued hardened; but for him to *require* it, and to avow that he could not repent of his sin upon any other condition, would be the height of insolence. Yet all this is pleaded for in respect of God. "If I be a father, where is mine honour?"

Besides, how is a sinner to "know that he is of God," otherwise than as being conscious of repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? Till he is sorry at heart for having dishonoured God, he is not of God, and therefore cannot know that he is so.

If some have gone into extremes in writing of "disinterested love," as



Mr. M'Lean suggests, it does not follow that true religion has its origin in self love. Most men, who make any pretence to serious Christianity, will allow, that if sin be not hated *as sin*, it is not hated at all; and why we should scruple to allow, that if God be not loved as God, he is not loved at all, I cannot conceive. I am not surprised, however, that those who have been so long and so deeply imbued in a system, a leading principle of which is "that godliness consists in love to that which first relieves us," should write in the manner they do.

On some occasions, however, Mr. M'Lean himself can say as much in favour of "disinterested love" as his opponent, and can represent that which arises from "a mere principle of self-love" as being of no value. "There may be some resemblances of *repentance*," he says, "in fear, remorse, and sorrow of mind, occasioned by sin; as in Cain, Judas, Felix, &c. But a mere principle of self-love will make a man dread the consequences of sin, while he has prevalent inclinations to sin itself. There is a difference between mere fear and sorrow on account of sin, and a prevalent hatred of it; between hatred of sin itself, and mere hatred of its consequences; between that sorrow for sin which flows from the love of God and of holiness, and that which flows from an inferior principle. Men may have even an aversion to some kinds of sin, because they interfere with others, or because they do not suit their natural constitutions, propensities, tempers, habits, age, worldly interests, &c., while they do not hate *all* sin universally, and consequently hate no sin *as such*, or from a proper principle."—*Works*, Vol. II, p. 95.

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## LETTER VI.

### THE CONNEXION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND DISPOSITION.

You need not be told that this is a subject of prime importance in the Sandemanian system. It every where considers knowledge as the one thing needful and disposition as its natural and proper effect.

Mr. M'Lean represents me as maintaining that the understanding or perceptive faculty in man is directed and governed by his will and inclinations; and this he supposes to be the principle on which my arguments are principally founded; a principle which can be true, he thinks, only in cases where the original order of things is perverted by sin.—*Reply*, p. 8, 9. Whether these sentiments be just, or contain a fair statement of my views, we shall inquire as we proceed: at present I only observe that the state of the will or disposition is, in Mr. M'Lean's account, governed invariably by the understanding; or if in any instance it be otherwise, it is owing to the disorder introduced by sin. I should not have supposed, however, that sin could have perverted the established laws of nature. It certainly perverts the *moral* order of things; that is, (as Dr. Owen represents it, to whom Mr. M. refers,) instead of the will being governed by judgment and conscience, judgment and conscience are often governed by prejudice. But there is nothing in all this subversive of the established laws of nature; for it is a law recognized both by nature and Scripture that the disposition of the soul should influence its decisions. A humble and candid spirit is favourable, and a proud and uncandid spirit is unfavourable, to a right judgment.

"It is a maxim, says Mr. Ecking, "that has not yet been refuted, that the

determination of the will must evermore follow the illumination, conviction, and notice of the understanding.\* By the illumination, conviction, and notice of the understanding must be meant, either what the mind judges to be *right*, or what it accounts *agreeable*. If the will were always determined by the former, there could be no such thing as knowing the will of God, and not doing it. But I suppose this will not be pretended. It must therefore be of the latter that Mr. Eeking writes. His meaning must be, that the will evermore follows the mind's view of the object *as agreeable*. But is it certain that the viewing of an object agreeable is properly and perfectly distinct from choosing it? President Edwards conceived it was not, and therefore did not affirm that the will was *determined* by the greatest apparent good, but merely that "*the will always is as the greatest apparent good, or as what appears most agreeable is.*"† This is not saying that the will is determined by the understanding; for, as the same author goes on to prove, the cause of an object appearing agreeable to the mind may be "the state, frame, or temper of the mind itself." But so far as this is the case, the judgment is determined by the state of the mind rather than the state of the mind by the judgment.

A great deal of confusion on this subject has arisen from confounding simple knowledge, pertaining merely to the intellectual faculty, with that which is compound or comprehensive of approbation. The former is with propriety distinguished from whatever pertains to the state of the will; but the latter is not, seeing it includes it.

Mr. M'Lean, speaking of certain characters who had heard the gospel, says, "It is supposed that such men have now received some *information* which they had not before, both with respect to their danger and the remedy of it, and"—what? that their wills or dispositions are in that proportion changed? No: but "that they are hereby rendered quite *inexcusable* if they should neglect so great salvation; which neglect must now be the effect of perverseness and aversion, and not of *simple* ignorance. John iii. 19; xv. 2, 25."‡ I do not say of Mr. M., as he did of me when I was only reasoning upon the principles of my opponent, that "he can take either side of the question as he finds occasion;" but this I say, that when writing in favour of the calls of the gospel, he felt himself impelled to admit principles of which, in his controversy on the other side, he has quite lost sight. The above statement appears to me to be very just, and as he here so properly distinguishes *simple* ignorance from ignorance which arises from aversion or neglect—the one as tending to excuse, the other to criminate—he cannot consistently object to my distinguishing between *simple* knowledge, which barely renders men *inexcusable*, and knowledge *inclusive of approbation*, which has the promise of eternal life.

*Simple* knowledge, or knowledge as distinguished from approbation, is merely a natural accomplishment, necessary to the performance of both good and evil, but in itself neither the one nor the other. Instead of producing love, it often occasions an increasing enmity, and in all cases renders sinners the less excusable. In this sense the term *knowledge*, and others related to it, are used in the following passages:—"The servant who *knew* his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."—"When they *knew* God, they glorified him not as God."—"If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin."—"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both *seen and hated* both me and my Father."

\* Essays, p. 54.

† On the Will, Part I. Section II. p. 11.

‡ Thoughts on Calls, &c., p. 17.

But knowledge is much more frequently used in the Scriptures *as including approbation*. The Lord is said to *know* the righteous, and never to have *known* the workers of iniquity. To understand this of simple knowledge would deprive God of his omniscience. As ascribed to men, it is what is denominated *a spiritual understanding*. It is not necessary to an obligation to spiritual duties, but it is necessary in the nature of things to the actual discharge of them. It may be said of the want of this, "The Lord hath not given you eyes to see, and ears to hear, to this day;" and that without furnishing any excuse for the blindness of the parties. It is the wisdom from above imparted by the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit.

That knowledge, in this sense of the term, produces holy affections is not denied. It is in itself holy, and contains the principle of universal holiness. It is that by which we discern the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which glory being beheld assimilates us into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. But the question at issue respects knowledge in its simple and literal sense, or that which is purely intellectual, exclusive of all disposition; otherwise it would amount to no more than this, whether that which includes the seminal principles of holy affection (namely, *a sense of heart*) tends to produce it; which never was disputed.

The ground on which I am supposed to have proceeded is, "that the understanding or perceptive faculty in man is directed and governed by his will;" but this is a mistake: I ground no doctrine upon any theory of the human mind which I may have entertained; but on what I consider as the Scriptural account of things; in which I find spiritual perception impeded by evil disposition, and promoted by the contrary, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Neither is the above a fair statement of my views. If what I have written implies any theory of the human mind, it is not that the understanding is in all cases governed by the will; but rather that they have a mutual influence on each other. I have allowed, in my *Appendix*, that volitions are influenced by motives or considerations which exist in the view of the mind; and I should think it is equally evident, on the other hand, that our judgments are, in a great number of instances, determined by a previous state or disposition of the soul. In objects which do not interest the affections, the judgment may be purely intellectual, and the choice may naturally follow according to its dictates; but it is not so in other cases, as universal experience evinces.

"But must it not be owned," says Mr. M. in his Reply, "that, so far as this is the case in man, it is an *irregular* exercise of his faculties, arising from the moral disorder of his lapsed nature, whereby judgment, reason, and conscience are weakened, perverted, and blinded, so as to be subjected to his will and corrupt inclinations?"—p. 8. It must undoubtedly be owned that the influence of an *evil* disposition in producing an erroneous and false judgment is owing to this cause; and if that for which I plead were what Mr. M. elsewhere represents it, viz. *a prejudice in favour of a report which renders the mind regardless of evidence*, (p. 67,) the same might be said of all such judgment. But how if the state of the will contended for should be that of a *deliverance from prejudice*, by which evidence comes to be properly regarded? It is not to the disorder introduced by sin that we are to ascribe the general principle of the moral state or disposition of the soul having an influence on the judgment; for it is no less true that a humble, candid, and impartial spirit influences the belief of moral truth, or truth that involves in its consequences the devoting of the whole life to God, than that a selfish and corrupt spirit influences the rejection of it. Surely it is not owing to the human faculties being thrown into disorder that a holy frame of mind in believers enables them to understand the Scriptures better than the best expositor! The experience of every Christian bears witness that

the more spiritually-minded he is, the better he is prepared for the discernment of spiritual things.

Mr. M'Lean thinks I have mistaken the meaning of the term *heart*, in applying it to the dispositions and affections of the soul, as distinguished from the understanding. When such phrases as *a heart of stone*, *a heart of flesh*, *a hard and impenitent heart*, *a tender heart*, *a heart to know the Lord*, &c. occur, though they suppose the intellectual faculty, yet there can be no doubt, I should think, of their expressing the state of the will and affections, rather than of the understanding. I have no objection, however, to the account given of the term by Dr. Owen, that "it generally denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil." The term may sometimes apply to what is simply natural; but it generally, as he says, denotes the principle of moral action, which, being comprehended in love, must in all cases, whether it relate to good or evil, include affection. And thus, in his *Treatise on Justice*, Dr Owen observes that "assent is an act of the understanding only; but believing is an act of the heart, which in Scripture compriseth all the faculties of the soul as one entire principle of moral and spiritual duties: 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' Rom. x. 10. And it is frequently described by an act of the will, though it be not so alone. But without an act of the will no man can believe as he ought. See John v. 40; i. 12; vi. 35. We come to Christ as an act of the will; 'And let whosoever will, come:' and to be willing is taken for believing, Psal. cx. 3. And unbelief is disobedience, Heb. iii. 18, 19."—Chap. I. p. 108.

Nay, Mr. M. himself acknowledges nearly as much as this. He says, "The Scriptures always represent the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit as exerted upon the heart, which includes not only the understanding, but the will and affections, or the prevalent inclinations and dispositions of the soul."—*Works*, Vol. II. p. 91.

That disposition, in rational beings, presupposes perception, I never doubted; but that it is *produced* by it is much easier asserted than proved. Knowledge is a concomitant in many cases where it is not a cause. If all holy disposition be produced by just perceptions, all evil disposition is produced by unjust or erroneous ones. Indeed, this is no more than Mr. M'Lean, on some occasions at least, is prepared to admit. He tells us that "the word of God represents the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of the mind, with regard to spiritual things, as the source of men's alienation from the life of God, and of their rebelling against him,"—p. 77. Does he really think, then, that the passages of Scripture to which he refers mean simple ignorance? If not, they make nothing for his argument. Does he seriously consider the *blindness* or *hardness* of heart, in Eph. iv. 18, as referring to ignorance, *in distinction* from aversion, or as *including* it? Can he imagine that the darkness in which Satan holds mankind is any other than a chosen and beloved darkness, described in the following passages? "They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."—"The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed."

That voluntary blindness renders sinners estranged from God I can easily understand, nor am I at any loss to conceive of its being "that by which

\* Eph. iv. 18, 19: Acts xxvi. 18; Eph. vi. 12; Col. i. 13.

† Πῶρος, Parkhurst observes, is from *πῶρω*, and signifies *hardness*, *callousness*, or *blindness*. "It is not mere ignorance," says Dr. Owen, "but a stubborn resistance of light and conviction; an obdurate hardness, whence it rejects the impressions of Divine truth."—*Discourses on the Holy Spirit*, Book III. Chap. III.

Satan reigns, and maintains his power over the minds of men;" but I do not perceive, in any of these facts, the proof of disposition having its origin in ignorance. Two friends, whom I will call Matthew and Mark, were one evening conversing on this subject, when the following sentiments were exchanged. All sin (said Matthew) arises from ignorance.—Do you think then (said Mark) that God will condemn men for what is owing to a want of natural capacity?—O no (said Matthew); it is a *voluntary* ignorance to which I refer; a *not liking* to retain God in their knowledge.—Then (said Mark) you reason in a circle; your argument amounts to this: All sin arises from ignorance, and this ignorance arises from sin; or, which is the same thing, from aversion to the light!

If Mr. M'Lean, or others, will maintain that sin is the effect of *simple* ignorance, (and this they must maintain, or what they hold is nothing different from that which they oppose,) let them seriously consider a few of its consequences, as drawn by some of our modern infidels. It is on this principle that Mr. Godwin, in his treatise on *Political Justice*, denies the original depravity of human nature; explains away all ideas of guilt, crime, desert, and accountableness; and represents the devil himself as a being of considerable virtue. Thus he reasons:—

"The moral characters of men originate in their perceptions. As there are no innate perceptions or ideas, there are no innate principles.—The moral qualities of men are the produce of the impressions made upon them, and THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ORIGINAL PROPENSITY TO EVIL."—Book I. Chap. III.

Again, "Vice is nothing more than error and mistake reduced to practice.—Acting from an ill motive is acting from a mistaken motive.—Under the system of necessity, (that is, as held by him,) the ideas of GUILT, CRIME, DESERT, and ACCOUNTABLENESS HAVE NO PLACE."—Book IV. Chap. IV.—VI. pp. 254, 314.

Again, "Virtue is the offspring of the understanding.—It is only another name for a clear and distinct perception of the value of the object.—Virtue, therefore, is ordinarily connected with great talents—Cæsar and Alexander had their virtues.—They imagined their conduct conducive to the general good.—the devil, as described by Milton, also was A BEING OF CONSIDERABLE VIRTUE!!! Why did he rebel against his Maker? Because he saw no sufficient reason for that extreme inequality of rank and power which the Creator assumed.—After his fall, why did he still cherish the spirit of opposition? From a persuasion that he was hardly and injuriously treated.—He was not discouraged by the inequality of the contest!"—Book IV. Chap. IV. App. No. I. p. 261.

Allowing this writer his premises, I confess myself unable to refute his consequences. If all sin be the effect of ignorance, so far from its being *exceedingly sinful*, I am unable to perceive any sinfulness in it. It is one of the clearest dictates in nature, and that which is suggested by every man's conscience, that whatever he does wrong, if he know no better, and his ignorance be purely intellectual, or, as Mr. M'Lean calls it, *simple*—that is, if it be not owing to any neglect of means, but to the want of means, or of powers to use them—it is not his fault.

The intellectual powers of the soul, such as perception, judgment, and conscience, are not that to moral action which the first wheel of a machine is to those that follow; but that which light and plain directions are to a traveller, leaving him inexcusable if he walk not in the right way.

But I shall be told that it is not natural but spiritual knowledge for which Mr. M'Lean pleads, as the cause of holy disposition. True; but he pleads for it upon the *general* principle of its being the established order of the

human mind that disposition should be produced by knowledge. Moreover, if spiritual knowledge should be found *to include approbation*, it cannot, with propriety, be so distinguished from it as to be a cause of which the other is the effect; for to say that all disposition arises from knowledge, and that that knowledge *includes approbation*, is to reason in a circle, exactly as, in the case just supposed, Matthew reasoned on all sin arising from ignorance, which ignorance *included aversion*.

That spiritual knowledge includes approbation in its very nature, and not merely in its effect, appears evident to me from two considerations. First, It is the opposite of *spiritual blindness*, 2 Cor. iv. 4—6; Eph. v. 8. But spiritual blindness includes in its very nature, and not merely in its effect, an aversion to the truth. Mr. Ecking (whose *Essays on Grace, Faith, and Experience* have been reprinted by the friends of this system, as containing what they account, no doubt, an able defence of their principles) allows the inability of the sinner to *consist* in his loving darkness rather than light, and his disinclination to depend upon a holy sovereign God, and not in the want of rational faculties. Describing this inability in other words, he considers it as composed of “error, ignorance, and unbelief,” in which he places the “disease” of the sinner, “THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE NATURAL MAN’S DARKNESS;” and the opposites of them he makes to be “truth, knowledge, and faith, which being implanted,” he says, “the soul must be renewed,”—pp. 66, 67.\* If Mr. E. understood what he wrote, he must mean to represent spiritual light as the proper opposite of spiritual darkness; and as he allows the latter, “in the very ESSENCE of it, to include aversion,” he must allow the former in the very essence of it to include approbation. Secondly, The objects perceived are of such a nature as to be known only by a *sense* of their Divine excellency, which contains in it more than a simple knowledge, even an approbation of the heart. Those who have written upon the powers of the soul, have represented “that whereby we receive ideas of beauty and harmony as having all the characters of a *sense*, an *internal sense*.”† And Mr. Ecking, after all that he says against a principle of grace in the heart antecedently to believing, allows that “we must have a spiritual principle before we can discern Divine beauties.”‡ But the very essence of Scriptural knowledge consists in the discernment of Divine beauties, or the *GLORY of God in the face of Jesus Christ*. To speak of faith in Christ antecedent to this is only to speak at random. The reason given why the gospel report was not believed is, that, in the esteem of men, the Messiah had *no form nor comeliness in him, nor beauty, that they should desire him*. To say we must have a spiritual principle before we can discern Divine beauties, is, therefore, the same thing in effect as to say we must have a spiritual principle before we can believe the gospel.

I will close this letter by an extract from President Edwards’s *Treatise on the Affections*, not merely as showing his judgment, but as containing what I consider a clear, Scriptural, and satisfactory statement of the nature of spiritual knowledge.

“If the Scriptures are of any use to teach us any thing, there is such a thing as a *spiritual supernatural understanding* of Divine things that is peculiar to the saints, and which those who are not saints have nothing of. It is certainly a kind of understanding, apprehending, or discerning of Divine things, that natural men have nothing of, which the apostle speaks of in 1 Cor. ii. 14, ‘But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because

\* I have only the first edition of Mr. E.’s *Essays*, and therefore am obliged to quote from it.

† Chambers’s Dictionary, Art. Sense.

‡ *Essays*, p. 67.

they are spiritually discerned.' It is certainly a kind of seeing or discerning spiritual things peculiar to the saints which is spoken of in 1 John iii. 6, 'Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him;' 3 John 2, 'He that doeth evil hath not seen God;' and John vi. 40, 'This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.' Chap. xiv. 19, 'The world seeth me no more, but ye see me.' Chap. xvii. 3, 'This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' Matt. xi. 27, 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.' John xii. 45, 'He that seeth me seeth him that sent me.' Psal. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.' Phil. iii. 8, 'I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Verse 10, 'That I may know him.' And innumerable other places there are, all over the Bible, which show the same. And that there is such a thing as an understanding of Divine things, which in its nature and kind is wholly different from all knowledge that natural men have, is evident from this, that there is an understanding of Divine things which the Scripture calls spiritual understanding: Col. i. 9, 'We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' It has already been shown that that which is *spiritual*, in the ordinary use of the word in the New Testament, is entirely different, in nature and kind, from all which natural men are or can be the subjects of.

"Hence it may be surely inferred wherein spiritual understanding consists. For if there be in the saints a kind of apprehension or perception which is, in its nature, perfectly diverse from all that natural men have, or that it is possible they should have, till they have a new nature, it must consist in their having a certain kind of ideas or sensations of mind which are simply diverse from all that is or can be in the minds of natural men. And that is the same thing as to say that it consists in the sensations of a *new spiritual sense*, which the souls of natural men have not, as is evident by what has been before once and again observed. But I have already shown what that new spiritual sense is which the saints have given them in regeneration, and what is the object of it. I have shown that the immediate object of it is the supreme beauty and excellency of the nature of Divine things as they are in themselves. And this is agreeable to the Scripture: the apostle very plainly teaches that the great thing discovered by spiritual light and understood by spiritual knowledge is the glory of Divine things. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them; together with verse 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;' and chap. iii. 18, 'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' And it must needs be so, for, as has been before observed, the Scripture often teaches that all true religion summarily consists in the love of Divine things. And therefore that kind of understanding or knowledge which is the proper foundation of true religion must be the knowledge of the *loveliness of Divine things*. For, doubtless, that knowledge which is the proper foundation of *love* is the knowledge of *loveliness*. What that beauty or loveliness of Divine things is, which is the proper and immediate object of a spiritual sense of mind, was shown under the last

head insisted on, viz. that it is the beauty of their moral perfection. Therefore it is in the view or sense of this that spiritual understanding does more immediately and primarily consist. And indeed it is plain it can be nothing else; for (as has been shown) there is nothing pertaining to Divine things besides the beauty of their moral excellency, and those properties and qualities of Divine things which this beauty is the foundation of, but what natural men and devils can see and know, and will know fully and clearly to all eternity.

“From what has been said, therefore, we come necessarily to this conclusion, concerning that wherein spiritual understanding consists; viz. That it consists in *a sense of the heart of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of Divine things, together with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion that depends upon and flows from such a sense.*

“Spiritual understanding consists primarily in *a sense of heart of that spiritual beauty.* I say *a sense of heart*; for it is not speculation merely that is concerned in this kind of understanding; nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of understanding and will, as acting distinctly and separately in this matter. When the mind is sensible of the sweet beauty and amiableness of a thing, that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the idea of it; and this sensibleness of the amiableness or delightfulness of beauty carries, in the very nature of it, the sense of the heart; or an effect and impression the soul is the subject of, as a substance possessed of taste, inclination, and will.

“There is a distinction to be made between a mere *notional understanding*, wherein the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and *the sense of the heart*, wherein the mind does not only *speculate and behold*, but *relishes and feels*. That sort of knowledge by which a man has a sensible perception of amiableness and loathsomeness, or of sweetness and nauseousness, is not just the same sort of knowledge with that by which he knows what a triangle is, and what a square is. The one is mere speculative knowledge; the other sensible knowledge, in which more than the mere intellect is concerned; the heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul as a being that not only beholds, but has inclination, and is pleased or displeased. And yet there is the nature of instruction in it; as he that has perceived the sweet taste of honey knows much more about it than he who has only looked upon and felt of it.

“The apostle seems to make a distinction between mere speculative knowledge of the things of religion, and spiritual knowledge, in calling that ‘the form of knowledge, and of the truth;’ Rom. ii. 20, ‘Which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.’ The latter is often represented by relishing, smelling, or tasting: 2 Cor. ii. 14, ‘Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place.’ Matt. xvi. 23, ‘Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.’ 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3, ‘As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.’ Cant. i. 3, ‘Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee;’ compared with 1 John ii. 20, ‘But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.’

“Spiritual understanding *primarily* consists in this *sense, or taste, of the moral beauty of Divine things*; so that no knowledge can be called spiritual any further than it arises from this, and has this in it. But, *secondarily*, it includes *all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion which depends upon and flows from such a sense.* When the true beauty and



amiableness of the holiness, or true moral good, that is in Divine things, is discovered to the soul, it as it were opens a new world to its view. This shows the glory of all the perfections of God, and of every thing appertaining to the Divine Being; for, as was observed before, the beauty of all arises from God's moral perfections. This shows the glory of all God's works, both of creation and providence; for it is the special glory of them that God's holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness are so manifested in them; and without these moral perfections there would be no glory in that power and skill with which they are wrought. The glorifying of God's moral perfections is the special end of all the works of God's hands. By this sense of the moral beauty of Divine things is understood the sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator; for it is only by the discovery of the beauty of the moral perfections of Christ that the believer is let into the knowledge of the excellence of his person, so as to know any thing more of it than the devils do: and it is only by the knowledge of the excellence of Christ's person that any know his sufficiency as a Mediator; for the latter depends upon and arises from the former. It is by seeing the excellence of Christ's person that the saints are made sensible of the preciousness of his blood, and its sufficiency to atone for sin; for therein consists the preciousness of Christ's blood, that it is the blood of so excellent and amiable a person. And on this depends the meritoriousness of his obedience, and sufficiency and prevalence of his intercession. By this sight of the moral beauty of Divine things is seen the beauty of the way of salvation by Christ; for that consists in the beauty of the moral perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every step of this method of salvation from beginning to end. By this is seen the fitness and suitableness of this way; for this wholly consists in its tendency to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to the happiness which consists in the possession and enjoyment of moral good, in a way sweetly agreeing with God's moral perfections. And, in the way's being contrived so as to attain these ends, consists the excellent wisdom of that way. By this is seen the excellence of the word of God: take away all the moral beauty and sweetness in the word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing. By this is seen the true foundation of our duty, the worthiness of God to be so esteemed, honoured, loved, submitted to, and served, as he requires of us, and the amiableness of the duties themselves that are required of us. And by this is seen the true evil of sin; for he who sees the beauty of holiness must necessarily see the hatefulness of sin, its contrary. By this men understand the true glory of heaven, which consists in the beauty and happiness that is in holiness. By this is seen the amiableness and happiness of both saints and angels. He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fulness of all things, without which all the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. Unless this is seen, nothing is seen that is worth the seeing; for there is no other true excellency or beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding. This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of Divinity, (if I may so speak,) the good of the infinite fountain of good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil, without which we ourselves had better never have been, and without which there had better have been no being. He therefore, in effect, knows nothing that knows not this. His knowledge is but the shadow of knowledge, or, as the apostle calls it, the form of knowledge. Well, therefore, may the Scripture represent those who are destitute of that spiritual sense, by which is perceived the beauty of holiness, as totally blind, deaf, and senseless; yea, dead. And well may regene-

ration, in which this Divine sense is given to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the blind eyes, and raising the dead, and bringing a person into a new world. For if what has been said be considered, it will be manifest that when a person has this sense and knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before: though before he *knew* all things after the flesh, yet henceforth he will 'know them so no more;' and he is become 'a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new;' agreeably to 2 Cor. v. 16, 17.

"And besides the things that have been already mentioned, there arises from this sense of spiritual beauty all true experimental knowledge of religion; which is of itself, as it were, a new world of knowledge. He that does not see the beauty of holiness knows not what one of the graces of God's Spirit is; he is destitute of any idea or conception of all gracious exercises of soul, and all holy comforts and delights, and all effects of the saving influences of the Spirit of God on the heart; and so is ignorant of the greatest works of God, the most important and glorious effects of his power upon the creature; and also is wholly ignorant of the saints as saints; he knows not what they are; and in effect is ignorant of the whole spiritual world.

"Things being thus, it plainly appears that God's implanting that spiritual supernatural sense which has been spoken of makes a great change in a man. And were it not for the very imperfect degree in which this sense is commonly given at first, or the small degree of this glorious light that first dawns upon the soul, the change made by this spiritual opening of the eyes in conversion would be much greater, and more remarkable, every way, than if a man who had been born blind, and with only the other four senses, should continue so a long time, and then at once should have the sense of seeing imparted to him, in the midst of the clear light of the sun, discovering a world of visible objects. For though sight be more noble than any of the other external senses, yet this spiritual sense which has been spoken of is infinitely more noble than that, or any other principle of discerning that a man naturally has, and the object of this sense infinitely greater and more important.

"This sort of understanding, or knowledge, is that knowledge of Divine things whence all truly gracious affections do proceed; by which, therefore, all affections are to be tried. Those affections that arise wholly from any other kind of knowledge, or do result from any other kind of apprehensions of mind, are vain!"—pp. 225-232.

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## LETTER VII.

AN INQUIRY WHETHER, IF BELIEVING BE A SPIRITUAL ACT OF THE MIND, IT DOES NOT SUPPOSE THE SUBJECT OF IT TO BE SPIRITUAL.

MR. SANDEMAN, and many of his admirers, if I understand them, consider the mind as passive in believing, and charge those who consider faith as an act of the mind with making it a *work*, and so of introducing the doctrine of justification by a work of our own.

Mr. Eeking sometimes writes as if he adopted this principle; for he speaks of a person being "passive in receiving the truth,"—p. 73. In another place, however, he is very explicit to the contrary. "Their notion is absurd," he

says, "who, in order to appear more than ordinarily accurate, censure and solemnly condemn the idea of believing being an *act* of the mind. It is acknowledged, indeed, that very unscriptural sentiments have prevailed about *acts of faith*, when they are supposed to arise from some previous principle well disposing the minds of unbelievers toward the gospel. Yet if it be admitted possible for the soul of man to act, (and who will deny that it does?) there is nothing more properly an act of the mind than believing a truth; in which first the mind perceives it, then considers the evidence offered to support it, and, finally, gives assent to it. And can this comport with inactivity? We must either say, then, that the soul acts in believing the gospel, or that the soul is an inactive spirit, which is absurd,"—p. 98. As Mr. E., in this passage, not only states his opinion, but gives his reasons for it, we must consider this as his fixed principle; and that which he says of the truth being "passively received" as expressive, not of faith, but of spiritual illumination *previously* to it. But if so, what does he mean by opposing a previous principle as necessary to believing? His acts of faith arise from spiritual illumination, which he also must consider as "well disposing the minds of unbelievers toward the gospel."

If there be any difference between him and those whom he opposes, it would seem to consist, not in the *necessity*, but in the *nature* of a previous change of mind; as whether it be proper to call it a *principle*, and to suppose it to include *life* as well as light. He no more considers the mind as discerning and believing the gospel without a previous change wrought in it by the Spirit of God than his opponents. Nay, as we have seen, he expressly, and, as he says, "readily acknowledges that we must have a spiritual *principle* before we can discern Divine beauties,"—p. 67. But if a spiritual principle be necessary to discern Divine beauties, it is necessary to discern and believe the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; for they are one and the same thing.

But the previous change which Mr. E. acknowledges, it will be said, is *by means of the word*. Be it so; yet it cannot be by the word *as spiritually discerned and believed*, for spiritual discernment and belief are supposed to be the effect of it.

Mr. E. says, indeed, that "the hinge upon which the inquiry turns is, *what* is that principle, and *how* is it implanted?" But this is mere evasion: for let the principle be *what* it may, and let it be implanted *how* it may, since it is allowed to be necessary "before we can discern Divine beauties," and of course before we can actively believe in Christ, the argument is given up.

The principle itself he makes to be "the word passively received;" but as this is supposed to be previously to "the discernment of Divine beauties," and to the soul's actively believing in Christ, it cannot of course have been produced by either: and to speak of the word becoming a spiritual principle in us before it is either understood or believed is going a step beyond his opponents. I have no doubt that the word of God, when it is once understood and believed, becomes a living principle of evangelical obedience. This I conceive to be the meaning of our Lord, when he told the woman of Samaria that "whosoever should drink of the water that he should give him, (that is, of the gospel,) it should be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." But for the word to become a principle before it is actively received, or, to use the language of Peter, before we have "purified our souls by obeying it," is that of which I can form no idea, and I suppose neither did Mr. Ecking.

As to the second part of what he calls the hinge of the inquiry, viz. *how* this principle is implanted? he endeavours to illustrate it by a number of

examples taken from the *miracles* of Christ, in which the word of Christ certainly did not operate on the mind in a way of motive presented to its consideration, but in a way similar to that of the Creator, when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Such is manifestly the idea conveyed by the words in John v. 25, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." To such an application of the word I have no objection. That for which I contend is, that there is a change effected in the soul of a sinner, called in Scripture "giving him eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to understand"—"a new heart, and a right spirit"—"a new creation," &c. &c.; that this change is antecedent to his actively believing in Christ for salvation; and that is not effected by motives addressed to the mind in a way of moral suasion, but by the mighty power of God.

Mr. M'Lean allows faith to be a *duty*, or an *act* of obedience. But if so, this obedience must be yielded either in a spiritual or in a carnal state. If the former, it is all that on this subject is pleaded for. If the latter, that is the same thing as supposing that the carnal mind, *while such*, is enabled to act spiritually, and that it thereby becomes spiritual.

To this purpose I wrote in my *Appendix*, pp. 204, 205: and what has Mr. M'Lean said in reply? Let him answer for himself. "This is a very unfair state of the question so far as it relates to the opinion of his opponents; for he represents them as maintaining that the Holy Spirit causes the mind *while carnal*, or before it is spiritually illuminated, to discern and believe spiritual things; and then he sets himself to argue against this contradiction of his own framing, as a thing impossible in its own nature, and as declared by the Holy Spirit to be so, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Were I to state Mr. F.'s sentiment thus, 'The Holy Spirit imparts to the mind *while carnal* a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth, would he not justly complain that I had misrepresented his view, and that he did not mean that the mind could possess any holy susceptibility while it was in a carnal state; but only that the Holy Spirit, by the very act of imparting this holy susceptibility and relish for the truth, removed the carnality of the mind? But then this explanation applies equally to the other side of the question; and surely it appears at least as consistent with the nature of things, and as easy to conceive, that the Holy Spirit should *in the first instance* communicate the light of truth to a dark carnal mind, and thereby render it spiritual, as that he should *prior* to that impart to it a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth.'"—*Reply*, p. 7.

Now, my friend, I entreat your close attention, and that of the reader, to this part of the subject; for here is the hinge of the present question.

I am accused of framing a contradiction which my opponents do not hold. They do not hold, then, it seems, that the Holy Spirit causes the mind *while carnal* to discern and believe spiritual things. Spiritual illumination precedes believing; such an illumination, too, as removes carnality from the mind, renders the soul spiritual, and so enables it to discern and believe spiritual things. Where then is the difference between us? Surely it does not consist in my holding with a previous principle as necessary to believing; for they profess to hold what amounts to the same thing. If there be any difference, however, it must lie in the *nature* of that which is communicated, or in the *order* in which it operates. And as to the first, seeing it is allowed to remove carnality, and to render the soul spiritual, there can be no material difference on this head. With respect to the second, namely, the *order* of its operations, Mr. M. thinks that the communication of the light of truth to a dark, carnal mind, whereby it is rendered spiritual, furnishes an easy and consistent view of things. To which I answer, If the carnality of the

mind were owing to its darkness, it would be so. But Mr. M. has himself told us a different tale, and that from unquestionable authority. "Our Lord," he says, "asks the Jews, 'Why do ye not understand my speech?' and gives this reason for it, '*even because ye cannot hear my word;*' that is, cannot endure my doctrine."—*Works*, Vol. II., p. 110.

Now if this be just, (and who can controvert it?) it is *not* easy to conceive how light introduced into the mind should be capable of removing carnality. It is easy to conceive of the removal of an effect by the removal of the cause, but not of the removal of a cause by the removal of the effect.

But whatever difference may remain as to the *order* of operation, the idea of a *previous* principle is held by Mr. M. as much as by his opponent. Only call it "Divine illumination, by which the dark and carnal mind is rendered spiritual," and he believes it.

In endeavouring to show the unfairness of the contradiction which I alleged against him, Mr. M. loses himself and his reader, by representing it as made to the *act of the Holy Spirit* in imparting spiritual light to the soul while carnal; whereas that which I alleged against him respected *the act of the creature* in discerning and believing spiritual things, while such. If God's communicating either light or holiness to a dark and carnal mind be a contradiction, it is of Mr. M.'s framing, and not mine; but I see no contradiction in it, so that it be in the natural order of things, any more than in his "quickening us when we were dead in trespasses and sins," which phraseology certainly does not denote that we are dead and alive at the same time! The *contradiction* alleged consisted in *the carnal mind's being supposed to act spiritually*, and not to its being *acted upon* by Divine influence, let that influence be what it might. It would be no contradiction to say of Tabitha, that life was imparted to her *while dead*; but it would be contradiction to affirm that while she was dead God caused her to open her eyes, and to look upon Peter!

Mr. M'Lean has, I allow, cleared himself of this contradiction, by admitting the sinner to be made spiritual through Divine illumination, *previously* to his believing in Christ; but then it is at the expense of the grand article in dispute, which he has thereby given up; maintaining, as much as his opponent, the idea of a previous principle, or of the soul's being rendered spiritual antecedently to its believing in Christ.

The principal ground on which Mr. M'Lean, Mr. Ecking, and all the writers on that side the question, rest their cause, is the use of such language as the following: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever."—"Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*."—"I have begotten you *through the gospel*."

On this phraseology I shall submit to you and the reader two or three observations:—

First, A being *begotten*, or *born again*, *by the word*, does not necessarily signify a being regenerated by *faith* in the word. Faith itself is ascribed to the word as well as regeneration; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" but if we say faith cometh by the word *believed*, that is the same as saying that it cometh by itself. Mr. M. has no idea of the word having any influence but as it is believed (Reply, pp. 16-34); yet he tells us (p. 113) that faith is "the *effect* of the regenerating influence of the Spirit and word of God." But if faith be the effect of the word *believed*, it must be the effect of itself. The truth is, the word may operate as an inducement to believe, as well as a stimulus to a new life when it is believed.

Secondly, The terms *regeneration*, *begotten*, *born again*, &c., are not always used in the same extent of meaning. They sometimes denote the

whole of that change which denominates us Christians, and which of course includes repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; and in this sense the foregoing passages are easily understood. But the question is whether regeneration, or those terms by which it is expressed in the Scriptures, such as being begotten, born again, quickened, &c., be not sometimes used in a stricter sense. Mr. M., confining what I had said on the *subject* of regeneration, as expressed by being *begotten, born again, &c.*, to the *term* itself, is "confident it bears no such meaning in the sacred writings,"—p. 17. But if a being born again, which is expressive of regeneration, be sometimes used to *account for faith*, as a cause accounts for its effect, that is all which the argument requires to be established. If it be necessary to be born again *in order to* believing, we cannot in this sense, unless the effect could be the means of producing the cause, be born again *by* believing. Whether this be the case, let the following passages determine.

John i. 11–13, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not; 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." I can conceive of no reason why the new birth is here introduced, but to *account* for some receiving Christ, or believing on his name, while others received him not. Calvin appears to have ordinarily considered regeneration in the *large sense* as stated above, and therefore speaks of it as an *effect* of faith. Yet, when commenting on this passage, perceiving that it is here introduced to *account for faith*, he writes thus; "Hereupon it followeth, first, That faith proceedeth not from us, but that it is a fruit of spiritual regeneration, for the evangelist saith (in effect) that no man can believe unless he be begotten of God; therefore faith is a heavenly gift. Secondly, That faith is not a cold and bare knowledge, seeing none can believe but he that is fashioned again by the Spirit of God. Notwithstanding it seemeth that the evangelist dealeth *disorderly* in putting regeneration before faith, seeing that it is rather an *effect* of faith, and therefore to be set after it." To this objection he answers that "both may very well agree," and goes on to expound the subject of regeneration as sometimes denoting the producing of faith itself, and sometimes of a new life *by* faith.

John iii. 3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." On this passage Dr. Campbell, in his notes, is very particular, proving that by the kingdom or reign of God is meant that of Messiah in this world; and that *οὐ δύναται* (*cannot*) denotes the incapacity of the unregenerate to discern and believe the gospel. The import of this passage is, in his apprehension, this:—"The man who is not regenerated, or born again of water and Spirit, is not in a capacity of perceiving the reign of God, though it were commenced. Though the kingdom of the saints on the earth were already established, the unregenerate would not discern it, because it is a spiritual, not a worldly kingdom, and capable of being no otherwise than spiritually discerned. And as the kingdom itself would remain unknown to him, he could not share in the blessings enjoyed by the subjects of it.—The same sentiment occurs in 1 Cor. ii. 14."

1 Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Mr. M., in his *Discourses on the Parable of the Sower*, says, "It is a doctrine clearly taught in the Scriptures, that none have a true understanding of the gospel but such as are taught of God by the special illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit. We are expressly told that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for

they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And in answering an objector—who asks, "What particular truth or sentiment is communicated to the mind by the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, and which unenlightened men can have no idea of?"—Mr. M. says, "It is not pleaded that any truth or sentiment is communicated to the mind by the Spirit *besides what is already clearly revealed in the word*; and the illumination of the Spirit is to MAKE MEN PERCEIVE AND UNDERSTAND THAT REVELATION WHICH IS ALREADY GIVEN IN ITS TRUE LIGHT."—*Sermons*, pp. 78, 80, 81.

Mr. M.'s object, through this whole paragraph, seems to be to prove that the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit is *necessary in order to our understanding the Scriptures*; but if so, it cannot be *by* the Scriptures as understood that we are thus illuminated, for this were a contradiction. It cannot be by any particular truth or sentiment revealed, any more than unrevealed, that we possess "eyes to see, ears to hear, or a heart to understand" it. If the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit consisted in imparting any particular truth or sentiment to the mind, even that which is revealed in the Scriptures, where would be the *mystery* of the operation? Instead of being compared to the operations of the wind, of which *we know nothing but by its effects*,\* it might have been ranked among the operations of motives as suggested by man to man, or, at least, as put into the mind by the providence of God so ordering it that such thoughts should strike and influence the mind at the time, Ezra vii. 27. But this would not answer to the Scriptural accounts of our being quickened, who were dead in sins, by the *power* of God; even by the exceeding greatness of his power, according to that which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

Mr. M. has taken great pains to show the absurdity of my reasoning on this subject; yet the sum of it is this, *That which is necessary in order to understanding and believing the word cannot be by means of understanding and believing it.*

All true knowledge of Divine things is no doubt to be ascribed to the word as the objective cause, in the same way as corporeal perception is ascribed to light. We cannot see without light; neither can we understand or believe spiritual things but by the word of God. But the question does not relate to what is objective, but subjective; or, if I might speak in reference to what is corporeal, not to light, but discernment. Mr. Eeking speaks of light shining into a dark room, and of the absurdity of supposing there must be some principles of light in this room which disposed it to receive that which shone into it,—p. 68. But if by the light he mean the gospel, he should rather have compared it to light shining upon a blind man, and have shown the absurdity, if he could, of supposing it necessary for his eyes to be opened ere he could discern or enjoy it. There is nothing in a dark room to resist the light, but that is not the case with the dark soul of a sinner. "The light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth (or, as Campbell renders it, *admitteth*) it not."

Though I cannot think, with Mr. E., that the word of God becomes a spiritual principle in us till it is actively received, yet I allow that it is productive of great effects. The understanding and conscience being enlightened by it, many open sins are forsaken, and many things done in a way of what is called religious duty. And though I have no notion of directing sinners to a course of previous humiliation, nor opinion of the efforts of man toward preparing himself for the reception of Divine grace; yet I believe God ordinarily so deals with men as gradually to beat down their false con-

\* Such is the meaning of John iii. 8, according to Campbell, and all other expositors that I have seen.

fidences, and reduce them to extremity, ere they are brought to embrace the gospel. Such things are not necessarily connected with faith or salvation. In many instances they have their issue in mere self-righteous hope; and where it is otherwise, they are to faith and salvation, as I have said before, but as the *noise* and the *shaking* of the dry bones to the *breath of life*.

Moreover, the word of God produces still greater and better effects *when it is believed*. In them that believe "it worketh effectually." When the commandment comes to a soul in its spirituality, it gives him to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and when the gospel comes not in word only, but in power, it produces mighty effects. It is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." It operated before to the "pulling down of strong holds," and the casting down of many a vain "imagination;" but now it "bringeth every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ." It is thus that we "know the truth, and the truth (as known) makes us free." If once we are enabled to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it changes us into the same image, begets and excites holy affections, and produces every kind of gracious exercise.

The gospel is the mould into which the mind of the believer is cast, and by which it is formed. The statement of Dr. Owen, as quoted by Mr. Ecking, is very just and Scriptural. "As the word is in the gospel, so is grace in the heart; yea, they are the same things variously expressed, Rom. vi. 17. As our translation doth not, so I know not how in so few words to express that which is so emphatically here insinuated by the Holy Spirit. The meaning is, that the doctrine of the gospel begets the *form, figure, image, or likeness* of itself in the hearts of them that believe: so they are cast into the *mould* of it. As is the one, so is the other. The principle of grace in the heart, and that in the word, are as children of the same parent, completely resembling and representing one another. Grace is a living word, and the word is figured, limned grace. As we have heard, so have we seen and found it: such a soul can produce the duplicate of the word, and so adjust all things thereby," &c.\*

All this describes the effect of the word on those *who believe it*; but the question is, how we come to believe it? Dr. Owen has elsewhere attempted to solve this difficulty, by proving that a principle of spiritual life is communicated to the sinner in regeneration, antecedently to believing.† He doubtless considered these things as consistent with each other; and though Mr. Ecking in making the quotation appears to consider them as contradictory, yet while he admits that "we must have a spiritual principle before we can discern Divine beauties," the same contradiction, if such it be, attaches to himself.

I allow, with Dr. Owen, that the Spirit of God makes use of "the reasons, motives, and persuasive arguments which the word affords, to affect the mind; and that converted persons are able to give some account of the considerations whereby they were prevailed upon." But I also think, with him, that "the *whole* work of the Spirit in our conversion does not consist herein; but that there is a real physical work whereby he imparts spiritual life to the souls of all who are truly regenerated."‡

Mr. M'Lean rejects the idea of *physical influence*, and seems to confound it with something corporeal or mechanical.—*Works*, p. 84. If I understand the term *physical*, with respect to influence, it is opposed to moral. That influence is denominated moral that works upon the mind by motives or considerations which induce it to this or that, and all beyond this is physical

\* On Psalm 130, pp. 168–170: in Ecking's *Essays*, pp. 77–79.

† Discourses on the Holy Spirit, Book III. C. 1.

‡ Discourses on the Holy Spirit, Book III. C. 5, sec. 18.



and supernatural. When God created the soul of man originally in righteousness and true holiness, I suppose it must be allowed to have been a physical work. Man certainly was not induced by motives to be righteous any more than to be rational; yet there was nothing corporeal or mechanical in it. It is thus that I understand Dr. Owen in the passage just quoted, in which, while he admits of the use of moral suasion, he denies that the *whole* work of conversion consists in it; and I should think Mr. M. could not upon his own principles maintain the contrary. For whatever motives or considerations the word of God may furnish in a way of moral suasion, yet he holds with the necessity of a Divine supernatural influence being superadded to it, by which the mind is illuminated and rendered spiritual. But if Divine influence consist in any thing distinct from the influence of the word, it must be supernatural and physical. The party is also equally unconscious of it on his principles as on mine: he is conscious of nothing but its effects. He finds himself the subject of new views and sensations; but as to knowing whence they came, it is likely he thinks nothing of it at the time, and is ready to imagine that any person, if he would but look into the Bible, must see what he sees so plainly taught in it. He may be conscious of ideas suggested to him by the word, and of their effect upon his mind; but as to any Divine influence accompanying them, he knows nothing of it.

Mr. Ecking represents "the inability or spiritual death of sinners as *consisting in disinclination*, or loving darkness rather than light." And this disinclination he ascribes to *ignorance* and *unbelief*; whence he argues, "If the removal of the effect is by removing the cause, it is reasonable to suppose that this is the way in which God works upon the human mind,"—p. 66. That the removal of the effect is by the removal of the cause I allow; but what authority had Mr. E. for making ignorance and unbelief the cause of spiritual death? Spiritual death *consists in* ignorance and unbelief, no less than in disinclination. It consists in *sin* (Eph. ii. 1); and if ignorance and unbelief are sins, they are of the essence of spiritual death. It is true they are productive of other sins, and may be considered as growing near to the root of moral evil: but unless a thing can be the cause of itself, they are not the cause of *all* evil. Before we ascribe spiritual death to ignorance, it is necessary to inquire whether this ignorance be voluntary or involuntary? If *involuntary*, it is in itself sinless; and to represent this as the cause of depravity is to join with Godwin in explaining away all innate principles of evil, and indeed all moral evil and accountableness, from among men. If *voluntary*, the solution does not reach the bottom of the subject; for the question still returns, what is the cause of the voluntariness of ignorance, or of the sinner's *loving* darkness rather than light? Is this also to be ascribed to ignorance? If so, the same consequence follows as before, that there is no such thing as moral evil or accountableness among men.

Mr. M'Lean has stated this subject much clearer than Mr. Ecking. He may elsewhere have written in a very different strain; but, in the last edition of his *Dissertation on the Influences of the Holy Spirit*, he attributes ignorance and unbelief to hatred, and not hatred to ignorance and unbelief. "Our Lord," he says, "asks the Jews, *Why do ye not understand my speech?* And gives this reason for it, *even because ye cannot hear my word*—that is, cannot endure my doctrine. Their love of worldly honour and the applause of men is given as a reason why they could not believe in him, John v. 44. He traces their unbelief into their HATRED both of him and his Father, John xv. 22, 24."—*Works*, Vol. II. p. 110.

Nothing is more evident than that the cause of spiritual blindness is, in the Scriptures, ascribed to disposition. "Light is come into the world; but

men *love darkness* rather than light because their deeds are evil.”—“They say unto God, Depart from us, for we *desire not* the knowledge of thy ways.”—“Being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, *because of the blindness* (hardness, or callousness) *of their heart.*”—“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.” But if, as the Scriptures teach, the cause of both ignorance and unbelief is to be traced to *hatred* (as Mr. M’Lean acknowledges); and if, as Mr. Ecking says, “effects are removed by the removal of the cause;” I scarcely need to draw the consequence—that though in a general sense it be true that we are regenerated *by* believing the gospel, yet in a more particular sense it is equally true that we are regenerated *in order to it.*

It is somewhat extraordinary that Mr. M’Lean, after allowing pride and aversion to be the great obstructions to faith, should yet deny the removal of them to be necessary to it. He will allow some sort of conviction of sin to be necessary to believing in Christ; but nothing that includes the removal of enmity or pride, for this were equal to allowing repentance to be necessary to it; but if enmity and pride be not removed, how can the sinner, according to our Lord’s reasoning in John viii. 43; v. 44, understand or believe the gospel? If there be any meaning in words, it is supposed by this language that, in order to understand and believe the gospel, it is necessary to “endure” the doctrine and to feel a regard to “the honour that cometh from God.” To account for the removal of pride and enmity as *bars to believing, by means of believing,* is, I say, very extraordinary, and as inconsistent with Mr. M.’s own concessions as it is with Scripture and reason; for when writing on spiritual illumination, he allows the dark and carnal mind to be thereby rendered spiritual, and so enabled to discern and believe spiritual things.—*Reply*, p. 7.

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## LETTER VIII.

AN INQUIRY WHETHER THE PRINCIPLES HERE DEFENDED AFFECT THE DOCTRINE OF FREE JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

You are aware that this subject has frequently occurred in the foregoing letters; but being of the first importance, I wish to appropriate one letter wholly to it. If any thing I have advanced be inconsistent with justification by faith alone, in opposition to justification by the works of the law, I am not aware of it; and on conviction that it is so, should feel it my duty to retract it. I know Mr. M’Lean has laboured hard to substantiate this charge against me; but I know also that it belongs to the adherents of the system to claim the exclusive possession of this doctrine, and to charge others with error concerning it, on very insufficient grounds.\* You may

\* I do not mean to suggest that Mr. M’Lean’s *system* is precisely that of Mr. Sandeman. The former, in his *Thoughts on the Calls of the Gospel*, has certainly departed from it in many things, particularly in respect of the sinner’s being justified antecedently to any “act, exercise, or advance” of his mind towards Christ; and on which account Mr. S. would have set him down among the *popular preachers*.† But he has so much of the system of Mr. S. still in his mind as often to reason upon the ground of it, and to involve himself in numerous inconsistencies.

† See Letters on Theron and Aspasio, Vol. II. p. 481, Note.

remember, perhaps, that Dr. Gill was accused of self-righteousness by Mr. Sandeman, on the ground of his being an anti-pædo-baptist!

A large part of that which Mr. M'Lean has written on this subject is what I never meant to oppose; much of what he imputes to me is without foundation; and even where my sentiments are introduced they are generally in caricature.

I have no doubt of the character which a sinner sustains antecedently to his justification, both in the account of the Lawgiver of the world and in his own account, being that of *ungodly*. I have no objection to Mr. M.'s own statement, that God may as properly be said to justify the ungodly as to pardon the guilty. If the sinner at the instant of justification be allowed *not to be at enmity with God*, that is all I contend for, and that is in effect allowed by Mr. M. He acknowledges that the apostle "does not use the word *ungodly* to describe the *existing character* of an actual believer,"—p. 123. But if so, as no man is justified till he is an actual believer, no man is justified in enmity to God. He also considers faith, justification, and sanctification as coeval, and allows that no believer *is* in a state of enmity to God, —p. 43. It follows, that as no man is justified till he believes in Jesus, no man is justified till he ceases to be God's enemy. If this be granted, all is granted for which I contend.

If there be any meaning in words, Mr. Sandeman considered the term *ungodly* as denoting *the existing state of the mind* in a believer at the time of his justification; for he professes to have been at enmity with God, or, which is the same thing, not to have "begun to love him," till he was justified, and even perceived that he was so.\* It was this notion that I wished to oppose, and not any thing relative to the character under which the sinner is justified. Mr. M.'s third question, namely, "whether justifying faith respects God as the justifier of the ungodly," was never any question with me. Yet he will have it that I "make the apostle by the term ungodly to mean godly." He might as well say that when I allow pardon to respect men as guilty, and yet plead for repentance as necessary to it, I make repentance and guilt to be the same thing.

I am not aware of any difference with Mr. M. as to what constitutes a godly *character*. Though faith is necessary to justification, and therefore in the order of nature previous to it, yet I have no objection to what he says, that it does not constitute a godly *character* or *state*, previously to justification,—p. 145. And whatever I have written of *repentance* as preceding faith in Christ, or of a *holy* faith as necessary to justification, I do not consider any person as a penitent or holy *character* till he believes in Christ and is justified. The holiness for which I plead antecedent to this is merely incipient; the rising beam of the sanctification of the Spirit. It is no more than the spirituality which Mr. M. considers as produced by Divine illumination previously or in order to believing (p. 7); and all the consequences that he has charged on the one might with equal justice be charged on the other.

Nor am I aware of any difference in our views respecting *the duties of unbelievers*; if there be any, however, it is not on the side that Mr. M. imagines, but the contrary. Having described the awakened sinner as "convinced of guilt, distressed in his mind on account of it, really concerned about the salvation of his soul, and not only earnestly desiring relief, but diligently labouring to obtain it, according to the directions given him by the exercise of holy affections and dispositions," he adds, "All this I admit may be previous to faith in Christ and forgiveness through him. *And will*

\* Epistolary Correspondence, p. 12.

*Mr. Fuller deny this is the repentance he pleads for in order to forgiveness?*" —p. 148. MOST CERTAINLY HE WILL. Had this been what he pleaded for, he had been justly chargeable with the consequences which Mr. M'Lean has attempted to load him with. But it is not. I cannot but consider this question as a proof that Mr. M. utterly mistook my sentiments on this part of the subject, as much as I did his in another, in consequence of having considered him as the author of a piece called *Simple Truth*. I have no more idea of there being any holiness in the exercises which he has described than he himself has. I might add, *nor quite so much*; for notwithstanding what he has here advanced, in his *Thoughts on the Calls of the Gospel*, he does not keep clear of unregenerate works being somewhat good, or at least that they are not *all* and *altogether* sinful.\* If this be compared with what I have written on *total depravity*, in my Dialogues and Letters, it will be seen who holds and who holds not with the holiness of the doings of the unregenerate.

But whether or not I deny this to be the repentance for which I plead as necessary to forgiveness, Mr. M. plainly intimates that *it is all the repentance which HE allows to be so*. In all that he has written therefore, acknowledging repentance to be necessary to forgiveness, he only means to allow that a few graceless convictions are so; and in contradiction to the whole current of Scripture, even to those scriptures which he has produced and reasoned from in his *Thoughts on the Calls of the Gospel*, still believes that sinners are forgiven prior to any repentance but that which needs to be repented of.—*Reply*, pp. 36–42.

The difference between us, as to the subject of this Letter, seems chiefly to respect the nature of faith, whether it include any exercise of the will; and, if it do, whether it affect the doctrine of free justification.

Mr. M. acknowledges faith, as a principle of sanctification, to be holy; it is only *as justifying* that he is for excluding all holy affection from it,—p. 97. But if it be holy in relation to sanctification, it must be *holy in itself*; and that which is holy in itself must be so in every relation which it sustains. It is not one kind of faith that sanctifies, and another that justifies; but the same thing in different respects. To represent faith sanctifying as being holy, and faith justifying as having no holiness in it, is not viewing the same, but a different thing in different respects.

For a specimen of Mr. M.'s manner of writing on this subject, you will excuse my copying as follows: "An awakened sinner asks, 'What must I do to be saved?' An apostle answers, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' But a preacher of the doctrine I am opposing would have taught him another lesson. He might, indeed, in compliance with Scripture language, use the word *believe*; but he would tell him that, in this case, it did not bear its usual sense, that it was not the assent of his understanding, in giving credit to the testimony of the gospel, but a *grace* arising from a *previous* spiritual principle, and including in it a number of *holy affections* and *dispositions* of heart, all which he must exercise and set a working, in order to his being justified; and many directions will be given him how he is to perform this. But this is to destroy the freedom of the gospel, and to make the hope of a sinner turn upon his finding some virtuous exercises and dispositions in his own heart, instead of placing it directly in the work finished by the Son of God upon the cross. In opposition to this, I maintain that whatever virtue or holiness may be supposed in the nature of faith itself, as it is not the ground of a sinner's justification in the sight of God, so neither does it enter into the consideration of the

\* See Vol. II. of his Works, pp. 63, 64.

person who is really believing unto righteousness. He views himself, not as exercising virtue, but only as a mere sinner, while he believes on him that justifieth the ungodly, through the atonement,"—pp. 98, 99.

You will not expect me to answer this. It is a proof how far a writer may misunderstand and so misrepresent his opponent; and, even in those things wherein he understands him, describe him in caricature. I will only apply a few of the leading traits in this picture to Mr. M.'s own principles.—"A preacher of this doctrine, instead of directing a sinner to believe in Christ, and there leaving it, would tell him that faith was an assent of his *understanding*, a grace arising from a previous *Divine illumination*, by which he becomes spiritual, and which he must therefore first be possessed of, and thus set him a working in order to get it, that he may be justified. But this is to deny the freeness of the gospel, and to make the hope of a sinner turn upon his finding some *light within* him, instead of placing it upon the finished work of the Son of God upon the cross. In opposition to this, I maintain that whatever illumination may be supposed necessary to believing, and whatever spiritual perception is contained in the nature of it, as it is not the ground of a sinner's justification in the sight of God, so neither does it enter into the consideration of the person who is really believing unto righteousness. He views himself not as Divinely illuminated, but merely as a sinner, believing in him who justifieth the ungodly through the righteousness of his Son."

Mr. M., when writing in this strain, knew that I had said nearly the same things; and therefore that if he were opposing me, I had first opposed myself. He even quotes almost a page of my acknowledgments on the subject,—p. 100. But these are things, it seems, which I only "sometimes seem to hold." Well, if Mr. M. can prove that I have *any where*, either in the piece he was answering, or in any other, directed the sinner's attention to the workings of his own mind, instead of Christ, or have set him a *working*, (unless he please to give that name to an exhortation to forsake his way, and return to God, through Jesus Christ,) or have given him any *directions* how to work himself into a believing frame; then let all that he has said stand against me. But if not, let me be believed when I declare my utter disapprobation of every thing of the kind.

But Mr. M. has another charge, or rather *suspicion*, against me. "Mr. Fuller admits," he says, "that faith does not justify, either as an *internal* or *external work*, or *holy exercise*, or as being *any part* of that which is imputed unto us for righteousness; and did not other parts of his writings appear to clash with this I should rest satisfied. But I own that I am not without a suspicion that Mr. F. here only means that faith does not justify *as the procuring cause or meritorious ground* of a sinner's justification; and that, while we hold this point, we may include as much virtue and holy exercise of the will and affections as we please, without affecting the point of justification, as that stands entirely upon another ground, viz. the righteousness of Christ.—But it must be carefully observed that the difference between us *does not respect the meritorious procuring cause* of justification, but the *way* in which we receive it,"—p. 100.

Be it according to this statement, (and I have no objection to say that such *is* the whole of my meaning,) yet what is there in this that clashes with the above acknowledgments, or with free justification? There may be a "difference between us" which yet may not affect this doctrine. But let us hear him through.

"The Scriptures abundantly testify that we are *justified by faith*, which shows that faith has some concern in this matter." True. "And Mr. Fuller admits that justification is ascribed to faith, merely as that which *unites to*

Christ, for the sake of whose righteousness alone we are accepted." Very good. "Therefore, the only question between us is this: Does faith unite us to Christ, and so receive justification through his righteousness, *merely in crediting* the Divine testimony respecting the sufficiency of that righteousness alone to justify us; or does it unite us to Christ, and obtain justification through his righteousness, by virtue of its being a *moral excellency*, and as including the *holy exercises* of the will and affections? The former is my view of this matter; the latter, if I am not greatly mistaken, is Mr. Fuller's,"—p. 101.

It is some satisfaction to find our differences on the important doctrine of justification reduced to a single point. Allowing my sentiments to be fairly stated, (and though I should not express them just in these words, yet I certainly do consider a holy faith as necessary to unite us to a holy Saviour,) the question is, whether this sentiment clashes with the foregoing acknowledgments, or with the doctrine of free justification? It lies on Mr. M. to *prove* that it does so. Let us hear him. "I hold that sinners are justified through Christ's righteousness, *by faith alone*, or purely in believing that the righteousness of Christ which he finished on the cross, and which was declared to be accepted by his resurrection from the dead, is alone sufficient for their pardon and acceptance with God, however guilty and unworthy they are. But, in opposition to this, the whole strain of Mr. Fuller's reasoning tends to show that sinners are not justified by faith *alone*, but by faith working by love, or including in it the holy exercise of the will and affections; and this addition to faith he makes to be that qualification in it on which the fitness or congruity of an interest in Christ's righteousness depends.—App. pp. 105, 106. Without this addition he considers faith itself, whatever be its grounds or objects, to be an empty, unholy speculation, which requires no influence of the Spirit to produce it,—p. 128. So that if what is properly termed *faith* has in his opinion any place at all in justification, it must be merely on account of the holy exercises and affections which attend it,"—pp. 101, 102.

Such is Mr. M.'s *proof* of my inconsistency with my own acknowledgments, and with the freeness of justification.

Let it be remembered, in the first place, that the difference between us, by Mr. M.'s own acknowledgment, does not respect the *meritorious* or *procuring cause* of justification. All he says, therefore, of "the righteousness of Christ as finished, and declared to be accepted by his resurrection from the dead, being alone sufficient for our pardon and acceptance with God, however guilty and unworthy we are," belongs equally to my views as to his own: yet, immediately after these words, he says, "but in *opposition* to this, Mr. F.," &c., as if these sentiments were exclusively his own. The difference between us belongs to the nature of justifying faith. He considers the sinner as united to Christ, and so as justified, by the mere assent of his understanding to the doctrine of the cross, *exclusive of all approbation of it*; whereas I consider every thing pertaining to the understanding, when the term is used exclusive of approbation, to be either merely natural, or a "seeing and hating of Christ and the Father." Nor is approbation a mere effect of faith, but enters into its essence. It is believing, but it is believing *with the heart*; which all the labours of Mr. Sandeman and his disciples have not been able to prove means only the understanding. We may believe many things without approving them; but the nature of the objects believed in this case renders cordiality essential to it. It is impossible, in the nature of things, to believe the gospel without a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the suitableness and glory of the Saviour, which does not merely *produce*, but *includes* approbation of him. To "see no form nor

comeliness in him" is the same thing as to be an unbeliever; and the contrary is to be a believer.

But I shall notice these remarks of Mr. M. a little more particularly.

First, By the manner in which he has introduced them, it must appear to the reader that I had not fully declared my mind on this subject, and that Mr. M., in detecting my errors, was obliged to proceed on the uncertain ground of "suspicion;" yet he could not have read the very pages on which he was animadverting, without having repeatedly met with the most express avowals of the sentiment, such as the following:—"Whatever is pleaded in behalf of the holy nature of faith, it is not supposed to justify us as *a work*, or *holy exercise*, or as being *any part of that which is accounted unto us for righteousness*; but merely as that which UNITES TO CHRIST, for the sake of whose righteousness alone we are accepted."—Again, "Living faith, or faith that worketh by love, is necessary to justification, not as being the ground of our acceptance with God, not as a virtue of which justification is the reward, but as that without which *we could not be UNITED TO A LIVING REDEEMER*." Yet, with these passages before his eyes, Mr. M. affects to be at a loss to know my sentiments; he "suspects" I maintain holy affection in faith as necessary to union with Christ!

Secondly, If the difference between us has no respect to the *meritorious* or *procuring cause of justification*, as Mr. M. allows it has not, then why does he elsewhere tell his reader that "he thinks Mr. F. means to plead for such a *moral fitness* for justification as that wherein the virtue of the party commends him to it; or in which he is put into a good state as a fit or suitable testimony of regard to the moral excellency of his qualifications or acts,"—p. 104. I know not what Mr. M. may think, but I should consider this as making faith the *procuring cause*, or *meritorious ground*, of justification; for what is the meritorious ground of a blessing but that in consideration of which it is bestowed?

Thirdly, If it is not sufficient that we ascribe the meritorious or procuring cause of justification to the work of Christ, unless we also exclude all holy affection from the nature of faith as uniting us to him, how is it that Mr. M. has written as he has on the *Calls of the Gospel*? He seems to have thought it quite enough for *him* to disavow repentance or faith as making any part of our justifying righteousness, though the same disavowal on *my* part gives him no satisfaction. "Did Peter," he asks, "overtun the doctrine of free justification by faith when he exhorted the unbelieving Jews to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out? Does he there direct them to *any part of that work which Christ had finished for the justification of the ungodly*, or lead them to think that their faith, repentance, and conversion were to *make an atonement for their sins*?" Again, "Cannot the wicked be exhorted to believe, repent, and seek the Lord, and be encouraged to this by a promise of success, without making the success to depend on *human merit*? Are such exhortations and promises always to be suspected of having a dangerous and self-righteous tendency? Instead of taking them in their plain and simple sense, must our main care always be to guard against some supposed self-righteous use of them, till we have explained away their whole force and spirit, and so distinguished and refined upon them as to make men more afraid to comply with than to reject them, lest they should be *guilty of some exertion of mind or body, some good disposition or motion toward Christ, which is supposed to be the highest wickedness, and a despising of the work of Christ*?"\*

If there be any meaning in words, Mr. M. here most decidedly contends

\* See Works, Vol. II. pp. 38, 55, 56.

for repentance, faith, and conversion (which must be allowed to include holy affection) being necessary, in the established order of things, to mercy, pardon, &c., which must also be allowed to include justification.

Fourthly, With respect to *fitness*, I think, with Mr. M., that there is a "peculiar suitableness in faith to receive justification, and every other spiritual blessing, purely of grace,"—p. 106. It is "of faith that it might be of grace." And this peculiar suitableness consists in its being of the nature of faith to *receive* the blessings of grace as God's free gifts through the atonement, instead of performing any thing in the way of being rewarded for it. Thus it is properly opposed to the works of the law. But it does not follow that in order to this there must be "no good disposition or motion toward Christ" in our believing in him. On the contrary, if faith were mere knowledge, exclusive of approbation, it would not be adapted to receive the doctrine of the gospel; it would be either unholy, or at best merely natural. If the former, instead of receiving it, would be certain to reject the heavenly doctrine; and if the latter, there would be no more suitableness to receive it than there is in the wisdom of this world to receive the true knowledge of God. A holy faith is necessary to receive a holy doctrine, and so to unite us to a holy Saviour.

The *fitness* for which I plead, in God's justifying those who cordially acquiesce in the gospel way of salvation, rather than others, and which Mr. M. considers as inconsistent with free justification, (Reply, p. 103,) is no other than that fitness of wisdom which, while it preserves the honours of grace, is not inattentive to those of righteousness. Had it been said, Though the wicked forsake *not* his way, *nor* the unrighteous man his thoughts, and though he return *not* to the Lord, yet will he have mercy upon him, *nor* to our God, yet will he abundantly pardon, we should feel a want of fitness, and instantly perceive that grace was here exalted at the expense of righteousness. He that can discern no fitness in such connexions but that of *works and rewards* must have yet to learn some of the first principles of the oracles of God.

Fifthly, With respect to justification *by faith alone*, Mr. M. appears to have affixed a new sense to the phrase. I have always understood it to mean justification by a righteousness *received*, in opposition to justification by a righteousness *performed*, according to Gal. iii. 11, 12, "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident; for, The just shall live *by faith*. And the law is not of faith; but, *The man that doeth them* shall live in them." In this sense, justification by *faith alone* applies to my views of the subject as well as to his; but the sense in which he uses the phrase is very nearly akin to that in which James uses it when speaking of faith as *dead, being alone*. We are, indeed, justified by *faith alone*; but not by a faith *which is alone*.

Mr. M. is in the habit of speaking of that holiness which I conceive essential to the nature of faith as something "added" to it, or as being something "more" than faith; but he might as well say that a cordial rejection of the gospel is something "more" than unbelief. In like manner, he seems to consider the phrase "faith which worketh by love" as expressive of what faith *produces posterior to its uniting us to Christ*; whereas it is of the nature of faith in its very *first* existence in the mind to work, and that in a way of love to the object. It is also remarkable that Paul speaks of faith which "worketh by love" as availing to justification; while circumcision or uncircumcision availeth nothing, Gal. v. 6. Faith, hope, and charity have, no doubt, their distinctive characters; but not one of them, nor any other grace, consists in its being devoid of holy affection. This is a common property belonging to all the graces, is coeval with them, and essential to



them. Whatever we may possess, call it knowledge, or faith, or what we may, if it be devoid of this, it is not the effect of special Divine influence, and therefore not a fruit of the Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*."

Lastly, If union with Christ were antecedent to all holy affection, it would not be what the Scriptures represent it; namely, a union of spirit; "He that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit*." Union of spirit must include congeniality of disposition. Our heart must be as Christ's heart, or we are not one with him. Believing in him with all the heart, we hence, according to the wise and gracious constitution of the gospel, and not in reward of any holiness in us, possess a revealed interest in him, and in all the benefits arising from his obedience unto death. "*He that hath the Son hath life*." Such appears to be the order of things as taught us in the Scriptures, and such the connexion between faith and justification. If union with Christ were *acquired* by faith, and an interest in him were bestowed in *reward* of it, it would indeed be inconsistent with free justification; but if the necessity of a holy faith arise merely from the nature of things, that is, its fitness to unite us to a holy Saviour, and if faith itself be the gift of God, no such consequence follows; for the union, though we be active in it, is in reality formed by him who actuates us, and to him belongs the praise. "*Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord*."

Mr. M. has written much about God's justifying the *ungodly*; but while he allows that the term is not descriptive of the *existing character* of a believer, I have no dispute with him. He admits that when Christ is said to *die for the ungodly*, the term includes many who *at the time were saints*, only he died not for them *as saints* (p. 115); and this I readily allow. The examples of Abraham and David were not introduced by me to prove them to have been godly characters for many years prior to their justification; but to show, from the examples of their faith not being taken from their first believing while yet it respected God as the justifier of the ungodly, that the doctrine of free justification could not require that the party should at the time be at enmity with God.\*

Mr. M. has also written much about the state of an *awakened sinner*. As he had disowned his being the subject of any *holy affection*, I concluded he must be "a hard-hearted enemy of God." This was stated, not from a want of feeling toward any poor sinner, but to show whither the principle led. Mr. M. answers—"I have not the least idea that a hard-hearted enemy of God, while such, *can* either receive or enjoy forgiveness; but I distinguish between such a state of mind and that of an awakened, self-condemned sinner, and also between the latter and a real convert, who believes the gospel, has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is possessed of holy affections,"—p. 151. Is there a medium, then, between holy affection and hard-hearted enmity? If so, it must be something like neutrality. But Christ has left no room for this, having declared, "He that is not with me is against me." Let a sinner be alarmed as much as he may, if he have no holy affection toward God, he must be a hard-hearted enemy to him. Such I believe are many awakened sinners, notwithstanding all their terrors, and such they will view themselves to have been, if ever they come to see things as they are. There are others, however, who are not so, but whose convictions are spiritual, like those of Paul, who saw sin, "through the commandment, to be exceeding sinful," and who "through the law became dead

\* On this subject I beg leave to refer to Discourse XXII. of my work on Genesis.

to the law, that he might live unto God." Convictions of this kind lead the sinner to Christ. They may not be distinguishable at the time, either by himself or others, and nothing but the *effects* may prove the difference; yet an essential difference there is.

Mr. M. refers to the case of the jailer. I know not what was his conviction of the evil of sin, nor when he became the subject of holy affection. But be it when it might, he was till then a hard-hearted enemy of God. The case to which writers on Mr. M.'s side the question more frequently refer is that of the self-condemned publican; but, antecedently to his going down to his house justified, he "humbled himself," and that in a way of *holy* though not of *joyful* affection.

According to Mr. M. there is a state of mind which is not the effect of renewing grace, and therefore contains nothing truly good, but which is, nevertheless, *necessary* and *sufficient* to prepare the sinner for receiving the forgiveness of his sin. "A hard-hearted enemy of God *cannot* receive or enjoy gospel forgiveness; but a sinner under terrors of conscience, though equally destitute of all regard for God as the other, *can*."

Far be it from me to impeach Mr. M.'s integrity. I doubt not but he thinks that in writing his *Reply* he was engaged in refuting error. Yet if his own words are to be believed, he does not know after all but that he has been opposing the truth. In page 151 he says, "Whether such convictions as issue in conversion differ in *kind* from others I WILL NOT TAKE UPON ME TO DETERMINE." That is, he does not know but that it may be so, and that there is such a thing as spiritual conviction, a conviction of the *evil* of sin, antecedently to believing in the Saviour, and subservient to it. But this is the same, in effect, as saying he does not know whether that which he has been opposing throughout his performance may not, after all, be true! "But I am certain of this," he adds, "that it would be very unsafe to build up any in an opinion of their possessing holiness merely upon the ground of their conviction, while they come short of a real change, and do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That conviction of sin and its desert which is subservient to faith in Christ will never lead a person to think that it is any part of his holiness; for such a thought would be as opposite to the nature of his conviction as his feeling a disease would be to his thinking himself whole." Very good: but against what is it directed? not any thing advanced by his opponent. It is, however, manifestly against the scope of his own performance. The tendency, though not the design, of these remarks is to show that there is a "difference in kind" between some convictions and others, and a marked one too. "That conviction of sin and its desert which is subservient to faith in Christ will never lead a person to think that it is any part of his holiness;" but (he might have added) *that* conviction of sin which is not subservient to faith in Christ will. Graceless convictions generally, if not always, become objects of self-admiration. Here, then, Mr. M. not only determines that *there is a difference* between some convictions and others, but specifies wherein that difference consists. It never occurred to the self-condemned publican that there was any thing good or holy in his "humbling himself" before God. Our Lord, however, held it up as *being* so, and recommended it as an example to others.

I shall conclude this letter with a few remarks on *qualifications*. This is a term on which Mr. Sandeman and his followers have plentifully declaimed. It conveys to me the idea of something which *entitles* the party to a good, or *fits* him to enjoy it. With respect to entitling us, I suppose, there is no dispute. The gospel and its invitations are our title to come to Christ for salvation. And, with respect to fitting us, there is nothing of this kind that is pleadable, or which furnishes any ground of encouragement to the sinner

that he shall be accepted. It is not any thing prior to coming to Christ, but coming itself, that has the promise of acceptance. All that is pleaded for is the necessity of a state of mind suited in the nature of things to believing, and without which no sinner ever did or can believe, and which state of mind is not self-wrought, but the effect of regenerating grace.

Mr. Sandeman represents sinners as saying to preachers, "If you would preach the gospel to us, you must tell us something fit to give us joy as we presently stand, unconscious of any distinguishing *qualification*." That the mind, at the time when it first receives gospel comfort, may be *unconscious*, not only of every distinguishing qualification, but of being the subject of any thing truly good, I allow; for I believe that is the first true comfort which arises from the consideration of *what Christ is* rather than of *what we are toward him*. But to be "unconscious" of any thing truly good and actually destitute of it are two things; and so are its being necessary *in the nature of things* to our enjoying the consolations of the gospel, and its being so *as a qualification* entitling, or in some way recommending, us to the Divine favour. To conceive of a sinner who is actually hardened in his sins, bloated with self-righteous pride, and full of opposition to the gospel, receiving joy "presently as he stands," is not only conceiving of rest for the soul without coming to the Saviour for it, but is in itself a contradiction. Mr. M'Lean acknowledges as much as this. "I have not the least idea," he says, "that a hard-hearted enemy of God, while such, *can* either receive or enjoy forgiveness." Conviction of sin then, whether it have any thing holy in it or not, is *necessary*, not, I presume, as a qualification recommending the sinner to the Divine favour, but as that without which believing in Jesus were in its own nature impossible. Such are my views as to the necessity of a new heart ere the sinner can come to Christ. The joy that an unregenerate sinner can receive "presently as he stands," is any thing but that which is afforded by the good news of salvation to the chief of sinners.

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## LETTER IX.

### ON CERTAIN NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICES.

THAT there are serious Christians who have leaned to the Sandemanian system I have no doubt, and in people of this description I have seen things worthy of imitation. It has appeared to me that there is a greater diligence in endeavouring to understand the Scriptures, and a stricter regard to what they are supposed to contain, than among many other professors of Christianity. They do not seem to trifle with either principle or practice in the manner that many do. Even in those things wherein they appear to me to misunderstand the Scriptures, there is a regard toward them which is worthy of imitation. There is something, even in their rigidness, which I prefer before that trifling with truth which among other professing Christians often passes under the name of liberality.

These concessions, however, do not respect those who have gone entirely into the system, so as to have thoroughly imbibed its spirit, but persons who have manifested a considerable partiality in favour of the doctrine. Take the denomination as a whole, and it is not among them you can expect to see the Christian practice of the New Testament exemplified. You will find them very punctilious in some things, but very defective in others. Religion, as exhibited by them, resembles a rickety child, whose growth is confined

to certain parts: it wants that lovely uniformity or proportion which constitutes the beauty of holiness.

Some of the followers of Mr. Sandeman, who in his lifetime formed a society in St. Martin's-le-grand, London, and published an account of what they call their *Christian practices*, acknowledge that the command of washing one another's feet is binding "only when it can be an act of kindness to do so;" and that though there be neither precept nor precedent for *family prayer*, yet "it seems necessary for maintaining the fear of God in a family." They proceed, however, to judge those who insist on family prayer and the first-day sabbath, *while they disregard the feasts of charity, the holy kiss, &c.*, as persons "influenced to their religious practices, not by the fear of God, the authority of Christ, or the Spirit of truth." It is easy to see hence what *kind* of Christian practice that is by which these people are distinguished.\*

A punctilious adherence to the letter of Scripture is in some cases commendable, even though it may extend to *the tithing of mint and cummin*; but in others it would lead you aside from the mind of Christ; and to pursue any thing to the neglect of *judgment, mercy, and the love of God*, is dangerous in the extreme.

It has long appeared to me that a great many errors have arisen from applying to *moral obligations* the principle which is proper in obedience to *positive institutions*. By confounding these, and giving to both the name of *ordinances*, the New Testament becomes little more than ritual, and religion is nearly reduced to a round of mechanical performances.

The distinction of obedience into *moral* and *positive* has been made by the ablest writers of almost every denomination, and must be made if we would understand the Scriptures. Without it we should confound the eternal standard of right and wrong given to Israel at Sinai (the sum of which is the love of God and our neighbour) with the body of "carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation." We should also confound those precepts of the New Testament which arise from the *relations* we sustain to God and one another with those that arise merely from the *sovereign will* of the Legislator, and could never have been known but for his having expressly enjoined them. Concerning the former, an inspired writer does not scruple to refer the primitive Christians to that sense of right and wrong which is implanted in the minds of men in general; saying, "Whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." But concerning the latter, he directs their whole attention to the revealed will of Christ. "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep *the ordinances* as I delivered them unto you."—"I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," &c. The one is commanded because it is *right*, the other is right because it is *commanded*. The great principles of the former are of perpetual obligation, and know no other change than that which arises from the varying of relations and conditions; but those of the latter may be binding at one period of time, and utterly abolished at another.

We can clearly perceive that it were inconsistent with the perfections of God not to have required us to love him and one another, or to have allowed of the contrary. Children also must needs be required to obey their parents; *for this is right*. But it is not thus in positive institutions. Whatever wisdom there may be in them, and whatever discernment in us, we could

\* I have not seen this pamphlet, but have taken a few quotations from it, contained in Backus's Discourse on Faith and its Influence.

not have known them had they not been expressly revealed; nor are they ever enforced as being in themselves *right*, but merely from the authority of the Lawgiver. Of them we may say, Had it pleased God, he might in various instances have enjoined the opposites. But of the other we are not allowed to suppose it possible, or consistent with righteousness, for God to have required any thing different from that which he has required. The obligation of man to love and obey his Creator must have been coeval with his existence; but it was not till he had planted a garden in Eden, and there put the man whom he had formed, and expressly prohibited the fruit of one of the trees on pain of death, that he came under a *positive* law.

The use to be made of this distinction, in the present controversy, is to *judge in what cases we are to look for express precept or example, and in what cases we are not to look for them.* Mr. Braidwood very properly observes, "That which is morally good in its own nature is a bounden duty, although it should not be particularly commanded nor exemplified in all the word of God."—Letters, &c., p. 42. In obedience of this description there is not that need of minute rules and examples as in the other; but merely of *general* principles which naturally lead to all the particulars comprehended under them.

To require express precept or example, or to adhere in all cases to the literal sense of those precepts which are given us, in things of a moral nature, would greatly mislead us. We may by a disregard of that for which there is no express precept or precedent omit what is manifestly right, and by an adherence to the letter of Scriptural precepts overlook the spirit of them, and do that which is manifestly wrong.

If we will do nothing without express precept or precedent, we must build no places for Christian worship, form no societies for visiting and relieving the afflicted poor, establish no schools, endow no hospitals, nor contribute any thing toward them, nor any thing toward printing or circulating the Holy Scriptures. Whether any person who fears God would on this ground consider himself excused from these duties, I cannot tell: it is on no better ground, however, that duties of equal importance have been disregarded; especially those of *family prayer* and the *sanctification* of the Lord's day.

In Mr. Sandeman's time it was allowed that "though there was neither precept nor precedent for *family prayer*, yet it seemed necessary for maintaining *the fear of God in a family.*" But this concession, being at variance with more favourite principles, seems to have meant nothing. It is said that family prayer has long been disregarded by many who drink the deepest into the doctrine. With them, therefore, the maintaining of "the fear of God in a family" seems to be given up. This fact has operated much against the denomination in the esteem of serious Christians, by whom they are considered as little other than a body of worldly men. Of late the system has been *improved*. Instead of owning, as formerly, that "the fear of God seemed to require this duty," it is now held to be *unlawful*, provided any part of the family be unbelievers, seeing it is holding *communion* with them. On the same principle, unbelievers, it is said, are not allowed to join in public prayer and praise, unless it be in an adjoining room, or with some kind of partition between them and the believers. In short, it is maintained by Mr. Braidwood that "we ought only to join in prayer and praise with those with whom we partake of the Lord's supper."—Letters, pp. 31–46. Such are the consequences of confounding things moral with things positive or ceremonial.

We have no account of any particular injunctions given to Abraham respecting the ordering of his family. God had said to him in general, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect;" and which, as to things of this nature, was

sufficient. "I know Abraham," saith the Lord, "that HE WILL command his children, and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment." Can a child be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord when it never hears its parents pray for it? Paul would not have eaten the Lord's supper with the ship's company; but he made no scruple of "giving thanks to God in presence of them all" at a common meal; and this, I presume, without any partition between his company and theirs, or so much as a mental reservation in respect of the latter. To join with unbelievers in what is *not their duty* is to become partakers of other men's sins; but to allow them to join with us in what is *their duty* is not so. The believer is not at liberty to join in the prayer of unbelief; but the unbeliever is at liberty, if he can, to join in the prayer of faith. To deny him this were to deny him the right of becoming a believer, and of doing what every one ought to do. We ought to pray for such things as both believers and unbelievers stand in need of: if the latter unite with us in desire, it is well for them; if not, the guilt remains with themselves, and not with us.

The *sanctification* of the Lord's day is said to be very generally disregarded among the admirers of this system. Having met and kept the *ordinances*, they seem to have done with religion for that day, and feel at liberty to follow any amusement or worldly occupation during the remainder of it. This is Christian liberty; and the opposite is Pharisaism!

So far as relates to its being the day appointed for Christian worship, rather than the seventh; that is to say, so far as it is *positive*, the keeping of it is amply supported by Scripture precedent: but as to keeping the day *holy* to the Lord, this, being *moral*, is left to be inferred from general principles. This is the case as to the *manner* of attending to all positive institutions. No injunctions were laid on the churches with respect to their keeping the Lord's supper in a *holy* manner; yet in the neglect of this lay the sin of the church at Corinth. And the reasoning which the apostle used to convince them of their sin applies to the case in hand. He argues from the ordinance of breaking bread being THE LORD'S supper, that turning it into their OWN supper was rendering it null and void:\* and by parity of reasoning it follows from the first day of the week being THE LORD'S DAY, that to do OUR OWN work, find OUR OWN pleasure, or speak OUR OWN words on that day, is to make it void. Of the former he declared, "This is not to eat the Lord's supper;" and of the latter he would, on the same principle, have declared, "This is not to keep the Lord's day."

If, on the other hand, we do every thing that is commanded in the New Testament, according to the *letter* of the precept, we shall in many cases overlook the true intent of it, and do that which is manifestly wrong.

The design of our Lord's precepts on prayer and alms-giving, in the sermon on the mount, is to censure a spirit of *ostentation* in these duties; but a strict conformity to the letter of them would excuse us from all *social* prayer and *public* contributions.

The design of the precept, "Resist not evil," but "if a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also," is to prohibit all private or selfish resentment, and to teach us that we ought rather to suffer wrong than go about to revenge an injury. Who does not admire the conduct of the noble Athenian, who, in a council of war held for the common safety of the country, when the Spartan chief menaced him with his cane, cried,

\* I am aware that THEIR OWN SUPPER has been understood as referring to the LOVE FEASTS; but the reasoning of the apostle seems to me to admit of no such meaning. How could he accuse them of making void the Lord's supper, if it was not the Lord's supper they were eating?

“STRIKE; BUT HEAR ME?” Such, in effect, has been the language of the martyrs of Jesus in all ages; and such is the spirit of the precept. But to contend for a literal compliance with it were to reflect on the conduct of Christ himself, who, when smitten before the high priest, did not so exemplify it, but remonstrated against the injury.

If the design of our Lord, in forbidding us to *lay up treasures on earth*, were absolutely and in all cases to prohibit the increase of property, it was his design to overthrow what the Scriptures acknowledge as a dictate of nature, namely, the duty of parents to provide for their children, 2 Cor. xii. 14. True it is that men may hoard wealth in order to enrich and aggrandize their families to the neglect of present duty toward the poor and toward the cause of God; but this is the *abuse* of the principle, and ought to be corrected, and not the principle itself destroyed. Only let our own interest, and that of our children, be pursued *in subordination to God*, and *in consistency with other duties*, and all will be right. The contrary practice would load the industrious poor, and prevent their ever rising above their present condition, while it screened the indolent rich, who might expend the whole of their income in self-gratification provided they did not increase their capital.

Nor can any good reason be given, that I know of, why we should understand this precept as prohibiting in all cases the increase of property, any more than that of “selling what we have, and giving alms,” as absolutely forbidding us to *retain* it. To be consistent, the advocates of this interpretation should dispose of all their property, and distribute it among the poor. In other words, they should abolish all distinctions of rich and poor so far as concerns themselves; not only of the *very* rich and *very* poor, but all distinction whatever, and be perfectly on an equality. When they shall do this, they will at least prove themselves to be sincere, and impart a weight to their censures against others which at present they do not possess.

It was not our Lord’s design in this partial manner to lop off the branches of a worldly spirit; but to strike at the root of it. To *lay up treasures on earth* denotes the *desire* of amassing wealth that we may be great, and shine, or in some way consume it upon our lusts; and herein consists the evil. There is as great a difference between a character who acts on this principle, and one whom God prospers in the path of duty, and in the full exercise of benevolence toward all about him, as between one who engages in the chase of worldly applause, and another who, seeking the good of those around him, must needs be respected and loved.

The evil which arises from such interpretations, whatever may be their tendency, does not consist in throwing civil society into a state of disorder; for though men may admit them in theory, yet they will contrive some method of practically evading them, and reconcile their consciences to it. The mischief lies in the hypocrisy, self-deception, and unchristian censures upon others, to which they give occasion.

Much has been spoken and written on “observing *all things* which Christ hath commanded us,” and on the authority of *apostolic example*. Both are literally binding on Christians in matters of positive institution, and in things moral the spirit or design of them is indispensable; but to enforce a literal conformity in many cases would be to defeat the end, and reduce obedience to unmeaning ceremony.

In Eastern countries the *washing of the feet*, after the toils of a journey, was a common and necessary refreshment; and our Lord, to teach his disciples *in love to serve one another*, took upon himself the humble office of a servant, and washed their feet; enjoining upon them to do that to one another which he had done to them. But to conform to this custom where it is not

practised, nor considered as necessary to be done by any one, is to defeat the end of the precept by substituting a form in the place of a humble and affectionate service. We may wash the saints' feet, and neglect to dry their clothes, or to administer necessary comfort to them when cold and weary. If, in commands of this nature, no regard is to be had to times, places, and circumstances, why do Sandemanians allow it to be binding "*only* when it can be an act of kindness to do so?"

It was customary in the East, and is still so in many countries, for men to express affection to each other by a *kiss*; and the apostles directed that this common mode of salutation should be used religiously. But in a country where the practice is principally confined to the expression of love between the sexes, or at most among relations, it is much more liable to misconstruction and abuse; and being originally a human custom, where that custom ceases, though the spirit of the precept is binding, yet the form of it, I conceive, is not so.

For a man to have his *head uncovered* was once the commonly received sign of his authority, and as such was enjoined; but with us it is a sign of subjection. If, therefore, we are obliged to wear any sign of the one or of the other in our religious assemblies, it requires to be reversed.

The apostle taught that it was a shame for a man to wear *long hair* like a woman; not that he would have concerned himself about the length of the hair, but this being a distinctive mark of the sexes, he appealed to *nature* itself against their being confounded; that is, against a man's appearing in the garb of a woman.

In the primitive times Christians had their *love feasts*; they do not appear, however, to have been a Divine appointment, but the mere spontaneous expressions of mutual affection; as when "breaking bread from house to house they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." While these feasts were conducted with propriety all was well; but in time they were abused, and then they were mentioned in language not very respectful, "These are spots in *your* feasts of charity." Had they been of Divine institution, it was not their being abused that would have drawn forth such language. The Lord's supper was abused as well as they; but the abuse in that case was corrected, and the ordinance itself reinducted.

These brief remarks are intended to prove that, in the above particulars, Mr. Sandeman and his followers have mistaken the true intent of Christ and his apostles. But whether it be so or not, the proportion of zeal which is expended upon them is far beyond what their importance requires. If, as a friend to believers' baptism, I cherish an overweening conceit of myself, and of my denomination, confining the kingdom of heaven to it, and shutting my eyes against the excellences of others, am I not carnal? The Jews, in the time of Jeremiah, thought themselves very secure on account of their forms and privileges. Pointing to the sacred edifice, and its Divinely instituted worship, they exclaimed, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these:" but were they not carnal? In how many ways, alas, are poor blind mortals addicted to err!

When the reflecting Christian considers what contentions have been maintained about things of this nature, what divisions have been produced, and what accusations have been preferred against those who stand aloof from such strifes, as though they *did not so much as profess to observe all things which Christ has commanded*, he will drop a tear of pity over human weakness. But when he sees men so scrupulous in such matters that they cannot conscientiously be present at any worship but their own, yet making no scruple of joining in theatrical and other vain amusements, he will be shocked, and must needs suspect something worse than weakness; something which



strains at a gnat, but can swallow a camel; something, in short, which, however good men may have been carried away by it, can hardly be conceived to have had its origin in a good man's mind.

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## LETTER X.

### AN INQUIRY INTO THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE APOSTLES PROCEEDED IN FORMING AND ORGANIZING CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

You need not be told of the fierce disputes which were first agitated by the leaders of this denomination, and which have since extended to others besides those who choose to be called after their names, concerning the order, government, and discipline of gospel churches. To write upon every minute practice found in the New Testament would be to bewilder ourselves and perplex the subject. If we can ascertain the *principles* on which the apostles proceeded in all they did, it will answer a much better purpose.

Far be it from me to contend for an Erastian latitude in matters of church government and discipline, or to imagine that no Divine directions are left us on the subject, but that the church must be modelled and governed according to circumstances. This were to open a door to every corruption that human ingenuity and depravity might devise. But, on the other hand, it is no less wide of the truth to consider the whole which is left us as a system of *ordinances*, or *positive institutions*, requiring in all cases the most literal and punctilious observance. Such a view of the subject, among other evil consequences, must introduce perpetual discord, seeing it aims to establish things from the New Testament which are not in it.

It may be thought that in reasoning thus I adopt the principles of the *Episcopalians* against the *puritans*, who denied the necessity of express precept or precedent from the Scriptures, which the others pleaded for. Had Episcopalians only denied this in respect of moral duties, I should have thought them in the right. It certainly is not necessary that we should have express precept or precedent for every duty we owe to our neighbours, but merely that we keep within the general principle of doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us. And the same may be said of various duties toward God. If in our thoughts, affections, prayers, or praises we be influenced by *love* to his name, though his precepts will be our guide as to the general modes in which love shall be expressed, yet we shall not need them for every thing pertaining to particular duties. When Josiah, on hearing the book of the law read to him, "rent his clothes and wept," it was not in conformity with any particular precept or precedent, but the spontaneous effusion of love. The question between the Episcopalians and the puritans did not relate to moral obligations, but to "rites and ceremonies" in Divine worship, which the church claimed a "power to decree." Hence it was common for them to urge it upon the puritans, that if their principles were fully acted upon, they must become Antipædobaptists; or, as they called them, Anabaptists;\* a proof this, not only that in their judgment there was neither precept nor precedent in the Scriptures in favour of pædobaptism, but that it was in matters of *positive institution* that they claimed to act without either.

The question is, On what principles did the apostles proceed in forming

\* Preface to Bishop Sanderson's Sermons, Sect. 23.

and organizing Christian churches, *positive* or *moral*? If the former, they must have been furnished with an exact model or pattern, like that which was given to Moses in the mount, and have done all things according to it; but if the latter, they would only be furnished with *general principles*, comprehending, but not specifying, a great variety of particulars.

That the framing of the tabernacle was positive there can be no doubt; and that a part of the religion of the New Testament is so, is equally evident. Concerning this the injunctions of the apostle are minute and very express. "Be ye followers (imitators) of me as I also am of Christ."—"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances* as I delivered them to you."—"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." But were we to attempt to draw up a formula of church government, worship, and discipline which should include any thing more than *general outlines*, and to establish it upon express New Testament authorities, we should attempt what is impracticable.

Doubtless the apostles acted under Divine direction; but, in things of a moral nature, that direction consisted not in providing them with a model or pattern, in the manner of that given to Moses, but in furnishing them with general principles, and enduing them with holy wisdom to apply them as occasions required.

We learn, from the Acts and the Epistles, that the first churches were congregations of faithful men, voluntarily united together for the stated ministration of the word, the administration of Christian ordinances, and the mutually assisting of each other in promoting the cause of Christ; that they were governed by bishops and deacons of their own choosing; that a bishop was an overseer, not of other ministers, but of the flock of God; that the government and discipline of each church was within itself; that the gifts of the different members were so employed as to conduce to the welfare of the body; and that in cases of disorder every proper means was used to vindicate the honour of Christ and reclaim the party. These, and others which might be named, are what I mean by *general principles*. They are sometimes illustrated by the incidental occurrence of examples (which examples in all *similar cases* are binding); but it is not always so. That a variety of cases occur in our time respecting which we have nothing more than general principles to direct us, is manifest to every person of experience and reflection. We know that churches were formed, officers chosen and ordained, and prayer and praise conducted with "the understanding," or so as to be understood by others; but in what particular manner they proceeded in each we are not told. We have no account of the formation of a single church, no ordination service, nor any such thing as a formula of worship. We are taught to sing praises to God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but have no inspired tunes. We have accounts of the election of church officers; but no mention of the mode of proceeding, or how they ascertained the mind of the church. If we look for express precept or example for the removal of a pastor from one situation to another, we shall find none. We are taught, however, that for the church to grow unto an holy temple in the Lord, it requires to be "fitly framed together." The want of *fitness* in a connexion, therefore, especially if it impede the growth of the spiritual temple, may justify a removal. Or if there be no want of fitness, yet if the material be adapted to occupy a more important station, a removal of it may be very proper. Such a principle may be misapplied to ambitious and interested purposes; but if the increase of the temple be kept in view, it is lawful, and in some cases attended with great and good effects.

This instance may suffice instead of a hundred, and serves to show that

the forms and orders of the New Testament church, much more than those of the Old, are founded on the reason of things. They appear to be no more than what men, possessed of the wisdom from above, would, as it were instinctively, or of their own accord, fall into, even though no specific directions should be given them.

That such were the principles on which the apostles proceeded is manifest from their own *professions*, or from the *general precepts* which they addressed to the churches. These were as follows:—"Let all things be done *to edifying*."—"Let all things be done *decently, and in order*."—"Follow after the things that *make for peace*, and things wherewith *one may edify another*." Whatever measures had a tendency to build up the church of God and individuals in their most holy faith, these they pursued. Whatever measures approved themselves to minds endued with holy wisdom as fit and lovely, and as tending, like good discipline in an army, to the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, these they followed, and inculcated on the churches. And however worldly minds may have abused the principle, by introducing vain customs under the pretence of *decency*, it is that which, understood in its simple and original sense, must still be the test of good order and Christian discipline.

The discipline of the primitive churches occupies no prominent place in their character. It is not that ostentatious thing which, under the name of an "ordinance," has become of late a mere bone of contention. It was simply the carrying into effect the great principle of brotherly love, and the spirit with which it was exercised was that of long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and meekness.

The way in which the apostles *actually proceeded*, in the forming and organizing of churches, corresponds with these statements. When a number of Christians were assembled together in the days of Pentecost, they were the first Christian church. But at first they had no deacons, and probably no pastors, except the apostles; and if the *reason* of things had not required it, they might have continued to have none. But in the course of things new service rose upon their hands, therefore they must have new servants to perform it;\* for, said the apostles, "It is not *reason* that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables: wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." In this proceeding we perceive nothing of the air of a ceremony, nothing like that of punctilious attention to forms, which marks obedience to a positive institute; but merely the conduct of men endued with the wisdom from above, servants appointed when service required it, and the number of the one proportioned to the quantity of the other. All things are done "decently and in order;" all things are done "to edifying."

In the course of things, the apostles, who had supplied the place of bishops, or pastors, would be called to travel into other parts of the world, and then it is likely the church at Jerusalem would have a bishop, or bishops, of their own. As the number of deacons was regulated by the work to be done, so would it be by bishops, both in this and in other churches. A large church, where much service was to be done, required seven deacons; and where they abounded in numbers and spiritual gifts there might be a plurality of pastors. With respect to us, where the *reason* of the thing exists, that is, where there are churches whose numbers require it, and whose ability admits of it, it is still proper;† but for a small church to have more pastors than one

\* A *deacon*, as well as a minister, means a *servant*.

† I say *whose ability admits of it*; for there is equal proof from the New Testament that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, as there is of a plurality of elders.

is as unnecessary as to have seven deacons. Such a rule must favour idleness, and confine useful ministers from extending their labours. To place two or three in a post which might be filled by one must leave many other places unoccupied. Such a system is more adapted for show than for promoting the kingdom of Christ.

It may serve to illustrate and simplify the subject if we compare the conduct of the apostles with that of a company of *missionaries* in our times. What, indeed, was an *apostle* but an inspired missionary? Allowing only for ordinary Christian missionaries being uninspired, we shall see in their history all the leading characteristics of apostolic practice.

Conceive of a church, or of a society of Christians out of a number of churches, or of "any two agreeing together," as undertaking a mission among the heathen. One of the first things they would attend to would be the selection of suitable missionaries; next they would instruct them in the things necessary to their undertaking; and after this send them forth to preach the gospel. Such exactly was the process of our Lord toward his apostles. He first selected them; then, during his personal ministry, instructed them; and after his resurrection, gave them their commission, with a rich effusion of the Holy Spirit to fit them for their undertaking.

The missionaries on arriving at the place of action would first unite in social prayer and fellowship; and this would be the first Christian church. Thus the apostles, and those who adhered to them, first met in an upper room for prayer, preparatory to their attack on the kingdom of Satan; and this little "band of about a hundred and twenty" formed the first Christian church; and when others were converted to Christ and joined them, they are to be "added to the church."

Again, The first missionaries to a heathen country could not be chosen by those to whom they were sent, but by him or them who sent them; nor would their influence be confined to a single congregation, but, by a kind of parental authority, would extend to all the societies that might be raised by means of their labours. It would be different with succeeding pastors, who might be raised up from among the converts; they would of course be chosen by their brethren, and their authority be confined to those who elected them. Thus the apostles were not constituted such by the churches, but received their appointment immediately from Christ; nor was their authority limited to any particular church, but extended to all. In this they stand distinguished from ordinary pastors, who are elected by the churches, and whose authority is confined to the churches that elected them.

Again, The first missionaries to a heathen country would be employed in the *planting* of churches wherever proper materials were found for the purpose; and if the work so increased upon their hands as to be too much for them, they would depute others whom God should gift and qualify, *like-minded* with themselves, to assist them in it. Some one person at least of this description would be present at the formation and organization of every church, to see to it that all things were done "decently and in order." And if there were any other churches in the neighbourhood, their elders and messengers would doubtless be present, and, to express their brotherly concurrence, would join in it. Thus the apostles planted churches; and when

But the zeal for the latter has not always been accompanied by a zeal for the former. If the term elder must be understood to be not only a term of office, but of the pastoral office exclusively, and a plurality of them be required, why is not a plurality of them supported? The office of elder in those churches which are partial to this system is little more than nominal; for while an elder is employed like other men in the necessary cares of life, he cannot ordinarily fulfil the duties of his office. *No man that warreth in this warfare (unless it be in aid of a poor church) ought to entangle himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

elders were ordained, the people chose them, and they, by the solemn laying on of hands, invested them with the office (Acts xiv. 23); and when the work increased upon their hands, they appointed such men as Timothy and Titus as evangelists, to "set things in order" in their stead, 2 Tim. ii. 2; Tit. i. 5. In these ordinations, a Paul or a Titus would preside, but the other elders who were present would unite in brotherly concurrence, and in importuning a blessing on the parties; and hence there would be the "laying on of the hands of the presbytery," or elders.

I may add, though it does not immediately respect any question here at issue, if the first missionaries, and those appointed by them, planted churches, set them in order, and presided at the ordination of elders, *it was not because the same things would not have been valid* if done by others, but because they would not have been *done*. Let but churches be planted, set in order, and scripturally organized, and whether it be by the missionaries or succeeding native pastors, all is good and acceptable to Christ. And such, I conceive, is the state of things with respect to the apostles and succeeding ministers. The same things which were done by the apostles were done by others appointed by them; and had they been done by elders whom they had not appointed, provided the will of Christ had been properly regarded, they would not have objected to their *validity*. This is certainly true in some particulars, and I see not why it should not be in all. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus, *that he might charge some that they taught no other doctrine*; but if the Ephesian teachers had been themselves attached to the truth, neither Paul nor Timothy would have been offended with them for having superseded their interference. He also left Titus in Crete to *set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city*; but if the Cretians themselves had had sufficient wisdom and virtue to have regulated their own affairs by the word of God, I believe their order would not have been reckoned disorder. Had there been elders already ordained among them competent to assist in the ordination of others, if we may judge from the general tenor of apostolic practice, instead of objecting to the validity of their proceedings, both Paul and Titus would, though absent in the flesh, have been with them in the Spirit, "joying and beholding their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ."

The sum is, that church government and discipline are not a body of ceremonies, but a few general principles and examples, sufficient for all practical purposes, but not sufficient to satisfy those who, in New Testament directions, expect to find an Old Testament ritual. It is not difficult to perceive the wisdom of God in thus varying the two dispensations. The Jewish church was an army of soldiers, who had to go through a variety of forms in learning their discipline; the Christian church is an army going forth to battle. The members of the former were taught punctilious obedience, and led with great formality through a variety of religious evolutions; but those of the latter (though they also must keep their ranks, and act in obedience to command whenever it is given) are required to attend, not so much to the mechanical as to the mental, not so much to the minute observation of forms as to the spirit and design of them. The order of the one would almost seem to be appointed for order's sake; but in that of the other the utility of every thing is apparent. The obedience of the former was that of children; the latter of sons arrived at maturer age.

As our Saviour abolished the Jewish law of divorce, and reduced marriage to its original simplicity; so, having abolished the form and order of the church as appointed by Moses, he reduced it to what, as to its first principles, it was from the beginning, and to what must have corresponded with the desires of believers in every age. It was natural for "the sons of God,"

in the days of Seth, to assemble together, and "call upon the name of the Lord;" and their unnatural fellowship with unbelievers brought on the deluge. And even under the Jewish dispensation, wicked men, though descended from Abraham, were not considered as Israelites *indeed*, or *true* citizens of Zion. The friends of God were then the "companions of those that feared him." They "spake often one to another," and assembled for mutual edification. What then is gospel church fellowship but godliness ramified, or the principle of holy love reduced to action? There is scarcely a precept on the subject of church discipline but what may, in substance, be found in the Proverbs of Solomon.

It does not follow hence that all forms of worship and of church government are indifferent, and left to be accommodated to times, places, and circumstances. The principles or general outlines of things are marked out, and we are not at liberty to deviate from them; nor are they to be filled up by worldly policy, but by a pure desire of carrying them into effect according to their true intent; to which may be added, that, so far as they are exemplified in the New Testament, it is our duty in similar cases to follow the example.

It does follow, however, that Scripture precedent, important as it is, is not binding on Christians in things of a *moral nature*, unless the *REASON* of the thing be the same in both cases. Of this proof has been offered in Letter IX., relative to the washing of the feet, the kiss of charity, &c. It also follows that, in attending to *positive institutions*, neither express precept nor precedent is necessary in what respects the *holy manner* of performing them, nor binding in regard of merely *accidental circumstances*, which do not properly belong to them. It required neither express precept nor precedent to make it the duty of the Corinthians, when meeting to celebrate the Lord's supper, to do it *soberly and in the fear of God*, nor to render the contrary a sin. There are also *circumstances* which may, on some occasions, accompany a positive institution, and not on others, which being, therefore, no part of it, are not binding. It is a fact that the Lord's supper was first celebrated with *unleavened bread*; for no leaven was to be found at the time in all the Jewish habitations; but no mention being made of this, either in the institution or in the repetition of it by the apostle, we conclude it was a mere accidental circumstance, no more belonging to the ordinance than its having been in "a large upper room." It is a fact, too, that our Lord and his disciples sat *in a reclining posture* at the supper, after the manner of sitting at their ordinary meals; yet none imagine this to be binding upon us. It is also a fact, with regard to the *time*, that our Saviour first sat down with disciples on the evening of the *fifth* day of the week, the night in which he was betrayed; but though that was a memorable night, and is mentioned by the apostle in connexion with the supper, yet no one supposes it to be binding upon us; especially as we know it was afterwards celebrated on the first day of the week by the church at Troas.

Much has been advanced, however, in favour of the *first* day of the week as exclusively the time for the celebration of the Lord's supper, and of its being still binding on Christians. A weekly communion might, for any thing we know, be the general practice of the first churches; and certainly there can be no objection to the thing itself; but to render it a term of communion is laying bonds in things wherein Christ has laid none. That the supper was celebrated on the first day of the week by the church at Troas is certain; that it was so *every* first day of the week is possible, perhaps probable; but the passage does not *prove that it was so*; and still less, as Mr. Braidwood affirms, that "it can *only* be dispensed on that day."—Letters, p. 44. The words of the institution are, "*As often as ye eat,*" &c., without

determining *how often*. Those who would make these terms so indeterminate as not to denote *frequency*, and consequently to be no rule at all as to time, do not sufficiently consider their force. The term "often," we all know, denotes frequency; and "*as often*" denotes the degree of that frequency; but every comparative supposes the positive. There can be no degree of frequency where frequency itself is not. It might as well be said that the words, *How much she hath glorified herself, so much torment give her*, convey no idea of Babylon having glorified herself more than others, but merely of her punishment being proportioned to her pride, be it much or little.

The truth appears to be that the Lord's supper ought to be frequently celebrated; but the exact time of it is a circumstance which does not belong to the ordinance itself.

Similar remarks might be made on *female* communion, a subject on which a great deal has been written of late years in the baptismal controversy. Whether there be express precept or precedent for it, or not, is of no consequence; for the distinction of sex is a mere *circumstance* in nowise affecting the qualifications required, and therefore not belonging to the institution. It is of just as much account as whether a believer be a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a freeman; that is, it is of no account at all; "for there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; but all are one in Christ Jesus." Express precept or precedent might as well be demanded for the parties being tall or low, black or white, sickly or healthy, as for their being male or female.

To accommodate the spirit of New Testament practice to the fluctuating manners and inclinations of men is certainly what ought not to be; but neither can it be denied that many of the apostolic practices were suited to the state of things at the time, and would not have been what they were if circumstances had been different. To instance in their proceedings on the *seventh* and *first* days of the week:—It is well known that, in preaching to the Jews, and others who attended with them, they generally took the *seventh* day of the week;\* the reason of which doubtless was its being the day in which they were to be met with at their synagogues. Hence it is that on the *first* day of the week so little is said of their preaching to unbelievers, and so much of the celebration of Christian ordinances, which is represented as the specific object of their coming together.† But the same motive that induced the apostles to preach to unbelievers chiefly on the *seventh* day of the week would, in *our* circumstances, have induced them to preach to them on the *first*, that being now the day on which they ordinarily assemble together. In countries where Christianity has so far obtained as for the legislature to respect the first day of the week as a day of rest, instead of having now and then an individual come into our assemblies, as the primitive churches had, and as churches raised in heathen countries must still have, we have multitudes who on that day are willing to hear the word. In such circumstances the apostles would have preached both to believers and unbelievers, and administered Christian ordinances, all on the same day. To frame our worship in things of this nature after apostolic example, without considering the reasons of their conduct, is to stumble in darkness, instead of walking as children of the light. Yet this is the kind of apostolic practice by which the churches have been teased and divided, the great work of preaching the gospel to the ungodly neglected, and Christianity reduced to litigious trifling.

If the practice of Christ and his apostles be in all cases binding upon

\* Acts xiii. 42; xviii. 4; xvi. 13.

† Cor. xi. 20; Acts xx. 7.

Christians, whether the reason of the thing be the same or not, why do they not eat the Lord's supper with unleavened bread, and in a reclining posture? And why do they not assemble together *merely* to celebrate this ordinance, and that on a Lord's day *evening*? From the accounts in 1 Cor. xi. 20, and Acts xx. 7, two things appear to be evident:—First, That the celebration of the Lord's supper was the *specific object* of the coming together both of the church at Corinth, and of that at Troas: the former came together (professedly) *to eat the Lord's supper*; the latter are said to have come together *to break bread*. Secondly, That it was on the *evening* of the day. This is manifest not only from its being called the Lord's *supper*, but from the Corinthians making it their *own supper*, and from its being followed at Troas by a sermon from Paul which required "lights," and continued till "midnight."

I do not mean to say that the church at either Corinth or Troas had no other worship during the first day of the week than this; but that this was attended to as a distinct object of assembling, and, if there were any other, after the other was over.

It may be thought that these were merely *accidental circumstances*, and therefore not binding on us. It does not appear to me, however, that we are at liberty to turn the Lord's supper into a breakfast. But if we be, and choose to do so, let us not pretend to a punctilious imitation of the first churches.

It is well known to be a peculiarity in Sandemanian societies not to determine any question, by a *majority*. They, like the first churches, must be of *one mind*; and if there be any dissentients who cannot be convinced, they are excluded. Perfect unanimity is certainly desirable, not only in the great principles of the gospel, but in questions of discipline, and even in the choice of officers; but how if this be unattainable? The question is, whether it be more consistent with the spirit and practice of the New Testament for the greater part of the church to forbear with the less, or, Diotrephes-like, to cast them out of the church; and this for having according to the best of their judgments acted up to the Scriptural directions? One of these modes of proceeding must of necessity be pursued, for there is no middle course; and if we loved one another with genuine Christian affection, we could not be at a loss which to prefer. The New Testament speaks of an election of seven deacons, but says nothing on the mode of its being conducted. Now, considering the number of members in the church at Jerusalem, unless they were directed in their choice by inspiration, which there is no reason to think they were, it is more than a thousand to one that those seven persons who were chosen were not the persons whom every individual member first proposed. What then can we suppose them to have done? They might discuss the subject till they became of one mind; or, which is much more likely, the less number, perceiving the general wish, and considering that their brethren had understanding as well as they, might peaceably give up their own opinions to the greater, "submitting one to another in the fear of God." But supposing a hundred of the members had said as follows:—"Without reflecting on any who have been named, we think two or three other brethren more answerable to the qualifications required by the apostles than some of them; but having said this, we are willing to acquiesce in the general voice"—should they or would they have been excluded for this? Assuredly the exclusions of the New Testament were for very different causes!

The statements of the society in St. Martin's-le-grand on this subject are sophistical, self-contradictory, and blasphemous. "Nothing," say they, "is decided by the vote of the *majority*." In some cases indeed there are dis-



senting voices. The reasons of the dissent are thereupon proposed and considered. *If they are Scriptural*, the whole church has cause to change its opinion; *if not*, and the person persists in his opposition to *the word of God*, the church is bound to reject him." But who is to judge whether the reasons of the dissentients be Scriptural or not? The *majority*, no doubt, and an opposition to their opinion is an opposition to *the word of God!*

Humility and love will do great things toward unanimity; but this forced unanimity is the highest refinement of spiritual tyranny. It is a being compelled to believe as the church believes, and that not only on subjects clearly revealed, and of great importance, but in matters of mere opinion, in which the most upright minds may differ, and to which no standard can apply. What can he who *exalteth himself above all that is called God* do more than set up his decisions as *the word of God*, and require men on pain of excommunication to receive them?

## LETTER XI.

### THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

You are aware that the admirers of Messrs. Glass and Sandeman generally value themselves on their "clear views of the gospel, and of the nature of Christ's kingdom;" and I doubt not but they have written things concerning both which deserve attention. It appears to me, however, that they have done much more in detecting error than in advancing truth; and that their writings on the kingdom of Christ relate more to what it is not than to what it is. Taking up the sentence of our Lord, "My kingdom is not of this world," they have said much, and much to purpose, against worldly establishments of religion, with their unscriptural appendages; but, after all, have they shown what the kingdom of Christ *is*; and does their religion, taken as a whole, exemplify it in its genuine simplicity? If writing and talking about "simple truth" would do it, they could not be wanting; but it will not. Is there not as much of a worldly spirit in their religion as in that which they explode, only that it is of a different species? Nay, is there not a greater defect among them in what relates to "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," than will often be found in what they denominate Babylon itself?

A clear view of the nature of Christ's kingdom would hardly be supposed to overlook the apostle's account of it. "The kingdom of God," he says, "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." From this statement we should expect to find the *essence* of it placed in things moral, rather than in things ceremonial; in things clearly revealed, rather than in matters of doubtful disputation; and in things of prime importance, rather than in those of but comparatively small account. We certainly should not expect to see the old error of the Pharisees revived, that of tithing mint and rue to the neglect of judgment, mercy, and the love of God.

We should also expect the most eminent *subjects* of this kingdom would be men who, while they conscientiously attend to the positive institutions of Christ, abhor the thought of making them a substitute for sobriety, righteousness, and godliness; men who need not a special precept for every duty;

but, drinking deeply into the law of love, are ready, like the father of the faithful, to obey all its dictates.

And as the kingdom of God consists in *peace*, we should expect its most eminent subjects to be distinguished by that dove-like spirit which seeks the things which make for peace. They may indeed be called upon to contend for the faith, and that earnestly; but contention will not be their element, nor will their time be chiefly occupied in conversing on the errors, absurdities, and faults of others. Considering *bitter zeal and strife in the heart* as belonging to the wisdom that descendeth not from above, but which is earthly, sensual, and devilish, they are concerned to lay aside every thing of the kind, and to cherish the spirit of a new-born babe.

Finally, The *joys* which they possess, in having heard and believed the good news of salvation, may be expected to render them dead to those of the world; so much so, at least, that they will have no need to repair to the diversions of the theatre, or other carnal pastimes, in order to be happy; nor will they dream of such methods of asserting their Christian liberty, and opposing Pharisaism.

Whether these marks of Christ's subjects be eminently conspicuous, among the people alluded to, those who are best acquainted with them are able to determine; but so far as appears from their writings, whatever excellences distinguish them, they do not consist in things of this nature.

It is remarkable that the apostle, after representing the kingdom of God as being "not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit," adds, "for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." This not only shows what the prominent features of Christ's kingdom are, but affords a striking contrast to the kingdom contended for by Sandemanians, which, instead of recommending itself to both God and man, would seem rather to have been copied from the religion of that people who "pleased not God, and were contrary to all men."

The substitution of forms and ceremonies for the love of God and man is one of the many ways in which depravity has been wont to operate. What else is paganism, apostate Judaism, popery, and many other things which pass for religion? And whether the same principle does not pervade the system in question, and even constitute one of its leading features, let the impartial observer judge. If it does not place the kingdom of God in meat and drink, it places it in things analogous to them, rather than in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

It is true the forms contended for in this case are not the same as in many others, being such only as are thought to be enjoined in the Scriptures. That many of them arise from a misunderstanding of the Scriptures I have endeavoured to show in a former letter; but whether it be so or not, if an improper stress be laid upon them, they may be as injurious as though they were not Scriptural. When the brazen serpent became an idol it was as pernicious as other idols. The tithing of herbs, though in itself right, yet, being done to the neglect of "weightier matters," became the very characteristic of hypocrisy.

It has been said that obedience to the least of God's commands cannot be unfriendly to obedience to the greatest; and if it be genuine, it cannot; but to deny the possibility of the great things of God's law being set aside by a fondness for little things is to deny the fact just referred to, and discovers but a slender acquaintance with the human heart, which certainly can burn in zeal for a ceremony, when, as to the love of God and man, it is as cold as death.

If the nature of Christ's kingdom were placed in those things in which the apostle places it, the government and discipline of the church would be considered as *means*, and not as *ends*. The design of order and discipline in an army is to enable it to encounter the enemy to advantage; and such was the order and discipline of the primitive churches. It was still peaceable and affectionate, without parade and without disputes. It consisted in all things being done to edifying, and in such an arrangement of energies as that every gift should be employed to the best advantage in building up the church and attacking the kingdom of Satan. But is this the order and discipline of which so much has of late been written? Surely not? From the days of Glass and Sandeman until now, it does not appear to have been their *object* to convert men to Christ from among the ungodly, but to make proselytes of other Christians. And is this to understand the true nature of Christ's kingdom? If there were not another fact, this alone is sufficient to prove that their religion, though it may contain a portion of truth, and though godly men may have been misled by it, yet, taken as a whole, is not of God. There is not a surer mark of false religion than its tendency and aim being to make proselytes to ourselves rather than converts to Christ, Acts xx. 30.

That there is neither tendency in the system, nor aim in those who enter fully into it, to promote the kingdom of Christ, is manifest, and easily accounted for. They neither expect, nor, as it would seem, *desire* its progress, but even look with a jealous eye on all opinions and efforts in favour of its enlargement; as though, should it be greatly extended, it must needs be a kingdom of this world! This, I am aware, is a serious charge, but it does not originate with me. Mr. Braidwood, of Edinburgh, who must be allowed to have the best opportunities of knowing the system and its adherents, and who cannot be supposed to write under the influence of prejudice, seeing he acknowledges he has "learned many things from the ancient writings of this class of professing Christians in relation to the simple doctrine of the gospel and the nature of Christ's kingdom,"—Mr. Braidwood, I say, writes as follows:—"I feel it incumbent on me to warn the disciples of Jesus against that state of mind which makes them slow to believe the prophecies relating to the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom."—"It is remarkable that some Gentile Christians now show a disposition, toward the Jews, similar to that which, in the apostolic age, the Jews manifested toward the Gentiles, namely, *a dislike to their salvation!* It is truly mortifying to reflect that the greater number of those who indulge this state of mind are persons much instructed in the knowledge of the gospel, and of the things concerning the kingdom of God. They call it a *Jewish notion* to expect an extensive influence of the word of God among all nations. The very opposite is the fact; for the apostle Paul, describing his countrymen, says, 'They please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak unto the Gentiles that they might be saved.' And even *believing* Jews were not very willing to acknowledge the first Gentile converts, and were surprised when they heard that God had also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life. But the apostle thus describes the spirit by which he regulated his own conduct;—'I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved!'

"The freeness of Divine grace, its sovereignty, its opposition to the most darling inclinations of the human heart, the spiritual and heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom—all these have been used as arguments against the conversion of the Jews, or any signal prosperity of the gospel among the Gentiles! And they whose hearts' desire and prayer to God for Israel, and for the nations, is that they may be saved, are accused of ignorance of the gospel,

and of wishing to see a corrupt faith prevail, especially if they dare to express a hope that their prayers will be answered!"

It would seem, hence, to be the interest of this class of professing Christians that the world and the church should continue what they are. They glory in the latter being few in number: if, therefore, any considerable part of mankind were to embrace even what they account the truth, they would have nothing left in comparison whereof to glory!

Mr. Braidwood addresses the party on whom he animadverts as follows:—"Will the purest and simplest views that can be entertained of the truth concerning Jesus have any tendency to make us less concerned about the salvation of men, and more anxious to darken the things revealed in the Scriptures concerning the success of the gospel among all nations? No, my friend, let us beware of imputing to the gospel a state of mind which so ill accords with its genuine influence, and which can arise only from *prejudice, and from mistaken views of the Messiah's kingdom*. That glorious kingdom, instead of dying away, as some have supposed, like an expiring lamp, before the advent of its eternal King, shall break in pieces and *consume all opposing kingdoms, and shall stand for ever*, although its own subjects, acting consistently, use no carnal weapons."—*Letters, &c.*, pp. 28, 30.

The writer to whom these excellent remarks are addressed signs himself *Palæmon*. I know not who he is; but as the signature is the same as that affixed to Mr. Sandeman's *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, I conclude he is and wishes to be thought a Sandemanian. Mr. Braidwood calls him his "friend," and speaks of his being "mortified" by these his erroneous sentiments, as though he had a feeling for Palæmon's general creed, or that "instruction in the knowledge of the gospel and of the things concerning the kingdom of God" which he and others had received. For my part, without deciding upon the state of individuals, I am persuaded that these people, with all their professions of "clear views," "simple truth," and "simple belief," have imbibed a corrupt and dangerous system of doctrine.

Palæmon, whoever he is, would do well to *examine himself whether he be in the faith*; and were I in Mr. Braidwood's place, I should feel it to be my duty to re-examine what I had "learned from the ancient writings of this class of professing Christians relative to the simple doctrine of the gospel and the nature of Christ's kingdom;" and to ask myself what I had asked my friend, *Whether that can be pure and simple truth which is productive of such effects?*

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## LETTER XII.

### THE SPIRIT OF THE SYSTEM COMPARED WITH THAT OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

You are aware that doctrines, whether true or false, if really believed, become principles of action. They are a mould into which the mind is cast, and from which it receives its impression. An observant eye will easily perceive a *spirit* which attends different religions, and different systems of the same religion; which, over and above the diversities arising from natural temper, will manifest itself in their respective adherents. Paganism, Mahomedism, deism, apostate Judaism, and various systems which have appeared under the name of Christianity, have each discovered a spirit of its own; and so has Christianity itself. Thus it was from the beginning: those who received "another doctrine" received with it "another spirit;" and hence we

are told of "the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error:" he that had the one was said to be "of God," and he that had the other "not of God."

I hope it will be understood that in what I write on this subject there is no reference to individuals, nor any wish to judge men indiscriminately by the names under which they pass, nor any desire to charge the evils which may belong to the system on all who have discovered a partiality in its favour, or who have defended particular parts of it. I shall only take a brief review of the spirit which is of God, and compare that of Mr. Sandeman and the generality of his admirers with it.

First, The spirit of primitive Christianity was full of *the devout and the affectionate*. Of this there needs little to be said in a way of proof, as the thing is evident to any one who is acquainted with the Bible. The Psalms of David are full of it; and so is the New Testament. Primitive Christianity was the religion of *love*. It breathed grace, mercy, and peace on all that loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Among such it would not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Its faithfulness was tempered with brotherly kindness. It had compassion for the ignorant, and them that were out of the way; and while siding with God against the wicked, it wept over them, and was willing to do or suffer any thing, if by any means it might save some of them. But is this Sandemanianism? You will scarcely meet with *terms* expressive of devotion or affection in any of its productions, unless it be to hold them up to ridicule. It appears to be at war with all devotion and devout men. Its most indignant opposition and bitterest invectives are reserved for them. Its advocates would have you think, indeed, that it is *blind* devotion, like that of the Pharisees, at which they sneer; but where are we to look for that which is *not* so, and with which they are *not* at war? Is it to be found out of their own connexions? Every thing there which has the appearance of religion is Pharisaism. It must therefore be among themselves if any where. But if the spirit of "love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness," &c. prevail in their assemblies, it is singular that the same spirit should not appear in their writings. Who that has read them will say that their general tendency is to promote the love of either God or man? Toward worldly men indeed, who make no pretence to religion, the system seems to bear a friendly aspect; but it discovers no concern for *their* salvation. It would seem to have no tears to shed over a perishing world; and even looks with a jealous eye on those that have, glorying in the paucity of its numbers!

Whether the advocates of this system perceive the discordance between their own spirit and that of David, or whatever is the reason, it is common for them to apply to Christ a great deal of what he manifestly wrote of his own devout feeling. Christ, it seems, might be the subject of devotion without any danger of self-righteous pride; but we cannot, and therefore must have little or nothing to do with it.

It is among people of this description that religious *feelings* and *affections* are ordinarily traduced. There are, no doubt, many enthusiastic feelings which have no true religion in them. There is such a thing too as to make a saviour of them as well as of our duties. But we must not on this account exclude the one any more than the other. President Edwards, in his *Treatise on Religious Affections*, has proved beyond all reasonable contradiction that the essence of true religion lies in them. In reading that work, and Mr. Sandeman's Letters, we may see many of the same things exposed as enthusiastic; but the one is an oil that breaketh not the head, the other an effusion of pride and bitterness. The former, while rejecting what is naught, retains the savour of pure, humble, and holy religion; but the

latter is as one who should propose to remove the disorders of the head by means of a guillotine.

It has been observed that every religion which, instead of arising from love to the truth, has its origin in *dislike* or *opposition*, even though it be to error, will come to nothing. You may sometimes see the principal inhabitants of a village fall out with the clergyman, perhaps on account of some difference on the subject of tithes, and proceed to build a place for dissenting worship: also dissenting congregations themselves will sometimes divide from mere antipathy to the preacher, or from offence taken at some of the people: but did you ever know such undertakings productive of much good? When we adhere to a system of religion from opposition to something else, we do not so much regard it for what it *is* as for what it is *not*. Whatever good, therefore, there may be in it, it will do us no good, and we shall go on waxing worse and worse. It is remarkable that the Sadducees, according to Prideaux, professed, at their outset, *the strictest adherence to the written word, utterly renouncing the traditions of the elders, which the Pharisees had agreed to hold*. In a little time, however, they rejected a great part of the word itself, and its most important doctrines, such as the resurrection and a future life. This was no more than might have been expected; for the origin of the system was not *attachment* to the word, but *dislike* to the Pharisees.

How far these remarks apply to the religion in question, let those who are best acquainted with it judge. It doubtless contains some important truth, as did Sadduceism at its outset; but the spirit which pervades it must render it doubtful whether this be held for its own sake so much as from *opposition* to other principles. If truth be loved for its own sake, it will occupy our minds irrespective of the errors which are opposed to it, and whether they exist or not. But, by the strain of writing and conversation which prevails in this connexion, it would seem that the supposed absurdities of others are the life of their religion, and that if these were once to cease, their zeal would expire with them. It is the vulture, and not the dove, that is apparent in all their writings. Who will say that Mr. Sandeman sought the good of his opponents, when all through his publications he took every opportunity to hold them up to contempt, and with evident marks of pleasure to describe them and their friends as walking in *a devout path to hell*? The same is manifestly the spirit of his followers, though they may not possess his sarcastic talents. But are these the weapons of the Christian warfare? Supposing Flavel, Boston, the Erskines, &c. to have been bad men, was this the way to deal with them? Is there no medium between flattery and malignity?

Mr. Sandeman would persuade us that Paul was of his "temper."\* Paul was certainly in earnest, and resisted error wherever he found it. He does not, however, treat those who build on a right foundation, though they raise a portion of what will be ultimately consumed, as enemies to the truth.† And in his conduct, even to the enemies of Christ, I recollect no sarcastic sneers, tending to draw upon them the contempt of mankind, but every thing calculated to do them good. If, however, it were not so, he must have practised differently from what he wrote. "The servant of the Lord," he says in his Epistle to Timothy, "must not *strive* (as for mastery); but be *gentle* unto all men, in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Paul would have instructed and entreated those whom Mr. Sandeman scorned.

\* Epistolary Correspondence, p. 9.

† 1 Cor. iii. 11-15.

There is a *calmness*, I acknowledge, in the advocates of this doctrine, which distinguishes their writings from the low and fulsome productions of the English Antinomians. But calmness is not always opposed to bitterness; on the contrary, it may be studied for the very purpose of concealing it. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his sayings were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords."

The only thing that I know of which has the appearance of love is that attachment which they have one to another, and which they consider as *love for the truth's sake*. But even here there are things which I am not able to reconcile. Love for the truth's sake unites the heart to every one *in proportion as he appears to embrace it*; but the nearer you approach to these people, provided you follow not with them, so much the more bitter are their invectives. Again, Love for the truth's sake takes into consideration its practical effects. It was truth *embodied* in the spirit and life that excited the attachment of the apostle John: "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children *walking in truth*." But that which excites their love seems to be the "clear views" which they conceive their friends to entertain above other professing Christians. Once more, Love, be it for the sake of what it may, will so unite us to one another as to render separation painful, and lead to the use of all possible means of preventing it. But such is the discipline of those who drink into these principles, that, for differences which others would consider as objects of forbearance, they can separate men from their communion in considerable numbers, with little or no apparent concern. I can reconcile such things with self-love; but not with *love for the truth's sake*.

Secondly, The spirit of primitive Christianity was a spirit of *meekness and humility*. Of this Christ himself was the great pattern; and they that would be his disciples must "learn of him, who was meek and lowly of heart." They were unbelievers, and not Christians, who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." He that would be wise was required to become a fool that he might be wise. The apostle Paul, notwithstanding his high attainments in the knowledge of Christ, reckoned himself as knowing nothing comparatively, desiring above all things "*that he might know him*, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable unto his death." If any man "thought that he knew any thing," he declared that he knew "nothing yet as he ought to know." But is this the spirit of the system in question? One of the first things that presents itself is a pretence to something very nearly akin to infallibility; an imposing air in all its decisions, tending to bear down timid spirits, especially as the sincerity, and consequently the Christianity, of the party is suspended upon his entirely yielding himself up to it.

If it be necessary to become fools that we may be wise, how are we to account for those "clear views of the gospel" of which these people boast? They have given abundant proof that they account *others* fools who do not see with them; and they may account *themselves* to have been such till they inhibited their present principles: but if any symptoms have appeared of their being fools in their own eyes *from that time forward*, they have escaped my observation. Instead of a self-diffident spirit, which treats with respect the understanding of others, and implores Divine direction, no sooner have these principles taken possession of a man, than they not only render him certain that he is in the right, but instantly qualify him to pronounce on those who follow not with him as destitute of the truth.

We may be told, however, that there is one species of pride, at least, of which the system cannot be suspected, namely, that of *self-righteousness*, seeing it is that against which its abettors are constantly declaiming. But he that would know the truth must not take up with mere professions. If a

self-righteous spirit consist in "trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others," I see not how they are to be acquitted of it. A self-righteous spirit and its opposite will be allowed to be drawn with sufficient prominence in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The question is, which of these characters is exemplified by those who enter fully into the Sandemanian system? Is it the publican? Look at it. I am aware that he is the favourite of the party, and so he is of other parties; for you never heard of any who were the professed advocates of the Pharisee; but are they of the *spirit* of the publican? Rather, are they not manifestly of the spirit of the Pharisee, who looked down with scorn upon his fellow worshipper?

Mr. Braidwood, referring to a late publication by one of this class of professing Christians, who calls himself *Simplex*, writes as follows:—"The work referred to seems intended chiefly to show how much *Simplex*, and they who agree with him, *despise others*, and how far they *alone* are from *trusting to themselves that they are righteous*. This their apparent inconsistency, their confident assertions when no proof is given, their unfeeling and indiscriminate censures, (which therefore cannot be always just,) and their fearless anathemas against all who follow not with them, prevent them from obtaining a hearing, not only from those whom they might be warranted to consider as false professors, but from disciples of Christ, who need to be taught the way of God more perfectly. And in this also they glory.

"If they would suffer an exhortation from a fellow sinner, I would entreat them to recollect that the Pharisee, praying in the temple, disdained the publican, while the publican disdained no man, and had nothing to say except what regarded himself and THE MOST HIGH—'God be merciful to me a sinner.' They will never successfully combat self-righteousness till they themselves become *poor and of a contrite spirit*. The most effectual way to condemn pride is to give an *example* of humility.

"Self-abasement corresponds with the humbling doctrine of Christ crucified; while the indulgence of an opposite spirit, in connexion with clear views of the freedom and sovereignty of Divine grace, presents a most unnatural and unedifying object—the publican turning the chace upon the Pharisee, and combating him with his own weapons! Nay, he who professes to account himself the chief of sinners, having once begun to imitate an example so repugnant to the genuine influence of the doctrine for which he contends, now proceeds to attack all who come in his way—self-condemned publicans, not entirely of his own mind, as well as proud Pharisees, avowing their impious claims upon the Divine Being. May we not ask, *Who art thou that judgest?*"—Letters, &c. Intr.

As to Mr. Braidwood's allowing them to possess "clear views of the freedom and sovereignty of Divine grace," I do not understand how such views can accompany, and still less produce, such a spirit as he has described; but, with regard to the spirit itself, it is manifestly drawn from life, and is of greater effect than if he had written a volume on the subject. Whether his observations do not equally apply to that *marked separation* of church members from others in public worship, said to be practised of late in Ireland, and to which he refers in page 32, let those who have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil judge.

Lastly, the spirit of primitive Christianity was *catholic* and *pacific*. Its language is, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—"As many as walk by this rule, (that is, the cross of Christ,) peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."—"All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and



ours, grace be unto them, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

There were cases in which the apostles and first Christians were obliged to withdraw even from *brethren* who walked disorderly; but this would give them pain. And if the disordered state of the Christian world at present render it necessary for some of the friends of Christ to withdraw from others, it must needs, to a truly good man, be a matter of deep regret. It will be his concern, too, to diminish the breach rather than to widen it; to consider the things wherein he agrees with others, and, as far as he conscientiously can, to act with them. If we see individuals, or a community, who, instead of such regret, are generally employed in censuring all who follow not with them, as enemies to the truth; and instead of acting with them in things wherein they are agreed, are studious to render the separation as wide as possible, and glory in it—can we hesitate to say this is not Christianity?

There is a zeal which may properly be denominated *catholic*, and one which may as properly be denominated *sectarian*. It is not supposed that any man, or body of men, can be *equally* concerned in promoting Christ's interest in all places. As our powers are limited, we must each build the wall, as it were, over against our own houses. Nor are we obliged to be *equally* concerned for the prosperity of all religious undertakings in which the parties may be in the main on the side of Christ. It is right that we should be most interested in that which approaches the nearest to truth and true religion. But true catholic zeal will nevertheless have the good of the universal church of Christ for its grand object, and will rejoice in the prosperity of every denomination of Christians, *in so far* as they appear to have the mind of Christ. Those who builded the wall against their own houses would not consider themselves as the only builders, but would bear goodwill to their brethren, and keep in view the rearing of the *whole* wall, which should encompass the city. As it is not our being of the religion of Rome, nor of any other which happens to be favoured by the state, that determines our zeal to be catholic; so it is not our being of a sect or party of Christians, or endeavouring with Christian meekness and frankness to convince others of what we account the mind of Christ, that gives it the character of sectarian. It is *a being more concerned to propagate those things wherein we differ from other Christians than to impart the common salvation*. Where this is the case, we shall so limit the kingdom of heaven to ourselves as nearly to confine our good wishes, prayers, and efforts to our own denomination, and treat all others as if we had nothing to do with them in religious matters but in a way of censure and dispute. Wherein this kind of zeal differs from that of the Pharisees, that compassed sea and land to make proselytes, but who, when made, were turned to them rather than to God, I cannot understand.

It is remarkable that, notwithstanding all that has been written by the advocates of this system about a free gospel to the ungodly, they do not seem to have much to do in labouring for the conversion of men of this description. Their principal attention, like that of the Socinians, seems directed toward religious people of other denominations, and from them their forces have been mostly recruited. This may not have been universally the case, but from every thing that I have seen and heard it is very generally so; and if this do not betray a zeal more directed to the making of proselytes to themselves than of converts to Christ, it will be difficult to determine what does.

The zeal of the apostles was directed to the correction of evils, the healing of differences, and the uniting of the friends of Jesus Christ; but the

zeal produced by the system appears to be of a contrary tendency. Wherever it most prevails, we hear most of bitterness, contention, and division.

It may be said this is no more than was true of the gospel itself, which set a man at variance with his father, his mother, and his nearest friends; and relates not to what it *causes*, but to what, through the corruptions of men, it *occasions*. The words of our Lord, however, do not describe the bitterness of believers against unbelievers, but of unbelievers against believers, who, as Cain hated his brother, hate them for the gospel's sake.

It has been said that "the poignancy of Mr. Sandeman's words arises from their being true." The same might be said, and with equal justice, of any other "bitter words," for which men of contemptuous spirits know how to "whet their tongues." If the doctrine which Mr. Sandeman taught were true, it would do good to them that believed it. It certainly produces its own likeness in them; but what is it? Is it not "trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others?" Is it not desecrating the mote in a brother's eye, while blinded to the beam in their own?

There is a very interesting description given in the Epistle of James of two opposite kinds of *wisdom*. The former is represented as coming "from above;" the latter as "coming *not* from above," but as being "earthly, sensual, devilish." That is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy;" this works "bitter zeal and strife in the heart." "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace," and in making peace, by the one; but by the other is produced "confusion, and every evil work." Yet these latter are supposed to "glory;" but in glorying they "lie against the truth." Without wishing to ascribe either to bodies of people indiscriminately, there is enough said to enable us to form a judgment of *things* by the effects which they produce.

To conclude.—It is no part of my design to vindicate or apologize for the errors of other denominations. The Christian church is not what it was at the beginning; and though every body of Christians is not equally corrupt, yet none is so pure but that, if its character were reported by the great Head of the church, he would have "somewhat against" it. But whatever errors or evils may be found in any of us, it is not this species of reform, even if it were universally to prevail, that would correct them. On the contrary, if we may judge from its effects during the last fifty years, it would lead the Christian world, if not to downright infidelity, yet to something that comes but very little short of it.

I am your affectionate Friend and Brother,

ANDREW FULLER.

# DIALOGUES AND LETTERS

BETWEEN

## CRISPUS AND GAIUS.

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### DIALOGUE I.

THE PECULIAR TURN OF THE PRESENT AGE.

*Crispus.* Good morning, my dear Gaius; I am glad to see you. The world is busy in grasping wealth, in discussing politics, and in struggling for dominion; all trifles of a moment: let us retire from the tumultuous scene, and discourse on subjects of greater importance.

*Gaius.* I am glad, my dear Crispus, to find your mind exercised on such subjects. The present agitated state of the world is doubtless a great temptation to many to let go their hold of heavenly things, and to bend their chief attention to subjects which originate and terminate in the present life.

*C.* My mind has of late been much engaged on Divine subjects. I find in them a source of solid satisfaction. Yet I must confess I feel as well a variety of difficulties which I should be happy to have removed. I have often found your conversation profitable, and should wish to avail myself of this and every other opportunity for improving by it.

*G.* Suitable conversation on Divine subjects is commonly of mutual advantage; and I must say there is something, I know not what, in the countenance of an inquisitive, serious friend, which, *as iron sharpeneth iron*, whets our powers, and draws forth observations where otherwise they never existed. I think I have been as much indebted to you for asking pertinent questions as you have been to me for answering them.

*C.* I have been lately employed in reading the works of some of our first Reformers; and, on comparing their times with the present, I have observed that a considerable difference has taken place in the state of the public mind. At the dawn of the Reformation the bulk of mankind were the devotees of superstition, and stood ready to extirpate all those who dared to avow any religious principles different from theirs. Even the Reformers themselves, though they inveighed against the persecuting spirit of the papists, yet seem to have been very severe upon one another, and to have exercised too little Christian forbearance, and too much of a spirit that savoured of unchristian bitterness, toward those whose ideas of reformation did not exactly coincide with their own. A great deal of their language, and some parts of their conduct, would, in the present day, be thought very censurable. How do you account for this change?

*G.* Were I to answer that the rights of conscience have of late years been more clearly understood, and that the sacred duty of benevolence, irrespec-

tive of the principles which men imbibe, has been more frequently enforced, I should so far speak the truth; and so far we have reason to congratulate the present age upon its improvement.

*C.* Do you suppose there are other causes to which such a change may be attributed?

*G.* I do. Scepticism, and a general indifference to religion, appear to me to have succeeded the blind zeal and superstition of former ages. It has been observed, I think by Dr. Goodwin, on that remarkable phrase of the apostle Paul, "Ye walked according to the course of this world," First, That there is a course which is general and common to all ages and places, and which includes the gratifying of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, the laying up treasures on earth instead of heaven, &c. Secondly, That there is a course which is more particular, and which is incessantly varying according to times, places, and circumstances. Like the tide, it is ever rolling, but in different directions. In one age or country it is this, in another that, and in a third different from them both. The course of this world in the early ages was a course of idolatry. In this direction it ran until the days of Constantine, at which period the prince of darkness found it impracticable, in the civilized parts of the earth, any longer to support the pagan throne. The leaders in the Roman empire resolved to become Christians; and great numbers from various motives followed their example. The tide had then changed its direction; the profession of Christianity was fashionable, was honourable, was the high road to preferment. Satan himself, if I may so speak, could now have no objection to turn Christian. The external profession of religion became splendid and pompous; but religion itself was gradually lost, and a system of ignorance, superstition, and persecution was introduced in its place. For many centuries the course of this world (I speak of the European part of it) was a course of popery; and so powerful was it, that those who ventured to resist it did so at the expense of every thing that was dear to them on earth. In this direction it ran till the Reformation. Since that period there has been another turning of the tide. Several nations have become Protestant; and yet the course of this world goes on, and Satan has great influence among us. He has no objection to our laughing at superstition, provided that in any form we remain the slaves of sin. The world of late years has not directed its course so immediately towards superstition as towards a criminal carelessness and infidelity. Formerly the minds of men were so bent on uniformity in religion as to require it in *civil* society. Now they tend to the other extreme, and are for admitting any kind of sentiments even into *religious* society. In short, the propensity of the world in this day is to consider all religious principles whatever, and all forms of worship, even those which are of Divine institution, as of little or no importance. It is from this cause I am afraid, Crispus, and not merely from a better understanding of the rights of conscience, that a great part of the lenity of the present age arises.

*C.* Be it so; yet the effect is friendly to mankind. If mutual forbearance among men arose from a good motive, it would indeed be better for those who exercise it; but let it arise from what motive it may, it is certainly advantageous to society.

*G.* Very true: but we should endeavour to have laudable conduct, if possible, arise from the purest motives, that it may be approved of God, as well as advantageous to men.

*C.* But do you think we are to expect as much as this from the apostate race of Adam? In the apostle John's time the whole world was represented as lying in wickedness; and, in fact, it has been so ever since. Formerly

its wickedness operated in a way of *intemperance*, now it works in a way of *indifference*. Of the two, does not the latter seem to be the less injurious?

G. It is indeed the less injurious to our property, our liberty, and our lives; but with regard to our spiritual interests it may be the reverse. Fashion, be it what it may, will always, in some degree at least, diffuse its influence through the minds of men, even of those who are truly religious. The intemperance of past ages gave to the temper of pious people as well as others a tinge of unchristian severity; and the indifference of the present time has, I fear, operated with equal power, though in a different manner. We ought to be thankful for our mercies, but at the same time we should take heed lest we be carried away by the course of this world.

C. What evidence have we that religious people are influenced by a spirit of indifference?

G. The crying up of one part of religion at the expense of another. You may often hear of practical religion as being every thing, and of speculative opinions (which is the fashionable name for doctrinal sentiments) as matters of very little consequence. Because they are not cognizable by the civil magistrate, they treat them as if they were of no account; and by opposing them to practical religion, the unwary are led to conclude that the one has no dependence on the other. The effect of this has been, that others, from an attachment to doctrinal principles, have run to a contrary extreme. They write and preach in favour of doctrines, and what are called the privileges of the gospel, to the neglect of subjects which immediately relate to practice. In other circles you may hear *experience* or experimental religion extolled above all things, even at the expense of Christian practice and of sound doctrine. But really the religion of Jesus ought not thus to be mangled and torn to pieces. Take away the doctrines of the gospel, and you take away the food of Christians. Insist on them alone, and you transform us into religious epicures. And you may as well talk of the pleasure you *experience* in eating when you are actually deprived of sustenance, or of the exquisite enjoyment of a state of total inactivity, as boast of experimental religion unconnected with doctrinal and practical godliness. The conduct of a man who walks with God appears to me to resemble that of the industrious husbandman, who eats that he may be strengthened to labour; and who by labour is prepared to enjoy his food.

C. Well, you have opened a field for discussion. The next time we meet we may inquire further into these subjects. Farewell.

## DIALOGUE II.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH.

C. IN our last conversation, Gaius, you made some remarks on the indifference of the present age, with regard to religious principles, which struck me forcibly; I should be glad to know what degree of importance you ascribe to the leading doctrines or principles of Christianity.

G. If you mean to ask whether I consider the belief of them as essentially necessary to the enjoyment of good neighbourhood, or any of the just or kind offices of civil society, I should certainly answer in the negative. Benevolence is good-will to men; and as far as good-will to men can consist with the general good, we ought to exercise it towards them as men, what-

ever be their principles, or even their practices. But if your question relate purely to religion, I acknowledge that I consider a reception of the great doctrines of Christianity (in those who have opportunity of knowing them) as necessary to holiness, to happiness, and to eternal life.

C. If your ideas be just, they afford room for very serious reflection. But will you not be subject to great difficulties in deciding what those truths are, and to what degree they must be believed? You cannot deny that even good men entertain different opinions of what truth is, nor that those who receive the truth receive it in very different degrees.

G. The same objection might be made to the express decision of Scripture, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It might be said, You will find great difficulties in deciding what true holiness is, and what degree of it is necessary to eternal life; for you cannot deny that even good men entertain different opinions of what true holiness is nor that those who are subjects of it possess it in very different degrees.

C. And what would you answer to this objection?

G. I should say that no upright heart can be so in the dark respecting the nature of true holiness as to make any essential mistake about it. Whether I can determine with metaphysical accuracy the different component parts of it or not, yet, if I be a true Christian, I shall feel it, I shall possess it, I shall practise it. As to determining what degree of it will carry a man to heaven, that is not our business. We do not know to what extent Divine mercy will reach in the forgiveness of sin; but this may be said, that a person may be assured he has no true holiness in him at all who rests contented with any degree of it short of perfection.

C. Will this answer apply to truth as well as to holiness?

G. Why not? If the way of salvation be so plain that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein," what can it be but prejudice that renders the truth difficult to be understood? "He who does the will of God shall know of his doctrine." Surely then I may say that no one who is in a right temper of mind can be so in the dark, respecting what truth is, as to make any essential mistake about it. Whether I can determine the question with accuracy or not, yet, if I be a Christian, *the truth dwelleth in me*. As to the precise *degree* in which we must receive the truth, in order to be saved, it is not our business to decide. But this is incontestable, that he who does not seek after the whole of revealed truth, and sit as a little child at the feet of his Divine Instructor, gives evidence that the truth is not in him.

C. But is it not easier to discover what holiness is than what truth is?

G. I grant that conscience assists in determining between right and wrong, which it does not in many things respecting truth and error. But if we were entirely on God's side, we should find the revealed dictates of truth as congenial to our hearts as those of righteousness are to our consciences; and in that case the one would be as easily determined as the other.

C. But is there not a difference between the importance of believing the truth of God, and that of complying with his commands?

G. You would not think more favourably of a child who should discredit your testimony than of one who should disobey your authority; and the same Being who declares that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," has declared that "he who believeth not the record that God hath given of his Son hath made him a liar"—that "he who believeth not shall be damned!"

C. But should every error or mistake to which fallible mortals are liable be considered as unbelief, and as subjecting us to damnation?

G. By no means. There is a specific difference between error and unbelief. The one is a misapprehension of what the Divine testimony con-

tains; the other supposes that we understand it, but yet discredit it. It is the latter, and not the former, that is threatened with damnation.

C. Do you then suppose error to be innocent?

G. The answer to this question must depend upon the cause from which it springs. If it arise from the want of natural power, or opportunity of obtaining evidence, it is mere mistake, and contains in it nothing of moral evil. But if it arise from prejudice, neglect, or an evil bias of heart, it is otherwise, and may endanger our eternal salvation.

C. Will you be so good as to illustrate this distinction?

G. Had David been engaged in the most wicked conspiracy when he fled to Ahimelech, and had Ahimelech in this circumstance given him *bread and a sword*; yet if he *knew nothing of the conspiracy, less or more*, nor possessed any means of knowing it, his error would have been innocent, and he ought to have been acquitted. But had he possessed the means of knowledge, and from a secret disloyal bias neglected to use them, giving easy credit to those things which his heart approved, he would have deserved to die.

C. Among human errors, can we distinguish between those which arise from the want of powers or opportunities, and such as spring from the evil bias of the heart?

G. In many cases we certainly cannot, any more than we can fix the boundaries between light and shade; yet there are some things, and things of the greatest importance, that are so plainly revealed, and of so holy a tendency, that we are taught by the Scriptures themselves to impute an error concerning them not to the understanding only, but to the heart. "The fool hath said *in his heart*, There is no God."—"Why do ye not understand my speech? Because *ye cannot hear my words*."—"They stumbled at the stumbling-stone, being disobedient."

C. Have not all men their prejudices, the good as well as the wicked?

G. As all men are the subjects of sin, undoubtedly they have. But as it does not follow that because a good man is the subject of sin, he may live in the practice of all manner of abominations, neither does it follow that because he is the subject of criminal error, he may err in the great concerns of eternal salvation. Good men have not only their *gold, silver, and precious stones*; but also their *wood, hay, and stubble*, which will be consumed, while they themselves are saved; nevertheless they are *all* represented as building upon *a right foundation*. He that errs with respect to the *foundation laid in Zion* will, if God give him not repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, err to his eternal overthrow.

C. Does not this last species of error seem nearly related to unbelief?

G. I conceive it to be so nearly related as to be its *immediate effect*. The heart leans to a system of falsehood, wishing it to be true; and what it wishes to be true it is easily persuaded to think so. The first step in this progress describes the spirit of unbelief; the last that of error: the one grows out of the other. Such a progress was exemplified in those persons described in the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians: "They received not the love of the truth"—"believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"—"therefore God gave them up to a reprobate mind, that they might believe a lie, and be damned!"

C. Surely it is a serious thing in what manner we hear and receive the word of God!

G. True; and I may add, in what manner we preach it too. Woe unto us if we teach mankind any other way of escape than that which the gospel reveals! Woe unto us if we preach not the gospel! If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed!

## DIALOGUE III.

## THE CONNEXION BETWEEN DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL, AND PRACTICAL RELIGION.

*C.* In our last interview, Gaius, we discoursed on the influence of truth as it respected our eternal salvation; we will now inquire, if you please, into its influence on the holiness and happiness of Christians in the present state; or, in other words, into the connexion between doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion.

*G.* Such an inquiry may convince us of the importance of each, and prevent our extolling one branch of religion at the expense of another.

*C.* What do you mean by experimental religion?

*G.* Experimental religion may be considered *generally* and *particularly*: in general we mean by it the exercise of spiritual or holy affections, such as hope, fear, joy, sorrow, and the like.

*C.* And what relation do these things bear to Divine truth?

*G.* Under the agency of the Holy Spirit, they are its immediate effect. To render this matter evident, we need only inquire what have been the best seasons of our life, and our own remembrance will convince us that Divine truth has been at the bottom of all those enjoyments which were truly solid and valuable.

*C.* Some of the best times in my life have been those in which I have mourned over my sin with godly sorrow.

*G.* Very well; this holy mourning arose from a sense of your own depravity, a truth plentifully taught in the Bible.

*C.* I can remember, also, many joyful seasons when I have been in the lively exercise of faith and hope.

*G.* Very good; but faith has truth for its object, and hope lays hold of a blessed immortality. Take away the doctrine of the cross and the promise of eternal life, and your faith, and hope, and joy would be annihilated.

*C.* I have heard some persons exclaim against doctrinal preaching, as being dry and uninteresting: "Give me," say they, "something spiritual and experimental."

*G.* Doctrines, it is allowed, may be so represented as to become dry and uninteresting; but Scripture truth is not so in its own nature. The doctrines of the gospel are expressly called "spiritual things," which are spiritually discerned.

*C.* Does not the term experience convey the idea of *proof* or *trial*?

*G.* It does; and this is what I had in mind when I said the subject might be considered *particularly*. Though we use the term to express the exercise of spiritual affections in general, yet it is more accurate to apply it to that *proof* or *trial* which we make of Divine things, while passing through the vicissitudes of life.

*C.* Experimental knowledge, we commonly say in other things, is knowledge obtained by trial.

*G.* Very true; it is the same in religion. There are many truths taught us in the Divine word, and which we may be said to know by reading; but we do not know them experimentally till we have proved them true by having made the trial.

*C.* Mention a few examples.

*G.* We read in the Scriptures of the doctrine of *human impotency*, and we think we understand it; but we never know this truth properly till we



have had proof of it in our own experience. Further, We read of the *corruption of the human heart*, and think in our early years that we believe it; but it is not till we have passed through a variety of changes, and had experience of its deceitful operations, that we perceive this truth as we ought. Again, We read much of the *goodness and faithfulness of God*, and we subscribe to each; but we never realize these truths till, having passed through those circumstances in which we have occasion for them, they become imprinted upon our hearts. It is then that we feel their force and taste their sweetness: hence it is that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience." It was, no doubt, a cheering truth at all times that God was the *portion* of his people; but never did they realize that truth so fully as when they were stripped of their earthly all, and carried into captivity. It was then that they sang, as taught by the prophet, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him."

C. All the experimental religion seems then to bear relation to truth. If taken generally, for the exercise of spiritual affection, truth is here the *cause*, and these exercises are its immediate *effects*. If taken more particularly, for that proof or trial which we have of Divine things as we pass through the vicissitudes of life, truth seems here to be the object of which we have experience.

G. True: and the more we have of experimental religion, the more we shall feel ourselves attached to the great doctrines of the gospel, as the bread and water of life, whence arises all our salvation, and all our desire.

C. Will not the connexion between doctrinal and experimental religion account for the ignorance which is attributed to carnal men with respect to Divine things, as that they *do not receive them, and cannot know them?*

G. It will; nor is there any thing more surprising in it than that a mercenary character should be a stranger to the joys of benevolence, or a dishonest man to the pleasures of a good conscience: they never *experienced* them, and therefore are utterly in the dark concerning them.

C. Will you give me your thoughts on the influence of truth on holy practice?

G. Perhaps there is no proposition but what has some *consequence* hanging upon it, and such consequence must be expected to correspond with the nature of the proposition. A truth in natural philosophy will be productive of a natural effect. Divine truth, when cordially imbibed, proves the seed of a godly life. For example: If there be a God that judgeth in the earth, he is to be loved, feared, and adored. If man be a sinner before God, it becomes him to lie low in self-abasement. If salvation be of grace, boasting is excluded. If we be bought with a price, we are not our own, and must not live unto ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again. Religious sentiments are called *principles*, because, when received in the love of them, they become the springs of holy action.

C. Do the Scriptures confirm this view of things?

G. You must have read such passages as the following: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."—"Speak thou the things which *become* sound doctrine." I suppose our Lord meant something like this when he told the woman of Samaria, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life;" that is, The gospel or doctrine that I preach, when cordially imbibed, shall become a well-spring of heavenly joy and holy activity, rising higher and higher till it terminate in everlasting blessedness.

C. What inference may be drawn from all this?

G. If God has joined these things together, let no man, whether preacher or hearer, attempt to put them assunder.

C. Is it proper to distinguish between doctrinal and experimental religion?

G. If by those terms it were only meant to distinguish between the truth to be known and a spiritual knowledge of it, they are very proper; but if the latter be considered as existing without the former, it is a great mistake.

## DIALOGUE IV.

### THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

C. YOUR late observations on the importance of truth, and the connexion between doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion, have excited in my mind an increasing desire after a more particular knowledge of the great doctrines of Christianity.

G. I am glad to hear it; and if it be in my power to afford you any additional light on those interesting subjects, it will give me great pleasure.

C. What do you consider as the first and most fundamental principle of true religion?

G. Unless I except the existence of God, perhaps none is more deserving of those epithets than his *moral character*.

C. What do you mean by the moral character of God?

G. The Divine perfections have been distinguished into *natural* and *moral*. By the former we understand those perfections which express his greatness; such are his wisdom, power, majesty, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, eternity, immensity, &c. By the latter, those which express his essential goodness; such are his justice, his mercy, his veracity, or, in one word, his HOLINESS. These last are the peculiar glory of the Divine nature, and constitute what is meant by his moral character.

C. Are not all the attributes of Deity essential to the character of an all-perfect Being?

G. They are; but yet the glory of his natural perfections depends upon their being united with those which are moral. The ideas of wisdom, power, or immutability convey nothing lovely to the mind, but the reverse, unless they be connected with righteousness, goodness, and veracity. Wisdom without holiness would be serpentine subtlety; power would be tyranny; and immutability annexed to a character of such qualities would be the curse and terror of the universe.

C. But as God is possessed of the one as well as the other, they *all* contribute to his glory.

G. True; and it affords matter of inexpressible joy to all holy intelligences that a Being of such rectitude and goodness is possessed of power equal to the desire of his heart, of wisdom equal to his power, and that he remains through eternal ages immutably the same. Power and wisdom in such hands are the blessing of the universe.

C. Is the above distinction of the Divine perfections into natural and moral applicable to any useful purposes?

G. It will assist us in determining the nature of that most fundamental of all moral principles—*the love of God*. If holiness constitute the loveliness of the Divine nature, this must be the most direct and immediate object

of holy affection. True love to God will always bear a primary regard to that which above all other things renders him a lovely Being.

*C.* I knew a lecturer on philosophy, who, by discoursing on the wisdom and power of God as displayed in the immensity of creation, was wrought up into a rapture of apparent devotion, and his audience with him; and yet, in less than an hour's time after leaving the room, he was heard to curse and swear, as was his usual manner of conversation.

*G.* You might find great numbers of this description. They consider the Divine Being as a great genius, as a fine architect, and survey his works with admiration; but his moral excellence, which constitutes the chief glory of his nature, has no charms in their eyes. But if that which constitutes the chief glory of his nature have no charms in their eyes, all the admiration which they may bestow upon the productions of his wisdom and power will amount to nothing: *the love of God is not in them.*

*C.* You consider the moral character of God as a *fundamental* principle in religion; what then are those principles which are founded upon it?

*G.* The equity of the Divine law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the ruined state of man as a sinner, with the necessity of an almighty Saviour and a free salvation.

*C.* Will you oblige me by pointing out the connexion of these principles?

*G.* If there be infinite loveliness in the moral character of God, then it is right and equitable that we should love him with all our hearts; which, with a subordinate love to our neighbour as ourselves, is the sum of what the Divine law requires. And in proportion to the loveliness of the Divine character must be the hatefulness of aversion to him and rebellion against him; hence follows the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And if sin be odious in its nature, it must be dangerous in its consequences, exposing us to the curse of the Divine law, the just and everlasting displeasure of a holy God. Finally, If, as rebels against the moral government of God, we be all in a ruined and perishing condition, we need a Deliverer who shall be able to save to the utmost, whose name shall be the *Mighty God*; and a salvation without money and without price that shall be suited to our indigent condition.

*C.* Is not the moral excellence of the Divine character admitted by great numbers who reject these principles, which you say arise from it?

*G.* I suppose no person who admits the being of a God would expressly deny the excellence of his moral character; but it is easy to observe that those who deny the foregoing principles either discover no manner of delight in it, but are taken up like your *philosophical lecturer* in admiring the productions of God's natural perfections, or else are employed in modelling his character according to their own depraved ideas of excellence. Being under the influence of self-love, they see no loveliness but in proportion as he may subserve their happiness; hence the justice of God in the punishment of sin is kept out of view, and what they call his goodness and mercy (but which, in fact, are no other than connivance at sin and indifference to the glory of his government) are exalted in its place. A being thus qualified may be easily adored: it is not God, however, that is worshipped, but an imaginary being, created after the image of depraved men.

*C.* "To know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent"—in other words, to know the true glory of the Lawgiver and the Saviour, seems to be of the highest importance.

*G.* True; the former is absolutely necessary to the latter, and both to *grace and peace being multiplied* here, and to our enjoyment of *eternal life* hereafter.

## DIALOGUE V.

## THE FREE AGENCY OF MAN.

*C.* OUR last conversation on the moral character of God has led me, Gaius, to desire your thoughts on the nature of man as a subject of moral government.

*G.* This is, no doubt, a very interesting subject. As we all feel ourselves accountable beings, and must all give account of ourselves another day, it becomes us to know ourselves, and the nature of those powers with which the great Creator has invested us.

*C.* Do you consider man as a free agent ?

*G.* Certainly ; to deny this would be to deny that we are accountable to the God that made us. Necessarians and anti-necessarians have disputed wherein free agency consists ; but the thing itself is allowed on both sides.

*C.* Suppose then I were to change the question, and ask wherein does free agency consist ?

*G.* I should answer, *In the power of following the inclination,*

*C.* And is it in our power in all cases to follow our inclinations ?

*G.* No : there is such a thing as involuntary motion. By the exercise of an absolute force upon our bodies we may be compelled to move against our inclination, and to forbear to move according to our desire : but in these cases we are not accountable beings.

*C.* Some have thought man to be a free agent in natural things, but not as to things moral and spiritual.

*G.* This is the same as supposing him accountable only for those things in which there is neither good nor evil ; and this, if true, would prove that we are not subjects of moral government, and shall never be called to give account of either good or evil. Besides, it is a fact that we as freely pursue our inclinations in spiritual as in natural things ; we as freely yield ourselves to be the servants of sin, or of God, as ever we choose to eat, drink, or walk.

*C.* Then you think we are free agents in all those matters which are inseparably connected with eternal salvation ?

*G.* Certainly : if otherwise, we should be equally incapable of rejecting, as of accepting, the gospel way of salvation.

*C.* And do you suppose we are free agents with respect to keeping or breaking the Divine law ?

*G.* I do : we are only required to love God with all our *strength* ; or to consecrate all our *powers* to his service, be they great or small.

*C.* Why then do we not keep the law perfectly ?

*G.* Because of the depravity of our hearts. If our hearts or inclinations were wholly on the side of God, we should feel no difficulty in keeping it ; on the contrary, it would be our meat and drink.

*C.* But if our hearts be depraved, and we be enslaved to sin, how can we be said to be free ?

*G.* We cannot be morally free ; but moral slavery, any more than moral liberty, has nothing to do with free agency. The reason is, that, in this case, there is no force opposed to the agent's own will.

*C.* I have often heard it asserted that it does not signify whether the incapacity lies in the will, or in something distinct from the will. "If we

cannot do good," say they, "we cannot, and in that case we are not free agents."

*G.* Those who speak thus of free agency must mean to include in it a freedom from the influence of motives; a power of acting with or contrary to the prevailing inclination; or, at least, a power to change the inclination.

*C.* Yes; I have heard it observed that it amounts to nothing to say we have the power of following the prevailing inclination, unless we have also the power of counteracting or changing it.

*G.* If, by *amounting to nothing*, they mean that we are not hereby any more qualified to be our own deliverers from the thralldom of sin than if we had no free agency, but must be indebted wholly to sovereign and efficacious grace for it, I admit the consequences. Little, however, as they make of this idea of free agency, I might reply, it is all that they themselves can conceive of, and all that can be ascribed to any being in heaven, earth, or hell.

*C.* How does this appear?

*G.* No one can conceive of a power of voluntarily acting against the prevailing inclination, for the thing itself is a contradiction; and a power of changing it is no less absurd. If a person go about to change his prevailing inclination, he must, in so doing, be either involuntary or voluntary. If the former, this can be no exercise of free agency; if the latter, he must have two opposite prevailing inclinations at the same time, which is a contradiction. And if it were not a contradiction, he still does no more than follow his inclination; namely, his virtuous inclination, which he is supposed to possess, to have his vicious inclination changed. If freedom from the influence of motives, or power to change one's inclination, be essential to free agency, the Divine Being himself is not free. God, as all must allow, possesses an immutable determination to do what is right, and cannot in the least degree, or for a single moment, incline to the contrary. His conduct is necessarily and invariably expressive of the infinite rectitude of his will. The same, in a degree, might be said of holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. So far from being free from the influence of motives, or having a power to change the prevailing inclination of their hearts, those motives which, by reason of the depravity of our natures, have but little effect upon us, have full influence upon them, and constantly determine them to the most ardent pursuit of righteousness.

*C.* And yet you say they are free agents?

*G.* If God, angels, and saints in heaven be not free agents, who are?

*C.* But this is moral *liberty*.

*G.* True; but the same reasoning will apply to moral slavery. If an unalterable bias of mind to good does not destroy free agency, neither does an unalterable bias of mind to evil. Satan is as much a free agent as Gabriel, and as much accountable to God for all he does.

*C.* Some suppose man to have lost his free agency by the fall.

*G.* Say, rather, man has lost his moral *rectitude* by the fall. All that was intrusted in his hand was lost. But we might as well say he had lost his reason, his conscience, or his memory, as to say he had lost his free agency; and this would be supposing him to have lost his intellectual nature, and to have become literally a brute.

*C.* Wherein does your notion of free agency differ from the Arminian notion of free-will?

*G.* The Arminian notion of free-will is what I have all along been opposing: the one consists merely in the power of following our prevailing inclination; the other in a supposed power of acting contrary to it, or at least of changing it. The one predicates freedom of the man, the other of

a faculty in man ; which Mr. Locke, though an anti-necessarian, explodes as an absurdity. The one goes merely to render us accountable beings ; the other arrogantly claims a part, yea, the very turning point, of salvation. According to the latter, we need only certain helps or assistances, granted to men in common, to enable us to choose the path of life ; but according to the former, our hearts being by nature wholly depraved, we need an almighty and invincible power to renew them, otherwise our free agency would only accelerate our everlasting ruin.

C. You suppose, I imagine, that the invincible operations of the Holy Spirit do not interfere with our free agency ?

G. Certainly : if the temper of the heart does not affect it, neither can any change upon that temper. It affects free agency no more than it affects reason, conscience, or memory : man all along feels himself at liberty to follow what inclination dictates ; and, therefore, is a free agent.

C. Does your notion of free agency agree with the language of the apostle Paul : “ The good that I would, I do not ; and the evil that I would not, that I do.”—“ To will is present ; but how to perform that which is good I find not ? ”

G. I think we ought to distinguish between a willingness that is habitual and general, and one that is universal and entire. Paul, and every real Christian, generally and habitually wills to be holy, as God is holy ; but this volition is not universal and entire. It is not so perfect nor intense as that there is no remainder of indolence, obstinacy, or carnality. Perfection is the object approved, or rather desired ; but that approbation or desire is not perfect in degree : a perfect degree of willingness would be perfect holiness.

C. Then you do not suppose the apostle to mean that sin operated absolutely, and in every sense, against his will ?

G. I do not : it was certainly against the ruling principle of his soul ; but to suppose that any sin can be strictly and absolutely involuntary in its operations is contrary to every dictate of common sense.

## DIALOGUE VI.

### THE GOODNESS OF THE MORAL LAW

C. OUR last two conversations, on the moral character of God and the free agency of man, have, I hope, been of use to me. I have been thinking since of the great rule of God's government—the moral law, as being the *image* of his moral character.

G. Your idea is just : God is LOVE. All his moral attributes are but the different modifications of love, or love operating in different ways. Vindictive justice itself is the love of order, and is exercised for the welfare of beings in general ; and the moral law, the sum of which is love, expresses the very heart of him that framed it.

C. I have been thinking of love as the band which unites all holy intelligences to God and one another ; as that in the moral system which the law of attraction is in the system of nature.

G. Very good : while the planets revolve round the sun as their central point, and are supremely attracted by it, they each have a subordinate influence upon the other : all attract and are attracted by others in their respective orbits, yet no one of these subordinate attractions interferes with the grand

attractive influence of the sun, but acts rather in perfect concurrence with it. Under some such idea we may conceive of supreme love to God and subordinate love to creatures.

*C.* Among the planets, if I mistake not, the attractive power of each body corresponds with the quantity of matter it possesses, and its proximity to the others.

*G.* True: and though in general we are required to love our neighbour as ourselves, yet there are some persons, on account of their superior value in the scale of being, and others on account of their more immediate connexion with us, whom we are allowed and even obliged to love more than the rest.

*C.* If we could suppose the planets endued with intelligence, and any one of them, weary of revolving round the sun, should desert its orbit, assume a distinct centreship of its own, and draw others off with it, what would be the consequence?

*G.* Anarchy and confusion, no doubt, with regard to the system; and cold, and darkness, and misery, with regard to those which had deserted it.

*C.* And is not this a near resemblance to the condition of apostate angels and men?

*G.* Doubtless it is; and your similitude serves to illustrate the evil of sin, as it affects the harmony of the Divine government in general, and the happiness of each individual in particular.

*C.* Is there not a general notion in the minds of men that the moral law is too strict and rigid for man in his fallen state?

*G.* There is; and some, who ought to know better, have compared its requirements to those of an Egyptian task-master, who demanded bricks without straw; and have recommended the gospel as being at variance with it. Many, who would be thought the greatest if not the only friends of Christ, have made no scruple of professing their hatred to *Moses*, as they term the moral law.

*C.* But does not the precept of the moral law require what is beyond our strength?

*G.* If, by strength, you mean to include inclination, I grant it does; but if, by strength, you mean what is literally and properly so called, it requires us even now but to love God *with all our strength*. It is not in the want of strength, literally and strictly speaking, that our insufficiency to keep the Divine law consists, but in the want of a holy temper of mind; and this, instead of being any excuse, or requiring an abatement of the law, is the very essence of that wherein blame consists.

*C.* I have thought it might serve to show the goodness of the Divine law if we were to suppose it reversed. Suppose, instead of loving, God should require us to hate him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbour likewise?

*G.* This would require us to be both wicked and miserable; and the idea is sufficient to shock any person of common sense.

*C.* But suppose God were to require us to love him and one another, only in a less degree?

*G.* That would be the same as requiring a *part* of our affection, and allowing us to be of a divided heart. Our powers cannot be indifferent. If they are not applied to the love of God and man, they will be applied to something opposite, even the love of the world. But as the love of the world is enmity to God, if this were allowed, it were the same as allowing men, in a degree, to be at enmity with him and each other; that is, to be wicked and miserable.

C. I have several more questions to ask you on this important subject, but shall defer them to another opportunity.

G. Farewell then, Crispus; God grant that this Divine law may be found written upon each of our hearts!

C. Amen!

## DIALOGUE VII.

### ANTINOMIANISM.

C. OUR conversation on the moral law has led me to think of some other subjects nearly related to it. I have observed that many people have been called Antinomians; yet very few call themselves so. What is Antinomianism?

G. Enmity or opposition to the law of God.

C. Are not all men then by nature Antinomians?

G. I believe they are; for the "carnal mind is enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

C. By this passage, it should seem that God and his law are so united, that a non-subjection to the one is enmity to the other?

G. How should it be otherwise? The sum of the law is love; and, in this case, not to love is to be enmity.

C. All men, however, do not profess to be at enmity either with God or his law.

G. True; but many men are very different, you know, from what they profess to be, and even from what they conceive of themselves.

C. I can easily conceive of various wicked characters being enemies to the Divine law, whatever they may say in its favour.

G. And have you not observed that all the different species of false religion agree in this particular?

C. I do not know whether I have sufficiently.—To what do you refer?

G. I refer to the different forms in which mankind quiet their consciences and cherish their hopes, while the love of God and man are neglected. What is superstition but the substitution of something ceremonial—something that may be done consistently with a heart at enmity with God—in the place of that which is moral? The tithing of mint and cummin, and various things of the kind, were much more agreeable, to the *ancient Pharisees*, than *judgment, mercy, and the love of God*. The *modern Jews* are greatly attached to ceremony; but the shocking indevotion which distinguishes their worship, and the mercenary spirit which too generally pervades their dealings, sufficiently discover their aversion from that law of which they make their boast. Impiety and cruelty are prominent features in the faces of our *modern heathens*, with all their refinement; and the same is observable in others who are less refined: gods and weapons of war are to be found in the most *barbarous heathen nations*. Ignorant as they are, they have all learned to violate the two great branches of the moral law.\* Beads, and pilgrimages, and relics, and all the retinue of *popish* ceremonies, are but substitutes for the love of God and our neighbour. The formal round of

\* This reflection was made by a friend of mine on visiting *The British Museum*, and seeing various curiosities from heathen countries; among which were a number of idols and instruments of war.



ceremonies attended to by *Pharisaical professors* of all communities is the same. Let an attentive reader examine the system of Socinus, and even of Arminius, and he will find them agreed in opposing the native equity and goodness of the moral law. The former claims it as a matter of justice that allowances be made for human error and imperfection; and the latter, though it speaks of *grace*, and the *mediation of Christ*, and considers the gospel as a new, mild, and remedial law, yet would accuse you of making the Almighty a tyrant, if this grace were withheld, and the terms of the moral law strictly adhered to. All these, as well as that species of false religion which has more generally gone by the name of *Antinomianism*, you see, are agreed in this particular. This last, which expressly disowns the moral law as a rule of life, sets up the gospel in opposition to it, and substitutes visionary enjoyments as the evidence of an interest in gospel blessings, in place of a conformity to its precepts.—This last, I say, though it professes to be greatly at variance with several of the foregoing schemes, is nearer akin to them than its advocates are willing to admit. If the love of God and man be left out of our religion, it matters but little what we substitute in its place. Whether it go by the name of reason or superstition, religious ceremony or evangelical liberty, all is delusion; all arises from the same source, and tends to the same issue. Good men may in a degree have been beguiled, and for a time carried away, with these winds of false doctrine; but I speak of *things* and their natural tendencies, not of persons. In short, we may safely consider it as a criterion by which any doctrine may be tried; if it be unfriendly to the moral law, it is not of God, but proceedeth from the father of lies.

*C.* What you have observed seems very clear and very affecting; but I have heard it remarked, that some of these systems naturally attach their adherents to the works of the law.

*G.* This is very true; but there is a wide difference between an attachment to the law, and an attachment to the works of the law as the ground of eternal life; as much as between the spirit of a faithful servant who loves his master, loves his family, loves his service, and never wishes to go out free, and that of a slothful servant, who, though he hates his master, hates his family, hates his employment, and never did him any real service, yet has the presumption to expect his reward.

*C.* This distinction seems of great importance, as it serves to reconcile those scriptures which speak in favour of the law, and those which speak against an attachment to the works of it.

*G.* It is the same distinction, only in other words, which has commonly been made respecting the law as a rule of life and as a covenant.

*C.* Will you be so obliging as to point out a few of the consequences of denying the law to be the rule of life, and representing it as at variance with the gospel.

*G.* First, This doctrine directly militates against all those scriptures which speak in favour of the moral law, and afford us an honourable idea of it; such as the following:—"O how I love thy law!"—"The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good."—"I come not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it."—"Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."—"I delight in the law of God after the inner man."—"I with my mind serve the law of God." Secondly, This doctrine reflects upon God himself for having given a law under one dispensation which is at variance with a gospel given under another. Thirdly, It justifies the sinner in the breach of the law. There can be no evil in sin, but in proportion to the goodness of that law of which it is a transgression. Fourthly, It is in direct opposition to the life and death of the Saviour. By the former he obeyed its precepts, by the latter endured its penalty, and by

both declared it to be holy, just, and good. Every reflection, therefore, upon the moral law is a reflection upon Christ. Fifthly, It strikes at the root of all personal religion, and opens the flood-gates to iniquity. Those who imbibed this doctrine talk of being *sanctified in Christ*, in such a manner as to supersede all personal and progressive sanctification in the believer.

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## DIALOGUE VIII.

### HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

*C.* I THANK you, Gaius, for your observations on various important subjects; and now, if agreeable, I should be glad of your thoughts on the painful but interesting subject of human depravity.

*G.* An interesting subject indeed! Perhaps there is no one truth in the Scriptures of a more fundamental nature with respect to the gospel way of salvation. I never knew a person verge toward the Arminian, the Arian, the Socinian, or the Antinomian schemes, without first entertaining diminutive notions of human depravity, or blameworthiness.

*C.* Wherein do you conceive depravity to consist?

*G.* In the opposite to what is required by the Divine law.

*C.* The sum of the Divine law is love; the essence of depravity then must consist in the want of love to God and our neighbour; or in setting up some other object, or objects, to the exclusion of them.

*G.* True; and perhaps it will be found that all the objects set up in competition with God and our neighbour may be reduced to one, and that is *self*. Private self-love seems to be the root of depravity; the grand succedaneum in human affections to the love of God and man. Self-admiration, self-will, and self-righteousness are but different modifications of it. Where this prevails, the creature assumes the place of the Creator, and seeks his own gratification, honour, and interest, as the ultimate end of all his actions. Hence, when the apostle describes men under a variety of wicked characters, the first link in the chain is—*lovers of their own selves*. Hence also the first and grand lesson in the Christian school is—to *deny ourselves*.

*C.* Almost all evangelical writers, I believe, have considered men as utterly depraved; and that not by education, or any accidental cause or causes, but by nature, as they are born into the world.

*G.* They have. This was manifestly the doctrine generally embraced at the Reformation, and which has been maintained by the advocates for salvation by sovereign grace in every age.

*C.* Yet, one should think, if men were *totally* depraved, they would be all and always alike wicked.

*G.* If by total depravity you mean that men are so corrupt as to be incapable of adding sin to sin, I know of no person who maintains any such sentiment. All I mean by the term is this:—That the human heart is by nature totally destitute of love to God, or love to man as the creature of God, and consequently is destitute of all true virtue. A being may be utterly destitute of good, and therefore totally depraved, (such, it will be allowed, is Satan,) and yet be capable of adding iniquity to iniquity without end.

*C.* I should be glad if you would point out a few of the principal evidences on which the doctrine of human depravity is founded.

*G.* The principal evidences that strike me at this time may be drawn

from the four following sources; Scripture testimony, history, observation, and experience.

*C.* What do you reckon the principal *Scripture testimonies* on this subject?

*G.* Those passages which expressly teach it; such as the following:—“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”—“God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”—“Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin; as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, no, not one. Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”—“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”—“The whole world lieth in wickedness.”—“Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”—Those passages also which teach the necessity of regeneration. If men were not essentially depraved, a reformation might suffice; but if all be corrupt, the whole fabric must be taken down: “Old things must pass away, and all things must become new.”

*C.* What evidence do you derive from *history* in favour of this doctrine?

*G.* If our limits would allow us to survey the history of mankind from their first apostacy to this day, the amount would go to prove what the Scriptures affirm—that “the whole earth lieth in wickedness.” The circumstances and changes among mankind have been various. They have greatly differed in their manners, customs, and religions: one age has established what another has demolished; in some ages they have been enveloped in ignorance, in others irradiated by science; but in all ages and in all circumstances they have been alienated from the love of God.

*C.* The history of the world, though it appear to favour the doctrine in question, yet seems to be too large and complicate an object to be viewed distinctly. Suppose you were to single out one nation as a specimen of the whole.

*G.* Very well; and suppose this one nation to have been attended above all others with mercies and judgments, Divine laws, special interpositions, and every thing that could have any tendency to meliorate the hearts of men.

*C.* You seem to have in view the nation of Israel.

*G.* I have; and the rather because I consider this nation as designed of God to afford a specimen of human nature. The Divine Being singled them out, crowned them with goodness, strengthened them with the tenderest encouragements, awed them with the most tremendous threatenings, wrought his wonderful works before their eyes, and inspired his servants to give us a faithful history of their character. I need not repeat what this character is. Excepting the conduct of a few godly people among them, which, being the effect of Divine grace, argues nothing against the doctrine in question, it is a series of rebellion and continued departures from the living God.

*C.* What additional evidence in favour of this doctrine do you derive from *observation*?

*G.* In looking into the composition of the human mind we observe various passions and propensities; and if we inspect their operations, we shall see in each a marked aversion from the true God, and from all true religion. For example: Man loves to *think*, and cannot live without think-

ing; but he does not love to think of God; "*God is not in all his thoughts.*" Man delights in *activity*, is perpetually in motion, but has no heart to act for God. Men take pleasure in *conversation*, and are never more cheerful than when engaged in it; but if God and religion be introduced, they are usually struck dumb, and discover an inclination to drop the subject. Men greatly delight in hearing and telling *news*; but if the glorious news of the gospel be sounded in their ears, it frequently proves as unwelcome as Paul's preaching at Athens. In fine, man feels the necessity of a *God*, but has no relish for the true God. There is a remarkable instance of this in the conduct of those nations planted by the king of Assyria in the cities of Samaria. They were consumed by wild beasts, and considered it as an expression of displeasure from the *god of the land*. They wished to become acquainted with him that they might please him. An Israelitish priest is sent to teach them the manner of the god of the land. But when he taught them the fear of Jehovah, his character and worship do not seem to have suited their taste; for each nation preferred the worship of its own gods, 2 Kings xvii.

C. What evidence do you draw in favour of this doctrine from *experience*?

G. The best of men, whose lives are recorded in Holy Scripture, have always confessed and lamented the depravity of their nature; and I never knew a character truly penitent, but he was convinced of it. It is a strong presumption against the contrary doctrine, that the light-minded and dissipated part of mankind are generally its advocates; while the humble, the serious, and the godly as generally acknowledge, with the apostle, that, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, they were by nature children of wrath, even as others."

C. I have several more inquiries to make on this interesting subject, which I must defer till another opportunity.

## DIALOGUE IX.

### THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

G. I THINK you said, Crispus, at the close of our last conversation, on the depravity of human nature, that you had several questions to ask upon the subject.

C. I did so. No subject has appeared to me more interesting or more pregnant with important consequences. The doctrine of *total* depravity, according to your own explication of it, seems to imply that all that which is called virtue in unregenerate men is not virtue in reality, and contains nothing in it pleasing to God, is no part of their duty towards him; but, on the contrary, is of the very nature of sin.

G. And what if these consequences were admitted?

C. I have not been used to consider things in so strong a light. I have generally thought that men are *universally* depraved; that is, that all their powers, thoughts, volitions, and actions are *tainted* with sin; but it never struck me before that this depravity was *total*, so total as that all their actions are of the very nature of sin.

G. You must admit that this was the doctrine embraced by the English Reformers. They tell us that "works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit are not pleasing to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity; yea, rather,

for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.”\*

C. True; but I should have suspected that they had carried things rather to an extreme. There is something so awful in the thought of a human life being one *unmixed* course of evil; so contrary to what appears in numberless characters, whom we cannot but respect for many amiable qualities, though they do not appear to be the subjects of true religion; in a word, so discouraging to every effort for the attainment of any virtue short of real godliness; that my heart revolts at the idea.

G. I am willing to examine every difficulty you can advance. Before you raise your objections, however, your first inquiry, I think, ought to be, *Is it true?*

C. Very well; proceed then to state your evidences.

G. The following are the principal evidences which occur to me at present: 1. All those passages of Scripture cited in the last Dialogue which expressly teach it, declaring that “every imagination,” purpose, or desire “of man’s heart is *only evil continually*”—that “there is none that seeketh after God”—“every one of them is gone back”—“they are altogether become filthy”—“there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” 2. Those scriptures which declare the utter impossibility of carnal men doing any thing to please God; such as, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”—“To be carnally-minded is death.”—“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”† If they that are in the flesh did any part of their duty towards God, or if what they did were good and virtuous in his sight, so far as it goes, their minds would so far be subject to the law of God, and, being such, they might and would please him; for God is not a capricious or hard master, but is pleased with righteousness wherever he sees it. 3. Those scriptures which speak of the whole of goodness or virtue as comprehended in *love*; namely, the love of God and our neighbour:—“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” If the love of God supremely, and the love of creatures subordinately, comprise the whole of virtue, where these are wanting virtue can have no existence. And that these are wanting in all ungodly men is evident, for “they have not the love of God in them;” and where God is not loved supremely, creatures cannot be loved in subordination to him; but are either disregarded, or regarded on some other account; such love, therefore, has no virtue in it, but is of the nature of sin. 4. Those scriptures which teach the necessity of *regeneration* to eternal life:—“Ye must be born again.”—“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”—“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” If there were any degree of virtue in the carnal heart, or any thing that was pleasing to God, it might be cultivated and increased; and in this case old things need not pass away, and all things become new. Regeneration would be unnecessary; a mere reformation, or an improvement of principles already inherent in man, would suffice. 5. Those scriptures which promise the blessings of salvation and eternal life to every degree of righteousness or true virtue:—“All things work together for good to them that *love God*.”—“Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that *obey him*.”—“He that *doth righteousness* is righteous.”—

\* Article XIII. of the Church of England.

† See this passage clearly illustrated, and the truth contained in it fully enforced, in two pieces in the *Evangelical Magazine* for August and December, 1793, pp. 72, 239

“They that have *done good* shall rise to the resurrection of life.”—“He that giveth a cup of cold water to a disciple, *in the name of a disciple*,” or because he belongs to Christ, “shall have a disciple’s reward.” In these passages we must observe that God’s gracious declarations and promises are not made to this or that *degree* of goodness, but to every or any degree of it; or, rather, it is not the degree, but the nature of it, that is considered in the Divine promise. Hence we may certainly conclude that unregenerate men have not the least degree of real goodness in them, or of any thing that is pleasing to God.

C. I must acknowledge there is much apparent force in these arguments, and I am not at present sufficiently prepared to encounter them; but I have some strong objections in my mind, which I wish to have thoroughly discussed.

G. With all my heart. Consider, Crispus, the force of what has been already alleged, and let me have your objections in the strongest light in which you are capable of arranging them.

C. I will endeavour to comply with your advice, and the result of it shall be the subject of a future discussion.

## LETTER I.

### THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE

[Crispus to Gaius.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

C—n, July 3, 1794.

As Providence has lately, by removing my situation, deprived me of the pleasure of your company, I hope that defect may be in some measure supplied by writing. The subject of our last two interviews, on *the total depravity of human nature*, has much occupied my attention. I feel it to be a *fundamental* principle in religion; it is that, take it how we will, on which almost all other principles are founded. I have objections to your ideas of this doctrine, I confess; and you desired me, when we were last together, to place them in the strongest light I was able. The principal things which have hitherto occurred to me may be reduced to the following heads:—

First, The Scriptures appear to speak with approbation of some actions performed by unregenerate men, and even God himself is represented as rewarding them. It appears to have been thus in the case of Ahab, when he humbled himself; and the Ninevites, when they repented at the preaching of Jonah; as also in the case of the young ruler in the Gospel, whom our Lord is represented to have *loved*; and the discreet scribe, whom he assured that he was “not far from the kingdom of heaven.” Now if all the actions of unregenerate men are of the nature of sin, these must have been so; but if these were so, how are we to account for the favourable manner in which they were treated?

Secondly, The common sense of mankind unites to attribute many excellences and amiable qualities to persons whom, nevertheless, we are obliged, from other parts of their conduct, to consider as destitute of true religion. Is it not right and amiable, even in the sight of God, so far as it goes, that children are dutiful to their parents, and parents affectionate to their children; that men are obedient to the laws, benevolent to the poor, faithful in

their connexions, and just in their dealings? And is it not evident to universal observation that these are things which may be found in characters who, nevertheless, by other parts of their conduct, evince themselves to be strangers to true religion?

Thirdly, Every man is possessed of *conscience*, which bears witness to him, in unnumbered instances, of what is right and wrong; and this witness is known to have considerable influence even on wicked men, so as to impel them to the performance of many good actions, and to deter them from others which are evil.

Fourthly, If all the actions of unregenerate men be not only mixed with sin, but are in their own nature sinful, then, whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, they sin against God; but eating and drinking, in moderation, appear to be mere natural actions, and to have in them neither moral good nor moral evil.

Lastly, If all the actions of unregenerate men be in their own nature sinful, surely there can be no ground for a ministerial address, no motive by which to exhort them to cease from evil and do good; nor any encouragement afforded them to comply with any thing short of what is spiritually good. It has been very common for even the advocates of salvation by free grace to distinguish between moral virtue and true religion; the former they have allowed to exist in a degree in unregenerate men, and have thought it their duty to encourage it, though at the same time they have insisted on the necessity of what is superior to it. But your ideas of total depravity would go to destroy this distinction, and render what has been usually called moral virtue no virtue. "This," I remember an ingenious writer once observed, "is not orthodoxy, but extravagance." For my own part, I would not speak so strongly; yet I cannot but say you seem to carry things to an extreme. I am free to own, however, that I feel the difficulty of answering what you advanced in the last Dialogue. Every truth is doubtless consistent with other truths. Happy should I be to obtain satisfactory and consistent views on this important subject.

Some religious people to whom I have repeated the substance of our conversations do not at all appear to be interested by them. They seem to me to be contented with a confused and superficial view of things. I wish I could transfer my feelings to them. Did they but know the worth of just sentiments in religion, they would think no labour too great to obtain them. They seem to be averse from the pain which accompanies a state of hesitation and suspense, and therefore decline to examine all those difficult subjects which would produce it. But then they are of course equally unacquainted with the pleasure which arises from the solution of these difficulties, and from obtaining clear and satisfactory views of Divine subjects. Surely it *were criminal indolence* in us, as well as *meanness*, if, rather than be at the trouble of drawing from a deep well, we are contented to sip muddy waters from any puddle that presents itself.

Your answer to the above will much oblige

Your affectionate friend,

CRISPUS.

## LETTER II.

## THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

[In reply to the objections of Crispus.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

K—, Dec. 5, 1794.

I RECEIVED yours with pleasure. It is quite agreeable to me to supply, as well as may be, the defect of personal intercourse by a free and friendly correspondence. Your thirst after truth is pleasing. Would to God we were all more of that temper which seeks for wisdom with the ardour of those who dig for hidden treasures! I intend it not as a mere compliment, when I say that you have stated your objections to the doctrine of total depravity in as plausible a manner as I ever recollect to have seen them. I will endeavour to give them all the weight they possess.

The point in dispute between us, you will observe, is, Whether an unregenerate sinner can be said to perform any part of his duty, or to obtain in any measure the approbation of his Maker. And I hope you will consider that this is, for substance, the same thing as whether the carnal mind be wholly enmity against God, or whether it be in any measure subject to the law of God, or indeed can be. You allow, I think, that whatever excellences such characters possess, “the love of God is not in them,” no, not in any degree. Their amiable qualities therefore, be they what they may, must be something quite distinct from love, or any of its operations. But as “love is the fulfilling of the law,” it must comprehend the whole of moral excellence; and consequently there can be no moral excellence in the sight of God without it.

You *first* reason from the cases of Ahab, the Ninevites, the young man whom our Lord is said to have *loved*, and the scribe who was declared to be “not far from the kingdom of heaven.” In answer to which I would observe, Though the great God knoweth the secrets of all hearts, yet in the government of the world he does not always proceed upon this principle. He has sometimes thought fit to reward men for their actions, not because he approved of them as actions of theirs, but merely because they tended to subserve his own great and wise designs. God rewarded Nebuchadnezzar for his long siege against Tyre, by giving him the land of Egypt; yet Nebuchadnezzar did nothing in this undertaking which in its own nature could approve itself to God. The only reason why he was thus rewarded was, that what he had done subserved the Divine purposes in punishing Tyre for her insulting treatment towards the people of God.\* God also rewarded Cyrus with the treasures of Babylon, “the hidden riches of secret places,” as they are called;† not because Cyrus did any thing that was pleasing in his sight; his motive was the lust of dominion; but because what he did effected the deliverance of Judah, and fulfilled the Divine predictions upon Babylon.

And as, in the great system of the Divine government, actions may be rewarded which have no appearance of innate goodness, so others may be rewarded which have such an appearance, even though it be nothing but appearance. God does not always avail himself of his omniscience, if I may so speak; but proceeds upon the supposition that men are what they profess and appear to be. The end of Jehovah in punishing the person and the house of Ahab was to make *manifest* his displeasure against their idolatries.

\* Ezek. xxvi. 1-7; xxix. 17-20.

† Isa. xlv. 3.



But if, when Ahab humbled himself and rent his garments, God had proceeded towards him on the ground of his omniscience, and, knowing him to be destitute of sincerity, had made no difference in his treatment of him, that *end* would not have been answered. For whatever might be Ahab's motives, they were unknown to men; and if no difference had appeared in the Divine treatment, they would have concluded that it was vain to serve God. It seemed good therefore to him, in the present life, to treat Ahab upon the supposition of his being sincere; and as to his insincerity, he will call him to account for that another day.

There is a case, much resembling this of Ahab, in the history of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam. In 2 Chron. xiii. we read of his wars with Jeroboam the son of Nebat, king of Israel, and how he addressed the apostate Israelites previously to the battle. Having reproached them with forsaking the God of their fathers, and turning to idolatry, he adds, "But as for us, Jehovah is our God, and we have not forsaken him: and the priests which minister unto Jehovah are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business: and they bring unto Jehovah, every morning and every evening, burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shew-bread also set they in order upon the pure table, and the candlestick of gold, with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of Jehovah our God; but ye have forsaken him. And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O ye children of Israel, fight ye not against Jehovah, God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper!" To all appearance this prince was zealous for Jehovah, God of Israel; and one might suppose that the signal victory given him over Jeroboam was an expression of Divine approbation; but if we turn to the account given of the same reign in 1 Kings xv., we shall find that this Abijah (or Abijam, as he is there called) was a wicked prince; that notwithstanding his boasted language when addressing Israel, he walked in all the sins of his father; and that although God gave him a signal victory over the idolatrous Israelites, yet it was not for his sake, or out of regard to any thing he did, but *for David's sake, and for the establishment of Jerusalem.* His attachment to Jehovah was nothing better than Pharisaical formality; and his boastings of the state of things in Judah were no better than the swellings of spiritual pride; but God proceeded with him, not according to his principles, but according to his professions. His hypocrisy was known to God; and he will appear to take cognizance of it in the day when he shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

Much the same things might be observed concerning the *Ninevites.* There might be many true penitents among them, for aught we know; but whether holy love or slavish fear was their motive, they professed and appeared to be humbled, and discovered all the apparent fruits of repentance; and as such it was manifestly an instance of Divine wisdom, as tending to do honour to his own government in the eyes of surrounding nations, to proceed with them upon the supposition of their repentance being sincere. The confessions and humiliations of *Pharaoh* likewise were repeatedly followed by the removal of those judgments which appalled his proud spirit, and so occasioned them; yet few will attribute goodness to Pharaoh. Not only the Divine Being, but Moses himself, saw his insincerity, and bid him *glory over him.* God however would remove the judgment when he made confession, let his motives be what they might, and even though he might laugh to himself for having imposed upon Moses so far as to gain his point.

The *young man* who came to Christ appears to have been a conceited Pharisee, who loved the present world, and not God; and is represented by our Lord as being as far from entering into the kingdom of heaven as a

camel was from passing through the eye of a needle. The only difficulty arises from its being said that the Lord *beheld him, and loved him*; which may seem to imply at least a partial approbation of his character. But to this it may be answered, Our Lord was at this time acting in *the character of a preacher or instructor of men*. His feelings towards the young man in question were much the same as ours would have been, had we been possessed of true *benevolence*, and in the same circumstances. Let the best man that ever existed be addressed in this manner; let him behold a poor self-deceived youth, flattered by all around him for his seeming virtue, and flattering himself with the hopes of heaven, while in reality he is a slave to the present world; and let him, if he can, forbear to feel towards him like our Lord. He would tell him the truth, though it should send him away *sad and grieved*; but his heart would at the same time melt in *compassion* to his poor deluded soul. But this would imply no more of an *approbation* of his spirit or conduct than was included in our Lord's looking upon Jerusalem and weeping over it.

As to the *scribe* who answered our Lord *discreetly*, and was assured that he was "not far from the kingdom of God," read the passage, (Mark xii. 28-34,) and you will perceive that it was not in relation to his *spirit* or *conduct* that our Lord spake, for not a word is recorded of either; but merely of his *confession of faith*; that *the love of God and man was of more account than whole burnt-offerings or sacrifices*. This doctrine was so true, and contained so much of the spirit of the gospel dispensation, that our Lord very properly assured this discreet inquirer that he was "not far from the kingdom of God;" that is, that the principles which he had avowed, if truly imbibed and properly pursued, would lead him into the very heart of Christianity.

The remainder of your objections I must take another opportunity to answer; and at present subscribe myself

Your affectionate friend,  
GAIUS.

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### LETTER III.

#### THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

[A further reply to the objections of Crispus.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

K—, Feb. 9, 1795.

I TAKE up my pen to answer some of your objections, as stated in yours of July 3, 1794. You not only reason from the cases of Ahab, the Ninevites, &c.; but, secondly, from the *common sense of mankind*, which attributes amiable qualities to persons whom nevertheless, on other accounts, we are obliged to consider as destitute of true religion. But let me entreat you to consider whether the common sense of one man can take cognizance of the motives which govern the actions of another; and whether, therefore, it can be any competent judge of the acceptableness of his actions in the sight of God, who sees things as they are. All the morality in the world consists in *the love of God and our neighbour*. There is not a virtue, nor a virtuous action, in being, but what is an expression of love; yet as there are numberless actions which bear a likeness to those which arise from love, and as it is beyond the province of man to take cognizance of the heart, it is common for us to call those actions amiable which *appear* to be so, and which are

beneficial to human society. It is fit we should do so; otherwise we invade the province of the Supreme Being, who alone is able so to judge of actions as perfectly to ascertain their motives. "He is the God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed."

It is right, no doubt, that children should be dutiful to their parents, parents affectionate to their children, and that every relation of life should be filled up with fidelity and honour. But these duties require to be discharged *in the love of God*, not without it; nor is there any duty performed, strictly speaking, where the love of God is wanting. Read those parts of Paul's Epistles where he exhorts to relative duties, and you will find that he admonishes children to obey their parents in the Lord; parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" servants to obey their masters "in singleness of heart, as unto Christ;" and masters to be just and kind unto their servants, as having an eye to "their Master in heaven"—adding, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men." Now all those persons whose behaviour may appear to be amiable in such relations, but who have not the love of God in them, do what they do merely *as unto men*; and, consequently, fly in the face of apostolic exhortation, instead of complying with it, even in the least degree.

It may be asked, If a merely external compliance with relative duties be a sin, would the omission of them be any better? I answer, No; but worse. There are, as has been allowed before, different degrees of sin. To perform an action which tends to the good of society from a wrong motive is sin; but to neglect to perform it, or to perform one of an opposite tendency, is a greater sin. In the one case we sin against God, in the other against both God and our neighbour.

Thirdly, You allege that "every man is possessed of *conscience*, which bears witness to him in numberless instances of what is right and wrong; and this witness is known to have considerable influence even on wicked men, so as to impel them to the performance of many good actions, and to deter them from others which are evil." To this I answer, 1. Conscience, though necessary to the performance of both good and evil, does not partake of either the one or the other. Conscience is that branch of the intellectual faculty which takes cognizance of the good and evil of our own actions; but is itself distinct from both. It is simple knowledge, essential indeed to moral agency, being one of the principal things by which we are distinguished from the brute creation; but as all duty is contained in *love*, good and evil must consist entirely in the temper and disposition of the heart; and the mere dictates of conscience including no such dispositions, neither good nor evil can, strictly speaking, be predicated of them. Neither men nor devils will ever cease to possess consciences, witnessing to them what is good and evil, even in a world of misery, when, as all must allow, they will be utterly destitute of virtue or goodness. We read, it is true, of a *good* conscience, and an *evil* conscience, of a conscience "*scared* as with a hot iron," &c.; and so we read of an *evil eye*, of "eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin:" but as there is neither good nor evil in the sight of the eye, only as it is under the influence of the temper or disposition of the soul, no neither is there in the dictate of conscience. If there be any virtue or goodness in wicked men, it consists not in their knowledge of the difference between good and evil, but in complying with the one and avoiding the other. 2. That compliance with the dictates of conscience of which wicked men are the subjects has nothing of the *love of God* in it; and consequently no real virtue. While conscience suggests what is duty, a variety of motives may induce men to comply with it, or rather with those actions which are usually the expressions of it; such as self-interest, a sense of honour, the

fear of reproach in this world, and of Divine wrath in another: and while they act in this manner, they are considered as acting conscientiously; but if *love be the fulfilling of the law*, where love is wanting, the law is not fulfilled; no, not in the least degree.

Fourthly, You allege that "if all the actions of unregenerate men be not only mixed with sin, but in their own nature sinful, then, whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, they sin against God; but that eating and drinking in moderation appear to be natural actions, and contain neither moral good nor moral evil." When I affirm that all the actions of unregenerate men are sinful, I would be understood by actions to mean all voluntary exercises, and which are capable of being performed to a good end. Whatever is capable of being so performed is not merely a natural, but a moral action. That eating and drinking, and every other voluntary exercise, are moral actions, is evident; for we are exhorted "whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God." In an irrational being, it is true, these would be merely natural actions; but in a moral agent they are not so; and the manner in which they are attended to renders them either good or evil. Every rational creature performs these actions either to the glory of God, (that is, that he may be strengthened to serve the Lord, and do good in his generation,) or he does not. If he do, they are virtuous; if not, there is a criminal defect in the end of them; and as the end or intent of an action is that which determines its nature, that which otherwise would have been lawful and laudable becomes sinful. To plough the soil is as much a natural action as eating and drinking; yet as all such actions are performed by wicked men for merely selfish purposes, without any regard to God and the general good, they become sinful in the sight of God; and hence we read that "the ploughing of the wicked is sin."

Lastly, You allege that, "if these principles be true, there can be no ground for a ministerial address; no motive by which to exhort unregenerate men to cease from evil, and do good; nor any encouragement for them to comply with any thing short of what is spiritually good." If you mean to say that ministers, on this account, can entertain no well-founded hope of success from the pliability of men's hearts, I fully grant it. Our expectations must rest upon the power and promise of God, and these alone, or we shall be disappointed. But if you mean to suggest that therefore all addresses to unregenerate sinners, exhorting them to do good, are unreasonable, this is more than can be admitted. If a *total* depravity would take away all ground for a rational address, a *partial* one would take it away in part; and then, in proportion as we see men disinclined to goodness, we are to cease warning and expostulating with them! But this is self-evident absurdity. The truth is, while men are rational beings they are accountable for all they do, whatever be the inclination of their hearts; and so long as they are not consigned to hopeless perdition, they are the subjects of a gospel address. Nor can it be affirmed with truth that there are no *motives* for them on which they can be exhorted to cease to do evil, or learn to do well; the motives to these things exist in all their native force, independently of the inclination or disinclination of their hearts to comply with them. Nor is the use of them in the Christian ministry thereby rendered improper; on the contrary, it is highly necessary; as much so as it is for the sun to keep his course, and go on to shine, notwithstanding it may prove the occasion of a filthy dung-hill emitting a greater stench. If any means be adapted to do good to wicked men, they are such as tend to fasten *conviction* upon them; but there is no means more adapted to this end than putting them upon *trial*. A sinner is exhorted to repent and believe in Christ—he feels hardened in insensibility—he *cannot* repent—he has no desire after Christ. A con-

sciousness of this kind, if it operate according to its native tendency, will lead him to reflect, What a state must I be in! Invited to repent and believe in Christ for the salvation of my soul, and cannot comply! Mine, surely, is the very heart of an infernal!—Let a sinner be brought to such a state of mind, and there is some hope concerning him.

You seem to feel sorry that there should be no encouragement held out to sinners to comply with any thing but what is spiritually good: and many who have sustained the character of Christian ministers have felt the same; and considering that poor sinners *cannot* comply with duties of this kind, have contented themselves with exhorting them to things with which they *can* comply, and still retain their enmity against God. But what authority have they for such a conduct? When did Christ or his apostles deal in such compromising doctrine? *Repentance* toward God, and *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ, were the grand articles on which they insisted. So far from hesitating to exhort their carnal auditors to what was spiritually good, it may be safely affirmed that THEY NEVER EXHORTED THEM TO ANY THING ELSE. It would have been unworthy of God, and of his servants, to require any thing short of the heart, or its genuine expressions.

To conclude: The following supposition may serve to illustrate the foregoing subject. A ship's company rise against their officers, put them in chains, and take the command of the ship upon themselves. They agree to set the officers ashore on some uninhabited island, to sail to some distant port, dispose of the cargo, and divide the amount. After parting with their officers they find it necessary, for the sake of self-preservation, to establish some kind of laws and order.

To these they adhere with punctuality, act upon honour with respect to each other, and propose to be very impartial in the distribution of their plunder. But while they are on their voyage, one of the company relents and becomes very unhappy. They inquire the reason. He answers, "We are engaged in a wicked cause!" They plead their justice, honour, and generosity to each other. He denies that there is any virtue in it: "Nay, all our equity, while it is exercised in pursuit of a scheme which violates the great law of justice, is itself a species of iniquity!"—"You talk extravagantly; surely we might be worse than we are if we were to destroy each other as well as our officers."—"Yes, wickedness admits of degrees; but there is no virtue or goodness in all our doings; all has arisen from selfish motives. The same principles which led us to discard our officers would lead us, if it were not for our own sake, to destroy each other."—"But you speak so very *discouragingly*; you destroy all *motives* to good order in the ship; what would you have us do?"—"REPENT, RETURN TO OUR INJURED OFFICERS AND OWNERS, AND SUBMIT TO MERCY!"—"O, but this we *cannot* do: advise us to any thing which concerns the good order of the ship, and we will hearken to you!"—"I *cannot* bear to advise in these matters! RETURN, RETURN, AND SUBMIT TO MERCY!" Such would be the language of a true penitent in this case; and such should be the language of a Christian minister to sinners who have cast off the government of God.

I am affectionately yours,

GAIUS.

## LETTER IV.

CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

[From Crispus to Gaius.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

C—n, March 9, 1795.

YOUR last two letters have occupied much of my attention. I confess I feel the force of the argument; and though there are difficulties in my mind which I scarcely know how to state in form, yet I must ingenuously confess that the grand objections which I advanced are answered. The subject is more interesting to me than ever; it affects all the great doctrines of the gospel. My thoughts have already been at work upon its consequences. I could wish, after having discussed the subject, we could examine its *bearings* on the different systems which are embraced in the religious world. With your leave, I will mention a few of those consequences which have struck my mind as resulting from it; and shall be obliged to you for your opinion of their propriety, and the addition of any thing wherein you may perceive me defective.

First, If your views be just, I perceive that *all mankind*, without any distinction of sober and profligate, are **UTTERLY LOST, AND ABSOLUTELY IN A PERISHING CONDITION.** All men will acknowledge that they are *sinner*s; that they have broken God's commandments, most or all of them, in thought or in deed, at one time or other; and that the best of their works have their imperfections. But such acknowledgments are seldom expressive of any deep concern. On the contrary, it is common for men, while they speak thus, to discover a spirit of indifference, supported by a kind of hope that God will pardon a few sins, and make up for a few imperfections; otherwise, they say, he must keep heaven to himself. But if your views be just, their whole life has been one uninterrupted course of foul revolt and abominable apostacy; and the irregularities of their lives bear no more proportion to the whole of their depravity, than the particles of water which are occasionally emitted from the surface of the ocean to the tide that rolls beneath. Nor is there any propriety in men of this description acknowledging their *imperfections*: imperfections relate to a standard, and imply an habitual aim to conform to it. Such language is properly applied to the righteous, the best of whom fall short of the mark; but the life of wicked men is in one shape or other an uninterrupted course of evil.

Secondly, If your views be just, they seem to afford a presumptive, if not more than presumptive, proof of **OUR NEED OF A SAVIOUR**; and not of a Saviour only, but of **A GREAT ONE!** I do not know whether I can exactly trace the operation of these principles, or their opposites, in the human mind; but this I know, it is a fact sufficiently notorious, that those professors of Christianity who reject the proper Deity and atonement of Christ at the same time entertain very diminutive notions of their own depravity. I have known many persons who, as soon as they have begun to lean towards the Socinian, Arian, or Arminian systems, have discovered an inclination to treat this doctrine with contempt. Those people, on the other hand, who have sat under such preaching as has led them to entertain low thoughts of Christ and the grace of the gospel, if at some period of their life they have been convinced of their guilty and perishing state as sinners against God, they have soon given up their other notions, and embraced the Deity and atonement of

Christ with all their hearts, and that with but little if any persuasion on the part of their friends. Nor does this appear very difficult to be accounted for: as *the whole need no physician, but those that are sick*; so it is natural to suppose that, in proportion as a person feels the depth and danger of his malady, he will estimate the necessity, the value, and the efficacy of the remedy.

Thirdly, If your views be just, I perceive that the work of *turning a sinner's heart must be altogether of God and of free grace*. If a sinner could return to God of his own accord, or even by Divine influence *helping or assisting him*, it must be upon the supposition of his having some will, wish, or desire to set about it. But if men are *totally* alienated from God, all desire after him must be extinct; and all the warnings, invitations, or exhortations of the word will be ineffectual; yea, Divine influence itself will be insufficient, if it falls short of renewing the heart. We have heard much of late concerning *political regeneration*. It has been warmly contended by many, in behalf of the change which has taken place in a neighbouring nation, that things were too bad for a *mere reformation*; and that therefore *regeneration* was necessary. However that be, is it not on these principles that we are told, "Ye must be born again." Old things *must* pass away, and all things *must* become new? If men be so depraved as you suppose, the necessity of a *Divine and entire* change must be indubitably evident.

Fourthly, If your views be just, the doctrine of *free or unconditional election* may be clearly demonstrated and proved to be a dictate of right reason. If men be utterly depraved, they lie entirely at the discretion of God either to save or not to save them. If any are saved, it must be by an act of free grace. If some are brought to believe in Christ, while others continue in unbelief, (which accords with continued fact,) the difference between them must be altogether of grace. But if God make a difference in time, he must have determined to do so for eternity; for to suppose God to act without a purpose is depriving him of wisdom; and to suppose any new purpose to arise in his mind would be to accuse him of mutability. Here, therefore, we are landed upon election—sovereign, unconditional election. And does not this accord with the Holy Scriptures?—"You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom, also, we all had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 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 are ye saved!"—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion!"—"He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Fifthly, If your views be just, the *justification of sinners by the work of their hands* utterly falls to the ground. The foundation on which sinners in general build their hopes is something like this: They have more virtue than vice, more good works than evil ones; that as none are without fault, (and which they conceive affords a good excuse for them,) God will not be strict to mark iniquity; but will weigh the good against the evil, and so balance the account! But if all the works of unregenerate sinners be of the nature of sin, there is an end to all hope of being accepted of God on their own account. When ministers have endeavoured to dissuade sinners from a reliance on their own righteousness, I have heard them reason to this effect: "Your good deeds are all *mixed* with evil, and therefore cannot be

acceptable to God." I acknowledge that this is just, and that the least mixture of sin is an eternal bar to our being justified by our own righteousness; but, methinks, if they could have alleged that all their works were essentially and entirely evil, their arguments must have been more effectual, as to the cutting up of self-righteous hopes. And such a doctrine would leave no room for the supposition of Christ dying to render our imperfect but sincere obedience acceptable to God, instead of that which is perfect; for, in this case, the idea of imperfect sincere endeavours in unregenerate men is inadmissible—there are no such endeavours in existence.

These things I have been used to believe in time past; but if the principle in question be admitted, I find such solid grounds on which to rest them as I never felt before. I shall leave you to conclude the subject, and remain

Affectionately yours,

CRISPUS.

## LETTER V.

CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

[From Gaius to Crispus.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

K—, April 9, 1795.

IF any thing I have advanced in the course of our correspondence has been of use to you, I am satisfied. The inferences which you have drawn from the doctrine of *total depravity*, as far as they go, appear to me to be just. I shall suggest a few others in addition to them; and as I have some other necessary employments which require my attention, you will excuse me if I propose, with these, for the present, to close our correspondence.

Your inferences relate to the bearings of the doctrine of total depravity on the Socinian and Arminian schemes; mine shall concern what I should call the *Pseudo-Calvinistic* scheme, or that view of the doctrines commonly called Calvinistical which induces many in the present day to disapprove of all exhortations to sinners, except to merely external obedience, or things which contain in them nothing truly or spiritually good. If the foregoing principles be just, three things at least will follow; namely—that the distinction between moral virtue and true religion has less foundation in truth than is commonly supposed—that men in general are either obliged to perform spiritual actions, or allowed to live in sin and perform sinful actions—and that we ought not, as ministers, so to compromise matters with God's enemies as to exhort them to merely external services. Let us particularly examine these consequences. They will be found to be more than a little interesting.

First, Let us inquire whether the distinction between moral virtue and true religion be founded in truth. It is true the term religion includes more than that of morality, as it is applied to doctrine as well as practice, and to the performance of things positive as well as moral; but if genuine morality be supposed to exist without true religion, such a supposition I conceive to be unfounded. It is allowed that what is commonly called morality is very different from true religion, because much that goes by this name is not morality, nor any thing truly virtuous. Nothing is morality, strictly speaking, but that which is in some degree a conformity to the moral



law; and nothing contains the least degree of conformity to the moral law, unless it include the love of God and our neighbour. There is, therefore, no such thing as morality in wicked men. On the contrary, "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That which constitutes the essence of genuine morality, namely, the love of God and man, contains the sum of practical religion. Repentance, faith, and every species of obedience, are but different modifications of love. If we love God, we cannot but *repent* of having offended and dishonoured him. If we love God in his true character, and bear genuine benevolence to man, we cannot but *love the Saviour*, and *embrace his salvation*, which proclaims "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men." The rejection of Christ by the Jews afforded a proof that they "had not the love of God in them." If we love God, we shall love his image in those that are born of him. In fine, if we love God, we shall keep his commandments, and his commandments will not be grievous.

It is common for professed infidels, and other enemies to true religion, to cry up morality as something opposed to it; and hence, it may be, some have thought proper to cry it down; yea, many, who by their practice have proved themselves friendly to a holy life, have yet, on this account, it should seem, found it necessary so to distinguish between morality and religion as to represent the former as something very inferior in its nature to the latter. But it ought to be considered that the morality on which the enemies of true religion love to dwell is of a *spurious kind*; it does not consist in the love of God in his true character, or of men in such a way as to rejoice in what contributes to their greatest good. It is a morality essentially defective; it leaves God and religion out of the question, and is confined to what are called the *social virtues*, or things which every man in his dealings with men finds it his interest to promote. When we hear such characters cry up morality, instead of coldly admitting it to be a very good thing in its place, and insisting that religion is something of an entirely different nature, we ought cordially to allow the importance of genuine morality, and insist upon it that, if this were attended to, true religion could not be neglected. Such characters would then discover their dislike to our morality, as much as they now do to what is called religion. Such a statement of matters, though it might grate on their inclinations, must, at least, approve itself to their *consciences*. Every man feels himself obliged to act upon the principles of morality. Let us then drive home that point in which we have their consciences on our side; let us say with the poet,

"Talk they of morals, O thou bleeding love!  
The grand morality is love of Thee!"

While you speak of religion as something entirely distinct from morality, such a character will also rest contented in the neglect of the one, and think himself happy, inasmuch as you allow him to be possessed of the other. But could you prove to him that morality, if genuine, would comprise the love of God, of Christ, of the gospel, and of the whole of true religion, it would plant a thorn in his bosom, which he would find it difficult to extract.

Secondly, If the foregoing principles be true, it will follow that men in general are either obliged to perform spiritual actions, or allowed to live in sin and to perform sinful actions. In the voluntary actions of a rational creature, there is no medium between what is good and well-pleasing and what is evil and offensive in the sight of God. All our actions are, in some mode or other, *the expressions of love*, or *they are not*. If they *are*, they are spiritually good; they are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, if it be done *to the glory of*

*God*, this is *godliness*. The actions performed may be simply natural, but the end to which they are directed, and which determines their quality, denominates them spiritual. On the other hand, If they *are not*, there is no possibility of their being any other than sinful. The want of love is itself a sin; it is a sinful defect relating to principle; and whatever is done otherwise than as an expression of love, let it wear what face it may, is a sinful action. We ourselves esteem nothing in a fellow creature which is not in some mode or other the expression of love. If a wife were ever so assiduous in attending to her husband, yet if he were certain that her heart was not with him, he would abhor her endeavours to please him, and nothing that she did would be acceptable in his sight.

Instead of its being a question whether God requires any thing of carnal men which is spiritually good, it is evident, both from Scripture and the nature of things, THAT HE REQUIRES NOTHING BUT WHAT IS SO. It has been alleged that the obedience which God required of Israel by the Sinai covenant was merely *external, and did not extend to the heart*. Their government, it is said, was a theocracy; God acted towards them under the character of a civil governor; and if so, it is supposed, he must forbear to take cognizance of the heart, which it is beyond the province of creatures to inspect. That God acted towards Israel as a civil governor is admitted; and that it belongs not to a civil governor, in his *executive* capacity, to take cognizance of the heart, is also admitted. In the bestowment of rewards and punishments, he must act from what is *apparent* in the lives of men, having no other medium by which to judge of the temper of their hearts; but it is not so with respect to *legislation*, or the formation of the laws. No civil government upon earth will *allow* its subjects to hate it in their hearts, provided they do but carry it fair in their conduct. The spirit of all laws, in all nations, requires men to be *sincere friends to their country*; but as there is no medium for mortals to judge of the heart but that of an *overt act*, it is fit that this should be the established rule for the dispensation of rewards and punishments. It was thus, I conceive, in the government of God over Israel. Every precept contained in the Sinai covenant required the heart, or, which is the same thing, some genuine expression of it; but, under its administration, punishments were not always inflicted, nor rewards conferred, according to what men really were, but what they appeared to be, or according to the judgment which would have been pronounced had a fellow creature sat in judgment upon them. It was on this principle that Ahab's punishment was averted on his humbling himself before God. So far was the Divine Legislator from *requiring* merely external obedience, by the Sinai covenant, that the grand preliminary to that covenant was this: "If ye will obey my voice *indeed*, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." And what is meant by obeying his voice *indeed* is sufficiently evident, by the subsequent addresses of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and others; in many of which it is observable, that though the blessings promised were external, yet the proviso on which the promises were made was nothing less than a *heart sincerely devoted to God*: "If ye will hearken diligently unto my commandments, *to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul*, I will give you the rain of your land in his season: the first rain, and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil."—"Take heed to yourselves, that your *heart be not deceived*, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods; and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit, and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you."—"Take diligent heed to do the commandments which Moses

the servant of the Lord charged you, *to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul.—Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, with all your heart:* for consider what great things he hath done for you." If *external* obedience were all that God required by the Sinai covenant, why was he not satisfied with the goodly professions which they made during that solemn transaction, saying, "All these things will we do?" and wherefore did he utter that cutting exclamation, "O that there were *such a heart in them*, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children for ever?"

Lastly, If the foregoing principles be just, instead of being a question whether ministers should exhort their carnal auditors to any thing spiritually good, it deserves to be seriously considered WHETHER IT BE NOT AT THEIR PERIL TO EXHORT TO ANY THING SHORT OF IT.—If all duty consists in the genuine operations and expressions of the heart, it must be utterly wrong for ministers to compromise matters with the enemies of God, by exhorting them to merely external actions, or to such a kind of exercise as may be performed without the love of God. It is disloyalty to God, betraying his just authority over the heart, and admitting that in behalf of him which we should despise if offered to ourselves from a fellow creature. Nor is it less injurious to the souls of men; as it tends to quiet their consciences, and to cherish an opinion that, having complied with many of the exhortations of their minister, they have done many things pleasing and acceptable to God; while, in fact, "every thought and imagination of their heart has been only evil continually."

It may be thought that these things bear hard upon the unconverted sinner, and reduce him to a *terrible* situation. But if such in fact be his situation, it will not mend the matter to daub it with the untempered mortar of palliation; on the contrary, it will render it still more terrible. The truth is, there is no way for a sinner to take, in which he can find solid rest, but that of returning home to God by Jesus Christ. And instead of trying to render his situation easy, it ought to be our business as ministers to drive him from every other resting-place, not for the sake of plunging him into despair, but, if it please God to bless our labours, that he may be necessitated to betake himself to the "good old way, and find rest unto his soul!" We ought solemnly to assure him that, do what else he will, he sins, and is heaping upon his head a load of guilt that will sink him into endless perdition. If he pray, or frequent the means of grace, *his prayer* "is an abomination to the Lord;" if he live in the omission of these things, it is worse. Whether he eat or drink, plough the soil, or gather in the harvest, (like the supposed ship's company, mentioned before, who with all their regularity continued in their rebellious course,) all is iniquity. "Incense is an abomination; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." To die is to be plunged into the gulf of destruction; and to live, if he continue in enmity to God, is worse; as it is heaping up wrath in an enlarged degree against the day of wrath.

What then, it will be asked, can sinners do? If they go forward, destruction is before them; if on this hand, or on that, it is the same. Whither can they go? and what must they do? All the answer which the Scriptures warrant us to make is included in the warnings and invitations of the gospel:—"Repent, and believe the gospel."—"Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—"Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven!" If the answer be, We cannot comply with these things; our hearts are too hard; advise us to any thing else,

and we will hearken;—if this, or something like it, I say, should be the answer, the servant of God, having warned them that what they call their *incapacity* is no other than a wicked aversion to God and goodness, that they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life, and that their blood will be upon their own heads,—must there leave them. His soul may weep in secret places for them; but it is at his peril to compromise the matter. If, seeing they *cannot* find in their hearts to comply with the invitations of the gospel, he should offer any directions which imply that their inability is of such a kind as to afford them any excuse—any directions which imply that it is not their immediate duty to repent and return to God by Jesus Christ—any directions which may descend within the compass of their inclinations—let him look to it! They may be pleased with his advice, and comply with it; and considering it as about the whole of what can reasonably be expected of them in their present circumstances, they may be very easy; and persisting in such a spirit, they may die in it, and perish for ever; BUT THEIR BLOOD WILL SURELY BE REQUIRED AT HIS HAND!

I am, my dear friend, yours very affectionately,

GAIUS.

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## THREE CONVERSATIONS

### IMPUTATION, SUBSTITUTION, AND PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

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#### CONVERSATION I.

##### IMPUTATION.

PETER and James considered each other as good men, and had for several years been in the habit of corresponding on Divine subjects. Their respect was mutual. Their sentiments, however, though alike in the main, were not exactly the same; and some circumstances had lately occurred which tended rather to magnify the difference than to lessen it. Being both at the house of John, their common friend, in his company they fell into the following conversation.

I am not without painful apprehension, said Peter to John, that the views of our friend James on some of the doctrines of the gospel are unhappily diverted from the truth. I suspect he does not believe in the proper *imputation* of sin to Christ, or of Christ's righteousness to us; nor in his being our *substitute* or representative.

*John.* Those are serious things; but what are the grounds, brother Peter, on which your suspicions rest?

*Peter.* Partly what he has published, which I cannot reconcile with those doctrines, and partly what he has said in my hearing, which I consider as an avowal of what I have stated.

*John.* What say you to this, brother James?

*James.* I cannot tell whether what I have written or spoken accords with brother Peter's ideas on these subjects; indeed I suspect it does not: but I never thought of calling either of the doctrines in question. Were I to relinquish the one or the other, I should be at a loss for ground on which to rest my salvation. What he says of my avowing my disbelief of them in his hearing must be a misunderstanding. I did say, I suspected that *his views* of imputation and substitution were unscriptural, but had no intention of disowning the doctrines themselves.

*Peter.* Brother James, I have no desire to assume any dominion over your faith, but should be glad to know what are your ideas on these important subjects. Do you hold that sin was properly imputed to Christ, and that Christ's righteousness is properly imputed to us, or not?

*James.* You are quite at liberty, brother Peter, to ask me any questions on these subjects; and if you will hear me patiently, I will answer you as explicitly as I am able.

*John.* Do so, brother James; and we shall hear you, not only patiently, but, I trust, with pleasure.

*James.* To impute (*שבח לזכות*) signifies, in general, to *charge, reckon, or place to account*, according to the different objects to which it is applied. This word, like many others, has a *proper* and an *improper* or figurative meaning.

First, It is applied to the *charging, reckoning, or placing to the account* of persons and things THAT WHICH PROPERLY BELONGS TO THEM. This I consider as its *proper* meaning. In this sense the word is used in the following passages:—"Eli *thought* she (Hannah) had been drunken."—"Hanan and Mattaniah, the treasurers, were *counted* faithful."—"Let a man so *account* of us as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."—"Let such a one *think* this, that such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present."—"I *reckon* that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Reckoning, or accounting, in the above instances, is no other than judging of persons and things *according to what they are, or appear to be*. To impute sin in this sense is to charge guilt upon the guilty in a judicial way, or with a view to punishment. Thus Shimei besought David that his iniquity might *not be imputed to him*; thus the man is pronounced blessed "to whom the Lord *imputeth not iniquity*?" and thus Paul prayed that the sin of those who deserted him might *not be laid to their charge*.

In this sense the term is ordinarily used in common life. To impute treason or any other crime to a man is the same thing as charging him with having committed it, and this with a view to his being punished.

Secondly, It is applied to the *charging, reckoning, or placing to the account* of persons and things THAT WHICH DOES NOT PROPERLY BELONG TO THEM, AS THOUGH IT DID. This I consider as its *improper* or figurative meaning. In this sense the word is used in the following passages:—"And this your heave-offering shall be *reckoned* unto you *as though it were* the corn of the thrashing-floor, and as the fulness of the wine-press."—"Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and *holdest* me for thine enemy?"—"If the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be *counted* for circumcision?"—"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught, *put that on mine account*."

It is in this *latter* sense that I understand the term when applied to justification. "Abraham believed God, and it was *counted* unto him for righteousness."—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth

the ungodly, his faith is *counted* for righteousness." The counting, or reckoning, in these instances, is not a judging of things *as they are*; but *as they are not, as though they were*. I do not think that faith here means the righteousness of the Messiah; for it is expressly called *believing*. It means believing, however, not as a virtuous exercise of the mind which God consented to accept instead of perfect obedience, but as *having respect to the promised Messiah*, and so to his righteousness as the ground of acceptance.\* Justification is ascribed to faith, as healing frequently is in the New Testament; not as that from which the *virtue* proceeds, but as that which *receives* from the Saviour's fulness.

But if it were allowed that faith in these passages really means the object believed in, still this was not Abraham's *own* righteousness, and could not be properly *counted* by Him who judges of things as they are as being so. It was *reckoned* unto him *as if it were* his; and the effects, or benefits, of it were actually imparted to him: but this was all. Abraham did not become meritorious, or cease to be unworthy.

"What is it to place our righteousness in the obedience of Christ," says Calvin, "but to affirm that hereby only we are *accounted* righteous? because the obedience of Christ is imputed to us *AS IF IT WERE OUR OWN*."†

It is thus also that I understand the imputation of sin to Christ. He was accounted in the Divine administration *as if he were or had been* the sinner, that those who believe in him might be accounted *as if they were or had been* righteous.

Brethren, I have done. Whether my statement be just or not, I hope it will be allowed to be explicit.

*John.* That it certainly is; and we thank you. Have you any other questions, brother Peter, to ask upon the subject?

*Peter.* How do you understand the apostle in 2 Cor. v. 21, "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?"

*James.* Till lately I cannot say that I have thought closely upon it. I have understood that several of our best writers consider the word *ἀμαρτία* (*sin*) as frequently meaning a *sin-offering*. Dr. Owen so interprets it in his answer to Biddle, (p. 510,) though it seems he afterwards changed his mind. Considering the opposition between the sin which Christ was made and the righteousness which we are made, together with the same word being used for that which he was *made* and that which he *knew not*, I am inclined to be of the Doctor's last opinion; namely, that the sin which Christ was made means *sin itself*, and the righteousness which we are made means *righteousness itself*. I doubt not but that the allusion is to the sin-offering under the law, but not to its being *made a sacrifice*. Let me be a little more particular. There were two things belonging to the sin-offering. First, The imputation of the sins of the people, signified by the priest's laying his hands upon the head of the animal, and confessing over it their transgressions, and which is called "putting them upon it;" that is, it was *counted*, in the Divine administration, *as if the animal had been* the sinner, and the only sinner of the nation. Secondly, Offering it in sacrifice, or "killing it before the Lord for an atonement." Now the phrase *made sin*, in 2 Cor. v. 21, appears to refer to the *first* step in this process in order to the last. It is expressive of what was preparatory to Christ's suffering death, rather than of the thing itself, just as our being *made righteousness* expresses what was preparatory to God's bestowing upon us eternal life. But the term *made* is not to be taken literally; for that would convey the idea of Christ's being really the subject

\* See Calvin's Institutes, Book III. Chap. XI. § 7. Also my Expository Discourses on Genesis, Chap. xv. 1-6.

† Institutes, Book III. Chap. XI. § 23.

of moral evil. It is expressive of a Divine *constitution* by which our Redeemer, with his own consent, stood in the sinner's place, as though he had been himself the transgressor; just as the sin-offering under the law was, in mercy to Israel, reckoned or accounted to have the sins of the people "put upon its head;" with this difference, that was only a shadow, but this went really to take away sin.

*Peter.* Do you consider Christ as having been *punished, really and properly* PUNISHED?

*James.* I should think I do not. But what do you mean by punishment?

*Peter.* An innocent person may *suffer*, but, properly speaking, he cannot be *punished*. Punishment necessarily supposes *criminality*.

*James.* Just so; and therefore, as I do not believe that Jesus was in any sense criminal, I cannot say he was really and properly punished.

*Peter.* Punishment is the infliction of natural evil for the commission of moral evil. It is not necessary, however, that the latter should have been committed by the party. Criminality is supposed; but it may be either personal or imputed.

*James.* This I cannot admit. Real and proper punishment, if I understand the terms, is not only the infliction of natural evil for the commission of moral evil, but the infliction of the one *upon the person who committed the other, and in displeasure against him*. It not only supposes criminality, but that the party punished was literally the criminal. Criminality committed by one party and imputed to another is not a ground for real and proper punishment. If Paul had sustained the punishment due to Onesimus for having wronged his master, yet it would not have been real and proper punishment *to him*, but *suffering* only, as not being inflicted in displeasure against him. I am aware of what has been said on this subject, that there was a more intimate *union* between Christ and those for whom he died than could ever exist between creatures. But be it so; it is enough for me that the union was not such as THAT THE ACTIONS OF THE ONE BECAME THOSE OF THE OTHER. Christ, even in the act of offering himself a sacrifice, when, to speak in the language of the Jewish law, the sins of the people were put or laid upon him, gave himself, nevertheless, THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST.

*Peter.* And thus it is that you understand the words of Isaiah, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all?"

*James.* Yes; he bore the punishment due to our sins, or that which, considering the dignity of his person, was equivalent to it. The phrase, "He shall bear his iniquity;" which so frequently occurs in the Old Testament, means, he shall bear the punishment due to his iniquity.

*Peter.* And yet you deny that Christ's sufferings were properly *penal*?

*James.* You would not deny eternal life which is promised to believers to be properly a *reward*; but you would deny its being a *real and proper reward* TO THEM.

*Peter.* And what then?

*James.* If eternal life, though it be a reward, and we partake of it, yet is really and properly the reward of Christ's obedience, and not ours; then the sufferings of Christ, though they were a punishment, and he sustained it, yet were really and properly the punishment of our sins, and not his. What he bore *was* punishment; that is, it was the expression of Divine displeasure against transgressors. So what we enjoy *is* reward; that is, it is the expression of God's well-pleasèdness in the obedience and death of his Son. But neither is the one a punishment *to him*, nor the other, properly speaking, a reward *to us*.

There appears to me great accuracy in the Scripture language on this subject. What our Saviour underwent is almost always expressed by the

term *suffering*. Once it is called a *chastisement*: yet there he is not said to have been chastised; but “the chastisement of our peace was *upon him*.” This is the same as saying he bore *our* punishment. He was made a *curse for us*; that is, having been reckoned or accounted the sinner, as though he had actually been so, he was treated accordingly, *as* one that had deserved to be an outcast from heaven and earth. I believe that the wrath of God which was due to us was poured upon him; but I do not believe that God for one moment was angry or displeased *with him*, or that he smote him from any such displeasure.

There is a passage in Calvin’s *Institutes* which so fully expresses my mind that I hope you will excuse me if I read it. You will find it in Book II. Chap. XVI. § 10, 11. “It behoved him that he should, as it were, hand to hand, wrestle with the armies of hell, and the horror of eternal death. The chastisement of our peace was *laid upon him*. He was smitten of his Father for our crimes, and bruised for our iniquities; whereby is meant that he was put in the stead of the wicked, as surety and pledge, yea, and *as* the very guilty person himself, to sustain and bear away all the punishments that should have been laid upon them, save only that he could not be holden of death.—Yet do we not mean that God was at any time either his enemy or angry with him. For how could he be angry with his beloved Son, upon whom his mind rested? Or how could Christ by his intercession appease his Father’s wrath towards others, if, full of hatred, he had been incensed against himself? But this is our meaning—that he sustained the weight of the Divine displeasure; inasmuch as he, being stricken and tormented by the hand of God, DID FEEL ALL THE TOKENS OF GOD WHEN HE IS ANGRY AND PUNISHETH.”

*Peter*. The words of Scripture are very express: “He hath *made him to be sin for us*.”—“He was *made a curse for us*.” You may, by diluting and qualifying interpretations, soften what you consider as intolerable *harshness*. In other words, you may choose to correct the language and sentiments of inspiration, and teach the apostle to speak of his Lord with more decorum, lest his personal purity should be impeached, and lest the odium of the curse, annexed by Divine law, should remain attached to his death; but if you abide by the obvious meaning of the passages, you must hold with a *commutation of persons*, the *imputation* of sin and of righteousness, and a *vicarious punishment* equally pregnant with *excretion* as with *death*.

*John*. I wish brother Peter would forbear the use of language which tends not to convince, but to irritate.

*James*. If there be any thing convincing in it, I confess I do not perceive it. I admit, with Mr. Charnock, “that Christ was ‘made sin’ *as if* he had sinned all the sins of men; and we are ‘made righteousness’ *as if* we had not sinned at all.” What more is necessary to abide by the obvious meaning of the words? To go further must be to maintain that Christ’s being *made sin* means that he was literally rendered wicked, and that his being *made a curse* is the same thing as his being punished for it according to his deserts. Brother Peter, I am sure, does not believe this shocking position; but he seems to think there is a medium between his being treated *as if he were* a sinner and his *being one*. If such a medium there be, I should be glad to discover it: at present it appears to me to have no existence.

Brother Peter will not suspect me, I hope, of wishing to depreciate his judgment, when I say that he appears to me to be attached to certain terms without having sufficiently weighed their import. In most cases I should think it a privilege to learn of him; but in some things I cannot agree with him. In order to maintain the *real* and *proper punishment* of Christ, he talks of his being “guilty by imputation.” The term *guilty*, I am aware, is



often used by theological writers for an *obligation to punishment*, and so applies to that voluntary obligation which Christ came under to sustain the punishment of our sins: but, strictly speaking, guilt is the *desert* of punishment; and this can never apply but to the offender. It is the opposite of innocence. A voluntary obligation to endure the punishment of another is not guilt, any more than a consequent exemption [from obligation in the offender] is innocence. Both guilt and innocence are transferable in their effects, but in themselves they are untransferable. To say that Christ was *reckoned* or *counted* in the Divine administration as if he were the sinner, and came under an obligation to endure the curse or punishment due to our sins, is one thing; but to say he *deserved* that curse is another. Guilt, strictly speaking, is the inseparable attendant of transgression, and could never, therefore, for one moment occupy the conscience of Christ. If Christ by imputation became *deserving* of punishment, we by non-imputation cease to deserve it; and if our demerits be literally transferred to him, his merits must of course be the same to us: and then, instead of approaching God as *guilty* and *unworthy*, we might take consequence to ourselves before him, as not only guiltless, but meritorious beings.

*Peter.* Some who profess to hold that believers are justified by the righteousness of Christ deny nevertheless that his *obedience itself* is imputed to them; for they maintain that the Scripture represents believers as receiving only the *benefits*, or effects, of Christ's righteousness in justification, or their being pardoned and accepted for Christ's *righteousness' sake*. But it is not merely *for the sake* of Christ, or of what he has done, that believers are accepted of God, and treated as completely righteous; but it is IN him as their Head, Representative, and Substitute, and by the imputation of that *very obedience* which, as such, he performed to the Divine law, that they are justified.

*James.* I have no doubt but that the imputation of Christ's righteousness presupposes a *union* with him; since there is no perceivable fitness in bestowing benefits on one *for another's sake* where there is no union or relation subsisting between them. It is not such a union, however, as that THE ACTIONS OF EITHER BECOME THOSE OF THE OTHER. That "the Scriptures represent believers as *receiving* only the benefits or the effects of Christ's righteousness in justification" is a remark of which I am not able to perceive the fallacy; nor does it follow that his obedience itself is not imputed to them. Obedience itself may be and is imputed, while its effects only are *imparted*, and consequently *received*. I never met with a person who held the absurd notion of imputed benefits, or imputed punishments; and am inclined to think there never was such a person. Be that however as it may, sin on the one hand, and righteousness on the other, are the proper objects of imputation; but that imputation *consists* in charging or reckoning them to the account of the party in such a way as to *impart* to him their evil or beneficial effects.

*Peter.* The doctrine for which I contend, as taught by the apostle Paul, is neither novel nor more strongly expressed than it has formerly been by authors of eminence.

*James.* It may be so. We have been told of an old protestant writer who says, that "In Christ, and by him, every true Christian may be called a *fulfiller of the law*;" but I see not why he might not as well have added, Every true Christian may be said to have been slain, and if not to have redeemed himself by his own blood, yet to be worthy of all that blessing, and honour, and glory that shall be conferred upon him in the world to come — What do you think of Dr. Crisp's Sermons? Has he not carried your principles to an extreme?

*Peter.* I cordially agree with Witsius as to the impropriety of calling Christ *a sinner, truly a sinner, the greatest of sinners, &c.*, yet I am far from disapproving of what Dr. Crisp, and some others, *meant* by those exceptionable expressions.

*James.* If a Christian may be called a *fulfiller of the law*, on account of Christ's obedience being imputed to him, I see not why Christ may not be called a *transgressor of the law*, on account of our disobedience being imputed to him. Persons and things *should be called what they are*. As to the *meaning* of Dr. Crisp, I am very willing to think he had no ill design; but my concern is with the meaning which his words convey to his readers. He considers God, in charging our sins on Christ, and accounting his righteousness to us, as reckoning of things *as they are*,—p. 280. He contends that Christ was *really* the sinner, or guilt could not have been laid upon him,—p. 272. Imputation of sin and righteousness, with him, is literally and actually a TRANSFER OF CHARACTER; and it is the object of his reasoning to persuade his believing hearers that from henceforward Christ is the sinner, and not they. "Hast thou been an idolater," says he, "a blasphemer, a despiser of God's word, a profaner of his name and ordinances, a thief, a liar, a drunkard?—If thou hast part in Christ, *all these transgressions of thine become actually the transgressions of Christ, and so cease to be thine; and thou ceasest to be a transgressor from the time they were laid upon Christ to the last hour of thy life*: so that now thou art *not* an idolater, a persecutor, a thief, a liar, &c.—thou art *not* a sinful person. Reckon whatever sin you commit, when as you have part in Christ, you are all that Christ was, and Christ is all that you were,"—p. 270.

If the *meaning* of this passage be true and good, I see nothing exceptionable in the expressions. All that can be said is, that the writer explicitly states his principle, and avows its legitimate consequences. I believe the principle to be false: 1. Because neither sin nor righteousness is *in itself* transferable. The act and deed of one person may *affect* another in many ways, but cannot possibly become his act and deed. 2. Because the Scriptures uniformly declare Christ to be sinless, and believers to be sinful creatures. 3. Because believers themselves have in all ages *confessed* their sins, and applied to the mercy-seat for *forgiveness*. They never plead such a union as shall render their sins not theirs, but Christ's; but merely such a one as affords ground to apply for pardon in *his name*, or *for his sake*; not as worthy claimants, but as unworthy supplicants.

Whatever reasonings we may adopt, there are certain times in which *conscience* will bear witness that, notwithstanding the imputation of our sins to Christ, *we are actually the sinners*; and I should have thought that no good man could have gravely gone about to overturn its testimony. Yet this is what Dr. Crisp has done. "Believers *think*," says he, "that they find their transgressions in their own consciences, and they *imagine* that there is a sting of this poison still behind, wounding them; but, beloved, if this principle be received for a truth, that God hath laid thine iniquities on Christ, how can thy transgressions, belonging to Christ, be found in thy heart and conscience?—Is thy conscience Christ?"—p. 269.

Perhaps no man has gone further than Dr. Crisp in his attempts at consistency; and admitting his principle, that imputation consists in a transfer of character, I do not see who can dispute his conclusions. To have been perfectly consistent, however, he should have proved that all the confessions and lamentations of believers, recorded in Scripture, arose from their being under the *mistake* which he labours to rectify; that is, *thinking* sin did not cease to be theirs, even when under the fullest persuasion that the Lord

would not impute it to them, but would graciously cover it by the righteousness of his Son.

*John.* I hope, my brethren, that what has been said in this free conversation will be reconsidered with candour; and that you will neither of you impute designs or consequences to the other which are not avowed.

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## CONVERSATION II.

### SUBSTITUTION.

*John.* I THINK, brother Peter, you expressed, at the beginning of our last conversation, a strong suspicion that brother James denied *the substitution of Christ*, as well as the proper imputation of sin and righteousness. What has passed on the latter subject would probably tend either to confirm or remove your suspicions respecting the former.

*Peter.* I confess I was mistaken in some of my suspicions. I consider our friend as a good man, but am far from being satisfied with what I still understand to be his views on this important subject.

*John.* It gives me great pleasure to hear the honest concessions of brethren when they feel themselves in any measure to have gone too far.

*Peter.* I shall be glad to hear brother James's statement on *substitution*, and to know whether he considers our Lord in his undertaking as having sustained the character of a *Head*, or *Representative*; and if so, whether the persons for whom he was a substitute were the elect only, or mankind in general.

*James.* I must acknowledge that on this subject I feel considerably at a loss. I have no consciousness of having ever called the doctrine of substitution in question. On the contrary, my hope of salvation rests upon it; and the sum of my delight, as a minister of the gospel, consists in it. If I know any thing of my own heart, I can say of my Saviour as laying down his life *for*, or *instead of*, sinners, as was said of Jerusalem by the captives: "If I forget *thee*, let my right hand forget: if I do not remember *thee*, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!"

[James here paused, and wept; and both John and Peter wept with him. After recovering himself a little, he proceeded as follows:]

I have always considered the denial of this doctrine as being of the essence of Socinianism. I could not have imagined that any person whose hope of acceptance with God rests not on any goodness in himself, but entirely on the righteousness of Christ, imputed to him *as if it were his own*, would have been accounted to disown his substitution. But perhaps my dear brother (for such I feel him to be, notwithstanding our differences) may include, in his ideas on this subject, that Christ was so our *Head* and *Representative* as that what he did and suffered we did and suffered in him. [To this Peter assented.] If no more were meant by this, resumed James, than that what he did and suffered is graciously accepted on our behalf *as if it were ours*, I freely, as I have said before, acquiesce in it. But I do not believe, and can hardly persuade myself that brother Peter believes, the obedience and sufferings of Christ to be so ours as that we can properly be said to have obeyed and suffered.

Christ was and is our *Head*, and we are his members: the union between him and us, however, is not in all respects the same as that which is between

the head and the members of the natural body; for that would go to explain away all distinct consciousness and accountableness on our part.

As to the term *representative*, if no more be meant by it than that Christ so personated us as to die in our stead, that we, believing in him, should not die, I have nothing to object to it. But I do not believe that Christ was so our Representative as that what he did and suffered we did and suffered; and so became meritorious, or deserving of the Divine favour. But I feel myself in a wide field, and must entreat your indulgence while I take up so much of the conversation.

*Peter and John.* Go on, and state your sentiments without apology.

*James.* I apprehend, then, that many important mistakes have arisen from considering the interposition of Christ under the notion of *paying a debt*. The blood of Christ is indeed the *price* of our redemption, or that for the sake of which we are delivered from the curse of the law; but this metaphorical language, as well as that of *head and members*, may be carried too far, and may lead us into many errors. In cases of debt and credit among men, where a surety undertakes to *represent* the debtor, from the moment his undertaking is accepted the debtor is free, and may claim his liberty, not as a matter of favour, at least on the part of the creditor, but of strict justice. Or should the undertaking be unknown to him for a time, yet as soon as he knows it he may demand his discharge, and, it may be, think himself hardly treated by being kept in bondage so long after his debt had been actually paid. But who in their sober senses will imagine this to be analogous to the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ? Sin is a debt only in a metaphorical sense; properly speaking, it is a *crime*, and satisfaction for it requires to be made, not on pecuniary, but on moral principles. If Philemon had accepted of that part of Paul's offer which respected property, and had placed so much to his account as he considered Onesimus to have "owed" him, he could not have been said to have *remitted* his debt; nor would Onesimus have had to thank him for remitting it. But it is supposed of Onesimus that he might not only be in debt to his master, but have "wronged" him. Perhaps he had embezzled his goods, corrupted his children, or injured his character. Now for Philemon to accept of that part of the offer were very different from the other. In the one case he would have accepted of a pecuniary representative, in the other of a moral one, that is, of a mediator. The satisfaction in the one case would annihilate the idea of remission; but not in the other. Whatever satisfaction Paul might give to Philemon respecting the wound inflicted upon his character and honour as the head of a family, it would not supersede the necessity of pardon being sought by the offender, and freely bestowed by the offended.

The reason for this difference is easily perceived. Debts are transferable, but crimes are not. A third person may cancel the one, but he can only obliterate the *effects* of the other; the *desert* of the criminal remains. The *debtor* is accountable to his creditor as a *private* individual, who has power to accept of a surety, or, if he please, to remit the whole without any satisfaction. In the one case he would be just, in the other merciful; but no place is afforded by either of them for the *combination* of justice and mercy in the same proceeding. The *criminal*, on the other hand, is amenable to the magistrate, or to the head of a family, as a *public* person, and who, especially if the offence be capital, cannot remit the punishment without invading law and justice, nor, in the ordinary discharge of his office, admit of a third person to stand in his place. In extraordinary cases, however, extraordinary expedients are resorted to. A satisfaction may be made to law and justice, as to the *spirit* of them, while the *letter* is dispensed with. The well-known story of Zaleucus, the Grecian lawgiver, who consented to

lose one of his eyes to spare one of his son's eyes, who, by transgressing the law, had subjected himself to the loss of both, is an example. Here, as far as it went, *justice and mercy were combined* in the same act; and had the satisfaction been much fuller than it was, so full that the authority of the law instead of being weakened should have been abundantly magnified and honoured, still it had been *perfectly consistent with free forgiveness*.

Finally, In the case of the debtor, satisfaction being once accepted, justice *requires* his complete discharge; but in that of the criminal, where satisfaction is made to the wounded honour of the law and the authority of the lawgiver, justice, though it *admits* of his discharge, yet no otherwise *requires* it than as it may have been matter of promise to the substitute.

I do not mean to say that cases of this sort afford a competent representation of redemption by Christ. That is a work which not only ranks with extraordinary interpositions, but which has no parallel; it is a work of God, which leaves all the petty concerns of mortals infinitely behind it. All that comparisons can do is to give us some idea of the *principle* on which it proceeds.

If the following passage in our admired Milton were considered as the language of the law of innocence, it would be inaccurate—

“————— Man disobeying,  
 .....  
 He with his whole posterity must die;  
 Die he, or justice must; unless for him  
 Some other able, and as willing, pay  
 The rigid satisfaction, death for death.”

Abstractedly considered, this is true; but it is not expressive of what was the revealed law of innocence. The law made no such condition or provision; nor was it indifferent to the Lawgiver who should suffer, the sinner or another on his behalf. The language of the law to the transgressor was not, *Thou shalt die, or some one on thy behalf*, but simply, *Thou shalt die*; and had it literally taken its course, every child of man must have perished. The sufferings of Christ in our stead, therefore, are not a punishment inflicted in the ordinary course of distributive justice, but an extraordinary interposition of infinite wisdom and love; not contrary to, but rather above the law, deviating from the letter, but more than preserving the spirit of it. Such, brethren, as well as I am able to explain them, are my views of the substitution of Christ.

*Peter.* The objection of our so stating the substitution of Christ as to leave no room for the free pardon of sin has been often made by those who avowedly reject his satisfaction; but for any who really consider his death as an atonement for sin, and as essential to the ground of a sinner's hope, to employ the objection against us is very extraordinary, and must, I presume, proceed from inadvertency.

*James.* If it be so, I do not perceive it. The grounds of the objection have been stated as clearly and as fully as I am able to state them.

*John.* What are your ideas, brother James, with respect to the persons for whom Christ died as a substitute? Do you consider them as the elect only, or mankind in general?

*James.* Were I asked concerning the gospel, when it is introduced into a country, *For whom was it sent?* if I had respect only to the revealed will of God, I should answer, It is sent for men, not as elect or non-elect, but as *sinner*s. It is written and preached “that they might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through his name.” But if I had respect to the appointment of God, with regard to its application, I should say, If the Divine conduct in this instance accord

with what it has been in other instances, he hath visited that country, to "take out of it a people for his name."

In like manner, concerning the death of Christ, if I speak of it irrespective of the purpose of the Father and the Son as to the objects who should be saved by it, referring merely to what it is in itself sufficient for, and declared in the gospel to be adapted to, I should think I answered the question in a Scriptural way in saying, It was *for sinners as sinners*. But if I have respect to the purpose of the Father in giving his Son to die, and to the design of Christ in laying down his life, I should answer, It was *for his elect only*.

In the *former* of these views I find the apostles and primitive ministers (leaving the consideration of God's secret purpose as a matter belonging to himself, not to them) addressing themselves to sinners without distinction, and holding forth the sacrifice of Christ as a ground of faith to all men. On this principle the servants sent forth to bid guests to the marriage-supper were directed to invite them, saying, "Come, *for* all things are ready." On this principle the ambassadors of Christ besought sinners to be reconciled to God; "*for*," said they, "he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In the *latter* view I find the apostles ascribing to the purpose and discriminating grace of God all their success: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed:" teaching believers also to ascribe every thing that they were, or hoped to be, to the same cause; addressing them as having been before the foundation of the world "beloved" and "chosen" of God; the "children" or "sons" whom it was the design of Christ, in becoming incarnate, to bring to glory; the "church" of God, which he purchased with his own blood, and for which "he gave himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

If the substitution of Christ consist in his dying *for* or *instead of* others, *that they should not die*, this, as comprehending the designed end to be answered by his death, is strictly applicable to none but the elect; for whatever ground there is for sinners as sinners to believe and be saved, it never was the purpose or design of Christ to impart faith to any other than those who were given him of the Father. He therefore did not die with the intent that any others should not die.

Whether I can perfectly reconcile these statements with each other or not, I embrace them as being both plainly taught in the Scriptures. I confess, however, I do not at present perceive their inconsistency. If I be not greatly mistaken, what apparent contradiction may attend them arises chiefly from that which has been already mentioned; namely, the considering of Christ's substitution as an affair between a *creditor and debtor*, or carrying the metaphor to an extreme. In that view the sufferings of Christ would require to be exactly proportioned to the nature and number of the sins which were laid upon him; and if more sinners had been saved, or those who are saved had been greater sinners than they are, he must have borne a proportionable increase of suffering. To correspond with pecuniary satisfactions, this must undoubtedly be the case. I do not know that any writer has so stated things; but am persuaded that such ideas are at the foundation of a large part of the reasonings on that side of the subject.

In atonement, or satisfaction for *crime*, things do not proceed on this calculating principle. It is true there was a *designation* of the sacrifices offered up by Hezekiah; they were offered not only for Judah, but for those that remained of the ten tribes; "for so the king commanded, that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made *for all Israel*." But the

sacrifices themselves were the same for both as they would have been for one, and required to be the same for one as they were for both. It was their *designation* only that made the difference.

Thus I conceive it is in respect of the sacrifice of Christ. If fewer had been saved than are saved, to be consistent with justice it required to be by the same perfect atonement; and if more had been saved than are, even the whole human race, there needed no other. But if the satisfaction of Christ was *in itself* sufficient for the whole world, there is no further propriety in asking, "Whose sins were imputed to Christ? or for whom did he die as a substitute?" than as it is thereby inquired, Who were the persons whom he intended finally to save?

That which is equally necessary for few as for many must, in its own nature, be equally sufficient for many as for few; and could not proceed upon the principle of the sins of some being laid on Christ rather than others, any otherwise than as it was the *design* of the Father and the Son, through one all-sufficient medium, to pardon the elect, while the rest are, notwithstanding, left to perish in their sins.

It seems to me as consonant with truth to say that a certain number of Christ's acts of obedience become ours as that a certain number of our sins become his. In the former case his one undivided obedience, stamped as it is with Divinity, affords a ground of justification to any number of believers; in the latter, his one atonement, stamped also as it is with Divinity, is sufficient for the pardon of any number of sins or sinners. Yet as Christ laid not his life down but *by covenant*, as the elect were given him to be the purchase of his blood, or the fruit of the travail of his soul, he had respect, in all he did and suffered, to this recompense of reward. Their salvation was the joy that was set before him. It was for the covering of *their* transgressions that he became obedient unto death. To *them* his substitution was the same *in effect* as if their sins had by number and measure been literally imparted to him.

I am not aware that any principle which I imbibe is inconsistent with Christ's laying down his life *by covenant*, or with his being the *Surety* of that covenant, pledging himself for the *certain* accomplishment of whatever he undertook; as, that all that were given him should come to him, should not be lost, but raised up at the last day, and be presented without spot and blameless. All this I consider as included in the design of the Father and the Son, with respect to the application of the atonement.

*John.* I have heard it objected to your views of the *sufficiency* of the atonement to this effect—"How does this principle afford a ground for general invitations, if the *design* was confined to his elect people? If the benefits of his death were never *intended* for the non-elect, is it not just as inconsistent to invite them to partake of them as if there were a want of sufficiency? This explanation therefore seems only to be shifting the difficulty.

*James.* Pharaoh was exhorted to let Israel go; and, had he complied, he had saved his own life and that of a great number of his people; yet, all things considered, it was not God's intention to save Pharaoh's life, nor that of the Egyptians. And is there no difference between this and his being exhorted under a promise in which the object promised had no existence?

It is a fact that the Scriptures rest the general invitations of the gospel upon the atonement of Christ.\* But if there were not a sufficiency in the atonement for the salvation of sinners without distinction, how could the ambassadors of Christ beseech them to be reconciled to God, and that

\* 2 Cor. v. 19—21; Matt. xxii. 4; John iii. 16.

from the consideration of his having been made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him? What would you think of the fallen angels being invited to be reconciled to God, from the consideration of an atonement having been made for fallen *men*? You would say, It is inviting them to partake of a benefit which *has no existence*, the obtaining of which, therefore, is *naturally impossible*. Upon the supposition of the atonement being insufficient for the salvation of any more than are actually saved by it, the non-elect, however, with respect to a being reconciled to God through it, are in the same state as the fallen angels; that is, the thing is not only morally, but *naturally impossible*. But if there be an objective fulness in the atonement of Christ, sufficient for any number of sinners, were they to believe in him; there is no other impossibility in the way of any man's salvation, to whom the gospel comes at least, than what arises from the state of his own mind. The intention of God not to remove this impossibility, and so not to save him, is a purpose to withhold not only that which he was not obliged to bestow, but that which is never represented in the Scriptures as necessary to the consistency of exhortations or invitations.

I do not deny that there is *difficulty* in these statements; but it belongs to the general subject of reconciling the purposes of God with the agency of man; whereas, in the other case, God is represented as inviting sinners to partake of what has no existence, and which therefore is physically impossible. The one, while it ascribes the salvation of the believer in every stage of it to mere grace, renders the unbeliever inexcusable; which the other, I conceive, does not. In short, we must either acknowledge an objective fulness in Christ's atonement, sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him; or, in opposition to Scripture and common sense, confine our invitations to believe to such persons as have believed already.

*John.* May I ask you, brother Peter, whether, on a review of what has passed, you consider brother James as denying the doctrines of *imputation* and *substitution*, or either of them?

*Peter.* Though I consider brother James's statements as containing various mistakes, and though I am exceedingly averse from the necessary consequences of certain tenets, which, if I rightly understand him, are avowed in them; yet I am now convinced that respecting those doctrines he did not intend what I supposed he did. It behoves me, therefore, frankly to acknowledge that I have unintentionally misrepresented his sentiments respecting them, for which I am truly sorry.

*John.* I hope, brother James, you are satisfied with this acknowledgment.

*James.* Perfectly so; and shall be happy to hear brother Peter's remarks on those particulars in which he may still consider me as in the wrong.

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### CONVERSATION III.

#### PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

*Peter.* NOTWITHSTANDING what our brother James has stated, I am far from being satisfied with his views as they affect the doctrine of *particular redemption*. If I understand him, his sentiment may be expressed in this position: THE PARTICULARITY OF THE ATONEMENT CONSISTS IN THE SOVEREIGN PLEASURE OF GOD WITH REGARD TO ITS APPLICATION.



*James.* I should rather say, THE PARTICULARITY OF REDEMPTION CONSISTS IN THE SOVEREIGN PLEASURE OF GOD WITH REGARD TO THE APPLICATION OF THE ATONEMENT; *that is, with regard to* THE PERSONS TO WHOM IT SHALL BE APPLIED.

*John.* It is to be understood then, I presume, that you both believe the doctrine of particular redemption, and that the only question between you is, Wherein does it consist?

*James.* So I understand it.

*Peter.* I consider the afore-mentioned position as merely a reconciling expedient, or compromise between principles which can never be reconciled.

*James.* I am not conscious of embracing it for any such purpose—but let me hear your objections against it.

*Peter.* It places the particularity of redemption in application. I understand, indeed, that by application you include, not only what the New Testament denominates “receiving the atonement”—“the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”—and “faith in his blood;” but also the *absolute intention* of Christ in his death to save all those who shall be finally happy. But notwithstanding the unauthorized latitude of meaning which, to render the position more plausible, is here claimed for a particular term, various and cogent reasons may be urged against it. Among others, it confounds the atonement itself with its application to the sinner; whereas, though the former completely ascertains the latter, yet, not being the same fruit of Divine favour, they must not be identified. The term application always supposes the *existence* of whatever is applied. The atonement, therefore, must be considered as existing, either actually or in the Divine decree, before it can be applied to the sinner. The application of a thing to any person, or for any purpose, ought not to be confounded with the thing itself. Hence, in former times, hardly any distinction was more common, among theological writers, than that between what they denominates the *impetration* and the *application* of redemption. To represent the *intention* of Christ in his death to save Paul, for instance, and not Judas, under the notion of *applying* the atonement to the one, and not to the other, is to me at least a perfectly novel sense of the word application, and was, I presume, adopted to meet the necessities of this hypothesis.

*James.* The whole of what you have said rests upon a mistake at the outset. You say the position in question “places the particularity of redemption in application.” Whereas, if you recollect yourself, you will find that it places it IN THE SOVEREIGN PLEASURE OF GOD WITH REGARD TO APPLICATION. The difference between this and the other is as great as that between election and vocation. Instead of my confounding redemption or atonement, therefore, with application, I have just cause to complain of you for having confounded application with the sovereign pleasure of God respecting it, and for having loaded me with the consequences.

*Peter.* But have you never made use of the term *application* so as to include the Divine *intention*?

*James.* I am not aware of having done so; but whether I have or not, you were not animadverting on what I may have said at other times, but on the position which you yourself had stated, which position affirms the very opposite of what you allege. Allowing you to animadvert, however, on other words than those contained in the position, and admitting that I may have spoken or written in the manner you allege, still it has been merely to distinguish what the death of Christ is *in itself sufficient for* from what it was *the design of the Father and the Son actually to accomplish by it.* This distinction is neither novel, nor liable to the objection of confounding the impetration of redemption with its application. I have no other meaning,

that I am aware of, than that of Dr. Owen in the following passage: "Sufficient, we say, was the sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of the whole world, and for the expiation of all the sins of all and every man in the world. This sufficiency of his sacrifice hath a two-fold rise. First, The dignity of the person that did offer, and was offered. Secondly, The greatness of the pain he endured, by which he was able to bear, and did undergo, the whole curse of the law, and wrath of God due to sin. And this sets forth *the innate, real, true worth and value of the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ*. This is its own true internal perfection and sufficiency. That it should be APPLIED unto any, made a *price* for them, and become *beneficial* to them, according to the worth that is in it, is *external* to it, doth not arise from it, but merely depends upon the intention and will of God."

*Peter*. Intention enters into the nature of atonement. Christ was voluntary in his sufferings, and his being so was essential to his death as a sacrifice and an atonement. His death, detached from these considerations, would be merely that of a martyr. It was the effect of the highest degree of love, and of the kindest possible intention respecting the objects beloved; for otherwise it might well be demanded, To what purpose this *waste* of love?

*James*. Intention of some kind doubtless does enter into the essence of Christ's laying down his life a sacrifice; but that it should be beneficial to this person rather than to that appears to me, as Dr. Owen expresses it, "external to it, and to depend entirely on the will of God." And as to a *waste* of love, we might as well attribute a waste of goodness to the Divine providence in its watering rocks and seas, as well as fruitful valleys, with the showers of heaven; or to our Lord for his commissioning his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, while he never expected any others to believe and be saved by it than those who were *ordained* to eternal life. It accords with the general conduct of God to impart his favours with a kind of profusion which to the mind of man, that sees only one or two ends to be answered by them, may have the appearance of waste; but when all things are brought to their intended issue, it will be found that God has done nothing in vain.

*John*. Placing the particularity of redemption, as you do, in the sovereign pleasure of God with regard to the application of the atonement, or the persons to whom it shall be applied, wherein is the difference between that doctrine and the doctrine of election?

*James*. I do not consider particular redemption as being so much a doctrine of itself as a branch of the great doctrine of election, which runs through all God's works of grace. If this branch of election had not been more opposed than others, I reckon we should no more have thought of applying the term *particular* to it than to vocation, justification, or glorification. The idea applies to these as well as to the other. *Whom* he did foreknow he did predestinate; *whom* he did predestinate, he called; *whom* he called, he justified; and *whom* he justified, he glorified.

*John*. This would seem to agree with the apostle's account of spiritual blessings in his epistle to the Ephesians: "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, *according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.*"

*Peter*. I have some questions which I wish to put to brother James on the difference which he appears to make between atonement and redemption. If I understand him, he considers the latter as the *effect* of the former.

*James*. There are few terms, whether in the Scriptures or elsewhere, that are always used in the same sense. *Reconciliation* sometimes means a being *actually in friendship with God, through faith in the blood of Christ*; but

when used synonymously with atonement, it denotes *the satisfaction of justice only*, or the opening of a way by which mercy may be exercised consistently with righteousness. In both these senses the word occurs in Rom. v. 10, "For if when we were enemies we *were reconciled* to God by the death of his Son, much more, *being reconciled*, we shall be saved by his life." On this passage Dr. Guyse very properly remarks, "'Reconciled to God by the death of his Son,' in the first clause, seems to relate to Christ's having worked out our reconciliation, or completed all in a way of merit by his death that was necessary to appease the wrath of God, and make way for the riches of his grace to be communicated to us in full consistency with the honour of all his perfections, and of his law and government, which the apostle had called (verses 6 and 8) 'dying for the ungodly,' and 'dying for us;' but 'being reconciled,' in the last clause, seems to relate to the reconciliation's taking effect upon us, or to our being brought into a state of *actual* reconciliation and peace with God, through faith in Christ's blood, which the apostle had spoken of in verses 1 and 9, and which, in the verse after this, is called 'receiving the atonement.'"—Thus also the term *redemption* is sometimes put for the *price* by which we are redeemed; namely, the bloodshedding of Christ. In this sense it appears to be used by the apostle in Rom. iii. 24, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the *redemption* that is in Jesus Christ." To be justified "through his redemption" is the same thing, I should think, as being "justified by his blood." But the term properly and ordinarily signifies, not that for the sake of which we are delivered from the curse of the law, but the deliverance itself. Viewing reconciliation or atonement as a satisfaction to Divine justice, and redemption as the deliverance of the sinner, the latter appears to me to be an *effect* of the former.

*Peter.* I am far from being convinced that redemption is an effect of atonement, any more than that atonement is an effect of redemption: both are the immediate effects of Christ's death, viewed in different points of light.

*James.* I freely admit that both are effects of Christ's death; but in such order as that one is the consequence of the other. I can conceive of the deliverance of the criminal arising from the satisfaction made to the judge; but not of satisfaction to the judge arising from the deliverance of the criminal.

*Peter.* To view the atonement as merely a satisfaction to Divine justice, or as a *medium* by which mercy may be exercised consistently with the Divine perfections, without considering sinners as *actually reconciled to God* by it, is to retain little if any thing more than the *name* of atonement.

*James.* I see no grounds for calling that which was wrought for us while we were yet enemies *actual* reconciliation. Actual reconciliation appears to me, as it did to Dr. Guyse, to consist in that which is accomplished through faith, or as receiving the atonement. The reconciliation which is synonymous with atonement is expressed in 2 Cor. v. 18, "All things are of God, who hath *reconciled us to himself* by Jesus Christ." But this is not supposed by the apostles, important as it was, to have brought sinners into a state of *actual* friendship with God; for if so, there had been no occasion for "the ministry of reconciliation," and for "beseeching sinners to be *reconciled* to him." Nor do I see how a state of *actual* reconciliation could consist with the uniform language of the New Testament concerning unbelievers, whether elect or non-elect, that they are under *condemnation*. I never understood that you held with justification before believing; but *actual* reconciliation seems to amount to this. Neither have I understood that you have ever attempted to explain away the duty of ministers to beseech sinners

to be reconciled to God. On the contrary, if I mistake not, you have pleaded for it. I am surprised, therefore, at your speaking of them as being *actually* reconciled to God while they are yet enemies.

*John.* What are your ideas, brother James, of that *reconciliation* which was effected while we were yet enemies.

*James.* I conceive it to be that *satisfaction to the Divine justice* by virtue of which nothing pertaining to the moral government of God hinders any sinner from returning to him; and that it is upon this ground that sinners are indefinitely invited so to do. Herein I conceive is the great difference at present between their state and that of the fallen angels. To them God is absolutely inaccessible; no invitations whatever being addressed to them, nor the gospel preached to them: but it is not so with fallen men. Besides this, as Christ gave himself for us "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people," I consider the actual reconciliation of the elect in the fulness of time as hereby *ascertained*. It was promised him, as the reward of his sufferings, that he should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

*Peter.* Is there any thing in the atonement, or promised to it, which infallibly ascertains its application to *all* those for whom it was made?

*James.* If by this you mean all for whose salvation it was *sufficient*, I answer, There is not. But if you mean all for whose salvation it was *intended*, I answer, There is.

*Peter.* You consider the *PRINCIPAL DESIGN* of our Lord's atonement to be the manifestation of God's hatred to sin, in order to render the exercise of mercy consistent with justice; but though this idea is supposed, yet it is far from being the first, the most prominent, the characteristic idea of our Lord's death: the grand idea suggested to an enlightened mind by the atonement of Christ is not God's hatred to sin, but his love to sinners.

*James.* I hope we shall none of us pretend to be more enlightened than the apostle Paul, and I am mistaken if he does not suggest the idea against which you militate. He represents God as "setting forth" his Son as a "propitiation, to declare (or demonstrate) *his righteousness in the remission of sins*. It is marvellous to me that I should be suspected of holding up God's hatred of sin to the disparagement of his love to sinners, when the former is supposed to have been manifested to *prepare the way for the latter*. Were I to say, The *PRINCIPAL DESIGN* of David in restoring Absalom at the instance of Joab, rather than by sending for him himself, was that even in pardoning the young man he might show some displeasure against sin, and save his own honour as the head of a family and of a nation, I should not be far from the truth. Yet I might be told, The grand, the prominent, the characteristic idea suggested by the king's consent was *love*; for "his soul longed to go forth to Absalom." Love to Absalom doubtless accounts for David's *desiring his return*; but love to righteousness accounts for his desiring it *in that particular manner*. So if the question were, Why did God give his Son to die for sinners, *rather than leave them to perish in their sins?* the answer would be, Because he *loved them*. But if the question be, Why did he give his Son to be an atonement for sinners, *rather than save them without one?* the answer would be, Because he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.

*Peter.* On the principle I oppose, the love of God in *applying* the atonement is much greater than in giving his Son to be an atonement, since the latter is mere *general benevolence*, but the former is *particular and effectual*.

*James.* You should rather have said, The love of God is greater in giving his Son to be a sacrifice *in respect of those for whose salvation it was his pleasure to make it effectual* than in merely giving him, as he is said to have

done, to some who never received him, John vi. 32; i. 11. If there was a particularity of design in the gift of Christ, it cannot be ascribed merely to general benevolence. And *so far as it is so*, we have no right to depreciate it on account of its not issuing in the salvation of sinners in general. It was no diminution to the love of God towards Israel, in bringing them out of Egypt, that the great body of them transgressed and perished in the wilderness; nor could it be truly said that the bringing of Caleb and Joshua into the land of promise was a greater expression of love than that which had been bestowed upon them, and the whole body of their contemporaries, in liberating them from the Egyptian yoke. And let me entreat you to consider whether your principles would not furnish an apology for the unbelieving Israelites.—“There was little or no love in God’s delivering us, unless he intended withal to prevent our sinning against him, and actually to bring us to the good land; but there was no good land for us—Would to God we had died in Egypt!” To this, however, an apostle would answer, “They could not enter in because of unbelief.” And as this language was written for the warning of professing Christians, whose inclination to relinquish the gospel resembled that of their fathers to return into Egypt, we are warranted to conclude from it, that though the salvation of the saved be entirely of grace, yet the failure of others will be ascribed to themselves. They shall not have the consolation to say, Our salvation was a *natural impossibility*; or if they were to utter such language, they would be repelled by Scripture and conscience, which unite in declaring, “They could not enter in because of unbelief.”

*Peter.* I remember an old nonconformist minister says, “If any man be bound to believe Christ’s satisfaction sufficient to justify him for whom it was never paid, he is bound to believe an untruth. God will never make it any man’s duty to rest for salvation on that blood that was never shed for him, or that satisfaction that was never made for him.”

*James.* This reasoning of the old nonconformist may for aught I know be just on his principles, but it is not so on mine. If satisfaction was made on the principle of debtor and creditor, and that which was paid was just of sufficient value to cancel a given number of sins, and to redeem a given number of sinners, and no more; it should seem that it could not be the duty of any but the elect, nor theirs till it was revealed to them that they were of the elect, to rely upon it; for “wherefore should we set our eyes on that which is not?” But if there be such a fulness in the satisfaction of Christ as is sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, were the whole world to believe in him, and if the particularity of redemption lie only in the purpose or sovereign pleasure of God to render it effectual to some rather than to others, no such consequence will follow; or if it do, it will also follow that Divine predestination and human accountableness are utterly inconsistent, and, therefore, that we must either relinquish the former in favour of Arminianism, or give up the latter to the Antinomians. But though the ideas of my much-respected brother, on the subject of redemption, cannot be very different from those of his old nonconformist, yet I should not have supposed he would have adopted his reasoning as his own.

*Peter.* Why not?

*James.* Because it is your avowed persuasion *that sinners as sinners are invited to believe in Christ for salvation.* Thus you have interpreted the invitations in Isa. lv. 1-7, and various others; carefully and justly guarding against the notion of their being addressed to *renewed*, or, as some call them, *sensible sinners.* Thus also you interpret 2 Cor. v. 20, of God’s beseeching sinners by the ministry of the word to be reconciled to him. But your old friend would tell you that God will never invite a sinner to rest for salvation

on that blood that was never shed for him, or on that satisfaction that was never made for him. I should have thought, too, after all that you have said of the warrant which sinners *as sinners* have to believe in Christ, you would not have denied it to be their *duty*, nor have adopted a mode of reasoning which, if followed up to its legitimate consequences, will compel you to maintain either that it is possible to know our election before we believe in Christ, or that in our first reliance on his righteousness for acceptance with God we are guilty of presumption.

*John.* I conceive, my dear brethren, that you have each said as much on these subjects as is likely to be for edification. Permit me, after having heard and candidly attended to all that has passed between you, to assure you both of my esteem, and to declare that in my opinion the difference between you ought not to prevent your feeling towards and treating each other as brethren. You are agreed in all the great doctrines of the gospel; as the necessity of an atonement, the ground of acceptance with God, salvation by grace only, &c. &c.; and, with respect to particular redemption, you both admit the thing, and I would hope both hold it in a way consistent with the practice of the primitive ministers; or if it be not altogether so, that you will reconsider the subject when you are by yourselves. The greater part of those things wherein you seem to differ may be owing either to a difference in the manner of expressing yourselves, or to the affixing of consequences to a principle which yet are unperceived by him that holds it. I do not accuse either of you with doing so intentionally; but principles and their consequences are so suddenly associated in the mind, that when we hear a person avow the former, we can scarcely forbear immediately attributing to him the latter. If a principle be proposed to us *for acceptance*, it is right to weigh the consequences; but when forming our judgment of the *person* who holds it, we should attach nothing to him but what he perceives and avows. If by an exchange of ideas you can come to a better understanding, it will afford me pleasure: meanwhile it is some satisfaction that your visit to me has not tended to widen, but considerably to diminish your differences.

Brethren, there are many adversaries of the gospel around you who would rejoice to see you at variance: let there be no strife between you. You are both erring mortals; but both, I trust, the sincere friends of the Lord Jesus. Love one another.

## SIX LETTERS TO DR. RYLAND

RESPECTING

THE CONTROVERSY WITH THE REV. A. BOOTH.

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### LETTER I.

NARRATIVE.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

January 4, 1803.

THOUGH you are not wholly unacquainted with what has lately passed between Mr. Booth and myself, relative to certain points of doctrine, yet I shall briefly state the leading particulars, together with my sentiments on the subjects concerning which I am charged with error.

In the month of May, 1802, when I was in London, wishing for a better understanding with Mr. B., I requested an interview. With his consent I went two or three times to see him. We had much conversation. I cannot pretend to recollect all that passed; but some things I well remember. After talking over certain particulars of a personal nature, on which he appeared to be satisfied, he, in a very serious tone, suggested that I had changed my sentiments on some important doctrines of the gospel; "and here," said he, "I have little or no hope." To these serious and heavy charges, from an aged and respected minister, I at first made but little answer, being all attention to what he had to offer in support of them. I assured him that I was willing to reconsider any thing I had advanced, and desired to know wherein he thought me in the wrong. Mr. B. answered, "It is on the doctrines of *imputation* and *substitution* that I conceive you to err." I asked whether his ideas on these doctrines did not proceed upon the principle of *debtor* and *creditor*; and that, as was the number of sinners to be saved and the quantity of sin to be atoned for, such required to be the degree of Christ's sufferings. This he disowned, saying he never had such an idea, nor did he ever meet with it in any writer;\* adding to this effect, *I am persuaded that if one sinner only were saved consistently with justice, it required to be by the same all-perfect sacrifice.* I felt persuaded that if Mr. B. admitted this principle in all its bearings, there could be no material difference betwixt us.

In his letter to me of September 3d, he says, "I deliberately aver that in our second and last conversation I understood you to *deny* that Christ obeyed and died as a *substitute*, and that you did not admit a real and proper imputation either of sin to Christ, or of his righteousness to those who believe." I give him credit for this; but insist upon it that (excepting what relates to

\* Yet if nine out of ten of the High Calvinists were asked their views on the subject, I am persuaded it would appear they had no other notion of it. No other notion, I think, could be collected from Dr. Gill's exposition of Isa. liii. 6, and all he writes upon the subject seems to go upon that principle.

the terms "real and proper"—terms not used in the *first* note) he has no *grounds* for so understanding me, and that there were grounds, whether he attended to them or not, for a contrary conclusion. I declare that I never suspected, while in his company, that I was charged with any such things; but merely that my views concerning those doctrines were not just. Under this impression, I said to Mr. B. to this effect,—“I do suspect, sir, that your views on imputation and substitution are not Scriptural.” I did not mean by this to charge him with *denying* either of those doctrines; and I had no apprehension of his having any such charge to prefer against me. The whole difference between us appeared to me to consist in the manner of explaining doctrines which we both acknowledged and held fast.

Mr. B. alleges, as a reason for his understanding me to deny the doctrines in question, that in direct opposition to this he pleaded 2 Cor. v. 21; to which, he says, I replied, “made sin means became a sacrifice for sin;” to which he could not accede. Granting this to be a fair statement, surely it does not follow that understanding the phrase “made sin” of Christ’s being “made a sin-offering” amounts to a denial of the imputation of sin to him. If it does, however, many of our best writers, among whom is Dr. Owen,\* are subject to the same charge. But Mr. B. is mistaken in saying that I affirmed “made sin” to mean “made a sacrifice for sin.” I merely asked him whether it did not, whether some expositors did not so interpret it, and whether there was not something in the original word which led to such an interpretation. This, I am certain, was the whole; for I had not at that time any decided opinion as to the meaning of the passage, and therefore asked him *merely for information*. I well recollect the substance of his answer, namely, that the word *ἀμαρτία*, it was true, was sometimes rendered “sin,” and sometimes a “sin-offering;” but the sin which Christ was made was *that which he knew not*, and which stood opposed to “the righteousness of God,” which we are made in Him; to this I made no reply, as thinking there appeared to be force in what he said.

I also very well remember his arguing from Gal. iii. 13, and contending that Christ must in some sense be *guilty*, else God could not have been just in *punishing* him: this argument did not approve itself to my judgment like the former. I admitted guilt to be necessary to punishment, and had no doubt but that the sufferings of Christ were *penal*; but I had my doubts whether it were so proper to say Christ was punished, as that he bore *our* punishment: but as I shall give my thoughts more particularly on this hereafter, I only say in this place that this conversation TOOK PLACE BEFORE I PREACHED FOR HIM, AND BEFORE HE ASKED ME TO PREACH FOR HIM.† It is somewhat surprising to me, therefore, if I was considered as *denying* the doctrines of imputation and substitution, that I should receive such an invitation. Whatever he may think of me, I would never consent to a man’s going into my pulpit whom I considered as denying either the one or the other.

I have said Mr. B. *had grounds for a contrary conclusion*, whether he attended to them or not. He cannot but remember his putting the Liverpool Magazine into my hands, where he conceived it was proved that I had changed my sentiments. On this, I said that I was not *aware* of any such change as he ascribed to me. Mr. B., I well remember, answered, in a tone

\* Answer to Biddle, pp. 509, 510. Vide Dr. Owen on Justification, ch. xviii. pp. 504, 505, 4to.

† Mr. B. speaks in his letter of September 3d of these things occurring in our second and last conversation; but I am certain that all those things on which he grounds his charge, and his alleging 2 Cor. v. 21, and Gal. iii. 13, occurred in the *first*, and before he asked me to preach for him.



of surprise, "No? Then you are lost!" that is, as I understood him, "You are bewildered in inconsistency, not knowing what you believe." Now, be it so, that I am lost in inconsistency, this is a very different thing from a *denial* of what I had before advanced. If I was not aware of having relinquished the leading principles of my answer to Philanthropos, I could not be aware of having given up the doctrines of imputation and substitution.

It might also have been supposed that my pleading for Christ's being made a *sin-offering*, as I was accounted to do, was not the language of one who "*denied* that Christ obeyed and died as a substitute;" for what else was the sin-offering but a substitute for the people?

Before I left town, I gave Mr. B. the manuscript of our last year's Circular Letter, *on the Practical uses of Believers' Baptism*, requesting his corrections. In this was the following sentence, with several others of like import—"Christ sustained the deluge of wrath due to our sins:" nor did this passage escape him; his first note holds this sentence up as an example of my inconsistency. Some men would have drawn a different conclusion. They would have said, Surely I must have mistaken the writer when in conversation; he cannot mean to discard these doctrines. If he did, why does he thus fully avow them? Instead of this, Mr. B., in the note accompanying the MS., flatly charges me with the denial of *substitution* and of *imputation*; not merely in his sense of them, nor with the epithets "proper and real" (since added as saving terms); but so as to disown the *vicariousness* of what our Saviour did and suffered, which *he* never did, even "in his juvenile" years, when I suppose he was a professed Arminian.

As this note did not reach me till I was just setting off for home, about the 2d or 3d of June, I could not see Mr. B. any more; and being conscious that I never thought of denying either of the doctrines in question, I supposed Mr. B. could only mean to charge such denial as the *consequence* of what I avowed. I therefore took three or four weeks to consider and re-examine my sentiments, that if any such consequences did attach to them I might discover them.

Early in July I answered the note, declared my belief of both the above doctrines, and complained of things being imputed to me as my principles which I did not avow, and which, if they had any connexion with my principles, were merely *consequences*, which consequences I did not perceive.

About the middle of July reports were circulated, both in town and country, that I had acknowledged myself to Mr. Booth to be an Arminian, &c. &c. One of my friends was in London, and heard it in a great number of places; "from Oxford-street," as he said, "to Ratcliff Highway;" and in every instance it was said to be authorized by Mr. B. I was informed also that it was common talk among those congregations in Northamptonshire which rejected all invitations to the unconverted, and nearly all obligations to spiritual religion. A person residing amongst them, who bore good-will to me, came to my house to know whether the report were true; and he assured me that the whole rested on the testimony of Mr. B.

Knowing that I had written to Mr. B., avowing my belief both in imputation and substitution, I knew not what to make of things.

Early in September, while I was at Edinburgh, I received a letter from Mr. B., partly averring that he understood me, in conversation, to deny that Christ obeyed and died as a substitute, and to disown a *real* and *proper* imputation; and partly inquiring whether I did believe these doctrines, and *in what sense* it was that I held them.

On receiving this letter, it appeared to me to contain a request which, had it been made previously to the sending abroad of a report to my disadvantage, had been fair, and I should freely have complied with it. But as things

were, I did not feel free to write any explanation to Mr. B., till he should have given some explanation of his conduct towards me. I wished for no humiliating concessions from a man so aged and so respectable as Mr. B.; but I did think myself entitled to some explanation; and that to have complied with his request without it had been a tame acknowledgment of guilt and fear, of neither of which I was conscious.

To this purpose I wrote, (on October 7th,) in answer to his of September 3d, wishing for nothing but a few lines, acknowledging that if he had mistaken my meaning, and thereby injured me, he was sorry; or any thing, however expressed, that should have discovered his regret for having been the occasion of misrepresentation.

But to this letter Mr. B. has written no answer. I have to thank you, however, for the copy of a letter which he addressed to *you*, dated December 6th. Here I find myself charged with having *changed my sentiments; with agreeing with Mr. Baxter in several of his leading peculiarities; and with denying the doctrines of imputation and substitution, in the sense in which Calvinists commonly hold and have held them.*

I own I feel dissatisfied with this second-hand method of attack, in which the oracles of God are nearly kept out of sight, and other standards of orthodoxy set up in their place. Each of these charges may be true, and yet I may be in the right, and Mr. B. in the wrong. It is no crime to change our views, unless in so doing we deviate from the Scriptures; nor is it an article of revelation that Mr. Baxter's views are erroneous, or that the notions of Calvinists in general concerning imputation and substitution are true. I write not thus because I feel the justice of either of these charges, but because I dislike such circuitous methods of judging concerning truth and error. They are unworthy of a candid inquirer after truth, and chiefly calculated to inflame the prejudices of the ignorant. If I have used the term *Calvinistic* in controversy, it has been merely to avoid circumlocution, and not as criminating my opponents on account of their differing from Calvin.

Mr. B. supposes that I suspect him of "insidious designs." No; I do not, nor ever did. I never thought him capable of this; but I do think him capable of being so far prejudiced against another as to think that to be right towards him which he would think very wrong if done to himself.

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## LETTER II.

### IMPUTATION.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Jan. 8, 1803.

WHILE Mr. B. refuses to give any explanation of his conduct, there can be no intercourse between me and him. I have no objection to give the most explicit answers in my power to the questions on imputation and substitution. I shall therefore address them to *you*; and you are at liberty to show them to whom you please.

To *impute*\* signifies, in general, to *charge, reckon, or place to account*, according to the different objects to which it is applied.

This word, like many others, has a *proper* and a *figurative* meaning.

First, It is applied to the *charging, reckoning, or placing to the account of persons and things* THAT WHICH PROPERLY BELONGS TO THEM. This,

\* From εψη and λογίζομαι.

of course, is its *proper* meaning. In this sense the word is used in the following passages:—"Eli *thought* that she (Hannah) had been drunken."—"Hananiah and Mattaniah, the treasurers, were *counted* faithful."—"Let a man so *account* of us, as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."—"Let such a one *think* this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will be also in deed when we are present."—"I *reckon* that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."\*

Reckoning or accounting, here, is no other than forming an estimate of persons and things, according to *what they are, or appear to be*. To impute sin, in this sense, is to *charge guilt upon the guilty in a judicial way, with a view to his being punished for it*. Thus Shimei besought David that his iniquity might not be *imputed* to him. Thus the man is pronounced blessed to whom the Lord *imputeth* not iniquity: and thus Paul prayed that the sin of those who deserted him might not be *laid to their charge*.†

In this sense, the term is ordinarily used in common life. To impute treason or any other crime to a man is the same thing as charging him with having committed it, and with a view to his being punished.

Secondly, it is applied to the *charging, reckoning, or placing to the account of persons and things, THAT WHICH DOES NOT PROPERLY BELONG TO THEM, AS THOUGH IT DID*. This, of course, is its figurative meaning. In this sense the word is used in the following passages:—"And this your heave-offering shall be *reckoned* unto you *as though it were* the corn of the thrashing-floor, and *as* the fulness of the wine-press."—"Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and *holdest* me for thine enemy?"—"If the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be *counted* for circumcision?"—"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on my *account*."‡

It is thus I understand the term, when applied to justification. "Abraham believed God, and it was *counted* unto him for righteousness.—To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is *counted* unto him for righteousness," Rom. iv. 3, 5. I do not suppose that "faith" in these passages means the righteousness of the Messiah; for it is expressly called "believing." It means believing, however, not as a virtuous exercise of the mind, which God consented to accept by a composition, taking a part for the whole; but *as having respect to the promised Messiah*, and so to his righteousness, as the ground of acceptance. Justification is ascribed to faith as *healing* frequently is in the New Testament; not as that which *imparted* the benefit, but that which afforded occasion to the great Physician to exercise his power and mercy.

But if it were allowed that faith, in these passages, means the object believed in, still this was not Abraham's *own* righteousness; and could not be *properly* imputed, or *counted*, by Him who judges of things as they are, as being so. It was reckoned to him *as if it were* his, and the effects or benefits were actually transferred to him; but this was all. Abraham did not become meritorious, or cease to be unworthy. "What is it else to set our righteousness in the obedience of Christ," says Calvin, "but to affirm that hereby only we are *accounted* righteous, because the obedience of Christ is *imputed* to us, as if it were our own?"—Iust. B. iii. ch. xi. § 23.

It is thus also that I understand *the imputation of sin to Christ*. He was *made sin* for us, in the same sense as we are *made the righteousness of God in him*. He was accounted in the Divine administration *AS IF HE WERE, OR*

\* 1 Sam. i. 13; Neh. xiii. 13; 1 Cor. iv. 1; 2 Cor. x. 11; Rom. viii. 18.

† 2 Sam. xix. 19; Psal. xxxii. 2; 2 Tim. iv. 16.

‡ Numb. xviii. 27-30; Job xiii. 24; Rom. ii. 26; Philem. 18.

HAD BEEN, the sinner; that those who believe on him might be accounted AS IF THEY WERE, OR HAD BEEN, righteous.

Mr. B. charges me with having explained the phrase "made sin" *made a sacrifice*. I have already said that what I asked him was purely for information. Considering his answer as worthy of attention, I have since endeavoured to form a decided opinion on the passage, and to give what he advanced its due weight. I perceive that many able writers, and among them Dr. Owen, understand the term ἀμαρτία, in this\* as in many other places, of a "sin-offering," and I must say I see no force in the objection that it sounds incongruous to say Christ was "made punishment," or "made suffering;" for the same objection might be brought against the express words of the prophet—"When thou shalt *make his soul an offering for sin.*" The genius of our language does not allow us to say of any one, "he was made suffering;" but it allows us to say, "he was made an offering for sin," which was suffering.†

The other reasons, however, which Mr. B. suggested, determine my mind to consider ἀμαρτία, in this place, as meaning *sin* itself, and not the penal effects of it. I doubt not but the allusion is to the sin-offering under the law, but not to its being *made a sacrifice*. Let me explain myself.—There were two things belonging to the sin-offering: 1. The imputation of the sins of the people, signified by the priest's laying his hands on the head of the animal, and confessing over it their transgressions, and which is called "putting them upon it" (Lev. xvi. 21); that is, it was counted in the Divine administration as if it had been the sinner, and the only sinner of the nation. 2. Making it a sacrifice, or "killing it before the Lord for an atonement," Lev. i. 4, 5. Now the phrase *made sin*, in 2 Cor. v. 21, appears to refer to the *first* step in this process, in order to the last. It is expressive of what was *preparatory* to Christ's suffering of death, rather than of the thing itself; just as our being *made righteousness* expresses what was preparatory to God's bestowing upon us eternal life.

But the verb ἐποιήσεν, *made*, is not to be taken literally; for that would convey the idea of Christ being really the subject of moral evil, which none contend for. It is expressive of a Divine *constitution*, by which our Redeemer with his own consent stood in the sinner's place, *as though he had been* himself the transgressor; just as the sin-offering under the law was, in mercy to Israel, *reckoned*, or *accounted*, to have the sins of the people "put upon its head." Thus he was made that sin *which he knew not*, and which is properly opposed to *the righteousness of God*, which we are *made* in him. But this, it will be said, is not a "*real and proper*" imputation. True; nor is such an imputation maintained, I should think, by Mr. B. any more than by me. A real and proper imputation, unless I have mistaken the meaning of the term, is that in which there is no transfer of any kind; and if applied to Christ, would amount to a charge of his having actually committed sin.

Mr. B. further argued thus:—"If Christ had not died as a *substitute*—if sin, sin itself, had not really been imputed to him, he could not have been made a curse for us." All this is freely admitted, save what respects the term "*really*," against which my objection is already stated. "Nor could he have been *punished*," he adds, "in our stead by eternal justice; for though an innocent person may suffer, yet, properly speaking, there cannot

\* In the MS. from which this was printed (and which was corrected by Mr. F.) the following sentence, in reference to the above remark, appears in the hand-writing of Mr. Booth:—

"In his book against Biddle he does; but the reverse in a book published some years after on Justification, Ch. XVIII."—ED.

† Περὶ ἀμαρτίας, in Rom. viii. 3, seems to mean *an offering for sin*; as it certainly does, Heb. x. 8.

be punishment where there is no guilt, either personally contracted or imputed." If this sentence had ended with the word "guilt," I should have fully admitted it. Guilt imputed is not properly opposed to guilt contracted. The term "imputed" is here used for "transferred," to which it is not synonymous. But we are perplexed here by affixing different ideas to the same term. I will endeavour to define my own, and then attend to the thing signified. By *sin* I mean transgression; by *guilt*, desert of punishment for having transgressed;\* and by *punishment*, the infliction of evil upon the guilty, in displeasure against him. It is the opposite of *reward*, which is the bestowment of favour upon the obedient, in token of approbation of his conduct. Finally, *imputation* ought not to be confounded with *transfer*. In its proper sense, we have seen there is no transfer pertaining to it. In its figurative sense, as applied to justification, it is righteousness itself that is imputed; but its effects only are transferred. So also in respect of sin; sin itself is the object of imputation; but neither this nor guilt is strictly speaking transferred, for neither of them is a transferable object. As all that is transferred in the imputation of righteousness is its beneficial effects, so all that is transferred in the imputation of sin is its penal effects. To say that Christ was *reckoned* or *counted* in the Divine administration *as if he were* the sinner, and came under an *obligation* to endure the curse for us, is one thing; but to say that he *deserved* the curse is another. To speak of his being *guilty* by imputation is the same thing, in my ear, as to say he was criminal or wicked by imputation; which, if taken improperly, for his being reckoned *as if he were so*, is just; but if properly, for his *being so*, is inadmissible. Guilt is the inseparable attendant of transgression.† If Christ by imputation became *deserving* of punishment, we by non-imputation cease to deserve it; and if our demerits be literally transferred to him, his merits must of course be the same to us; and then, instead of approaching God as guilty and unworthy, we might take consequence to ourselves before him, as not only guiltless, but meritorious beings.

As to Christ's being *punished*, I have no doubt, and never had, of his sufferings being *penal*, any more than I have of our salvation being a *reward*; but as the latter is not a reward *to us*, so I question whether the former can properly be said to be a punishment *to Him*. What he bore *was* punishment, that is, the expression of Divine displeasure against transgressors, in whose place he stood; so what we enjoy *is* reward, that is, the expression of God's well-pleas'dness in the obedience and death of his Son; but neither is the one a punishment *to Him*, nor the other a reward *to us*.

There appears to me great accuracy in the Scripture phraseology on this subject. What our Saviour underwent is commonly expressed by the term *sufferings*. Once it is called a *chastisement*; yet there he is not said to have been chastised, but "the chastisement of our peace was *upon him*." This is the same as saying, He bore *our* punishment, He was made a *curse* for us; that is, having been *reckoned* or accounted the sinner, as though he had actually been so, he was treated accordingly, *as* one that had deserved to be an outcast from heaven and earth. I believe the wrath of God that was due to us was poured upon him; but I do not believe that God for one moment was angry or displeas'd with him, or that he smote him from any such displeasure. "It behoved him," says Calvin, "that he should as it were

\* Some have defined guilt *an obligation to punishment*; but a voluntary obligation to endure the punishment of another is not guilt, any more than a consequent exemption from obligation in the offender is innocence. Both guilt and innocence, though transferable in their effects, are themselves untransferable.

† This is admitted by Dr. Crisp, who on this ground argues his point, that Christ was *really* the sinner, or guilt could not have been charged upon him.—*Sermons*, p. 272.

hand to hand wrestle with the armies of hell and the horrors of eternal death. 'The chastisement of our peace was *laid upon him.*' He was stricken of his Father for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities; whereby is meant that he was put in the stead of wicked doers, as a surety and pledge; yea, and *as* the very guilty person himself, to abide and suffer all the punishment that should have been laid upon them. Yet do we not mean that God was at any time his enemy, or angry with him. For how could he be angry with his beloved Son, upon whom his mind rested? or how could Christ by his intercession appease his Father's wrath towards others, if, full of hatred, he had been bent against himself? But this is our meaning, That he suffered the grievousness of God's rigour; for that he, being stricken and tormented by the hand of God, DID FEEL ALL THE TOKENS OF GOD WHEN HE IS ANGRY AND PUNISHETH."—*Inst. B. II. Ch. xvi. § 10, 11.*

I remember Mr. B. once said to me, "Christ was not made sin by *participation*; but he was every thing excepting this." Herein I perfectly agree. When it is allowed that he was *accounted as* the sinner, yea, as the greatest of all sinners, as though he had been made up of sin itself, every thing is allowed short of a participation in sin. If it be not, however, it lies upon him to point out a possible medium between his being treated as *though he were a transgressor* and his actually *being one.*

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### LETTER III.

#### SUBSTITUTION.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Jan. 12, 1803.

WHETHER Christ laid down his life as a *substitute* for sinners, was never a question with me. All my hope rests upon it; and the sum of my delight in preaching the gospel consists in it. If I know any thing of myself, I can say of Christ crucified for us, as was said of Jerusalem, "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!"

I have always considered the denial of this truth as being of the essence of Socinianism. Mr. B. professes, "in his juvenile years, never to have hoped for salvation but through a vicarious sacrifice." But if he allow himself to have believed this doctrine when he was an Arminian, it is rather singular that I, who am *not* an Arminian, as he himself acknowledges, should be charged with denying it. I could not have imagined that any person whose hope of acceptance with God rests not on any goodness in himself, but entirely on the righteousness of Christ, would have been accounted to disown his substitution. But, perhaps, Mr. B. considers "a *real* and *proper* imputation of our sins to Christ," by which he seems to mean their being *literally transferred* to him, as essential to this doctrine; and if so, I acknowledge I do not at present believe it.

For Christ to die as a substitute, if I understand the term, is the same thing as his dying *for us*, or *in our stead*, or that *we should not die.*

The only subject on which I ought to have been here interrogated is, "The persons for whom Christ was a substitute; whether the *elect only*, or *mankind in general.*" On this question I will be as explicit as I am able.

Were I asked concerning the gospel, when it is introduced into a country, *For whom was it sent?* I should answer, if I had respect only to the revealed

will of God, and so perhaps would Mr. B., It is sent for men, not as elect, or as non-elect, but as sinners. It is written and preached, "that they might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing they might have life through his name." But if I had respect to the secret will or appointment of God as to its application, I should say, If the Divine conduct in this instance accord with what it has been in other instances, he hath visited that country "to take *out of it* a people for his name."

In like manner concerning the death of Christ. If I speak of it *irrespective of the purpose of the Father and the Son, as to its objects who should be saved by it*, merely referring to what it is in itself sufficient for, and declared in the gospel to be adapted to, I should think that I answered the question in a Scriptural way by saying, It was for *sinners as sinners*; but if I have respect to the *purpose* of the Father in giving his Son to die, and to the *design* of Christ in laying down his life, I should answer, *It was for the elect only*.\*

In the *former* of these views, I find the apostles and primitive ministers (leaving the consideration of God's secret purpose as a matter belonging to himself, not to them) addressing themselves to sinners without distinction, and holding forth the death of Christ as a ground of faith to all men. On this principle the servants sent forth to bid guests to the marriage supper, were directed to invite them, saying, "Come, for *all things are ready*." On this principle the ambassadors of Christ besought sinners to be reconciled to God, "*for*" (said they) "he hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

In the *latter* view, I find the apostles ascribing to the purpose and discriminating grace of God all their success; and teaching believers to ascribe every thing that they were, or hoped to be, to the same cause; addressing them as having been before the foundation of the world the objects of his *love* and *choice*; the *children* or *sons* whom it was the design of Christ in becoming incarnate to bring to glory; the *church* of God, which he purchased with his own blood, and for which he gave himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself.

If it be a proper definition of the substitution of Christ, that he died *for* or *in the place of others, that they should not die*, this, as comprehending the designed end to be answered by his death, is strictly applicable to none but the elect; for whatever ground there is for sinners, as sinners, to believe and be saved, it never was the design of Christ to impart faith to any others than those who were given him of the Father. He therefore did not *die* with the intent that any others *should not die*.

Whether I can perfectly reconcile these statements with each other, or not, I believe they are both taught in the Scriptures; but I acknowledge that I do not at present perceive their inconsistency. The latter Mr. B. will admit; and as to the former, I am quite at a loss what to make of his concessions, if they do not include it. According to the best of my recollec-

\* The distinction between what the atonement of Christ is in itself *sufficient for*, and what it is as *applied*, under the sovereign will of God, is made by Dr. Owen, as well as many others. Speaking of "the dignity, worth, or infinite value of the death of Christ," he ascribes it partly to "the dignity of his person, and partly to the greatness of his sufferings. And this," he adds, "*sets out the innate, real, true worth and value of the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ*; this is its own true internal perfection and sufficiency. That it should be *applied* unto any, made a price for them, and become beneficial to them, according to the worth that is in it, is external to it, doth not arise from it, but merely depends upon the intention and will of God." And it is on this ground that Dr. O. accounts for the propitiation of Christ being set forth in general and indefinite expressions—and for "the general proffers, promises, and exhortations made for the embracing of the fruits of the death of Christ, even to them who do never actually perform it."—Death of Death, &c., Book IV. Ch. I.

tion, he acknowledged to me that *he believed the atonement of Christ to be sufficient for the whole world as well as I; and that if one sinner only were saved consistently with justice, it required to be by the same all-perfect sacrifice.* So, I am certain, I understood him. Now if it be acknowledged that the obedience and death of Christ was a substitution of such a kind as to be equally required for the salvation of one sinner as for many—is not this the same thing as acknowledging that atonement required to be made for *sin as sin*; and, being made, was applicable to *sinner as sinners*? In other words, is it not acknowledging that God redeemed his elect by an atonement in its own nature adapted to all, just as he calls his elect by a gospel addressed to all?

If the speciality of redemption be placed in the atonement *itself*, and not in the sovereign *will of God*, or in the design of the Father and the Son, with respect to the persons to whom it shall be applied, it must, as far as I am able to perceive, have proceeded on the principle of *pecuniary* satisfactions. In them the payment is proportioned to the amount of the debt; and being so, it is not of sufficient *value* for more than those who are actually liberated by it; nor is it true, in these cases, that the same satisfaction is required for one as for many. But if such was the satisfaction of Christ that nothing less was necessary for the salvation of one, nothing more could be necessary for the salvation of the whole world, and the whole world might have been saved by it *if it had accorded with sovereign wisdom so to apply it.* It will also follow that if the satisfaction of Christ was in *itself* sufficient for the whole world, there is no further propriety in such questions as these—“Whose sins were imputed to Christ? for whom did he die as a substitute?”—than as they go to inquire who were the persons *designed* to be saved by him? That which is equally necessary for one as for many, must, in its own nature, be equally sufficient for many as for one; and could not proceed upon the principle of the sins of some being laid upon Christ, rather than others, any otherwise than as it was the *design* of the Father and the Son, through one all-sufficient medium, ultimately to pardon the sins of the elect rather than those of the non-elect. It seems to me as consonant with truth to say a certain number of Christ's acts of obedience are literally transferred to us, as that a certain number of our sins are literally transferred to him. In the former case, his own undivided obedience, stamped as it is with Divinity, affords a ground of justification to any number of believers; in the latter, his own atonement, stamped also as it is with Divinity, is sufficient to pardon any number of sins or sinners. Yet as Christ did not lay down his life but by *covenant*—as the elect were given to him, to be as the *travail of his soul, the purchase of his blood*—he had respect in all that he did and suffered to this recompense of reward. It was for the covering of *their* transgressions that he became obedient unto death. To them his substitution was the same, *in effect*, as if their sins had by number been literally transferred to him. I am not aware that any principle that I hold is inconsistent with Christ's laying down his life by covenant, or with his being the *surety* of that covenant, pledging himself for the *certain* accomplishment of whatever he undertook; as, that all that were given him should come to him, should not be lost, but raised up at the last day, and be presented without spot and blameless. All this I suppose to be included in the *design* of the Father and the Son, or in the “sovereign application” of the atonement.

It has been objected, though not by Mr. B., “how does the sufficiency of Christ's death afford ample ground for general invitations, if the *design* was confined to the elect people? If the benefits of his death were never *intended* for the non-elect, is it not just as inconsistent to invite them to par-



take of them as if there were a want of sufficiency? This explanation seems to be no other than *shifting the difficulty*."

To this I answer:—

1. It is a fact that the Scriptures rest the general invitation of the gospel upon the atonement of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 19—21; Matt. xxii. 4; John iii. 16.

2. If there were not a sufficiency in the atonement for the salvation of sinners, and yet they were invited to be reconciled to God, they must be invited to what is *naturally impossible*. The message of the gospel would in this case be as if the servants who went forth to bid the guests had said, "Come," though, in fact, nothing was ready if many of them had come.

3. If there be an objective fulness in the atonement of Christ sufficient for any number of sinners, were they to believe in him, there is no other impossibility in the way of any man's salvation to whom the gospel comes than what arises from the state of his own mind. The intention of God not to remove the impossibility, and so not to save him, is only a resolution to withhold, not only that which he was not obliged to give, but that which is never represented *as necessary to the consistency of exhortations and invitations to a compliance*. I do not deny that there is a *difficulty*; but it belongs to the general subject of reconciling the purposes of God and the agency of man; whereas, in the other case, God is represented as inviting sinners to partake of that which does not exist, and which therefore is naturally impossible. The one, while it ascribes the salvation of the believer, in every stage of it, to mere grace, renders the unbeliever inexcusable, which the other, I conceive, does not.

Such, as well as I am able to explain them, are my views of these important subjects. I may be mistaken in some particulars, and, if so, I should be happy to receive further light from any one. But, till I do, I shall not think the worse of what I have written for the names by which it may be stigmatized.

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## LETTER IV.

### CHANGE OF SENTIMENTS.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Jan. 17, 1803.

MR. B., in his letter to you of Dec. 6, expresses his persuasion that "I could not now oppose PHILANTHROPOS as I formerly did; we being more nearly agreed than we were twelve or fifteen years ago." When I wrote my Reply to Philanthropos, I acknowledged that I had read and thought but little on the subject, and therefore engaged in that controversy with considerable reluctance. Were I to write it over again, there would, doubtless, be several alterations. I might understand some passages of Scripture differently, might demur upon a few of the arguments used to establish my leading principles, and upon some few of the answers to those of Philanthropos; but *the leading principles themselves* I do still approve. If a new edition were wanted, I should have no other objection than what arises from the above particulars to reprint it as it is. I freely own that my views of particular redemption were altered by my engaging in that controversy; but what alteration there was, was *before* I published my Reply. The truth is, I tried to answer my opponent without considering the *sufficiency* of the atonement in itself considered, and of its being the ground of gospel invitations; but I could not.

I found not merely his reasonings, but the Scriptures themselves, standing in my way. After some serious thought upon the subject, therefore, I formed my judgment; and it was some relief to find all the *old* Calvinists defending the doctrine upon the same ground.

I conceded to my opponent that the death of Christ *in itself* considered, *i. e.* irrespective of the *design* of the Father and Son as to its application, was sufficient for all mankind; that a way was opened by which God consistently with his justice could forgive any sinner whatever that returns to him by Jesus Christ; that if the whole world were to believe in him, none need be sent away for want of a sufficiency in his death to render his pardon and acceptance consistent with the rights of justice (p. 23); and this is all that I should concede now. This is the whole of what I meant in the second edition of *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*, by "the peculiarity of redemption consisting not in its insufficiency to save more than are saved, but in the sovereignty of its application." If more be conveyed by this sentence than the above, it conveys what I never intended; but I am not able to perceive that this is the case.

That for which I then contended was, that Christ had an absolute and determinate design in his death to save some of the human race, and not others; and were I engaged in a controversy with Philanthropos now, I should contend for the same thing. I then placed the peculiarity of redemption wholly in the *appointment* or *design* of the Father and the Son, which, if I understand my own words, is the same thing as placing it in "the sovereignty of its application." As my views of particular redemption were somewhat changed between my writing the first edition of *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*, and my *Reply to Philanthropos*, it was right when publishing a second edition of the former work to render it consistent with the latter, as well as with my then present sentiments.

In the course of twelve or fifteen years there are few, if any, thinking men, but what see reason to change their sentiments in some particulars. What I have here stated on *imputation* may not be the ideas which I entertained at that distance of time, though I do not recollect to have written any thing upon it; yet, to the best of my remembrance, I thought that in God's charging our sin on Christ, and placing his righteousness to our account, he reckoned of things *as they were*; as Dr. Crisp pleads, (Sermons, p. 280,) though how it was I could form no idea. I did not perceive at that time that *imputation* and *transfer* were not the same thing. In short, I had never closely considered the subject. The same might be said of some things which I have written in *The Gospel its own Witness*, P. ii. ch. iv., as whether the satisfaction of Christ proceeded on the principle of commercial or of moral justice, and whether it was an event admissible in the ordinary course of distributive justice, or an extraordinary expedient devised by infinite wisdom, answering all the ends of moral government, and so concurring with the *spirit* of the law, though not required or admitted by the *letter* of it.

In answering the objection of the infidel against the atonement, that it represented Divine justice as proceeding on the same principle in criminal cases as in cases of debt and credit, indifferent to the object so that the punishment was but inflicted, I must either acquiesce, or endeavour to repel it. Had I acquiesced, and maintained, with Dr. Crisp, "that justice, as a blood-hound, follows the scent of blood, and seizes wherever it finds blood;"\* in other words, that it is indifferent to justice who it punishes, provided it does but punish, whether it be the transgressor, or one who condescends to have

\* Sermons, p. 274.

his transgressions imputed to him; had I acquiesced, I say, in this, how could I have disproved his calumny, that "what is called justice is not justice, but indiscriminate revenge?" These subjects were seriously examined, with no other design than to obtain just views of evangelical truth, and to vindicate it against its adversaries. If in any instance I have betrayed it, I hope I should, on discovering it, be very sorry. The grounds on which I have attempted to vindicate the atonement do not appear to me to bear injuriously upon any other doctrine of the gospel, nor upon the leading principles in my former publications. So far from considering what I wrote of late as subversive of them, I always supposed it went to confirm them. They operate, I admit, against that notion of particular redemption which places it not in the *design* of the Father in giving his Son, nor the Son in laying down his life, but in the number of sins and sinners for which his sufferings sufficed as an atonement; but this in my account is no part of evangelical truth; and by the acknowledgment of Mr. B., that *the same sacrifice is necessary for the salvation of one sinner as of many*, it would seem to be none in his.

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## LETTER V.

### CALVINISM.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Jan. 18, 1803.

WHEN I had assured Mr. B., in my letter of July 7, 1802, that I did not deny either imputation or substitution, but merely the *sense* in which he held them, he writes in answer, "That he is not aware either of his understanding or using those terms in a sense which is not common among CALVINISTS." And in his letter to you, of Dec. 6, while he acquits me of being an *Arminian*, he says, "It is to me beyond a doubt that he (Mr. F.) does *not* hold the doctrine of substitution, and of imputation, as CALVINISTS have commonly done, and still continue to do." The amount is that, at least in these particulars, Mr. B. is a Calvinist, and I am not. If this be true, it does not follow that I deny substitution or imputation. Mr. B. says "that in his juvenile years he never hoped for salvation but through a vicarious sacrifice." If then he could believe this doctrine while an *Arminian*, surely I might be allowed to believe it, who, as he acknowledges, am *not* an *Arminian*. But, passing this, Mr. B.'s views on these subjects may, for aught I know, be more consonant with those of the general body of persons called Calvinists than mine. All the High Calvinists will doubtless agree with him, and disagree with me, so far as they know our sentiments; but it does not appear to me that his opinions on either of the subjects in question are those of *Calvin* or of Calvinists during the sixteenth century. I do not pretend to have read so much of either as he has; but, from what I have seen, so it appears to me. The quotations that have already been made from Calvin, pp. 24, 33, 34, prove that he had no other notion of imputation than that of the righteousness of Christ being reckoned to us "as if it were our own," and of our sins being so reckoned to Christ, that, "as the very guilty person himself, he suffered all the punishment that should have been laid upon us." I should think it were manifest, from this, that he did not believe in a "real or proper" imputation in either case, nor in Christ's being really guilty, and as such *punished*. All he pleads for is, that "he felt all the tokens

of God when he is angry, and punisheth;" and this is precisely what I believe.

With respect to *substitution*, from what I have read of Calvin, he appears to have considered the death of Christ as affording an offer of salvation to sinners without distinction; and the peculiar respect which it bore to the elect as consisting in the sovereignty of its application, or in God's imparting faith and salvation through it, to them, rather than to others, as it was his design to do. To this effect is his comment on John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth," &c. "This," says he, "is a singular commendation of faith, that it delivereth us from eternal destruction. For his meaning was plainly to express that, though we seem to be born to death, yet there is certain deliverance offered in the faith of Christ; so that death, which otherwise hangeth over our heads, is nothing to be feared. He added also the universal note 'whosoever,' both that he may invite all men in general to the participation of life, and cut off all excuse from unbelievers. To the same end tendeth the term 'world;' for though there be nothing found in the world that is worthy of God's favour, yet he showeth that he is favourable to the whole world, when he calleth all men without exception to the faith of Christ. Let us remember, however, that though life is promised to all who shall believe in Christ, so commonly that yet faith is not common to all men; for though Christ lieth open to all men, yet God doth only open the eyes of the elect, that they may seek him by faith."

The Calvinists who met at the SYNOD OF DORT have expressed their judgment on redemption in nine propositions. Were they not too long for transcription, I would insert the whole. The following extracts, however, will sufficiently express their sentiments on the points in question. "The death of the Son of God is the only and most complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, of infinite value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.\* The promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life; which promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought promiscuously and indiscriminately to be published and proposed to all nations and individuals to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel. The reason why many who are called by the gospel do not repent and believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, is not through any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered upon the cross, but through their own fault."—"All those who truly believe, and by the death of Christ are delivered and saved, have to ascribe it to the grace of God alone, which he owes to no one, and which was given them in Christ from eternity."—"The gracious *will* and *intention* of God the Father was, that the life-giving and saving efficacy of the precious death of his Son *should exert itself in all the elect, to endue them alone with justifying faith, and thereby infallibly bring them to salvation.*"†

I would not wish for words more appropriate than the above to express my sentiments. If Mr. B.'s views accord with them, there can be no material difference between us. But if I be not mistaken, Mr. B. holds the substitution of Christ in a way that does *not* admit of "the *command* to repent and believe being promiscuously addressed to all." I have never been able to learn, however, from his writings, preaching, or conversation, after all that has been said about sinners as sinners being *warranted* to believe, that he even

\* I question if any such concession as this can be found in the writings of Dr. Gill, or Mr. Brine, from whom the High Calvinists seem to have taken their views. Neither of these writers considered the gospel as addressed to sinners as *sinners*, but as *sensible sinners*; and their ideas of the atonement were calculated to such preaching.

† Acta Synod. Dordrecht. Sess. 136, p. 250.

exhorts them to it; or avows it to be the *command* of God that they should repent and believe, in such a manner as is connected with salvation. Now what is it, but his ideas of imputation and substitution, that can be the cause of this hesitation? I call it *hesitation*, because I never heard or saw any thing in him that amounted to a *denial* of it. Yet he does not avow it, though he well knows it was avowed by Calvin, and all Calvinists for more than a century after the Reformation. They held the doctrines of imputation and substitution so as to feel at liberty to exhort sinners, without distinction, to repent and believe in Christ: Mr. B. *does not*. Have I not a right, then, to infer that his ideas of these doctrines are different from theirs, and that what is now called Calvinism is not Calvinism?

I could extract similar sentiments with the above from many able Calvinistic writers in the seventeenth century; but I think these are sufficient.

The sentiment which I oppose does not appear to me to be CALVINISM, but CRISPISM. I never met with a single passage in the writings of Calvin on this subject that clashed with my own views; but in Dr. Crisp I have. He considers God, in his charging our sins on Christ, and accounting his righteousness to us, as reckoning of things *as they are*.—Sermons, p. 280. “Hast thou been an idolater,” says he, “a blasphemer, a despiser of God’s word, a profaner of his name and ordinances, a thief, a liar, a drunkard? If thou hast part in Christ, all these transgressions of thine become *actually* the transgression of Christ, and so *cease to be thine; and thou ceasest to be a transgressor from that time they were laid upon Christ to the last hour of thy life*: so that now thou art *not* an idolater, a persecutor, a thief, a liar, &c.—thou art *not* a sinful person. Reckon whatever sin you commit, whereas you have part in Christ, you are all that Christ was, and Christ is all that you were,”—p. 270. If this be true, all the confessions of good men, recorded in the Scriptures, that they *were* sinners, and deserving of death, were not only unnecessary, but owning what was not true. Dr. Crisp does not pretend that Christ *actually committed* sin, nor deny that believers committed it; but while he makes our sins to become “*actually* the transgressions of Christ,” and teaches that they “*cease to be ours*,” he undermines all ground for confession or repentance.

Whatever reasonings we may adopt, there are certain times in which conscience will bear witness that, notwithstanding the imputation of our sins to Christ, *we are actually the sinners*, and not He; and I should have thought that no good man could have gone about gravely to overturn its testimony. Far be it from me to wrest the words of any writer, however ill chosen, to a meaning which he does not hold; but when I read as follows, what other conclusion can I draw? “Believers *think* that they find their transgressions in their own consciences, and they *imagine* that there is a sting of this poison still behind, wounding of them; but, beloved, if this principle be received for a truth—that God hath laid thine iniquities on Christ—how can thy transgressions, belonging to Christ, be found in thy heart and conscience? Is thy conscience Christ?”—p. 269.

Perhaps no man ever went further than Dr. Crisp in his attempts at consistency; and admitting his principle, I am not able to deny his conclusions. To have been perfectly consistent, however, he should have proved that all the confessions and lamentations of believers, recorded in Scripture, arose from their being under the *mistake* which he labours to rectify; viz. *thinking* that sin did not cease to be theirs, even when under the fullest persuasion that the Lord would not impute it to them, but would cover it by the righteousness of his Son.

If Christ be “*actually*” the transgressor, and our transgressions, being laid upon him, “*cease to be ours*,” God cannot be offended with us for any

thing we do; nor ought we to be offended, one should think, with one another. Our displeasure ought to terminate on the person to whom the offence actually belongs, be it whom it may.

What Mr. B. may think of these sentiments, I know not. For my part, without approving of the Neonomianism which was afterwards opposed to them, I account them, to use the softest term, gross extravagance.

Yet if this be not what he means by a *real* and *proper* imputation, (I mean when pursued to its just *consequences*,) I have yet to learn what that doctrine is.

## LETTER VI.

### BAXTERIANISM.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Jan. 22, 1803.

MR. B. in his letter to you of Dec. 6, 1802, though he acquits me of Arminianism, yet “ventures to say that I appear to him to have adopted some of the *leading peculiarities of Mr. Richard Baxter*.” I wish he had named them; I would in that case have frankly owned whether I approved or disapproved. As it is, I have been constrained to do what I never did before, look over such polemical pieces of that writer as I could procure. I have found this, I confess, an irksome task. I endeavoured to procure his *Aphorisms on Justification*, but could not. All I could get of a polemical kind were his treatise on *Universal Redemption*, and *Four Disputations on Justification*. I have bestowed two days upon them, but cannot say that I have read them through. They are so circuitous, and full of artificial distinctions, and obscure terms, that I could not in many cases come at his meaning, nor could I have read them through without making myself ill.

It is true, I have found several of my own sentiments maintained by Mr. Baxter. He speaks of salvation by a substitute as being a measure rather “above law” than according to it, and of satisfaction being made “to the *Lawgiver* rather than to the *law*.” If he means any thing more by this than what I have said in Lett. IV., I have no concern in it; and this for substance is allowed by Dr. Owen, in his answer to Biddle,—p. 512. He pleads, also, that the faith by which we are justified includes a submission of heart to Christ, *in all his offices, or a reconciliation* to God; and, consequently, that a sinner when justified, *though ungodly* in the eye of the law, yet is not so in the eye of the gospel, or in our common acceptance of the term. In this I agree with him. It appears to me, however, that though it be essential to the *genuineness* of faith to receive Christ in every character he sustains, so far as it is understood, yet believing for justification has a special respect to Christ’s obedience unto death, with which God is well pleased, and of which our justification is the reward.

Mr. Baxter pleads for “universal redemption;” I only contend for the *sufficiency* of the atonement, in itself considered, for the redemption and salvation of the whole world; and this affords a ground for a universal invitation to sinners to believe; which was maintained by Calvin, and all the old Calvinists. I consider redemption as inseparably connected with eternal life, and therefore as applicable to none but the elect, who are redeemed from *among* men.

Mr. Baxter considered the gospel as a *new law*, taking place of the original law under which man was created; of which faith, repentance, and sincere obedience were the requirements; so, at least, I understand him. But these

are not my sentiments: I believe, indeed, that the old law, *as a covenant*, is not so in force as that men are now required to obey it *in order to life*; on the contrary, all such attempts are sinful, and would have been so though no salvation had been provided. Yet the precept of it is immutably binding, and the curse for transgressing it remains on every unbeliever. I find but little satisfaction in Mr. Baxter's disputations on *justification*. He says a great deal about it, distinguishing it into different stages, pleading for evangelical works as necessary to it, &c. &c. Sometimes he seems to confine the *works* which Paul excluded from justification to those of the common law, ("the burdensome works of the Mosaical law,"—these are his words,) and to plead for what is moral, or, as he would call it, "evangelical." Yet he disavows all works as being the *causes* or *grounds* on account of which we are justified; and professes to plead for them only as "concomitants;" just as we say repentance is necessary to forgiveness, and faith to justification, though these are not *considerations* moving God to bestow those blessings. In short, I find it much easier to express my own judgment on justification, than to say wherein I agree or differ with Mr. Baxter. I consider justification to be God's graciously pardoning our sins, and accepting us to favour, exempting us from the curse of the law, and entitling us to the promises of the gospel; not on account or in consideration of any holiness in us, ceremonial or moral, before, in, or after believing, but purely in reward of the vicarious obedience and death of Christ, which, on our believing in him, is imputed to us, or reckoned as if it were ours. Nor do I consider any holiness in us to be necessary as a concomitant to justification, except what is necessarily included in believing.

Mr. Baxter writes as if the unconverted *could do something towards their conversion, and as if grace were given to all, except those who forfeit it by wilful sin*. But no such sentiment ever occupied my mind, or proceeded from my pen. Finally, Mr. Baxter considers Calvinists and Arminians as reconcilable, making the difference between them of but small amount. I have no such idea; and if on account of what I have here and elsewhere avowed, I were disowned by my present connexions, I should rather choose to go through the world alone than be connected with them. Their scheme appears to me to undermine the doctrine of salvation by grace only, and to resolve the difference between one sinner and another into the will of man, which is directly opposite to all my views and experience. Nor could I feel a union of heart with those who are commonly considered in the present day as *Baxterians*, who hold the gospel being a new remedial law, and represent sinners as contributing to their own conversion.

The greatest, though not the only, instruction that I have received from human writings, on these subjects, has been from *President Edwards's Discourse on Justification*. That which in me has been called "a strange or singular notion" of this doctrine is stated at large, and I think clearly proved, by him under the third head of that discourse,—pp. 86–95.

Here, my dear brother, I lay down my pen. Reduced as I am to the awkward necessity (unless I wish to hold a controversy with a man deservedly respected, and who is just going into his grave) of making a *private* defence against what is become a *public* accusation, I can only leave it to Him who judgeth righteously to decide whether I have been treated fairly, openly, or in a manner becoming the regard which one Christian minister owes to another. If what I have written contain any thing injurious to the truth, may the Lord convince me of it. And if not, may He preserve me from being improperly moved by the frowns of men. I am, as you know, your affectionate brother.

A. F.

REMARKS ON MR. MARTIN'S PUBLICATION,

ENTITLED

“THOUGHTS ON THE DUTY OF MAN

RELATIVE TO

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST;”

IN

FIVE LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

“Our want of power (to trust in Christ) is, generally speaking, want of will, and want of love.”—Mr. MARTIN.—Ser. on Rom. x. 3, p. 31.

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LETTER I.

ON MR. MARTIN'S ACCUSATIONS.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have requested my thoughts on Mr. Martin's recent publication. I now take up my pen to comply with your request. I cannot help observing that the *spirit* in which Mr. M. has conducted his performance renders a sober and serious reply to it very difficult. His abounding likewise so much with what respects my personal qualities as a writer and as a Christian must render a minute attention to what he has written equally difficult. There is this comfort, however, that such things do not require an answer. Nobody expects that I should go about to defend my own abilities for writing, or the spirit in which I have written; the impartial reader, perhaps, may be a better judge of both than either Mr. M. or myself.

All I shall attempt will be to notice a few of Mr. M.'s *accusations*, make some *general observations* on his performance, and discuss two or three of the *leading subjects in debate*.

Most writers propose to establish some system, or hypothesis, in the place of that which they go about to demolish; but whatever Mr. M. may do in future, I think it must be obvious to every reader that he has done but little in this way at present. The main points that he seems to have kept in view are, to inform the world that there is such a person as “Mr. Andrew Fuller, of Kettering, in Northamptonshire—that he is a very *obscure, inconsistent, erroneous, ignorant, artful, vain, hypocritical* kind of a writer—that he has written upon *humility*, but is far from being humble—that he was under the influence of a lust of being consequential”—that when he professes a respect for many of those who differ from him, and a grief of mind for the shyness which he apprehended his publication might occasion, he is not to be believed; for the whole was only his *vanity, or covetousness*, which produced an anxious fear common to “poor authors, lest their works should not be *read*, should not *sell*, or should not be *applauded*—that he is wanting



in method—that his style is embarrassed, coarse, comical, and uncouth—that he is unqualified to instruct—and that those who cannot discern these defects and blemishes in his writings are ignorant, and incompetent to discover even the mistakes which his *Errata* were given to correct.—That Mr. M., on the contrary, “has had the advantage of trials and observations, more in number and variety than some people have had opportunities to experience and consider”—that “he fancied himself qualified to say something in answer to Mr. Fuller that should be above contempt—that he hoped to gain some *repute* by it—but that, supposing he should not, yet it must be acknowledged, he thinks, even by his opponent, that he is *above contempt*.”—Now suppose all this were true, what do nine parts out of ten of it concern the reader? The question with which he is supposed to take a book in hand is, *What is truth?* but should this be the case with Mr. M.'s reader, must he not at least wait the publication of a *second part* for an answer?

Mr. M., as if he thought scorn to lay hands on a single obscure individual, ventures to extend his attack far and wide. MESSIEURS EVANS of *Bristol*, HALL of *Arnsby*, SPENCER of *Alcester*, and THOMAS of *Leominster*,\* and indeed the whole *Midland Association* are attacked amongst the *living*; and, amongst the *dead*, not only PRESIDENT EDWARDS, but all those *Calvinists* who have pleaded for a love to God and Divine things for their own excellency, fall under his severe rebuke,—160. Well, I am happy in my company. There is no need in this case that I should become the advocate of either the dead or the living; the writings of neither, I should hope, will be much endangered by Mr. M.'s attack.

I need not say that Mr. M. deals plentifully in *accusations*. Besides those already mentioned, I am accused of *speaking loosely of the Scriptures*—and *diminutively of the obligations of men*—of aiming to be wise above what is written—of attempting to *equalize* the obligations of all mankind, whose capacities and opportunities God hath so variously distributed—of undervaluing an *assurance* of interest in Christ—and of importing my sentiments from *America*.—These, with many other minor charges, Mr. M. has exhibited, repeating on almost every occasion, as a kind of chorus to the song, those of *OBSCURITY, INCONSISTENCY, and ERROR*. A long train of accusations indeed! Are they founded in justice? Let us examine.

Because I suppose there are *some truths* which would be evident even to the mind of a heathen, were he but the subject of a right spirit, I am accused of *speaking loosely of the Scriptures*—42. This censure, however, falls equally upon the apostle Paul as upon me, Rom. i. 19, 20.

Further, Because I speak of God's requirements as being *in themselves easy* to be complied with, as having nothing hard or difficult in them but what arises from the depravity of our hearts, I am accused of diminishing the obligations of men, by representing it “as not being any great difficulty to perform the full extent of duty,”—52, 53 This censure likewise falls upon *Moses, Samuel, and Jeremiah*, as well as upon me. These each spoke of God's service in exactly the same kind of language as I have done, and with which Mr. M. is so much offended, Deut. x. 12; 1 Sam. xii. 24; Jer. iii. 13.

I am accused likewise of *aiming to be wise above what is imparted*,—132. To imagine that we ought to be wise above what is imparted *in the Scripture* is the height of folly and presumption: attempts of this kind were severely censured by *Agur, Moses, and John*, in the passages quoted by

\* The *one* you know wrote the circular letter which Mr. M. has censured, p. 71, and the *other* signed it as a moderator, and has since defended it.

Mr. M. But if it is no man's duty to be wise but in proportion as wisdom is actually and effectually imparted to him by the Holy Spirit, then it is no man's duty to be wiser than he *is*. And if so, there could be no reason in that complaint, "*Oh that they were wise!*" Indeed, this is the main tendency of a great part of Mr. M.'s reasonings: if they prove any thing, they prove that no man is obliged to be more *wise*, more *holy*, or more *spiritual* than he actually is; and that is the same thing as proving that there is no such thing as *sin* in the world.

Much is said concerning *equal obligation*, as covering what I have written with obscurity; even the word *man*, in the connexion in which I have used it, is said to be obscure,—13. All obligation which creatures can be under I have all along supposed to be *in proportion to their natural abilities and opportunities*. A child of ten years old is not supposed to be capable of understanding so much as when he becomes a man of thirty; nor is a man obliged to believe faster or sooner than he has the means of obtaining evidence: but both the child and the man are obliged to be of such a disposition as shall cordially embrace the gospel when it is revealed, and its meaning comes within the reach of their understandings. All this was declared in my Reply to Mr. Taylor, which had Mr. M. considered, it might have spared him the trouble (or should I have said, deprived him of the *happiness?* for so he accounts it, p. 190) of writing at least about twenty pages of his work.\*

But if I talk of *understanding* what we believe, I shall be charged with adopting Mr. *Foster's* maxim, "Where mystery begins, religion ends." If by understanding were meant a perfect comprehension of *all that pertains to a doctrine*, the charge were just; but surely I must understand the meaning of the testifier before I can either believe or disbelieve his testimony; except it be in a *general way*, taking it for granted, from the opinion I have of his veracity, that whatever he says is true. I can believe no *particular* Scripture doctrine without perceiving that that doctrine is contained in Scripture; and such perception is the same thing as understanding the meaning of the testifier. This is no more than Mr. M. himself elsewhere pleads for (143, 182); so that his opposition to it here looks like contention for contention's sake.

Again, I am accused of undervaluing an *assurance* of a personal interest in Christ; because I suppose, that when compared with the heart's falling in with God's way of salvation, and when *that* is so attended to as that *this* is overlooked, it is a *mean* and *low* idea of faith,—134. That may be good and desirable in its place, which yet, if put in the place of some other thing of greater excellence, becomes mean and low. There is nothing mean or low in a man's pursuing his own *interest* in subordination to the public good, or his own *reputation* in subserviency to God's glory; but to make either the *direct* and *ultimate* end of his pursuits is *mean* and *low*, and unworthy of a rational being.

Much is said of my having read EDWARDS, BELLAMY, and other *American* writers. Mr. M. seems as if he would have his readers think he has made a great discovery here, though it is no more than I had freely acknowledged. It is true I have received instruction in reading the authors above-mentioned; nor do I know of any sin or shame either in the thing itself, or in openly acknowledging it. Mr. M. may wish to insinuate that I have taken matters upon trust from these writers without examining them; but in answer to such insinuations it is sufficient to say, that is more than he can prove. All he knows or can know of the matter is, that I have read them,

\* Especially pages 13—15, 20, 21, 30—38, 44—46.

and approve of some of their sentiments; and is there any crime in this? I remember about fourteen years ago to have received some advantage on the subject now in debate by hearing Mr. MARTIN preach upon it. It is true we were so unhappy *then*, as well as now, as to differ in our sentiments. I, at that time, did NOT think as I now do, but Mr. *Martin* DID. I own I disliked the violence with which he then maintained my present sentiments; and the supercilious language which he used of those who differed from him, whom I then understood to be GILL and BRINE, or writers of their stamp. Upon the whole, however, what he said set me a thinking, and I believe was of use to me. I remember also soon after this time to have read Mr. M.'s sermon on Rom. x. 3, entitled *The Rock of Offence the Sinner's last and only Refuge*. This sermon, which ascribes men's non-submission to the righteousness of God to *voluntary ignorance, prejudice, pride, and self-righteousness*, appeared to me to carry in it considerable evidence in favour of those principles concerning the truth of which I then hesitated. And has not Mr. M. derived instruction from the works of men as well as his neighbours? If he has not, it is not much to his honour. Be that as it may, he cannot mean to censure the reading of *all* human productions, for if so, why does he offer *his own* to the public? If somebody were not to *go to market*, Mr. M. might be in a similar predicament with other "poor authors—agitated lest his performance should not *SELL*."—After all, perhaps, it is not *going to market* that Mr. M. objects to, either in himself or others, but going to an *American* market; for there are several authors whom he still recommends. Mr. M., whatever is the reason, seems to have an antipathy against *America*, in religion as well as in politics. There was a time, however, when the writings of EDWARDS had the honour of his warmest recommendation, when he accounted his treatise on *Religious Affections* "a much *wanted*, and for that reason, perhaps, a much *neglected* book."—END and EVID. of ADOPTION, p. 19. But "time and chance happen to all things."—"There is a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."

Finally, I am accused of *obscurity, inconsistency, and error*. As to *obscurity*, I shall say nothing, except it be that every one does not think so, nor every one of my opponents; Mr. TAYLOR allows me to have written with "perspicuity." As to *inconsistency*, if what Mr. M. says is true, which doubtless it is, that "the most consistent character is only a little *less inconsistent* than his neighbours," it must be in vain for me wholly to deny the charge. Thus much, however, I may say, that the far greater part of what Mr. M. charges with inconsistency is such in sound only, and not in sense; and that if he had not almost perpetually *confounded* things that differ, he could not have found so many *apparent* inconsistencies as he has. No doubt you have observed how he confounds *Divine efficiency* with human obligation (15); what *is* with what *ought to be* (44); men's obligation perfectly to conform to God's law with an obligation to make reconciliation for sin (62); their *natural* capacity to keep the law perfectly *in future* (that is, to love God with all their heart) with their capacity to produce such a righteousness as the law requires, which must imply a making atonement for past sins (104, 144); *reason* for keeping the law with *encouragement* to comply with the gospel (108, 110); the *formal* requirement of obedience with *that* in the Divine character and conduct which affords a reason for such requirement being made (40); and that which warrants our *coming to Christ* with that which warrants us to conclude ourselves interested in eternal life (72-76):—it is on these subjects principally that I am charged with inconsistency. It is allowed there are many opposite things asserted; but opposites may be asserted surely of *things that differ*, without affording

ground for a charge of inconsistency.\* As to the charge of *error*, that will come under consideration when I attempt a discussion of the leading subjects in debate.

## LETTER II.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

HAVING replied to Mr. M.'s principal *accusations*, I shall now make a few *general observations* on his performance. I know not how it is, but it is a fact I have sometimes observed, that, where a person is more than ordinarily addicted to certain vices, it is common for him to be the first that shall discover those vices in his neighbours. I knew a man that every body around him reckoned to be very *proud*, and yet he was always exclaiming against *pride* in others. There is some resemblance between this temper of mind, and a certain distemper of the body which makes every object around us appear of the same colour as that with which the eye is infected. Whether this will not account for some of Mr. M.'s charges, particularly for those of *obscurity*, *inconsistency*, and *error*, I leave you to judge from the whole of his performance, especially from what will be noticed in the following observations.

I think it must appear to every attentive reader that Mr. M. has hitherto done but little towards overturning my *leading propositions*, even though these were what in his *title-page* he proposed to consider. As to the first, he neither denies that whatever God commands is the duty of those to whom it is commanded, nor attempts to invalidate the evidence in favour of faith being commanded of God to unregenerate sinners. As to the *second*, he has said something about it (32); he has tried his utmost to make it an *identical* proposition, but cannot gain his point; conscious, it seems, that it would not bear such a construction, he allows in the next page (33) that I "*must be understood otherwise.*"†—All that he has said in answer to it in its *true meaning* is, that it enjoins *equal obligation* upon all; but this charge has been already answered in the foregoing letter. The *third* proposition he has likewise glanced at, and says I make the gospel, though not in *form*, yet in *fact*, a law,—40. If you look at my treatise, you will see the injus-

\* After all that Mr. MARTIN has written upon my *inconsistency*, is it not rather surprising he should maintain that "our want of *power* (to trust in Christ) is, generally speaking, want of *will* and want of *love*;"—that the reasons or causes of the righteousness of Christ being rejected are *voluntary ignorance*, prejudice, pride, &c.; and, when he has done, find fault with me for maintaining the self-same things? Do compare his "Rock of Offence," &c., pp. 31, 36—48, with his "Thoughts on Duty," pp. 103, 104, 142.—Should it be said it is seventeen or eighteen years since that sermon was printed, and Mr. M. may have altered his sentiments in that time; I answer, true, but if this should acquit him of present *inconsistency*, it must be at the expense of his *integrity*. If his sentiments are altered, why did he not honestly acknowledge it, and answer his *own* arguments, instead of falling foul upon those of another, which were expressed in nearly the self-same words? It looks as if Mr. M. strove to conceal his own change of sentiments, that he might enjoy the *happiness* of a few strokes at his AUTHOR for his fickleness in changing his.

† Suppose it had been an *identical proposition*, what then? Why then I must have suffered shame for my *ignorance*.—True, but my sufferings might have been a little alleviated by Mr. M.'s condescending to become my companion and fellow sufferer. "Are not all men *anxious to possess*," he asks, "what they *covet to enjoy*?"—28. Undoubtedly! and when he shall have informed us of the difference between a being *anxious to possess* and *coveting to enjoy*, we may perceive the tendency of this "*fact*," if it has such a tendency, "to refute my inferences."

tice of this remark. The *fourth*, *fifth*, and *sixth* propositions he has scarcely touched; and the *Scriptures* under each are never looked in the face.

It is rather extraordinary, that, of so many publications against an *eighteen-penny pamphlet*, they should all steer so wide of the body of Scripture evidence contained in the *second part*. Mr. BURTON, to do him justice, has said *more* in a way of reply to this part than any of his coadjutors. It is to be hoped that Mr. M. will not publish *two* more two-shilling books, and at last omit executing what in his *title-page* he has given us to expect.

There was an argument which I had urged pretty much in my treatise, and reply to Mr. BURTON. It was this, Every man ought to be Christ's *friend*, or his *enemy*, or to stand neuter and be *neither*. To suppose the *first* is to grant all that is pleaded for; to suppose the *second* is too gross to need a refutation; if then neither of these will satisfy, it must fall upon the *third*, but this our Lord declares to be an *impossibility*, "He that is not with me is against me." It might have tended to bring the matter to some issue, if Mr. M. would but have given this argument a fair discussion. He seems to have glanced at it, however, in one place. "Perhaps," he says, "Mr. Fuller does not sufficiently recollect that in human actions *what seems the reverse of doing wrong is not always doing what is right*." There are cases, he supposes, wherein the reverse of doing wrong may be as much of an extreme as the doing wrong itself; and instances in cases of "*avarice and prodigality*," &c. &c.,—144. True, there are cases in which both extremes may be equally wrong; but the question is, Is it so in respect of being Christ's *friend* or his *enemy*; of a perfect *future* conformity to God's law, or a living in the *breach* of it? Mr. M., to make this observation of any force, must admit that it would be equally an extreme for a sinner to be decidedly *for* Christ as it is to be decidedly *against* him; that it were equally wrong to love God with *all* the heart as not to love him *at all*; that his duty is to be of a *divided* heart, to be neither *for* Christ nor *against* him, but in a medium way, just as it is a man's duty to be neither covetous nor prodigal, but something between them.—"Perhaps Mr. Fuller *has* considered," that though there are cases in which both extremes are wrong, yet it is not so in this case; *in this case* our Lord declares a medium to be impossible.

I have taken it for granted, that *so far as any thing is charged upon men as their sin, so far the contrary must be their duty*; because where there is no obligation, there can be no transgression.\*—I should not have imagined that any man in his senses could have called this in question, and yet this is what Mr. M. has done. He calls it a *mere inference*, and talks of proving it a *false consequence*!—89. In page 146, he speaks of men being given up to *vile* affections—allows such affections to be *sinful*, and yet will not allow it to be their duty to possess the contrary! What he has advanced (89, 90) to prove this "a false consequence" amounts to this, that sinners *cannot* serve the Lord acceptably—and that, whatever good *takes place*, it is the *effect of Divine influence*. This is the reasoning that is to prove that *though men are criminal for breaking the law, yet they are not obliged perfectly to keep it—*that *though unbelief is a sin, yet faith is not a duty*! On what principles, and in what manner, is such a writer to be reasoned with?

"Figurative expressions," Mr. M. contends, "are intended to convey a meaning,"—126. Undoubtedly; and sometimes as *strong* and *stronger* a meaning than terms used literally. Mr. M. had no right to represent as if by pleading for a figurative sense of the terms *blind*, *deaf*, and *dead*, I meant

\* *The contrary must be their duty?*—What then, Mr. M. will ask, is prodigality the duty of the covetous? I answer, No; neither is prodigality, but *contentment* and *generosity*, the contrary of covetousness, Heb. xiii. 5.

to lessen their *force*. The term *quicken*ed has doubtless a meaning, and a very strong one; and if Mr. M. had not thought himself warranted, while he censures his AUTHOR as he calls him for *coarseness* and *uncouthness* of style, to be as coarse, as uncouth, as comical, and as irreverent as he pleased himself, he could never have talked of being RUBBED UP by the *Spirit of God*.

Mr. M. frequently writes as if his only end was to *oppose*. Sometimes I am accused of *equalizing* the obligations of men whose capacities are various (13); at other times for *varying* their obligations according to their natural capacity or incapacity,—104. When I make it men's duty to possess that, in respect of holy dispositions, of which they are destitute, then he will have it that their duty is only to *occupy what they have*,—18. On the other hand, when I admit, in respect of natural capacities and opportunities, that men are obliged only to *occupy what they have*, then he complains that this is putting the Almighty off with only a right *use* of what is left,—98, 104. Thus he falls out with Mr. HALL, of *Arusby*, for asserting that "God doth not require more of any man than a right use of what he hath"—alleging, that "if so, it must *inevitably* follow that no man need seek for what he has not,"—76. Some people would have thought that rightly to *use* or *occupy* what we have would *be* to seek that which we have not. If the *slothful servant* had rightly *used* his talent, he would have *increased* it, by seeking that which he had not. If Mr. M.'s "modes of opposition are not more *formidable* than this conclusion is *inevitable*," we have not much to fear.—After all, what does he mean? what is he about? Has he any sentiment upon the subject? Or does he mean barely to *oppose*? If he has, it must be this, that *natural impossibilities* ARE binding upon mankind, but that *moral impossibilities* ARE NOT so!

Whether Mr. M. has not intermeddled in a controversy which, with all his "opportunities" for obtaining knowledge, *he does not understand*, some have doubted. What his abilities are for writing perhaps it does not become me to say, nor is it of any great consequence to determine; but I should think it is no great recommendation of his judgment in language to call that *dictatorial* which any reader may perceive to be written merely in the *declaratory* style (66); such as every writer must use, unless he will be always repeating the words, *I conceive, I apprehend, &c.*—It is not language, however, that I chiefly refer to, but *sentiment*. Nothing is more common than for Mr. M. to be employed in zealously establishing what I never denied, and refuting what I never affirmed. This is the case almost all through his piece when he treats on *Divine efficiency*, and the duty of men, as he expresses it, to "possess the power of God," and *perform acts peculiar to him*. There are not wanting places wherein I am expressly acquitted, on the above subject, of that of which in other places I am accused. Compare p. 96 with p. 125. In the one, it is supposed that I extend duty to "those actions which are not *our own*; or to the possession of *the power of God*; in the other, it is acknowledged that I am "of opinion that *spiritual blessings*, and the *Divine energy* that gives us the enjoyment of them, CANNOT come under the notion of duties." Is it uncandid to impute the above to his *not understanding* the subject on which he writes?—On *natural and moral ability and inability*, Mr. M. writes in a manner that is very extraordinary.

He talks of men being enabled to make a right *use* of *moral ability* (118); as if I supposed it to be a kind of talent, which may be *used* or *abused*. Of *natural ability*, he asks, "Does it require ability to reject Christ? let this be proved,"—59. As if it required *proof* that a man must possess the powers of *intelligence* and *choice* in order to reject Christ! If not, a *stock*

or a stone might reject him as well as a man.—On all occasions he denies *natural inability* to be any excuse for the non-performance of that which would otherwise be duty,—101, 122. He seems astonished at my supposing the contrary in cases where the parties have brought that inability upon themselves by their own sin,—104. It seems by this as if Mr. M. would criminate the errors of a *lunatic*, provided he has lost his reason by his own personal fault; yea, suppose he has not, his “natural defects and disorders are the continued *consequences* of our first revolt from God,” and therefore it seems are inexcusable!—98. Some people, however, will be ready to think a man cannot be far off such a state of mind himself when he can admit of such an idea. After all, does not Mr. M.’s own description of the case of *Samson*, (29,) who lost his strength by his *own sin*, sufficiently refute what he would here establish?

Mr. M. has greatly abounded in *misrepresentation*. To enumerate every instance of it were as tedious as it is unnecessary. There are but few pages which are wholly exempt. If, as he assures us, it is none of it to be imputed to *unfair intention*, but to a *bad judgment*, (152,) his judgment must be *bad* indeed!\* Much is made of what I said in my treatise of “no sort of hope being held out to sinners as such.” I have long since as good as acknowledged that sentence to be *obscure*; and have declared my meaning to be, “merely to disown that any sinner was encouraged by the gospel to hope for eternal life without returning home to God by Jesus Christ.”—*Reply to Philanthropos*.—But of this, Mr. M. has taken no notice. This might be an oversight. But to what can you impute his applying what was written upon *humility* in the abstract to my *own* humility? Further, what can you make of his representing me as imputing it to *ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion to God*, that people do not believe as *I believe*—that is, that they do not embrace my views of the sentiment here in dispute!—133. Is this “the result of *fair intention*?” It may be said Mr. M. meant to urge the above only as an *inference*, and that he has so represented it in another place (142): be it so, he had no warrant to represent that inference as *my apprehension*, which he does,—p. 113. But suppose it were considered as an *inference*, what then? If *mental errors* are not excusable, as Mr. M. says they are not, (101,) then to what purpose are all his attempts to excuse them?—132, 143, 182. If mental errors are criminal in others, why should they be thought innocent in Mr. M. or me? I never professed to be free from *prejudice*, though I am persuaded it is no more than *I ought to be*; and in proportion as this occupies the mind we shall linger and halt in embracing truth. Our Lord, who was never wanting in *compassion* to his disciples, yet said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

I will mention but one instance more of Mr. M.’s misrepresentations. I had said, “*Some* have treated the distinction of inability into natural and moral as a *new invention*”; but that only proves their own want of reading.”

\* Query—Does not Mr. M., by his here distinguishing between *judgment* and *intention*, mean to excuse himself from blame, at least in some degree, in case of any supposed misrepresentation! But if natural inability has no tendency to excuse, (101,) he might as well have been willing to have it imputed to *unfair intention* as to a *bad judgment*. The truth is, though Mr. M. may treat this subject with scorn, may call it a *little distinction*, may assume an air of importance, and affect great superiority in knowledge, (69,) yet it is a distinction founded in the nature of things; and Mr. M., and every other man, whether he will or no, must feel its propriety, and, by whatever language he may choose to express it, must use it in ten thousand instances in life.

As to the swelling language of p. 69, and indeed almost all through his piece, few people except himself will think that of advantage to his cause.—“The ignorant and the insolent,” as Mr. M. elsewhere observes, “in matters of a religious nature, as well as in what relates to the circle of science, always make a more *pompous* profession of their knowledge and zeal than those who are wise and humble.”—*End and Evid. of Adoption*, p. 5.

Also that, "for want of knowing better, some people had suspected this distinction to be friendly to Arminianism." Mr. M., after observing that I charge my *Calvinistic* opponents with *want of reading*, with *want of knowing better*, &c., adds, "When the characters who are censured, on the one side, and the *reading, knowledge, and years* of their formidable CENSOR, on the other, are duly considered, will such a contrast give the intelligent reader a high idea of our author's modesty?"—91. But does Mr. M. know *what* CHARACTERS these are? If not, how can either he or his reader "consider" any thing about them? Will Mr. M. assert there can be *no* persons found on *his* side of the question in debate, of whom he himself would be ashamed to say that they are persons of extensive reading? While yet there are others, who disagree with me in this point, who would be ashamed to defend their cause by the rash assertions and misrepresentations which some have advanced. Is it any compliment to *Calvinists*, and Calvinists of *character* too, to suppose *them* so ignorant as to treat the above distinction as a *new invention*? Is Mr. M. one of these *Calvinists*? If he is, it would be no want of modesty to tell him that his reading must either have been very small, or to very little purpose. One should think it must imply a greater want of modesty to *deny* than to *affirm* that, if the above distinction is supposed to be friendly to Arminianism, it must be *for want of knowing better*, seeing three of the greatest champions that ever engaged in the Arminian controversy have either used it, or declared in its favour. EDWARDS is well known to have used it, and that to purpose, in his *Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will*; TOPLADY applauded *Edwards's* work, as adapted "totally to unravel and defeat the Arminian sophistry;" and GILL, though he made but little use of it, yet declared that "the distinction of the *natural* and *moral* liberty of the will was of great *service* in the *Arminian* controversy."—Query, *Did not Mr. M. in the above remark wish to have his reader think that I referred to such CHARACTERS as GILL and BRINE* (whose names he mentions within a page or two of the place); *and spoke of THEM as men of little reading and little knowledge?* Why else did he print the word CHARACTERS in capitals? and why omit referring, as usual, to the *page* wherein my words are to be found? If this was the case, and this, after all, was the result of *fair intention*, I say again it must indicate a judgment *bad* indeed!

Mr. M. takes one method to work upon his readers, not much to his *own* honour, or to the credit of the opinion he has of *their* judgment; that is, of calling himself and those of his opinion "*Calvinists, intelligent Calvinists,*" (88,) and insinuating that his opponent is at least approaching towards "*Baxterianism,*"—191. It were puerile to have any dispute with him upon such a subject. "Competent judges" will perceive that I am as far off from *Baxterianism* as he is from *Calvinism*; and I need not be further.

Mr. M. asks, "Does Mr. Fuller know an *intelligent Calvinist* that is offended with the character of God—that believes that God is not worthy of being loved with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength—that is so ignorant as not to perceive that want of love to God is so *vile* a disposition as admits of no excuse?"—88.—Perhaps not; but he knows of one who *calls* himself a *Calvinist*, and in point of intelligence thinks himself pretty much *above contempt*, who has written above two hundred pages to prove (if they are intended to prove any thing) that the *possession* of love to God is not incumbent on men in general, but barely an *endeavour* to possess it; and if so, how is it that the want of it should admit of no *excuse*? Is it so inexcusable a fault to be *wanting* in what we are not obliged to *have*?

Of the anger or resentment of *others*, Mr. M. seems to have no dread,—71. Heroic man! He seems, however, to consider his *own* anger as very



dreadful, and when roused, very unrulable (93); he did wisely, and generously, no doubt, in avoiding a topic by which he might have set himself on fire.

There are many extraordinary features discernible in the face of Mr. M.'s performances, but none more prominent than his *desire of applause*. It is amusing, as well as astonishing, to see the frankness with which this is proclaimed, and even defended. *Self-applause* is his declared motive for loving and praising virtuous actions,—169. *Reputation* is an end for which he writes,—190. The "*applause of competent judges*" seems to be the summit of his wishes,—207. HUME, REID, and TOPLADY wrote for *fame*; and so does Mr. MARTIN, and, if he may be believed, every other writer,—170. All this is *amusing*; but when the authority of Paul is introduced to justify his folly, this is *profane*. Paul exhorted us to pursue things *which are of good report, but not for the sake of gaining applause by it*. The desire of applause is so mean a vice that most other authors, if they have felt it, have chosen to conceal it; but Mr. M. is superior to concealment. Conscious, it seems, that he is under its governing influence in all he writes, he scorns either to hide it or apologize for it; he dares to avow it, and defend it, as not only lawful, but laudable, and according with apostolic injunction!

And yet is it not rather extraordinary that Mr. M. should defend this motive in *himself*, and at the same time censure it so severely in others, calling it, by way of disdain, "*the lust of being consequential?*"—180. It may be alleged, perhaps, that the word *lust* signifies an *inordinate* desire; and Mr. M. may think his desire of fame to be more *moderate* than that of some people. But of this, it may be replied, Mr. M. may hardly be a competent judge. It is not impossible that he may view both his own desires, and those of his neighbours, through a *deceitful medium*, by which the latter may be magnified, and the former diminished. Some have thought it was not very prudent in him to hazard the following questions:—"Who are the *most* anxious to secure (and sometimes by methods deservedly censured) the shadow of popularity? Who are *most* desirous of being *thought* very useful, and *fond* of being *consequential?*"—58. They will be ready to answer, *Who* indeed? *Who* is it that pleads for *fame* as the object of every undertaking? who that labours to obtain *reputation* by degrading others? who that swells with such an idea of *himself* as to pronounce his qualifications to be *above contempt*, his arguments *formidable*, his conclusions *inevitable*, and those that oppose him to be guilty of such folly as, if it were possible, would make angels blush?\*

\* There was a time when Mr. M. *spiritualized a watch*; a time also when the ministers with whom he was *then* connected employed him to write a *Circular Letter* to the churches; and a time when he used occasionally to print *sermons*. There was a time also when, in advertising a *new* performance, he thought proper to cry down these *old* ones, calling them "*fugitive pieces, written,*" as he in his great humility informs the world, "*at a time when it was his duty to have learned, and his vanity to publish.*" See the advertisement at the end of Mr. M.'s *Christian's Peculiar Conflict*.

Whatever right Mr. M. might have to cry down his *other* productions, one should have thought he might have let the *Circular Letter* alone. As it is always customary for the associated ministers and messengers to revise, alter, and correct it, and the moderator to sign it, the *writer* can have at most but a *part* of the honour or dishonour attending it; and most writers would, in such an instance, have forborne their claim. If, however, they had put it down amongst their *works*, they would never have thought themselves at liberty to *trude* it; knowing this could not be done without *insulting* the whole association. But it seems Mr. M. had much rather insult his former connexions than lose an opportunity of praising his *last* performances, and giving the world to understand that he was now become the accomplished author. What a method was this to recommend his book! "*Poor authors,*" as Mr. M. (*feelingly*† no doubt) expresses it, (189.) "*often as proud, or vain at least, as they are poor; to what measures are they frequently reduced! The book will not be read, will not SELL.*"—Ah, Mr. Martin! is this your kindness to your old friends? Verily ministers had need beware of giving their sanction to your performances!

† "*None but an author knows an author's cares.*"—COWPER.

The pursuit of *fame* is Mr. M.'s avowed object; he would be thought, however, to have steered clear of *envy*,—71. And yet he speaks as if he was not a little *unhappy* at hearing “last January of the prevalence of Mr. Fuller's sentiments,”—190. But might not this arise from his regard to what he accounted truth? It might; and if such a regard had not been too *disinterested* for his theological creed, we might suppose that to be his meaning. Allow this, however, to be his meaning; allow his heart in one instance to be better than his system; this is not all.—He talks of being my *competitor*,—208. *Competitor*—for what? for *fame*, no doubt. Happy man, if he can steer his course clear of *envy*! But with his *motives*, excepting so far as he has openly discovered them, I have no concern. *To his own Master he standeth or falleth.*

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### LETTER III.

#### LOVE TO GOD AND DIVINE THINGS FOR THEIR OWN EXCELLENCY.

HAVING replied to Mr. M.'s accusations, and made some general observations on his work, I shall now drop some few remarks on *three* of the principal subjects in debate; namely, *love to God, Divine efficiency, and human endeavour.*—*Love to God and Divine things, FOR THEIR OWN EXCELLENCY,* will be the subject of the present Letter. On this subject Mr. M. has dealt largely in *misrepresentation.*

First, He all along supposes that, by loving God for what he is in *himself*, I mean a loving him for some *abstract* properties of his nature, no way *related* to his creatures, and in which they have no *interest* (158, 160, 163); whereas I have said that “I know of no such properties in the Deity; but that whatever excellence exists in the nature of God, that excellence is engaged in favour of his people.”—But does it not follow that because, if I am a Christian, there is no excellence in God but what I *have* an interest in, therefore such interest is the only possible *consideration* for which I can or ought to love him?—It is true, in one sense, that I know not what God is *in himself*, nor even what “a blade of grass is;” neither do I know what a *man* is in himself;—but yet I can distinguish between the affection I bear to a man on account of his kindness to me, and that which I feel towards him on account of his general character. A man of infamous character may in some instance do me a kindness: if I am the subject of a right temper, I shall at once feel gratitude and good-will towards him, while yet I am constrained to detest his general disposition and conduct. A man of *good* character may do me a kindness: if I feel towards him as I ought, I shall love him both for his kindness to me, and as well for the excellence of his character in general, which might have been what it is if I had never existed.

Secondly, What Mr. M. has written supposes that I am against people's *loving themselves*—that I want to *separate* the glory of God and our best interests, and to make it incumbent on men to pursue the one so as to neglect the other,—pp. 160, 172, 173. But all this is unjust, and what he could never infer from any thing I have written. I never imagined that every kind of self-love was *selfish*, in the bad sense of the word. On the contrary, I suppose that the law which requires us to love our neighbour *as ourselves* implies that we ought to love ourselves *as our neighbour*; we ought to love *both, in subserviency* to his glory who requires the *supreme* place in our

affections. But does it follow, because it is right to make our own interest a *secondary* object of our pursuit, or to seek it in *subserviency* to God's glory, that therefore it must be the *direct* object of all our affections?—160. Does it follow that, because a pursuit of God's glory cannot be *separated* from our best interest, therefore it cannot be *distinguished* from it? Is nothing to be distinguished that cannot be separated? If I pursue a line of conduct tending to promote the public good, and if it appear to others that the public good is the grand end I have in view, I shall *have* reputation; but if it be alleged that, because a pursuit of the public good is *attended* with reputation, therefore I must needs have such reputation in view as the *direct* object of my pursuit, in all my actions, would this be just reasoning? Would it be just to say that, on account of such reputation *attending* my conduct, it is impossible I should feel any *disinterested* regard to the public good—that is, any regard but that which I feel towards it on account either of the share I as an individual have in it, or the honour or advantage that will accrue to me from my conduct?

When I speak of loving God *for himself*, I neither suppose it is on account of some excellences in his nature which have no *relation* to our welfare, nor that we feel, or ought to feel, regardless of our best interests, true honour, or substantial happiness. These may, and ought, no doubt, to be pursued in subordination to God's glory; and a proper pursuit of them, instead of setting aside the idea of love to God for his own excellence, necessarily *implies* it. Am I, for instance, in search of *true honour*? If I am, it is of that honour that ariseth from being *approved of God*; but, in order to God's approbation being the summit of my soul's ambition, I must necessarily love him for what he is *in himself*. What gratification would the applause of a person afford me of whom I had but a mean opinion, and towards whom I had no *previous regard*? Again, Am I in pursuit of *substantial happiness*? If I am, I am in search of the enjoyment of God, as my everlasting portion; but how could I conceive of God as a portion worthy to be sought, or at all adapted to make me happy, unless I loved him for what he is in himself antecedently to my enjoyment of him? Do men ever seek a portion in earthly things without viewing that portion as good and desirable *in itself*, whether they have it or not?

Mr. M. considers a love to God and Divine things for their own excellence as a *chimera*; and the ground on which he proceeds seems to be this: Whatever object we love, the enjoyment of that object affords us *pleasure* or *happiness*; and so our love is in no respect *disinterested*, does not terminate on what God is *in himself*, but aims *DIRECTLY* at our own advantage,"—171, 160. This is the argument that is to silence *deists*,—171. This, I suppose, is the sum of what Mr. M. would wish to have considered as the result of "trials and observations, more in number and variety than some people have yet had opportunities to experience and consider,"—80. And what is it after all? The question is, *Is it possible for us to take pleasure in an object for its own sake?* Mr. M. answers, *No*.—Wherefore? Because that *object affords us pleasure*.—That is, we *cannot take pleasure* in an object, because we *can and do find pleasure in it!*

What can be thought of Mr. M.'s *ingenuousness* in quoting Mr. BOYLE (167) against the doctrine of disinterested love, when every one who reads his work must see that *that doctrine* is there expressly and largely defended? It is true Mr. BOYLE pleads for God's blessings being "*taken in among* the motives of loving him;" and who objects to this? Mr. M. knows his opponent does not. Mr. Boyle pleads that God is to be loved partly "*for WHAT HE IS IN HIMSELF*," and partly "*for WHAT HE IS TO US*." (These are his own words.) And I have done the same. But Mr. M. seems to wish to

insinuate to the reader that I embrace the same principles with those preachers in the time of Mr. Boyle who "taught the people that to hope for heaven is a *mercenary, legal*, and, therefore, unfilial affection." Is this "the result of fair intention?"—See Mr. BOYLE'S Motives and Incentives to the Love of God, sect. 13.

The gospel undoubtedly holds up *rewards* to stimulate us to duty, rewards addressed to our *emulation* and *thirst of happiness* (173); and if the deists on this account reproach it as a *selfish theory*, I have no doubt but their reproach is groundless. The gospel ought not to be denominated a selfish theory because it inculcates a regard to ourselves. If, however, it could be proved that we are there taught *so* to pursue our own interest as that the glory of God shall not be regarded as a supreme, but as a *subordinate* end, the charge were *just*. But the rewards contained in the gospel convey no such idea as this, for the following plain reason:—The sum of all these rewards is GOD HIMSELF. Grace and glory are only God's communications of himself. Hence it follows that such *rewards*, properly pursued, instead of excluding supreme love to God for what he is in himself, necessarily *imply* it. Without such a love, as hath been already observed, it is impossible in any right manner to seek either his approbation or blessing.

Mr. M. himself, it seems, once thought on this subject as his opponent now thinks,—80.\* I wonder whether he then held all the extravagancies which he now imputes to me, and whether we are to consider him as exemplifying the character which he has drawn from Mr. Baxter, "censuring others by the measure of his own mistakes,"—192. Did he then "suppose it possible for any man to perceive the highest excellence, so as to prefer it and enjoy it, and yet fancy that such affection might be *separated* from his *best* interest and *highest* pleasure?"—160. Did he then think he had *found out God* and *knew the Almighty to perfection*? or that he had any other ideas of God than by *analogy* or *similitude*? Did he then "swell with a vain imagination," and aspire at *independency* of God? In a word, DID HE THEN THINK HIMSELF A WISER MAN THAN HE DOES NOW?

Mr. M. not only denies the possibility of a love to *God* for what he is in himself, but likewise a love to *virtue* and *virtuous actions* for their own sake. He contends it is with a view to the *interest* that we have in loving and applauding such actions that we love and applaud them. To the objection, how we come to "praise virtuous actions performed in distant ages and remote countries, which have no connexion with our present happiness or security," Mr. M. answers, "We never cordially bestow praise without being *pleased*. Nor are we pleased with the report of virtuous actions unless we *judge* them to be such. Nor do we *so* judge without *applauding* ourselves for our decision. For we really think it contributes to advance our 'present happiness and security,' by increasing our *reputation*,"—196. Much to the same purpose is what is advanced in p. 138, in a supposed address to me. This account of the matter, it must be allowed, is very curious. We *praise* virtuous actions—wherefore? because those actions *please* us. But wherefore do they please us? because they correspond with what we *judge* to be truly virtuous. But wherefore do we *judge in favour* of true virtue? because when the decision is past it affords, upon reflection, a ground of *self-applause*. Self-applause therefore is the original motive or reason why we love and applaud virtuous actions!—Mr. M., by making self-applause his motive, must mean either the *thing itself*, or the *desire* of it. If he mean the *former*, he must maintain that self-applause, which *arises from* a favourable judgment of virtuous actions, nevertheless existed *before* such judgment was made, so

\* See also his End and Evidences of Adoption, p. 18-23, and 39.

as to be the ground and reason of it. It is something of so peculiar a quality as to exist prior to its cause, and give being to that of which itself is the effect! If he mean the *latter*, that is, the *desire* of self-applause, and not the *thing itself*, this, it is possible, may be found to be as far off from the truth as the other. A Christian takes up his Bible—reads the interesting history of *Joseph*—reads of his patience under sufferings, his chastity in temptations, his firmness, his meekness, his wisdom, his fidelity, his filial duty, but above all his amiable forgiving spirit towards his cruel brethren—His heart begins to burn—with what? *love*? No, stay—first with the desire of self-applause; and knowing that if he judge in favour of Joseph's virtue, is *pleased* with it, and speaks in praise of it, his desire will be accomplished, he consequently forms the decision, feels pleased, proclaims that pleasure to others, and so accomplishes his end—enjoys the satisfaction of self-applause, increases his *reputation*, and thus promotes his present happiness and security.

I will not deny but that in some cases, and in some degree, Mr. M.'s doctrine may be true. *Hypocrites* will often praise what they never practise; and consequently what they never cordially love. Thus the Pharisees *built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous*. In these cases *self-love* may be the origin, and *reputation* the end; and in this sort it is granted men may applaud really virtuous actions without possessing "religious dispositions,"—168. But perhaps Mr. M. would not thank me for this concession.

But Mr. M. seems to think he has loaded the doctrine of disinterested love with sufficient reproach by representing "*Arminians, mystics, and deists* as its chief detailers and defenders,"—80. But suppose it were so, that would not prove it to be erroneous. Mr. M., however, will not say of GOODWIN, OWEN, CHARNOCK, EDWARDS, GILL, or BRINE, that either of them was an "Arminian, a mystic, or a deist;" and yet each of them has defended a love to God and Divine things for their own excellency, in distinction from a love to them barely on account of their being advantageous to us.\* They admitted that we should love *ourselves*, and pursue our own interest in subserviency to God's glory; but to make our own interest the *first* motive or the *last* end was what, in their opinion, characterized a *hypocrite*, or an *apostate world*. Mr. CHARNOCK calls the one a "loving of God *first*, and ourselves *in order to God*;" the other, a loving of *ourselves* first, and God *in order to ourselves*;" and thus, says he, "LOVE TO GOD IS LOST, AND LOVE TO SELF HATH USURPED THE THRONE."

It may be presumed, too, that none of these writers had less *opportunity* for obtaining knowledge, or was possessed of less *humility*, than Mr. M.; though he ascribes his ideas on this subject to his superior "opportunities to some people;" and the ideas of those who differ from him to a spirit of *pride*, the pride of aspiring at independency of God! Nor were they perhaps inferior to him in *wisdom* and *solid judgment*; though he is pleased to represent those who hold this sentiment as "swelling with a vain imagination," and their opinion as *folly* and *madness*, yea, such folly as is "sufficient, if it were possible, to make *angels blush*!"—158, 160. This is the writer that censures his opponent, and talks of his anger being roused for his *want of respect* for those who differ from him!—93. Whether *angels can blush* may be doubted; perhaps, as Mr. M. seems to think, they are *incapable* of it; and does it not seem as if *some men* were equally incapable?

\* Goodwin on Ephes. vol. I. p. 152-161. Owen on the Spirit, p. 99. Charnock's Works, vol. I. p. 90-93. Edwards on Affections, p. 139-152. Gill's Bod. Div. vol. III. ch. 9. Brine's Dialogues, 313-315.

## LETTER IV.

## DIVINE EFFICIENCY.

HAVING considered what Mr. M. has advanced on *love to God*, the next subject that requires discussion is DIVINE EFFICIENCY. I am sorry I should have again to complain of *misrepresentation*. Though Mr. M. acquits me in one place, (124,) as indeed he ought, of making any thing the duty of men but that wherein they are voluntary,\* yet in many other places he represents me as maintaining that it is men's duty to *produce* spiritual dispositions, (147,) to *be born again*, (150,) to *vivify themselves*, to *make the word effectual* to salvation, (202,) to *convince themselves of sin*, (120,) to *be the sons of God*, (125,) &c. &c. I suppose, however, that all he would abide by is, that these are the just *consequences* of my principles; but suppose they were, Mr. M. had no right to represent me as *holding* those consequences, especially when he knows, and in some places acknowledges, that I disavow them.

It was before asked, DO WE NEED THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO ENABLE US TO DO OUR DUTY? Mr. M. answers, "WE DO," (116,) but denies the *inferences* that I have drawn from it. The grand inference that I drew from it was this, *If we need the Spirit of God to enable us to do our duty, then our needing the Spirit of God to enable us to BELIEVE will not prove but that BELIEVING MAY BE A DUTY.*—Now, admitting the *premises*, what has Mr. M. said to overthrow this *conclusion*? He says, "Let also this question be well weighed, *Do we need the Spirit of God ONLY to enable us to do our duty?* Are there not  *blessings* to be enjoyed as well as *duties* to be discharged?  *blessings* which He who came to bless us designed to be our strength?  *blessings* by which he turns us from our iniquities, and prepares us for the present and future enjoyment of HIMSELF?  *blessings* which, though they are the source and spring of *new obedience*, must not be degraded by the name of *duty*. For though the proper discharge of duty is *our excellence*, is it not confined to *our acts*? *Blessing*, however, is not our excellence; but as it is imparted and enjoyed, it is *THAT* which makes us to excel. Why are things so different and so distinct to be confounded?"—117.

Mr. M., I observe, amidst all his exclamations against *obscurity*, chooses to deal in very *vague* language. He talks of " *blessings* bestowed by the Holy Spirit— *blessings* which are the spring of new obedience, but which must not be degraded by the name of duty— *blessing* which is not our excellence, but  *THAT* which makes us to excel"—and yet, after all, he has not told us  *what this blessing is*; whether it is the *regenerating grace* of the Holy Spirit, that is, *Divine influence itself*; or whether it is a *new heart*, or *new spirit*, wrought by that influence. One should think he cannot mean the former, for  *that* he knows and acknowledges I never imagined to be any other than a  *blessing*,—125. And yet it is evident in some places that this is his meaning; particularly in p. 96, where he makes that which I suppose is required of men to be a "*possessing of the power of God!*" By  *blessing* he must mean, if he mean any thing different from his opponent, a *new heart*, *spirit*, or *disposition*; and since he sometimes distinguishes "*spiritual blessings* from the *energy* that gives us the enjoyment of them," (125,) and in the above passage confines all duty to *our acts*, thereby denying it to extend to *dispositions*, one should think he means to affirm that though mental *acts* may be duties, yet *dispositions* are not, but are *mere blessings*; and that these are *not our excellence*, but  *what cause us to excel*. To all which it is replied,

\* See my Treatise, Appendix.

I. Suppose all duty *were* confined to *our acts*, Mr. M., I presume, will not deny that believing in Christ is an *act of the mind*; and therefore, according to his own reasoning, it may be the duty of men in general, though, like other duty, it cannot be done without the Spirit of God. How then does he overthrow my *inference*? Has he not inadvertently confirmed it? Admitting that we need the Holy Spirit for *other* purposes as well as to enable us to do our duty—(indeed this is what I should never deny)—yea, admitting, for argument's sake, the *whole* of what he has here alleged to be just, believing in Christ may notwithstanding be a duty—a duty which we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to comply with, and which, therefore, in being a duty, is no way inconsistent with the doctrine of *Divine efficiency*. If Mr. M.'s reasonings affect any thing, it is not the duty of believing in Christ, but that of being the subjects of *spiritual dispositions*; and so of the *same thing*, in different respects, being *both* a duty and a blessing. How far this is affected remains to be examined.

II. Duty is *not* to be confined to *our acts*, it extends to our *dispositions*.—God requires that we “BE HOLY, *for that he is holy*”—that “*the SAME MIND BE IN US which was in Christ Jesus*”—that we BE “PERFECT, as our Father who is in heaven is perfect.”—If holy dispositions do not come under the denomination of *duties*, neither do unholy dispositions come under the denomination of *sins*; for where there is no obligation there can be no transgression—and so it will follow that a *proud, covetous, or malignant temper of mind* has nothing in it offensive to God, or worthy of his displeasure. Mr. M. would not be thought “so ignorant as not to perceive that the want of love to God is a DISPOSITION SO VILE as to admit of no excuse,”—88. But if duty be confined to *our acts*, how can *vileness* be attributed to any disposition. In that case it can be neither virtuous nor vicious.

III. If duty extend to the *temper, spirit, or disposition* of the mind, then it must follow that the *same thing may, in different respects, be both a duty and a blessing*.—It is admitted on all hands that holy dispositions, wherever they exist, *are blessings*; and if they come within the compass of duty, then they must be both duties and blessings. Every sinner is required “*to love God with all his heart*.” This *implies* a right spirit. A right spirit in this view is *duty*. But if any sinner *now possesses* such a spirit, it is in consequence of that promise, “A new heart will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them.” A right spirit in this view is a *blessing*.

Nobody imagines that blessing, considered *as such*, is our excellence; doubtless it is *that*, as Mr. M. says, “which makes us to excel.” But if the same thing in one respect may be a duty, as well as in another respect a blessing, then it may *in one respect* be our excellence after all. And is not this the very truth? Is not the *temper, spirit, or disposition* of the mind either its *excellence* or its *disgrace*? Is not that *new heart, and new spirit*, which is on all hands allowed to be a *blessing* of the Holy Spirit, our *excellence* as well as our *happiness*? Instead of making no part of our excellence, it makes the sum of it; for no *acts* are any further excellent, or virtuous, than as they are the expressions of such a disposition.

When I speak of the same thing, in different respects, being both a duty and a blessing, Mr. M. calls it *halving* the matter,—131. But this, I should think, will contribute but little to his “*reputation amongst competent judges*.” Is it *halving* of any thing to consider it differently in different respects? For example, is it *halving* or dividing the Deity to say that in different respects he is both *three and one*?

What Mr. M. has said against its being the duty of a bad man to be a good man, and against its being the duty of every good man to be as holy as

St. Paul, he may well think will be "considered by some as erroneous and dangerous,"—96. I should not exceed truth were I to say, those who have hitherto been Mr. M.'s best friends *detest* these principles; and in proportion as our Lord's doctrine, which requires us to be *perfect* even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect, is regarded, they must always be detested. If this is not *Antinomianism*, nothing ever deserved that name. There was a time when Mr. M. himself considered such notions as not only "*dangerous, but despicable.*"—End and Evid. of Adop. p. 46, 47.

It is a poor apology that he makes for himself, that he "only means to show that saying it is the duty of a bad man to MAKE HIMSELF a good man, and that it is the duty of a good man to MAKE HIMSELF the best man, is language of a dangerous tendency,"—96. Whether it is the duty of men to *make themselves* good men, or not, is not the question; such language, or such ideas, never proceeded from my pen; therefore Mr. M. cannot, with any just pretence, maintain that this is all he means to oppose. The thing which I affirm, and which he denies, is, that it is the duty of a bad man to BE a good man. The ground on which this affirmation rests is this, that the thing which God *directly* requires is THE HEART, and not barely a going about to use certain *means* and *endeavours* in order to make the heart better. If a righteous king confer with a number of his rebellious subjects, the thing that he requires is, that they BE WILLING to come under his government. If they allege that their hearts are averse, and they *cannot* obey him, he is never known to direct them to *means* and *endeavours* for changing their hearts. Such a direction would be beneath him; and such an allegation on their part would be looked upon as an open avowal of their rebellious intention, and the conference must immediately break up.

And thus it is in the *Scriptures*. The language of the Bible is not, "Use such and such means to *get those* dispositions of which you are at present destitute;" but, "BE YE HOLY, for I am holy."—"BE NOT wise in your own conceits."—"Let that mind BE IN YOU that was in Christ Jesus," &c. &c. That which God requires of men is not barely that they use certain *means* in order to bring their hearts to *love, repent, and believe*; he requires the *things themselves*. His language is, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.*"—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

The *grounds* on which Mr. M. supports his denial of its being the duty of a bad man to *be* a good man are such, as, if they prove any thing, will prove that it is not the duty of a villain to *be* an honest man; but barely to make certain *endeavours* towards it, which may or may not be effectual, as God shall please to bless them. But if such a character were a *debtor* to Mr. M., and were to urge that though he had *endeavoured* to his utmost to become of an honest mind, yet it had not pleased God, at present, to crown his endeavours with success; it is well if he was not treated as *uncivilly* as a supposed character of such a kind is said to have been treated by me,—117, 188.

If it is alleged that telling sinners it is their duty to *be* of such a temper of mind as they must know they are not, and telling them of no means by which they, *without possessing any true desire after it*, may become of such a temper, must needs drive them to *despair*—I answer, *First*, It is impossible, in the nature of things, for any means or directions to be given which those who have *no direct desire* after a right temper of mind may use in order to obtain such a temper. The use of a means always *implies* the *existence of desire* after the end; and the constitution of our souls must be altered before it can be otherwise. *Secondly*, It is true that such doctrine as this must drive sinners to *despair*; but it is such despair as must lie at



the foundation of all well-grounded hope. It was in this way that *sin revived*, and the apostle *died*. And after all that Mr. M. has said about *grace* and *Divine efficiency*, it is in this way, and not by his compromising notion of *endeavour*, that the sinner must be brought to feel himself utterly lost, absolutely at God's discretion, and in want of a saviour that shall save him, as one may say, in spite of himself.

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## LETTER V.

### HUMAN ENDEAVOUR.

HAVING in my last considered the subject of Divine efficiency, I shall now draw to a close with a few thoughts on Mr. M.'s notion of ENDEAVOUR. If there is any thing in Mr. M.'s performance from which his real sentiments can be gathered, it is this. All the rest is little more than an attempt to demolish. This is the ground on which he has taken his stand. It is not men's duty to *love God*, to *repent of sin*, to *believe in Christ*, to be *perfectly holy*; but to ENDEAVOUR a compliance with these things. It is their duty, it seems, not to *return* to the Lord, but barely to *pray* that they may be able to return—and so on of every internal exercise of religion,—75, 96. I have already dropped a few occasional hints on this notion, and shall now consider it more particularly. The following observations are offered to consideration.

I. This *endeavour* is supposed to have no certain connexion with the thing endeavoured after.—Mr. M. does not mean to say that that endeavour to *love God*, *repent of sin*, and *believe in Christ*, which he grants to be the duty of men, is such as, if exercised, would certainly issue in any of those things. If he did, the difference between us would not be very material. But this would be contrary to the tenor of what he has written, especially to pages 26, 27. According to Mr. M.'s notion, if I understand it, men may endeavour to love God, repent of sin, and believe in Christ, and so perform their whole duty, in that matter, and yet never be able to love him, believe in him, &c., no, not in the least degree; and so may die unconverted notwithstanding, and finally perish!

II. *Endeavour* is used by Mr. M. in opposition to *possession*. The thing that he all along opposes is, that men are obliged to *possess* spiritual dispositions; and this is what he substitutes in the place of such possession,—96. The endeavour, therefore, that he inculcates, must not imply the *possession* of any spiritual disposition whatever; no, nor of any *direct inclination* or *desire* after the things sought. If it did, endeavour would not be properly opposed to possession; for it is absurd to say that any thing is opposed to that which is necessarily included in it. And this seems to be the kind of endeavour that Mr. M. pleads for in page 26, where he says, "we must pray, as in truth we *can*, let our frame or state be what it may"—that is, if we have *no desire* after God in our hearts, we are only to take care that we pretend to none, and in this way we may pray with *integrity* and *uprightness*! But,

III. Seeking and endeavouring without the possession of any true desire after the things sought can be only *indirect*; and therefore can have *no true virtue* in it, but, on the contrary, is the essence of *hypocrisy*.—A disobedient son may know himself in danger of being disinherited by his father. He may, to avoid this, reform his conduct, conform in appearance to his father's

will, and *endeavour* to reconcile his mind to many things which in themselves he cordially hates. But such endeavour as this few will pretend has any virtue in it; and yet this is as much as Mr. M.'s notion of *endeavour* makes to be incumbent on men in general. If they are obliged to *seek* after God, to *pray* to him, to *strive* to enter in at the strait gate, yet they are not in all or any of these exercises obliged to *possess* any true desire after God, or the things for which they seek, for that would be the same as being obliged to possess spiritual dispositions. Mr. M.'s *endeavours*, therefore, are destitute of all true virtue; have nothing in them truly good, or acceptable to God; on the contrary, they are abominable in his sight, as containing the very essence of *hypocrisy*.

I can hardly persuade myself that Mr. M. really means to plead for such endeavours as these, though his account of the matter, taken altogether, can agree to no other. He would not wish, however, I dare say, to be an advocate for any other than *sincere* endeavours; that is, such a seeking and endeavouring as imply a *sincere desire* after the things sought for. Such *desire* he represents the supposed son of a deist, in his endeavours, to possess,—26. But if this is what he pleads for, then all the ends to be answered by it are lost; for he is then but just upon the same ground as his neighbours. If it is the duty of every man sincerely to endeavour to repent of sin, and believe in Christ, then it is his duty to *possess a sincere desire* to repent and believe; but that amounts to the same thing as its being his duty to possess spiritual dispositions. Mr. M. also, in pleading for this as the duty of men, pleads, just as his opponent does, for that which “never existed, nor ever will,”—120.\* Neither can he tell us of any *means* which those who have *no desire* to repent and believe may use in order to get such a desire; so that his reader is just as much perplexed as he supposes mine to be,—17. Such a *desire* also is a *blessing* as well as a duty. By the supposition it is the latter, and yet wherever it exists it is the former. It is wrought by Divine efficiency; it is the effect of being created anew in Christ Jesus, and stands connected with eternal life. And here Mr. M.'s unmeaning questions (pages 24, 25) might be retorted upon him—“Which must *take the lead*, the *blessing* or the *duty*?”—What he says, likewise, of my making it men's duty to be the *AUTHORS* of spiritual dispositions (202) falls equally upon himself. If it is men's duty *sincerely to endeavour*, then it is their duty to *have sincere desire*; but this amounts to as much as I have asserted, and may as well be called a making it the duty of men to be the *AUTHORS* of such desire, as any thing I have written can be called a making it their duty to be the *AUTHORS* of spiritual dispositions.—Thus Mr. M.'s notion of *endeavour* either obliges men to be *hypocrites*, or places him in the same situation as those he censures, and answers the substance of his own objections.

Mr. M.'s own ideas of the matter, however, are widely different. He seems to have such an opinion of this notion as to reckon it almost a sufficient ground for anticipating the issue of the contest, and enjoying beforehand the pleasure of a mental triumph. He requires “Mr. Fuller to show what it is that men are obliged to that is absolutely different from *endeavour*, and yet short of acting *efficiently*. Till this be done,” he adds, in a style peculiar to himself, “he may *write*, but it is supposed he can never write an *answer* to the governing propositions of this performance!”—154.

Truly I do not know that I have any material objection to comprehending the whole of human duty in *endeavour*, though not as explained by Mr.

\* “A freedom from condemnation sinners want to obtain; but a life of faith *in* Christ, and holiness *from* Christ, they do not so much as *desire* to enjoy; nor *ever will*, until the Lord takes away the heart of stone, and graciously bestows a heart of flesh.”—Mr. Martin's Sermon on Rom. x. 3, p. 32.

Martin. There is as much included in the word as I have ever pleaded for. First, Endeavour includes the utmost exertion of all our natural powers; but the utmost exertion of all our powers towards spiritual objects is spiritual exercise. Such *endeavour* as this to love, repent, and believe, (if it is proper to speak of such exercises as the objects of endeavour,) can never be in vain, because therein it is that *the things themselves consist*. The exertion or outgoings of the will and affections is the same thing as *choosing* and *loving*. *Seeking after God*, and such-like expressions, are always descriptive of *spiritual* exercise, of such exercise as is connected with eternal life.\* Secondly, Endeavour to perform spiritual actions, and to obtain spiritual blessings, instead of being opposed to the possession of spiritual disposition, necessarily implies it. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that we should directly and truly endeavour after that towards which we possess no real *desire*. No man ever yet *sought* after God, or *endeavoured* to please him, without *possessing* a love to him, and desire after him. Thus the whole of what I plead for is included in Mr. M.'s favourite word ENDEAVOUR.

Mr. M., before he has done, gives us to understand that, let the worst come to the worst, he is not without his resources of comfort. Suppose, for instance, it should prove that he is as *inconsistent* as he has attempted to prove his AUTHOR, even *that*, he thinks, will prove *one* point which he has long laboured to establish, namely, "*the weakness of the human understanding*,"—95. That is, it will prove the weakness of Mr. Martin's understanding. But possibly that may never have yet been called in question; or if it have, and if after "long labour" he may be supposed by this time to have put the matter out of all doubt, still it may not follow that, because his understanding is weak, therefore every one's else must needs be the same.

Seriously, was ever any question made of the weakness of the human understanding? Was it ever denied that our natural faculties are impaired, as well as our bodies subjected to disease, by the fall? True, it has been, and is supposed, that, let our natural faculties be impaired as they may, it is not our fault that we do not understand beyond their present extent, any more than it is the fault of a man born blind not to read his Bible. But the chief of what I have written upon the human understanding respects not its natural, but moral weakness; and has this ever been denied? Has it not all along been maintained that men are *blinded by prejudice*, and that even good men are infected with a sad degree of the same disease? And how if it should prove that Mr. M.'s mind is tinctured with such a degree of prejudice, in favour of his own ways of thinking, as that he has involved himself in far greater inconsistencies than those which he thinks he has discovered in the author whom he has censured? Will this affect any argument in debate between us? I appeal to you, sir, and to all "competent judges," whether Mr. M.'s understanding must not be weak indeed if he think it will.

But suppose Mr. M., instead of gaining, should lose the *prize* for which he is become a COMPETITOR, still he comforts himself that his ALL will not be lost. He has a stock of respectability that will yet be unexhausted. He does not mean therefore, at any rate, to indulge *despair*. So well established is his respectability, that even "Mr. Fuller," he thinks, "cannot hesitate to say that he is above contempt,"—208. Mr. M., I observe, though in general fond of *self-applause*, yet here appears hardly contented with it; he wishes, it seems, to know his AUTHOR'S opinion concerning him; but not having patience to wait for it, he ventures to anticipate the matter, and

\* See my Reply to Mr. Button.

decide it himself.—Had Mr. M. but given me leave to speak for myself, I cannot tell how much I might have said in his praise; as it is, I can only say that if I could have access to him, I would whisper in his ear these lines of Dr. Young:—

“Fame is a bubble the reserved enjoy;  
Who strive to grasp it, as they *touch, destroy*;  
'Tis the world's debt, to deeds of high degree;  
But if you pay *yourself*, the world is free.”

Seriously, is not Mr. M. ashamed? If he is not, must not his best friends be ashamed for him? and not only ashamed, but grieved, for the idea he gives the world of the motives of those who are engaged in what he calls a “serious altercation?”

I remain affectionately yours,

A. FULLER.

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### POSTSCRIPT.

You ask what I think of Mr. Martin's treatment of Mr. Evans, particularly “whether his gross misrepresentation of his meaning, page 70, is to be attributed to ignorance or malevolence?”

I think his treatment of Mr. Evans is of a piece with his treatment of others. Mr. M. seems to be so intoxicated with ideas of his own “reputation” as to be incapable of respecting the character of other men. Few people who may read the 69th, 70th, and 71st pages of his book will think he discovers much of the *Christian* or the *gentleman*; some may suppose, however, that he has shown himself the *man*, particularly by his daring manner of speaking concerning Mr. Evans's resentment. If manliness consisted in the swell of self-importance, or the bold dashes of insolence, Mr. Martin might well be entitled to that quality; but the boldest attempts to provoke another's resentment are not always the strongest indications of manly courage. There are cases which are *beneath* resentment—cases in which the assailant himself cannot have the vanity to expect it. I do suppose Mr. Martin never expected that Mr. Evans would take any notice of what he has written; and this might probably inspire him with courage to write as he did.

As to the passage in page 70, I think a very small share of candour and common sense would have construed Mr. Evans's words as meaning no more than that men in general have the command of all the members of the body, and *the use* of all the faculties of the soul. *Ignorance* and *malvolence*, however, are hard words, especially the latter; your “knowledge of Mr. Martin's character,” you say, “makes you hope it was the former.” For my part, I think it is very well that Mr. Martin has informed us (p. 70) that he is not under the influence of *ENVY*; for I confess I should otherwise have imputed his treatment of Mr. Evans to *that* cause; and even as it is, I know not upon what other principle to account for his harping upon the subject of “emolument.”

# ANTINOMIANISM

CONTRASTED

WITH THE RELIGION TAUGHT AND EXEMPLIFIED

IN

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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## INTRODUCTION.

WHEN we consider the awful strides which irreligion has lately made in the Christian world, it is almost enough to induce us to think favourably of any thing that bears the name of Christ—at least of any thing which professes to embrace the leading principles of the gospel: but thus it must not be. Irreligion is not so dangerous as false religion; the one is an enemy at a distance, the other at home. The more we are threatened by the former, therefore, the more necessary it is that we detect the latter. The friends of Christ, though they be but few, had better be by themselves. A little band girt with truth, and strengthened by the Lord of hosts, will do more execution than a heterogeneous mixture of friends and enemies.

It is one of the arts of the wily serpent, when he cannot prevent the introduction of the gospel into a place, to get it corrupted, by which means it is not only deprived of its wonted efficacy, but converted into an engine of destruction. In the early ages of the church, men rose up who advanced depreciating notions of the person, work, and grace of the Redeemer. These, however, were repelled, and a stigma fixed upon them, by the labours of the faithful; and though they have had their advocates in all succeeding ages, yet men have not been wanting who have exposed their fallacy; so much so, that the serious part of professing Christians have in a good measure united against them. But of late we have been taken as it were by surprise: while our best writers and preachers have been directing their whole force against Socinian, Arian, or Arminian heterodoxy, we are insensibly overrun by a system of false religion which has arisen and grown up among us under the names and forms of orthodoxy.

Several circumstances have concurred to render this system but little noticed. One is, its having been embraced not so much by the learned as by the illiterate part of professing Christians. Some of its principles, it is true, are common to every unrenewed mind; but, considered as a system, it is especially calculated for the vulgar meridian. On this account it has been treated as beneath the notice of the ablest writers. There is also something so low, foul, and scurrilous in the generality of the advocates of this system, that few have cared to encounter them, lest they should bring upon themselves a torrent of abuse. But though it is far from agreeable to have to do with such adversaries, yet it may be dangerous to treat their opinions

with contempt. The Roman empire was overturned by a horde of barbarians. An apostle did not think it beneath him to expose the principles of men who "crept in unawares, and turned the grace of God into lasciviousness."

The distinguishing *feature* of this species of religion is SELFISHNESS. Such is the doctrine, and such the spirit which it inspires. The love of God *as God*, or an affection to the Divine character as holy, is not in it. Love as exemplified in the Scriptures, though it can never be willing to be lost, (for that were contrary to its nature, which ever tends to a union with its object,) yet bears an invariable regard to the holy *name* or character of God. "How excellent is thy *name* in all the earth!"—"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his *name* together."—"Let them that love thy *name* say continually, The Lord be magnified."—"Blessed be his glorious *name* for ever and ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen." But love, as exemplified in the patrons of this system, is mere favouritism. God having as they conceive made them his favourites, he becomes on that account, and that only, a favourite with them. Nor does it appear to have any thing to do with good-will to men *as men*. The religion of the apostles was full of benevolence. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, they *persuaded* men, and even *brought* them to be reconciled to God. They had no hope of sinners complying with these persuasions of their own accord, any more than the prophet had in his address to the *dry bones* of the house of Israel; nor of one more being saved than they who were called according to the Divine purpose; but they considered election as the rule of God's conduct—not theirs. They wrote and preached Christ to sinners as freely as if no such doctrine existed. "These things are written," said they, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name." Jesus wept over the most wicked city in the world; and Paul, after all that he had said of the doctrine of election in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, protested that "his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved." He did not pray for them *as reprobates*, but as fellow sinners, and whose salvation while they were in the land of the living was to him an object of hope.—Though, in his treatment of the most decided enemies of the truth, he sometimes rebuked them sharply, and used an authority which was committed to him as an extraordinary character; yet there is no malignant bitterness or low abuse in his language. But the religion of which I speak is in all these respects the very opposite. It beseeches not the unconverted to be reconciled to God, because it is God only who can turn their hearts. It refuses to pray for their salvation, as not knowing whether it would not be praying for the salvation of the non-elect. It has no tears to shed over a perishing world, but consigns men to perdition with unfeeling calmness, and often with glee. And as to its adversaries, it preserves no measure of decency with them; personal invective, low scurrility, and foul abuse are the weapons of its warfare. Tell any of its advocates of their unchristian spirit towards all who are not of themselves, and you may expect to be answered in some such terms as these—I wish they were in hell: every one should be in his own place, and the sooner the better!

Nor is it less a stranger to the love of Christians *as Christians*. The religion of the New Testament makes much of this. It is that by which men were known to have passed from death to life; for the love of him that begat and of those who were begotten of him were inseparable. But the love which this species of religion inspires is mere party attachment, the regard of publicans and heathens, any of whom could *love those that loved them*. If any man oppose their opinions, whatever be his character for

sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, he is without hesitation pronounced graceless, a stranger to the new birth, and an enemy of Christ. Even an agreement in principles among the patrons of this religion, provided there be any competition in their worldly interests, produces not union, but rivalry; and every low method is practised to supplant each other in the esteem of the people. In various other systems, though you have to dig through the whole strata of error and superstition, yet you will occasionally discover a vein of serious and humble piety; but here all is naught. (I speak of the system as carried to perfection, and which in the present day it is to be hoped it is.) Here nothing is to be met with that resembles love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, or temperance; on the contrary, the fruits of this spirit are selfishness, pride, spleen, and bitterness, which, like the bowels of Vesuvius, are ever collecting or issuing in streams of death.

The *origin* of this species of religion in individuals will commonly I fear be found in a radical defect in their supposed conversion. True Scriptural conversion consists in "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But in many of these conversions there is no appearance of one or the other. With regard to repentance, the system goes in a great measure to preclude it. The manner in which it represents and dwells upon the fall of Adam, so as nearly to remove all accountability from his posterity, together with its denial in effect of the Divine authority over the heart, leaves no room for repentance, unless it be for a few gross immoralities. The sins of not loving God, and neglecting his great salvation, are entirely kept out of sight. Hence, though you may sometimes see in such conversions great terror of mind, and great joy succeeding to it; yet you will rarely perceive in the party, from first to last, any thing like ingenuous grief for having dishonoured God.

As repentance toward God has little if any place in such conversions, the same may be said of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The true believer, in his first looking to the Saviour for life, stands upon no higher ground than that of a sinner ready to perish. Whatever evidence he may have *afterwards* of his being one of God's chosen people, he can have none at that time; nor is it in this character that he applies for mercy. The gospel is that which first comforts him, or Christ's having come into the world to save the chief of sinners. But the conversions in question commonly originate in some supposed revelation to the party that he is of the number of God's elect, that Christ had died for him, and that of course he shall be for ever happy. Considering this as coming from God, he *believes it*, and thenceforth reckons himself possessed of the faith of God's elect. If afterwards he be troubled by the dictates of conscience with suspicions of self-deception, he calls these *temptations*, or the workings of *unbelief*, and supposes that the enemy of souls wants to rob him of his enjoyments. Neither his faith nor his unbelief has any respect to revealed truth; his whole concern is about his own safety.

It is of infinite importance that we be right in our first outset, and that we take up our rest in nothing short of Christ. When a sinner is convinced of his dangerous condition, fears and terrors will commonly possess him. If, under these impressions, he be led to relinquish all other confidences, and to fly for refuge to the hope set before him, all is well. But if, having left off a few of his immoralities, and conformed to the outward exercises of religion, without betaking himself wholly to Christ, he comforts himself that now he is, at least, in a fair way to eternal life, he is building on the sand, and may live and die a mere self-righteous Pharisee.

Or should he be deprived of his rest—should his fabric be demolished by

the blasts of new temptations, and his mind become rather appalled with fear than elated with self-confidence—if by this he be brought to give up his self-righteous hope, and come to Jesus as a sinner ready to perish, still it is well. “Such things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit.” But this is not always the issue. Longing for ease to his troubled spirit, he is in the most imminent danger of taking up his rest in any thing that will afford him a present relief; and if in such a state of mind he receive an impression that God has forgiven and accepted him, or read a book or hear a sermon favourable to such a mode of obtaining comfort, he will very probably imbibe it, and become inebriated with the delicious draught. And now he thinks he has discovered the light of life, and feels to have lost his burden. Being treated also as one of the dear children of God by others of the same mind, he is attached to his flatterers, and despises those as graceless who would wish to undeceive him!

Let us pause a minute, and reflect upon this deplorable case. There is no situation, perhaps, more perilous than that of an awakened sinner prior to his having closed with Christ. He is walking as upon enchanted ground, and is in the utmost danger of falling asleep in one or other of its arbours. Nor is there any case in which it is of greater importance to administer right counsel. To go about to comfort such persons on the ground of their present distress, telling them, as some do, that the Lord first wounds, and then heals, and that their feeling the former is a sign that in due time they will experience the latter, is to be aiding and abetting them in what may prove their eternal ruin. The mischief in these instances arises from a false notion of the case of the awakened sinner, as though he were really willing and even anxiously desirous of being saved in God’s way, if it would but please God to consent that he might, and to signify that consent by revealing it to him. So he thinks of himself, and so his advisers think of him. But the truth is, he is not straitened in God, but in his own bowels. The fountain is open; the Spirit saith, Come, and the bride saith, Come, and whosoever will may come, and partake of the water of life freely. God’s word directs him to the good way, and counsels him to walk in it, promising that in so doing he shall find rest to his soul. Nothing hinders his coming but a secret attachment to his idols, which on coming he is aware must be relinquished. The only comfort that we are warranted to hold up to one in such circumstances is that of Jesus Christ having come into the world to save sinners, and of his being able and willing to save all them that come unto God by him. If this afford no consolation, it is at our peril to console him from what he feels in himself, which, till he falls as a sinner ready to perish at the feet of Jesus, is nothing better than the impenitent distress of a Cain, a Saul, or a Judas. It *may* terminate in a better issue, and it may not. Our business is to point to the gospel refuge; teaching, entreating, and warning him to flee thither from the wrath to come.

If once a sinner derives comfort from any thing short of Christ, he from thence falls asleep in security; and it is well if he awakes in this world. He has obtained a kind of “rest for his soul” without “coming to him for it,” which must needs therefore be delusive. Stupified by the intoxicating potion, he dreams of being a favourite of Heaven, and if any attempt to disturb his repose, it is commonly without effect. “They have smitten me, (saith he,) and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not; when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.” Such, or nearly such, is very frequently the beginning of Antinomian religion.

I call those convictions, terrors, and joys *selfish* which have no regard to the glory of God, but merely to one’s own safety. Every one that knows any thing of true religion will allow an essential difference between terror



on account of the consequences of sin, and an ingenuous grief for having sinned; and the difference is not less between the joy of an imagined safety, (no matter how,) and that which arises from a believing view of the doctrine of the cross. Moreover, I call those impressions *delusive* in which it is *not any part of revealed truth* which is impressed upon the mind, but a persuasion of our being the favourites of Heaven, loved with an everlasting love, and interested in the blessings of the covenant of grace. Nor is it of any account that the impression may have been made by means of some passage of God's word occurring to the mind; the question is, whether the idea impressed be revealed truth. Satan, we know, has made use of Scripture passages for the purpose of impressing falsehood, Matt. iv.; and where the true meaning of God's word is perverted, and something inferred from it which never was in it, there is reason to think he does the same still. That God's love is everlasting, and that the covenant of grace abounds with blessings, is true; but it is no where revealed of any person in particular that he is interested in them. The promises of God are addressed to men under certain descriptive *characters*, in the manner of the beatitudes in our Lord's sermon on the mount; nor can we know our interest in them otherwise than by a *consciousness* of these characters belonging to us. To imagine that it is immediately revealed to us by the Spirit of God is to suppose that the Spirit's work is not "to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us;" but to disclose other things which were never before revealed.

If "the truth as it is in Jesus" be impressed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whether it be by reading, or hearing, or thinking—whether by any particular passage of Scripture or by some leading truth contained in it occurring to the mind—it will operate to produce humility. To be impressed, for instance, with a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, with the love of God in the gift of his Son, with the love of Christ in dying for the ungodly, with his all-sufficiency and readiness to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, or with the freeness of his grace to the most guilty and unworthy, is the same thing as to be made to feel the influence of that gospel which lays low the pride of man. The *manner* in which these things are impressed upon the mind may be various. I have no doubt but that some conversions which have been very extraordinary have been nevertheless genuine; for the things impressed are true, and might be proved true from the Scriptures; the effects produced also are such as bespeak them to be wrought by the finger of God. But impressions of that which is not truth, or at least not any part of revealed truth, and the tendency of which is to inspire vain-confidence, self-admiration, and a bitter contempt of others, cannot proceed from that Spirit whose office is to lead us into the truth, and whose influence, no less than his nature, is *holy*. No sooner is this marvellous light discovered than the discoverer, encouraged by the example of others, is qualified to decide upon characters; as who are gracious, and who are graceless; and this not by the rule laid down in the Scriptures, but by his own experience, which he sets up as a standard by which others are to be tried. He is also qualified to distinguish between true and false ministers; this is legal, that is dead, and the other knows little or nothing of the gospel; not because their preaching is unscriptural, or unaccompanied with a holy life, but because it does not yield him comfort, nor accord with his experience. It is also remarkable that, in such conversions, *repentance for past sins* has no place. The party, it is true, will talk of his past sins, even such as decency would forbear to mention; but without any signs of shame or godly sorrow on account of them. On the contrary, it is not uncommon to hear them narrated and dwelt upon with apparent glee, accompanied with occasional turns of wit and humour, suffi-

ciently evincing that they are far from being remembered with bitterness of soul. Genuine conversion includes genuine repentance, and genuine repentance looks back upon past sins with silent shame and confusion of face "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." But conversions like the above are noisy and ostentatious. The party, having forsaken a few gross immoralities, imagines himself a prodigy of grace, boasting of the wonderful change, and challenging his adversaries to accuse him of evil from the time of his supposed conversion. But he that *lacketh* that *faith* which is followed by "virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." When old sins are related with new gust, they are reacted, and, lightly as it may be thought of, recommitted. I know of nothing that bears so striking a resemblance to such conversions as the case of the demoniac described by Matthew. Under first convictions and terrors of conscience, "the unclean spirit," by which the sinner has hitherto been governed, "goeth out of him;" and, while "seeking rest" in some other habitation, the house is "swept" of its former filth, and "garnished" with the appearance of religion: still, however, it remains "empty," or unoccupied by the Spirit of God. Encouraged by so flattering a prospect, the demon "goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The former was a state of irreligion, the latter of false religion: in the one case he was void of light; in the other, the light which is in him is darkness.

Neither are these delusive impulses confined to the beginning of a religious profession, but generally accompany it in all its stages; and in every stage produce a most intolerable degree of spiritual pride. Such persons value themselves as the special favourites of the Almighty, with whom he is on terms of the greatest intimacy, making them, as it were, his confidants, revealing to them the secrets of his heart. Almost all the future events in their own lives, whether prosperous or adverse, with many things in the lives of others, are revealed to them, and not unfrequently their eternal destinies. And these are supposed to be "the secrets of the Lord which are with them that fear him!"

Another mark of this species of religion, nearly akin to the former, and commonly seen in persons of that description, is a *disposition to interpret all favourable events in providence as proofs of their being the favourites of Heaven; and all unfavourable events towards their adversaries as judgments for their conduct towards them, and, as it were, an avenging of their quarrels*. This is a natural and necessary effect of a selfish religion. Supreme self-love, like every thing else which is supreme, subordinates every thing else to it. If men be governed by this principle, there is nothing in the word or providence of God, in the law, in the gospel, nor even in God himself, which attracts esteem, but as it is subservient to the gratification of their desires. I knew a person of this description who came to the possession of a large estate. He was much elated by it, often talking of providence, and exulting in his success, as an instance of eternal predestination. In a little time, however, there arose another claimant, who, by legal process, wrested it out of his hands. After this, no more was heard of providence or predestination. From wishing every thing to be subservient to the gratification of self, it is an easy transition to think it is so; for opinions are greatly governed by desires. Hence, if an adversary be unsuccessful in business, it is the blast of God upon him; if afflictions befall him, they are

the arrows of the Almighty discharged at him; or if he die, he is cut off as a monument of Divine displeasure; and *all because he has offended God, by offending this his peculiar favourite!*

A truly humble Christian will regard the providence of God in all things; yet, knowing that "one event happeneth to all," he is far from considering its bounties as any proof of an interest in special grace. Neither will he set up his present accommodation as a matter of so much consequence that heaven, and earth, and all which in them is, should be rendered subservient to it. Nor is he disposed to triumph over an adversary when evil befalls him; nor to imagine that it is in just judgment for the offences committed *against* him. It is said of Lady Rachel Russell, whose lord was beheaded in the latter end of the reign of Charles II., that, "In the free effusions of her heart to her most intimate friends, with the constant moans of grief for the loss of her dear husband, there did not appear, in all her letters, so much as one trace of keen resentment, or reflection upon any person whatever that had any concern in his death, if rather it may not be called his *murder*. If the duke of York was so malignant as to instigate his brother, King Charles, to be inexorable to the applications that were made for Lord Russell's life, and even to propose that he should be executed at his own door, the good lady drops no censures upon him; and even after James II. was no more king, but a wanderer in a foreign land, there is nothing like a triumph over him, or an intimation from her ladyship that she thought he was justly punished for his bloody crimes.—Even the inhuman Jefferies himself, who distinguished himself by a flaming speech against Lord Russell at his trial, is passed over in silence by her. She takes not the least notice of his disgrace, imprisonment, and death in the Tower, owing, as it has been thought, to the blows he received while in the hands of an enraged populace."\*

This is the spirit possessed by the first character of his age, holy Job, who stood accused, notwithstanding, by those who judged of characters by the events which befell them, of being a wicked man and a hypocrite. "He rejoiced not at the destruction of him that hated him—neither did he suffer his mouth to sin by wishing a curse for his soul."

One would think it did not require any extraordinary discernment to discover that this is true religion, and that it will be approved at that tribunal where a spirit of pride and malignity will be ashamed to show its face.

Far be it from me to suggest that all who have cherished notions which belong to this system are destitute of true religion. It is not for us to pronounce upon the degree of error which may be permitted to accompany the truth. I have no doubt but that many good men have been deeply tinctured with these principles, though it is not from them that their goodness has proceeded. I believe, however, that this was more the case formerly than at present. Of late years the true character of the system has been more manifest. Its adherents having proceeded to greater lengths than their predecessors, both in theory and practice, upright characters, who for a time were beguiled by its specious pretences of magnifying grace and abasing human pride, have perceived its real tendency, and receded.

What I have to offer will be comprehended in three parts: the first containing a brief view of the system—the second its influence on some of the principal doctrines of the gospel—and the third its practical efficacy on the spirit and conduct of its professors.†

\* Dr. Gibbon's Memoirs of Eminent Pious Women, Vol. I.

† The author left the MS. in an unfinished state, not having entered on the third part.—ED.

## PART I.

CONTAINING A BRIEF VIEW OF ANTINOMIANISM, WITH ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE LEADING PRINCIPLE FROM WHICH IT IS DENOMINATED.

THE names given to the different systems or doctrines of religion are seldom so accurate as to render it safe to rest our opinions upon them. They may be supposed to have been first conferred either by friends or enemies: if by the former, they commonly assume the question at issue; and if by the latter, they are as commonly mere terms of reproach. But allowing them to have been conferred impartially, yet it is next to impossible for a name to express more than some one or two leading doctrines pertaining to a system. Unitarianism, for instance, not only assumes more than its opponents can grant, but, admitting its fairness, it expresses scarcely a tenth part of the principles of the people who wish to be denominated by it. It is thus in part with respect to Antinomianism. The name signifies *that which is contrary to the law*; because those who are denominated Antinomians profess to renounce the moral law as a rule of conduct, and maintain that as believers in Christ they are delivered from it. This appellation, so far as it goes, seems to be appropriate; but it is far from expressing all the distinguishing opinions of which the system is composed. It may be found, however, to be that which the corner-stone is to the building. The moral government of God lies at the foundation of all true religion, and an opposition to it must needs be followed by the most serious consequences. If there be no law, their is no transgression; and if no transgression, no need of forgiveness. Or if there be a law, yet if it be unjust or cruel, either with respect to its precepts or penalties, it is so far no sin to transgress it, and so far we stand in no need of mercy. Or if there be a just law, yet if on any consideration its authority over us be set aside, we are from that time incapable of sinning, and stand in no need of mercy. The sum is, that whatever goes to disown or weaken the authority of the law, goes to overturn the gospel and all true religion.

It has been said that every unregenerate sinner has the heart of a Pharisee. This is true; and it is equally true that every unregenerate sinner has the heart of an Antinomian. It is the character expressly given to the carnal mind, that it is "enmity against God;" and the proof of this is that it "*is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*" Nor is it surprising that these two apparently opposite principles should meet in the same mind. There is no more real opposition between them than there is between enmity and pride. Many a slothful servant hates his master and his service, and yet has pride and presumption enough to claim the reward. It is one thing to be attached to the law, and another to be *of the works of the law*. The former is what David and Paul, and all the true servants of God, have ever been, loving and delighting in it after the inner man; the latter is what the unbelieving Jews were; who, though they none of them kept the law, yet presumptuously expected eternal life for their supposed conformity to it. The quarrels between Antinomianism and Pharisaism arise, I think, more from misunderstanding than from any real antipathy between them. They will often unite, like Herod and Pontius Pilate, against the truth and true religion.

The spirit of Antinomianism is to fall out with the government of God, to raise objections against it as rigorous and cruel, to find excuses for sin committed against it, and to seize on every thing that affords the shadow of

an argument for casting it off; but all this is common to every carnal mind. If our Antinomians could pay a visit to the heathens of Hindoostan, (and probably the same might be said of heathens in general,) they would find millions on millions of their own way of thinking.\* Nor need they go so far from home: among the apostles of modern infidelity the same thing may be found in substance. The doctrine of necessity, *as embraced by them*,† reduces man to a machine, destroys his accountableness, and casts the blame of sin upon his Creator. The body of these systems may be diverse, but the spirit that animates them is the same.

Antinomianism, having annihilated moral obligation, might be expected to lead its votaries to the denial of sin; yet, strange as it may appear, there is scarcely any people who speak of their sins in such exaggerating language, or who make use of such degrading epithets concerning their character, as they. But the truth is, they have affixed such ideas to sin as divest it of every thing criminal, blameworthy, or humiliating to themselves. By sin they do not appear to mean their being or doing what they ought not to be or do, but something which operates in them without their concurrence. In all the conversations that I have had with persons who delight in thus magnifying their sins, I cannot recollect an instance in which they appeared to consider themselves as inexcusable, or indeed ever the worse on account of them. On the contrary, it is common to hear them speak of their sinful nature with the greatest levity, and, with a sort of cunning smile in their countenances, profess to be as bad as Satan himself; manifestly with the design of being thought deep Christians, thoroughly acquainted with the plague of their own heart.

There are two principal grounds on which moral government and accountableness are by this system explained away; namely, the *inability of man*, and the *liberty and privileges of the gospel*. The former applies to the unregenerate who pretend to no religion, and serves to keep them easy in their sins; the latter to those who consider themselves as regenerate, and serves to cherish in them spiritual pride, slothfulness, and presumption.

It is undoubtedly true that the Scriptures represent man by nature as unable to do any good thing; that is, they declare that an evil tree *cannot* bring forth good fruit; that they who are evil *cannot* speak good things; that they whose eyes are full of adultery *cannot* cease from sin; that they who are in the flesh *cannot* please God; finally, that they whose hearts are attached to their idols, or to the mammon of this world, *cannot* serve the Lord.‡ This doctrine, if properly understood, is of great account in true religion. Hence arises the necessity of our being created anew in Christ Jesus ere we can perform good works; and of our being continually kept from falling by the power of God. He that has the greatest sense of his own weakness and insufficiency to do any thing as he ought, will be most earnest in crying to the strong for strength, and most watchful against the temptations of the world. It is thus that "when we are weak, then are we strong." But if this doctrine be confounded with physical inability, and understood to excuse the sinner in his sins, it is utterly perverted. If the connexion of the above passages were consulted, they would be found to be the language of the most cutting reproach; manifestly proving that the inability of the parties arose from the evil dispositions of their own minds, and therefore had not the least tendency to render them less accountable to God, or more excusable in their sins; yet such, in spite of Scripture, conscience, and common sense, is the construction put upon it by Antinomianism.

\* See *Periodical Accounts*, Vol. I. pp. 227, 228.

† See *A View of Religions*, by Hannah Adams, Article *Necessarians*.

‡ Matt. vii. 18; xii. 34; 2 Pet. ii. 14; Rom. viii. 8; Josh. xxiv. 19-23; Matt. vi. 24.

Let a minister of Christ warn the ungodly part of his audience of their danger, and exhort them to flee for refuge to the hope set before them; and if they have learned this creed, they will reply, We can do nothing. We *desire* to repent and be converted; but it is God only, you know, that can convert us. All that we can do is to lie in the way, and wait at the pool for the moving of the waters.—Let him visit his hearers upon a bed of affliction, and endeavour to impress them with a sense of their sin, in having lived all their days in a neglect of the great salvation, and of their danger while they continue the enemies of Jesus Christ—if they have learned this system, he will be told that they have done all that they *could*, or nearly so; that they *wish* for nothing more than to repent and believe in Christ, but that they can as easily take wings and fly to heaven as do either. Thus they flatter themselves that *they are willing*, only that God is not willing to concur with their sincere desires; whereas the truth is no such desires exist in their minds, but merely a wish to escape eternal misery; and the want of them, together with a strong attachment to their present course, constitutes the very inability of which they are the subjects. Here, too, we see how the Antinomian can occasionally unite with the self-righteous Pharisee. The latter will insist upon the goodness of his *heart*; and the former tells you he *wishes*, he *desires*, he *means* well; but he cannot do it of himself, and God it seems will not help him: but what do all these pretended good wishes and desires amount to short of a good heart? The thing is the same, only expressed in somewhat different language.

It is remarkable that we never read of this kind of answers being given to the exhortations in holy writ. Wicked men of old were, in times of trouble, exhorted to “stand in the ways, and see, to ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and to walk therein,” and were told that in so doing they should “find rest unto their souls.” To this they roundly answered, “We will not walk therein.” Had these people understood the modern Antinomian refinements, they might, I think, have come off with somewhat a better grace, by alleging their inability; but it does not appear that they were acquainted with them, and therefore the true cause was assigned without ceremony or disguise.—When John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, exhorted their hearers to “repent and believe the gospel,” if they had been acquainted with these notions, they might have answered, We *wish* to do so; but Jesus himself acknowledges that no one *can* come to him “except the Father draw him:” the fault, therefore, is not in us. But this method of repelling the truth seems to have been reserved for later ages. I recollect nothing that bears any resemblance to it in the Scriptures, unless it be the words of certain ungodly men in the times of Jeremiah, who said, “We are delivered to do all these abominations;” and the objection introduced by Paul, “Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?” These men seem to have been acquainted with that part of the system which finds an excuse in the doctrine of Divine decrees; but even they do not appear to have learned to plead innocent on the score of inability. And wherefore? Because they were conscious that it lay in the state of their own minds. When asked, therefore, by our Saviour, “How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?” so far were they from imagining that he meant to excuse them, that they considered his words as the most pointed reproach.

With respect to *the liberty and privileges of the gospel*, it is a truth full of the richest consolation, that those who believe in Jesus are freed, not only from the ceremonial yoke of the Mosaic dispensation, but from the condemning power of the law considered as moral. It is by faith in Christ that believers live. All their hope is derived from his righteousness, which being imputed to them, they are accepted of God on account of it. Being

“not under the law” as a covenant, “but under grace,” sin hath no more dominion over them.—But surely it does not follow that they are no longer under obligation to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, or their neighbour as themselves.\* The prodigal son, when forgiven and accepted, was not less obliged to conform to the orders of his father’s house than before he left it, but rather the more so.

I shall conclude this part by offering proof that though the law is dead to a believer, and a believer to it, as *a term of life*, yet he is under perpetual and indissoluble obligation to conform to it as *a rule of conduct*.

To satisfy a serious and sincere mind on this subject, one would think it were sufficient to read the ten commandments in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. Is a believer, any more than an unbeliever, allowed to have more gods than one? May he make to himself a graven image, and fall down and worship it? Will the Lord hold him guiltless if he take his name in vain? Is he not obliged to keep holy the sabbath day? Is he at liberty to dishonour his parents, or kill his neighbours, or commit adultery, or steal, or bear false witness, or covet any thing belonging to another? Surely the things which are required by all these precepts must approve themselves to every man’s conscience, unless it be perverted and seared as with a hot iron.

But in order to set aside the authority of the ten commandments as a rule of duty to the believer, it has been objected that they do not contain *the whole of it*. If this were granted, yet it would not follow but that they are binding as far as they go; but if so, why pretend to be delivered from the law? The new commandment of Christ, to love another, does not include the whole of duty, and yet we are not free from obligation to comply with it. If the ten commandments were admitted to be binding as far as they go, their comprehending the whole of duty would be a question of comparatively small importance; but the manifest design of the objector is, by undermining their perfection, to overturn their authority, that, having freed himself from this disagreeable yoke, he may establish what he calls Christian liberty.

To show the perfection, then, as well as the authority of the ten commandments, let it suffice to have recourse to our Saviour’s exposition of them. If that exposition be faithful, they are reducible to two, answering to the tables of stone on which they were written, and consisting in “love to God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to our neighbour as ourselves.” But love to God and our neighbour comprehends every act of duty that can possibly be performed. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and of all that God requires of man. It is the principle of all positive obedience; for he that loveth God supremely willingly obeys him in whatever forms he shall prescribe. The new commandment, of love to the brethren, is comprehended in the old commandment; for he that loveth God cannot but love his image wherever it is seen. Hence the former is enforced by the latter, Gal. v. 13–15; Rom. xiii. 8–12. All the graces of the Spirit, as repentance, faith, hope, charity, patience, temperance, goodness, &c., are but so many modifications of love. He that loveth God cannot but be grieved for having dishonoured him; cannot but believe his word, and embrace his way of saving sinners through the death of his Son; cannot but build his expectations upon his promises; cannot but love those that love him; cannot but take every thing well at his hand; in short, cannot but deny himself for his sake, and aspire to be of his mind,

\* See Dr. Ryland’s Sermon before the Association at Salisbury, entitled, *The Dependence of the Whole Law and the Prophets on the Two Primary Commandments*, 1798. Also his Sermon before the Association at Lyme, on *The Necessity of the Trumpet’s giving a Certain Sound*, 1813.

who causeth his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and upon the unjust. Upon this great principle, therefore, as our Lord observed, "hang all the law and the prophets," and indeed the whole of true religion.

Yes, say some, we must be ruled by a *principle* of love; but not by the law as requiring it: the love of Christ constrains the believer to be zealous in the performance of good works.—It is true, we shall never love without a principle, nor run in the ways of God's commandments, unless constrained to do so by a gracious enlargement of heart. Nor does any thing afford so powerful a motive to it as the dying love of Christ. But to make that the rule which is the moving spring of obedience is to confound things essentially different. "The way of God's commandments" is the same, whether our hearts be "enlarged to run therein" or not. To confound the rule with the moving cause, or to make a rule of the latter to the exclusion of that which is afforded by the commandment, is to reduce our obligation to the standard of our inclinations, or to consider ourselves as bound to yield just so much obedience to God as we do yield, and no more; and this is the same thing as professing to live free from sin. Moreover, to make that the rule of obedience which is the moving cause of it, is the same thing as for a son to say to his father, Sir, I will do what you desire me when I feel inclined to do so, but I will not be *commanded*.—Whatever may be argued against the authority of God, I believe there are few if any parents who could put up with such language with respect to their own.

In addition to the above, let the following particulars be duly considered:—

I. If we be not under the moral law as a rule of life, we are not *obliged* to love either God or man, and it is no *sin* to be destitute of love to both. But such a state of things can never exist. The obligation to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves, is founded in our relation to him and one another, and cannot possibly be dissolved while God is God and man is man. To suppose the contrary, is to suppose that the King of the universe can abdicate his throne, and leave his subjects at liberty to hate and rebel against him with impunity. If all the fathers of families in the world could dispense with filial affection in their children, and all the princes in the world with loyal attachment in their subjects, it were less unnatural, and infinitely less mischievous, than for God to dispense with the requirement of our loving him supremely, and each other as ourselves.

II. Believers are represented as subject to commit sin, and as actually committing it every day of their lives. The petition for daily forgiveness, in the Lord's prayer, supposes this; and John teaches that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But all sin implies a law of which it is the breach: "Where no law is, there is no transgression." Believers, therefore, must be under some law. And that this is no other than the moral law is evident from the definition which is given of sin by the apostle John, that it is "the transgression of *the law*." This is the same as saying that every sin which is committed, whether by believers or unbelievers, is a deviation from that Divine rule. The sum is, if believers daily break the law, they must of necessity be under it as a rule of duty.

If the law were abrogated, or its authority superseded, so as to be no longer a rule of duty to believers, it could be no medium to *them* by which to come at the knowledge of sin. That by which sin is known must be a living rule. To say otherwise is as absurd as to judge of the criminality of a prisoner by a statute which had been long since repealed.

III. One great and leading design of our Lord, in his sermon on the



mount, was to vindicate the precepts of the moral law from the false glosses of Jewish rabbies, and to show that in their most spiritual meaning they were binding upon his followers. Coming into the world, as he did, to introduce a new dispensation, he was aware that men might suppose his mission was at variance with Moses and the prophets. To prevent such conceits, he speaks in the most decided language—"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." He also goes on to warn his followers against those who should "break the least of the commandments, and teach men so;" and to declare that "except their righteousness exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." To say that we need the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to us is to speak truth, but not the truth of this saying, the manifest design of which is to inculcate a purer morality than that which was taught and practised by the Jewish leaders.

The advocates of the system I oppose are offended at the very terms *practical preaching* and *practical religion*; yet the sermon on the mount was full of it. The solemn and impressive similitude with which it closes is in the same practical strain. He that heareth his sayings, and *doeth* them, he buildeth his house upon a rock; and he that heareth, but *doeth* them not, buildeth his house upon the sand. It was not our Lord's design, indeed, to hold up any of our doings as the rock, but as *building our house upon a rock*; and which none do but those whose faith is operative and practical. Had this sermon been heard by many a modern audience, it would have been condemned as legal, and the preacher pronounced a poor graceless wretch, who knew nothing of the gospel.

IV. Believers are exhorted, in the New Testament, to love one another, on the express ground of its being a requirement of the moral law. "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." If the "liberty" possessed by the Galatians consisted in a freedom from obligation to obey the precepts of the moral law, it is passing strange that these very precepts should be urged as an authority against their using liberty as an occasion to the flesh. Paul, whatever some of his professed admirers have been, was assuredly a better reasoner than this would make him. The liberty of the gospel includes an exemption from the precepts of the ceremonial law, and from the curse or condemning power of the moral law; and these were privileges of inestimable value. They were, however, capable of abuse; and, to guard against this, the holy *precept* of the law, notwithstanding the removal of its penalty, is held up by the apostle in all its native and inalienable authority. To the same purpose the apostle, writing to the believing Romans, inculcates brotherly love and purity from the authority of the moral law. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.\* But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." If any man can read this passage without perceiving that the precepts of the moral law are still binding on believers, he must be proof against evidence: and with such a person it is in vain to reason. If God give him not repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, he must e'en go on, and abide the consequences.

V. Believers are either under the law (in the sense in which we plead for it) or "without law." By the language of the apostle there can be no medium. There is no other way of exonerating ourselves from the charge of being "without law to God," but by acknowledging that we are "under the law to Christ." Such was the acknowledgment of Paul in behalf of the primitive Christians; "To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law." His words plainly intimate a change, indeed, in its administration; but not of the thing itself. Formerly it was administered by Moses, and attended with that terrific aspect which properly pertains to it when addressed to transgressors; now it is administered by Christ, who has placed it at the foundation of his legislative code, and, by divesting it of its curse, has rendered it to the believer a friendly guide. But the thing itself is the same, and will remain so when heaven and earth shall have passed away.

VI. Those who have the greatest aversion to the law being a rule of life, yet are very willing that others should make it the rule of their conduct towards them. Whether they are bound to love their neighbours as themselves, or not, if they are treated unkindly or unjustly, even by their brethren, they are as much alive to resentment as any other people. But if they be not obliged to love others, why should others be obliged to love them? and why should they be offended with them for the contrary? And if the second table of the law be mutually binding, on what ground can we plead exemption from the first?

We have often heard it intimated that the obligation of sinful creatures to love God with all their hearts is very difficult to be understood; yet we can any of us understand, with the greatest ease, the obligations which others are under to us. If a man be a kind and good father, he feels no difficulty in understanding the fitness and reasonableness of his children loving him, and that with the most unfeigned affection: receiving his instructions, following his example, and taking pleasure in obeying his will. Should any one of them be ungrateful or disobedient, and plead that he *could not* love his father, nor take pleasure in obeying him, he would instantly perceive that what was alleged as his excuse was the very height of his disobedience, of which he ought to be ashamed. Yet, when God is concerned, the same man will tell you, We are poor sinners, and cannot love him; and as to your nice distinctions between natural and moral inability, we cannot understand them: if we are unable, we are unable; and it does not signify of what kind the inability is.

So also when we insist on every person or thing being loved in subordination to the blessed God, and every action done with a view to his glory, it is objected that the subject is too abstruse and metaphysical for common Christians to understand it. Yet I never knew a Christian, or any man, but who could pretty well take in the doctrine of *subserviency* as it related to him-

\* Even the terms, "Let us," &c., have of late given offence to some hearers, as savouring of legality; yet Paul's writings abound with such language.

self. He can easily understand that a servant whom he pays for his time and labour ought to lay them out in promoting *his* interest, and not merely his own; and if such servant, when pursuing his own private interest, should accidentally, or without design, promote that of his master, would his master thank him for it, or think a whit better of him on account of it? No, in all these things man is wise in his generation; it is only where God and religion are concerned that he finds such insuperable difficulties. Every nation, community, or individual knows how to set itself up as *supreme*, and to wish for all others to be rendered *subservient* to its interests. Man, by his ingenuity, can draw into subordination to himself the light, the darkness, the fire, the water, the air, the earth, the animals, and almost every thing else that comes within his reach; but man cannot understand the abstruse doctrine of loving every thing in subordination to his Creator, and doing every thing in subserviency to his glory!

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## PART II.

### THE INFLUENCE OF ANTINOMIANISM IN PERVERTING SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.

If the law and the gospel be in harmony—(which if the author of both be immutable they are)—it may be expected that the same great design pervades them both. Such is the fact. The law requires us to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. Had this requirement been obeyed, the honour of God and the happiness of creatures had been for ever united. But men by sin *have fallen into a gulf of selfishness*. They neither love God, nor their neighbours for his sake. They are “lovers of their own selves;” and care for neither God nor man any further than as they conceive them to be necessary for their own happiness. But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the corruption of human nature, God sent his Son to accomplish. God would be glorified in Christ, though men had dishonoured him; and though they had incurred his wrath, and become hateful and hating one another, yet peace and reconciliation should be restored to him. Hence, on his first appearance on earth, the angels, entering into the grand design of his coming, sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men!”

But if the law and the gospel be in harmony, they that fall out with the one must fall out with the other. A scheme that sets out with rejecting all obligation to the love of God and man cannot be friendly to either, nor to that gospel whose tendency is to promote them. It must be a mere system of *selfishness*; suited not to the condition, but to the propensities of fallen creatures.

It might be expected that a system founded on such a principle would go on to a flat denial of most of the doctrines of Divine revelation. It is not so, however; the forms of orthodoxy are in general retained; it is the ideas chiefly that are given up. The same terms may be used by different persons to express very different ideas. The Jews in our Saviour's time professed the same creed, perhaps, in the main, as their forefathers. They reckoned themselves, at least, to believe in Moses; but, holding with Moses to the exclusion of Christ, their faith was so different from that of their forefathers as to become void. “If ye believed Moses,” said our Lord, “ye would have

believed me; for he wrote of me." From the same principle it follows that the faith of those who hold with Christ to the exclusion of Moses is void; for if they believed one, they would believe the other, seeing both are in perfect harmony.

The doctrine of *election*, as it is taught in the Scriptures, is of a humbling and holy tendency. The whole difference between the saved and the lost being ascribed to sovereign grace, the pride of man is abased. Upon every other principle, it is the sinner that makes himself to differ; and who must, therefore, find whereof to glory. We may allow ourselves to be unable to repent and believe without the *aids* of the Holy Spirit; but while we maintain that these aids are afforded to sinners in common, and that faith, instead of being "the gift of God," is the effect of our having improved the help afforded, while others neglected it, if we think we do not ascribe the very turning point of salvation to our own virtue, we greatly deceive ourselves. But *election*, while it places no bar in the way of any man which would not have been there without it, resolves the salvation of the saved into *mere grace*: "and if of grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Such a view of things tends to humble us in the dust. It is frequently the last point which a sinner yields to God; it is the giving up of every other claim and ground of hope from his own good endeavours, and falling into the arms of sovereign mercy. And having here found rest to his soul, he will not be less, but more attentive to the means of salvation than he was before. His endeavours will be more ardent, and directed to a better end. Then he was trying to serve himself; now he will serve the Lord. But if election be viewed in certain *connexions*, it will cease to be a doctrine according to godliness. If faith and works foreseen be connected with it as the *procuring cause*, grace is excluded, and self-righteous boasting admitted. If, on the other hand, they be not connected with it as effects, the interests of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness are relinquished.

If we take our views of this great subject with simplicity from the word of God, we shall consider it, like other Divine purposes, not as a rule of conduct to us, but to himself. We shall agonize through life that we may at last enter in at the strait gate, no less than if all was in itself uncertain. Nay, more so: for as Paul's assuring the mariners that there "should be no loss of any man's life" would, if believed, inspire them with hope; so our being predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ furnishes encouragement to be pressing on towards the mark. And as they were told, nevertheless, that except certain means were used they "could not be saved," so we can have no evidence of our "election to salvation," but as being the subjects of "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Thus, while the blessing itself is an antidote to despair, the means connected with it are a preservative from presumption. In short, we shall view the doctrine of election in much the same light as we do other Divine appointments concerning our lot in the present life. We are given to believe that what we enjoy in this life is so ordered by the will of God, and so much the effect of providence, that there is no ground whatever of boasting in any creature; yet we do not on this account neglect to plough or sow, or pursue the good and avoid the evil.

A "fleshly mind" may ask, How can these things be? How can predestination be made to comport with human agency and accountableness? But a truly humble Christian, finding both in the Bible, will believe both, though he may be unable fully to conceive of their consistency; and will find in the one a motive to depend upon God, and in the other a caution against slothfulness and a presumptuous neglect of duty.

A Christian minister also, if he take his views simply from the Scriptures,

will find nothing in this doctrine to hinder the free use of warnings, invitations, and persuasions, either to the converted or to the unconverted. Not that he will found his hopes of success on the pliability of the human mind; but on the power and grace of God, who, while he prophesieth to the dry bones as he is commanded, is known to inspire many with the breath of life. Thus, while the apostle, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, traces the Divine sovereignty in his calling some from among the Jews, and leaving the greater part of them to perish in unbelief; he nevertheless, so long as they were in this world, was deeply concerned for them. Even in his preaching to the Gentiles he had an eye to them, "if by any means he might provoke to emulation them that were his flesh, and might save some of them." And though he taught believers from among them to ascribe their salvation entirely to electing grace, and spoke of the rest as being blinded, yet he represents that blindness as being their own fault, to which they were judicially given up of God, Rom. xi. 7-10.

But, whatever this doctrine is in itself, it may be held in such a manner as to become a source of pride, bitterness, slothfulness, and presumption. Conceive of the love of God as a capricious fondness—suppose that, because it had not motive in the goodness of the creature, therefore it was without reason, only so it was, and so it must be—consider it not so much a means of glorifying his character as an end to which every thing must become subservient—imagine yourself to be an object of this love, a darling of Heaven, a favourite of Providence, for whom numerous interpositions, next to miracles, are continually occurring—and, instead of being humble before God as a poor sinner, your feelings may resemble those of a flattered female, who, while she affects to decline the compliments paid her, is in reality so intoxicated with the idea of her own importance, as to look down with contempt on all her former companions.

Such views of the doctrine will ordinarily excite contemptuous feelings towards all who are not its adherents, considering them as graceless sinners, strangers to the liberty of the gospel, Pharisees, Hagarenes, children of the bond-woman, and the like; towards whom the most malignant bitterness is Christian faithfulness.

God's election of the posterity of Abraham was of sovereign favour, and not on account of any excellence in them natural or moral, Deut. vii. 7; ix. 1-6. In this view it was humbling, and had, no doubt, a good effect on the godly Israelites. But the Jews in our Saviour's time turned this their national election into another kind of doctrine, full of flattery towards themselves, and of the most intolerable contempt and malignity towards others.

The doctrine of the *atonement* is, in itself, the life of the gospel system. View it as a glorious expedient devised by Infinite Wisdom for the reparation of the injury done by sin to the Divine government, and for the consistent exercise of free mercy to the unworthy, and you are furnished with considerations the most humiliating, and at the same time the most transporting, that were ever presented to a creature's mind.

The principles of this Divine interposition are set forth in the Scriptures in divers forms; but probably in none so fully as in the *substitutional sacrifices*, which, from the fall to the coming of Christ, formed a conspicuous part of instituted worship. The great truth inculcated by these sacrifices, from age to age, would be, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Some of the leading sentiments which they were calculated to inspire may be seen in the sacrifice of Job, on behalf of his three friends. "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven

bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for your selves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, like my servant Job." This reproof and direction would, if rightly taken, excite the deepest repentance and self-abasement. To be told that they had sinned, that the wrath of Heaven was kindled against them, that an offering, and even a petition for mercy, would not be accepted at their hands, that it must be presented by a mediator, and that this mediator should be the very person whom they had despised and condemned as smitten of God and afflicted, was altogether so humiliating, that had they been unbelievers, and left to their own spirit, they would have rejected it with a sullen scorn, equal to that with which many in our day reject the mediation of Jesus Christ. But they were good men, and followed the Divine direction, humiliating as it was, with implicit obedience. "They did as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job." To them, therefore, this direction must have imparted a new set of views and feelings; as full of humility, thankfulness, conciliation, and brotherly love, as their speeches had been of pride, folly, and bitterness.

Such is the nature and tendency of the Christian doctrine of atonement. But, humbling as this doctrine is in itself, it may be so perverted as to become quite another thing, and productive of an opposite effect. If God as a lawgiver be held up as an Egyptian task-master, and the mercy of the Saviour be magnified at his expense—if his atonement be considered rather as a victory over the law than as an honour done to it—if his enduring the curse be supposed to exonerate us from obeying the precepts—if, in consequence of his having laid down his life, we think more lightly of sin, and imagine it to be a less dangerous evil—finally, if, from the full satisfaction which he has made to Divine justice, we reckon ourselves to be freed not only from punishment, but from the *desert* of it, and warranted not merely to implore mercy in his name, but to *claim it as a right*—we are in possession of a scheme abhorrent to the gospel, and not a little productive of spiritual pride. Such views of the atonement excite an irreverent familiarity with God, and, in some cases, a daring boldness in approaching him; yet such is the strength of the delusion, it passes for intimate communion with him!

An atonement has respect to justice, and justice to the law or rule which men have violated. If this be worthy of being traduced by a servant of Christ, it was worthy of the same treatment from his Lord and Master; and then, instead of being honoured by his life and death, it ought to have been annulled, both in respect of him and of us. The doctrine of the cross, according to this view of things, was so far from being a display of the Divine glory, that it must have been a most shocking exhibition of injustice.

Every instance of punishment among men is a sort of atonement to the justice of the country, the design of which is to restore the authority of government, which transgression has impaired. But if the law itself be bad, or the penalty too severe, every sacrifice that is made to it must be an instance of cruelty; and should the king's own son interpose as a substitute, to save the lives of a number of offenders, whatever might be the love expressed on his part, it would be shocking in the government to permit it, even though he might survive his sufferings. Could the public opinion be expressed on such an occasion, it would be to this effect:—There was no necessity for any atonement: it does no honour, but dishonour to the king, and though he has liberated the unhappy men, there was no grace in the act, but mere justice: the law, instead of being maintained by a suffering substitute, ought to have been repealed. It is easy to see, from hence, that

in proportion as the law is depreciated, the gospel is undermined, and the necessity, glory, and grace of the atonement rendered void.

It is probable there are not many who would in so many words deny the law to be holy, just, and good: on the contrary, there is little doubt but most would in argument acknowledge as much as this; but if on all other occasions they speak of it with disrespect, comparing it to the task-masters of Pharaoh, and disown the authority of its precepts to be binding on them, such acknowledgments can be considered as nothing more than compliments to the express words of Scripture. If they really believed the law to be holy, just, and good, and holiness, justice, and goodness were their delight, however they might renounce all dependence upon "the works of it" for acceptance with God, they could not object to being under it as a rule of duty. It is the law as abused, or as turned into a way of life in opposition to the gospel, (for which it was never given to a fallen creature,) that the apostle depreciates; and not as the revealed will of God, or as the immutable standard of right and wrong. In this view he delighted in it; and if we be Christians, we also shall delight in it; and if so, we shall not object to being under it as a rule of duty; for no man objects to be ruled by the precepts which he loves. Still less shall we allow ourselves to disparage it, and to represent the redemption of Christ as delivering us from its tyrannical yoke. So far as any man is a Christian, he is of Christ's mind, and that was to account it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.

If the law be really an oppressive and tyrannical yoke, it was requisite that our deliverance from it should have been by *power*, and not by *price*. This is the way in which we are delivered from the power of darkness. No satisfaction was made to Satan, inasmuch as his dominion was usurped. Captivity was led captive, and the prey taken from the mighty. If such had been the power which the law had over us, such would have been the nature of our redemption from the curse of it. But here the case is different. Christ, however strong his love was to us, did not ask our salvation at the expense of law or justice. He would rather die than admit of such a thought. He was actually set forth to be a propitiatory sacrifice, that he might "declare his righteousness in the remission of sins, and be just in justifying them that believe in him." After all this, is it credible that he should teach a doctrine, and approve of preaching, the object of which is to traduce that which in life and death it was his delight to honour?

The *mediation and intercession of Christ* are founded on his propitiatory sacrifice, and carry on the great design of saving sinners in a way honourable to the law. Mediations require to be conducted according to the nature of the case. If a father and a son be at variance, and a common friend interpose to effect a reconciliation, his first inquiry is, Is there any fault in the case? If it be a mere misunderstanding, an explanation is sufficient. If fault exists, and it be on both sides, there will be ground for mutual concession. But if the father be wholly in the right, and the son have offended him without cause, he must do every thing to honour the one, and humble the other. To propose that, after the reconciliation, the former system of family government should be superseded, and that the son in future should be under a different rule, or any thing implying a reflection on the father's former conduct, would render the breach wider instead of healing it. Such is the nature of the case between God and man. If our Advocate with the Father had pleaded for the superseding of God's authority as Lawgiver, he had proved himself utterly unqualified for his undertaking. But he "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; and therefore God, his God, anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows," and granted him the desire of his heart. Though he undertook the cause of sinners, yet he never pleaded

in extenuation of their sins; but presented his own blood as a consideration that they might be forgiven. The Advocate for sinners is, as it was requisite he should be,—“Jesus Christ the righteous.”

In receiving the doctrine of the mediation and intercession of Christ, it is of great importance that we consider it *in harmony with the grace of God*. Socinians, who reject the atonement, are continually alleging its inconsistency with the idea of grace. If forgiveness, say they, requires a satisfaction, how can it be free? And the way in which satisfaction has been sometimes held up by good men has furnished but too much of a handle for their objections. If the atonement be considered as that through which mercy is exercised *consistently with justice*, there will be nothing found in it inconsistent with grace; but if the benefits resulting from it be considered as objects of *claim*, or the bestowment of them as *required by justice*, it will be otherwise. It is doubtless becoming the character of God to fulfil his own gracious engagements. Thus “God is *unrighteous* to forget our works of faith and labours of love;” and thus “he is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins.” But if salvation were so obtained by the propitiation of Christ as that the bestowment of it should be required by essential justice, it had not been an object of *intercession* on his part, nor of *prayer* on ours. That which essential justice requires is not of grace, but of debt, and admits of the language of appeal rather than of prayer. These consequences have been actually drawn: the intercession of Christ in heaven has been considered as possessing the nature of a *demand*. But whatever merit there was in his obedience unto death, or to whatever reward he was entitled from the remunerative justice of God, yet, in *asking the life of another*, and that other *a rebel*, it must not be in the language of demand. I recollect nothing in the Scriptures favourable to such an idea. The words of our Lord, in John xvii. 24, “Father, I *will* that they also whom thou hast given me be with me,” &c., express (says Campbell) no more than a petition.\* And as to our omitting to pray for the forgiveness of sin, or asking for it in the language of demand, I should hope no serious Christians can act on such principles, though some Antinomians have appeared to do so.

I am far from thinking that every one who has pleaded for salvation as a matter required by essential justice is an Antinomian; but such may be the tendency of the principle notwithstanding. Every one that knows any thing of the gospel, knows that one of its grand peculiarities is, that it harmonizes the justice and mercy of God in the forgiveness of sins. In it “mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.” In it God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” But the principle in question pleads for justice in such a way as to exclude mercy. To say mercy is exercised *consistently with justice* is to represent them as harmonizing in a sinner’s salvation; but to say it is *required by justice* is to say what is self-contradictory. If it be required by justice, it is not mercy, or at least not undeserved favour. If justice, for instance, require that the believer in Jesus be justified, this is more than the covenant engagements of the Father to the Son requiring it: it amounts to this, that it would be an act of essential injustice in God to condemn him. But if so, we are not justified “freely by grace, through the redemption of Christ,” but as a matter of right, in which grace has nothing to do beyond the gift of Christ.

It has been thought that the idea of salvation being only *consistent with justice*, and not *required by* it, tends to diminish the efficacy and value of Christ’s merits. But, as has been hinted already, the efficacy and value of

\* Hence he renders it, “Father, I *would*,” &c., and quotes Matt. xii. 38; xxvi. 39; Mark vi. 25, 35, where the same word is used for request, not demand. See his note.



these are in nowise affected by this principle; for whatever be their value, they cannot render our salvation a matter due to us on the footing of justice, unless they render *us meritorious*. If an atonement had been made by us, and not by another for us—that is, if we ourselves had sustained the full penalty of the law—we might have claimed an exemption from further punishment as a matter of right; and if, in addition to this, we had yielded perfect obedience to its precepts, we might claim justification as a matter of right: but if all this be accomplished for us by *another as our substitute*, though the benefit may be ours, yet it will be altogether of grace, and not by the requirement of justice. It is no less of grace than if we had been forgiven without an atonement. This will appear from the atonements under the Mosaic law. In cases wherein the sinner was himself made a sacrifice, justice took place, and grace and forgiveness were excluded. “He shall surely be put to death, his blood shall be upon him.” But in cases wherein a substitutional sacrifice was admitted, and the sinner escaped, it was of forgiving grace, the same as if there had been no sacrifice offered. “The priest shall make an *atonement* for him, and his sin shall be forgiven him.” A substitutional sacrifice was an expedient devised by the Lawgiver, that the exercise of mercy might be consistent with justice, or that God might forgive sin without seeming to connive at it; but it was no part of its design to destroy or diminish the grace of forgiveness, or to render the deliverance of a sinner a matter of claim.

To establish the principle of *claim*, it is necessary to prove that there was such a *union* between Christ and his people as not merely to furnish a ground for their sins *being reckoned* as his, but for their really and properly being his; not merely that he might *bear the curse* due to them; but that, in sustaining it, he should suffer according to his desert: not merely that his righteousness should be *reckoned* or *imputed* to them by a gracious act of the Lawgiver; but that *reckoning* things as they are, and adjudging to every one what is his own, it should be really and properly theirs: not merely that they should receive the benefit of his merits, but that they themselves should become meritorious, or deserving of all that they receive. But this amounts to Christ and his people being *one and the same conscious being*; and if so, there is no propriety in saying he *died for them*, seeing they themselves died in his death, and redeemed themselves by their own blood.

It is this notion of the atonement, or what leads to this, that is continually held up by the Socinians, and which lays the foundation for all that they have advanced, with any degree of plausibility, on its inconsistency with grace. *Substitutionary* atonement, or atonement made for the sin of *another*, whether it be by slain beasts, or by any other means, in nowise interferes with grace. In *pecuniary* satisfactions, if the creditor be but paid, whether it be by the debtor, or by a surety on his behalf, *he has received his due*, and no room is left for remission or for grace; but it is not so here. In cases of *crime*, nothing can render deliverance a matter of claim, but the criminal himself having suffered the full penalty of the law. Deliverance by the interposition of a mediator, though it may answer the great ends of justice, and so be *consistent with it*, yet can never be *required by it*, nor be any other than an act of grace. This truth, while it repels the objections of Socinianism, corrects the abuses of Antinomianism.

The doctrine of *justification by faith in Jesus Christ, without the works of the law*, is in itself exceedingly humbling; for it is no other than *God’s justifying the ungodly*, or accepting to favour a believing sinner, not for any worthiness in him, but for the sake of his righteousness in whom he believeth. It relates to the way in which we who are unrighteous are accepted of God as the Lawgiver of the world, and treated as righteous. If we had

retained our original righteousness, justice itself would have justified us; but having sinned, the question, How shall man be justified with God? is too difficult for created wisdom to solve. Whatever delight the Creator takes in honouring and rewarding righteousness, there is none left in this apostate world for him to honour or reward. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." If any child of Adam, therefore, be now accepted and rewarded as righteous, it must be entirely on different ground from that of his own righteousness. What ground this could be, God only knew.

This great difficulty, however, is solved by the gospel. We are "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Hence it is that justification is ascribed to *faith*, not as a virtue which God consented to accept for righteousness instead of perfect obedience, but as receiving the righteousness of his Son, of which our justification is the reward. Justification by faith, and being "made righteous by the obedience of Christ," are the same thing. Believing in him, we are *united* to him, and so possess a revealed interest in him, and in all the benefits and blessings arising from his obedience unto death.\* This righteousness is *imputed* to us, or *counted* by the Lawgiver of the world, in his treatment of us, as if it were our own. Not that it really *is* our own, for then should we cease to be guilty and unworthy, and might draw nigh to God as meritorious beings; but as Christ was "made sin for us," though in respect to his real character he "knew no sin;" so we are "made the righteousness of God in him," though in respect to our real character we are worthy of death.

To believe for righteousness is to *receive it as a free gift*, and so stands opposed to justification by the works of the law, which is to receive it as the reward of our own doings. Hence it is said to be "of faith," that it may be of grace. Faith is necessary to justification, and so is repentance to forgiveness; but neither the one nor the other is necessary as a cause, or as being that for the sake of which we are justified or pardoned. With respect to the meritorious or procuring cause, nothing is necessary but the righteousness of Christ. The sinner in his justification is considered as altogether unworthy, and even ungodly. As such our Redeemer died for us, and as such he justifies us.

Being accepted in the Beloved, our services also are accepted through him. The Lord had respect not only to Abel, but to his offering. Thus it is that our duties become rewardable, and that the promises of God are made to them. There are no promises made to the doings of unbelievers, however fair they may appear in the eyes of men.

In fine, being thus justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and draw near to a throne of grace with humble boldness, as to a father.

But the subject may be viewed in such a light as to become another doctrine, and to be productive of another spirit. Conceive of the imputation of Christ's righteousness as that by which we are not only *treated* as righteous, but are *actually* without spot in the sight of God—imagine that he can think a character to be different from what it really is, and suppose justification to include such a remission of our sins, past, present, and to come, as renders daily prayer for forgiveness unnecessary, and even improper—and our souls will be so lifted up as not to be upright in us. It is true that God

\* Rom. viii. 1; Phil. iii. 9; 1 Cor. i. 30.

graciously deals with his people, not according to their sins, but according to the righteousness of his Son; but this is without being blinded to their faults, or the less offended with them for their sins. It is also true that they are delivered from a state of exposedness to condemnation on their first believing, and that provision is made for the remission of all their future transgressions; but as the Scriptures pronounce no sinner justified till he believes, so they declare no sin to be forgiven till it is confessed and forsaken, Prov. xxviii. 13; 1 John i. 9.

To obviate the plain testimony of Scripture, which declares repentance to be necessary to forgiveness, it is commonly alleged that this does not mean forgiveness itself, but a sense of it in the mind: the thing itself is supposed to exist in the secret purpose of God. But forgiveness itself is no more a secret purpose in the mind of God than it is a sensation or persuasion in the mind of man; rather, it is the gracious purpose of God as *revealed in the Scriptures*. Those sins which *the Scriptures* forgive are forgiven, and those which they retain are retained; but the Scriptures declare no sin to be forgiven which is unlamented.

I do not accuse all who have gone into the unscriptural notions to which I refer of being Antinomians. Many godly people have had their minds greatly perplexed on this subject, who yet have retained and felt so much of the truth as to "count all things but loss that they might win Christ, and be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Justification has by many been considered as a gracious purpose in the mind of God not to impute sin, but the righteousness of Christ, to an elect sinner. Hence, as no new purpose can arise in the all-comprehending mind, it has been considered as *eternal*; and what is denominated in the Scriptures justification by *faith*, as the revelation or discovery of it to the soul. But faith has to do with only revealed truth: supposing, therefore, that it were true of a sinner that he was justified in the Divine purpose from eternity, yet, this being no where revealed of him in the Scriptures, it cannot be by *faith* that he discovers it. It must either be by a new revelation from heaven, or by an impulse on his imagination which he unhappily mistakes for one.

But neither is it true that justification consists in the purpose of God not to impute sin, but the righteousness of Christ, to an elect sinner. It does not belong to the secret, but to the revealed will of God. It is for a believing sinner to be exempted from the curse of the law, and entitled to the blessings of the gospel, not in the Divine purpose, but according to the will of God as *revealed in the Scriptures*.

If justification be a *law term*, and opposed to condemnation, as I believe it is generally allowed to be, it cannot be any thing existing merely in the Divine mind. Neither the one nor the other is a purpose in the mind of the judge, but a sentence passed in open court. Condemnation as opposed to justification in the Scriptures is not an appointment of sinners to future punishment, but a state of exposedness to the curse of the law. The former is not true of elect sinners, even while unbelievers, but the latter is.\* Whatever be the secret purpose of God in their favour, so long as they reject the Saviour, "the wrath of God abideth" upon them, or, which is the same thing, all the threatenings and curses of the Divine law stand in full force against them. But if condemnation consist not in God's purpose finally to

\* "We were by nature children of wrath, even as others," said Paul of himself and the believing Ephesians, chap. ii. 3.

punish, justification consists not in his purpose finally to acquit; and if the former be that exposedness to the curse of the law which, according to the sentence *pronounced in the Scriptures*, belongs to every transgressor, the latter must be that change of state, condition, or standing, with respect to the Lawgiver of the world, which takes place on our believing in Christ, and in which the sentence is revoked in respect of us, and we henceforth possess a revealed interest in all the blessings and promises of the gospel. I say, a *revealed interest*; for as the sentence of condemnation stood against us *in the Scriptures*, so that of justification must there stand for us. It is not the purpose which may exist in the Divine mind, nor the impulse, impression, or persuasion which may have place in our minds, but *the voice of God in his word concerning us*, that determines our state, or denominates us justified or condemned.

When the revealed will of God is disregarded as a rule of life, it is common to be much occupied about his secret will, or his decrees, as a substitute for it. It is thus that men stumble upon the dark mountains, and fall into many dangerous errors, besides those on justification. To what other cause can it be attributed that the *invitations of the gospel*, instead of being addressed to sinners considered merely as guilty and miserable, should be confided to *sensible* sinners, or to persons who, though they have never yet come to Christ, taken his yoke, or learned his spirit, are nevertheless supposed to be in possession of something that proves them to be of the elect, and therefore entitled to have the invitations addressed to them? Who can trace the delusion which must arise from such a doctrine? If a sinner is ever invited to come to Christ, it is when he is considered as sufficiently *sensible* of his lost condition; and this is held up, not merely as that which is necessary in the nature of things to his coming, but as giving him a warrant to come. Thus the sinner is taught to think himself one of God's elect, while as yet he has neither repentance toward God, nor faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

To what is it owing, but to the substituting of the *secret for the revealed will of God*, that Christians should be afraid to pray for the salvation of their neighbours, ministers for that of their hearers, and parents for that of their children, lest they should not prove to be of the elect? If nothing more were meant than that in all our prayers there should be a condition implied, namely, that what we ask is according to the will of God, there could be no just objection to it. But if, lest what we ask should not accord with the Divine purpose, we refrain from asking any thing, our conduct will resemble that of the slothful servant, who, from certain notions which he entertained of his Lord's character, concluded that there was no encouragement for him to do any thing, and therefore went and buried his Lord's talent in the earth. And why should we neglect to pray for our neighbours, our hearers, or our children only, lest they should not have been elected? Why not also on the same ground neglect to pray for *ourselves*? There must have been a time when we had no ground to conclude ourselves elected; and did we wait till we had obtained evidence of this before we began to pray for the salvation of our own souls? If we did not, and yet object on this account to pray for others, surely self-love must be the Alpha and Omega of our religion.

Paul, as has been already observed, believed and taught the doctrine of election; yet in the same Epistle, nay, in the same chapter, he declared his most anxious solicitude for the salvation of his unbelieving "brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh." And wherefore? Because he desired any thing contrary to the will of God? No; but not knowing what was the secret will of God respecting individuals, he was satisfied with obeying

his commandments. God he well knew would regulate *his own conduct* by his wise and righteous decrees, but they could be no rule to him, inasmuch as they were utterly beyond his knowledge.\* It was for him to obey the precept, and to leave the issue to his disposal who "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The doctrines of *efficacious grace* and the *final perseverance of believers*, are in themselves of a humbling nature. They imply the utter depravity of the human heart, as being proof against every thing but omnipotent love; and the proneness of the best of men to draw back even to perdition, were it not that they are preserved by grace. When a serious Christian remembers the hateful enmity with which he formerly opposed the Divine authority, and resisted to the utmost the very calls of mercy, his soul is humbled within him. It was *God*, says he, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved me, even when I was dead in sins, that quickened me together with Christ. By grace I am saved!—Or if he survey his life from the beginning of his Christian course, and the innumerable defects and miscarriages of it are brought to his recollection, shame and confusion overwhelm him. He is *God*, saith he, and changeth not; therefore it is that I am not consumed!—But these important doctrines may be perverted; and, being so, that which is retained may be as false as they are true, and as productive of spiritual pride as they are of humility. If the influence of either sin or grace be supposed to destroy our accountableness to God—if the necessity of regeneration be contended for on some other ground than our having been degenerate—if it consist not in the renewal of the mind to a right spirit, but in the communicating of a principle essentially different from any thing to which we were obliged in our unregeneracy, or from that which we possessed in a state of original purity—if this principle and its opposite, *the new and the old man*, be considered as agents, and the man himself not an agent, but a passive spectator of their conflicts—if a confident persuasion of our being the children of God be taken for Christian faith, and the apprehensions excited by a guilty conscience be treated as unbelief—finally, if perseverance be considered as a certain connexion between a beginning and an end, while an actual progress in grace and holiness is either denied or overlooked—it is easy to perceive what kind of effects will follow.

It is from these fond notions that men imagine themselves possessed of such extraordinary *knowledge* as to be entitled to look down upon all around them, as the Jews in the time of our Saviour looked down upon the Gentiles, treating them as dogs. Not only are *natural men* despised, as though destitute of common understanding; but the first parent of our race, created in the image of God, is accounted a natural man, and as such utterly incapable of knowing what they know. Even the angels in heaven are in this respect considered as greatly their inferiors.

Much is said in the Scriptures of "living by faith;" and, truly understood, it is of the greatest importance. Without it there is neither the progress nor existence of true religion. To live by faith on the Son of God is not only to be crucified to the objects of sense which surround us, and alive to unseen realities, but to feel habitually divested of self-sufficiency, and to place our whole confidence in the promised grace of Christ. Such a confidence has revealed truth for its foundation, and operates in a way of unfeigned humility. Hence the language of the prophet: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; *but the just shall live by faith.*" But if a life of faith be understood to mean a continued unshaken confidence *that we are converted and shall be saved*, this is entirely another thing. That true

\* See Dr. Ryland's Sermon before the subscribers to the Stepney Institution, preached at Devonshire Square, 1812, pp. 31-34.

Christians may know that they have passed from death to life is readily granted; this, however, is not an object of *faith*, but of *consciousness*. It is no where revealed in the Scriptures concerning us that we are true Christians; therefore it can be no exercise of faith to be persuaded of it. A believer may be conscious that he is such, and that he loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and this faith and love having the promise of salvation, he may probably be also certain that he shall be saved. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." The apostles and primitive Christians appear to have entertained little or no doubt of their personal Christianity. Why? *Because "great grace was upon them all."* This afforded a living and constant evidence of their being born of God. But when they speak of "holding fast the beginning of their confidence to the end," their meaning is not that they are to maintain a good opinion of their own state, but an unshaken attachment to the gospel, in the declarations and promises of which they had from the beginning confided. The most unshaken persuasion of the goodness of our own state may be mere *self-confidence*; and if it operate in a way of religious vaunting, there is every reason for concluding it will be found nothing better. Such was that of the Pharisees, who boasted that God was their Father, and so trusted that they were righteous, and despised others. The soul of such a man is "lifted up," and therefore "is not upright in him." Instead of living by faith, his life is that to which a life of faith is directly opposed.

Such doctrine has a bewitching influence upon minds of a certain cast. It is a species of religious flattery, which feeds their vanity, and soothes their selfishness; yet they call it the food of their souls. Like intoxicating liquors to a drunkard, its tendency is to destroy; but yet it seems necessary to their existence; so much so, that for the sake of it they despise the bread of life.

AN APOLOGY  
FOR THE LATE  
CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TO INDIA.  
IN THREE PARTS.  
WITH AN APPENDIX.

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PART I.

“There are no such things done as thou sayest; but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.”—NEHEMIAH.

“And now, I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”—GAMALIEL.

SECTION I.

AN ADDRESS TO EDWARD PARRY, ESQ., CHAIRMAN OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

SIR,

As in a letter lately addressed to you by Mr. Thomas Twining, on the danger of interfering in the religious opinions of the natives of India, there is a reference to the labours of the Baptist missionaries in that country, you will not consider me, I hope, as obtruding myself on your attention while I offer a few remarks upon it, and upon the important subject which it embraces.

It is true, the principal part of Mr. Twining's pamphlet is directed against “The British and Foreign Bible Society,” and that this has been sufficiently answered from another quarter; but though he affects “not to know these missionaries,” yet their undertaking, particularly in the work of translating the Scriptures, has, no doubt, contributed to excite his alarm.

If, by “interfering in the religious opinions of the natives of India,” Mr. Twining means nothing more than the dissemination of the Christian faith by the fair methods of persuasion, the Baptist missionaries, and those of every other denomination, must be acknowledged to have interfered; but if he include under that term violence, unfair influence, or any measures subversive of free choice—or any addresses, either in speech or in writing, which have endangered the peace of society—they have not interfered, nor have they any desire of so doing.

Whether Mr. Twining has chosen this ambiguous term, that he may with the greater ease insinuate, as occasion requires, the obnoxious idea of a design to overthrow the pagan and Mahomedan religions by *force*, I shall not determine; but that such is the use that is made of it, throughout his

pamphlet, is clear. "As long," he says, "as we continue to govern India in the mild and *tolerant* spirit of Christianity, we may govern it with ease; but if ever the fatal day shall arrive when religious innovation shall set her foot in that country, indignation will spread from one end of Hindostan to the other,"—p. 30. Is giving the Scriptures then to the natives in their own languages, and offering to instruct them in their leading doctrines, opposed to the mild and *tolerant spirit of Christianity*? If it be, sir, neither the Founder of the Christian religion, nor his followers, have yet understood it. Be this as it may, it is not an "innovation;" the fatal day has arrived more than a century ago. Mr. Twining "hopes our native subjects in India will be *permitted* quietly to follow their own religious opinions,"—p. 31. We hope so too; but if this gentleman's wishes could be realized, we should not be permitted to follow ours, nor to recommend what we believe to be of eternal importance to our fellow men and fellow subjects. Yet this is all we desire. If missionaries, or any other persons on their behalf, should so far forget the principles of the gospel as to aim at any thing beyond it, I trust the government will always possess wisdom and justice sufficient to counteract them. The question, sir, which Mr. Twining proposes to submit to a general court of proprietors, whatever be the terms in which it may be couched, will not be, whether the natives of India shall continue to enjoy the most perfect toleration, but WHETHER THAT TOLERATION SHALL BE EXTENDED TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES.

I have observed with pain, sir, of late years, a notion of toleration, entertained even by some who would be thought its firmest advocates, which tends not only to abridge, but to subvert it. They have no objection to Christians of any denomination enjoying their own opinions, and, it may be, their own worship; but they *must not be allowed to make proselytes*. Such appear to be the notions of Mr. Twining and his friends. They do not propose to persecute the Christians of India, provided they would keep their Christianity to themselves; but those who *attempt to convert others* are to be exterminated. Sir, I need not say to you that this is not toleration, but persecution. Toleration is a legal permission not only to enjoy our own principles unmolested, but to make use of all the fair means of persuasion to recommend them to others. The former is but little more than might be enjoyed in countries the most distinguished by persecution; for few would wish to interrupt men so long as they kept their religion to themselves. Yet this is the whole of what some would wish to allow, both in the East and West Indies. In former times, unbelievers felt the need of toleration *for themselves*, and then they generally advocated it on behalf of others; but of late, owing perhaps to the increase of their numbers, they have assumed a loftier tone. Now, though for political reasons all men must be allowed to follow their own religion, yet they *must not aim at making proselytes*. Men who have no belief in the Christian religion may be expected to have no regard for it; and where this is the case, the rights of conscience will be but little respected.

So far as my observations extend, these remarks are applicable to deists in general; and where situations are favourable to their views, they may be expected to rise in their demands. In a letter from Mr. Carey, now before me, of a late date, he writes as follows:—"India swarms with deists; and deists are, in my opinion, the most intolerant of mankind. Their great desire is to exterminate true religion from the earth. I consider the *alarms* which have been spread through India as the fabrications of these men. The concurrence of two or three circumstances in point of time; namely, the massacre at Vellore, the rebellious disposition of the inhabitants in some parts of Mysore, and the public advertisements for subscriptions to the



Oriental translations; have furnished them with occasion to represent the introduction of Christianity among the natives as dangerous."

While Mr. Carey was writing this letter, sir, he might not be aware that a number of these men were preparing to embark for Europe, with a view to spread the *alarm* at home. Assuredly they have a *cause in which they are engaged*, as well as the Bible Society; and are not wanting in zeal to support it. Mr. Twining would be thought a *Christian*; but if so, in what cause is he engaged? He may pretend that he is only pleading for toleration; but, in fact, he is pleading for the exclusion of what he acknowledges to be *light and truth*, and for the refusal of toleration to the religion of his Maker.

As "the religious opinions and customs of the natives of India" are a subject on which Mr. Twining's feelings are so "particularly alive," it may not be amiss to state what a few of these opinions and customs are. It may not be necessary, sir, for your information; but some persons into whose hands this pamphlet may fall may be the better able to judge of the question at issue.

In the first place, then, the Hindoos acknowledge ONE SUPREME GOD; they do not appear, however, to worship Him, but certain subordinate powers, which, they say, proceeded from him. Of these, the three principal are denominated BIRMA, the creator of all; VISHNOO, the preserver of all; and SEEB, the destroyer of all. Birmha is not worshipped at all; Vishnoo only by a few; but Seeb (the destroyer) by almost all; their worship, therefore, is chiefly the effect of superstitious *fears*. The foulest vices are ascribed to these subordinate deities in their own Shasters; but that which is sin in men, they say, is not sin in the gods. Besides these, they worship innumerable inferior deities, called *debtas*, chiefly, if not entirely, under an idea that it is in their power to do them harm. The lusts, quarrels, and other vices of these debtas also fill their Shasters, as their images do the country. The chief use that they seem to make of the one Supreme God is to ascribe to him all the evil that they commit, and to persuade themselves that they are not accountable beings.

They have a most firm faith in conjuration, in lucky and unlucky days; and in almost all their civil concerns act under its influence.

A considerable part of their religion consists in *self-torment*. One will hold up a hand till it is grown stiff, and he is incapable of taking it down again; another will lie upon the points of iron spikes, just so blunt as not to pierce him to death, and this for years together; others, on certain days at the beginning of the new year, are suspended in the air by sharp iron hooks stuck through the skin on each side of their back, and continue swinging round in that position from five to fifteen minutes. At the worship of Juggernaut, whose temple is in Orissa, this massy wooden god is borne in a carriage, drawn by the multitude; and, while the air resounds with their shouts, happy are those who throw themselves under the wheels to be crushed to death! This, and every other species of self-torment and self-murder, gains admiration from the spectators.

Besides this, it is well known to be a part of their religion to favour the *burning of widows* with the bodies of their deceased husbands. Their Shasters pronounce this to be a *great virtue, and to render them a kind of celestial beings*. And, lest the circumstance of absence at the time of the husband's death should prevent it, their laws prescribe as follows: "If the wife be within one day's journey of the place where her husband dies, the burning of his corpse shall be deferred one day for her arrival. If he die in another country, the virtuous wife shall take any of his *effects*, a sandal for instance, and, binding it on her thigh, shall enter the fire with it." Thus

careful are these sacred laws to secure their victim. And as if it were meant to outrage every vestige of humanity, and to refine upon cruelty, it is an established law that the eldest son, or nearest relation, shall set fire to the pile!

Great numbers of *infants* also are thrown into the river, as offerings to the goddess; and others, who refuse their mothers' milk, are frequently hung up in baskets on the branch of a tree, &c., to be devoured by ants or birds of prey!

Whether all these customs be proper objects of toleration may admit of a doubt. The British government in India seems to have thought otherwise. The governor-general in council, on August 20, 1802, is said to have passed a decree declaring some of them to be murder. We leave this, however, to the civil authorities. *Our* object is confined to remonstrance, persuasion, and the exhibition of truth; and surely, if it be possible by such means to induce a people, or any part of a people, to cast away these practices, it must be so far favourable to human happiness. If, sir, there were *no* hereafter, and we were merely to consult our own national interest, it were worth while, as far as possible, to endeavour to mitigate these evils; but if the good of the governed be allowed to have place in a government, it is still more so; and if there be a judgment to come, where governors and governed must each appear and give an account, it must be an object of the first importance. At that bar, sir, the adversaries of those who peaceably endeavour to bring off the Hindoos from these abominations will be ashamed to show their face!

I may be told that the particulars above referred to are the most offensive parts of the system, and that other parts of it may be very good. It is true that there are degrees in evil. All things pertaining to Hindooism may not be equally shocking to the feelings of an enlightened mind. I might safely affirm, however, with Dr. Buchanan, "The Hindoos have no moral gods;" neither does any part of their religion produce a moral impression on their minds, but the contrary. As men, they are not worse than other men; but, by their superstitions, they are become exceedingly corrupt.

"The natives of India," Mr. Twining tells us, "are a *religious* people; and in this respect they differ, he *fears*, from the inhabitants of this country." If, by the inhabitants of this country, he means those Christians who are alarmed at the progress of Christianity, I fear so too. If the religion of the natives of India, however, have no influence on their morals, unless it be to corrupt them, it will argue nothing in its favour. And that this is the case, every friend to the morality of the New Testament, who has resided in India, can bear witness. I have read enough, sir, of the communications of men of this description, to make me disregard the praises bestowed on the virtues of these people by others. I find these praises proceed either from deistical writers, whose manifest design is to depreciate the value of Christianity, or from persons residing in the country, who, "despairing," as Dr. Buchanan says, "of the intellectual or moral improvement of the natives, are content with an obsequious spirit and manual service. These they call the virtues of the Hindoo; and, after twenty years' service, praise their domestic for his *virtues*."

"I know not," says Bernier, an intelligent French traveller, "whether there be in the world a more covetous and sordid nation.—The brahmins keep these people in their errors and superstitions, and scruple not to commit tricks and villainies so infamous, that I could never have believed them if I had not made an ample inquiry into them."\*

\* Voyages de François Berniers, Tome I. pp. 150, 162, et Tome II. p. 105.

“A race of people,” says governor Holwell, “who from their infancy are utter strangers to the idea of common faith and honesty. This is the situation of the bulk of the people of Hindostan, as well as of the modern brahmins; amongst the latter, if we except one in a thousand, we give them over measure. The Gentoos, in general, are as degenerate, superstitious, litigious, and wicked a people, as any race of people in the known world, if not eminently more so, especially the common run of brahmins; and we can truly aver that, during almost five years that we presided in the judicial cutchery court of Calcutta, never any murder, or other atrocious crime, came before us, but it was proved, in the end, a brahmin was at the bottom of it.”\*

“A man must be long acquainted with them,” says Sir John Shore, governor-general of Bengal, “before he can believe them capable of that barefaced falsehood, servile adulation, and deliberate deception, which they daily practise. It is the business of all, from the ryott to the dewan, to conceal and deceive; the simplest matters of fact are designedly covered with a veil, through which no human understanding can penetrate.”†

“Lying, theft, whoredom, and deceit,” says Mr. Carey, “are sins for which the Hindoos are notorious. There is not one man in a thousand who does not make lying his constant practice. Their thoughts of God are so very light, that they only consider him as a sort of plaything. Avarice and servility are so united in almost every individual, that cheating, juggling, and lying are esteemed no sins with them; and the best among them, though they speak ever so great a falsehood, yet it is not considered as an evil, unless you first charge them to speak the truth. When they defraud you ever so much, and you charge with it, they coolly answer, ‘It is the custom of the country.’ Were you to charge any company of ten men with having amongst them liars, thieves, whoremongers, and deceitful characters, however improper it might be, owing to your want of proof, yet there would be little probability of your accusing them falsely. All the good that can with justice be said in favour of them is, they are not so ferocious as many other heathens.”

I have said nothing of the Mahomedans; but it is well known that they are not behind the Hindoos in superstition, and greatly exceed them in ferocity, pride, and intolerance.

In short, sir, to every European who places virtue in the fear of God and a regard to men, and not in that which merely contributes to his own interest and inclination, the introduction of the means of Christianity, among both Hindoos and Mahomedans, must appear a matter of national importance. Christianity might not be embraced, at first, by the greater part; but it would, nevertheless, have a powerful influence on society; not only on those who believed it, but, by way of example, on those who believed it not.

But Mr. Twining professes to be alarmed at the measure, as *dangerous* to the British interests in India. He asserts this again and again; but what has he done beyond asserting it? Has he produced a single fact that can bear upon the subject; or preferred a single charge against the conduct of the missionaries? Neither the one nor the other. It is rather surprising, indeed, that he should not have discovered something on which to found the appearance of a charge; for I am not ignorant, sir, that the missionaries have on some occasions felt much, and spoken in strong language. They have frequently seen females burnt alive, and have remonstrated against the horrid deed, as an act of murder; taking occasion also from thence to prove to the people that such a religion could not be of God. If at such times there had been somewhat of a local tumult, there had been nothing surprising

\* Holwell's Historical Events, vol. I. p. 228; vol. II., p. 151.

† Parliamentary Proceedings against Mr. Hastings, Appendix to vol. II. p. 65.

in it. But the truth is, no such tumult has ever occurred; nor have any means which they have used so much as endangered their own safety.

Mr. Twining speaks of *alarms* among the natives; but what are they? When or where did they manifest themselves? If, by "alarms," he means a conviction that their principles will gradually fall before the light of the gospel, there is some foundation for what he says; for considerable numbers of them have calmly acknowledged as much as this. But if he mean that, on account of any thing done or doing by the missionaries, they are apprehensive of their religion being suppressed by authority, there is no proof of the fact, nor so much as an attempt to prove it. Nothing can furnish stronger evidence of Mr. Twining's want of materials of this kind, than his reference to "the recent catastrophes of Buenos Ayres, Rosetta, and Vellore,"—p. 27. You need not be told, sir, that none of these catastrophes were produced by an attempt to recommend our religious principles.

That alarms may exist in India is very possible; but if such there be, they are of a date posterior to the Vellore mutiny, and must be traced, it is probable, to the causes which produced that melancholy event. That the labours of the missionaries, either in Bengal or on the Coast, have been productive of any such effect, remains to be proved. The only alarms which they have excited will be found in the minds of Europeans, who, passing under the name of Christians, are tremblingly alive to the danger of Christianity making progress in the earth.

If, by "the LIGHT and TRUTH into which the omnipotent power of Heaven may some time lead these people," Mr. Twining means Christianity, his pamphlet exhibits, to say the least, an awkward association of ideas. Of Mr. Twining I know nothing but from the part he has taken in this business, and therefore can have no personal disrespect towards him: but I cannot understand, sir, how a *Christian* could be disgusted with the idea expressed by a Suabian Catholic, of "the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls gathering together his sheep from all nations and religions, languages and kingdoms" (pp. 9, 10); how, in searching for something which the British nation values as the Hindoos do their Shasters, and the Mahomedans their Koran, he should overlook *the Bible*, and instance in "Magna Charta" (p. 30); how he can be shocked at the downfall of Mahomedism (p. 17); how his feelings can be so "particularly alive" on the religious opinions of the natives of India (p. 29); and, above all, how he can be so *alarmed* at the progress of Christianity. It is true he professes to feel on this subject chiefly from his "extreme apprehension of the fatal consequences to ourselves." But if so, why do his alarms extend to Turkey, and even to China?—pp. 15, 17. Is he afraid that, if the Mahomedism of the one and the paganism of the other should give place to the gospel, they would refuse to trade with us? Surely, sir, there can be but little doubt of this gentleman's being "of a party," nor of what that party is!

May I not take it for granted, sir, that a British government cannot refuse to tolerate protestant missionaries; that a protestant government cannot forbid the free circulation of the Scriptures; that a Christian government cannot exclude Christianity from any part of its territories; and that if, in addition to this, the measures which have of late years been pursued in India, without the least inconvenience arising from them, can be proved to be *safe* and *wise*, they will be protected, rather than suppressed? I trust I may.

Permit me, sir, to copy an extract or two from the letters of the missionaries on this subject. "No political evil," says Mr. Carey, "can reasonably be feared from the spread of Christianity now; for it has been publicly preached in different parts of Bengal for about twenty years past, without the smallest symptom of the kind. Within the last five years, an edition of

the New Testament, of two thousand copies, nearly one of the Pentateuch of a thousand, one of Matthew of five hundred, and one of the Psalms and Isaiah of a thousand, besides many copies of a second edition of the New Testament, and of the poetical books of Scripture from Job to Canticles, and many religious tracts, have been distributed among the natives without a single instance of disturbance, unless the abusive language of a few loose persons may be so called. To this might be added the experience of the missionaries on the coast, who have taught Christianity for a hundred years, and reckon about forty thousand persons to have embraced it. Such long-continued exertions to spread the gospel, carried on to such an extent and in such different situations, without producing the smallest inconvenience, may, we presume, furnish a course of experience sufficient to remove every suspicion of political evil arising from the introduction of Christianity."

"The tongue of slander itself," says Mr. Marshman, "has not been able to charge us, nor any of the native converts, with the least deviation from the laws and government under which we live. How should it, when we are devoted from our very hearts to the British government, and this not from a blind partiality, but from a firm conviction of its being a blessing to the country? Had we been sent hither for the sole purpose of conciliating the natives to it, and of supporting it by every means in our power, we could not have been more cordially attached to it, nor have pursued a line of conduct more adapted to the end. Nothing will so effectually establish the British dominion in India as the introduction of Christianity, provided it be merely by persuasion; and nothing is more *safe*, and, under the Divine blessing, more *easy*."

"With regard to *safety*, there is nothing to be feared from the attempt. The Hindoos resemble an immense number of particles of sand, which are incapable of forming a solid mass. There is no bond of union among them, nor any principle capable of effecting it. Their hierarchy has no head, no influential body, no subordinate orders. The brahmins, as well as the nation at large, are a vast number of disconnected atoms, totally incapable of cohesion. In this country, sin seems to have given the fullest sample of its disuniting, debilitating power. The children are opposed to the parents, and the parents to the children; brother totally disregards brother; and a brahmin will see another brahmin perish with the greatest apathy. Yea, for the sake of a little gain, a brahmin will write against his gods, satisfying himself with this, that the sin belongs to his employer, and that he only does something to support himself. When to this are added their natural imbecility, and the enervating influence of climate, it will be evident that nothing is less to be apprehended than a steady, concerted opposition to the spread of Christianity. Nothing will ever appear beyond that individual contempt and hatred of the gospel which are inseparable from the vicious mind.

"Instead of the introduction of Christianity endangering the safety of the state, the danger arises from the other side. No one unacquainted with the natives can know the heart of an idolater. We have about a hundred servants in our different departments; and they have been treated with a kindness which, in England, would have conciliated affection, and created attachment. But so far are these effects from being produced in them, that not an individual can be found amongst them who would not cheat us to any extent, or who would not plunder us of every thing we have, were it in their power. How can it be otherwise? Their religion frees them from every tie of justice. If their own benefit can be secured by any action, this renders it lawful, or at least venial, though it were fraud, robbery, or even murder. Often have we heard it affirmed that a robber who should spend the whole night in the most atrocious deeds, and secure plunder to the

amount of a hundred rupees, would wipe off all the stain in the morning by giving one of them to a brahmin! Attachment to a master, a family, or a government of a different religion, is that which cannot be produced in the mind of a Hindoo while under the power of his gooroo or his debta. But if they lose caste, and embrace Christianity, not by force, but from pure conviction, they become other men. Even those who, as it may prove, have not embraced it cordially, are considerably influenced by it. If once they lose caste the charm is broken, and they become capable of attachment to government.

“These remarks are abundantly proved by what is seen in our native converts. We have baptized above a hundred of them; and we dare affirm that the British government has not a hundred better subjects and more cordial friends among the natives of Hindostan. The gloomy and faithless demon of superstition is dethroned. They cannot fear a brahmin nor a debta as heretofore. While they feel an attachment to us to which they had been strangers, they are also cordially attached to the governors who protect them in the exercise of their religion, and whom they consider as their friends and brethren.

“Such is the *ease* with which Christianity, under the Divine blessing, could be disseminated, that it may seem to some incredible. No public acts of government are necessary. It is not necessary that government should appear in the business; and much less that it should be at any expense whatever. If it be only understood that no one shall be forbidden to teach Christianity, and no one but the *evil-doer* receive interruption from the magistrate, the work will go on in the most gradual and yet effectual manner. God is raising up native converts of character and talents suited to it. It is possible for ten of these brethren to enter a district, to go unobserved through the principal towns, sit down in a private circle, gently reason, convey ideas of Divine truth, and turn persons from darkness to light, nearly unobserved. Thus a town, a district, a country, could be leavened with the blessed gospel, almost without the knowledge of the wealthy and great, even of their own countrymen.

“The only thing necessary for European missionaries is that, as long as they *deserve* the confidence of government, they be permitted to fix their residence in those places which will enable them to exercise a necessary superintendence, and administer support to these native brethren; to visit the societies which are formed; and, as occasion offers, dispense with prudence the word of life. It were the easiest thing imaginable for government to obtain from European missionaries the most ample pledges of good behaviour, and to withdraw its protection the moment they ceased to deserve it. A good man would feel a pleasure in giving such security; and, what is more, his being a good man would itself be a security. What security could have been exacted from a Schwartz, equal to that which his own wise and benevolent heart afforded? Nor is this peculiar to Schwartz; it is the feeling of every real missionary.

“A permission to itinerate and form missionary stations in the country, so far from being injurious to the British government, would advance its essential interests. In every missionary it would have a friend; a friend whose influence and capacity of rendering service would be constantly increasing. What were the advantages which the English derived from one Schwartz in the Mysore country! And what would be the effect of their having at this moment a hundred Schwartzes in India, each with his train of pious, peaceable, loyal, and faithful disciples! These messengers of peace and love (and all others we give up) would endear to the inhabitants the very nation to which they belonged. Who are these, they would ask,

that so manifestly seek our good, and not their own?—The answer, that they are English, must exhibit an idea of the government and nation which the natives can never have displayed before their eyes too often.

“But if a missionary could so far forget himself and his object as to cherish a spirit inimical to government, still, one would suppose, his own interest would correct him. To whom are he and his friends indebted for security? Without the protection of government, they would be continually in danger of being massacred. If, however, the folly of any one should render him insensible to these considerations, he must abide the consequences. Let him bear his own burden.”

Sir, I cannot persuade myself that the East India Company will adopt the principles of Mr. Twining. They have too much good sense to be alarmed at every outcry, too much justice to ascribe danger to causes from which it never arose, and too much wisdom to banish men who have always approved themselves the faithful friends of their government. Whatever be the mind of individuals, I trust that neither they nor the British government, as a body, are prepared to prohibit the free circulation of the Scriptures, or the temperate propagation of Christianity.

I am aware, indeed, that persecution has of late made its appearance in our *West* India colonies; and, if Mr. Twining and his party could succeed, there is too much reason to fear that we should see the same thing in the East; but I am also aware that, in the first instance, it was disallowed by HIS MAJESTY IN COUNCIL; and though it has since been revived on a narrower scale, yet I trust it will not be permitted either in the West or in the East to accomplish its ends.

It is not difficult, sir, to account for that aversion from religion which is so frequently found in men who have left their country at an early period in pursuit of a fortune. They neither understood nor believed the gospel when at home; and on going abroad took leave of Christian ordinances, and of all respect for them. They may wish, indeed, for certain reasons, to retain the name of Christians; but that is all: they cannot bear the thing, nor that any about them should be in earnest in the profession of it. But, whatever measures may be taken by men who have become aliens from that which is the glory of their country, I trust there will be found a sufficient number of the rulers and inhabitants of this land to counteract them. If not, let us talk as we may against French atheism, we are fast sinking into it.

If, sir, there be a God that judgeth in the earth, the danger lies in making HIM our enemy. It is a principle which cannot be disputed, however it may be disregarded, THAT WHATEVER IS RIGHT IS WISE, AND WHATEVER IS WRONG IS FOOLISH AND DANGEROUS. Sir, the tombs of nations, successively buried in oblivion, have this truth inscribed on every one of them. It was by “forbidding Christian ministers to speak unto the Gentiles that they might be saved, that the most favoured nation upon the earth filled up the measure of its sins, and drew upon it the wrath of Heaven to the uttermost!”

At a time, sir, when many and great nations are overthrown, nations which have not possessed our privileges, and therefore have not incurred our guilt—when we are engaged in the most tremendous struggle that this country ever knew, a struggle for our very existence—and when, on certain occasions, we profess to fast and to humble ourselves before Almighty God, shall we raise from its slumbers the wicked system of PERSECUTION? “Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than *He*?”

Mr. Twining may be disgusted at the idea of the Eastern empire being given us by Providence, *for the very purpose* of introducing the gospel (p. 25); but if it be so, it is no more than God’s having formerly given it to Cyrus, “for Jacob his servant’s sake,” Isa. xlv. 1–4. Men may scorn to be

subservient to their Maker; but whether they consent or not, it will be so. The conquests of Rome made way for the introduction of Christianity into Britain; and those of Britain may make way for its general introduction in the East. Should Britain be friendly to this object, it may be the lengthening of her tranquillity; but, as an eloquent writer\* observes, "If we decline the illustrious appointment, God may devolve on some less refractory people those high destinies which might have been ours. 'Who knoweth whether we are come to the kingdom for such a time as this? If we altogether hold our peace at this time, then may there enlargement and deliverance arise to them from another place, and we and our father's house may be destroyed.'"

I am, sir, very respectfully yours,

ANDREW FULLER.

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## SECTION II.

STRICTURES ON THE PREFACE TO A PAMPHLET ENTITLED "OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY."

This performance, though anonymous, has been generally ascribed to Major Scott Waring; and as I understand that that gentleman has since publicly avowed himself to be the author, I shall consider him as such in the following remarks.

Mr. Twining's performance had scarcely any thing tangible about it. It was chiefly made up of quotations, with here and there a sentence distinguished by italics, or capitals of different sizes, according, it should seem, to the different degrees of suspicion and alarm which possessed the mind of the author. But Major Scott Waring attempts to reason; and as he certainly has entered into the subject *with all his heart*, we may hope from hence to ascertain the real strength of our adversaries.

Having given his preface a cursory review, I determined, before I sat down to answer it, to read through his pamphlet; and, on looking it over, I found that though the "Observations" related chiefly to things beside my province, yet they contained passages worthy of attention; especially when compared with others, and with the general design of his performance. A few of these I shall take the liberty to transcribe.

"For many centuries, we believe, Christian missionaries have resided in India, with the free consent of the native princes. These men were generally, if not universally, pure in their morals, and inoffensive in their conduct; and many of them highly respected by the princes of India, who allowed them to preach the gospel, and to make as many converts as they could to the Christian religion,"—p. 9.

"Missionaries can do no mischief in India, if they are treated as formerly, neither encouraged nor oppressed; but if men paid by the British government are encouraged to make converts to Christianity, our empire will be in danger,"—p. 14.

"The missionaries now in India, or those who may go thither in future, should be treated by our government as they formerly were by the native princes. In that case they may be as zealous as possible, without doing mischief. Mr. Buchanan says that the four Gospels have been translated,

\* Mr. Wrangham's sermon, *On the Translation of the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages*, preached before the University of Cambridge, on May 10, 1807,—p. 11.



and liberally distributed. If that was done at the expense of the Bible Society in England, or of the other religious societies in Europe, the measure was laudable; but if at the expense of the Company, and from their press, it was most impolitic, and made use of, no doubt, by the sons of Tippoo Sultaan, to excite the seapoys to mutiny. The true line for the British government to pursue is obvious; let missionaries make as many converts as they can, but give them no support on the one hand, nor discouragement on the other. Let us copy the example of the native princes in allowing the missionaries of this day to preach the gospel also, but there let us stop,"—pp. 22, 23.

"No jealousy was ever entertained, either by Mahomedan or Hindoo princes, because missionaries were settled in their countries who now and then converted one of their subjects to Christianity. No jealousy will now be entertained of their having similar success, while the British government, which stands in possession of the power formerly enjoyed by the native princes, is contented merely with following their example,"—p. 25.

As I have no concern in any plan which would be expensive to government, or would require their interference in any way beyond simple protection to the missionaries, and that no longer than their conduct is found to be deserving of it, I have no dispute with Major Scott Waring on what he has here advanced. If he suspects Mr. Carey to be *paid* by government, or the translations in which he is engaged to be printed or circulated at their *expense*, I can assure him it is without foundation. The salary which he receives is not as a missionary, but merely as a professor of the Shanscrit and Bengalee languages. Government knows nothing of him, or his colleagues, as missionaries, any further than, when mentioning certain literary works, to speak of those works as undertaken by "the protestant missionaries at Serampore." Mr. Carey's salary is the due reward of his labours as a literary man. It is true, he disinterestedly devotes all his savings to the work of spreading the gospel; but the same may be said of more than one of his colleagues, who have no connexion with government, and whose avocations are productive of little, if any thing, less than his. And, whatever has been done by the missionaries in translating and circulating the Scriptures, has been done at the expense of societies and individuals. Whether any translations have been printed at the Company's press, I cannot speak with certainty. I think it is highly probable they have not; of this, however, I am certain, that those which are enumerated by Mr. Carey [in page 121 of this volume] were printed at Serampore. When it was determined to translate the Scriptures into all the Eastern languages, government permitted them to advertise in their Gazette for subscriptions to the work; but, to argue from this that they had any pecuniary concern in the undertaking, is absurd; for if so, what need was there to advertise for *private* subscriptions?

Upon the whole, it follows that what has been done is, in Major Scott Waring's opinion, "laudable," and was *not* made use of to excite the seapoys to mutiny. And here I might take leave of this gentleman, were it not for his preface, with the satisfaction of our labours having obtained his approbation and applause. For as to what he says of the *hopelessness* of attempting to convert the Hindoos, that is to ourselves. We derive hope from a book with which he may be but little acquainted; and, so long as we do "no mischief," why should we be interrupted?

But when I look into the preface, I find a new and a contradictory publication. Whether the "Observations" were written at so distant a period that he had forgotten them, or whether the late "intelligence from Madras" proved so alarming to him as to produce an entire change in his principles

—whatever was the cause, there is certainly a most violent opposition between the one and the other.

Before we proceed to examine this extraordinary preface, which is nearly as large as the book itself, it may be proper to remark that Major Scott Waring knows nothing of the effects of Christian missions in India of late years but from *the report of their adversaries*. The reader will recollect what was quoted from Mr. Carey's letter of February 13, 1807, [in page 764,] and the intimation there given of a number of persons who were at that time preparing to embark for Europe, with a view to spread the alarm at home. These are the men from whom the author derives his intelligence. "Various private accounts," says he, "men of sense, observation, and character, mention," &c.,—p. I. And again, "I am assured, by gentlemen lately returned from India, that," &c.,—p. xlii. These, or some gentlemen like-minded, have been endeavouring by *private letters*, during the whole of 1807, to excite suspicions against us. But, when told of these things, our answer has been, "Let us not be judged by private letters: let our adversaries come forward and accuse the missionaries; or, at least, give proof of their labours having been injurious."\*

I know not who these *gentlemen* are, and therefore can have no personal disrespect to any of them; but, whoever they be, I have no scruple in saying that their reports, as given in the performance before me, are *utterly unworthy of credit*. Of this the reader will be convinced, I presume, in the course of these remarks.

Major Scott Waring, as if conscious that *private* reports were of no use, unless to fill up the deficiencies of what is public and authentic, begins with the *Proclamation from the Madras Government, on Dec. 3, 1806*; that is, about six months after the mutiny at Vellore. This proclamation states that, in some late instances, an extraordinary degree of agitation had prevailed among several corps of the native army of that coast—that, on inquiry into the cause, it appeared that many persons of evil intention had endeavoured, for malicious purposes, to impress upon the native troops a belief that it was the wish of the British government to convert them, by forcible means, to Christianity—that such malicious reports had been observed with concern to be believed by many of the native troops—and that they were utterly without foundation,—pp. i.—v.

Such is "the alarming intelligence lately received from Madras." From hence Major Scott Waring takes occasion "humbly to submit to the consideration of his Majesty's ministers, the East India Company, and the legislature, a plan for restoring that confidence which the natives formerly reposed in the justice and policy of the British government, as to the security of their religion, laws, and local customs." And what is it? Nothing less than "THE IMMEDIATE RECALL OF EVERY ENGLISH MISSIONARY, AND A PROHIBITION TO ALL PERSONS DEPENDENT ON THE COMPANY FROM GIVING ASSISTANCE TO THE TRANSLATION OR CIRCULATION OF OUR HOLY SCRIPTURES,"—p. xvii. These the author thinks "the most, and indeed the only, efficacious measures." That they would be *efficacious* there can be no doubt; and such would be the application of a guillotine for the cure of the headache; but whether it be just or wise is another question.

If I had written the "Observations," and had been afterwards convinced that the principles they contained were erroneous, I think I should not have sent out a new edition of them: or, if justice had failed to influence me, a regard to consistency would have prevented my publishing them and their refutation in the same pamphlet; but to publish that refutation *in the form*

\* Private intelligence is proper on some occasions; but, in cases of accusation, no man should be able to take away another's character without risking his own.

of a *preface* is beyond every thing. To preface his work by contradicting its leading principles is advertising his reader that he has sold him a bad commodity. Should his Majesty's ministers, the East India Company, or the legislature, attend to this gentleman's performance, in what part are they to regard him? In the preface they are advised "immediately to recall every English missionary;" but, as they read on, they are told that "the true line for the British government to pursue is obvious; let missionaries be as zealous as they may, and make as many converts as they can, provided they be neither encouraged on the one hand, nor discouraged on the other, they can do no mischief." What then are they to do, unless it be to disregard the whole as nugatory?

And what have these English missionaries done, that they are to be immediately recalled; and these Holy Scriptures, that they are not to be translated or circulated by any one dependent on the Company? Nothing. As to the former, it is not pretended that they had any hand in the tragical event at Vellore. On the contrary, they are expressly acquitted of it,—p. xi. And as to the latter, no accusation has yet been brought against them. But evil-minded men, it seems, have taken *occasion*, from the increase of the one, and the gratuitous circulation of the other, to misrepresent the designs of government; and, therefore, it is *necessary* to proceed to this extremity. The author, it must be acknowledged, has hit upon a happy expedient for suppressing the Scriptures; for if he can once get the men who are employed in translating and circulating them recalled, there is no danger of their doing any further mischief. So long as they are locked up in an unknown language, all Asia may continue from generation to generation under the dominion of imposture.

But why must the missionaries be recalled *immediately*? It was said by a wise heathen, *Ye ought to do nothing rashly*. Permit us, at least, to ask a question or two before we are condemned.

In the first place, *WHEN were these misrepresentations made*? Is there any proof of their having existed *before* the mutiny, so as to have had any influence in producing it? None at all. But we are told that "it is *impossible*, impolitic as the measure was, that the mere change in the dress of the seapoys could have produced a general belief that the British government was resolved to compel them to embrace Christianity,"—p. 1. I answer, there is no proof that such a *general belief existed*; no, not six months afterwards, when the proclamation was issued; for it was *then* alleged to have extended only to "several corps of the native army on the coast;" and *at the time of the mutiny* there is no proof of any other belief than what arose from the impositions. With what colour of evidence can this writer pretend that "the *great increase* of English missionaries of late years, and the gratuitous distribution of our sacred Scriptures *throughout the whole country*," were *CONNECTED* with the impositions in dress, in the representations made to the seapoys, when in the same sentence he acknowledges those impositions to have *affected their religion*? Allowing it to be what he calls it, "*a religious mutiny*," yet the impositions in dress were competent to produce it. Had he not been determined to bring in these missionaries, and these Holy Scriptures, at any rate, he would have concluded that the other causes were "*sufficient to create the alarm*," without any thing else being *connected* with them. But "*various private accounts* from men of sense, observation and character, mention that the *great increase* of missionaries, the profuse and gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures, *added* to the change of dress, were represented as proofs of our resolution ultimately to compel them to become Christians,"—p. 1. Ah, that is it! Major Scott Waring knows of nothing antecedent to the mutiny; the proclamation knows of nothing;

but "*private accounts from men of sense, observation, and character,*" make known every thing. And what have they to say on this subject? They tell of the *great increase of English missionaries* of late years. It is possible there may be about fifteen or sixteen; but nine of them, by Major Scott Waring's own reckoning, are in Bengal, where no alarm worth mentioning has existed, except in the minds of Europeans. They also tell of "the gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures, *throughout the whole country,*"—pp. x. 1. The truth is, I believe, that the gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures has been hitherto confined to Bengal. Thus much, at present, for the private accounts of these *men of sense, observation, and character*, but for whose information we could not have known of any misrepresentations being made to the seapoys, *prior* to the Vellore mutiny.

We ask, secondly, *Who were the authors of these misrepresentations?* The proclamation does not inform us; and probably government did not know, or they would have punished the offenders. But whether it be from the *private accounts* of these *men of sense, observation, and character*, or from some other source of information, Major Scott Waring makes it out that they were "disaffected natives of the Carnatic and the Mysore,"—p. x. This, if applied to what took place *subsequent* to the mutiny, may have some truth in it, or it may not. The evil-minded persons referred to in the proclamation, who appear to have availed themselves of the mutiny to increase the alarm, might be disaffected natives, or they might be Europeans, who, from aversion to Christianity, and a desire to get the Scriptures suppressed and the missionaries recalled, suggested such things to the seapoys as might accomplish their end. It is remarkable that, in the very passage in which this writer speaks in so positive a strain of "the disaffected men of the Carnatic and the Mysore" having taken advantage of our folly, and excited the troops to mutiny, he exonerates the sons of Tippoo Suldaun, whom he had before, with equal positivity, condemned. "*We know,*" he had said in his Observations, "that the mutiny was excited by the sons of Tippoo Suldaun, whose emissaries insinuated that the change which we wished to adopt in the dress of the seapoys was only a preparatory step towards the accomplishment of our great object, which was to compel them to embrace Christianity,"—p. 8. But in the preface (p. x.) he says, "From later information I have reason to believe that the sons of Tippoo Suldaun are innocent of the charge preferred against them; but the disaffected men of the Carnatic and the Mysore *did* take advantage of our folly; and that they excited the troops to a *religious mutiny* is beyond a doubt." If this gentleman's *knowledge* be thus unfounded, though so very minute and particular that he would almost seem to have been an ear-witness, what is to be thought of his conjectures? and what to make of this last account more than conjecture I cannot tell. His eagerness to charge the disaffected natives looks as if *some other people* were suspected. Let us hear the other side.

Mr. Carey says, "India swarms with deists; and deists are, in my opinion, the most intolerant of mankind. Their great desire is to exterminate true religion from the earth. *I consider the alarms which have been spread through India as the fabrications of these men.* The concurrence of two or three circumstances, in point of time, namely, the massacre at Vellore, the rebellious disposition of the inhabitants in some part of Mysore, and the public advertisements for subscriptions to the Oriental translations, have furnished them with occasion to represent the introduction of Christianity among the natives as dangerous."

Dr. Kerr's Report, dated Madras, July 23, 1807, twelve months after the mutiny, confirms Mr. Carey's statement. He clearly shows that, in his opinion, the evil-minded persons, who industriously circulated reports nearly

allied to the above, were not natives, but Europeans *hostile to religion and its interests*. "Various reports," says he, "have been industriously circulated, by evil-minded persons hostile to religion and its interests, that the natives would be alarmed were missionaries allowed to come out to India; but I feel myself authorized, by a near acquaintance with many of the protestant missionaries now in India, and a perfect knowledge of the respect which is entertained for them by all descriptions of the natives, to repeat what I have formerly stated to government, that these men are, and always have been, more beloved by the natives than any other class of Europeans; and it is to be accounted for on the most rational grounds—that is, they learn their language intimately; they associate with them in a peaceable, humble manner, and do them every act of kindness in their power; while, at the same time, the example of their Christian lives produces the very highest respect amongst heathens, unaccustomed to behold such excellence amongst each other. The lives of such men in India have always been a blessing to the country, and I heartily wish that all such characters may be encouraged to come amongst us."

The above statements from Mr. Carey, and Dr. Kerr, I may venture to place against the *anonymous accounts of men of sense, observation, and character*; and if they be true, they not only furnish an exposition to the labours of Messrs. Twining, Scott Waring, and Co., but fully account for those apprehensions which, it is said, "existed as late as March, 1807, three months after the date of the proclamation; and which induced the British officers attached to the native corps constantly to sleep with loaded pistols under their pillows," p. xi. An event so tragical as that at Vellore would itself, indeed, suggest the necessity of such a precaution, and that for a considerable time after; and still more so when the flame was fanned by evil-minded persons. Yes, reader, if these statements be true, it follows that the enemies of Christianity, after having themselves excited these alarms, are now actually attempting to transfer the responsibility for their consequences to the missionaries.

We ask, lastly, *let these misrepresentations have been fabricated when and by whom they might, Is it JUST, or WISE, to recall those who are acknowledged to have had no concern in them, or to suppress the circulation of the Holy Scriptures on that account?*

A great outrage has certainly been committed. What was the cause? According to Major Scott Waring, the Madras government acted *absurdly*; first, in changing so suddenly a native to an English administration, and then in imposing such alterations in the dress of the seapoys as affected their religion. And when, in addition to this, they were told, by evil-minded persons, of the great increase of missionaries, and the gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures throughout the country, they believed government intended to compel them to become Christians; and though the thing was not true, yet it was by no means *irrational* for them to believe it,—pp. ix., x. Supposing this account to be correct, where is the *justice* of punishing men for their numbers being magnified, and their labours misrepresented by others? If an atonement be necessary, why select *them* as victims? If, indeed, the evil-minded incendiaries, who misrepresented their designs and those of government, could be detected, it might answer a good end to punish them; but if this cannot be accomplished, let not the innocent suffer.

Major Scott Waring seems, indeed, to give up the *justice* of the measure; but yet contends for it as of "absolute *necessity*, seeing the proclamation had not lulled the suspicions of the people,"—p. xi. Such are the Machiavelian politics of this gentleman. Could we suppose him to be sufficiently acquainted with the New Testament, we might suspect that he had taken

up this opinion from Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, who advised the crucifixion of our Lord, on the principle of its being "*expedient* that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not," John xi. 49, 50.

"It is necessary to convince the natives," says this writer, "not only that we never did entertain the wild idea of compelling them to embrace Christianity, but that we have not a *wish* to convert them,"—p. vi. It cannot be necessary to convince the natives that Major Scott Waring, and all who are like-minded with him, have not a *wish* to convert them; and as to others, who may entertain the idea of converting them *without compulsion*, it deserves to be considered whether the recalling of them would not have a contrary effect to that which is pretended. The recall of the missionaries, and the virtual suppression of the Scriptures, would furnish the natives with an important subject of reflection. It would be a tacit acknowledgment, on the part of government, that, till instructed by the Vellore mutiny, they *had* entertained "the wild idea of compelling them to embrace Christianity;" but that *now* they have become sober, and relinquished it! Whether such a measure would be attributed to *respect*, or to *fear*, and what effects it would produce on the army and the country, let common sense determine.

As the main design of this preface was to excite "his Majesty's ministers, the East India Company, and the legislature" against the missionaries and their labours, the author, having improved the Vellore mutiny as far as he is able, proceeds to denounce these men, and all who have been in any way abettors of their dangerous designs. *The British and Foreign Bible Society*, who have aided them as translators; Mr. Brown, and Dr. Buchanan, who have encouraged them; and Dr. Kerr, who is engaged in the same *cause* with them; all come in for a share of his censures.

"Dr. Buchanan conceives," says he, "that it is by no means submitted to *our judgment, or to our notions of policy*, whether we shall embrace the means of imparting Christian knowledge to our subjects or not,"—p. xxv. The Major probably thinks this a very *wild* opinion; yet it only amounts to this, that God is greater than man, and that what respects the promotion of his kingdom in the earth must not be rendered subservient to worldly interests. But this, he tells us, "was precisely the doctrine of the Spaniards and Portuguese, when they discovered the new world; and they extirpated millions of unfortunate men in propagating their doctrines by the sword." If there be any force in this remark, (which seems to be a favourite one,) it is because the persecuting conduct of these nations was *the legitimate and necessary consequence* of the doctrine in question. But why might they not have considered themselves as under indispensable obligation to impart the means of Christian knowledge, without being obliged to follow it with persecution? Does it follow, because they were not obliged to extend their religious principles by the sword, that we are not obliged to extend ours without the sword?

Many things are said on the impolicy of Dr. Buchanan's visit to the Syrian Christians, and that of Dr. Kerr to the Malabar coast. It seems to have given this writer serious offence that the governor of Madras should have given the epithet "important" to an inquiry relating to Christianity,—p. xxix. He calls it "the most trifling of all possible subjects connected with the welfare of our Oriental empire,"—p. xxxiii. He speaks of this empire as being "conquered by British valour,"—p. xl. God and religion, therefore, it should seem, can have nothing to do with it. No, let the missionaries go to Africa, to the South Sea Islands, or to the wilds of America; but let them not come hither! "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more

at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court," Amos vii. 12, 13. Yet this gentleman would be thought, after all, to be a Christian, and "trusts it will not be imputed to indifference for the eternal welfare of the people of India" that he advises what he does!

But as Dr. Buchanan and Dr. Kerr, if they judge it necessary, are able to vindicate themselves, I shall confine my replies to those particulars which more immediately concern me. Many things are said against "the English, and especially the Baptist missionaries." Such, indeed, is the quantity of misrepresentations contained in these few pages, that, to correct it, it is often necessary to contradict every sentence. On this account, the reader must frequently dispense with the ordinary forms of quoting and answering; and consider those paragraphs which are marked with reversed commas as the words of Major Scott Waring, and those which are not as the answers to them. I do not accuse my opponent of wilful errors; but if he be clear of them, his information must be extremely incorrect.

"We have now a great number of sectarian missionaries spread over every part of India,"—p. xii. Those whom Major Scott Waring is pleased to honour with this appellation may amount to fifteen or sixteen, the greater part of whom reside at Serampore, near Calcutta, directly under the eye of the supreme government. "Mr. Carey, the head of the Baptist mission in Bengal, and his assistant missionaries, have been employed, since the year 1804, in translating the Scriptures into the various languages of India." It may have been from that period that the work of translating has been conducted on so extensive a scale; but for many years before that time Mr. Carey was engaged in the same undertaking. An edition of the New Testament, in Bengalee, was printed at Serampore in 1801, a copy of which is now in his Majesty's library. "Mr. Carey is employed in translating the Scriptures into the *Chinese* language,"—p. xv. The Chinese translation is not the work of Mr. Carey, but of Mr. Johannes Lassar, a learned Armenian Christian, with other assistants. "As the different parts are translated, they are printed, as I understand, at the *Company's press*, attached to the College at Calcutta." If this were true, while no man is forced to read them, no danger could arise from it; but there is very little, if any, truth in it. The translations of the missionaries have been printed at Serampore. "Specimens of these translations have been sent home by the provost." It seems, then, that they were not engaged in any thing of which they were ashamed. "The natives of India cannot be ignorant of these novel and extraordinary proceedings:"—Especially while their most learned pundits assist in the work. "They can form no other conclusion than this, that if we cannot *persuade*, we shall *compel* them to embrace Christianity." So long as no compulsion is used towards them, they have more sense than to draw such conclusions, or even to believe them when drawn for them by others whom they consider as men of *no religion*.

"In 1781, when it was the fixed principle of the legislature that we ought never to *interfere* with the religion, laws, or native customs of the people of India, a proposition for *free schools* and *Christian missionaries* could not have been listened to,"—p. xiii. There never was a period, since the British have had footing in India, in which either free schools or Christian missionaries were considered as an *interference* with the religious opinions of the natives. If they were, why were Schwartz and his contemporaries tolerated? The truth is, the term "interference" has been adopted in this controversy to answer an end, and the idea which our adversaries endeavour to attach to it is altogether novel.

"The late bishop of St. Asaph, a sound and orthodox divine, and one of the main pillars of our good old Church of England, deprecated all such

interference." He did so; and Major Scott Waring, with his *men of sense, observation, and character*, have, doubtless, in his lordship's decease, lost an able advocate. "The command of our Saviour to his apostles, to preach the gospel to all nations, did not, as he conceived, apply to us—and his opinion in 1781 was universal." Major Scott Waring may know that this was the opinion of the late bishop of St. Asaph; but he knows very little indeed of what were the opinions of the Christian world. "Since that period many very worthy and good men are of opinion that, as Christians, it is incumbent upon us to spread the Christian religion as widely as we possibly can; and highly, indeed, do I applaud their zeal, when it is exercised in countries where *we* have no political power." Whatever charges we may exhibit against Major Scott Waring, we cannot accuse him of not speaking out.

"I do not exactly know what are Baptist missionaries. I believe they may be classed with Calvinistic Methodists, to distinguish them from the Arminian Methodists,"—p. xv. We can excuse the author's ignorance on this subject; but when he tells us, in the same page, that there are "spread over India, Baptist missionaries, Arminian Methodists, and United Brethren missionaries," &c. &c., we see ignorance combined with something worse. The Arminian Methodists have no mission in India, and never had. The United Brethren have formerly had one at Serampore; but I believe, at present, they have none. Before this gentleman writes again, he would do well to consider the justness of the remark made by himself, and to apply it to other subjects, as well as politics: "In discussing political questions, a certain degree of acquaintance with the subject is supposed to be requisite,"—p. 38.

"I am assured, by gentlemen lately returned from India, that, notwithstanding the very great increase of missionaries of late years, the case is not changed since my time; that they have not made a single Mahomedan convert, and that the few Hindoos who have been converted were men of the most despicable character, who had lost their castes, and took up a new religion because they were excommunicated,"—p. xlii. I presume these *gentlemen lately returned from India* are the same persons whom this writer elsewhere denominates *men of sense, observation, and character*. The reader will now be able to judge of the value of these boasted authorities. **EVERY PARTICULAR IN THIS PARAGRAPH IS FALSE.** There has been no such great increase of missionaries of late years as is pretended. There are Mahomedans, as well as Hindoos, who have been baptized. Out of more than eighty natives who have been baptized before May 25, 1806, only *three* had previously lost caste, *eight* were brahmins, and *seven* Mahomedans. The whole number which had been *excluded* for immoral conduct might amount to *eight* or *nine*. As nearly as I can make it out the above is a true statement. The reader may see a list of the baptized, down to Nov. 1804, in No. XV. Periodical Accounts—Pref. p. xiv. I can assure him that the missionaries might have had more proselytes than they have, if they would have received such characters as these men report them to have received; but their object is to make *converts to Christ*, and not proselytes to themselves. Indeed, so little are the assertions of this writer to be regarded, with respect to the character of the native converts, that it would be the easiest thing imaginable directly to confront them by the testimony of competent witnesses. Mr. J. Fernandez, a gentleman who came from India early in 1806, and who is now with Dr. Ryland at Bristol, makes the following declaration:—"There are several Mahomedan converts among the missionaries, and some very respectable Hindoos who have embraced Christianity. To the best of my recollection, there are but two at Serampore who had



previously lost caste: these had been for a long time reckoned Portuguese, and were not in worse circumstances than other people. Some of the highest class of brahmins have, to my knowledge, embraced the gospel, whom the natives call Mookoorja, Chatirja, Barridja," &c. As to what is said of their non-success, either by Major Scott Waring or *the gentlemen lately returned from India*, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether, if they themselves believed what they say, they would raise such an opposition as they do. They tell us the natives are alarmed; but the alarm is with themselves. It is somewhat remarkable that infidelity, which has of late years threatened to swallow up Christianity, should in so short a time be alarmed for itself, and for its pagan and Mahomedan allies. A small detachment from the Christian army, clad in the armour of God, and operating as in a way of diversion, has caused their host to tremble, and to cry out to the civil powers to assist them by recalling these men.

This gentleman is sufficiently aware of the prejudice which exists against *Protestant Dissenters*, and knows how to avail himself of it. He can condescend to call the missionaries *sectaries* and *schismatics*,—pp. xliii.—xlv. And would we have liked them better, if they had been churchmen? No; for he speaks of certain gentlemen as "classed under that description of our clergy who are termed *evangelical*," and of their being all for "converting the Hindoos to Christianity,"—p. xv. Clergymen of this description are, in his account, as bad as sectaries and schismatics. The truth is, it is *as Christians* that we incur his displeasure; only he judges it prudent to attack us under other names.

But these missionaries are also represented as "illiterate, ignorant, and as enthusiastic as the wildest devotees among the Hindoos,"—p. xlv. The following extract from the speech of Sir George Barlow, published in a Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary, on Saturday, March 8, 1806, will prove that all men are not of Major Scott Waring's opinion. "I have received with great satisfaction the information that, *under the patronage of the Asiatic Society*, the Society of protestant missionaries at the Danish settlement of Serampore, aided and superintended by the abilities of Mr. Carey, professor of the Shanscrit and Bengalee languages, has undertaken the translation of some of the most ancient and authentic works of literature in the former of these languages."

Of the missionaries sent out by the London Society, I do not believe there is an individual who is either "*ignorant or illiterate*;" though, doubtless, as in all other bodies of men, there are diversities of talent and learning. And with respect to *enthusiasm*, after what has been quoted from Major Scott Waring, no Christian need be offended at his calling him an enthusiast.

This gentleman has furnished himself with various reports from the Missionary Societies. Among others, he has met with a "Sermon," preached in May last before "The Society of Missions to Africa *and the East*," of which Society Admiral Lord Gambier is a governor. It seems, then, that India is not *altogether* "thrown into the hands of schismatics." But at the end of this sermon is an account of a brahmin, as given by Mr. John Thomas, in the "Baptist Periodical Accounts."—Vol. I. pp. 22–26. Let any one that fears God read that account, and compare it with these remarks upon it. "I had the curiosity," says he, "to inquire after Mr. Thomas and his convert, and I heard that they both died raving mad in Bengal,"—p. xlv. We may suppose this information, as well as the preceding, was received from *the gentlemen lately returned from India*. It is worthy of them. Parbotee, however, is neither dead nor insane. And Mr. Thomas, though his mind was deranged for a month or two at one period

of his life, yet died sane and happy. Mr. John Fernandez, the gentleman before referred to, says, "Mr. Thomas was deranged for a short time and after his recovery lived with my father at Dinagepore for a considerable time before his dissolution, when he died very happy. As for Parbotee, I am almost certain that he is still alive. He was so, however, when I left India in 1806. I saw him myself.

It is remarkable that this gentleman is for tolerating the Roman Catholic missionaries, and all others, indeed, except "*those who possess this new mania for conversion*, so unaccountably taken up,"—p. xlix. We perfectly comprehend him; and, I hope, shall profit by the hint. It signifies but little with him how many missionaries there are, nor by what names they are called, so that they are *not in earnest for the salvation of men*. We will follow his example:—while we adhere to that denomination which appears to us to approach nearest to the Scriptures, we will recognise *the Christian*, in whatever communion we may find him. We will rejoice in the good which is done by "The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge," even though they are offended with their missionaries, for nothing that we can conceive but their exercising the common duties of hospitality to ours.\*

Major Scott Waring, among other missionary reports, has procured No. XVI. of the "Baptist Periodical Accounts," and proposes giving us some extracts from it. Before he does this, however, he presents us with a few particulars by way of introduction; but all, as the reader would suppose, gathered from this said No. XVI. First, he informs us that "*nine English missionaries are employed by this Society in Bengal alone*."—p. liii. What a number then must they employ, the reader would suppose, in all the other provinces of India! It happens, however, that in no other province of Hindostan have they ever employed a single missionary. Whether *the gentlemen lately returned from India* informed the author of the great numbers of these missionaries scattered all over the country, or however he came by the idea, his mind is certainly full of it, and it has led him into a curious train of reasoning. "The jealousy and the alarm," says he, "which has pervaded the whole of the Carnatic and Mysore, has been but partially felt in Bengal, because [there] the efforts of the English missionaries have hitherto not extended beyond a few inconsiderable villages, and the populous city of Dacca."—p. li. They have been more extensive then, it should seem, in the Carnatic and Mysore! The truth is, I believe, that NOT AN ENGLISH MISSIONARY HAS ENTERED EITHER OF THESE COUNTRIES. Nearly the whole of what has been hitherto done is confined to Bengal; for though the London Society has *five or six* missionaries in other provinces, some of which may be near to the Carnatic, yet the time is so short that they have scarcely been able, at present, to acquire the languages. But in Bengal the Baptist mission has existed for a number of years, and the labours of the missionaries have been much more extensive than our author would seem in this instance to apprehend; yet there these "alarms have been but partially felt!" Who does not perceive the consequence? THESE ALARMS ARE NOT THE EFFECT OF MISSIONARY EXERTIONS.

Major Scott Waring goes on to inform his reader of a number of particulars, in a manner as though he had collected them from our own Report. Among other things, he speaks of Mr. Carey as "having apartments in the

\* See the last Report of the committee of this Society, No. IV. p. 165. They acknowledge the documents they possess to be *quite insufficient* to enable them to form a judgment of the true ground of certain disorders; but "Missionaries from an Anabaptist Society, and from that called the London Missionary Society," have called upon them, and it seems received some countenance from them; and therefore this committee thinks proper to throw out a suspicion that *they may have been the occasion of these evils!*

college for the reception of his brother missionaries when they visit Calcutta," and repeats the story of "Mr. Thomas and his convert Parbotee dying mad in Bengal."—p. liii. Did he learn these particulars from No. XVI., or from the *gentlemen lately returned from India*? It were singular indeed if a professor in a college had no apartments in it, and were not at liberty to receive any person who may call upon him.

"In the Company's list of college officers he is styled Mr. William Carey; but the Bible Society has given him the dignified title of *Reverend*,"—p. liii. He might be called *Doctor Carey*, or *Professor Carey*. Whether either of these titles would be less displeasing to this gentleman I cannot tell. If not, whenever he has occasion to correspond with him, he may lay aside all titles, and call him, as I do, *Mr. Carey*. I can answer for it that it will give him no offence.

As to the attempts to prove from the missionaries' own accounts that they have "caused considerable *uneasiness* among the people of the villages," Major Scott Waring may make what he can of them. If he had given *extracts*, as he proposed, and referred to the pages, it would have appeared that no such sensation was ever produced *with respect to government*. It was confined, as Mr. Carey says, "to abusive language from a few loose persons;" or, at most, to ill treatment of the native converts, and which, in every instance, they have borne with Christian meekness and patience. No such thing as a disturbance, endangering the peace of society, has occurred. The "alarm" which the appearance of a European is allowed to excite (p. lviii.) respects him not as a missionary, but *as a European*; and it is for the purpose of avoiding this as much as possible that the labours of the native converts are encouraged. This writer seems to think it sufficient to discredit all missionary attempts, that he can prove from our own accounts that we have strong prejudices to encounter, and judge it expedient, instead of violently attacking them, to proceed in as still and silent a way as possible.

A very heavy charge is preferred against one of the missionaries, as having *perverted* the words of our Lord: "Think you that I am come to send peace on the earth? I tell you, Nay." Yet nothing is alleged to prove it a perversion, except that the gospel inculcates the mild doctrine of "peace on earth, and good will to men,"—p. lix. The *direct* influence of the gospel is no doubt what he says of it; but what if, owing to the depravity of men, it should in many instances *occasion* the most bitter enmity and opposition? Is the gospel accountable for this? Christian compassion has been known to excite the foulest resentment in some men. What then? Is Christian compassion ever the worse?

The remarks on the journey to Dacca (pp. liv. lv.) show what Major Scott Waring *wishes* to prove; but that is all. If what he calls "the proper line for the British government to pursue" had been pursued on that occasion, the young men had not been interrupted. I say the *young men*; for it was not Mr. Carey, but Mr. *William Carey*, his second son, who accompanied Mr. Moore. "They distinguished," we are told, "between the brahmins and the people at large." Yes, they had reason to do so; for the people were eager to receive the tracts, but some of the brahmins were offended; and this is common on almost all other occasions. "Should we be mad enough to make the same distinction, our destruction is *inevitable*." One would think, then, the destruction of the missionaries themselves would not only be inevitable, but immediate. As the brahmins are displeased with none but them and the native converts, if *they* escape, there is no cause for others to fear. The truth is, the common people are not so under the influence of the brahmins as to be displeased with hearing them publicly confuted. On the contrary they will often express their pleasure at it; and,

when the latter remain silent, will call out, "Why do you not answer him?" But "Lord Clive and Mr. Verelst, in the year 1766, were not so mad as to advise a poor creature who had lost caste to abandon his ridiculous and idolatrous prejudices, and to embrace the true religion,"—p. lvi. If I were to say they were not so wise and so good as to do so, I should be as near the truth; and my saying would bear reflection in a dying hour, quite as much as that of Major Scott Waring.

"We may conceive the narrow *bigotry* by which these men are actuated, by the conduct of Mr. [William] Carey and Mr. Moore to some native Christian Catholics whom they met with in a village when they were driven from Dacca by the magistrate and collector." And what was it? Why, "to these poor Catholics, they pointed out the *errors of popery*, and warned them of the danger of *worshipping* and trusting to *idols*,"—p. lx. And this is *bigotry!* Such bigots they certainly were and are.

To prove the absolute inutility of the dispersion of one edition of the New Testament, and of twenty thousand religious tracts, a letter from Mr. Carey is cited, which speaks of there being "but few months in which *some* were not baptized; of *three* natives having joined them in the last month, and *two* the month before; but of their being under the necessity of excluding *several for evil conduct*,"—p. lx. If Major Scott Waring be not more successful in his opposition than he is in his *proof*, Christianity may still go on and prosper in India. I suspect it was from a conscious want of this important article, that he was obliged to fill up his pages with such terms as "bigots," "madmen," "mischievous madmen," &c. &c. There is nothing so provoking, to a man who is desirous of proving a point, as the want of evidence.

"In the course of several years, they have made about eighty converts, all from the lowest of the people, most of them beggars by profession, and others who had lost their castes. The whole of them were rescued from poverty, and procured a comfortable subsistence by their conversion,"—p. xli. That is, reader, thus say the *gentlemen lately returned from India*,—p. xlii. I need not repeat the refutation of these falsehoods. Before, they were said *all* to have previously lost caste; but now it seems to be only *some* of them. Judge, reader, do these men believe what they say? But "the whole of them were rescued from poverty, and procured a comfortable subsistence by their conversion." A considerable number of the Christian natives live many miles from Serampore, and subsist in the same manner as they did before their baptism, and without any aid from the missionaries. The subsistence of others, who reside in the neighbourhood of Serampore, is from the same employment as it was before they became Christians; and those who receive pay from the missionaries are such as are *employed* by them. Mr. John Fernandez says, "I have been present almost every time when the converts have professed their faith before the brethren, and have repeatedly heard the missionaries tell them that, unless they worked with their own hands, they would receive no help from them. Inquirers were always kept for some time on probation." Some of them were Byraggees, a sort of religious beggars; but they are no longer so when they become Christians. No one is supported in idleness. If any are bettered in their circumstances, it is by being taught to be industrious and frugal. But many of those whom our author calls "beggars by profession" lived in much greater fulness by that way of life than they do now by labour; and it is not very likely that they should have relinquished the one, and chosen the other, from interested motives. What is it that kindles the wrath of this man? If a word be spoken against the character of these people while they continue heathens, he is all indignant; but if they become Christians, the foulest reproaches

are heaped upon them. Is it because these beggars are become industrious, and cease to live upon the superstitious credulity of their neighbours, that he is so offended? Does he think the British government would be overturned if all the rest of the beggars were to follow their example?

But "one of the missionaries writes to England that a hundred rupees a month would support ten native converts with their families, and a still greater number of single brethren; which," he says, "is undoubtedly true, because the wages of our common servants are but three, four, and five rupees a month,"—p. lxi. lxii. Why does not our author refer to the *pages* from whence he takes his extracts? As this passage stands in his pamphlet, it conveys the idea that *every native convert with a family* costs the Society ten rupees a month; but if the reader look into No. XVI. p. 171, from which the extract is taken, he will find that it is of native *preachers* that Mr. Marshman writes; who observes that, "while they are thus employed in disseminating the good seed, they cannot be at home supporting their families." It is one thing, surely, to pay a man ten rupees for the support of his family, and his own travelling expenses; and another to give him the same sum as a common labourer at home.

Major Scott Waring may give as many extracts from our publications as he pleases; but he should not pervert the meaning. He may think us wild and foolish to lay out money in such undertakings; he may call it "*ridiculous* to talk of the perishing millions of India" (p. lxii.); he may reckon compassion to a great city, wholly given to idolatry, a proof of the want of *common sense* (p. lxxv.); but let him to do us the justice of allowing us to think otherwise. We are not surprised at his having no compassion for perishing idolaters, nor indeed at any thing else, unless it be his pretending, after all, to be a Christian; but let him not represent us as employed in bribing bad men to become hypocrites.

"Some of these converts have been expelled for gross immorality." True, and what then? "Such I am confident would be the fate of the remainder, were not the missionaries afraid of being laughed at." But why should he imagine this? Does he think the Hindoos *all* bad men? or do they become such when they embrace Christianity? And why should the missionaries be supposed to retain bad men in their society for fear of being *laughed at*? Had they feared this, they had never engaged in the work. Did they fear this, they would not exclude so many as they do; or, at least, would not report it in their letters. I may add, it is not long since they had a fair opportunity to have entirely *desisted* from their work; and that in a way that would not have incurred the laughter, but possibly the commendation of these men. They might also from that time have gone on to accumulate fortunes, instead of sacrificing every thing in a cause which they knew, it seems, at the same time to be hopeless. Surely these missionaries must be worse than madmen; and the government at Calcutta, and the Asiatic Society, cannot be much better, to think of employing them in translating works of literature.

Once more, "The new orders of missionaries are the most ignorant and the most bigoted of men. Their compositions are, in fact, nothing but puritanical rant, of the most vulgar kind; worse than that so much in fashion in Great Britain, during the days of Oliver Cromwell." We hope the author will furnish us with a specimen. Yes, here it is: "When Mr. [W.] Carey and Mr. Moore were at Dacca, they write on the Lord's day as follows: *What an awful sight have we witnessed this day! A large and populous city wholly given to idolatry, and not an individual to warn them to flee from the wrath to come. As soon as we rose in the morning, our attention was unavoidably excited by scenes the most absurd, disgusting, and degrading*

to human nature!" Judge, Christian reader, what a state of mind that man must possess who can call this language *vulgar rant*, and adduce it as a proof of *ignorance and bigotry!* "Could men possessing common sense," he adds, "have written such nonsense as this is, unless blinded by enthusiasm? Had they discovered that a single Englishman was a convert to the Hindoo or the Mahomedan religion, they would have been justified in giving their sentiments to *him*, as to his apostasy from the true to a false and idolatrous religion; but to pour out such unmeaning and useless abuse on an immense population, which merely observed those forms and ceremonies which had been used throughout Hindostan for above 2000 years, is folly and arrogance in the extreme,"—p. lxv. I wonder whether this writer ever read a book called the Bible, or heard of any of its language, excepting a few passages held up, perchance, to ridicule, in some history of the times of Oliver Cromwell! I presume the reader has had enough; and as all that follows is little else than a repetition of what has already been answered, interlarded with the usual quantity of low abuse, I shall pass it over unnoticed. I have seldom seen a performance, by a writer calling himself a *Christian*, so full of barefaced infidelity. May God give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

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## PART II.

We certify the king that, if this city be builded, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.—THE ADVERSARIES OF JUDAH.

Now Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, be ye far from thence: let the work of this house of God alone.—DARIUS.

### INTRODUCTION.

THAT apologies for Christianity should have been necessary in heathen countries is easily conceived; but an attempt of the kind in this country, and at this period of time, seems itself almost to require an apology. Who would have thought that the sons of protestant Britain would so far degenerate as to become the advocates of paganism? or, though that were the case with a few individuals, yet who could have imagined that a number of men would be found who would have either the power or the resolution publicly to oppose the propagation of Christianity?

We may be told that the greater part of our opponents profess to be Christians, and that their opposition is merely on *political* considerations. I might meet them upon this ground, and might deny that the progress of the gospel in any country, or in any circumstances, can be unfriendly to its political welfare. But it would be compromising the honour of the gospel to rest its defence on this principle. If Christianity be true, it is of such importance that no political considerations are sufficient to weigh against it; nor ought they, for a moment, to be placed in competition with it. If Christianity be true, it is of God; and if it be of God, to oppose its progress on the grounds of political expediency is the same thing as to tell our Maker that we will not have him to reign over us, unless his government be subservient to our temporal interests.

Should we be reminded that we are fallible men, and ought not to identify our undertakings with Christianity, nor to reckon every opposition to us as an opposition to Christ, this we readily admit. If we be opposed in relation

to any other object than that of propagating the gospel, or on account of any thing *faulty* in us in the pursuit of that object, such opposition is not directed against Christianity, and we have no desire, in such cases, to identify our undertakings with it. Let it only be fairly proved that the missionaries are *intemperate and dangerous men*, and we will admit the propriety of their being recalled. But if no such proof be given, if the reports circulated against them be unfounded, if the alarms which have been spread in India be the mere fabrications of evil-minded Europeans, and if they themselves be men who work the work of God, an opposition to them may be found to be an opposition to Christ.

Let our adversaries, instead of declaiming against us, join issue with us on this point. Let them prove the missionaries to be *intemperate and dangerous men*, and their cause is gained.

We have only one petition to present to our judges; which is, *that such effects as naturally arise from the preaching of the gospel among those who do not believe it, which always have arisen, even from the first preaching of the apostles down to our own times, and which terminate only on ourselves, may not be admitted in evidence against us.* Our adversaries allege that, according to our own accounts, the missionaries occasionally excite *uneasiness*, and that the native Christians sometimes draw upon themselves *abusive* treatment. We do not deny that in a few instances this has been the case; but we say this effect is no more than what Christianity has always produced, in a greater or less degree, when addressed to unbelievers; and that so long as this uneasiness and abuse are merely directed against the parties, and are no more injurious to the British government than the preaching of Paul and Barnabas was to that of Rome, we ought not, on this account, to be censured. And if a few things of this kind be thrown aside, as irrelevant, we have no apprehension of a single charge being substantiated against us.

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## SECTION I.

### REMARKS ON MAJOR SCOTT WARING'S LETTER TO THE REV. MR. OWEN.

THERE is a sympathy between kindred principles which is often unperceived by the party who favours them, but which may be expected to betray itself in speaking or writing upon the subject. How is it that our opponents are so anxious for the preservation of paganism and Mahomedism? They certainly have no intention of becoming the disciples of either, nor to convey any such idea to the public; but when these systems are in danger, they have a feeling for them which they cannot conceal. How is it that Major Scott Waring should so readily find mottos for his pamphlets, in "Hints to the Public and the Legislature, on the Nature and Effect of Evangelical Preaching?" He professes to be no *sectary*, but a true orthodox churchman, believing in the doctrine of the Trinity; nay more, considering the belief of that doctrine as the only thing essential to Christianity,—p. 107. Yet the author of these "Hints," if report be true, while he calls himself "a Barrister," is, in reality, a *Socinian Dissenter*; but, being *so exactly of his mind with respect to evangelical religion*, his wanting what he accounts the only essential of Christianity is a matter of small account.

Finally, How is it that the cause of our opponents should be favoured in most of the *Socinian* publications, and that they should be so happily united

in their wishes for government not to tolerate *evangelical religion*? One submits "A Plan to his Majesty's Ministers, the East India Company, and the Legislature," proposing to "recall every English missionary;" another suggests "Hints to the Public and the Legislature, on the Nature and Effect of Evangelical Preaching." The language of both is, We know not what to do with these evangelical men, and therefore humbly request GOVERNMENT to take them in hand!—Yet these are the men who would be thought the friends, and almost the only friends, of reason and toleration!

If the Major and his new ally have been accused of dealing too much in *reason*, we answer, with Dr. Owen, They have been unjustly treated; as much so as poor St. Hierome, when beaten by an angel for preaching in a Ciceronian style.

So much for the motto. As to the Letter itself, it contains little more than a repetition of things which have no foundation in truth, and which, I trust, have been already answered. The Major having been so ably-repulsed in his first object of attack, "The British and Foreign Bible Society," may be expected to direct his force somewhat more pointedly against the missionaries. We have his whole strength, however, in his former Preface. No new facts are adduced, nor new arguments from the old ones: almost all is repetition. Thus he repeats the base calumnies of our bribing beggars to become Christians; of our sending out thousands a year to support them; of our not having made one good convert; of the converts having lost caste before they were baptized, &c.,—pp. 32, 87. And thus, seven times over, he has repeated the words of Mr. Marshman, on "an alarm being excited in a bigoted city by the appearance of a European missionary," which, after all, respects him not *as a missionary*, but merely as an European. The scope of Mr. Marshman's argument proves this; for he is recommending *native* missionaries, who, in conversing with their own countrymen, are listened to with attention, and excite none of that fear and reserve which are produced by the appearance of a foreigner.\*

If the *reviling* conduct of the inhabitants of a certain village towards the missionaries or native converts, who bore all without resistance, proves the fault to have been with them, it will prove the same of other missionaries whom our author professes to respect, and of other native converts. If he will look into the Report of "The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge," for 1804, he will see an account of "an extraordinary conversion of several thousands, and of an extraordinary and unexpected *persecution* of the converts from their heathen neighbours, and particularly from some *men in office, under the collector*,"—p. 145. Moreover, it will prove that the apostle Paul and our Saviour were accountable for the *uncasiness* which their preaching excited among the Jews, and for the persecutions which they met with on account of it. We may be told, indeed, that we ought not to compare ourselves with Christ and his apostles; and it is true that, in various respects, it would be highly improper to do so; but in things which are common to Christ and his followers it is very proper. Now this is the case in the present instance. The disciples of Christ were given to expect that their doctrine would draw upon them the displeasure of unbelievers, in the same manner as that of Christ had done before them. "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also," John xv. 20. If Major Scott Waring had known any thing of the gospel, and of its opposition to the vicious inclinations of the human heart, he could not have stumbled in the manner he has at Mr.

\* See *Periodical Accounts*, No. XVI. p. 170.



Ward's application of the words of our Saviour in Luke xii. 51. He had introduced them before, and now he introduces them again,—pp. 80, 99. "Suppose ye that I am come to send peace on the earth? I tell you, Nay." "These words," he says, "most evidently, considered with their context, apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, which our blessed Saviour predicted would happen before the generation then existing had passed away." So, then, Christ came to set fire to Jerusalem! But how was it *already kindled*? Almost any commentator would have taught him that these words have no reference to Jewish wars, but to Christian persecutions, which were predicted to take place at the same time. Neither do they express, as I have said before, what was the *direct* tendency of the gospel, which is doubtless to produce love and peace, but that of which, through man's depravity, it would be the *occasion*. In this sense Mr. Ward applied the text, in order to account for the persecutions which the native converts met with; and I should not have supposed that a man of Major Scott Waring's age and talents could have construed it into a suggestion that the natural tendency of the gospel is to produce division.

The Major proposes to the Rev. Mr. Owen that they should "preserve the manners of gentlemen in arguing the question,"—p. 4. Is it then becoming the pen of a gentleman to write as he has done of Mr. Thomas and the other missionaries? Or does he think himself at liberty, when dealing

\* Having lately received a letter from a gentleman of respectability in Scotland, concerning the calumny on the memory of Mr. Thomas, I shall take the liberty of introducing it in this place, as a further vindication of this injured character.

"DEAR SIR,

"An anonymous pamphlet† has this day fallen into my hands, which is ascribed to a gentleman who formerly held a high rank in the East India Company's military service, and of which it is the principal object to induce the East India Company to expel every protestant missionary from their possessions, and prevent the circulation of the Scriptures in the native languages.

"Among the numerous and virulent misrepresentations which this work contains, there is a most false and scandalous aspersion of the character of the late Mr. Thomas, who was the first missionary of your Society in India, which, from my personal acquaintance with that gentleman, I am enabled to contradict in the most positive manner, and which, from my regard for his memory, I deem it my duty so to contradict.

"The author asserts, in p. 46, and again in p. 51, of the preface, that Mr. Thomas *died raving mad in Bengal*. It is indeed true that Mr. Thomas was once afflicted with a temporary derangement; but it was a considerable time before his death. From the summer of 1796, till May, 1801, I held an official situation in the Company's civil service at Dinagore; and, during the last six months of this period, I had very frequent intercourse with Mr. Thomas, and heard him preach almost every Sunday; and I most solemnly affirm that I never saw the least symptom of derangement in any part of his behaviour or conversation. On the contrary, I considered him as a man of good understanding, uncommon benevolence, and solid piety.

"In May, 1801, I quitted Dinagore, and never again saw Mr. Thomas; but I had more than one letter from him between that time and his death, which happened, I think, in October, the same year. These letters, which are still in my possession, exhibit no signs whatever of mental derangement. In the last of them he wrote (with the calmness and hope of a Christian) of his own dissolution; an event which he thought was near at hand, as he felt some internal symptoms of the formation of a polypus in his heart.

"After Mr. Thomas's decease, I had an opportunity of learning the circumstances of it from the late Mr. Samuel Powell, a person whose veracity none who knew him could question: and I never had the smallest reason to believe or suspect that Mr. Thomas was, in any degree whatever, deranged in mind at the time of his death. On the contrary, I always understood that he died in possession of his faculties, and of that hope which nothing but an unshaken faith in the gospel of Christ can give.

"It is not my present purpose to vindicate *the living* from the coarse and vulgar abuse of this anonymous author. This, you have undertaken, and are well qualified to do; but as he has thought it necessary to insult the character of *the dead*, and wound the feelings of surviving friends; and as I am, perhaps, the only person now in Great Britain who can, from personal acquaintance with Mr. Thomas during the last year of his life, do any thing to rescue his memory from this unmerited insult; I should think it criminal to have remained silent on this occasion. And I am happy thus to make some return for the instructions I

† "Major Scott Waring's Observations," &c.

with *them*, to put off that character? If his own motives be arraigned, or his Christianity suspected, he thinks himself rudely treated; yet, when speaking of men who secede from the Established Church, he can allow himself to insinuate that they do not act from principle,—p. 58.

As to the charges of "ignorance and bigotry," which he is continually ringing in our ears, I refer to the answers already given in my *Strictures*. It is allowed that "Mr. Carey may be a good Oriental scholar, and a good man; but he is narrow-minded and intemperate,"—p. 33. The proof of this is taken from the conduct of his *son* at Dacca. The mistake as to the person is excusable; but what was there in the conduct of either of the young men on that occasion which showed them to be narrow-minded or intemperate? They felt, though they were not apostles, for a great city wholly given to idolatry; for they had read in their Bibles that "idolaters cannot enter the kingdom of God." This was narrowness! But when Major Scott Waring proposes to exclude all denominations of Christian missionaries from India, except those of the Established Church, I suppose he reckons this consistent with liberality.\*

With regard to *intemperateness*, I know of nothing like it in the conduct of these junior missionaries. They gave away tracts to those who came to their boat for them, and wished to have taken a stand in the city for the like purpose: but, being interrupted, they returned home; not declining, however, to do that which had been done for years without offence, during the administration of Marquis Wellesley—namely, to distribute tracts in the villages. As to the Marquis Cornwallis, or any other person, being absent from Calcutta, it had just as much influence in causing their journey as Major Scott Waring's being at the same time, perchance, at Peterborough House.

But their language is *cant*. The Major, however, might find plenty of such cant in the communications of Schwartz and his colleagues to "The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge," if he would only look over the East India intelligence in their reports. These, he tells us, were missionaries in his time, and of them he approves; yet if their letters were printed in our accounts, they would equally fall under his censure. The truth is, the language of a serious mind, formed on Scriptural principles, will always sound like cant in the ears of such men as this author.

Major Scott Waring makes a curious distinction between a *gratuitous circulation* of the Scriptures, and a *giving them to petitioners*. The former he opposes; but to the latter, he says, "no Christian can object,"—p. 48. Wherein then consists the mighty difference? In the one case they are offered for acceptance, if the party please; in the other, the party himself makes the application: but in neither is there any thing done but with his full consent. No difference exists as to the effects; for if an individual petition for a New Testament, as soon as the brahmins or other interested persons come to know it, they will be just as *uneasy*, and as likely to *revile* him, as if he had received it without petitioning. But, I suppose, Major Scott Waring may think that if nothing were done, except in consequence of applications from the natives, nothing in effect would be done, and this

received from Mr. Thomas as a minister of Christ, and the pleasure I frequently enjoyed in his society and conversation.

"You are at liberty to make any use of this letter that you may think proper. Believe me to be, dear sir, very sincerely yours,

"Glasgow, Jan. 15, 1808."

"WILLIAM CUNNINGHAME.

\* Such is the notion of *liberality* and *toleration* which I ventured to denounce in my Letter to the chairman of the East India Company; and I wish I were able to draw the serious attention of every friend to religious liberty in Britain to the subject. These men talk of liberty, while they are razing it to its foundation.

would please him! After all, I question whether the greater part of the New Testaments which have been distributed have not been given as "a dole of charity to *petitioners*." An indiscriminate distribution would be throwing them away; it is therefore an object with the missionaries to give Testaments only to persons who *desire* them, and who are, therefore likely to read them. So I hope we shall please better as we understand one another.

It seems to grieve the Major that Christians of almost all denominations are united against him; but he and his colleagues have to thank themselves for this. Had their attack been directed merely against a few Dissenters, they might have had some chance of succeeding; but it is so broad that no man, who has any feeling for Christianity, can view it in any other light than as an attempt to *crush it in our Eastern possessions*. It is an attempt to stop the progress of the Bible; and therefore must be absolutely anti-christian. Whether Major Scott Waring perceives his error in this respect, and wishes to repair it, or whatever be his motive, he certainly labours in this, his *second* performance, to divide his opponents. First, he would fain persuade them that he himself is a Christian, which it is very possible he may be in his own esteem; and secondly, he would be very glad to single out these sectarian missionaries as the only objects of his dislike. It grieves him sorely that they should have been encouraged by clergymen. If they would but discard these men, I know not but they might obtain forgiveness for being evangelical. But if not, he will do his utmost to prove that they are not the true sons of the church. "I never met with an *evangelical clergyman*," he says, "who had not a tender feeling for those who have deserted the church of England, though at one time conformists." Allowing this to be the case, he might have supposed it was for their holding *evangelical principles* in common with themselves, and not on account of their deserting the Church. And whatever feeling they might have toward those Christians who are not of their own communion, it is surely as pardonable as that which this author and his party have toward Mahomedans and heathens.

This writer seems to think that, unless the whole population of India were converted, nothing is done. If forty in a year were to embrace Christianity, that is nothing in his account. He should consider, however, that we believe in the immortality of the soul, and in the importance of eternal salvation. We should not think our labour lost, therefore, if we could be the instruments of saving half that number. We know, moreover, that the greatest and most beneficial events to mankind have arisen from small beginnings. Hence we pay no regard to such objections; and even the flouts and sneers of our adversaries are far from discouraging us. We compare them with those of "Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite," who were grieved exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. "What do these feeble Jews?" said the one: "will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? Even that which they build," answered the other, "if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Yet Nehemiah went on with the work, and the wall was built.

The author still continues to revile Mr. [Wm.] Carey, and Mr. Moore, for what they wrote in their journal at Dacca, calling it "downright nonsense;" and still speaks of them as "ignorant men," on account of it. The reader may see what this nonsense was, by only turning to p. 785. Reader, can you tell us wherein lies the nonsense of this language? for we are unable to discover it. Major Scott Waring has been told that, as the language of the young men was taken from the words of Scripture, in reviling them he blasphemes the word of God. And what is his answer? As far as I can

understand it, it amounts to this: The same things which were very wise in Paul, and in our Saviour, are very foolish in these young men,—p. 89. But there may come a time when it shall appear, even to this gentleman, that *things* are the same, whether they be in an apostle or in any other man; and that he who revileth *the words of Christ* revileth Christ: and he that revileth Christ revileth Him that sent him.

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## SECTION II.

### REMARKS ON "A VINDICATION OF THE HINDOOS, BY A BENGAL OFFICER."

SINCE the publications of Messrs. Twining and Scott Waring, another piece has appeared, entitled, "A Vindication of the Hindoos from the Aspersions of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, M. A.; with a Refutation of the Arguments exhibited in his Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India, and the ultimate Civilization of the Natives by their Conversion to Christianity. Also, Remarks on an Address from the Missionaries in Bengal to the Natives of India, condemning their Errors, and inviting them to become Christians. The whole tending to evince the Excellency of the Moral System of the Hindoos, and the Danger of interfering with their Customs or Religion. By a Bengal Officer."

This production surpasses all that have gone before it. Messrs. Twining and Scott Waring were desirous of being considered as Christians; but if this writer does not formally avow his infidelity, he takes so little care to disguise it that no doubt can remain on the subject. After having ascribed the protestant religion to "reason" rather than revelation (pp. 9, 10)—pretended that the immortality of the soul was first revealed in Hindostan (p. 28)—questioned whether Christianity be at all necessary to the improvement of the Indian system of moral ordinances (p. 11)—preferred the heathen notion of transmigration to the Christian doctrine of future punishment (p. 47)—and framed a Geeta of his own in favour of purgatory (p. 48)—after all this, I say, and much more, he cannot, with any consistency, pretend to be a Christian.\*

If he believe in any thing pertaining to religion, beyond the dictates of his own reason, it is in the revelations of his "divine MENU." He is fond of calling these institutes by the name of *Scripture*, and reasons from them against our endeavouring to convince and convert the Hindoos,—pp. 15, 16, 22 23. It is an unfortunate circumstance that the Hindoo religion admits of no proselytes; otherwise this writer must, ere now, have been invested with the honours of the *poitou*.

The gentleman complains of his want of "eloquence,"—p. 3. There is, however, in his performance, much that tends to dazzle the mind of the reader. But as he professes "to decline the factitious aid of false appearances," I shall attend only to facts, and to the reasoning which is founded upon them.

I must also be allowed to confine my remarks to what immediately relates to *the late Christian missions to India*. With an ecclesiastical establishment I have no concern. Thus much, however, I will say, the treatment of Dr. Buchanan, by this writer, is most indecent. Whatever were the motives of that gentleman, *he* cannot prove them to have been either mercenary or am

\* In the last two pages he has put marks of quotation to his own words, and represented them as the reasonings of the Hindoos!

bitious. Where then is the justice, or candour, of his insinuations? But why do I complain? Candid treatment is not to be expected from any *anonymous* accuser.

This writer's pen appears to have been taken up on occasion of a manuscript falling into his hands, "professing to be a translation of an address to the inhabitants of India, from the missionaries of Serampore, inviting them to become Christians,"—p. 1. From this address he has given several extracts; and the chief of his remarks, in the first part of his pamphlet, are founded upon it.

But, before he or Major Scott Waring had thus publicly animadverted on a private translation, they should have known a few particulars concerning it. How could they tell whether it was drawn up by the missionaries? or, if it were, whether the translation were faithful? I can assure them and the public that it was *not* written by a European, but by a native; and that the translation is very far from being a *faithful* one. In referring to the former of these circumstances, I do not mean either to disparage the tract or the writer, nor to exempt the missionaries from having a concern in it. They doubtless approved of it, and printed it, and it was circulated as an address *from them*. All I mean to say on this point is, that some allowance should be made for the style or manner of address as coming from a Hindoo. At the same time, it may be presumed that no Hindoo would call his own countrymen *barbarians*.

With respect to the *translation*, it was done by a person who did not choose to put his name to it, and apparently with the design of inflaming the minds of the directors and of government against the missionaries. Whether we are to ascribe his errors to this cause, or to ignorance, I shall not determine; but that the most offensive ideas contained in the translation are not in the original is a fact. Nothing is said in the tract itself about "their books of philosophy;" nor are they said to be "fit for the amusement of children." The Hindoos are not called "barbarians," nor their Shasters "the Shasters of barbarians," nor are they desired to "abominate them."

I have before me the translation from which this author appears to have taken his extracts, and another by Mr. John Fernandez, a gentleman who is now with Dr. Ryland at Bristol, and who will be answerable for its fidelity. I shall present the reader with the first 21 verses of both, in two opposite columns; and as the 14th, 15th, and 20th verses are those which contain the supposed offensive passages, I shall give in them the original words in English characters, so that any person who understands the language may judge of both the translations. I have also authority to say that any person who can read Bengalee may have one of the original tracts by applying to Dr. Ryland.

*Translation from which the Vindicator appears to have taken his extracts.*

*Translation by Mr. John Fernandez.*

THE MESSENGER OF GLAD  
TIDINGS.

THE GOSPEL MESSENGER.

1. Hear, all ye people of the land, hear with attention, how ye may obtain salvation from hell, hard to escape!

1. Hear, O people of the world, hear with one mind; from hell tremendous, how will you find salvation?

2. No one is able to describe it! the thought of money and riches is ruin.

2. None of you are inquiring about these things; incessantly mindful of rupees and cowries.

3. All such things are calculated only for this life; let all men observe that this world is not eternal.

4. The enjoyment of all these goods is but for a short time; for at his death no one can take his riches with him.

5. He must resign all his garments, ornaments, and health to his kindred; for after that he will have no corporeal form.

6. Know, all ye people, that after life comes death; and after death, the going to heaven or hell.

7. Unless you are cleansed from evil, you will not go to heaven; ye will be cast headlong into the awful regions of hell.

8. What sort of place hell is, or what are its torments, no one knows; no one is able to imagine.

9. Hell is full of inevitable sufferings, in the midst of fire never to be extinguished; its extinction will never come to pass.

10. Having fallen into it, brethren, there is then no salvation; its beginning and its duration are of infinite time.

11. With constant meditation, fear lest hereafter ye fall into this dreadful pit of hell; into that fire which cannot be quenched.

12. Form a remedy, O people, form a remedy; for without a remedy ye shall not obtain salvation.

13. In other Sastras there is not any account of salvation; and yet how many discourses there are upon the rites and ceremonies peculiar to people of different countries!

14. Both Hindoos and musulsans have many Sasters; most of which we have examined.

15. In none of them are to be found the principles of the true salvation; those your Sastras are fit only for the amusement of children, and your books of philosophy are mere fables.

3. All these things are for this world; this is a transitory world; see every one.

4. These things are needful only for a short time: after death, riches will never go with you.

5. You will leave these riches, jewels, apparel behind you: a stop being put to these things, they will be utterly useless.

6. Having once been born, you know you must die; after death you must go either to heaven or hell.

7. Without the pardon of sin you will never go to heaven; but headlong you will fall into the thick gloom of hell.

8. What hell is, what torments there are in it, you know not; therefore you are not concerned.

9. The dreadful hell is full of unquenchable fire; its extinction will never be!

10. Falling therein, brother, there is no deliverance: eternity's bound will only be its beginning!

11. Fear, lest you fall into this dreadful hell. Beware, O beware of this unquenchable furnace!

12. Take refuge in CHRIST, take refuge; without a refuge none will receive salvation.

13. In other Shasters there is no news of redemption; they contain so many expressions of national rites and customs

*Hindoo mosolmaner bohoo ache Shastor taharboddonto mora koreenoo bistor.*

14. Hindoos and musulsans have many Shasters; we have investigated them thoroughly.

*Prokritto ooddhar totto naheeka tahay ballyanondo Shastro seye oopokott' har neyay.*

15. True search for deliverance (from the wrath to come) there is not in them; children-enticing Shasters they are, like fabulous tales.

16. Formerly we ourselves had only such Sastras; but, having obtained the great Sastra, we flung those away.

17. The great Sastra of religion contains glad tidings; for in it alone is to be found the way to salvation.

18. The great Sastra of religion had not appeared here: some time since we obtained it, and have now brought it here.

19. Hear, hear, ye people, hear with due attention! Let him who is willing come, and we will cause it to be read.

20. Hereafter do ye and your brethren abominate the discourses of barbarians; the Sastras of barbarians contain not the means of salvation.

21. If you and your brethren wish for the means of salvation, be attentive, and hear somewhat of an example, &c.—

16. Ours were formerly such kind of Shasters; but, finding THE GREAT SHASTER, we threw away the other.

17. This holy book is the good news of salvation; the way of deliverance is in this alone.

18. The holy book was not made known here; some time ago we received it, now we have brought it hither.

19. Hear ye, hear ye, O people, hear with attention! Whosoever wish it is, come—we will cause you to hear.

*Mlecch'ho bolee ghrinná pache kor-roho shobbáy mlecch'ho Shastro nóhhë ey tränner oopáy.*

20. Lest you should hereafter call it the barbarian's (Shaster) and should hate it (this is not the barbarian's Shaster, but a remedy for your salvation).

21. A little of its contents we must declare: hear with your mind, if you wish for a remedy.--

The writer of the tract then proceeds to give a sketch of Scripture doctrine, &c.

The reader will here perceive that, instead of calling them barbarians, and telling them to abominate their barbarian Shasters and discourses, the missionaries merely entreat them not to abominate the Bible as being what they term the Shaster of the *M'lecches*, or *unclean*; for so they denominate all who are not of the caste. It was on this account that a brahmin urged another brahmin who had conversed with Mr. Thomas, and thought favourably of him, to go and wash his clothes; for, said he, he is *M'lecch* (or *unclean*) *if not filthy*. The other replied, that filthy men did filthy deeds; whereas he could never say so of this Englishman, and he would not go and wash his clothes.\*

Thus has this tract not only been mistranslated, and its mistranslations largely quoted and descanted upon; but our adversaries have represented its circulation in India as that which must needs have provoked the natives to rise up against the missionaries. It was this that Major Scott Waring alleged as a reason why he should not have wondered if they had thrown them into the Ganges.† Yet, when the truth comes to be stated, it appears that the inflammatory passages in the tract have been inserted by some unknown person, *engaged in the same cause with himself*. There is no proof that the tract itself, or any other tract, was ever known to give any such offence to the natives as to cause them to treat the missionaries ill, either in words or actions. I wonder what these men can think of a cause which requires such means to support it; and whether, when thus detected, they be susceptible of shame like other men.

\* See "Periodical Accounts," vol. I. p. 22.

† "Observations," Preface, p. lxvi.

It is not enough for them on the authority of an anonymous manuscript translation to accuse the missionaries of calling the natives "barbarians," &c., but Major Scott Waring must add, "this tract has been profusely circulated amongst the native troops in Bengal,"—p. 117. It is impossible for me at this distance to be acquainted with every minute circumstance; but I am almost certain that there is no truth in this statement, and that the missionaries have never gone among the native troops on any occasion. If, however, it be true, let Major Scott Waring prove it. I challenge him to do so by any other testimony than that which, in a great number of instances, has been proved, I presume, to be utterly unworthy of credit.

It is owing to such base representations as these, particularly in the pamphlets of Major Scott Waring, that even the friends of Christianity, and of the missionaries, have thought themselves obliged in justice to concede that the latter may have been guilty of *indiscretions*. It is scarcely possible, while slander is flying about, as in a shower of poisoned arrows, and before they have been repelled, not to have our confidence in some degree wounded. But while I freely acknowledge that there *may have been* instances of indiscretion, (for the missionaries are men,) I must insist that neither Mr. Twining, nor Major Scott Waring, or the Bengal Officer, has substantiated a single charge of the kind.

The substance of the *Bengal Officer's* remarks may be considered under three heads: namely, the morality of the Hindoo system—the moral character of the Hindoos—and the conduct of the missionaries and of the native Christians.

OF THE MORALITY OF THE HINDOO SYSTEM.—"The religious creed of the Gentoos," says Professor White, in his Bampton Lectures, "is a system of the most barbarous idolatry. They acknowledge indeed one supreme God; yet innumerable are the subordinate deities whom they worship, and innumerable also are the vices and follies which they ascribe to them. With a blindness which has ever been found inseparable from polytheism, they adore, as the attributes of their gods, the wickedness and passions which deform and disgrace human nature; and their worship is, in many respects, not unworthy of the deities who are the objects of it. The favour of beings which have no existence but in the imagination of the superstitious enthusiast, is conciliated by senseless ceremonies and unreasonable mortifications—by ceremonies which consume the time which should be dedicated to the active and social duties, and by mortifications which strike at the root of every lawful and innocent enjoyment. What indeed shall we think of a religion, which supposes the expiation of sins to consist in penances than which fancy cannot suggest any thing more rigorous and absurd; in sitting or standing whole years in one unvaried posture; in carrying the heaviest loads, or dragging the most weighty chains; in exposing the naked body to the scorching sun; and in hanging with the head downward before the fiercest and most intolerable fire?"—Sermon X. p. 12.

But our author tells a very different tale. He "reposes the Hindoo system on the broad basis of *of its own merits*, convinced that on the enlarged principles of moral reasoning it little needs the meliorating hand of Christian dispensations to render its votaries a sufficiently correct and moral people, for all the useful purposes of civilized society,"—p. 9. Could this be proved, it were no solid objection to Christian missions. To argue merely from what is useful to civilized society is to argue as an atheist. Civilized society is not the chief end of man. If there be an eternal hereafter, it must be of infinitely greater moment, both to governors and governed, than all the affairs of the greatest empire upon earth. This writer, when pleading the cause of "beggars by profession," (as Major Scott Waring calls the



Hindoo byraggees when they have left that profession and become Christians,) can allege that religion ought not to be subservient to mere worldly interest (p. 76); but, when his cause requires it, he can turn about, and contend that that which is sufficient for the purposes of civil society is all that is necessary. The cause of God and truth requires that such an atheistical principle should be repelled, otherwise I should have no objection to meet him even upon this ground, persuaded as I am that whatever is right for another life is wise for this.

But let us attend to "the excellence of the religious and moral doctrines of the Hindoos," as taught in *The Institutes of Menu*, and in other books. From these, especially the former, we are furnished with numerous quotations, occasionally interspersed with triumphant questions; such as, "Are these tales for children?" "Are these the discourses of barbarians?"

On the Institutes of Menu, I would offer a few remarks:—

First, *Let them possess what excellency they may, they are unknown to the people.* The millions of Hindostan have no access to them. Sir William Jones did indeed persuade the brahmins to communicate them to him; and by his translation, and the aid of the press, the European world are now acquainted with them, as well as with other productions to which our author refers us; but to the Hindoo population they are as though they existed not. The lower classes are by their law subjected to penalty for hearing any part of the Vedas read. The young are not taught principles from this work; and it never furnishes a text for discoursing to the adult. There is, indeed, no such thing as moral education, or moral preaching, among the great body of the people. They know far less of the doctrines of Menu than the vulgar pagans of ancient Greece knew of the writings of Plato. It is, therefore, utterly fallacious and disingenuous to quote this work as a standard of opinion or practice among the Hindoo people, seeing it is little more known to the bulk of them than if it had no existence.

Secondly, *Though there are some good sentiments in these Institutes, yet they contain a large portion not only of puerility, but of immorality, which this writer has carefully passed over.* Sir William Jones says of the work, that "with many beauties, which need not be pointed out, it contains many blemishes which cannot be justified or palliated. It is a system of despotism and priestcraft, both indeed limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support, though with mutual checks. It is filled with strange conceits in metaphysics and natural philosophy, with idle superstitions, and with a scheme of theology most obscurely figurative, and consequently liable to dangerous misconceptions. It abounds with minute and childish formalities, with ceremonies generally absurd, and often ridiculous; the punishments are partial and fanciful; for some crimes dreadfully cruel, for others reprehensibly slight; and the very morals, though rigid enough on the whole, are in one or two instances (as in the case of light oaths, and pious perjury) unaccountably relaxed——"

The following specimen may serve as a proof of the justness of Sir William's remark, of its being a system of "priestcraft."

Ver. 313. "Let not a king, though in the greatest distress for money, provoke *brahmins* to anger, by taking *their property*; for they, once enraged, could immediately, by sacrifices and imprecations, destroy him, with his troops, elephants, horses, and cars."

V. 315. "What prince could gain wealth by oppressing those who, if angry, could frame *other worlds*, and regents of worlds; could GIVE BEING TO NEW GODS, and mortals?"

V. 316. "What man desirous of life would injure those by the aid of

whom, that is, *by whose oblations*, WORLDS AND GODS PERPETUALLY SUBSIST; those who are rich in the learning of the Vedas?"

V. 317. "A brahmin, whether learned or ignorant, is a POWERFUL DIVINITY; even as fire is a powerful divinity, whether consecrated or popular."

V. 318. "Even in places for burning the dead, the bright fire is undefiled; and when presented with clarified butter, or subsequent sacrifices, blazes again with extreme splendour."

V. 319. "Thus, although brahmins employ themselves in all sorts of mean occupation, they must invariably be honoured; for they are something TRANSCENDENTLY DIVINE."\*

Our author would persuade us that the "Divine Spirit" is the grand object of Hindoo adoration; but he omitted to tell us that the brahmins are above Him, for that WORLDS AND GODS SUBSIST BY THEIR OBLATIONS, and they can GIVE BEING TO NEW GODS. Any person of common discernment may perceive, by this specimen, that, let these Institutes be of what antiquity they may, they are of *brahminical origin*; and that, in order to raise this class of men above the control of the civil powers, they not only give them "divinity," but elevate them "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped."

Thirdly, *Even those parts which our author has selected and quoted are very far from being unexceptionable.* On the two great subjects of the unity of God, and the expiation of sin, what do the Vedas teach? What ideas are we to attach to the following language?—"Equally perceiving the Supreme Soul in all beings, and all beings in the Supreme Soul, he sacrifices his own spirit by fixing it on the Spirit of God; and approaches the nature of that sole Divinity who shines by his own effulgence."—If there be any meaning in this rhapsody, it corresponds with the atheistical jargon of Spinoza, confounding the Creator with the work of his hands.

That which follows is worse:—"The Divine Spirit alone is the whole assemblage of gods; all worlds are seated in the Divine Spirit, and the Divine Spirit, no doubt, produces by a chain of causes and effects, consistent with free-will, the connected series of acts performed by embodied souls,"—p. 26.

Such is their doctrine of "One Supreme Being!" Is then the infinitely glorious God to be not only associated, but identified, with the rabble of heathen deities, all which *subsist* in the oblations of the brahmins? Is his blessed name to be annihilated and lost in theirs? Better a thousand times were it to make no mention of Him than to introduce Him in such company. Though the last sentence cautiously guards the idea of human agency, so much indeed as to possess the air of modern composition; yet it is certain that the brahmins, on this principle, constantly excuse themselves from blame in all their deeds, as they have frequently alleged to the missionaries that *it is not they, but God in them, that performs the evil.*

What follows is still worse:—"We may contemplate the subtle æther in the cavities of his [that is, God's] body; the air, in his muscular motion and sensitive nerves; the supreme solar and igneous light, in his digestive heat and visual organs: in his corporeal fluid, water; in the terrene parts of his fabric, earth. In his heart, the moon: in his auditory nerves, the guardians of eight regions;† in his progressive motion, VISHNU;‡ in muscular force, HARA;§ in his organs of speech, AGNI;|| in excretion, MITRA;¶ in procreation, BRAHMA."\*\*

I presume the reader has had enough, and needs no reflections of mine. Let us hear the Vindicator of *image worship*. "It is true that in general they worship the Deity through the medium of images; and we satisfactorily

\* Sir William Jones's Works, vol. III. pp. 378, 379.

† Eight points of the compass.

‡ The preserver.

§ The destroyer.

|| God of fire.

¶ The sun.

\*\* The creator.—p. 27.

learn from the Geeta that it is not the mere image, but the invisible Spirit, that they thus worship,"—p. 44. And thus from Abulfazel:\* "They one and all believe in the unity of the Godhead; and although they hold images in high veneration, yet they are by no means idolaters, as the ignorant suppose. I have myself frequently discoursed upon the subject with many learned and upright men of this religion, and comprehend their doctrine; which is, that the images are only representations of celestial beings, to whom they turn themselves while at prayer to prevent their thoughts from wandering; and they think it an indispensable duty to address the Deity after that manner,"—p. 47.

If this reasoning be just, there never were any idolaters upon earth; for what is said of the Hindoos applies to the worshippers of Baal, and of all other heathen deities. But to call this *worshipping the Deity through the medium of images*, is representing them as connected with Him, when, in fact, they are rivals of him in the hearts of his creatures. The invisible spirit to which their devotions are directed, according to this writer's own account, is CRISHNA (p. 45); who is not God, but a deified creature that takes place of God: a demon, whose character, as drawn even in their own Shasters, is lewd and treacherous. We might know from these their records, though an apostle had not told us, that "*the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to DEMONS, AND NOT TO GOD.*"

It has been common to speak of the Hindoos as acknowledging one Supreme Being, but as worshipping a number of subordinate deities; and I may have used this language as well as others. The terms supreme and subordinate, however, do not appear to be happily chosen. They might as well be applied to a lawful sovereign and a number of usurpers who had set up the standard of rebellion against him. Whatever subordination there may be among these deities with respect to each other, they are all opposed to the true God. What claims can He have, after those of *Chreesna* are satisfied, who calls his "THE SUPREME NATURE, *which is superior to all things?*"—p. 45. Our author would wish him, no doubt, to be thought an attribute of the true God, or, as he calls him, "the preserving power of the Divinity;" but this he cannot be, for his character is immoral. He must, therefore, be a rival, taking place of the Divinity. If it be alleged that he is merely an imaginary being, and therefore neither the one nor the other, I answer, while he claims "a supreme nature," and is worshipped as possessing it, though he be nothing in himself, yet he is something to the worshippers, and answers all the ends of a conscious and active usurper of the throne of God.

After this, the reader will not be surprised to hear of "repentance, devotion, and pious austerities," as the means of expiating sin,—pp. 29, 36. We cannot wonder at such notions in benighted pagans; but that a writer who has read the New Testament should think of alleging them, as a recommendation of the system to the favourable regard of Christians, is a proof of his having either never understood what Christianity is, or forgotten it amidst the charms of idolatry. As to what these "devotions and austerities" are, be they what they may, when considered as *an expiation of sin*, they are worse than nothing. But the truth is, they are neither aimed to propitiate the true God, nor do they consist of any thing which he requires at their hands.

Such are the excellences of the Hindoo system; such the arguments

\* Abulfazel was the prime minister of Ackbar, one of the Mogul emperors in the sixteenth century, who, perceiving the ill effects of Mahomedan persecution, endeavoured to reconcile the different religious parties in the empire, and to persuade that of the court to think favourably of that of the country.

which the missionaries are challenged to answer; and such the faith which would be thought to erect her standard by the side of reason! Our author, after enumerating these and other glorious principles, asks, with an air of triumph, "What is it that the missionaries propose teaching to the Hindoos?" What is it, in religious concerns, which they do not require to be taught?

He allows there are "many reprehensible customs among the Hindoos, the mere offspring of superstition;" but he contends that "they are not enjoined by the Vedas, and are chiefly confined to certain classes,"—p. 69. "I have no hesitation," he says, "in declaring that *no branch whatever of their mythology, so far as I understand it, appears to merit, in the smallest degree, the harsh charges of vice and falsehood*,"—p. 97. Yet, to say nothing of things which it would be indecent to mention, Dr. Buchanan has quoted a number of authorities from their sacred books in favour of the burning of women, and in which such voluntary sacrifices are declared not to be suicide, but, on the contrary, highly meritorious.\* And the *Institutes of Menu*, as Sir William Jones observes, are unaccountably relaxed in regard of light oaths and pious perjury. But these things, and a hundred more, stand for nothing with our author, whose admiration of the general system leads him to forget, as trifling, all such imperfections. "Wherever I look around me," he says, "in the vast region of Hindoo mythology, I discover piety in the garb of allegory; and I see morality at every turn, blended with every tale; and as far as I can rely on my own judgment, it appears the most complete and ample system of moral allegory that the world has ever produced!"—p. 97.

How shall we stand against this tide of eloquence? I will transcribe a passage from Dr. Tennant. "It is curious," says he, "to observe how the indifference, or rather the dislike, of some old settlers in India, is expressed against the system of their forefathers. It is compared with the Hindoo institutions with an affectation of impartiality, while, in the mean time, the latter system is extolled in its greatest puerilities and follies: its grossest fables are always asserted to convey some hidden but sound lessons of wisdom. They inveigh against the schisms, disputes, and differences of the western world, ascribing them solely to their religious dogmata. They palliate the most fanatical and most painful of the Hindoo rites, and never fail in discovering some salutary influence which they shed upon society. Wrapt up in devout admiration of the beauty and sublimity of the Vedas, they affect to triumph in their supposed superiority over the simplicity of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. This affectation is the more ridiculous, because it is indulged by those who pretend to great taste, and profound knowledge of Sanscrit learning."†

If the Doctor's performance had not been written before that of the Bengal officer, we should almost have supposed he meant to draw his picture.

This author may suppose that a system so good-natured as to concede the Divinity of Christ (p. 50) might be expected to receive some concessions in return; but he had better not attempt a compromise, for the systems cannot agree. If he be a heathen, let him cast in his lot with heathens. Let him, if he should get intoxicated, attend to the recipe of his "divine Menu;" let him, in order "to atone for his offence, drink more spirit in flame till he severely burn his body; or let him drink, boiling hot, until he die, the urine of a cow, or pure water, or milk, or clarified butter, or juice expressed from cow-dung," p. 41. Let him, if he should be vicious, expect to become a dog, or a cat, or some more despicable creature; or, if he be virtuous, let

\* Memoir, p. 96.

† *Thoughts on the British Government in India*, p. 141. Note.

him hope for his reward in the favour of Chrishna,—p. 46. But we are Christians, and have learned another lesson. We have been taught to revere the authority of Him who hath said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."

OF THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THE HINDOOS.—This is a subject of great importance in the present controversy; for if Hindooism produce as good fruits as Christianity, the necessity of attempting the conversion of its votaries must, in a great degree, if not entirely, be set aside. It is a subject, too, in which our author has the advantage of us, as it must be more agreeable to the public mind to think favourably than unfavourably of a great people who form now a component part of the empire. Nothing but truth, and a desire to do them good, can justify us in disputing these favourable accounts.

Considering the importance of the subject, and the weight of testimony which our author must be aware he had to encounter, we may suppose he has brought forward all the proof of which he is capable. That the reader may be able to judge on the subject, I will first state the substance of the evidence on the other side, and then inquire what this writer has done towards overturning it.

I have already mentioned three or four testimonies in my Letter to the Chairman of the East India Company.\* These I shall not repeat.

Tamerlane the Great, when about to die, thus addressed his sons and statesmen:—"Know, my dear children, and elevated statesmen, that the inhabitant of Hindostan cultivates imposture, fraud, and deception, and considers them to be meritorious accomplishments. Should any person intrust to him the care of his property, that person will soon become only the nominal possessor of it."

"The tendency of this my mandate to you, statesmen, is to preclude a confidence in their actions, or an adoption of their advice."†

"At Benares," adds Dr. Buchanan, "the fountain of Hindoo learning and religion, where Captain Wilford, author of the *Essays on the Indian and Egyptian mythology*, has long resided in the society of the brahmins, a scene has been lately exhibited which certainly has never had a parallel in any other *learned* society in the world.

"The pundit of Captain Wilford having for a considerable time been guilty of interpolating his books, and of fabricating new sentences in old works, to answer a particular purpose, was at length detected and publicly disgraced. As a last effort to save his character, he brought *ten* brahmins, not only as his compurgators, but to swear, by what is most sacred in their religion, to the *genuineness* of the extracts.‡ Captain Wilford would not permit the ceremonial of perjury to take place, but dismissed them from his presence with indignation."

Dr. Tennant, *late chaplain to his Majesty's troops in Bengal*, has written very explicitly on the subject, not only stating facts, but pointing out their connexion with the system. As his testimony includes the opinions of Sir James M'Intosh, Sir William Jones, and some other very respectable authorities, and as he himself cannot be accused of any strong predilection for missions, I shall transcribe a few pages from his account.

\* See Part I.

† Dr. Buchanan's Memoir, pp. 113, 114. "Marquis Cornwallis was never known, during his administration in India, to admit a native to his confidence. Under the administration of Marquis Wellesley there is a total exclusion of native counsel."

‡ Asiatic Researches, vol. VIII., p. 28.

"The native character," he says, "however amiable in some respects it may appear, is frequently stained with vices directly hostile to society. The crime of PERJURY, *from the great defects of their religious system*, is remarkably prevalent, and in many instances renders the execution of justice difficult and impossible.

"The prevalence of this vice," says Sir James M'Intosh, "which I have myself observed, is, perhaps, a more certain criterion of a general dissolution of moral principle than other more daring and ferocious crimes, much more terrible to the imagination, and of which the immediate consequences are more destructive to society." "Perjury," adds Dr. Tennant, "indicates the absence of all the common restraints by which men are withheld from the commission of crimes. It is an attack upon religion and law in the very point of their union for the protection of human society. It weakens the foundation of every right, by rendering the execution of justice unattainable.

"Sir William Jones," continues he, "after long judicial experience, was obliged, reluctantly, to acknowledge this moral depravity of the natives of India. He had carried out with him to that country a strong prejudice in their favour, which he had imbibed in the course of his studies, and which in him was perhaps neither unamiable nor ungraceful. This prejudice he could not longer retain against the *universal testimony of Europeans*, and the enormous examples of depravity among the natives which he often witnessed in his judicial capacity."\*

Again, Having described the state of the country previously to its falling into the hands of the British, Dr. Tennant says, "Thus, within the short space of a man's life, and almost in our own remembrance, the empire of India fell into anarchy and ruin; not from the external violence of foreign enemies, but from *the inveteracy and extent of corruption which pervaded the whole of its members.*"†

Again, "The boasted humanity of the Hindoo system, to all sentient beings, is but ill supported, when we come to a close examination of the customs which it tolerates, the precepts which it enjoins, or the actual conduct of its votaries. Though it be admitted that some of the above horrid customs are a violation of their written code, yet there are other practices equally shocking to which it affords its immediate sanction. The public encouragement held out to aged pilgrims who drown themselves in the Ganges, under the notion of acquiring religious merit, is equally repugnant with the practice already noticed to reason and humanity. No less than four or five persons have been seen drowning themselves at one time, with the view of performing a religious sacrifice of high value in their own estimation, and that of many thousands who attend this frightful solemnity.—The recommendation given to a favourite wife to burn herself on the same funeral pile with the dead body of her husband affords not an unfrequent spectacle of deliberate cruelty, which cannot, perhaps, be equalled in the whole annals of superstition.

"The cruel treatment of the sick, the aged, and dying, if not a precept, is a practical result of this degrading system, far more universal than any of those already mentioned; it is of a nature which the most moderate share of humanity would prompt any person to use very zealous efforts to remedy. As soon as any mortal symptoms are discovered in the state of a patient by his physician, or by his relations, he is, if in Bengal, removed from his bed, and carried to the brink of the Ganges, where he is laid down with his feet and legs immersed in the river: there, instead of receiving from his friends any of the tender consolations of sympathy, to alleviate the pain of his

\* Thoughts on the British Government in India, p. 54.

† Ibid. 77.

departing moments, his mouth, nose, and ears are stuffed with clay, or wet sand, while the bystanders crowd close around him, and incessantly pour torrents of water upon his head and body. It is thus, amidst the convulsive struggles of suffocation, added to the agony of disease, that the wretched Hindoo bids farewell to his present existence, and finally closes his eyes upon the sufferings of life.

"But waving these particular usages, some of which are perhaps abuses which have sprung out of their primitive institutions, it may be contended, on good grounds, that the general spirit of the system has itself a tendency, in many instances, to promote ignorance and encourage vice.

"In the Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, Mr. Orme has presented the public with a laborious and detailed exposition of all those defects of the Hindoo system. The author, in this work, conveys no very favourable impression of the Indian character; but his ideas are the result of personal observation; they are clear, forcible, and correct. Towards the close of his interesting disquisition, he thus sums up the general impression which the subject left upon his mind. 'Having brought to a conclusion this Essay on the Government and People of Hindostan, I cannot refrain from making the reflections which so obviously arise from the subject. Christianity vindicates all its glories, all its honours, and all its reverence, when we behold the most horrid impieties avowed amongst the nations on whom its influence does not shine, as actions necessary in the common conduct of life; I mean poisonings, treachery, and assassination, among the sons of ambition; rapine, cruelty, and extortion, in the ministers of justice.—I leave divines to vindicate, by more sanctified reflections, the cause of their religion and of their God.'—

"The Hindoo system makes little or no provision for the instruction of the great body of the people; a defect the more remarkable when we advert to the number and authority of its priesthood, and the great multiplicity and size of its sacred volumes. Their Vedas, Poorans, and other books held sacred, contain, it is said, a copious system of sound morality; and, from the specimens already translated, this must be partly admitted; but the truths contained in these writings are almost totally obscured and rendered useless by a vast mixture of *puerile fictions and frivolous regulations*. And, besides, the canonical books of the Hindoos have always been regarded as a bequest too sacred to be committed to vulgar hands; to the far greater part of the community their perusal is strictly forbidden; closely guarded in the archives of the learned, to the great body of the people they remain, in the most emphatic sense, 'a dead letter.'

"Of the ceremonies of brahminism, some are showy, many are absurd, and not a few *both indecent and immoral*. Its temples were formerly in some districts richly endowed; they are represented by all travellers as maintaining a number of priests, and, what seems peculiar, a number of women consecrated to this service, who are taught to sing and dance at public festivals in honour of the gods. The voluptuous indolence in which they are destined to spend their lives renders them totally useless to society; while the indecency of their manners gives room to suspect that they may injure it by their example.

"The temples themselves, which in other countries excite sentiments of reverence and devotion, are in India plerished with images of fecundity, and of creative power, TOO CROSS FOR DESCRIPTION. Similar representations are also displayed by those images which, at certain times, are drawn through the streets amidst the dancing, noise, and acclamations of the multitude. The *ruth jatra*, or riding of the gods, is a ceremony at once cruel and indecent. The carriages on which their deities are then placed are of

immense height, and supported on sixteen wheels; the whole drawn along by thousands of fanatics, some of whom fall down before these wheels, and, being instantly crushed, are, as they believe, put in possession of immortal bliss.

“It would be, perhaps, rash, after all, to affirm that the Hindoos are immoral and depraved in a degree *proportioned to the melancholy extent of their superstitious system*, though their minds are strongly withdrawn by it from feeling the due weight of moral obligations. Those [however] who are concerned in the police know well the frequency of fraud, robbery, and murder, as well as the great number of delinquents which have always rendered the prisons more crowded than any other habitations in India. It has not been from them, nor indeed from any class of men intimately acquainted with their manners, that the Hindoo character has received so many encomiums for its innocence and simplicity.”

Speaking of their wandering religious devotees, he says, “Mr. Richardson, author of the Persian and Arabic Dictionary, has characterized these vagrants, under the article *Fakeer*, in the following manner:—In this singular class of men, who in Hindostan despise every sort of clothing, there are a number of enthusiasts, but a far greater proportion of knaves; every vagabond who has an aversion to labour being received into a fraternity which is regulated by laws of a secret and uncommon nature. The Hindoos view them with a wonderful respect, not only on account of their sanctified reputation, but from a substantial dread of their power. The fakeer pilgrimages often consist of many thousands of naked saints, who exact, wherever they pass, a general tribute; while their character is too sacred for the civil power to take cognizance of their conduct.’”\*

Many other testimonies might be produced. If the reader wish to see them systematically stated, he may find much to his purpose in “Cuninghame’s Christianity in India,” Chap. II.

We have now to examine what our author has advanced on the other side. Has he attempted to weaken this body of evidence, or to overcome it by testimonies more numerous or more credible? Neither the one nor the other. He takes no notice of any thing that has been said by others; not even by Dr. Buchanan, though he was professedly answering his *Memoir*. And as to the testimonies which he produces, lo, they are two . . . viz. HIMSELF and ABULFAZEL!

From *his own* knowledge he writes many things. He resided in India many years; has been much acquainted with the people; has gone into their temples, and never saw any thing indecent in them; has intrusted money and liquors to a great amount in the hands of Hindoo servants, and never found them unfaithful—but stop: we know not who this witness is: we cannot admit of *anonymous* testimony. No man, while he withholds his name from the public, has a right to expect credit any further than what he advances may recommend itself. I must take leave, therefore, to set down all that he has related from his own knowledge as nugatory.

Let us examine the next witness. Abulfazel might be a great and enlightened statesman, and might be aware that the persecutions carried on against the Hindoos in the preceding reigns were impolitic as well as cruel. He might wish to praise them into attachment, and to soften the antipathies of the Mahomedans against them. Hence he might endeavour to persuade the latter that the former were “not idolaters,” but, like themselves, “believers in one God, and withal a very amiable and good sort of people.” But, whatever proof this may afford of Abulfazel’s talents for governing, the

\* *Thoughts on the British Government in India*, § IX. X.



*truth* of his statements requires to be confirmed by more disinterested testimony; and where the whole current of European experience is against it, it can be of no account.

The reader will draw the inference, that the evidence of Hindoo depravity is not weakened in the least degree by any thing this writer has advanced.

OF THE CONDUCT OF THE MISSIONARIES AND THE NATIVE CHRISTIANS.—On this part of the subject our author is less profuse than his predecessor. There are a few passages in his performance, however, which require notice. He says, "If the conduct of the missionaries has here so unwisely forced itself on the attention of the public, and thus rendered them obnoxious to the displeasure of our government in the East, in having, unsanctioned by its authority, assumed the dangerous province of attempting to regulate the consciences of its native subjects, to the manifest tendency of disturbing that repose and public confidence that forms at this moment the chief security of our precarious tenure in Hindostan—if men, thus labouring for subsistence in their vocation, and under the necessity of making converts at any rate, in order to insure the continuance of their allowances and the permanency of their missions, rashly venture to hurl the bigot anathema of intolerance at the head of the 'barbarian Hindoos,' and unadvisedly to vilify the revered repositories of their faith—we may find some colour of excuse in the seeming necessity under which they act; but that a member of the English Church," &c.,—pp. 3, 4.

On this tedious sentence, or rather part of a sentence, I would offer a few remarks. 1. If the conduct of the missionaries has been forced on the attention of the public, it is their adversaries that have forced it. Nothing has been done by them or their friends but in self-defence. 2. I do not understand how the *private request* of the governor-general for Mr. Carey and his colleagues, at a certain critical period, to desist from preaching to the natives, can be attributed to *displeasure*, when the acting magistrates who delivered the message acknowledged that "they were well satisfied with the character and deportment of the missionaries, and that no complaints had ever been lodged against them." 3. If, at the first outset, their undertaking was not sanctioned by authority, and if on that account they settled in the Danish territory; yet government, having known them, and being satisfied that they acted not from contumacy, but from the most pure, upright, and peaceable principles, has always been friendly to them. Under the administration of Marquis Wellesley they lived secure. 4. There never was an idea of their labours disturbing the confidence which the natives place in the British government, till European adversaries suggested it. 5. The missionary labour of the men referred to is not for their own subsistence; nor do they subsist by "allowances" from England. At all times this has not been the case; but, at present, the remittances sent from this country are for another use. It is by their own literary labours that they subsist, which not only supply their wants, but enable them to devote a surplus for the propagation of the gospel. Did they act from mercenary motives, they might lay by their thousands, and return, as well as their accusers, in affluence to their native country. 6. If "the bigot anathema of intolerance," which this writer endeavours to hurl at the missionaries, hurt them no more than theirs does the Hindoos, there is no cause for alarm. But who could have imagined that an address to the conscience could have been represented as "assuming to regulate it;" and that a writer with the cant of toleration in his mouth could advocate the cause of intolerance?

This author tells us of "a circumstance having recently come to his knowledge, that exhibits proof superior to a hundred arguments of the im-

propriety and dangerous consequences of injudicious interference with the Hindoos on the score of their religion,"—p. 54. This "circumstance" must surely, then, be of importance, especially at a time when arguments are so scarce. And what is it? A native of Calcutta had lost caste; he went to one of the missionaries, and was immediately baptized; soon after this he became a preacher; in addressing his countrymen, he provoked their resentment; and, after being assaulted with clods and brick-bats, narrowly escaped with his life. But here I must again take the liberty of reminding the gentleman that he is out of his province. An *anonymous* writer has no business to obtrude himself as a *witness*, but merely as a reasoner.

I know the first part of this story to be a fabrication, and I suspect the whole to be one; but, whether any part of it be true or not, it makes nothing for his argument. He might with equal justice accuse the missionaries of having been assaulted by him, and his friend the Major, with a volley of foul abuse.

All our opponents declaim on the danger of tolerating missionaries, and urge the necessity of an immediate suppression of their labours. Yet I cannot learn that the Hindoos, as a body, are an intolerant people. There may be, and doubtless are, exceptions; but in general I have always understood that in this respect they differ widely from the Mahomedans. And if this be true, how can they be offended with government for being of the same mind? Were they themselves an intolerant people, it might be expected that a government, to be acceptable to them, must not only protect them in the exercise of their own religion, but persecute all who might endeavour to convince or persuade them to relinquish it. Such is exactly the line of conduct which our opponents mark out for the British government in India: but the Hindoos appear to desire no such thing; and if they did, who does not perceive that it would be mean and degrading for any government in this manner to render itself the instrument of their intolerance? Whether, therefore, these men, in urging such advice on the different departments of the British government, consult their honour, or their own inclination, let those high authorities decide.

Such is the modesty of this writer, that he allows "it would not *perhaps* become him to assume the province of dictating the means of suppressing these missionaries;" but he makes no scruple of asserting that "the government in India stands pledged to the honourable Company, and to the empire at large, by every sense of imperious duty and by every consideration of safety to our countrymen abroad, by the most prompt and decisive interposition of their authority" to suppress them. He is also so good as to inform the government with what facility it may be effected, inasmuch as the Danish settlement of Serampore is now [probably] under our immediate control,—p. 170.

If government, whether in England or in India, be of opinion that the accusers of these missionaries have substantiated their charges against them, they can be at no loss for the means of suppressing them; but if they should think it right to wait for better evidence than has yet appeared, I hope they may stand acquitted of violating their pledge either to the honourable Company or the empire at large.

## PART III.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world. Amen.—JESUS CHRIST.

## PREFACE.

IT appears to be the design of Providence, by a succession of events, to effect a more marked distinction between the friends and enemies of religion than has, of late years, subsisted. Through a variety of causes they have long been confounded. As though there were no standard for either side to repair to, they have each mingled with the other in a sort of promiscuous mass.

The effect of this junction has been more unfavourable to the cause of Christ than to that of his adversaries; for as holy things would not communicate holiness, but unclean things would communicate uncleanness, (I Hag. ii. 12, 13,) so it has been in respect to these commixtures. Ungodly men who have had to do with holy things have not thereby become holy; but godly men who have had to do with unclean things have thereby become unclean. Hence it appears to be the will of God, by his inscrutable providence, to effect a closer union among Christians, and a more marked separation between them and their adversaries. As though some decisive conflict were about to take place, the hosts on each side seem to be mustering for the battle.

The French revolution (that mighty shaking of the church and of the world) has been productive of this among other effects. Great numbers, who had before passed as Christians, perceiving infidelity to be coming into fashion, avowed their unbelief.\* Christians, on the other hand, of different denominations, felt a new motive to unite in defence of the common faith in which they were agreed.

The same effect has been produced by the sending out of missions to the heathen. The effort itself excited a correspondence of feeling, a communication of sentiment, and a unity of action, and that to a great extent; and now that success has, in some measure, attended it, it has drawn against it a host of adversaries. As the assembling of Israel before the Lord in Mizpeh, (1 Sam. vii.,) though they had neither sword nor spear among them, excited the jealousy of the Philistines, and drew forth their armies in the hope of crushing them at the outset, so it is at this day. It is remarkable what a tendency the genuine exercises of true religion have to manifest the principles of men, and to draw them into a union, either on the side of Christ, or on that of his adversaries. You may now perceive deists, Socinians, and others who retain the form of Christianity, but deny the power, naturally falling into their ranks on one side, and serious Christians, almost forgetting their former differences, as naturally uniting on the other. I question whether there ever was a controversy, since the days of the apostles, in which religion and irreligion were more clearly marked, and their respective adherents more distinctly organized.

But is it *Christianity* that they attack? O no! It is *Methodism, Cal-*

\* Many of these, however, when the rage of French principles began to abate, perceiving that they had mistaken the road to preferment, turned about, and assumed to be the patrons of *rational and orthodox Christianity!*

*vinism, fanaticism, or sectarianism, &c.* And is it a new thing for the adversaries of religion to attack it under other names? Was it ever known that they did otherwise? The apostle Paul was not accused as a zealous promoter of the true religion, but as a *pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, and a ringleader of an obnoxious sect.* Unless we wish to be imposed upon by names instead of things, we can be at no loss to perceive that the prime object of their attack is THE RELIGION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Among those who contribute their aid in this important struggle, we shall find the *Edinburgh Reviewers* just now coming forward. It is one of the professed objects of these editors to "use their *feeble* endeavours in assisting the public judgment on those topics to which its attention was actually directed." The attack on missions is preceded by one on *Methodism*;\* for it would have been imprudent to have fallen abruptly upon the subject. Under this general term, the Reviewer professes to include, in one undistinguished mass, "the sentiments of the Arminian and Calvinistic Methodists, and of the *evangelical* clergymen of the Church of England!" These he describes as three classes of fanatics, very good *subjects* indeed, but "engaged in one general conspiracy against common sense and rational *orthodox Christianity!*"

These fanatics are denounced as maintaining "the absurd notions of a universal providence, extending not only to the rise and fall of nations, but to the concerns of individuals; the insufficiency of baptism, and of a participation in the customary worship of the country, without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, to denominate men Christians;" and what is worse, it seems, as "making a marked and dangerous division of mankind into the *godly* and the *ungodly!*"

The party seems to be extending too; and where it will end the Reviewer cannot tell, nor whether the evil admits of any cure. "All mines and subterraneous places belong to them; they creep into hospitals, and small schools, and so work their way upwards. They beg all the little livings, particularly in the north of England, from the ministers for the time being; and from these fixed points they make incursions upon the happiness and common sense of the vicinage." The Reviewer "most *sincerely* deprecates such an event; but it will excite in him no manner of surprise, if a period arrive when the churches of the *sober* and *orthodox* part of the English clergy are completely deserted by the middling and lower classes of the community." They have not only made "an alarming inroad into the church," but are "attacking the army and navy. The principality of Wales, and the East India Company, they have already acquired." And, what is more still, they have made their way into "the LEGISLATURE; and by the talents of some of them, and the unimpeached excellence of their characters, render it probable that fanaticism will increase rather than diminish!"

What is to be done with these fanatics? Truly, the Reviewer does not know. He "cannot see what is likely to impede the progress" of their opinions. He is not wanting in good-will, but what can he do? He "believes them to be *very good subjects*; and has no doubt but that any further attempt upon their religious liberties, without reconciling them to the church, would have a direct tendency to render them disaffected to the state." He thinks "something may, perhaps, be done in the way of ridicule;" but ridicule in some men's hands becomes itself ridiculous.

Ah, well may these Reviewers talk of their "*feeble* endeavours in assisting the public judgment!" They have gleaned from the Methodist and Evangelical Magazines a portion of real weakness and absurdity, though several

\* No. XXII. p. 341.

of their extracts are such only in their opinion; and with this, by their comments, they have mixed a larger portion of misrepresentation. The best use that the editors of those publications can make of the critique will be to be more cautious than they have been in some instances; but, while they pluck up the weeds, there is no need to plant the deadly nightshade in their place.

The Reviewer proposes in a subsequent number to write an article on "Missions." By the foregoing specimen we can be at no loss what to expect at his hand.

It has been said of the "Edinburgh Review," that, "with a greater force of writing than the 'Monthly,' it unites at least an equal rancour against genuine Christianity, without that suspicion of Socinian and sectarian bias under which the other labours; while the barbarity, insolence, and pride, which it displays in almost all its criticisms, is sufficient to give it a prominence amongst the works of darkness." An attack on missions, from such a quarter, if not to their honour, cannot be to their dishonour; and, if made by the writer of this article especially, will, it is hoped, produce no ill effects.

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## SECTION I.

### STRICTURES ON MAJOR SCOTT WARING'S THIRD PAMPHLET.

THE present performance is of a piece with this author's other productions. The quantity of repetition surpasses any thing that I have been used to meet with in writers of the most ordinary talents. The foul spirit which pervades it is much the same, upon the whole, as heretofore. It is true, there is much less acrimony towards many of his opponents; but what is taken from them is laid upon the missionaries. The title of it might have been, *War with the Missionaries, and Peace with all the World besides*. The remarks on the critique of "The Christian Observer" are so many advances for a *separate peace*. The same may be said of his compliments to the members of the Church of Scotland, to the Arminian Methodists, to the United Brethren, and to all indeed who have *not* sent missionaries to India. He has found some difficulty, however, in ranking under this head the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, whom he will not allow to have sent out any missionaries to India, but merely to have given pecuniary assistance; and that only, it seems, in former times. Their own Reports, however, speak a different language; they express their desire of sending missionaries, provided any could be found to be sent.

The sum is, our author and his party are aware of their having erred in their first attack. By making it on so extended a scale, they shocked the feelings of the Christian world, and drew upon themselves their united and indignant censures. But what is to be done? Having committed an error, they must repair it as well as they are able; and there is no way of doing this but by endeavouring to divide their opponents. With all his antipathy to the evangelical clergy, the Major would make peace with them, and grant them almost any terms, so that they would be neutrals in his war of extermination against the missionaries.

Having requested a friend in town to furnish the Major with the first part of my "Apology," he had no sooner dipped into it than he proclaimed in his preface that I had "put beyond the possibility of future doubt the correct-

ness of his private information;" that is, by publishing Mr. Carey's letter, in which he speaks of *alarms which had been spread through India*. After this no person, he presumes, will venture to say that an alarm was not spread through India in 1806 and 1807, relative to missionaries,—p. vi. But who ever denied that an alarm was spread *among Europeans* throughout India? I knew that at each of the three presidencies these alarms had been industriously circulated, and strange reports added to them, as that the missionaries, or at least Mr. Carey, were imprisoned, &c. &c. It was of these alarms that I understood and still understand Mr. Carey to have written, and not any which were entertained by *the native population of India*, which is the point that our author's private information aims to establish. From the date of the Vellore mutiny, there can be no doubt of alarms having existed throughout the country among Europeans; and, in Mr. Carey's opinion, so far as they related to the plans of Christian missionaries, they were fabricated by deists, who availed themselves of that and other circumstances to answer an end.

He adds, "On the 13th of Feb. 1807, Mr. Carey writes, *A number of persons were preparing to embark for Europe with a view to spread the alarm at home.*" Mr. Carey writes no such thing. Whatever merit or demerit there may be in that paragraph, it belongs to the apologist, and not to Mr. Carey. This, if our author had been a little less in a hurry, he must have perceived. Mr. Carey, instead of having communicated it, is supposed *not to be aware of it*. And though it is there intimated that a number of persons were at that time preparing to embark, *with a view* to spread the alarms at home; yet it was never imagined that this was their *sole view* in returning to Europe.

There is no difficulty in understanding the Major, when he suggests that Mr. Carey must have included the governor of Ceylon, and the governor-general and council of Bengal, among the deists who swarm in India, "because they have very effectually opposed the plans of the missionaries,"—p. viii. Of the former I have heard nothing, except from our author, and therefore hope it may resemble many other things of his communicating. And as to the latter, if any such effectual opposition has been made as he appears to hope for, it is unknown to me. But if it have, it is no new thing for deists so far to conceal their motives as to influence public measures, even those in which men of very different principles preside.

I have no inclination to follow this writer through one tenth of his wranglings and repetitions; nor is there any need of it. It will be sufficient if, after a few general remarks, I answer his most serious charges against the missionaries.

The Major intimates, that if his assertion of Mr. Ward's having impiously perverted a passage of the holy gospel could be disproved, that were coming *to an issue*,—p. 22. If it were in the power of evidence to convince him on this subject, he would be convinced by what is alleged by "The Christian Observer." But the truth is, as Dr. Johnson is said to have bluntly expressed it, in answering an ignorant opponent, *We may offer evidence, but we cannot furnish men with understanding.*

It is still persisted in that missions, or Bibles, sent into a country where we had engaged to preserve to them *the free exercise of religion*, amount to a violation of the public faith,—p. 8. The free exercise of one religion then, it seems, is inconsistent with the free offer of another. The next proposal to government may be for the silencing of Protestant Dissenters; for so long as they are allowed to preach in the country, the members of the National Church, according to his reasoning, have not the free exercise of their religion.

When converts to Christianity are mentioned, the Major calls out, "Where are they? Who are they? I can find no account of them in the *Missionary Reports*,"—p. 18. He speaks, however, in another place, of the "nonsense that we may read in the *Missionary Reports* relative to the success of the missionaries in making numerous converts to Christianity,"—p. 33. If he has read the last four or five Reports of "The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge," he must there have met with the largest portion of this kind of nonsense that has appeared of late years, particularly in the communications of Mr. Gericke. And as he has examined the Baptist Periodical Accounts, he cannot have overlooked the list of the baptized in No. XV. down to Nov. 1804. He must there have seen several brahmins among them, and also several Mahomedans, and consequently have known his private accounts to be unfounded. But perhaps he will answer, as in p. 73, "This is an atrocious falsehood." We leave the reader to judge from what has been said, and what may yet be said, to whom the charge of falsehood belongs. Meanwhile, if our author be determined to disbelieve the accounts, let him disbelieve them; but let him not say they are not to be found in the *Missionary Reports*, and at the same time accuse those Reports of nonsense for relating them!

It is remarkable with what facility the Major picks up the discordant principles of other men, and sews them together in a sort of patch-work. One while the bishop of St. Asaph seemed to be his oracle; now the barrister is every thing. Getting hold of him he can mimic the Socinian, and declaim against John Calvin. The bishop of St. Asaph would have censured him for traducing Calvin, for whom he professed a high respect. But when a man has no principles of his own, what can he do? He had better not borrow those of others, however, till he knows how to use them.

By the frequent recurrence of such terms as *hot-headed maniacs*, *madmen*, *mad Calvinists*, *mad Baptists*, &c. &c., it would seem as if the gentleman himself was scarcely sober. Had this raving kind of diction been confined to his later publications, we might have ascribed it to the goadings of the Reviews; but as it has been his strain of writing from the beginning, it must belong to his nature.

We have heard much of a certain *tract*, which calls the natives "barbarians, and their Shasters barbarian Shasters," and of some thousands of it being distributed among the native troops, and other inhabitants of Bengal. At length we are told that the missionaries, with all their activity, *did not visit one military station*; that their abusive tracts were distributed *once* at Berhampore among the native troops, and that the copy now in England was given by one of our seapoys to his officer,—p. 129. We are much obliged to the Major for being so explicit. He may tell us, in his next piece, who translated it; for he seems to be quite in the secret. At present, I can only observe that, by his account, this obnoxious tract appears to have been scattered among the troops by thousands, if not without hands, yet without a single visit from the missionaries!

The Major has not yet finished his labours in defaming the memory of Mr. Thomas. "A man," he says, "whom Mr. Thomas puts down as a brahmin, a man of title, was, in fact, a servant of Mr. Thomas, an outcast of society. This fellow, Parbotee, as he is called, robbed his master, Mr. Thomas, and ran away, and, as I understand, died mad at a distant period,"—p. 75. For a writer, on the authority of men whom he will not name, thus to abuse the memory of the dead, is an outrage on decency. Parbotee was and is a brahmin, and never was a servant to Mr. Thomas. When will this man desist from retailing falsehood?

Speaking of missionary societies, he says, "There is also an Arminian

Methodist Society, and a Society of the United Brethren, whose missionaries are well employed in pagan countries; *but they have wisely refrained from sending missionaries to India,*”—p. 85. Have they? Yet we are told in the preface to the “Observations,” p. xv., that there are “spread over India Arminian Methodist and United Brethren missionaries,” &c. &c. And in the letter to Mr. Owen we are assured that, “on most accurately looking over the preface, he could not discover either a misstatement or a misrepresentation!”—p. 117. Whether he discovered this, or whether he wrote both without discovering them to be contradictions, it is not for me to determine; but if the latter were the case, I should not be surprised, for it is easy to perceive that, in many instances, he knows not what he writes.

“Mr. Marshman,” says he, “was at Saugur during a great Hindoo festival, where at least 200,000 Hindoos were assembled. He preached to as many as could hear him, and he told the Hindoos that ‘he did not come, like other Englishmen, to *take their money*, but to bring the jewel above all price, the grand offer of salvation.’ The Hindoos became clamorous on their devotions being thus disturbed, and Mr. Marshman exclaimed, ‘Well, since you decline it, remember that, as you have received the gospel, you have no longer any excuse for idolatry, but will be *dammèd everlastingly,*’”—pp. 36, 98.

It is the practice of this writer to make no references to the page or book from which he takes his extracts. In cases of accusation this is unpardonable, and is difficult to be accounted for on any principle but that of a desire to escape detection.

The only visits to Saugur of which I have any remembrance, or can find any traces in the Periodical Accounts, are two. One may be found in No. XVI., pp. 225, 226; but in this there is no address to the Hindoos of any kind: his quotation, therefore, could not be taken from thence. The other is in No. XIV., pp. 513–522. Here there is an address to the Hindoos; and as some of the words which are quoted are to be found in p. 521, I conclude it must be to this address that he refers.

On reading the whole account, and comparing it with that of Major Scott Waring’s, I find in the latter a much larger portion of misrepresentation than of fact. Mr. Marshman was not the missionary who addressed the Hindoos, but Mr. Chamberlain; and the circumstance of their “becoming clamorous on account of their devotions being disturbed” is not in the account, and must, therefore, either have been taken from some other account, and without regard to truth applied to this, or be absolutely a fabrication. Nor is this all: There were no such words spoken as of his *being come to bring the jewel above all price, the grand offer of salvation*; nor did he exclaim, *Well, since you decline it, remember that, as you have received the gospel, you have no longer any excuse for idolatry, but will be dammèd everlastingly*. These are Major Scott Waring’s words, and not those of the missionary. He may pretend that there were things said which are capable of this construction; but he has no right to quote his own constructions, be they just or not, as the words of another. I hoped before that the Major, notwithstanding all his misstatements, had not been guilty of *wilful* errors; but really after this he hardly leaves one the power of placing any dependence on his veracity.

A great deal is said about the *number* of the missionaries. It is introduced in this pamphlet in no less than seven places. It is said that “the London Society maintain *thirteen* missionaries on the coast and in Ceylon, and one at Surat; and that *three of the number are women,*”—p. 15. Are women then to be reckoned as missionaries? If so, we have considerably more than eleven in Bengal. But why did he not take in their children too? In reckoning the whole number of both the Societies, sometimes they are



twenty-three, and sometimes twenty-five, yet both are given as the number "now in India,"—pp. 25, 81. To assist the gentleman in his future reckonings, I will put down the names and places of the missionaries of both Societies.

Messrs. Carey, Marshman, Ward, Moore, Rowe, Robinson, and Felix Carey, at *Serampore*; Mr. Chamberlain, at *Cutwa*; and Messrs. Mardon and Chater, at *Rangoon, in Burmah*. Besides them, there was Mr. Biss, but he died in 1807. Mr. *William Carey*, though he accompanied Mr. Moore to Dacca, is not at present a missionary. The number of missionaries, therefore, that we have now in the Company's territories is only *eight*.

The following extract of a letter from the Secretary of the London Society will show what are *their* numbers and situations. "All the missionaries we have in India are, Messrs. Cran and Desgranges, at *Vizagapatam*; Mr. Loveless, at the school at *Madras*; Dr. Taylor, at *Bombay*; Mr. Ringletaube, in *Travancore*; and Messrs. Vos, Erhardt, and Palm, in *Ceylon*.—Taylor never got to Surat, nor can he go at present; and he is not at all engaged as a missionary as yet, and never, I believe, preached one sermon to the heathen. None of those now in India have been at Ceylon; but those in Ceylon were first, for a few weeks, at Tranquebar. Loveless and Desgranges are married, as also the Ceylon missionaries; but as their wives did not preach, they ought not to be called missionaries. We have heard nothing of Messrs. Vos, Erhardt, and Palm being sent from Ceylon, and do not believe it."

Now, lest the Major should again be out in his reckoning, I may inform him that the whole number of missionaries from this Society in Hindostan is *five*; which, with the three who are or were in Ceylon, make eight; and which, added to the eight in Bengal, make *SIXTEEN*.

Our author has furnished himself with the *Baptist statement*, which seems to have afforded him much new light upon the subject. This statement, the reader should be informed, was drawn up in the spring of 1807, not to be sold, but circulated among the directors, and the members of administration. The design of it was to counteract the influence of a number of *private* letters which had then arrived from India against the mission; and I have no particular reason to doubt of its having answered the end.

Had the Major known the particulars communicated in this statement sooner, he "should not have written one word about Bengal missionaries,"—p. 60. We hope then he will learn, in future, to wait till he understand a subject before he writes upon it. It might be full as creditable to himself to do so, and some saving to the public. But we must not count too fast on the Major's approbation. If he had not written, it had been, not from any satisfactory opinion of the missionaries' conduct, but from their being laid under an interdiction which he hopes may be sufficient to stop them in their career. It is possible, however, he might have written notwithstanding; for since he has seen the statement he has written nearly as much as he did before.

Our author, in going over the statement, finds the Baptist Society submitting to the consideration of government the following proposition, as the opinion of the missionaries: "No political evil can reasonably be feared from the spread of Christianity now; for it has been publicly preached in different parts of Bengal for about twenty years past,\* without the smallest symptom of the kind." "But are the Baptist missionaries," he asks, "or their Society at home, authorized by law to determine whether or not a

\* Though Mr. Carey had been there only thirteen years, yet Mr. Thomas had publicly preached to the Hindoos in their own language for several years before.

political evil is to be reasonably feared from the spread of Christianity in India?"—p. 69. Unless our being Baptists deprives us of the right of all other subjects, we have just the same authority as Major Scott Waring, who also has said a great deal to government on what is reasonable and unreasonable. He states what he conceives to be good policy, submitting it to the consideration of those who are authorized to determine it, and we have done no more.

But the principal materials which our author finds in the Baptist statement are such as enable him to accuse us, as he thinks, of *falsehood* and even of *rebellion*. These are certainly very serious charges, and, if we be unable to answer them, must sink us in the estimation of all honest men.

For our parts, we are not conscious of having been guilty of either of these crimes. So far as we know our own hearts, we have from the beginning exercised a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. If we be guilty, therefore, we must be under the grossest self-deception. And as we never considered ourselves either as *liars* or *rebels*, neither have we been able to learn that any other person, high or low, Churchman or Dissenter, friend or enemy, has so considered us, till Major Scott Waring made the discovery.

"Not a single instance of disturbance has occurred," says Mr. Carey, "unless the abusive language of a few loose persons may be so called." To prove the falsehood of this statement, the Major refers to the old story of a *universal alarm* being excited by their entering into a city or a village. One of these statements, he says, must be *false*. But if the alarm mean nothing more than a sensation of fear arising from the presence of Europeans, there is no such thing as *disturbance* included in it. Our author has read the account of the journey to Saugur;\* and might have observed that "the people were surprised to see Europeans amongst them, and that some appeared *afraid*;" yet at that time their errand was unknown. This *fear*, therefore, could not respect them as missionaries, but merely as Europeans.

Mr. Carey says, further, that "the missionaries on the coast reckon about forty thousand persons to have embraced Christianity." "This," says the Major, "is another direct false assertion. Dr. Kerr admits, on the 7th of Nov. 1806, that *hitherto it is generally imagined few good converts have been made*,"—p. 70. But though this might be *generally imagined*, yet it does not follow that it was true, or that Dr. Kerr thought it to be true. Or, granting that he did, he might mean it only comparatively. Forty thousand people are but few when compared with the population of the country. In the letter addressed to Dr. Vincent, which was published in the Report of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge of 1800, they are reckoned at "three thousand;" and since that time, according to the Reports of that Society, there have been great accessions; whole villages casting away their idols and embracing the gospel. Whether forty thousand be a just estimate, I cannot tell, and Mr. Carey does not determine; but, till I have some better proof of his want of veracity than has yet appeared, I can entertain no doubt of its being agreeable to the information he had received.

Thousands of heathens in Calcutta were willing to hear the gospel; "but we," says Mr. Marshman, "are forbidden to preach it." That is, in Calcutta, where they had preached it. "This assertion," says the Major, "is false; they are allowed to preach it in Serampore, and in their own house in Calcutta." But the thousands who desire to hear it could not attend in either of those places. If Major Scott Waring want understanding, who can help it? But he should not charge that as false which arises from his own misconstructions

\* Periodical Accounts, No. XIV. p. 518.

To say that thousands of heathens are willing to hear the gospel, is, he says, "a false and wicked assertion, in the way in which the missionaries desire to be understood. Curiosity may draw, as it has done, thousands together to hear these men preach, but they are not likely, to use the elegant expression of one of the coast missionaries, to catch one (of the thousands) in the gospel net,"—p. 72. The missionaries never desired to be understood as if thousands stood ready to embrace Christianity, but merely that they were willing and even desirous to hear it; and this, whatever were their motives, was the truth. As to the improbability of their being brought to believe it, that is only Major Scott Waring's opinion, and stands for nothing.

"We have baptized," says Mr. Marshman, "about a hundred of these people, and we dare affirm that the British government has not a hundred better subjects, and more cordial friends, among the natives of Hindostan." "This," says the Major, "is a most atrocious falsehood. Of their hundred converts, whom they have baptized in thirteen years,\* they have dismissed many for gross immorality,"—p. 73. The number of those who have been dismissed for gross immorality, however, is not so great as this writer would have it thought to be; but, be it what it may, Mr. Marshman says in the same page, "If they lose caste, and embrace Christianity, not by force, but from pure conviction, they become other men. *Even those who, as it may prove, have not embraced it cordially, are considerably influenced by it. If once they lose caste, the charm is broken, and they become capable of attachment to government.*"

But I am weary of contending with this foul opponent. It is time to bring this part of the subject, at least, to a close. As "the most atrocious falsehood" is charged on the missionaries, let us here come to an issue. We will not shrink from it. Let our judges satisfy themselves of the truth of our statements. We will hold ourselves obliged, whenever called upon by proper authority, to give proof of them. If falsehood be found on our side, let our missionaries be ordered out of the country as a set of impostors; but if on the side of our accusers, let the burden which they have laboured to fasten upon us fall upon themselves.

But our missionaries are accused not only of falsehood, but with being "in open rebellion." This accusation is founded on their going out without legal authority, and by foreign ships—on their availing themselves of the protection of Denmark—and on their itinerating in the country without passports, and after a legal permission to do so was refused them.

It is easy to perceive that, on this subject, the hopes of our accuser begin to brighten. Like the Pharisees and the Herodians, he thinks he shall be able to entangle us, and bring us under the displeasure of government. Well, let him do his utmost. We acknowledge the above to be facts, let them affect us as they may. It is worthy notice, however, that it is not owing to any thing which our accuser has written that these facts have been brought to light. The substance of them was contained in the *Statement*: which statement was, in fact, though not in form, respectfully submitted to the very parties to whom he wishes to accuse us. He is, therefore, a day too late. Our judges were in possession of the facts before he knew of them. There is nothing left for him to do as an accuser, but merely as counsel, to assist the judges in forming a decision, by his comments and learned arguments. And, with respect to these, we must take the liberty of wiping off a part of his colouring; and truly it can be only a part, for to remove the whole the pamphlet itself must be literally purified by fire.

The itinerating excursions, subsequent to the refusal of a legal permission

\* He might have said in *six*.

in 1805, were not in *defiance* of government, but with their knowledge, and, I may say, their approbation. The refusal of the governor-general did not appear to arise from any disapprobation of the object, or of the means used to accomplish it, but merely from a hesitation whether the government in India were warranted *formally* to adopt the measure. There was no prohibition whatever at that time laid upon the missionaries, nor any intimation of even a wish for them to relax in their itinerating labours. On the contrary, when, from the hesitation before mentioned, the governor-general disapproved of a committee to superintend the translations, he nevertheless gave full liberty to advertise in the "Gazette" for voluntary subscriptions; and added, "Let the missionaries go on in their present line of action."

Our accuser, not knowing what to do with this last sentence, contrives to throw it back a year, supposing the remark must have been made "prior to the autumn of 1805,"—p. 93. Certainly this supposition is necessary for his argument; but unfortunately it is not true. I cannot exactly refer to the date, but have no doubt of its being in 1806. Never till the 24th of August, in that year, was any thing like a prohibition given, and then it appears to have arisen more from apprehension than dislike; and consisted not in a written order from the governor-general in council, but merely in a private verbal message. If, therefore, the Major flatter himself that Sir George Barlow is of the same mind with him and his party, he may find himself mistaken.

I may add, that the protection of the Danish government was granted at the unsolicited recommendation of the late governor Bie, whose testimony to the good character of the missionaries was not only sent to his own government at Copenhagen, but the same things conveyed in a letter to the Society in England in the following terms: "Permit me to assure you that I do not consider the friendship and few civilities I have had it in my power to show your brethren here otherwise than as fully due to them. I have received them as righteous men, in the name of righteous men; and I shall never withhold good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of my hand to do it. I am happy in possessing them, and shall be more so in seeing their number increase."—The missionaries have always acknowledged the kindness of the British as well as of the Danish government; and though at one period they expressed their concern at being forbidden to preach to the multitudes who were willing to hear in Calcutta, yet neither they nor the Society have dealt in reflections, but have contented themselves with simply stating the facts, and the arguments arising from them; and this merely to counteract the underhand measures of their adversaries.

We ask only for a calm and candid hearing. We solemnly aver before God and our country that we are most sincerely attached to its constitution and government; that we regard its authority with sentiments of the highest respect, and hold ourselves bound to be obedient to its lawful commands. Obedience to the ruling powers we conceive to be enjoined in Scripture, where, however, an exception is expressly made in favour of those cases in which the commands of man are directly opposed to the revealed commands of God. These are cases which, in the course of human affairs, may occur; but which no good subject will love to anticipate before their actual occurrence. Supposing, however, the arrival of an emergence so painful, it surely would be somewhat harsh to stigmatize with the name of "open rebellion" the reluctant disobedience, in a particular instance, of those who are only yielding to a deliberate, sober, and conscientious conviction of their duty. The apostles exhorted all Christians, rather than renounce their faith or disobey the Divine precepts at the command of the state, to "resist even unto

blood;" but we have yet to learn that such injunctions were intended or received as instigations to *rebellion*.

Were it possible to conceive (we merely suppose the case) that the missionaries should be called to the hard duty of deciding between the service of God and obedience to man, we trust that they would be enabled to encounter, with resignation, the painful sacrifice imposed upon them; but we are thankful to say that they have as yet been spared so severe a trial.

Surely nothing but the most uncandid and bitter prejudice would represent the refusal of an *official* sanction to their itinerations as an imperative prohibition of them; or would class the missionaries as rebels merely because, being denied the formal protection of the governing power, they were content with connivance, or at least with uncovenanted toleration. Numbers of Europeans are to be found residing in India, though unaccredited by the Company or the British governments; and we have never understood that all these were considered as in a state of "open rebellion." Yet we have no objection to be explicit, and will be free to confess that the legality of such a residence for the purposes of private emolument would in our view be more than doubtful, and that we should certainly abstain from it.

If, upon a candid consideration of all circumstances, it be found that we have, in some instances, deviated from the regulations alluded to, it will be remembered that it has not been for any object of temporal advantage, the illicit pursuit of which it was doubtless the design of those regulations to prevent, though they are necessarily expressed in terms which give them a more general application. As far, indeed, as the deviation may, even under these circumstances, seem an irregular proceeding, so far we should certainly rest our defence of it on the nature and importance of the objects which it was intended to compass; and, in this mild and qualified case, should even appeal to the spirit of the principle which has been already mentioned—the principle of a conscientious preference of duty to all other considerations, however pressing.

With respect to the question of duty, we are aware that men may be prompted by delusive impulses and erroneous comments to measures of extravagance, justly censurable by civil authority. But we are governed by no such impulses. We have no notion of any thing being the will of God, but what may be proved from the Scriptures; nor of any obligations upon us to go among the heathen more than upon other Christians. If we be not authorized by the New Testament, we have no authority. And as to our *comments*, if they will not bear the test of fair and impartial scrutiny, let them be discarded, and let our undertakings be placed to the account of a well-meant but misguided zeal. The principal ground on which we act is confined to a narrow compass: it is the commission of our Saviour to his disciples, "Go—teach all nations;" which commission we do not consider as confined to the apostles, because his promised presence to them who should execute it extends "to the end of the world."

Our accuser is aware that the apostles and primitive ministers went every where preaching the gospel, even though it were at the risk of liberty and life; and this, he conceives, was right in them, because "they were expressly *commanded* to do so,"—p. 80. His conclusion, that it is wrong in Christians of the present day, rests upon the supposition that the command of Christ does not extend to them; but we shall not allow him to build on these disputed premises.

That there were things committed to the apostles, *for them to commit to Christians of succeeding ages*, cannot be denied. Such must have been the great body of Christian doctrines and precepts contained in the New Testament; and seeing the promise of Christ to be with his servants in the

execution of the command reaches "to the end of the world," the command itself must have been of this description. Not that every Christian is obliged to preach, or any Christian in all places; but the Christian church as a body, and every member of it individually, is obliged to do its utmost in the use of those means which Christ has appointed for the discipling of all nations.

To say that because we are not endowed, like the apostles, with the gift of tongues and the power of working miracles, therefore we are not obliged to make use of the powers which we have for the conversion of the world, is trifling, not reasoning. What proof, or appearance of proof, is there that the obligations of the apostles to preach the gospel to all nations arose from those extraordinary endowments? If our being unable to work miracles be a reason why we should not preach the gospel to all nations as far as opportunity admits, it is a reason why we should not preach it at all; or, which is the same thing, a proof that the Christian ministry, as soon as miracles had ceased, ought to have terminated. The institution of the Christian ministry is founded in the commission, even that commission which enjoins the teaching of all nations. And if we leave out one part, we must, to be consistent, leave out the other. We ought either not to teach at all, or, according to our powers and opportunities, to teach all nations.

If we believe the Scriptures, (and if we do not we are not Christians,) we must believe that all nations are promised to the Messiah *for his inheritance*, no less than the land of Canaan was promised to the seed of Abraham; and we, as well as they, ought, in the use of those means which he has appointed, to go up and endeavour to possess them. It is not for us, having obtained a comfortable footing in Europe, like the Israelites in Canaan, to make leagues with the other parts of the world, and, provided we may but live at ease in our tents, to consent for them to remain as they are. Such a spirit, though complimented by some as liberal, is mean, and inconsistent with the love of either God or man.

Our accuser, who will neither be a Christian nor let Christianity alone, represents the apostles as "authorized to act in *defiance* of magistrates," to "break the laws of the different countries they visited," to "*despise* the orders of men;" "but Christians *now*," he tells us, "are expressly directed to *obey the powers that be*." If the principle acted on by the apostles "be admitted in *these days*," he thinks, "we must bid adieu to India,"—pp. 53, 79, 80.

It would seem by this account of things as if the apostles, under a Divine authority, trampled on all law and order among men, and, as far as their influence extended, actually "turned the world upside down." If it were not so, the conclusion that the same principle acted upon in these days would prove the loss of India, is mere unfounded assertion. But were any such effects produced by the labours of the apostles? What colonies were lost to the Romans through them? Let the countries be named which were ruined or injured by their preaching.

In attempting to fix a charge upon us, our accuser has libelled the apostles, and even their Master, as well as the Christians of all succeeding ages. Where did he learn that Jesus Christ authorized his apostles to act in *defiance* of magistrates, or to *despise* the orders of men? What proof has he that they ever acted on such principles? Was there any thing like this in the behaviour of Paul before Felix, or Festus, or Agrippa? Such a spirit had no more place in his religion than our accuser has been able to prove it to have had place in ours. The apostles were commanded to break no laws but such as were inconsistent with their allegiance to Christ; and in breaking them they never acted with contumacy, but merely as impelled by

a superior authority; bearing at the same time the consequences with meekness and fortitude, as their Lord had done before them. The principle on which they acted was that which HE had laid down for them when tempted by certain "hypocrites," with the intent of rendering him obnoxious to government (not that they cared for government, but were desirous of making it the instrument of their malice); namely, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that God's."

What authority has our accuser for representing the apostles as enjoining on common Christians that subjection to civil government which they did not exemplify in their own conduct? Were not they themselves subject to the powers that were? Yes, in every thing save in what concerned their allegiance to Christ, and this reserve they made for all Christians. Why else did they encourage them to hold fast their profession under the most cruel persecutions; referring them to the last judgment, when God would recompense rest to them, and tribulation to those that troubled them? Could they have submitted their consciences to the ruling powers, they need not have suffered persecution; but they acted on the same principle as the apostles, who, instead of laying down one law for themselves and another for them, exhorted them to follow their example: "Those things," said they, "which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in us, do."

On the principle of our accuser, all those Christians of the first three centuries who had not the power of working miracles, though peaceable and loyal subjects in civil concerns, yet, not-submitting their consciences to the ruling powers, were rebels. The same may be said of the English martyrs in the days of the first Mary. They could not work miracles any more than we, and pretended to no special commission from Heaven to break the laws; but, while they manifested the utmost loyalty to the queen in civil matters, they felt themselves accountable to a higher authority, and submitted to be burnt alive rather than obey her mandates. These characters, whom all succeeding ages have revered as men of whom the world was not worthy, were loaded by the Bonners and Gardiners of the day with every epithet of abuse, and treated as rebels.

We may be told that the cases are dissimilar; they were put to death, but the whole that our accuser aims at is banishment; they suffered for avowing their religious principles at home, whereas we might have done this without his wishing to interrupt us. But this dissimilarity relates only to degree; the principle is the same. If, since the days of miracles, Christians have been under an obligation to submit to the powers that be in religious matters, the martyrs of seventeen hundred years have been, in fact, a succession of rebels.

Our accuser may think it a matter "not to be endured" that sectaries should compare themselves with these honoured characters:\* but with his leave, or without it, we are *Christians*; and though we should be less than the least of Christ's servants, yet we must aspire to act upon the same *principles* as the greatest of them.

What is there in these principles which affects the honour of government, or the peace and good order of society? Is it any disparagement to the highest human authorities not to interfere with the Divine prerogative? On the contrary, is it not their highest honour to respect it? Those govern-

\* Considering the pains which have been taken to load us with the odium of *sectarianism*, it may be thought I should have done something towards removing it. The truth is, our opponents care not for the Church, nor have they any dislike to Dissenters, provided they be adverse to *evangelical religion*. All that they say, therefore, against us as sectaries, is for the mean and crafty purpose of working upon the prejudices of Churchmen; and such vulgar abuse requires no answer.

ments which, disregarding such men as our accuser, protect the free exercise of religious principle, will not only be prospered of Heaven, but will ever stand high in the esteem of the wise and the good, and when the ferment of the day is over be applauded by mankind in general.

A great deal is said by all our opponents on *the power of working miracles*, as though because we cannot pretend to this qualification we had no warrant to attempt the conversion of the heathen. "It is not to be endured," says our accuser, "that these men should be compared with the apostles who wrought miracles." And another wiseacre gravely suggests that "sectaries are not likely to have these extraordinary powers;" as though, had we been Churchmen, we might have stood some chance of attaining them!\* It was the commission of Christ, and not the power of working miracles, that constituted the warrant of the apostles to "go and teach all nations." The latter was, indeed, an important qualification, and necessary to accredit the Christian religion at its outset; but if it had been necessary to its progress, it would either have been continued till all nations had been evangelized, or the promise of Christ to be with his servants in the execution of the commission would not have extended to the end of the world.

If we arrogated to compare ourselves with the apostles, in distinction from other Christians, that indeed were not to be endured; but nothing is further from our minds. If we compare ourselves with the apostles, it is not as apostles, but as Christians, engaged, according to the gifts which we possess, in the same common cause. That there were some things pursued by Christ and his apostles which require to be pursued by all Christians cannot be denied. Why else is our Saviour said to have "left us an example that we should follow his steps?" And why did the apostle exhort the Corinthians to be "followers of him, as he also was of Christ?" It might have been said of Paul, that for him to compare himself with Christ "was not to be endured;" and that with equal justice as this is said of us. He did not compare himself with Christ, though he imitated him in those things wherein he was set for an example; neither do we compare ourselves with the apostles, though we imitate them in those things wherein they are set for our example.

Nothing is more evident, to men who have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil, than that the cause of God is the same in all ages; and that, whatever diversity of gifts there may be among Christians, there is but one spirit. It is not on that wherein Christianity is diverse in different ages that we found our comparisons, but on that wherein it is the same in all ages. Whatever diversities there were as to spiritual gifts between Christ and his apostles, or among the apostles themselves, yet they each incurred the hatred and opposition of wicked men. The Lord of glory himself was reproached as a *madman*, and the people who attended to him considered as fools for listening to his doctrine. He was also accused to government of *stirring up the people*, merely because he taught them throughout the country. Such also was the treatment of the apostles. So foreign were the things of which Paul discoursed from all the previous ideas of Festus, that, though he spoke only the words of truth and soberness, yet they appeared to the other to be *madness*. And the charges alleged against him, at another time, before Felix, were, that he was a *pestilent character*, a

\* This suggestion is contained in a piece which has lately appeared, under the title of *The Dangers of British India from French invasion and Missionary Establishments*. I see nothing in the pamphlet which requires an answer. Government will see to that part which refers to the danger of French invasion, whether they read this performance or not; and as to what relates to the missionaries, it is a mere repetition of things which have been answered in the preceding pages.



*mover of sedition*, and, what was worse still, a *ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes*. Now when we hear the same charges, for substance, alleged against us, at a distance of almost two thousand years, we cannot help concluding that, whatever disparities there are between Christ and the apostles and Christians of the present day, there are certain common points of likeness, and that all such reproaches prove nothing against us.

We do not wonder, however, that our adversaries should not be able to "endure" these comparisons; for they not only feel annoyed by them, but must needs perceive that, if *we* are compared to Christ and his apostles, *they* also will be compared to men of a very opposite character, and this they may not be able to "endure" any more than the other.

Another subject on which almost all our opponents dwell is the *impracticability* of converting the Hindoos. Most of them, as if to screen themselves from the suspicion of being averse to Christianity, acknowledge that if the thing were practicable it would be right. But, in the first place, they speak as though we expected the sudden conversion of the whole population of India; and as though nothing were done, unless it amounted to this; but we have no idea of the kind. If the work go on in a silent and gradual way, like the operations of a little leaven, as the kingdom of heaven has been used to go on, the whole lump may in the end, though not at present, be leavened. We say the leaven has begun to operate, and all we desire is, that its operation may not be impeded.

We perfectly agree with our opponents that the Hindoos can never be converted by mere *human means*, though we are equally persuaded they will never be converted without them. We no more think that "men can accomplish it" than they. We do not use such calculations respecting the expulsion of paganism and Mahomedism from India as might be used concerning the reduction of a country by a certain degree of physical force. Our hope arises from the promise of Christ to be with his servants in the execution of their mission to the end of the world. Nor can our adversaries consistently object to this, since they also can talk of "the omnipotent power of Heaven leading these people into the paths of light and truth," and even of "the outpouring of the Spirit" upon them. The difference is, they introduce Divine influence as something miraculous, and for the purpose of superseding human means; we as an ordinary blessing, promised to the church in all ages, and to encourage the use of means. They argue from what the Almighty *can* do to what he *must* do, if ever the work be done; namely, convert them "in an instant;" we consider such talk as wild and visionary. Our opponents sometimes declaim against "the enthusiasm" of the missionaries; but nothing like this will be found in any of their communications. Surely they must be hardly driven, or they would not have attempted to conceal their opposition to the progress of the gospel under the mask of fanaticism.

Do they really think it more probable that God will convert a whole country "in an instant" than that they will be converted in the ordinary use of means? No, they expect no such Divine interference, and, it may be, on this very account give it the preference. If the Hindoos *must* be converted, they had rather, it seems, that it should be done by the immediate power of God than by us; but it requires no great depth of penetration to perceive that it would please them better still were it to be done by neither.

## SECTION II.

REMARKS ON "A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF CONTROL ON THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA."

My design in noticing this Letter is more for the purpose of explanation than dispute. The "hints" suggested to those who are concerned in sending out missionaries to the East, so far as they relate to their peaceable temper and character, are very good. I can say, in behalf of the societies which have of late years sent out missionaries to that quarter, that it has been their aim, from the beginning, to act on the principle which the author recommends. The following are extracts from the Instructions of the London and the Baptist Societies.

## TO THE MISSIONARIES GOING TO SURAT.

"It is peculiarly incumbent on you for your own comfort, and agreeable to the spirit and teaching of our Divine Master, to avoid all interference both in word and in deed with the Company's servants, government, and regulations. We cannot sufficiently convey what we feel on the high importance of this injunction, of abstaining from all observations on the political affairs of the country or government, in your intercourse, and in your correspondence.—The very existence of the mission may be involved in an attention or inattention to this regulation!"

## TO THE MISSIONARIES GOING TO BENGAL.

"Since that kingdom which we, as the disciples of Jesus, wish to establish, is not of this world, we affectionately and seriously enjoin on each missionary under our patronage that he do cautiously and constantly abstain from every interference with the political concerns of the country where he may be called to labour, whether by words or deeds; that he be obedient to the laws in all civil affairs; that he respect magistrates, supreme and subordinate, and teach the same things to others; in fine, that he apply himself wholly to the all-important concerns of that evangelical service to which he has so solemnly dedicated himself.

"Lastly, however gross may be the idolatries and heathenish superstitions that may fall beneath a missionary's notice, the Society are nevertheless persuaded that both the mutual respect due from man to man, and the interests of the true religion, demand that every missionary should sedulously avoid all rudeness, insult, and interruption, during the observance of the said superstitions; recommending no methods but those adopted by Christ and his apostles, viz. the persevering use of Scripture, reason, prayer, meekness, and love."

The societies may not, in every instance, have succeeded according to their wishes; but if any of their missionaries have betrayed another spirit, they have not failed to admonish them, and, if they could not be corrected, would certainly recall them. The mildness and gentleness of missionaries, however, does not require to be such as that they should not *refute and expose the evils of idolatry*. No man can be a missionary who is not allowed to do this. This has been always done by Mr. Schwartz and his colleagues, (whom the author of the Letter justly praises,) as is manifest from their communications to "The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,"

and of which the Society have approved by communicating them to the public.

“Mr. Kolhoff,” say they, “in his intercourse with heathens, made it his business to give them a plain and comprehensive view of all the truths of our holy religion, and to prevail upon them to receive them, *by representing the absurdity and sinfulness of their idol-worship*, the happiness which would attend their obedience to the truth, *and the judgments to which they would render themselves liable by a contempt of the only true God, and the offers of his mercy.*”—Report of 1798, p. 134.

They also tell us of Mr. Pohle, another of their missionaries, “preaching daily the principles of Christianity to the natives of different religions, and especially the heathens, *refuting at the same time their errors.*” Yet he is said to have been “heard with joy and amazement.”—Report of 1796, p. 129.

The following extract of Mr. Kolhoff’s letter will furnish an apology for their earnestness, to those who may think nothing to be proper but simple instruction.

“Besides a multiplicity of superior deities, the heathens in this country have a great number of *infernal deities* (or rather *devils*) whom they likewise make objects of their adoration. The worship or service done to these infernal deities, in order to render them propitious, consists in offering them sheep, swine, fowls, rice, plantains, and intoxicating liquors, which is always done either in a garden, or in a chapel built in a grove, without the city or village. After offering the sacrifice, the priest, and the people by whom the sacrifice is brought, sit down to feast themselves on the things offered.

“Such a sacrifice was offered by some heathens in the month of July last, near a village twelve miles to the south of Tanjore. Having offered their sacrifice, they sat down to the succeeding entertainment, in which the priest, having made too free with the intoxicating liquor, very soon became like a wild beast, and murdered two persons who were near him, with the instrument with which he had killed the victims. Others endeavoured to save themselves by flight, but he pursued after them, murdered a woman, wounded six others, and very likely would have proceeded in his murderous business, if the inhabitants of the village had not brought him down with their sticks, and disabled him from doing further mischief. He was taken a prisoner to Tanjore, and died in his confinement of the wounds he got from the inhabitants. Oh that the heathens would open their eyes to see the dreadful consequences of forsaking their Maker, and doing the devil’s drudgery!”—Report of 1798, p. 132.

“I believe,” says the author of the Letter to the President of the Board of Control, “that in Bengal the matter has been much the same as on the coast, and that no dissatisfaction has, for perhaps a century, been produced by the preaching of the missionaries, catholic or protestant, with the exception of only a recent instance of disgust, very naturally excited among some Hindoos, from being (if I am rightly informed) coarsely reproached by some vulgar zealot, with the worship of *murderers, liars, and so forth,*”—pp. 9, 10.

I very much suspect that this gentleman *has* been misinformed, even as to this exception. No such communication has reached me; and if any one of the missionaries had, by the use of such language, excited disgust, I think either myself or some other member of the Society would have heard of it. If it were “a *fact*, and a matter of *notoriety* in India,” it is somewhat extraordinary that when, on account of the alarms produced by the Vellore mutiny, Mr. Carey and his colleagues were *requested* to desist from preaching to the natives, the magistrates at Calcutta, who delivered that request, should have made no mention of it; and still more so that they should have declared

themselves "well satisfied with their character and deportment," acknowledging that "no complaint had ever been lodged against them." But the number of private reports which have of late been circulated is sufficient, for a time, to shake the confidence even of those who are friendly to the object. We can only repeat what we have said before, "Let us not be judged by private letters: let our adversaries come forward and accuse the missionaries, or at least give proof of their labours having been injurious."

There is, doubtless, a manner of representing things which tends not to convince, but to provoke. If any thing of this kind can be proved against the missionaries, we shall by no means defend it. To charge a company of Hindoos directly with the worship of murderers, liars, &c., must be very improper; but it is possible for a charge of this kind to be urged in a less offensive manner. Supposing a brahmin to be in the company, and that, in encountering the missionary, he should appeal to the Shasters for the lawfulness of idol worship; would it be improper for the missionary calmly to prove from those Shasters that the very gods which they command to be worshipped are there described as the most vicious characters? This, I believe, has been done, and that with good effect. Nor did I ever hear of an instance of any Hindoo being provoked by it, except the brahmins, who were thereby confounded before the people.

With respect to inculcating "the less controverted principles of Christianity," I do not believe that the missionaries have ever so much as mentioned to the converted natives, and certainly not to the unconverted, any of the controversies of European Christians. On the contrary, they teach them what they conceive to be simple Christianity, both in doctrine and practice; and were any thing like a disputatious spirit to arise among them, (which, I believe, has never been the case,) they would utterly discourage it.

The fears which this writer seems to entertain of "confounding the people with a variety of discordant opinions and sects" are, I trust, without foundation; but as I shall have occasion to notice this subject more particularly in the next article, I shall here pass it by.

What this author means, and who he can refer to, by "churches overflowing with converts, who do no honour to the cause, but serve rather as a stumbling-block than an incitement to the conversion of others," I know not. Major Scott Waring, in his *third* pamphlet, understands him as agreeing with him, that "the hundred converts made in thirteen years by the *Bengal missionaries* have injured the cause of Christianity in India,"—p. 136. After this, I must say, the author is called upon by every consideration of truth, justice, and religion, and in the name of each I hereby call upon him, through some public medium, to explain his meaning. The accusations of Major Scott Waring, and his associates, reflect no dishonour; but when taken up as sober truth by a writer who appears to be not only a man of veracity, but friendly to religion, they become of consequence, and require to be either substantiated or retracted.

We may have more hope of the conversion of the Hindoos, and consequently more zeal, than this author. We certainly do hope, by the good hand of God upon us, to produce something more than merely "an increased esteem for Christianity" among the heathen; but so far as his advice goes to recommend temperate men and measures it meets our cordial approbation.

This writer recommends to government that the "number of missionaries should be limited, and that they should be required to enter into covenants with the Company, calculated to insure their prompt obedience to the restraints which it may be found necessary to impose upon them." It is possible this gentleman may have formed his idea of the number of the missionaries from the reports circulated in such pamphlets as those of Major

Scott Waring, as if "a great number of sectarian missionaries were spread over every part of India." If he had known that this great number does not exceed *sixteen*, and that the greater part of them reside at Serampore, under the immediate eye of the supreme government, he would scarcely have thought of such a proposal. As to "covenanting with the Company," the quotation from Mr. Marshman, already given, proves their willingness to give every possible security for their peaceable and good behaviour.

The sum of this gentleman's advice is, that, "with the growing zeal of this country for Indian conversion, the vigilant control of the India government should keep pace." A vigilant control and a system of intolerance sound very much alike. I hope, however, he does not mean such control as would impede the work itself; and if no more be meant than a restriction from intemperate language and behaviour, such restraints, I trust, will not "be found necessary to be imposed upon them."

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### SECTION III.

#### REMARKS ON THE PROPRIETY OF CONFINING MISSIONARY UNDERTAKINGS TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

I AM aware that on this part of the subject I have strong prejudices to encounter, especially from those who know little or nothing of Protestant Dissenters, except from the opprobrious names given them by their adversaries.

Of an ecclesiastical establishment for India I say nothing. We shall rejoice in the success of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Whether such an establishment take place, or not, I am persuaded no force will be used towards the natives; and I should not have suspected a desire to *exclude* Protestant Dissenters, had it not been expressly avowed in a late discourse before one of our Universities.\* There are thousands, I am persuaded, in the National Church, who would utterly disapprove of the illiberal wish, and whose hearts would revolt at the idea of recalling men of approved talents and character, who, with great labour and perseverance, have in a measure cleared the ground and sown the seed, to make way for others to go after them who should reap the harvest. Attached as they are to the Church of England, they would not wish, in this manner, to promote her interests. They would, I presume, consider such a measure as strictly *sectarian*; that is, establishing a party at the expense of the general interest of the church of Christ.

But should Churchmen of this description be out-numbered by others of a different mind, we appeal from them to the temperance, the wisdom, and the justice of GOVERNMENT. A government distinguished by its tolerant principles, and which guards the rights of conscience even in Mahomedans and heathens, will not, we trust, exclude Protestant Dissenting missionaries from any of its territories, especially men of learning and character, against whom not a single charge of improper conduct has ever been substantiated.

Dr. Barrow says, "Missionaries of various interests, or parties, ignorantly or wilfully differing in their comments, their opinions, and their designs, should not be suffered to appear amongst those whom we wish to convert." Surely Dr. Barrow might have supposed, from the disinterested labours of

\* See Dr. Barrow's *Sermon before the University of Oxford*, Nov. 8, 1807, pp. 13, 14.  
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these missionaries, and from the good understanding which they have always endeavoured to cultivate with Christians of other denominations, that they had no "design" in view but that of extending the Christian religion; but that if they differ from him, or others, in some particulars, it may arise from other causes than either ignorance or obstinacy.

He adds, "If we permit the ministers of various sects and denominations, Lutherans and Calvinists, Arminians and Baptists, to inculcate their respective tenets without restraint, the unlettered Indian will not be able to determine what that Christianity is which we would persuade him to embrace; and the more learned, convinced that the doctrines of all our teachers cannot be equally true, may be led to conclude that all are equally false." Plausible as this reasoning may appear on paper, experience and fact are against it. There never has been, and I trust never will be, such an opposition in the doctrine of the missionaries as to furnish any stumbling-block to the natives. According to the reasoning of this gentleman, if "the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge" had sent out an English clergyman as a missionary to India, they must at the same time have recalled Schwartz, Gericke, and their fellow labourers, as being "Lutherans."

The errors which exist in the Christian world, to whomsoever they belong, are doubtless an evil, and tend to obstruct the progress of the gospel. Could we be all of one mind, *and that the mind of Christ*, we might hope for greater success; but seeing this is not the case, what are we to do? Surely there is no necessity for our all sitting idle; nor yet for one party, which happens to be established by civil authority, to exclude the rest.

Let us suppose an *agricultural* mission among the American Indians. Fifteen or sixteen experienced farmers are sent to teach the people how to cultivate their lands. After a few years' trial, some good fruits arise from their instructions. But a certain theorist, sitting at home, finds out that these men are not all perfectly of one opinion as to the best modes of husbandry; and therefore proposes to recall them, and to send others in their place. Common sense would, in this case, check the presumption. It would say, Let these men alone. There is no such difference between them as materially to affect the object. There is room enough for them all, so that no one will need to interfere with his neighbour. Even the less skilful among them will do good, perhaps as much as those whom you would send in their place, and who, after all, might be as far from unanimity as they are.

Such is the extent of the British empire in the East, that if we could divest ourselves of the sectarian spirit of "desiring to boast of other men's labours," no two denominations of Christians need interfere, and all might be helpers one of another. But though it were otherwise, and the evils alleged were allowed to arise from it, yet the measures proposed by this writer would not diminish them. It is by subscribing "the creed of the National Church" that he wishes all who engage in this work to be united; but the unanimity produced by subscribing a creed, however good that creed may be, is little more than nominal, and therefore could have no good effect on thinking heathens. They would soon discover that there had been almost as many different "comments and opinions" about the meaning of the creed, as about the Scriptures themselves; and that as great an opposition existed among those who had subscribed it as between them and others who had not subscribed it.

The truth is, if we wish to convert heathens to *ourselves*, we must do as the Church of Rome does, set up for infallibility, and withhold the Scriptures from the people, lest they should read and judge for themselves. But if we wish to convert them to *Christ*, we shall put the Scriptures into their hands, *as the only standard of truth*, and teach them to consider all other

writings as in nowise binding on their consciences, nor even as claiming regard any further than they agree with them. By this rule let them form their judgments of us, and of our differences, should they deem it worth while to inquire into them; but the aim of a true missionary will ever be to divert their attention from such things, and to direct it to "the truth as it is in Jesus."

It cannot be very marvellous to them that fallible men should not be perfectly of one mind. Whether they be pagans or Mahomedans, they know very well this is not the case with them; and though the Christian religion professes to contain one consistent doctrine, yet it were highly presumptuous to encourage in them the hope of finding this any where in perfection, save in the Holy Scriptures. However proper it may be for a church to express the leading articles of its faith in a creed, yet to make that creed "A RULE OF CONDUCT, AND A STANDARD OF TRUTH, TO WHICH APPEALS IN DOUBT AND CONTROVERSY ARE TO BE MADE," is to invade the Divine prerogative, and to make void the word of God by our traditions. I have too high an opinion of the Reformers to suppose that they ever intended a composition of theirs to take place of the oracles of God. Should such an idea be held up to the Hindoos as that which was delivered in this sermon, it were indeed to cast a stumbling-block in their way; but if we be contented with giving them the word of God as *the only standard of faith and practice*, and with being ourselves, in all we say or do among them, measured by it, no material evil will arise to them from our differences.

To this may be added, if no great temptations of a worldly nature be held up as motives, it may be presumed that few will engage in the work but those whom the love of Christ constraineth; but between such men the differences will not be very important; and as they know one another, those differences may be expected to diminish.

Dr. Barrow recommends "one uniform and general attempt, *to the exclusion of all others, where we have the power to exclude them*, to be made by the ministers of the National Church, under the authority and regulations of an act of the legislature."

And how many ministers of the National Church does Dr. Barrow think would engage in this undertaking? If there be a sufficient number to justify his proposal, why do they not supply the episcopal mission on the coast of Coromandel? The worthy successors of Schwartz have long proclaimed the harvest in India to be great, and the labourers to be few. Scarcely a report of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" has appeared since the death of that great man, without calling out for more missionaries.

"Mr. Gericke," says the Society, "laments the want of more assistance at Tanjore. How happy a thing, he observes, would it be if God were to furnish a faithful missionary for the assistance of Mr. Kolhoff, and another or two for the congregation southward of Tanjore. It is delightful to see the growth of the Tanjore mission, and the southern congregations dependent on it. The inhabitants of whole villages flock to it. What a pity that there are not labourers for such a delightful harvest! At Jaffna, and all the coast of Ceylon, there is another great harvest. We have sent such of our native catechists as could be spared; but many are required for that extensive work."

Such was the Report in 1803; and did any of the ministers of the National Church offer themselves for the service? I believe not; but we are told that "applications had been repeatedly made to the professors at Halle in Saxony to furnish the Society with some new missionaries."

The Report in 1804, among other things, gives the cheering intelligence of "the inhabitants of four villages being unanimous in their resolution of embracing the Christian faith; ar 1 of their having put away their idols, and

converted their temples into Christian churches." It is added by Mr. Gericke, "It seems that if we had faithful and discreet labourers for the vineyard of the protestant mission on this coast, to send wherever a door is opened unto us, rapid would be the progress of the gospel."

The following is the answer which the Society was enabled to make to these solemn and impressive calls: "It is with concern that the Society still has to report that no suitable supplies of new missionaries have yet been heard of, to succeed the good men who have finished their course."

If we look to the next year, 1805, we find "The Society cannot *yet* report that any new missionaries have been engaged in Europe to carry on the work of promoting Christian knowledge in the East Indies, although many efforts have been used to find out suitable persons to be employed in this labour of love."

In the Report of 1806 the complaints are repeated; but no mention is *yet* made of any new missionaries; and none in that of 1807, just published.

I do not reflect upon the English clergy. There are many among them who, I am persuaded, would willingly engage in any service which appeared to be their duty; but who, from the purest motives, might consider themselves called to labour in another quarter. Neither do I reflect upon the Society; for how can they send out missionaries till there are missionaries to be sent? I only ask, how could Dr. Barrow, with these facts before his eyes, preach and write as he did? How could he propose to take the *whole* work of evangelizing India into the hands of the ministers of the National Church, when that *part* of it which had a special claim upon them was known to be standing still, in a manner, for want of assistance?

Let there be what excellence there may in the Established Church, (and far be it from me to wish to depreciate it,) it is not thence *exclusively* that we are to look for the accomplishment of this work. To furnish a sufficient number of suitable men for so great an undertaking is not in the power of any one denomination, established or unestablished; nor, as I suspect, of the friends of Christianity in all of them united: but if, like her that anointed the Lord's feet, we *do what we can*, we shall be approved.

For many ministers and members of the Established Church I feel a most sincere regard; and sorry should I be to wound their feelings. It is a circumstance that has afforded me pleasure, in this otherwise disagreeable controversy, that its tendency is to unite the friends of Christianity in a common cause. If, in my remarks on the episcopal mission in the East, I have seemed to interfere in concerns which do not immediately belong to me, it is because I have found it necessary, in order to repel the propositions of a writer WHOSE AVOWED INTOLERANCE KNOWS NO LIMITS BUT THE WANT OF POWER!

Whatever this gentleman may allege in behalf of "one uniform and general attempt, to be made by the ministers of the National Church exclusively," "the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" cannot, with any consistency, second the motion. They must know that such a proposal, whatever it may appear on paper, could not be reduced to practice. And surely it is not too much to infer, that if it be right and desirable to introduce Christianity among the Hindoos, others should be allowed to take part in the work as well as they, especially as there is no desire of interfering in any of their labours. Let the Church of England do what it can. Let it send out ministers who are willing to spend and be spent in the work, and we with all our hearts shall pray for their success. From missionaries of this description we should have no apprehensions. Such men would not wish to "exclude" those who are already employed, whether they could fully accord with them or not. Their language would be, "Let there be no strife



between us, for we are brethren! Is not the whole land before us? If you will go to the left hand, then we will take the right; or if you depart to the right hand, we will go to the left." Nay more, their language already is, "GOD BLESS ALL MISSIONARY INSTITUTIONS! MAY THE WORK OF GOD PROSPER IN ALL THEIR HANDS!"\*

For our parts, observing of late years that Christianity itself was powerfully assailed, we have, in a manner, laid aside inferior objects, and made common cause with the Christian world. We have been less attentive to the things in which we differ from other Christians than to those wherein we are agreed; and to the best of our abilities have joined with them in defending the common faith. Our zeal has not been expended in making proselytes to a party, but in turning sinners to God through Jesus Christ. It was in pursuit of this object that we first engaged in missionary undertakings. We had no interest to serve but that of Christ. It was in our hearts to do something for his name among the heathen; and, if it might be, to enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom. Such also we know (as far as men know each other) were the motives of our brethren, the missionaries. And now that it hath pleased God in some measure to prosper our way, it is our humble, respectful, and most earnest entreaty . . . HINDER US NOT!

We ask not for any temporal advantage, any participation in trade, any share of power, any stations of honour, or any assistance from government; we ask merely for permission to expend such sums of money as may be furnished by the liberality of Christians, earned chiefly by the sweat of the brow, in imparting the word of life to our fellow subjects in Hindostan.

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## APPENDIX.

### RECENT TESTIMONIES TO THE CHARACTER OF THE MISSIONARIES.

Extracts of a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Sandys, (who, after twenty-two years' service in India, returned in 1804,) in answer to one addressed to him since the veracity of the missionaries has been called in question by Major Scott Waring.

"FROM my acquaintance with Messrs. Carey, Ward, Marshman, &c., before I left India, I feel a repugnance to answer the question on their veracity. I can believe that, as all men are fallible, they in some of their impressions and relations may have been mistaken; but, as to their veracity, I do not, cannot, dare not doubt it. I can also readily conceive that a common village tumult in India may in England be considered as a very serious affair; but an English mob and an Indian mob are very different things. A missionary may go with a small boat thirty or forty miles to a village market, sit down, converse, and afterwards preach. Perhaps some brahmin will oppose him. This introduces the Hindoo idolatry; and, while he remains calm, they will become vociferous. As he proceeds to his boat, the boys may be encouraged to throw mud at him; but no personal injury follows; and the missionary, as he is going away, may be asked by a villager when he will come again and hold conversation with his brahmin: but this is all.

"Having served at different times in various staff departments of the army, particularly in Mysore, under the Marquis Cornwallis, I had a great variety

\* See the Rev. Basil Woodd's Sermon, prefixed to the last Report of the Committee of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, pp. 175—178.

of people, of different castes, under my direction, and had a full opportunity of observing their customs and manners.

“I never heard of any thing worthy of being called a tumult or disturbance occasioned by the missionaries while I was in India, which I think I should if there had been any; and I do not believe that any of their addresses to the natives, either in words or writing, would produce any serious effect of the kind, provided there were no actual interruption of their customs. At the encampment near Surat, a Bengal brahmin seapoy (a soldier of the priest order) went to the river to perform his ablutions, and to say his prayers, according to custom, in the water. Another seapoy, of the Bombay establishment, going into the stream before him, at the same time and for the same purpose, muddied the water. As soon as the brahmin perceived it, he instantly left the river and ran to his battalion, calling out that he was contaminated and had lost his caste. The respective battalions to which the parties belonged immediately took arms, and, had not their officers exerted themselves with great energy and prudence, the consequence must have been dreadful; but through their interference the business was settled.—The Bombay seapoy might have said what he pleased to the brahmin *standing on the bank*. He might have inveighed against him in the most bitter terms, and told him that his caste was better than his: the brahmin, I believe, would have returned only a smile of contempt. It is not talking to them, or endeavouring to persuade them, but actual interference that will excite mutiny and disaffection. In all the instances of dissatisfaction that I remember, this has been the case.

“A little before my return, I and some others were in company with a Christian native, called Petumber, a very eloquent man. He told us that he had in preaching to his countrymen occasionally met with abuse, but that in general they heard him with attention. In crossing a river, he said, he passed one of his old acquaintances, a brahmin, who was washing, and praying to his gods, to whom he spoke of the absurdity of his worship. The brahmin only pitied him, and told him that with his caste he had lost his senses. Thus they parted without any thing like anger on either side; but had Petumber passed the stream above him, religious hatred and revenge would have followed. As to talking about religion they are fond of it: it is only when they are interrupted or contaminated that they are seriously offended.”

Extracts of a letter from WILLIAM CUNNINGHAME, Esq., late assistant judge at Dinagopore, on the same occasion as the foregoing.

“If Mr. Carey be accused of *falsehood*, and if I were called upon to state what I think of this charge, my sensations respecting it would be those of any ingenuous person well acquainted with the great Howard, had he been called upon to vindicate that philanthropist from the charge of *inhumanity*. I am as well convinced as I can be of any thing which is not the subject of consciousness, that Mr. Carey is totally incapable of being guilty of any falsehood or misrepresentation whatever.

“During the last two years of Mr. Carey’s residence in the Dinagopore district, he was well known, not only to me, but to all the gentlemen in the Company’s civil service in that station. He possessed, I can safely say, the cordial friendship of some, and the good opinion of all.

“In particular, I know that the gentleman who held the office of judge and magistrate of that large and important district had a very high esteem and respect for Mr. Carey’s character, which he showed by every proper mark of polite attention. And of that gentleman, the unspotted integrity and the merits as a public servant are well known, and have, I believe, been

acknowledged by every successive government of Bengal, from Lord Cornwallis's to Sir George Barlow's. While Mr. Carey resided in the above district, his conduct was uniformly quiet and irreprehensible; and, had it been otherwise, I, from my situation as registrar of the civil court of Dinagopore and assistant to the magistrate, must have known of it.

"After I quitted Dinagopore in 1801, my personal intercourse with Mr. Carey became more frequent. I had also an opportunity of becoming well acquainted with Mr. Ward, and knew Mr. Marshman, though, from this last gentleman's being more confined by his duties as a schoolmaster, I seldom saw him.

"I shall say nothing of Mr. Carey's *religion*, because it is not that which is the subject of dispute; but I will say that the unaffected simplicity of his manners, the modesty of his demeanour, his good sense and information, his unwearied industry, and the general excellence of his character, did, as far as I had an opportunity of observing, procure to him the esteem of all those Europeans to whom he was known.

"I also frequently conversed with Hindoo and Mahomedan natives, rather of the better sort, upon the subject of Christianity and the probable success of the mission, and they generally discussed these things with much freedom. As far as I can recollect, I never in any conversation of this kind heard Mr. Carey or any of the other missionaries mentioned with disrespect. On the contrary, I believe their characters were highly respected even by the natives, who, with all their faults, generally form pretty just estimates of the characters of Europeans who reside among them, and are by no means backward in giving their sentiments thereupon.

"Though I did not personally know the native converts, I can safely affirm, from my acquaintance with the character of the missionaries, that their testimony respecting those converts ought to be received, and that full credit should be attached to it. It is a most unfounded calumny to assert that the missionaries have received immoral characters, knowing them to be such, into the church. I am certain they would receive no such characters."

[The two following letters were published by the author in a separate form, at a subsequent period to the above; but as they form an appropriate conclusion to the subject, it is deemed advisable to give them a place in this Appendix.]

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PETITIONERS\* TO PARLIAMENT FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN INDIA: A LETTER TO JOHN WEYLAND, JUN., ESQ., OCCASIONED BY HIS LETTER TO SIR HUGH INGLIS, BART., ON THE STATE OF RELIGION IN INDIA.

SIR,—I have read with interest your Letter addressed to Sir Hugh Inglis, Bart., "On the state of Religion in India." Having been for twenty years past the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, the Society which sent out the present Dr. Carey and his colleagues, it is natural that I should be interested in whatever may affect the important question now pending in parliament.

The dispassionate, candid, and for the most part judicious strain in which you have written, sir, deserves acknowledgment. I have no hesitation in

\* By the title given to these pages, the author means no more than to express his own principles, and what *he conceives* to be the principles of the petitioners in general. Having observed, by conversing with several gentlemen, that the object of the petitions was understood to be something incompatible with the security of government, he wished, as far as he was able, to remove those impressions, and to give a true statement of what he conceived to be their object.

saying, it appears to me to come nearer the point at issue than any thing that I have met with.

Those gentlemen who assert that, "as the Hindoos and the Christians worship one great Creator, it is indifferent whether the adoration be offered to him through the pure medium of Christianity, or through the bloody and obscene rites of the Indian idolatry," you very properly deem incompetent to judge on the subject. The British legislature I trust will never so dishonour itself as to entertain the question whether the Christian religion be preferable to that of Juggernaut.

As to what you have written, sir, of an *ecclesiastical establishment*, that is not my immediate concern; but if it be so conducted as to "take a share in the conversion of the heathen," and do not interfere with the labours of those who are unconnected with it, it will be entitled to our Christian regards, no less than our undertakings are to those of pious episcopalians. The efforts of individuals and societies unconnected with the Establishment are those which immediately concern me, and a large proportion of the petitioners.

Many of your remarks on this part of the subject, sir, are candid and liberal. Your short and conclusive proof that "no danger is to be apprehended from these efforts, because no danger ever *has arisen*, though the practice has been going on for centuries, and during the period many thousands of natives have been converted," must approve itself to every candid and enlightened legislator.

It is here, sir, that I wish to offer a few remarks on your proposed regulations, and to state what I consider as the principles of the general body of the petitioners.

In order to be a competent judge of the question at issue, you reckon a man must be "free from enthusiasm, either for or against Christianity." You do not mean by this that he should be "deficient in a warmth of gratitude for the benefits of Christianity;" but merely that, while he engages in real earnest in the propagation of the gospel, he is not to be regardless of good sense and sound discretion. That there are enthusiasts of this description is very possible; but I hope to be believed, when I say that, of all the persons I have conversed with on the subject, I have never met with such a one. Persons whose principal attention is turned to the conversion of the heathen, and who are but little acquainted with its political bearings, may dwell more on the former and less on the latter; but I never heard such an idea as this suggested, that "we have nothing to do but to pour into India all the evangelical knowledge and zeal we can export, and leave the result to Providence." Many of the petitions have expressed a wish for all *prudent* and *peaceable* means to be used; and where this has not been expressed, I believe it has been invariably understood. It is not to *prudence*, sir, that the petitioners have any objection; but merely to *that species of prudence that would not scruple to subject, nor even to sacrifice, Christianity to political expediency*. Ought a nation, sir, to set up its power and temporal prosperity as the supreme end, and to require that nothing be done within the sphere of its influence but what appears consistent with, if not calculated to promote, this end? Is not this to "sit in the seat of God?" See Ezek. xxviii. 1-10.

Dr. Carey and his colleagues, sir, are acknowledged by the Marquis Wellesley (in a late speech, said to have been delivered in the House of Lords) to be "*quiet, prudent, discreet, orderly, and learned men*;" yet no men on earth are further from admitting such a principle as the above than they. We may be prudent without being irreligious. Dr. Marshman has proved that, if the British government be friendly to Christianity, it *will* by this in-

sure its own prosperity; for "whatever is right is wise;" but to befriend Christianity itself in subserviency to our worldly interest were to turn that which is good into evil, and, instead of "placing us under the Divine protection," might be expected to procure our overthrow. If God be what we are in the habit of calling him, the *Supreme Being*, he must be treated as *supreme*, or we cannot hope for his blessing.

You allege that "the ultimate conversion of these heathens depends, under God, upon the duration of the British dominion." That the British dominion may be the appointed means of enlightening the eastern world, as the Roman dominion was of enlightening Britain, is readily admitted. This may be the design of Providence in connecting them. It is also allowed that, on the supposition of British dominion being used for the amelioration of the condition of the natives, its duration is very desirable, and must needs be desired by the friends of Christianity; but I cannot allow the prevalence of the kingdom of Christ to depend on the duration of *any* earthly government. The duration of a government may depend upon its befriending the kingdom of Christ; but if it refuse to do this, deliverance will arise from another quarter. The great system of God, as revealed in prophecy, will be accomplished; *the nation and kingdom that refuses to serve Him will perish*.

I am persuaded, sir, that you have no intention to reduce Christianity to a state of mere subserviency to civil policy, and that if you perceived this consequence to be involved in any thing you had advanced, you would retract it. "I do certainly," you say, "go a little beyond Machiavel," who was for holding religion in veneration as the means of preserving government. Yet you speak of our being "bound as a Christian country to impart the blessings of Christianity, only *so far as it can be done with safety to our dominion*." Be assured, sir, I have no desire to endanger British dominion, nor the most distant idea that the labours of missionaries will have any such tendency. If they have, however, it will be an event of which history furnishes no example. But why set up the safety of our dominion as the supreme object, to which every thing else, even the imparting of the blessings of Christianity, must give way? If there be any meaning in our Saviour's words, "He that saveth his life shall lose it," is not this the way to ruin that very dominion you are so anxious to preserve? It was to prevent the Romans from coming to take away their place and nation that the Jews were persuaded to crucify the Lord of glory—a measure which brought on them the very evil that they dreaded.

Review, sir, your proposed regulations for confining missionaries to a particular *district*, and sending them away by a summary power upon proof of any evil consequences, not only arising, but "*likely to arise*, from their presence." Does not this suppose that you have *adversaries* to deal with, such as Shimei was known to be by Solomon; who, therefore, must be confined and watched with a jealous eye, and who require to be punished on the ground of mere apprehension? Does it not proceed on the principle that every thing must be subservient to political expediency? Why should you not treat missionaries as *friends* till they prove themselves to be enemies? If they *prove* to be such, let them be sent home at our expense; or let us be informed, and we will recall them. Of all the missionaries that have gone to India, how many has the government found that deserved the name of enemies? I believe not one. But their zeal, it has been said, may betray them into *indiscretions*. It may; we have never heard, however, of any such indiscretions as those of which military gentlemen have been guilty, in *cutting off men's beards and shooting their monkeys*. But allowing that religious zeal may betray them into some indiscretions, and this we do not

deny; yet let them be treated as you would treat a *friend*; that is, let them be told of their indiscretions, of which it may be they are not aware at the time. A few such words would go much further with these men than a jealous eye or severe animadversion. A *friendly feeling*, sir, in this case, is every thing. Supposé a missionary stationed up the country; he gives the Scriptures to those who ask for them, and preaches, or rather converses, with the natives (for their addresses are not harangues, but are frequently interrupted by inquiries). The Hindoos are attentive, and desire to hear more; but two or three Mahomedans, to whom it is almost natural to be of a bitter, persecuting spirit, are displeas'd, and get a letter of complaints written to government. If government be *friendly*, it will hear both sides before it judges; if not, the missionary will be immediately ordered away. Such, sir, appears to be the summary process which your proposed regulations would justify.

Why should imaginary dangers, unfounded in a single fact during the experience, as you say, of centuries, be made the ground of legislative control? Surely, sir, your apprehensions of "a premature shock being given to the Hindoo opinions," while yet you acknowledge that "no danger ever *has arisen*," must have been excited by the reiterated representations of those persons whom you reckon incompetent to judge on the question. Why should a course of disinterested labours which in every instance of conversion adds a cordial friend to the British government, even though it were, like the course of an apostle, to be now and then the innocent occasion of a local disturbance, be viewed with so jealous an eye? Out of nearly *five hundred* persons who have embraced Christianity by means of our missionaries, we fear no contradiction when we say that not one of them has proved himself any other than a loyal and peaceable subject.

If there be any danger of mischief arising from missionaries, it must affect *themselves* before it can affect government. In the frolic of the officers who shot the sacred monkeys, government does not appear to have been so much as thought of; it was their own life, and that only, that was endangered; and so long as missionaries stand merely on their own ground, receiving no favour but what is common to good subjects, (and this is all we ask,) it will be the same with them. If any danger arise, it will be to themselves; and of this, after all their experience, they have no apprehensions.

Some gentlemen cannot understand what we mean in our petitions, when we profess obedience to government in *civil* things only. We mean nothing more than to reserve our consciences for God, according to our Saviour's words, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." We have no reserves but these. Hinder us not in our efforts to carry into execution the commission of Christ, and we are not anxious about other things. We mean by obedience in all civil concerns as much as if we engaged to conduct ourselves in a loyal, orderly, and peaceable way. If it be objected that we are liable to act improperly in *religious* as well as in civil concerns—we answer, If our conduct, even in the exercise of religion, be injurious to the peace of society, we should allow this to be a breach of civil obedience, and have no objection to be accountable for it; only let us not be punished on the ground of mere apprehension, nor treated but as being what we are—sincere friends to our country and to our species. I am, sir, respectfully yours,

ANDREW FULLER.

## ANSWER TO AN ANONYMOUS LETTER FROM "AN OBSERVER," ON HIS OBJECTIONS TO FOREIGN MISSIONS.

I SHOULD not have thought it necessary thus publicly\* to notice an anonymous letter, had it not afforded me an opportunity of answering an objection to foreign missions, which has been more than once advanced—that of its *interfering with exertions in favour of our own countrymen*. I shall say but little of the gross misstatement in the letter,† as that my going to Scotland, in 1799, was to “witness the state of that country,” and to “concert measures for doing good;” that I did not “condescend” to halt, and preach, between York and Newcastle; and that “it cannot be said that one convert has been made” in foreign missions. Such assertions must have arisen from the want of information. My journey was merely owing to a kind invitation given me to go and receive the donations of a number of my fellow Christians, who were willing to contribute to the giving of the Holy Scriptures to a great nation which had them not, as all the country between York and Newcastle has. My excursion was not a preaching one, though I did preach, and that to the utmost extent of my power. If I had taken half a year, I might have stopped much oftener than I did; but then it is possible my own congregation would have reminded me that “charity begins at home.” Whether success has, or has not, attended foreign missions, the accounts which have been printed of them, so far as human judgment can go in such matters, will enable us to decide.

The only question that requires attention is, *Whether the spirit which, within the last ten years, has prompted Christians of different denominations to engage in foreign missions, has been favourable or unfavourable to the propagation of the gospel at home?*—It is a fact which cannot be disputed, that, within the above period, there have been far greater exertions to communicate the principles of religion to the heathenized parts of both England and Scotland than at any former period within the remembrance, at least,

\* This article originally appeared in the *Theological and Biblical Magazine*, 1802.

† The following is a verbatim copy of this singular communication:—

“REV. SIR,

“Various and costly have been the exertions made for the propagation of the gospel among foreign nations. However laudable this labour of love may be, yet very considerable blame is attached to it; since the probability of greater success was in favour of a region far less distant, and more deserving, if charity begins at home. The wilful neglect of so large a part of our own land is certainly unpardonable. It is true that many an expensive and fatiguing journey has been undertaken, from south to north Britain, which has been well repaid by that which has taken and is likely to take place. Yet you, sir, have rode post down to the Scotch metropolis, for the purpose of witnessing the state of that country, with a view to aid in concerting the best means by which good might be done; but neither yourself, nor others, who at least ought to have had more consideration, did condescend to halt by the way, either to preach or inquire into the truly deplorable state of ignorance and irreligion of that large and populous tract of country situated between York and Newcastle-upon-Tyne; or in your flight back again, to give one thought towards the reformation of Cumberland, or heathenish Westmoreland.

“If we may judge of the success which attended the labours of Paulinus, the first missionary sent into these parts from Rome, the most pleasing benefits would be the consequence, upon the application of proper means. Paulinus is said to have baptized, in one day, ten thousand persons in the river Swale, near Richmond in Yorkshire. The fair Otahetan, the filthy Hottentot, and cruel East Indian, have each been sharers in missionary boon, at the expense of many thousands of pounds, many valuable lives, and the earnest labours of pious and zealous characters; and after all this, it cannot be said that one convert has been made; when, in all probability, if a tenth part had been done in favour of our own nation, some scores, perhaps hundreds, would have been praising God and thanking you, which they might have done to all eternity.—That the time for the calling of the Gentiles may be fast approaching is the earnest prayer of one who is no director in these matters, but only

“AN OBSERVER.”

of the present generation. If I were to say they have been five times greater than before, I think I should not exceed the truth. Nor has that part of the kingdom to which the writer of the letter alludes been overlooked. And how is this fact to be accounted for? Will this friend to village-preaching unite with Bishop Horsley, and say it is the effect of political motives; and merely a new direction of the democratic current, which was interrupted by the Treason and Sedition bills in 1795? If so, we might ask, How came it to commence two years before those bills were passed? How is it that it should have prevailed, not so much among those Dissenters who took an eager share in political contention, as those who had scarcely ever concerned themselves in any thing of the kind? And finally, How is it that it should have extended to other nations as well as Britain, and other quarters of the world as well as Europe? But I suppose the writer of this letter would not attribute it to this cause. How then will he account for it? The truth most manifestly is, that the very practice of which he complains has been more conducive to that which he recommends than all other causes put together. It is natural that it should be so. A longing desire after the spread of the gospel, when once kindled, extends in all directions. The same principle which induces some to leave their native land, to impart the heavenly light, induces others to contribute and pray for their success; and while they are doing this, it is next to impossible to forget their own countrymen, who, though they have access to the written word, yet live "without God in the world."

It is very singular that the example of "Paulinus," (I suppose he meant Austin the monk,) who came to Britain as a missionary from Rome, about the year 596, and is said to have baptized ten thousand people in the river Swale,\* should be alleged against foreign missions. Allowing Austin's converts to have been real Christians, (which, however, is very doubtful,) according to the "Observer" there was "much blame attached" to his labours of love, since the probability of greater success was in favour of Italy; a country far less distant than Britain, and more deserving of his charity, which should have begun at home.

Unfortunately for this proverb, I do not recollect ever hearing it alleged but for a selfish purpose. Go and ask relief for some distressed object of a wealthy man. His answer is, "Charity begins at home." True, and it seems to *end* there. And, by the reasoning of this observer, his would do the same. So long as there are any sinners in Britain, we must *confine* our attention to them. A person of a contracted mind once objected to the exportation of our manufactures. "We have many poor people in England," said he, "who are half naked, and would be glad of them; and charity begins at home." He was informed, however, by a merchant, that to send our commodities abroad is not the way to impoverish, but to enrich ourselves, and even to furnish the poor with clothing, by providing them with plenty of good employment.

\* Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, vol. I., p. 132, 9th edition.





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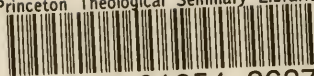
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