

FOUR TREATISES

ON

THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

PRAYER OF MOSES

DOCTRINE AND DUTY OF SELF-EXAMINATION

ON THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

TO WHICH IS ADDED:

*THE REVELATION OF
GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS*

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A SHORT DISCUSSION OF:

DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

THE GOSPEL, WHAT IS IT?

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ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR - TREATISES

THE Author of this little volume deems no apology necessary for its publication. It consists of four short Treatises on subjects connected with the eternal welfare of every individual of the human race; and the writer considers it to be the duty of every believer in Christ, to endeavor, by all the means in his power, to call the attention of his fellow-sinners to the glorious gospel of his God and Savior.

In the first of the following Treatises the writer has attempted—how feebly he is well aware—to point out some part of the Divine Wisdom, as displayed in the Mystery of Redemption. This is a subject of boundless extent—a subject too immense for the intellect of an angel to grasp in all its grandeur—but at the same time one which ought habitually to occupy our minds. In the Incarnation of the Son of God is displayed the immensity of the misery of man, as occasioned by the fall, by the immensity of the Remedy which was necessary to restore him to happiness. Here then we may meditate with profit, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, learn that wisdom which cometh from above.

In the second Treatise is attempted an illustration of one of the most beautiful pieces of Poetry recorded in the sacred volume. The Author considers, that a part of that Psalm, entitled "The Prayer of Moses," refers, not as is perhaps most generally supposed, to man's returning to the dust, but to the Resurrection at the last day—and he has accordingly endeavored to support this view by a reference as well to other passages of scripture, as to the context. May the remarks which arose out of the consideration of this Psalm, by the blessing of God, prove useful in establishing the believer in his most holy faith, and in showing to some poor sinner the freeness and the efficacy of that gospel which can alone enable us to live with comfort, and support us in that hour when the world, with all its enchantments, is receding from our eyes, and we are about to appear before the Lord of the Universe.

The third Treatise on the Doctrine and Duty of Self-examination, was originally published in the year 1806. A new edition has been repeatedly asked for, and the Author hopes that this attempt to enforce a most important duty will not be the less acceptable because it does not appear in a separate form.

The last Treatise is on the Faith of the Gospel; it was written many years ago, and is now published without alteration. It was the aim of the writer to remove, so far as he was able, that obscurity in which he considered this subject to have been occasionally involved—to show that the mind of the Christian ought not, in the Examination of his Faith, to be so much occupied with the manner as with the substance of his belief—to show that the gospel cannot be really believed merely speculatively, and that those who either trust to their Faith as an act, or to their clear views of the Nature of Faith, instead of fixing their attention on the great Object of Faith, are alike entangled in a grand and most fatal error.

Before concluding these remarks, the writer cannot but advert to the different characters of those into whose hands these pages may possibly come. It is a melancholy consideration, that the largest proportion of the people who live in a country where the gospel is preached, are borne along the current of life, forgetful of God, and regardless of eternity.—Such unconcern in a matter that regards their everlasting happiness or misery, is indeed calculated to inspire awe as well as amazement. Whether he engages in the pursuit of wealth, or enters on the race of ambition—whether he devotes himself to the attainment of knowledge, or surrenders himself to the allurements of pleasure—observe the eagerness with which man grasps at earthly happiness. And is it not astonishing, that while he knows death is approaching, and that a frail and uncertain life alone separates him from the unseen world, he can deliberately thrust aside the thought of eternity, as if it were possible to annihilate it by ceasing to entertain it in his thoughts. If men would act on their own maxims in regard to religion, they would at once confess that such conduct is irrational, shocking to common sense, and in the highest degree criminal. Does not this inconceivable blindness to his own interest, as it has been well remarked by the profound Pascal, prove the truth of Christianity, and show how strange a revolution has been wrought on man by the fall.

There are others who advance a step farther, and openly avow their disbelief in Christianity. It would be to little purpose to argue with those who triumph in their infidelity, and attempt, in spite of the secret warnings of conscience, to brave their Maker, and "rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler." But if we could imagine anyone who entertained doubts on this subject, and was yet desirous of information, we would direct him to that book to which all have access, and desire him to read it with attention, and then pronounce

whether it can possibly be a forgery. We would desire him to look at the long succession of prophecies, at the end of two thousand years centering in Jesus Christ: we would desire him to look at the life, the miracles, the discourses, the death and resurrection of the redeemer; we would desire him to look at his apostles, chosen from among the poor fishermen of Galilee, and commissioned to preach that gospel which has overturned idolatry, superstition, and the systems of false philosophy, wherever it has come: we would desire him to look at the history of Jews, and compare it with their present condition, scattered as they are all over the world, and yet preserved in a state of complete separation—and after looking at this standing testimony to the miraculous power of God, we would desire him to turn to the prophecies which are now being fulfilled, and observe the progress which the gospel is making—a progress which, like the advancing tide, may occasionally have appeared to be changed for a receding impulse, but which will certainly go forward till the knowledge of the Lord cover the whole earth.—We would further desire the man we have supposed, to look at the sanctifying effect which this doctrine produces in the lives of those who embrace it—and then we would ask, if demonstration itself ought to produce a firmer conviction on the mind.

There is another class of men, and it is to be feared not a small one, who do not altogether neglect religion, who profess to believe in Christianity, and who, notwithstanding, pervert and misunderstand the gospel. They are zealous for the cause of morality, and apprehensive lest the freeness of the gospel-offers of pardon should lead to licentiousness. They therefore erect for themselves a system in which they make salvation through Christ a sort of consequence attendant on, or at best the concomitant of, good, works. But they err, not knowing the scriptures. His honor God will not give unto another, and there is none other name given under Heaven whereby men can be saved, but the name of His beloved Son. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," (Heb. 11:6) and "Faith is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8) Until therefore we are endowed with this gift, no action we perform can be rewarded by the God of infinite purity. We may attribute our good works to God, as did the Pharisee, when he thanked God (Luke 8:11) on this very account; but if we do not come to Christ upon the same footing as did the thief upon the cross, we may rest assured that we are in some secret way flattering our pride, and building upon some "other foundation than that

which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. 3:11) "Oh the presumptuous vanity," it is well remarked by an eloquent writer, (Essay on Faith, by Thomas Erskine, Esq. p. 116.) whose words I am happy to quote, "Oh the presumptuous Vanity of men, who would dream of inventing a defense for the interests of holiness, better and securer than that which God himself has appointed."

It were an endless task to point out the different ways in which men pervert and misapply the doctrine of our blessed Savior. But the author is happy to think, that there are also many who receive the truth in the, love of it; who are not ashamed of the gospel, but are prepared to follow their Master through good and through bad report. Should the following pages be useful to a single individual, in awakening him from false security, in confirming his faith, in removing his doubts, in "stirring up his pure mind by way of remembrance," or in enlarging his views of the wisdom and glory of God, the writer will feel himself highly honored, and the object of this publication will be fully answered.

George-street, Edinburgh,

June 13, 1823.

TREATISE 1
THE WISDOM OF GOD DISPLAYED
IN THE
MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

THE most distinguished period in the history of Israel as a nation, may unquestionably be traced to the reign of Solomon. The boundaries of his empire, stretching over the whole extent of the promised land, extended from the border of Egypt to the banks of the Euphrates (Compare Gen. 15:18 with 2 Chr. 9:26.)—his extraordinary talents made him the object of universal admiration, and secured for his people the blessings of peace and prosperity, while his glory was spread over all the world. To this era, associated as it was with every circumstance of national grandeur, the descendants of Abraham have always looked back with the fondest emotions of regret.

But in no part of the history of Solomon—as we find it recorded in the word of God—is there a scene half so brilliant and imposing as that presented to our view in the account of the dedication of the Temple.

There we behold a young accomplished and illustrious monarch, by whose unrivalled wisdom and vast resources, a structure, perhaps the most magnificent the world ever saw, had just been completed, kneeling in the midst of his assembled subjects, and supplicating the God of Israel to take possession of his house. The Lord had promised to dwell in the midst of his chosen people; he had marked out the spot on which his temple was to be built; (1 Chr. 22:1, & 2 Chr. 3:1.)—it had been constructed according to the pattern communicated to David by the Holy Spirit, (1 Chr. 28:12-19.) and there was no room to suspect that Jehovah would not make it his abode. But this did not preclude the necessity of prayer. Prayer does not imply any distrust in the faithfulness of our heavenly Father; his promises must always be the foundation of our petitions, and the stronger our faith is, the more fervent will be our supplications.—(Eze. 36:37, James 1:6-7, 2 Sam. 7:27, Matt. 15:22-28.)

Of this the prayer of Solomon affords a striking and most beautiful example. He earnestly beseeches the God of Israel to descend and fulfill his promise to David, and at the same time he evinces the most perfect confidence in the faithfulness of Him who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He seems

to behold his prayer already accomplished, and the Lord of the Universe descending to sojourn in this world. No wonder then that Solomon, overwhelmed and transported with the thought, should exclaim, "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth." (2 Chr. 6:18.) We do not stop to inquire in what sense Solomon understood the words, which, under the influence of the Spirit, he was led to employ. We are taught that the prophets did not always comprehend the meaning of their own predictions. (John 11:49-61, 1 Cor. 2:9-10.) and that, on some occasions at least, they were commanded to be satisfied with knowing that the revelation of the divine purposes was not given so much for their own instruction, as for the sake of those who should live in after ages. (1 Pet. 1:10-12.) Certain it is, that this remarkable passage implies the expectation of that astonishing event—the accomplishment of which was reserved for these latter days.

That GOD should condescend "to dwell with men on earth"—that HE should assume the form of a weak and fallen creature—that HE should submit to all the pains and sorrows which mortality is heir to—might well excite the wonder and amazement of the universe. Truly it is a thing which never could have entered into the heart of men or angels, had not the Most High himself revealed it by his Spirit. And yet in this act of condescension—in the incarnation of the Savior—in God "dwelling with men on the earth"—there is a display of power and wisdom so vast and incomprehensible, that the more we meditate upon it the more shall we be disposed to exclaim with the apostle, "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." (Rom. 11:32)

It is the object of these pages to illustrate some of the important ends which were designed by Providence in "God's dwelling with men on the earth"—but in order that we may the more fully understand the subject, it seems necessary previously to notice a few of the intimations by which God was pleased to signify his gracious purpose, and to mark the accomplishment of the grand event.

Every attentive reader of scripture must have been struck with the repeated instances there recorded of the manifestation of God in human form.

On one occasion, Jehovah, attended by two angels, appeared to Abraham, and condescended to partake of the food which the Patriarch had prepared while

ignorant of the quality of his guests. The two angels proceeded towards Sodom, and the Lord remained, and revealed himself to Abraham. (Gen. 18:1-33.)

God afterwards appeared to Jacob as a man, and the name of the place was in consequence called Peniel; "for," said Jacob, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." (Gen. 32:24-30) Various other exhibitions of God in human form are mentioned, and in these was given a striking intimation that the only-begotten of the Father should be partaker of flesh and blood, and that God should in very deed dwell with men on the earth.

Again, God not only promised to be the King of Israel, and to dwell among them, but commanded a tent to be erected for his habitation. Into this tent (or tabernacle) the priests alone were permitted to enter. Besides other furniture, it had a golden candlestick, with seven lamps, which were constantly kept burning, and a table on which twelve loaves of bread were placed, which were exchanged for fresh loaves on the Sabbath. Solomon afterwards built the temple, which was the palace of the King of Israel, (1 Chr. 29:1.) and was furnished in the same manner as the tabernacle. In it the shew-bread continued to be placed, and the priests to minister. Here then was a palace built, food provided, and household servants waiting for the coming of the King of Israel, the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts (Psa. 24:10.) and thus it was plainly intimated that God was in very deed to dwell with men on the earth.

The same astonishing event was foretold by the prophets; and of this the context of the passage we have quoted from the prayer of Solomon furnishes a proof. God had sworn with an oath to David, "that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." (Acts 2:30.) Solomon entreats that this promise may be accomplished: "Now therefore, Oh Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him saying, there shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way, to walk in my law as thou hast walked before me. Now then, Oh Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David." But as if overwhelmed with the consideration of the magnitude of the promise, he exclaims, "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth: Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee:

how much less this house which I have built. (2 Chr. 6:16-18.)

Thus the accomplishment of the promise to David, that that should not fail him a man to sit upon the throne of Israel, is connected in the scripture, which "cannot be broken, (John 10:35) with God in very deed dwelling with men on the earth; and this exactly corresponds with the apostolic explanation of a part of the same promise, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sam. 7:14.) which is quoted as a decisive proof of Christ's superiority to the angels. (Heb. 1:5.)

Isaiah foretold that the virgin's son should be called Immanuel, (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23.) which being interpreted, is God with us; "unto us," says the same prophet, " 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, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. (Isa. 9:6-7.) "Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall lead his flock like a shepherd." (Isa. 40:10-11; compare Luke 1:76, with John 10:11.)

Micah at once informs us of the dignity of the Redeemer, and the place of his birth. "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Mic. 5:2.)

Malachi thus predicts the coming of Jehovah to the house, which as we have already seen, was prepared for him. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger (or angel) of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Mal. 3:1.) The same prophet having foretold the coming of the Messiah, under the title of the Sun of Righteousness, adds, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:" (Mal. 4:6.) and we learn from an infallible commentator, that this refers to John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Messiah. (Matt. 17:10-12.)

Such are some of the numerous predictions that God was in very deed to

dwell with men on the earth, which received their full accomplishment in Jesus Christ.—That Jesus united in his wonderful person both the Divine and human nature, we learn from various parts of the New Testament. The apostle John, after describing him as the Word, who was with God, and was God, as having been from the beginning, and having created all things without exception, as the fountain of life, proceeds, "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." (John 1:14.) Paul characterizes him as over all, God blessed forever; (Rom. 9:6.) as God manifest in the flesh; (1 Tim. 3:16.) worshipped by all the angels of God, seated for ever on this throne; the great Creator of heaven and earth. (Heb. 1:6, Heb. 1:10.) Many other passages might be mentioned, in which this fundamental truth is explicitly declared; but, as has been well observed, the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ is established, not merely by particular passages, but is so wrought into the whole texture of scripture, that it cannot be denied without destroying the whole fabric. (Dr. Priestly admitted, that were this doctrine found in the scriptures, he would not hesitate to pronounce them a forgery. What a striking comment on such passages as 1 Cor. 2:14, 1 Cor. 3:18; Luke 18:17.)

Thus were the predictions that God should dwell with men on the earth fulfilled in Jesus.—Thus did he, who stretched out the heavens as a curtain, and laid the foundations of the earth, by an act of condescension, at once unparalleled and overwhelming, stoop to enter this world, to be born of a woman, and appear in the likeness of sinful flesh.

And how was the Savior received? Was his appearance welcomed by the grateful hosannahs of the sons of men? Was he worshipped and adored as "God manifest in the flesh?" Was he hailed as the deliverer of mankind from the cruel thralldom of Satan? Or, at all events, did not the chosen people of God recognize in him their long expected king and prophet; and when they heard of his birth, did they not, like the Eastern Magi, hasten to present their offerings as the tribute of their homage? Oh no! He came to his own, but his own received him not; he was despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Here then we may see portrayed in living characters the wickedness of the human heart, and how it is led captive by the Prince of Darkness. Had the Son of God occupied a palace—had he, like Solomon, been surrounded with worldly pomp and grandeur—had he

employed that power by which he controls the universe in the exaltation of his friends, and the destruction of his enemies, he would have been admired and caressed. But he was meek and lowly; he not only assumed our nature, but was among men as one that serveth. (Luke 22:27.) He thus pathetically describes his situation in a world which he had called into existence: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Matt. 8:20.) He never courted the approbation of the world, but testified of it that its works were evil. He came for the purpose of delivering his people from the destruction to which, in consequence of sin, it is irreversibly doomed, and he poured contempt on all that it bestows on its votaries. He consequently appeared in the eyes of those who were blinded by the god of this world, as having no form nor comeliness; but in the midst of his humiliation, the moral splendor with which he was invested totally eclipsed all that is esteemed among men.

Nothing could more strongly mark the opposition of heaven and earth, than the birth, the life, and death of Jesus. His mother could find no room in the inn, his birth-place was a stable, and his cradle a manger. Here he lay in our world, unnoticed and unknown, while a multitude of the heavenly host celebrated his praise, and united in the rapturous song to which his nativity gave rise, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." (Luke 2:14.)

When he came to be baptized, his presence attracted no attention; there was no external pomp to distinguish him from the surrounding multitude; but his Father's eye was upon him,-and while the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape, and rested on him, the voice of the Almighty proclaimed him to be his only-begotten son, in whom he delighted.—With wicked hands men nailed him to the cross. Stripped of his garments, and numbered with the transgressors, the Savior was exposed to the gaze of the people: but the sun withdrew his light, and a veil of supernatural darkness shrouded the agonizing sufferer.

A stranger provided him a tomb; but the angels who had attended him through life watched over his body. A stone was rolled to the mouth of the sepulcher; it was sealed and made sure, and a guard stationed to prevent the approach of his disciples. But the angel of the Lord descended and broke the seal; his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and

for fear of him the keepers did quake, and became as dead men. He announced to the women the joyful tidings of the resurrection of the Son of God, and showed them the place where the Lord of life had lain.

Thus, while the sons of earth combined to pour contempt on the Savior, the inhabitants of heaven were always at hand to testify their profound veneration of him, who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

What then, we may inquire, were the ends contemplated in this astonishing act of condescension? Surely it was to accomplish no ordinary purpose in the government of the universe, that the Savior of the world left the throne of his Father's glory, and condescended to dwell with men on the earth.

1. One grand end which it contemplated was, to reconcile the unbending principles of the Divine justice and truth with the salvation of an innumerable multitude of the human race.

The nature of man is wonderful, and forms a link between the spirits around the throne, and the beasts that perish. Possessing appetites in common with the lower animals, he is capable of knowing, loving, and holding communion with his Creator. At once allied to earth and heaven, he was placed in a situation exactly adapted to his constitution. He dwelt in Eden, where, surrounded by the beauties of nature, and every object that was calculated to gratify the senses, his Creator revealed himself as the great Proprietor, to whom alone his homage was due. God granted him permission freely to eat of the trees of the garden, with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty attached to disobedience was death, and thus was Adam taught his entire dependence on God, for life and all its enjoyments.

Adam presumed to disobey, and God is not a man that he should lie or the son of man that he should repent: the word had gone out of his mouth that the wages of sin is death, and both his truth and justice stood pledged for the infliction of the penalty.

But the Lord regarded guilty man with pity; his rebellion was indeed inexcusable, but he had fallen into the snare of one who, glorying in the elevated rank which he once held in the scale of being, had said, "I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." He beguiled Eve by his subtlety, and imagined that he had completely blasted this lower creation, and forever alienated man from God.

And was it not so? Had not man subjected himself to the curse, and who could redeem him from death? Our first father was created in the image of God; but in casting off his allegiance he had at once lost the image, and forfeited the favor of his Maker. His children were begotten in his own likeness, after his image, condemned and accursed, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; (Eph. 4:18; Eph. 2:3.) consequently by nature the children of wrath.

Such were the awful circumstances in which Adam's posterity were placed. Truth and justice not only required that man should bear his merited punishment; he was also incapable of enjoying happiness. God is the fountain of joy; in his favor is life, but man had forfeited his favor, and rendered himself incapable of holding communion with his Creator. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Rom. 8:7.)

Light and darkness are not more opposite than God and sin; he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; (Heb. 1:13.) he sits upon the throne of his holiness, he pervades the universe, and his providence equally extends to the greatest events and to the most minute circumstances. Whither then should the sinner fly from his presence?—or where should he find a place where he may indulge with impunity his appetite for sin? "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them." (Amos 9:2-3.)

Whether then we consider the justice, truth, and unchangeableness of God, or man's incapacity of enjoying happiness, his state after the fall appeared to be completely without hope. He was neither able nor desirous of restoring himself to the friendship of God, and there seemed to remain nothing but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

Our first parents anticipated their doom, and when, in the cool of the evening, they heard the voice of God—that voice which they had never before heard but with feelings of holy joy—attempted to hide themselves amidst the trees of the garden. When summoned into his presence, they were constrained to

acknowledge their guilt; and while the Lord informed them that they should eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices, that they should spend their days in sorrow, and, afterwards return to the dust, he promised them a Savior, who should overcome their great adversary; and thus a door of hope beyond the grave was opened for fallen man. The woman had been first in the transgression, and was doomed to bring forth children in sorrow; but from her the promised Savior was to spring. He was then to be a man. But we are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, (Psa. 51:5.) every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man is only evil continually, (Gen. 6:5.) and was it possible that any individual of such a race could save his brethren? No, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. (Psa. 49:7.)

What then was to be done? Must an angel unite himself with fallen man—be born into our world, and save our ruined race? Must an angel make atonement for our transgressions, restore the honor of God's broken law, endure the curse under which we lay, and thus take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive? No, the highest created being is as much dependent on his Maker as the worm that crawls upon the ground. He is in the situation which the Almighty has assigned to him, and in it he must remain. He holds his existence at God's good pleasure, and has neither the right nor the power to dispose of himself. Were he to submit to the lowest degradation for the glory of God, he would but answer the end of his creation; he would still be an unprofitable servant, and his goodness could not extend to his fellow-creatures.

It only remained that God himself should undertake the work; that he should assume our nature; and that by a life of the most unsullied purity, as well as by bearing the curse pronounced on sinful man, he should magnify the law which we had broken, and thus open a way in which the righteous Governor of the universe might receive into favor all whom the Redeemer should acknowledge as brethren.

A body was therefore prepared in the womb of the virgin, and the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Although he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. During life it was his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father, and he offered himself to God for a sacrifice of a sweet-

smelling savor. Being in the form of God, he 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 humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. (Php. 2:6-8) No man took his life from him; he laid it down-of himself. He had power to lay it down, and he had power to take it again; (John 10:18.) he was a voluntary sacrifice; and thus did he restore what he took not away. God laid on him the iniquities of his people, and he bore them all to the land of forgetfulness.

Adam lost the divine image, and died as a transgressor. Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, was made a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin; he redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us; and by rising from the dead as the head and representative of his people, he proved that justice was satisfied, that he had made full atonement for sin, had brought in everlasting righteousness, and that all his people who, in consequence of their connection with Adam, are doomed to return to the dust, shall, in virtue of their union with Christ, be raised from the dead to the enjoyment of eternal life. Thus the debt was fully paid, and now grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

Adam's transgression procured the death of all his posterity, and Christ's atonement has procured the resurrection of all his people. The first man by his wickedness involved his whole race in condemnation; the second man by his righteousness secured pardon and acceptance with God to all his redeemed.

In human nature the divine authority was set at naught, and Adam by his disobedience poured contempt on the holy law of God: but in the same nature ample satisfaction was made for sin. Such was the dignity of the second Adam, and such, in consequence, the value of his obedience unto death, that mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embraced each other; and while the voice of the Eternal proclaimed that he had found a man in whom his soul delighted, and through whom his love could flow to our ruined race, the angels adored this fresh discovery of the glory of their Creator, and the heavenly mansions resounded with the joyful song; "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the

throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

But we noticed, that man was not only under the curse, but that, in consequence of the alienation of his mind from God, he was cut off from the fountain of joy, and was incapable of happiness. This is also provided for in the wonderful plan of redemption. The perfect reconciliation of believing sinners to God, is exhibited in the person of Immanuel, their glorious head. In him the divine and human natures are united. He is the Umpire, who lays his hand upon both parties. With him the honor of the divine government is safe, for he is over all, God blessed forever; and the interest of man is equally secure, for he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

The children of fallen Adam are born of corruptible seed, but in Christ Jesus believers are created anew; they are born of the incorruptible seed of the Word. (1 Pet. 1:23.) They are joined to the Lord, and are one spirit with him. (1 Cor. 6:17.) Their body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in them. (1 Cor. 6:19.) which they have of God. (2 Cor. 3:3.) The law of God is written in their hearts, and their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This communion is real, though imperfect; it is frequently interrupted through the influence of sin, but it is maintained by the supply of the Spirit which believers receive from their glorious Head, and God will bruise Satan under their feet shortly. Ere long they shall be completely freed from the body of sin and death; as they have borne the image of the earthly, they shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam; (1 Cor. 15:49.)I they shall be satisfied when they awake with God's likeness. (Psa. 17:15.)

Adam estranged himself from God, and all friendly intercourse between man and his Creator was apparently for ever at an end. But in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, born of a woman; in him was no sin; and the Almighty, enthroned as he is in light and purity, beheld with infinite complacency a man who delighted to do all his will, and who hesitated not to die an accursed death, that he might glorify his heavenly Father, and open a channel through which mercy might flow to the lost and guilty; through which the Creator might again receive the homage of his rebellious offspring, and might shower down on his once lost and ruined creature the blessings of his grace, the overflowings of the kindness of paternal love.

No sooner had Jesus accomplished the work of reconciliation, than he sat down on the right hand of power, as the great High priest of those with whom

he had taken part in flesh and blood; and having received honor and glory as the recompense of his sufferings, he became the medium of intercourse between God and man; receiving from the Father every spiritual and heavenly blessing, and communicating all the treasures of wisdom and love to his people, who are represented as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (Eph. 5:30.) All mankind spring from Adam, and in consequence of his rebellion are doomed to return to the dust. Jesus is the head of a new creation, the members of which are all partakers of eternal life; a life not derived from Adam, but from the Son of God, of the perpetuity of which his life is the assured pledge. (John 19:19.)

Hence believers are said to be dead; their life is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:4.) They are broken off from the stock of nature; from the tree which the curse of God blasted and dried up, and they are grafted into the good olive tree; they have become branches of the living vine, and through the sap and nourishment thus communicated to them, they bring forth fruit unto God.

Thus does God give to believers eternal life, and this life is in his Son; and for this purpose God condescended in very deed to dwell with men on the earth.

2. Another great end of this astonishing act of condescension was that a stop might be put to the progress of sin.

It results from the character of God, that all his works were originally good. Sin, however, entered the universe; but it did not originate with man. It had gained admission previous to his creation, it had proved the ruin of multitudes of the rebel angels, and by their prince it was introduced into our world. How awful are the effects of sin, how does it blind the minds of those who are caught in its toils! The angels who excel in strength, who stood in the presence of God, presumed to rebel; and although they immediately began to reap the fruit of their wickedness; yet, impelled by pride and alienation from God, they persisted in the desperate warfare; attempted to thwart the schemes of their Creator, and to tarnish his glory by the ruin of mankind. Thus did they sink themselves deeper in the pit of destruction, while, in consequence of their opposition, his character, who maketh the wrath of his mightiest enemies to praise him, shone forth with added luster.

Surely there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord. He that sitteth in the heavens, laughs at the puny efforts of his enemies to counteract his will; and while he speaks to them in wrath, and vexes them in his sore displeasure, his counsel always stands, and he does what he purposed in his heart.

Why sin was at first permitted we cannot tell. It was not owing to want of power, or wisdom, or goodness, in the Creator; but it made its appearance, it extended its influence to this world; and we learn from scripture, that one grand end which God had in view in dwelling with men on the earth, was to destroy the works of the devil, to arrest the progress of sin, and finally to sweep it from the face of the universe into that place whence it shall never escape to mar the beauty of creation, and shall only be recollected to enhance the glory of God and the felicity of all his obedient and intelligent creatures.

The scripture informs us, that this world was created by and for Jesus Christ; (Col. 1:16.) it was intended as a theater on which his glory should be exhibited, and that by the church redeemed with his blood, the manifold wisdom of God might be known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. (Eph. 3:10-11.)

We enter not into the question, How the purpose of God to put a final stop to the progress of sin by the redemption of fallen man is consistent with the guilt of Adam lying entirely with himself. To such a question our faculties are totally inadequate; but of one thing we are assured, that Adam was not tempted of God, for he cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. (Jam. 1:13.) Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world; from the beginning he has acted on a plan, originating in infinite wisdom and perfect goodness. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter. (Pro. 25:2.)

Clouds and darkness are round about him—righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne: (Psa. 97:2.) when the mystery of God shall be finished; in the great day of the revelation of his righteous judgment then all difficulties will be unraveled, and one harmonious song shall fill the universe. Great and marvelous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! Who shall not fear thee, Oh Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (Rev. 15:3-4.)

In consequence of this world being created for the purpose of putting a final stop to the progress of sin in the universe, by the manifestation of the Son of God, everything from the beginning was conducted with a view to this great object. Mankind were not created individually, but were all created, and blessed in Adam. (See Gen. 1:25-30, and observe how the whole human race are included in the blessing there pronounced upon Adam.)

Much has been said of a covenant made with Adam, according to which, after a certain term of probation, he and his posterity were to be established in the enjoyment of eternal life. But the scripture speaks nothing concerning such a covenant, and it is our wisdom to keep by what is written, and not to enter into speculations as to what might possibly have taken place. Had Adam stood fast in his allegiance, doubtless his posterity would have continued to enjoy those blessings which were bestowed on their head; but he fell, and involved his children in misery. This event, however, was not unprovided for, and before our first parents were expelled from Paradise, they heard the joyful tidings of salvation through Christ. In the mysterious providence of God Adam was ordained, a type or figure of him that was to come. (Rom. 5:14.) That which was natural, prefigured that which was spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46.) and as in Adam all his children die, so in Christ shall all his people be made alive. (1 Cor. 15:22-23.)

In Adam, formed of the dust of the ground, and made a living soul, we have seen all his offspring blessed with all natural blessings in earthly places; and in the second Adam, who is a quickening spirit, (1 Cor. 15:45.) believers are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. (Eph. 1:3.) As all Adam's children by his disobedience became children of wrath, and alienated from God, so by the victory of the second Adam, all believers are reconciled to God, and made heirs of eternal salvation. The first man returned to the dust, and drew after him all his posterity. The second man, the Lord from heaven, (1 Cor. 15:47.) communicates spiritual and eternal life to his people, and in his resurrection raises them to glory, honor, and immortality.

The Creation of all mankind in Adam afforded to Satan a great apparent advantage, in his attempt to ruin the human race. In consequence of this constitution, one successful blow proved fatal to the whole; by leading Adam to rebel, he brought all his posterity under the curse.

The devil perhaps imagined that the success of his scheme for the intro-

duction of sin into this world, was an earnest of future triumphs; but his career was suddenly arrested by the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness, on the throne of which a man was placed, to defeat the machinations of the apostate angel, to execute vengeance on him and all his adherents, and effectually to secure others from the risk of being seduced from their allegiance.

For this end Christ was born. He encountered Satan on his own ground in the world, of which he is god. Long had the strong man kept his house, and his goods were in peace; long had he triumphed over man! But in the fullness of time a stronger than he appeared, and the kingdom of Satan began to fall, like lightning from heaven. He assaulted the second Adam with temptation, but without effect; he stirred up his adherents to aid him in the contest; but they only did what God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done. (Acts 4:28.) On the cross Christ spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (Col. 2:16.) and having made full atonement for sin by his death, he rose from the dead, and sat down on the throne of his glory. Such was the reward of his obedience; as God, Jesus was equally incapable of humiliation and exaltation; but in our nature he had been despised and persecuted and crucified, and in the same nature he is raised to the throne of the universe. All things in heaven and in earth are put under him; angels, principalities, and powers are made subject to him. He is constituted the Judge of men and angels; the honor of the divine government is entrusted to his care, and he will allot to all their everlasting portion.

When the scripture foretold the bringing into the world the only-begotten Son of God, it said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Accordingly we have already seen that they waited upon him during his abode on earth. They accompanied him when he ascended up on high; they are now all employed as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation; and they shall attend him on that solemn occasion, when he shall come to execute vengeance on all the enemies of God, and to receive his redeemed into the full enjoyment of that kingdom which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Then shall take place the grand consummation for which the world was created; then shall the redeemed among men be completely conformed to their glorious Head, and Christ will present the church to himself, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such

thing. Then too will he turn the wicked into hell; the devil and his angels shall be cast into the lake of fire prepared for them; and those of the human race who rejected the message of reconciliation, who refused to touch the golden scepter which the King of righteousness and peace so long held out to them; who, blinded by the god of this world, neglected the great salvation, shall share the doom of him from whom they so obstinately refused to be separated.

Although the word of God gives us no information for the purpose of gratifying curiosity, and only speaks of angels as far as is necessary for our information, enough is said to teach us that the elect-angels, as well as the elect of mankind, are united in one society, under the Son of God. He is not only the head of his body the church, but the head of all principality and power (Col. 2:10.) and it appears that in virtue of their connection with Christ, the elect angels are now irrevocably secured from evil. The apostle informs us, that it was God's good pleasure to gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; (Eph. 1:10.) by Christ, to reconcile all things unto himself, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven. (Col. 1:20.) Hence the whole family in heaven and in earth is said to be named of Christ; (Eph. 3:15.) and hence believers are represented as having come to the new Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. (Heb. 12:22.) Thus the faithful, whether Jews or Gentiles, are not only represented as united in one glorious fellowship or society, but as intimately connected with the elect angels, who are also the subjects of Christ.

Thus we see creation divided into two great parts. On the one hand, all God's obedient creatures, including the redeemed of mankind, are joined in one family under Christ; and on the other hand, all the enemies of God, including unbelievers, are joined under the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. (Eph. 2:2.)

The warfare between the kingdoms of light and darkness is still maintained; but on the great day of Christ's second coming, the contest shall be forever terminated, all tears shall then be wiped away from the eyes of God's people, while his enemies shall be cast into everlasting destruction, and the smoke of their torment shall ascend up forever and ever.

Here let us pause to contemplate the omnipotence of God. Let us observe

how Satan was caught in his own snare. He had rebelled, and incurred the displeasure of the Almighty, and he attempted to involve this world in his ruin. He thought he had completely succeeded; by one act of disobedience the whole human race was alienated from God. Perhaps he dreamed of still extending his conquests; but the sin of man, of which he was the author, was the appointed means of putting a final stop to iniquity, of banishing sin from the universe, with the exception of that place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels.

Thus does God take the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. The schemes of men and devils for opposing his will are made subservient to its accomplishment. The fruit which Satan reaped from his victory over man was, that by a man all his plans should be baffled, and that from the lips of a man he should hear the irreversible sentence, by which he and all his associates shall be forever shut up in that prison whence they shall never come forth again to molest the creation of God.

Such then is another important end which was to be answered by God in very deed dwelling with men on the earth. By this means a final stop shall be put to the progress of iniquity in the universe; and not only are an innumerable multitude of the lost and guilty and ruined sons of Adam plucked as brands from the burning; but all God's obedient and intelligent creation are eternally secured in their allegiance, while sin receives its due reward, and shall never again be permitted to diffuse its malignant influence. When this glorious consummation is attained, the great end of the mediatorial kingdom shall be accomplished, and then the Son of God will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:28.)

3. God condescended to dwell with men on the earth, that he might exhibit his character in such a glorious light, as should through eternity increase the happiness of the whole obedient and intelligent creation.

In creation and providence we behold the glory of God, and the greater progress we make in knowledge, the more astonishing do his works appear. We behold the divine power laying the foundations of the earth, and stretching out the heavens as a tent to dwell in. We perceive the Lord's goodness in providing for the wants of his creatures; and amidst the ruins of the fall, we have ample proofs of his kind beneficence. But the plan of

redemption opens to our view a display of the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, knowledge, power, and goodness of God, which affords an inexhaustible subject of delightful contemplation to all the inhabitants of heaven, through the revolving ages of eternity.

God does nothing in vain, nothing merely for the sake of display. An earthly king may surround himself with his guards when there is no danger; he may display his power and wealth to his subjects for the sake of impressing their minds with admiration and awe; but the Majesty of heaven condescends not to employ such means for securing respect. His power is so immense, the glory of his character so surpassing, his works so astonishing, that they are amply sufficient to call forth the highest admiration of his creatures.

Some have spoken of the manifestation of the Son of God, and his atonement for sin, as if it had been intended merely to prove that God views sin with the greatest abhorrence. But the scriptures represent the death of Christ as necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice, independently of the effect which it was to produce on the universe. Man had dishonored God, had broken his law and come under the curse, and man must endure the righteous penalty. This we have seen was accomplished, and such glory was brought to God by the man who was constituted the head of the new creation, that it was a righteous thing with God, through him, to communicate eternal life to all his people.

But while the chief object of the manifestation of the Son of God, so far as the human race is concerned, was to satisfy divine justice, and to open a channel through which mercy might flow to sinners; God has, by the plan of salvation, given the most astonishing and glorious display of his character. He had evinced his abhorrence of sin in the destruction of the rebel angels, but in pardoning iniquity through the death of his only begotten Son, in bringing again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, an innumerable multitude of the lost race of Adam; in making the success of Satan's temptation of the father of mankind, the means of the final destruction of the arch-apostate, and the complete subversion of his kingdom; God has proved how vain it is to resist his will, and that with him nothing shall be impossible. He has revealed the purity of the divine character in a manner far more striking, than if all mankind had eternally perished, and appears at once the just God and the Savior, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long

suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin and that will by no means clear the guilty. (Exo. 34:6-7.)

Since God is the source of happiness, from the contemplation of his glorious character must spring the eternal enjoyment of all his rational creatures, and consequently every new display of the treasures of wisdom, goodness, and power, which are hid in God, must augment the happiness of the whole intelligent creation. This world is but a small part of the universe; had the Lord consumed the earth, and suffered all mankind to perish, the extent of his dominions and the number of his subjects, would not have been sensibly diminished; but he regarded us in our lost estate, he looked, and there was none to help, and he wondered there was none to uphold; therefore his own arm brought salvation to lost and guilty man. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, he made his soul an offering for sin, and thus he proclaimed to the universe that God is love.

So stupendous is the thought of God's dwelling with men on the earth, that eternity will be too short to unfold the mysteries of wisdom and goodness which are included in this event. The angels desire to look into it, it has long been the subject of their contemplation, and through eternity shall they admire the boundless riches of the grace of God in the wonderful plan of man's redemption. We speak of these things as children, we think of them as children, and this arises from the magnitude of the subject. But it required a subject of infinite magnitude to supply matter of eternal contemplation and delight to millions of the human race, and thousands of millions of those glorious spirits who surround the throne. Something new is necessary for our happiness, and were it possible for the grand theme provided by God for ensuring the felicity of his creatures to be exhausted, their enjoyment would immediately terminate. But since God has condescended to dwell with men on the earth, and has purchased the church with his own blood, provision, is made, ample and inexhaustible provision, for the growing enjoyment of men and angels forever.

Such then have been the consequences of God's dwelling with men on the earth, and they are worthy the divine character. On this foundation he has reared the building of mercy in which, as his chosen temple, he will forever dwell. Compared with the cross of Christ, in all God's other works we behold

but the hiding of his power; but in the redemption of fallen man, there is a height, and depth, and breadth, and length, both of wisdom and goodness which passeth knowledge, and which shall through eternity fill the heavenly mansions with joy and rapture. Still shall the question be asked, What are these which are arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands, and whence came they? And still shall the answer be repeated, These are they which came out of much tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. And the reply shall call forth the voice as of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. (Rev. 7:13, Rev. 7:15; Rev. 19:6-7.)

The depth of God's condescension in assuming our nature, shall thus be the means, not only of exalting millions of the human race to the rank of the sons of God, and restoring the interrupted harmony of creation, but of exalting the thoughts of men and angels to a height of knowledge, love, and joy, to which they could not otherwise have attained.

The day is not far distant when Christ appearing in his own and his Father's glory with the holy angels, shall swallow up death in victory; and the highest notes of praise shall through eternity arise to God and to the Lamb.

Such is the glorious consummation of the scheme of redemption. Such were the ends which brought the Majesty of heaven down to our world. The happiness of millions of immortal creatures of the race of Adam was an object worthy of the divine benevolence; but the astonishing plan of man's salvation has extended its influence "unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." and shall, through the ceaseless ages of eternity, diffuse love and light, and joy, through the universe.

TREATISE 2

THE PRAYER OF MOSES

Psa 90:14-15 *"Oh satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad, according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil."*

THIS psalm is entitled, "*A prayer of Moses the man of God*," and according to the ancient Jewish commentators, was written at the period, when God swore in his wrath, that the generation which had rebelled should perish in the wilderness, and not enter into his rest. (Num. 14:1-45; Psa. 95:8-11.) The psalm contains much internal evidence in favor of this tradition; for although it must ever be applicable to the people of God in this world, it is peculiarly appropriate to the situation of Moses, and of all who feared God in Israel, on that awful occasion.

Abraham, in obedience to the divine commandment, left his father's house, and dwelt in the land of Canaan, which he was assured should be given to his posterity. After the lapse of four hundred years, this promise was about to be fulfilled. The children of Israel had arrived at the borders of the land, and were commanded immediately to occupy it; but, discouraged by the report of the spies, respecting the warlike appearance of the inhabitants, they bewailed their hard fate, affirming that they would rather have died in the wilderness, and resolved to elect a captain and return to Egypt.

Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, in vain forbade the madness of the people. These distinguished characters would inevitably have fallen a sacrifice to their fury, had not the sudden appearance of the Divine glory overawed the enraged multitude. The intercession of Moses prevented the congregation from being immediately consumed; but he, who "is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent," declared that their impious wish should be gratified, and that their carcasses should fall in the desert.

Job, in reference to those judgments in which the righteous and wicked are indiscriminately involved, observes, "If, the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent." This was exemplified on the present occasion. Not only were the children of the rebels doomed to bear their iniquities during forty years in the wilderness; but Moses, and those who had withstood them, were included in the same punishment.

This must have been very mortifying to him, who in the strength of his God, and on behalf of his nation, had braved all the fury of the Egyptian monarch, and finally led Israel forth in triumph—to him who had gone before them through the midst of the sea—who had delivered to them those laws, which God himself had been pleased to dictate for their government—and had now conducted them to the borders of the land promised to their fathers. Moses was at this time eighty years of age, and had the certain prospect—if he should live so long—of remaining, during the next forty years, in "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water." Here then was every earthly prospect completely blasted; and if in this life only he had hope in God, he was "of all men most miserable." But "he had respect to the recompense of the reward." Many years before, he had "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. (Heb 11:24-26.) Such had been his deliberate resolution in the fervor of youth, when surrounded by every temptation; and he was not "of who those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

We know, however, with what intense desire Moses looked forward to the enjoyment of the "good land," which God had promised to Israel; but being disappointed in this, he cried to the Lord—like David, on another occasion—"Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." He was "perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed." When excluded from the habitation which God had promised to Israel, he exclaims, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. (Psa. 90:1-2.)

In the time of prosperity, the people of God are in danger of losing sight of the transient nature of earthly happiness. While Providence smiles upon them; while the Lord seems to "set a hedge about them, and about their house, and about all that they have on every side;" although they do not, forget him, they are apt to forget that they are strangers and pilgrims here, and that they hold every worldly comfort by a very precarious tenure. "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favor, thou hast made my mountain to stand strong.' (Psa. 30:6-7.) But God, who does not intend to

give his people their portion in this life, often deprives them of what they chiefly value, and, by drying up the springs of earthly joy, compels them to seek their happiness more simply in himself. He chastens them, in order that they may be "partakers of his holiness."

While, by this disappointment, the mind of Moses was directed immediately to God for relief, he exults in the contemplation of the divine eternity and unchangeableness. In all generations the Lord had been the dwelling-place of his people: from everlasting to everlasting he is God. Before the land of Canaan had been promised to the seed of Abraham, he had been the refuge of his people. He had preserved Noah and his family amidst the universal desolation occasioned by the flood. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, to whom Canaan had been given as an inheritance, had cheerfully dwelt in it as strangers and pilgrims, although they obtained no other possession than a burying place; thus proving, that they viewed it only as an emblem of the "heavenly country" where they desired to dwell with God. (Heb. 11:9-16.) And now that Moses and those who feared God in Israel, were excluded from the earthly Canaan, they could view him as their "strong habitation, whereunto they could continually resort," and look for happiness beyond death and the grave.

It was true that God had pronounced sentence of death upon man, but he had also secured the recovery of his people. "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." (Psa. 90:3-4.) Turning man to destruction, evidently refers to the sentence pronounced in consequence of Adam's transgression: (Gen. 3:19.) but God was not, on this account, less the object of the confidence of his fallen creatures; for while he turned man to destruction, with the same breath, as it were, he said, "Return, ye children of men." Immediately after the fall, he promised a Savior, who should vanquish the great adversary of mankind; and thus, while he shut up every prospect of happiness in this world,—declaring that in sorrow man should "eat his bread all the days of his life,"—he opened to the human race the view of eternal happiness beyond the grave. This promise was illustrated, both by the preaching of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, and by his translation without seeing death. (Gen. 5:24; Jude 1:14; Heb. 11:5.)

It might indeed be objected, that we see no appearance of the resurrection of

the dead. We commit the bodies of our friends to the grave, and in a few years they are reduced to dust. Thousands of years have elapsed since the death of Adam and Abraham and the prophets, yet their bodies still remain under the power of death. This affords a handle to scoffers, who treat the doctrine of the resurrection with contempt, and inquire, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The apostle repels their objection, by reminding believers, that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. 3:8.) In the psalm before us, from which the words of the apostle are a quotation, the very same argument is employed; and hence we conclude, that when God is represented as saying, "Return, ye children of men," or as it is translated in the Liturgy of the Church of England, "Come again, ye children of men," it does not, as is very often supposed, refer to his appointment that they should return to the dust, but to his promise of recovering them from that destruction to which they had been turned by his righteous appointment. In consequence of this promise, the sentence of condemnation, passed on fallen man, is no argument against sinners viewing God as their friend and dwelling-place.

In the subsequent verses, the frailty and mortality of mankind are described. One generation after another is swept away, as by a resistless torrent; human life is but a dream; all flesh is grass, which flourishes in the morning, and at evening falls before the mower's scythe: thus is guilty man consumed by the anger of God, and troubled by his wrath; (2 Pet. 3:5-7.) and thus, by the vengeance which he inflicts on transgressors, does he plainly demonstrate his abhorrence of Iniquity. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told." (Psa. 90:8-9.) "Thine own wickedness," it is elsewhere said. "shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." (Jer. 2:19.)

Whether human life was at that time shortened to its present date, we know not; but it is certain, that the tenth verse contains an accurate description of the measure of our days. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength, they be fourscore years: yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

The contemplation of the dreadful consequences of sin deeply affected the mind of Moses. "Who," he exclaims, "knoweth the power of thine anger?" And although the question did not admit of a direct answer, he observes, that our fear of God should bear some proportion to the displeasure which he has expressed at man's apostasy, and the resistless power with which he punishes sin. "Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." (Psa. 90:11.)

But, aware of the hardness of the human heart, he adds, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psa. 90:12.) The wisdom here spoken of, is, both in the Old and New Testaments, opposed to the wisdom of this world. It consists in resisting the allurements of earthly objects, and in seeking "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." In the book of Job, we have a striking description of the extent of human ingenuity, which enables man to surmount difficulties apparently insuperable, and to make himself master of the riches buried in the bowels of the earth. "But where," it is added, "shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" This inestimable treasure is described as the exclusive property of God, in whose works it shines conspicuous. In his word he has also revealed it to the human race. "Unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28.)

Moses prays that, by our experience of the shortness of human life, we may be directed to this wisdom. He proceeds—"Return, Oh Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants." (Psa. 90:13.) This does "not refer to his expectation of any change of purpose respecting Israel. The sentence of exclusion from Canaan was confirmed by the oath of God. This verse contains a request for the mercy of God unto eternal life. It is an acknowledgment of the wretchedness and misery to which man has reduced himself, and a prayer that" God may not cast his people off for ever, that his anger may not smoke against the sheep of his pasture." (Psa. 74:1.) The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever." (Psa. 103:8-9.) In the faith of this, Moses entreats, that although all our days are passed away in his wrath, God may hereafter view his people with an eye of favor.

This interpretation is clearly established by what follows. "Oh satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad

according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." (Psa. 90:14-15.) Moses, it has been formerly observed, was at this time eighty years of age. Like his ancestor Jacob, he felt that his days had been few and evil, and prays, that himself, and the rest of the people of God, might be made glad, according to the days wherein they had been afflicted; that they might be early satisfied with the mercy of God, and might rejoice and be glad in him all their days. (The expression, "Oh satisfy us early with thy mercy," exactly corresponds with the exhortation of the apostle, "Looking for, and-hasting to the coming of the day of God," 2 Pet. 3:12.) Certainly this does not refer to a present world. He had already passed the limit of human life, and knew that, during forty years, he must accompany Israel in their wanderings, unless previously released by death. Could he then expect much enjoyment in the land which flowed with milk and honey? No; like his great progenitor, he looked for a city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God. (Heb. 11:10.) By faith he beheld that land, the inhabitant of which "shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Isa. 33:24.)—he anticipated the period when death shall be swallowed up in victory when the Lord God shall wipe away tears from all faces, and take away the rebuke of his people, (Isa. 25:8,)—when the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads;—when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isa. 35:10.)

In the book of Job, there is a prayer which resembles and seems to illustrate the petition of Moses—"Return, Oh Lord, how long; and let it repent thee concerning thy servants." When contemplating the misery of human life, Job exclaims, "Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave; that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past; that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me." Here the patriarch anticipates a period, when the wrath of God against his people shall cease; when he shall remember those whom he has doomed to return to the dust. But reflecting on the improbability of the dead being raised, he inquires, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Yes;—as surely as God giveth a body to the seed which is cast into the ground and dies, so surely will he raise up the bodies of his people, (1 Cor. 15:36-42.) and, in the faith of this, Job answers his own question, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine

hands." (Job 14:14-15.)

Death is not the change for which Job was to wait; he refers to the renovation, which fallen man must necessarily undergo, before entering on the enjoyment of that happiness which God has prepared for his people. On this subject the language of the apostle is explicit. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump—for the trumpet shall sound—and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15:50-54.)

At the "appointed time," Job was confident that God would call, and that he should answer him. How exactly does this correspond with the language of the New Testament! "The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." (John 5:28-29.) "The Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. 4:16.) God turns man to destruction; he reduces to dust the human body, so "fearfully and wonderfully made:" but, in that day, he will "repent concerning his servants;" he will "remember" them, and once more have a desire to the work of his hands. "His loving kindness shall be declared in the grave, and his faithfulness in destruction." (Psa. 88:11.)

Moses, having prayed for the enjoyment of that rest, which "remaineth for the people of God," makes intercession in behalf of future generations. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children." (Psa. 90:16.) When the sentence of exclusion from Canaan was passed on Israel, God thus addressed them: "Your little ones whom ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." Moses entreats that this promise may be accomplished that when he, and the present generation, had gone the way of all the earth, their children might serve God, and behold his glory in the promised land.—He concludes: "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of

our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." (Psa. 90:17.) Moses, and those who feared God, had been in part involved in the sentence passed upon Israel. They were suffering under the rebuke of God, and the work which they had undertaken had for the present miscarried. But a period was approaching, when "the beauty of the Lord their God should be upon them?"—when the triumph of Israel over the nations of Canaan should be complete, and thus the work of their hands should be established. Perhaps, also—enlightened by the Holy Spirit to look forward to the new dispensation—Moses beheld the glory of God appearing to their children, in that astonishing display of his character, which is made in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of his Son. Perhaps he foresaw, how the perverseness and rebellion of Israel in the wilderness, would afford a salutary lesson to believers in Jesus, (1 Cor. 10:1-12, Heb. 3:7-12.) while his own faith, and that of those who united with him in opposing the folly of the multitude, would be exhibited for the imitation of the people of God in after-ages. (Heb. 11:27, Heb. 3:16.) Thus, in point of fact, has the beauty of the Lord been upon them, and thus has the work of their hands been established.

Such appears to be the scope of this beautiful psalm—such is assuredly the doctrine of the word of God. In this world, we must endure affliction; this is not our rest, "because it is polluted:" but those who have been taught by grace to apply their hearts to wisdom—who, in the language of the New Testament, have been made wise unto salvation, shall ever find, amidst the sorrows of life, a source of comfort and of joy, which the world can neither give nor take away.

The writings of Moses and the prophets are declared by our Lord, sufficient to instruct men in regard to a future state, and to render those inexcusable who seek their portion in this life. (Luke 16:29-31.) But Jesus has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10.) The certainty of the resurrection of the body is established by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and, as the "forerunner of his people,"—the "first-born among many brethren,"—he is gone to prepare a place for them in his Father's house.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible,

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season—if need be—ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire might be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:3-7.)

The dispensation under which we live, is very different from that under which Israel was placed. Moses indeed taught the same things to which our attention is directed by the apostles of Christ. (Acts 26:22-23.) But he taught with a veil upon his face. (2 Cor. 3:13.) In his writings, spiritual and eternal things were exhibited in types and shadows; but "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." (1 John 2:8.) The apostles "use great plainness of speech," (2 Cor. 3:12.) and, in reference to our superior privileges, thus address believers: "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest; and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that it might not be spoken to them any more,—for they could not endure that which was commanded—and if so much as a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake. But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." (Heb. 12:18-25.)

The curtain which overspread the invisible world is at length drawn aside, (Isa. 25:7.) and we behold our great high priest entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." We hear the songs of the redeemed, expressive of their gratitude to Him, who loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and hath made them kings and priests unto God. (Rev. 5:9-10.) We see our friends in Jesus, from time to time, joining the blessed assembly. We hear the voice of their Savior and our

Savior, encouraging us "not to sorrow as others who have no hope;" informing us, that the resurrection of Christ, attested as it is by the most infallible proofs, is not more certain, than the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (1 Thess. 4:13-14.)

We are assured, that the sickness which has deprived us of the society of our beloved Christian friends, "is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby;"—that believers, when absent from the body, are present with the Lord, (2 Cor. 5:6-8.)—that, when committing their remains to the dust, we are sowing the seed of a glorious harvest, (1 Cor. 15:42-44.)—and that our sorrow shall ere long be turned into joy.

Such is the "strong consolation," under all the sorrows of life, which God has given to those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." To believers it shall be "a morning without clouds;" for "the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended." (Isa. 60:20.)

It is impossible, however, to reflect on the ample grounds of consolation, afforded by the word of God to Christians whose friends have died in the faith, without adverting to the almost indiscriminate confidence, respecting the happiness of the dead, so generally expressed in this country (This is carried still farther on the Continent. In the North of Europe, the blessed Mr. _____ is, to this day, the common form of expression respecting the dead.) Nothing is more calculated to produce false security in the living, than being accustomed to hear all represented as having made a happy change on leaving the world. It is true, such representations are generally considered as words of course. The worth of the deceased, and the happiness which he now enjoys, are topics of conversation, perfectly understood between the relations of the deceased, and those who pay them a visit of condolence.

But they know little of human nature, who are not aware, that the frequent recurrence of such conversations must have a powerful effect, either in convincing men of the truth of what is so often repeated, or in making them altogether careless and indifferent about eternity

At first sight it may seem strange, that those whose attention is wholly engrossed with the things of time, should, on being deprived of their friends, become so confident of their eternal happiness. But when we recollect, that this apparent concern about a future state implies no sacrifice—no diminution

of eagerness in worldly pursuits; that those who express such confidence, run no risk of being charged with enthusiasm, or of being esteemed righteous overmuch, the difficulty vanishes. Man can never be wholly unconcerned about a future state; although, when it comes in competition with his worldly interests, he may practically disregard it, he is generally prepared to admit its importance. And when deprived of his friends by death—when every worldly prospect in regard to them is at an end—no wonder, that he should fondly cherish the hope that they may still be happy, and that when he shall be laid in the silent grave—when the bustle and the business of life are over, he may join them in the realms of bliss. In such a state of mind it is natural to grasp at the doctrine of scripture, and, by its authority, to endeavor to confirm his hopes.

But this is not all. A great proportion of those who profess to believe the Scriptures, consider Christianity as chiefly intended to promote the welfare of society. They are aware of the importance of something more than temporal punishments, to restrain the wickedness of man; and they see how powerfully the doctrine of a future judgment tends to produce this effect. They are also sensible that the dispositions, enjoined in the word of God, are well adapted to promote security and happiness among men. They view the religion of Jesus merely as it stands connected with the tranquility of the state; and hence the impatience and irritation with which numbers hear of any attack on Christianity, while they are ignorant of its principles, and completely mistake its object.

It is not to be expected that such persons should entertain any doubt of the happiness of their departed friends, who have been amiable and useful in society. The hope of happiness in a future state is congenial to the mind of man: it has prevailed in every age and country; and those who enjoy the benefit of Divine revelation, too often employ it merely to sanction their preconceived notions, as deists borrow the Divine attributes from the Bible, to render their systems of natural religion more imposing.

The erroneous principle to which we have referred, necessarily involves a total misapprehension of the doctrine of Scripture. The influence of Christianity in ameliorating the state of society, is doubtless most beneficial; but it was not to secure a transient happiness for the ruined race of man, that the Son of God left the throne of his Father's glory. It was to remove the

enmity of the human heart against God. (Eph. 2:10.) and to reconcile man to his Maker, (2 Cor. 5:20.)—to deliver him from this present evil world, Gal. 1:4.)—and by creating him anew in Christ Jesus, (Eph. 2:10.) to make him worthy of the inheritance of the saints in the blissful realms of light and of glory. (Col. 1:12.) Wherever the love of the truth is received, these effects are produced. Religion is then felt to be a personal concern. Its infinite and eternal importance to every individual is now perceived. It is no longer viewed merely, or principally, as it bears on society, by restraining the lower classes, and operating as a substitute for those principles of honor, by which, it is alleged, the higher orders are influenced. When a man believes the truth as it is in Jesus, he understands, what formerly appeared to him absurd, that a person may be amiable and exemplary as a member of society—that he may be an affectionate husband, a kind parent, and a sincere friend—that he may be a good master, upright in his dealings, and liberal in relieving the wants of the poor—in short, that he may appear to be adorned with all those qualities which are so justly esteemed among men, and may yet be living without God in the world.

So far from giving countenance to the expectation of the future happiness of all who have been useful members of society, the scriptures represent the people of God as a "little flock;" (Luke 12:32.) they exhort us to "enter in at the strait gate; for 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 the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13.) We are not only taught that those who commit gross sins shall not inherit the kingdom of God; (1 Cor. 6:9-10. Gal. 5:20-21.) but we are informed, that a man may be an able and eloquent defender of Christianity—may give all his goods to feed the poor—may be a martyr in the cause of truth—and yet have neither part nor lot in the salvation of Jesus! (1 Cor. 13:1-3.)

The man who is distinguished by his virtue and benevolence justly claims from us the homage of respect. Beloved by his friends—esteemed and venerated by the world, he has his reward. But if he has not learned that lesson which "flesh and blood" cannot teach—if he has not learned the utter corruption of his heart and its estrangement from God—if he has not been led to that river which flows from Zion, and where alone his guilt can be cleansed—then we may rest assured that there is something hollow in all

those actions which we cannot but approve. He may not be a hypocrite—he may feel conscious of rectitude, but all cannot be right. The heart is diseased—the fountain is poisoned, and the stream cannot be salubrious. The world is the portion of those who do not belong to Christ; and wherever the man we have supposed does not act merely from the impulse of natural good temper he is generally actuated by a desire to gain the applause of his fellow-men. In some cases a desire to have something "whereof he may glory before God," may be superadded, or even seem to have the ascendancy in the mind. But this, alas! is not the offspring of humility, and has in it an insincerity, of which even the man himself may be little aware. How beautifully is this melancholy truth illustrated in the story which is recorded by the Evangelist of the rich young man. (Mark 10:17-23.) Trusting in his unimpeached moral character—priding himself in the fancied purity of his motives—and eager to learn how he might most successfully pursue the career of what he esteemed true virtue—he came to Jesus and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. When Jesus recounted to him the commandments of the second table of the decalogue, he at once replied, "All these have I observed from my youth." He seems to have spoken the language of ingenuous sincerity. But who can fathom the deceitfulness of the human heart? None but the Divine Master, in whose presence the young man stood, could have at once stripped him of all his boasted excellence, and shown him that rich as he might fancy himself in good works, he was poor indeed before God. The Savior, we are told, did not repulse him as a proud self-righteous Pharisee—but looking on him with love, said, "Go sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor." This was too much to hear; he felt that his treasure was garnered up on earth, and he went away overwhelmed with sorrow.

Eternal life is in scripture expressly limited to those who "by faith are united to Christ (Rom. 8:1, 1 John 5:12.)—who know the true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; (John 17:3.) and this faith is plainly declared to be the gift of God, Eph. 2:8.)—this knowledge, it is positively affirmed, is not obtained by education, but is the effect of the teaching of the Spirit of God. (John 6:45.) According to scripture, every Christian has experienced a change of heart and character; (2 Cor. 5:17.) and without this change, which is compared to a new birth, the Judge of the world has declared, that none shall see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3.)

Such are the explicit declarations of the Word of God; and yet many profess

to believe the scriptures, while these subjects have never occupied their attention. To not a few, the doctrine of the necessity of a change of heart and character, produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit, appears enthusiastic and visionary. How come they thus to treat a book, which they profess to consider to be a revelation from God? If this be indeed the case, every part of it demands our most serious attention. It is at our peril that we receive only what we approve, and overlook the rest, as speculative and mysterious and unintelligible. The Bible is either all true, or all a fable. If it contains anything erroneous—anything superfluous—any false principle,—it does not proceed from Him whose wisdom is infinite. Human writings are imperfect: in them truth and falsehood are constantly blended; and therefore in perusing them, we must choose the good and reject the evil. But the scripture disclaims all imperfection; it asserts that the whole is given by inspiration of God; (2 Tim. 3:16.) and consequently, challenges the most scrupulous investigation, and the most implicit obedience.

It describes all mankind to be naturally alienated from God and under his curse; (Gal. 3:10-13.) to be lost; (Luke 19:10.) and without strength to recover themselves. (Rom. 5:6.) It assures us, that the death of Christ is the only foundation of the sinner's hope (1 Cor. 3:11.) and that every unbeliever, whatever be his character, is condemned already. (John 3:18.) It declares that the good news of salvation through Christ, is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, (Rom. 1:16.)—that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to those who are saved it is the power of God, (Luke 19:10.)—that the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, teaches believers, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Tit. 2:11-12.)

All in this country consider themselves Christians; but how many do we find who are strangers to the power of this doctrine who know not the value of Christ's atonement—whose minds are engrossed with the cares and pleasures of this life—who are "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!" They confess indeed that they are sinners; but they are not aware of their guilt and danger. Disregarding the declaration of Him, who has not only said, that the whole world lieth in wickedness, (1 John 5:19.) but that "although hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished," they comfort themselves with the idea that God is merciful, and that they are not worse than others. They are "willingly ignorant" of the destruction of an ungodly world by a flood,

while a single family was preserved in the ark. They know not, that "the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Pet. 3:7.) Destitute of the love of God, (John 5:42-43.) they can hear without emotion of the humiliation, and sufferings, and death, of Jesus, while angels delight to dwell on the wondrous theme. (1 Pet. 1:12.) Let such be entreated to consider their ways; let them behold the evil of transgression, in the cross of Him, in whose person the Divine and human natures are united. Let them there learn God's abhorrence of iniquity, and attend to the solemn question of Jesus, in the immediate prospect of his sufferings, "If these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31.)

Let us not think that any external reformation will exempt us from danger; or imagine that we can either atone for our past sins, or deliver ourselves from the dominion of iniquity. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." (John 1:29.) Let us look to Christ for salvation; "his blood cleanseth from all sins;" (1 John 1:7.) and "by him all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:39.) Trusting in his death for pardon and acceptance, we shall not be confounded. (1 Pet. 2:6.) The great Shepherd of the sheep was "brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant;" (Heb 13:20.)—thus God declared that justice was fully satisfied;—and, through the same blood, shall all his people be raised to eternal life.

Let us look also to Christ for that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12:14.) He, and he alone, is able to save us from our sins; (Matt. 1:21.) to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities. (Acts 2:2-7.) Let the life then which we live in the flesh, be by the faith of the Son of God; (Gal. 2:20.) let all our confidence be in him; for "there is salvation in none other; neither is there any other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:11.)

Depending on his grace, we shall be "accepted in the beloved." (Eph. 1:6) "Sin shall not have dominion over us." (Rom. 6:14.) "We shall receive the communication of his Spirit." (John 7:38-39.) "He will put his laws into our mind, and write them on our hearts," (Heb. 8:10.)—and, "being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we shall have our fruit unto holiness; and the end everlasting life. For the WAGES of sin is death, but the GIFT of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:22-23.)

TREATISE 3
ON THE DOCTRINE AND DUTY
OF
SELF- EXAMINATION

"KNOW thyself," was the maxim of the Grecian Sage.—It is a maxim replete with wisdom, and one frequently inculcated in the word of God. Conscious as we are of all that passes through the mind, we might at first imagine it to be impossible to be ignorant of our own character. But the more we reflect on the complicated motives by which our conduct is influenced—the more we are accustomed to "Self-Examination,"—the more shall we become convinced that an acquaintance with ourselves is one of the most illimitable, as well as the most necessary attainments.

It is comparatively easy to deceive each other. We may clothe the basest designs in the garb of perfect innocence—we may persuade others that our intentions are virtuous, and our actions regulated by the nicest sense of honor, when we are engaged in the most selfish intrigues. But we are also prone to impose upon ourselves, and it is a task of no ordinary difficulty, even for the best regulated mind, to trace all the secret springs which influence its determinations, and to penetrate that cloud, which raised by prejudice and passion, continually obstructs its view.

Such too is the natural darkness and ignorance of man—such the perversion of his will—that he is of himself incapable of becoming acquainted with his true character and condition in the sight of God. It is the Bible, and the Bible alone that unlocks to man his heart; but even the sacred volume itself remains in his hands a sealed book, until the Holy Spirit causes the lamp of truth to shine upon it, and unfolds to him the mystery of Providence.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, exhorts the gentile converts, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your ownelves: know ye not your own-selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" Although he had confidence in the Corinthians, that they were in general sincere in their belief, and members of the true church of Christ,—yet he felt that it was possible that they might be destitute of the faith of the gospel that they might have been imposing upon themselves, and were the objects of divine displeasure, instead of their "life being hid with

Christ in God."

It is a serious thing for the professor of Christianity to reflect on this possibility, but it is on this account the duty of self-examination is urged on him by the highest sanctions.

In endeavoring to explain and enforce this duty, I shall

- I.** Make some general observations on the subject.
- II.** Consider the end which we ought to have in view in self-examination.
- III.** Suggest some topics to which our inquiries should be directed in attending to this Divine precept.

I. Make some general observations on the subject.

1st. I observe, the commandment to examine ourselves, does not imply, that we may not be immediately sensible that we believe the gospel, and consequently have joy and peace in believing. The mind perceives, and is acquainted with all its own thoughts, judgments, and emotions. When we believe anything to be true, we feel that we do so; and we may know when we believe the gospel of God, as well as when we believe any report upon the authority of a fellow-creature. But let it be remembered, that even in the things of this life, we are apt to impose upon ourselves. The deceitfulness of the heart is especially manifest in regard to things unseen and eternal; and hence so many cry peace, peace! to themselves when there is no peace. One fruitful cause of self-deception in every country called Christian, is, that most men have been accustomed from their earliest years to hear what is called the gospel, and to acknowledge its truth, without understanding its meaning, attending to its evidence, or feeling its importance. We may be conscious that we believe what we deem to be the gospel, and yet be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. It is necessary, therefore, for all to examine, not only whether they believe something to which they attach the name of gospel, but whether it be indeed the gospel which they believe.

2nd. From the very nature of the gospel, as well as from the express declarations of God, we are certain, that the faith of Christ must produce sentiments, experience, and practice, peculiar to itself. The connection between faith and practice is uniformly declared to be so inseparable, that the latter must always exactly correspond with the former. The gospel of Christ is

described as a mould into which believers are cast; (Rom. 6:17.) and as the metal necessarily acquires the shape (Literally the mould or form of doctrine into which ye were delivered.) and impression of the mould, so will the conduct of the believer be regulated by the views which he entertains of the gospel, and of the display which it gives of the glory of Jesus. If these are just and extensive, he walks so as to please God; and where these are limited and erroneous, it will be manifest in his conduct and conversation. The character and deportment which the faith of the gospel always produces are minutely described in the scriptures, which are consequently an infallible standard of self-examination.

3rd. It is to be observed, that the duty of self-examination has been enforced by some in a different manner from that employed by the apostles. True faith has been said to consist of various acts of the mind. Some of these acts, it has been thought, are not peculiar to the children of God, but, may be exerted under the influence of natural principles, by those who are still in a state of condemnation. Great pains have in consequence been taken to distinguish with accuracy between common and saving faith, and persons have been directed to judge favorably or unfavorably of their state, according as they have exerted the saving, and not merely the natural acts of faith. The certain consequence of this must be, to lead men to endeavor to perform such saving acts, and to trust in these, when they suppose that they have performed them. The mind is thus diverted from Jesus Christ, from the glory of his atonement, and the mercy of God revealed in him, which is the only foundation of hope, to a delusive search after something else which may quiet the conscience; and thus a system of self-righteousness is established, under the name of salvation by faith.

Besides, nothing can lay us more open to self-deception. When instead of being engaged in contemplating the truth, our minds are occupied in considering the manner of our believing, we are laid under very strong temptations to persuade ourselves, that our faith possesses all the qualities of saving faith, and hence to draw our consolation. The scriptures show us a more excellent way. They do not entangle us in the mazes of metaphysical distinctions. They address the common sense of mankind; teach us what we are to believe, and describe the effects which the belief of the truth must necessarily produce. Thus, our minds are constantly directed towards the testimony of God, and a far more unequivocal test is given us by which we

may prove whether we believe the gospel.

4th. We ought ever to bear in mind, that we are extremely prone to take refuge in the opinion of others, especially of those who rank high in our esteem for judgment and piety. The opinion of others may indeed be very useful to the Christian. It is, however, often more important for us to regard the sentiments of those who are prejudiced against us, than those of our friends. This serves to counteract that natural self-love and partiality, which render us blind to our own defects. A Christian, in his intercourse with the world, often receives salutary reproofs from the remarks made respecting his conduct, not only by his brethren, but also by worldly men. But nothing can be more fallacious, than to draw comfort from the good opinion of our fellow-creatures, or to conclude, because they esteem us highly, that we are in the faith. Let us always recollect how little they know of us, how often they applaud actions for which our hearts condemn us,—a condemnation in which others would join, if they were acquainted with all our motives. This consideration should prevent us from reposing great confidence in the judgment of others. The caution is the more necessary, as there is a strong tendency in those who are weak in the faith, and especially in persons under recent impressions, to be very solicitous about the opinion of those around them; and it is to be feared, that many, by imagining that others entertain a favorable opinion of them, are buoyed up by delusive hopes, and hardened to their own destruction.

5th. The doctrine of Jesus is addressed to the heart, and never fails to affect it when understood and believed. It does not merely produce outward reformation, while the mind remains under the dominion of sin: it is mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought and affection to the obedience of Christ.

Many have spoken of the emotions and affections of the mind in religion, in a very unguarded and improper manner. They give them the name of animal passions or affections, a term which suggests a low meaning, and raises ideas of affections relating merely to animal life. This not only tends to confound things between which there is the greatest difference, but leads men to despise what should be the object of their warmest desires, and prejudices them against the vigorous exercise of the best affections. It encourages

formality in devotion, and is calculated to represent the religion of Jesus as a system of empty speculation, which does not affect the heart. (See M'Lauren's Essay on Divine Grace § 6, p. 432, edit. Edin. 1772) At the same time, it must be admitted, that others have run into a contrary extreme, and endeavored to work upon the passions by means very different from those employed in the scriptures.

In self-examination, therefore, we ought to attend to our inward feelings, as well as to the general tenor of our conduct. In this respect many have erred. While some have considered real religion as consisting almost exclusively in certain emotions of mind, without paying due attention to the conduct; others, observing how little the practice of some professors corresponds with what they profess to feel, discard the consideration of inward emotions entirely, and look only to the outward behavior. Both are in error. By attending to the workings of our minds, as well as to our practice, we are in less danger of being deceived. The one is a check upon the other. Our conduct may in many respects appear good, while it proceeds from a corrupt principle; and in judging of our feelings, without bringing them to the test of practice, we are ever apt to impose upon ourselves, and to cherish those feelings which give us pleasure, without considering whence they spring. It is only when our feelings and practice correspond, that we can have well-grounded satisfaction.

6th. We ought to beware of forming a judgment of ourselves by partial and detached views of our conduct. To this we are extremely prone. Ever ready to depart from universal regard to the ways of God, we are disposed to rest on some one action, or series of actions, as an evidence that all is well with us, and thus to flatter ourselves that we are in truth the servants of Christ. But self-examination must embrace the whole of the divine law, and the whole of our character, and consequently is not the work of a day, but should be our constant employment, although it is highly proper to devote certain seasons peculiarly to this duty.

7th. The evidence of our being in the faith is always capable of increase. We are not then to be satisfied with the presumption, that upon the whole the balance is in our favor, but to seek after the most decisive evidence. We are not to lull ourselves asleep, by saying we are right in the main, although imperfect in very many respects, and certainly weak in the faith; for

according to the evidence of this imperfection, or of our weakness in the faith, are we in danger of making shipwreck of faith altogether. (1 Tim. 1:10.) The more we are conformed to the image of Christ, the more decisive is our evidence that we are in the faith; so that the necessity of self-examination can never be superseded, whatever may be our attainments. Nor is there any danger of our being immoderately elated by ascertaining our progress; for in proportion as we advance in holiness, in the same proportion shall we be sensible of our pollution as sinners. The more we become assimilated to the image of the Lord Jesus, (1 John 3:1-24.) the more shall we be humbled from the consideration of the small advancement we have made; the more shall we condemn ourselves on account of our defects, and aspire after higher attainments. In short, the greater progress we make, we shall be the less disposed to admire or depend upon our attainments, for our standard of holiness will always be proportionately raised.

8th. The revelation of God, that his love is unchangeable, that believers shall finally and certainly persevere, and that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, is often abused to the neglecting or setting aside the necessity of self-examination. When lukewarm in our love, and backsliding from God, we are prone to quiet our consciences with such considerations. The saints shall indeed persevere; but we can have no evidence that we are of the number, unless we are abiding in the truth. (John 8:31.) It is written, The just shall live by faith; but if HE draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. (Heb. 10:28. The supplement, any man, in our translation, is certainly not only unnecessary, but improper. The apostle's words suggest no idea contrary to the uniform doctrine of scripture concerning the perseverance of the saints.)

It is indeed true, that nothing tends more to encourage believers, and to prevent them from fainting in their warfare, than the many assurances of support which are given them, and the hope derived from the purpose and promises of God, that they shall be kept unto the end. By these considerations the apostles uniformly animated the disciples. Thus Paul, writing to the Corinthians: Who shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord (Php. 1:6.) Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8-9.) God is faithful,

who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13.) We ought to pray in faith to the Lord, to hold up our goings in his paths, that our footsteps slide not. (Psa. 17:5.) But let all beware, lest they pervert this doctrine to promote carnal security. When we are departing from the ways of God, we can enjoy no solid comfort from his faithfulness: this shall be manifest whatever becomes of us; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself. (Psa. 17:5.)

The scriptures uniformly distinguish the saving operations of God on the soul, by their permanence. The children of God are not of those who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul; while those who receive the word with joy, but have no root, are manifested by their stumbling and falling away, being unable to endure temptation. Hence it follows, that whatever we have done or suffered for the gospel, unless we abide in the faith, we cannot be saved. Paul doubted whether all that the Galatians had suffered might not be in vain, Gal. 3:4; and he found it necessary to warn the Hebrews, who had taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, not to cast away their confidence, ch. 10:35.; and to fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of them should seem to come short of it, Heb. 4:1. We can only be saved by the gospel, if we keep in memory the truth. (1 Cor. 15:2.) None, therefore, can lawfully take comfort from the promises of God, that believers shall persevere, unless they are actually persevering, and, under the influence of these promises, working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Hence, in self-examination, the question is not, whether we did actually believe at any former period, but whether we are now in the faith of Christ.

II. Let us next consider what purposes and ends we ought to present to our mind in self-examination.

This is a consideration of very great importance. If we have not some specific object, we shall neglect the duty altogether, or attend to it in an indifferent and careless manner. Again, if we have a wrong object in view, we shall perplex our minds; or perhaps, by endeavoring by the performance of it to establish our own righteousness, lull ourselves asleep to our own destruction.

1st. Self-examination, then, is not calculated to quiet the conscience, to

banish slavish fear, or to remove doubts and apprehensions of our being unbelievers. To this end, however, it is often applied. A person whose heart condemns him, who has no comfort from the gospel, because he either never knew it, or has let slip the truth from his mind, is directed to prove the reality of his faith, by thinking of the duties he has performed, or of the change he has experienced. He is reminded of his past emotions and zeal. The instances of his exemplary conduct are recalled, and his present despondency is imputed, by the partiality, or perhaps by the flattery of friendship, to his modesty and humility. God, he is told, often, in sovereignty, that is arbitrarily, withdraws from his people, because they cannot bear uninterrupted comfort; but this withdrawing, or hiding his face from them for a season, is a proof of his love to them, although at such times their evidences are under a cloud. From those considerations he is exhorted to draw comfort.—Those who have in this way sought for comfort, or have witnessed its effects upon others, must have observed, that where the conscience is truly awakened, such reasoning rarely affords the smallest relief; and, should it be productive of tranquility for a season, it only resembles the repose procured by stupifying drugs, which does not refresh and strengthen the body. Such comfort seldom continues; it is but a deceitful calm, and generally precedes a more violent storm.

But if the remembrance of past duties and experiences should succeed and satisfy the awakened conscience, the consequences are likely to be still more dreadful. Such comfort is altogether delusive; it is truly placing confidence in the flesh. If our peace of mind be founded on anything in ourselves, anything which we have done or felt, it will always puff us up with pride. We may ascribe the glory to God, as did the Pharisee, (see Luke 18:11.); but although we acknowledge that divine grace hath made us to differ, yet, if this difference be the ground of our comfort, we are not building upon God's foundation.

When the mind is apprehensive of divine displeasure and its consequences, we have for our relief, the testimony of God, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from ALL sin; we are invited to draw near to the throne of grace for mercy, and are assured, that Christ will in nowise cast out the most vile who come to him. If this does not relieve us, God has provided no other ground of comfort, and we ought to beware of seeking such, either for ourselves or others. If this does not give us peace, it must be because we believe not the

record of God, because we are not willing to be indebted to free and sovereign mercy alone, and in such a state of mind, we need to be excited to fear and jealousy of ourselves, and to be called to repentance, not to be quieted in our unbelief and rebellion.

We have a beautiful description of the Psalmist's experience. (Psa. 77:1-20.) When in distress, he thought on God, and was troubled. He sought relief by calling to mind his song in the night, and communing with his own heart. But all would not do; still he questioned whether the Lord would not cast him off forever. At length he said, This is my infirmity; but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; I will remember the works of the Lord. Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of thy doings This relieved his mind; and in like manner, the believing recollection of the finished work of Christ, and the freeness of his salvation, will give rest to the most troubled conscience.

Here we cannot but observe, that persons of very opposite sentiments in religion, approach very near in their manner of comforting those who are distressed by apprehensions that they are not the children of God. Some, who profess to hold salvation by grace through faith, are shocked when they hear of persons resting their hopes on a well-spent life, or proposing this to others as the ground of their consolation; yet, when they find those of whom they have formed a good opinion, oppressed with despondency concerning their interest in the favor of God, how do they attempt to comfort them? By dissuading them from entertaining these apprehensions; by telling them they are too scrupulous and self-diffident; by representing their doubts as proceeding from excessive tenderness of conscience and as a proof that they should have a better opinion of themselves. Hence they congratulate them on these evidences of their faith, and direct them to their past experience as sufficient to remove all their fears. Wherein then do they differ from the openly self-righteous?—The one substitutes virtuous actions, the other the experience of the work of God on the soul, in place of the hope of the gospel. Both are equally contrary to the doctrine of scripture.

2nd. The object of self-examination, according to the scriptures, is to prove the genuineness of the peace and comfort which we enjoy.

Peace and comfort are the necessary effects of the gospel, when its meaning is properly understood, and its certainty deemed by us unquestionable. But

there is a false peace which may be mistaken for true. True peace arises from the knowledge of the atonement of Christ, and is always connected with deep and lively views of eternal things. False peace arises from indifference about eternal things; and of this we see enough in the world lying in the wicked one. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. (Luke 11:21.) Every man enjoys some kind and degree of peace, notwithstanding the misgivings and inward checks of conscience which he may feel. The sources of this tranquility are various. They may in general, however, be traced to erroneous views of the character of God, and of the unchangeable nature of his law. Woe to those who are thus at ease!—We ought therefore to examine whence our peace arises; whether from putting God and eternal things at a distance or from the cross of Christ; whether from slight and superficial views of sin and of the divine justice, or from a persuasion of the fullness and efficacy of the atonement of Christ; whether it has a sanctifying tendency on the mind, and urges us forward in the path of duty, however rough and unpleasant, or whether it disposes us to sloth, and to avoid whatever is disagreeable to flesh and blood; whether it leads us to watch unto prayer with thanksgiving, or whether it is maintained without our living near to God.

Thus we see, that while self-examination is not calculated to restore peace to the troubled mind, it is highly important in order to ascertain whether the hope we enjoy be scriptural. Without much self-examination, we shall not long continue in the possession of solid peace.

3rd. The object of self-examination, according to the scriptures, is to detect "the hidden evils of the heart."

Many fleshly lusts war against our souls. We are surrounded with snares, and are ever apt to be led aside; not only to fall into open sin, but to impose upon ourselves, and while outwardly walking religiously, not to be living to God—going on in cold formality, not mortifying our members, but in some secret, and perhaps unperceived manner, serving the flesh. By frequently bringing our hearts to the test of scripture, and comparing our spirit and conduct with the precepts of the word of God, we shall more easily avoid the snares of Satan, and maintain more habitually a suitable and becoming conversation.

4th. One great object on account of which self-examination is enjoined in scripture, is to increase our joy in the Lord.

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, (Gal. 5:22.) of the very greatest importance, and much insisted on in the word of God. The joy of the Lord is our strength. (Neh. 8:10.) It animates us in duty, and supports us under trials; it prevents the innocent enjoyments of this life from engrossing an immoderate share of our affections; it renders the pleasures in which the men of the world chiefly delight, insipid, and encourages us to devote our all to the Lord, in whose service we enjoy the greatest happiness. The abounding of joy in the churches of Macedonia, amidst great afflictions and poverty, produced rich liberality. (2 Cor. 8:12.) In proportion as we do not experience the joys of religion, while we practice the forms of it, we must be influenced by the spirit of bondage. Our obedience, therefore, like that of all slaves, will be as scanty as possible, and we shall be in danger of turning back to the world as our supreme good. The desire of happiness is the very law of our nature. We cannot, we ought not to endeavor to divest ourselves of this desire. Many do not seem to be aware of this, and of the vast importance of having the soul filled with joy in God. They even look upon it with a suspicious eye, as if it proceeded from presumption, and were inconsistent with that humility which ought to distinguish the disciple of the lowly Jesus. Nothing can be more false and unfounded, The idea can only arise from inexperience of the joy which flows from the gospel.

That there is a presumptuous confidence among some professors, who speak great swelling words of vanity about their joy, is alas! too manifest. But we are not on this account to contradict the whole revelation of God, which represents joy as an eminent characteristic of believers. Even under the comparatively dark dispensation of Moses, the Lord threatened Israel with the most awful vengeance, because, says Moses, thou servedst not the Lord thy God with JOYFULNESS and GLADNESS OF SPIRIT. (Deut. 28:47.) Paul tells us, that the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST, and exhorts his brethren always to rejoice in the Lord. (Php. 3:1. Php. 4:4.) We not only find believers described as those who GLADLY received the word, (Acts 2:41.) but continuance in this joy is declared to be an essential characteristic of those who are Christ's, Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the REJOICING OF THE HOPE, firm unto the end. (Heb. 3:6.)

If we have little enjoyment in the ordinances of God, we shall be very apt to attend to them in a careless, formal manner, if not to find excuses for

neglecting them altogether. There was little danger of the Psalmist's neglecting public worship, while he was glad when they said unto him, Let us go up into the house of the Lord. (Psa. 122:1.) There is no danger of our forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, when happy in the Lord, and expecting an increase of joy from fellowship with him and with our brethren in the observance of his ordinances. We are not apt to omit prayer, when our hearts are lifted up in the ways of the Lord, when we go to him as our exceeding joy, (Psa. 43:4.) and feel the privilege of casting every burden upon him. No; the greater our joy in God, the greater delight shall we feel in every part of worship. It is when departing from the living God through an evil heart of unbelief, when we have, consequently, no joy of faith, that we either neglect his worship, or hurry it over. Hence the earnestness of the apostle to increase the joy of his brethren, (1 John 1:4.) and hence the desire of our Lord to promote this holy temper in his disciples. (John 15:11.)

Nothing recommends the gospel of Christ to the world more than his followers being filled with joy and peace. Ungodly men are ever prone to mistake and misrepresent religion as productive of gloom and melancholy, and they have had too much reason for this from the conduct of many professors. We have every reason to believe, that the uncomfortable views of religion which so many entertain, arise from their not discerning the glory and fullness of the gospel, together with the carnality of their minds, which leads them to endeavor to keep their consciences at ease, while not living near to God. Hence they flatter themselves, that their want of comfort is the fruit of their humility, and that the joys of others are the offspring of pride, if not a mere pretence. It is no uncommon thing for Satan to be transformed into an angel of light, and to represent the genuine fruits of the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the heart not being right with God.

The joy of faith which is so important, can only be founded upon the truth as it is in Jesus, which alone can give solid peace to a guilty conscience. It assures the sinner, that, however guilty and abominable he may be, Jesus is almighty to save, and that he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance; that he has made full atonement for sin, and that his power, and grace, and faithfulness, are all engaged for the eternal salvation of EVERY sinner who trusts in him. When men are fully persuaded of the truth of this, it must give them joy; but this joy will always be increased by the increasing influence of the gospel on the heart and life. A person laboring under a

painful and dangerous disease, rejoices when a physician, in whose skill and probity he has the fullest confidence, assures him of recovery; but his joy is increased, when he finds the symptoms of his malady gradually abating, and the medicines which he uses producing exactly those effects which were foretold. This not only gives him additional confidence in his physician, but also convinces him that he has understood his prescriptions aright. Thus it is with the believer. The gospel reveals God as the justifier of the ungodly, and is therefore calculated to give instant joy to the believer, independently of the consideration of the effects which it produces on the mind. But as we are assured, upon the authority of God, that this gospel teaches all who believe, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; that it produces abhorrence of sin and delight in holiness; in proportion to our experience of these effects, we have additional evidence that we are not deceiving ourselves, but that it is the true grace of God wherein we stand. Hereby, says the apostle, we do KNOW that we know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3.) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we KNOW that we are of the truth, and shall ASSURE our heart before him. (1 John 3:18-19.)

If we are living near to God, self-examination will show us many things, for which we have cause to be deeply abased; but it will also manifest the effects of the truth on our hearts and lives. This is perfectly consistent with the most profound humility, which does not imply, that we are unconscious of what the grace of God has wrought in us. The apostle supposes that the Corinthians knew that they differed from others, (1 Cor. 4:7.) and the exhortations to holiness throughout the epistles, generally proceed upon the consideration of the distinguishing goodness of God to those to whom they are addressed, in having delivered them from the power of darkness, and translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son. Now the more abundant measure of fruit we bring forth to God, the greater evidence we have of his distinguishing kindness towards us. Accordingly, we find the apostles everywhere urging believers to press after an increasing measure of faith and joy, by abounding in every holy temper, and being ready to every good work. Thus, Paul exhorts, Let every man prove his own work, and then shall we have REJOICING in himself alone, and not in another. (Gal. 6:4.) God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister;

and we desire, that everyone of you do show the same diligence, to the full ASSURANCE of hope unto the end. (Heb. 6:10-11.) Thus, too, on reviewing his life, now drawing near a close, he rejoices in the manner in which he had acted: I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c. (2 Tim. 4:7-8.) And in the midst of his labors, and of the opposition and calumny with which he met on account of them, his joy in believing was increased by the consideration, that he had acted on principles diametrically opposite to the dictates of flesh and blood. Our rejoicing, says he, is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. (2 Cor. 1:12.) Peter exhorts the brethren to give diligence to make their calling and election SURE, by adding to faith, fortitude, knowledge, temperance, patience, &c. (2 Pet. 1:5-10.) He that keepeth his commandments, says John, dwelleth in him; and he in him; and hereby we know that he dwelleth in us, by his Spirit which he hath given us. (1 John 3:24.) Indeed, fruitfulness and enjoyment are always represented as inseparable.: If, at any time, we become slothful and inactive, not occupying the talents God hath given us, our joy abates in proportion to our barrenness, we grieve the Holy Spirit and bring darkness over our minds. On the contrary, by abounding in the work of the Lord, we at once obtain additional evidence, that it is the true grace of God wherein we stand, and receive a present reward in the increasing discoveries we obtain of the glory of God. Jesus said; If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (John 14:23.) He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. (John 14:21.) Thus, while the doctrine of Jesus gives rest to the conscience, it must ever prove a constant source of active obedience.

Upon the whole, it appears, that while our peace and joy must, in the first instance, arise entirely from believing the testimony of God, and can only be preserved by abiding in his doctrine, it is most highly important and necessary, as we would guard against self-deception, as we would correct what is amiss in us, as we would increase our joy, and consequently our activity in the Lord's service, that we closely and constantly examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.—Let us now,

III. Suggest some topics, to which our inquiries should be directed, while engaged in the duty of self-examination.

1st. Let us inquire how the gospel has affected us. Does it give us hope, while we regard ourselves as justly deserving of the wrath of God on account of sin? Do we see in it a reply to the accusations of conscience? Are these answered by the considerations of its truth? This is the first and necessary effect of the gospel, if we know what it means, and have received it, not in word only, but by the Holy Spirit, and in much, assurance. It is an effect, without which no other can exist, and upon the existence and degree of which, every fruit of the Spirit depends. But though this is first in order, it is never solitary. What other effects then has the gospel produced in our minds? I do not mean that we should inquire, whether these have been suddenly produced by it; but whether it has, either more gradually or immediately, wrought effectually in us, changing the objects of our pursuit, and the tempers and dispositions of our hearts. Many things, and these highly interesting, may be believed, which leave the heart as they found it. Not so the gospel of Christ; this opens a new scene to the eyes of all who receive it; it brings them, as it were, into a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17.) The things which formerly engrossed their minds now appear mean and contemptible, compared with those revealed in the gospel; and those things which were once considered as unworthy of their regard, now appear to be all-important. Being risen with Christ, by the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead, the Christian seeks those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, at the right hand of God, (Col. 3:1.) Begotten again to the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, he accounts himself a stranger and pilgrim on earth, and plainly declares that he seeks a heavenly country. Is this the case with us? Have the vast and momentous concerns of eternity, made all that is in the world appear vain in our eyes? This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4.) If therefore the world is not crucified to us, and we unto the world, by the doctrine of the cross, we have never beheld the glory of that doctrine, and are consequently rejecting the testimony of Jesus.

2nd. We should examine the general principles on which we act. Worldly men act upon a variety of principles; but they are all of the same kind. Pride influences one man, avarice another, and sensuality a third; but all men naturally pursue things seen and temporal. Christians too are placed in

various situations, and have originally different tempers and constitutions; but amidst all this diversity, their ruling object is one they all walk by the faith of those things which are unseen and eternal. Let us pause and inquire is this our character?

Faith works by love to God. Believers are constrained by the love of Christ thus to judge, that if one died for all, then all died, i. e. all endured death in him, the substituted sacrifice, for their sins, and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:14-15.) They consider themselves not to be debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh; they account themselves not their own, but bought with a price; and are the willing servants of their Redeemer, desiring to glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his. Does this description correspond with our character? What views have we of the character of God? Do we tremble like slaves in his presence, esteeming him a hard and austere master? (Matt. 25:24-25.) or are we destitute of reverence and holy awe of his majesty? The faith of the gospel produces the most profound awe and veneration of God. The believer views him as a consuming fire; (Heb. 12:29.) while, at the same time, he has boldness in his presence, and is taught to cry, Abba, Father! (Heb. 10:19. Rom 8:15.) The comforts of the Holy Spirit are ever found united with the fear of God.

What views do we entertain of sin? Does it appear to us a light matter? Or does the sense of it drive us to despondency or despair? In either case, we may be assured, on the authority of God, that we are not believing the Gospel. The Gospel produces self-abhorrence on account of sin, and that in the greatest degree. It gives a view of sin, so dreadful, as may well confirm every fear which the loudest alarms of conscience can excite. But it also stills these alarms, and produces peace, and joy, and lively hope in believers, without diminishing, in any degree, their sense of the malignity and awful consequences of sin. We remember and are confounded, and never open our mouths any more, because of our shame, when we know that God is pacified towards us for all that we have done. (Eze. 16:62-63.)

How do we feel respecting the restraints under which the law of God places us? Do we wish them to be less strict and spiritual, or esteem them rigorous and arbitrary? or do we account that all his commandments concerning all things, are right; that they are good as well as just and holy? Do we account it

our greatest happiness to yield them universal obedience? Do we esteem Christ's yoke easy, his burden light, and none of his commandments grievous? And does this appear by our earnest desires and prayers to know and obey the will of God, whatever may be the price? Or is there any part of his will which we know, and are not inclined to obey; or any particular subjects on which we suspect that we are not well informed, but which we decline to investigate from the fear of consequences? This shows either total ignorance of God, or at least a great degree of unbelief.

Again, we should inquire, what things chiefly occupy our thoughts, whether the things of the flesh or of the Spirit. They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (Rom. 8:5.) In which channel do our minds run?—Thus ought we not only to keep, but to examine our hearts with all diligence. But, as we are apt to impose on ourselves, when we judge merely by our feelings, and to imagine our minds to be, spiritual, while our conversation is carnal, we ought to inquire.

3rdly. How far we actually sacrifice everything to the will of God? Does our practice decidedly prove that we are seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Does our conduct plainly show that we sit loose to the world? Do our lives make it manifest, that neither the wealth, the honors, nor the pleasures of the world are the chief objects of our regard; that we are not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds? This is the certain consequence of holding fast the truth.

4thly. How do we employ the talents God has committed to us? Do we seriously consider what talents we possess, and do we act as those who must give account—not endeavoring, on the one hand, ostentatiously to display them, and thus to acquire honor for ourselves; nor, on the other, from sloth or false humility, neglecting to occupy them, because they are small and inconsiderable, or because they are of such a nature as not to excite the admiration of men? Do we conscientiously employ them with an eye to the glory of God?—This opens a wide field for self-examination.

5thly. How do we bear the trials which God appoints for us? Are we like the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke? Do we FAINT in the day of adversity, or fret under our afflictions? or do we DESPISE the chastening of the Lord; with a sullen and stoical firmness braving distress, and steeling our minds to

disappointment? It is the characteristic of the believer to glory even in tribulations, (Rom. 5:3.) to account them light and temporary, not worthy to be compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory for which these afflictions are preparing him. (2 Cor. 4:17-18.) The language of faith, therefore, will always be, The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it? The believer, knowing that all things shall work together for good to those who love God, in everything gives thanks (1 Thess. 5:18.) He has learned, in whatever state he is, therewith to be content. (Php. 4:11.) His soul is as a weaned child (Psa. 131:2.) While he may keenly feel the rod of his heavenly Father; while he is, it may be, in heaviness through manifold temptations, yet he greatly rejoices, adding fortitude and patience to faith.

6thly. How do we act towards our brethren of men? If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 John 4:20.) Do we consider Christ as our great pattern, whom we are bound to imitate in doing good to all men as we have opportunity, and especially to those of the household of faith? Do we really love the disciples of Jesus; do we esteem them the excellent of the earth; do we associate with them, and testify our love to them by every act of kindness in our power. (1 John 3:14.) Nothing ascertains character more than the company with whom we delight to associate. We must needs go out of the world, were we altogether to avoid the ungodly. But their society is not to a Christian a matter of choice and satisfaction. He is aware of the danger to which it exposes him, and is ever fearful and watchful of its effects.

How are we affected by the sin and misery we witness around us? Are we grieved at the dishonor done to God? Do we endeavor to turn transgressors from the error of their ways? And do we study to increase the sum of human happiness, by embracing every opportunity of relieving misery, of doing good to all men, our rivals and enemies not excepted? Do we visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and relieve them, especially the Lord's people? "If" says an apostle, "these things be in you and abound, they make you neither to be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." (2 Pet. 1:8-9.)

Many other subjects of self-examination might be mentioned; but they may

in general be referred to some of the above particulars. I shall only add that, without much prayer to God and confidence in him, we shall neither perform this, nor any other duty, in a profitable manner. Without these, we shall either neglect it altogether, or else impose upon ourselves through the deceitfulness of our hearts. If self-examination be properly conducted, the result will always be a deep sense of our sinfulness and a growing conviction of our constant need of pardoning mercy. This must be the case with the most zealous, circumspect, and conscientious. The more we are convinced of the reasonableness, and struck with the wisdom and excellence of the commandments of Christ, and the more we know of the happiness of those who obey them, the more severely shall we condemn ourselves, and lament that we have not hitherto regarded them as we ought.

If, on self-examination, we have reason to conclude, or if we suspect, that we are not in the faith, it is our present duty to believe in Jesus who died for the ungodly, and confidently to trust in him for salvation. Nothing we can do or suffer, can prepare us better for receiving the testimony of God. Salvation is proclaimed to men as sinners. The gospel is addressed to all, in the circumstances in which it finds them. We cannot indeed enjoy the blessings it conveys without faith; but we need no other qualification for divine mercy but guilt and wretchedness; and if we dream that we do, or that we shall ever, possess any other, we deceive ourselves. It is only pride and the love of sin, with the blindness and error inseparable from them, which prevent all men from gladly receiving the gospel. They desire to have something whereof to glory; they wish to feel something which shall warrant them to believe. But in so doing they err, not knowing their own character, nor the grace of God.

Do some object, "We cannot believe; faith is the gift of God; no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him?" This is true, and, properly understood, what every Christian must feel and believe. But many, it is to be feared, misapprehend and wrest these scriptures to their own destruction. They lament their own inability as if it were their misfortune, and not their crime; and then they quiet their consciences, considering the uneasiness they feel, as an evidence that there is some good thing in them towards God, and that in due time all will be well.

But in what does this inability consist? We can receive the testimony of men; we conduct ourselves every hour by faith in human veracity; and why can we

not receive the testimony of God? Is it less weighty or more questionable? Are we laid under an invincible necessity to account the God of truth a liar? No; but his gospel pours contempt on all to which we are attached; it shocks the pride of the human heart; it describes our righteousness as filthy rags, and proclaims salvation to the most sober and decent, On the same terms as to the murderer and the sensualist; it acknowledges no difference among men as a recommendation to divine mercy. (Rom. 3:22.) Thus it levels all human glory, and cuts off all occasion of boasting, Hence Christ is a stumbling-block and rock of offence, and Satan, in the form of an angel of light, suggests to those who are blinded by him, that as this doctrine confounds all moral distinctions, and depreciates human virtue, it cannot be of God.

Add to this, the gospel makes no provision for the lusts of the flesh or of the mind. It spares not a right eye nor a right hand, but proclaims complete deliverance from all sin. This salvation is not future, but present. Now, to suppose an ungodly man truly desirous of being made holy, is to suppose that he loves holiness, which the scriptures uniformly deny. If then a sinner's inability to believe consists in pride and the love of iniquity, it is plain that so far from being an alleviation, it is the greatest aggravation of unbelief. The carnal mind is enmity against God; and therefore cannot be subject to the law of God. (Rom. 8:7.) Yet this God, to whom men are enemies, pitying their ruined condition, has given his Son to die for sinners, and beseeches them to turn to him and live. But they cannot think of it; they cannot find in their hearts to be reconciled to God; and they quiet their consciences by alleging, "I am tempted of God; he but tantalizes me; I am unable to believe."

When men object, that they cannot believe, and that faith is the gift of God, their ideas are altogether different from what is meant in the scriptures by these declarations. We naturally consider faith as something which is to recommend us to the favor of God. However blinded the human mind may be, few are able to persuade themselves, that they can fully keep his holy law. They think they can do something, but not quite enough, and they go about to establish their own righteousness under the name of faith, which, though an imperfect, they consider to be an acceptable obedience. If their consciences, however, still continue uneasy, they take shelter in the delusion that they must wait till God give them faith. Such have yet to learn that they are utterly lost and ruined; and till they see this to be the case, the preaching of the cross must appear to them foolishness. In the mean time, they dream of doing what

they can, that they may obtain faith, and thus attempt to purchase the blessings of salvation. But unbelievers are never required in the scriptures to use means to believe. This would in fact be a contradiction to the whole gospel. It would be a commandment to men to go about to establish their own righteousness to endeavor to reconcile God to them; as if he were their enemy, while they were desirous of his friendship.

We are taught in the gospel, that we can do nothing, more or less, to procure the favor of God; that we are destitute of every good disposition; that our hearts are filled with enmity against him; and that the only bar to our being reconciled, is our aversion to reconciliation. He commands every creature to place confidence in the finished work of Christ, which he has declared to be all-sufficient for the remission of sins of the deepest dye; and so long as men disobey this commandment, they plainly show, whatever their profession may be, that they love the darkness more than the light, that they hate both Christ and his Father. Eternal life is preached to all, as a free gift through Jesus Christ; and those who reject it, plainly show, that they prefer the gratification of their pride and evil passions, to the enjoyment of the blessings of the salvation of Christ.

Through the deceitfulness of the human heart, many who do not believe, imagine that they desire to be delivered from sin. But if the power of sin: in the heart be such as the scriptures uniformly assert; if men are completely under its dominion, ungodly, and without strength, till Christ sets them free; and if he only that believeth is thus delivered by Christ, then it is absurd to suppose, that any unbeliever truly desires salvation. He may wish to be freed from some particular sin which exposes him to inconvenience; but the dominion of iniquity is so firmly established in his heart, that he cannot possibly desire to be delivered from his bondage, which consists entirely in his depraved inclinations.

Some suppose that to call in question their own state is a rejection of the testimony of God, and thus set aside all self-examination. To doubt their eternal salvation, is according to them, to make God a liar. But God has not testified to any individual that he shall be saved. His testimony is true, whether men believe it or not, that he who BELIEVETH in Jesus Christ shall never perish, but shall have eternal life. Hence the necessity of inquiring, Am I in the faith?

Others, who do not go so far, too easily admit, that any suspicions concerning their state are temptations, of which they endeavor to get rid as soon as possible. But let such remember, that their apprehensions may be perfectly well founded. As far as their conduct and conversation do not correspond with what the scriptures declare to be inseparable from the belief of the truth, they have reason to doubt, to search and try their ways. All doubts of our personal interest in Christ, it is true, have their origin in unbelief. If we were fully persuaded of the truth of the gospel, if our eyes were always fixed upon it, if we always clearly perceived the glorious fullness and freeness of the salvation of Christ, we should constantly rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and we should also be proportionately sanctified by the truth, be fruitful in every good work, and thus possess the full assurance of the hope which God hath published in the gospel. It is owing to our not discerning the glory of this doctrine, that we at any time stand in doubt of our obtaining eternal blessedness. But we shall not improve our situation, by imposing on ourselves, and concluding, without reason and evidence, that notwithstanding our uneasiness, all is well with us. We should consider these doubts as the symptoms of some internal disorder; and we have at all times an almighty Physician, to whom we may with confidence apply, whose skill is equal to the most desperate case; believing in whom, no sinner of the human race shall ever perish, but shall undoubtedly obtain eternal life.

TREATISE 4

ON THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

"He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ," saith the apostle John, "is born of God" This declaration can only be denied by those who reject the scriptures altogether But many profess that Jesus is the Christ, write with great clearness on the accomplishment of prophecy, and the various external evidences of his mission, nay, celebrate the excellence of his doctrine and precepts, who yet manifest themselves not to be his disciples. In order to account for these appearances, it has been supposed that there are two kinds of faith, one saving and divine, the other merely speculative;

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 labored 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 to 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. The word of God, on the contrary, dwells on what we are to believe and so far from giving us reason to conclude, that saving faith is something else than belief of the saving truth, it asserts the contrary in the strongest terms. That ever there should have been any dispute on the subject, would no doubt appear very extraordinary to one who was taught of God, and had never read any book on divinity but the Bible. Good men have been laid under temptation to deviate from the doctrine of scripture on this subject, by the outcry raised ever since Paul's time, that faith makes void the law. (They have found that the gospel appears far less offensive, if the faith that saves us is represented to be something very different from giving credit to a testimony. The world in general accounts it reasonable that good people should be the peculiar favorites of Heaven; The offence of the cross chiefly consists in all men being addressed as equally lost, ruined, and undone; in a righteousness being revealed unto all and upon all them that believe, making no difference between the sober and decent and those who are openly profane. (Rom. 3:22-23.) It consists in the righteousness of faith speaking on

this wise. "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend up into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 3:22-23.) Now this offence will be greatly done away, if we declare, that by faith we do not mean simply believing, but a certain temper of mind which renders us acceptable to God. The world sees a suitableness, a fitness in justification by faith when it is thus explained, because it is in fact justification by the works of the law, and not free justification by the blood of Christ.

The principal stumbling-block, however, in the way of good men, has been the profession of faith by many who plainly were strangers to Christ. To refute the pretences of those who profess to believe the gospel, and yet are under the dominion of sin, the scriptures teach us a more excellent way, than, by our definitions of faith, to frustrate the grace of God. They inform us, not only what we are to believe, but the consequences of believing. The salvation proclaimed in the gospel is a present deliverance from sin. Christ undertakes, that every believer of the truth shall enjoy this salvation. If any man then professes faith while destitute of holiness, we have to choose between two—whether to consider him to be making a false profession, or at least to be imposing upon himself, or to conclude that Christ has failed as to the accomplishment of his promise; and surely we cannot hesitate to say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar," the difference between a true Christian, and such an one as we have spoken of, consists, not in any difference of the act of the mind in believing, but in the difference of what they believe. The mind of the one is enlightened by the Holy Ghost who has taken the things of Christ and shown them to him; the other, under the influence of its native darkness, mistakes the truths of God. The things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man; he receiveth them not. The truth of God is a stumbling-block to him; it must be shaped in his corrupt mould, before he can admit it, and in this case he is not believing the truth, but his own lie.

That thousands believe the scriptures to be the word of God while they are in the gall of bitterness, is freely admitted; but there is a great difference between this and believing what they contain. One great cause of the hatred of the unbelieving Jews to Christ, was his supposed opposition to Moses,

who they believed had been employed by God to speak to Israel; (John 9:29.) yet the Lord tells them, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me." (John 5:46.) In like manner, we find Paul addressing Agrippa, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." (Acts 26:27.) He was persuaded that they were sent by God, and that their writings were true; but he misunderstood, and consequently did not believe what they wrote, and therefore rejected him to whom they all bore witness.

We have a striking proof of the power of the miracles of Christ on the minds of the carnal Jews. (John 6.) When he had fed the multitudes with a few loaves, they said, "This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world," and they proceeded to force him to assume royal dignity, and take possession of the throne of David. Here is faith that Messiah was to come, and that Jesus was he; but alas for their unbelief as to the end and design of Messiah's coming! In like manner, we find many believing on Jesus, but he did not commit himself to them, because they altogether mistook his character. They were fondly expecting a temporal prince, and, overcome by the miracles he wrought, and the wisdom he displayed, they concluded that he was the Christ. Yet were they in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Their faith was the belief of a lie, and hence we find many such disciples, who, when his conversation undeceived them, went back, and walked no more with him. (John 6:66)

Just so in our own days there are many who believe Christ to be a Savior, but the salvation they expect from him is perfectly different from what he has proclaimed, and consequently they do not believe the truth.

This will help us to detect another error respecting faith. It is not, say some, merely the belief of a testimony, but an act of trust or confidence in Christ. But does this remove difficulties? It is as possible to form a false notion of Christ, and to trust so in him, as to believe his history without being saved.

The Socinians trust in Christ for salvation. But their Christ is not the Christ of God. Indeed, we may go further than Socinians, and trust in him for what he has not promised. Thus many trust in Christ, that, notwithstanding their wickedness, they shall go to heaven at last. To believe in Christ, or to believe the truth concerning him, are used indiscriminately in scripture, for it is impossible to believe what is testified of Christ without placing all our confidence in him as the only Savior.

Many talk about speculative faith, but there is no such thing as a speculative faith of the gospel, men may speculate about the gospel, but when they do so, they do not understand, and are not believing it. The moment it is believed, speculation on that point is at end: it is felt to be supremely interesting. Speculation implies doubt and uncertainty. Sir William Temple observes, that "this terrestrial globe was before round in speculation, but has since been surrounded by the fortune and boldness of many navigators." When we hear of a man condemned to die we may speculate upon the state of his mind, but if placed in his situation, speculation would soon be at end, and, feeling substituted in its stead. Whatever part of the plan of salvation does not affect us, we do not believe. We are interested in the whole. The Bible does not tell us of another world which rebelled and came under the curse of God, but that such is the case of our world, that we are rebels, that we are under the curse, that except we repent we shall perish. The scripture does as much address each individual who opens it, as if he were the only one upon the face of the earth. It makes known to him his state and the only way of recovery. And according as the one or other is believed, he will be filled with fear or joy.

We have observed that, to believe the truth and to believe in Christ, are used indiscriminately to describe a state of salvation. Thus John the Baptist, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," (John 3:36.) So Paul, "I know whom I have believed," i.e. whose word I have taken, "and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.) While some have under-valued believing the truth, and represented saving faith as an act of trust, others appear to have gone into an opposite extreme. They are afraid to call on sinners to trust in Christ. They seem to wish to fix the minds of their hearers on truth in the abstract. We find nothing of this kind in scripture. The apostles preached Christ, and indiscriminately urged their hearers to believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead, and exalted him a Prince and Savior to give repentance and remission of sins, or to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to trust in him who is thus exalted. If we speak with logical precision, trust in Christ is the effect of believing the truth concerning him, and thus confidence in Christ may be said to be the effect of faith or believing; for how shall we believe in him of whom we have not heard; or how shall we trust in him of whose power and grace we are not persuaded? But such precision is not necessary in

common language, and hence in the scriptures we find men called upon either to trust in the Savior, or to believe The truth concerning him. In like manner, if a person had made us a promise, we should either say we fully believed it, or we confidently trusted that he would accomplish it. No fault could be found either with the one or other of these expressions. They express the same state of mind. The constitution of our nature compels us to avoid misery, and to seek happiness. So soon as we are persuaded that sin will render us miserable both here and hereafter, we must desire deliverance from it; and so soon as we believe that Jesus is an Almighty Savior who invites us to receive a complete salvation, in which is contained the greatest blessedness, we must trust in him. Many impose on themselves by imagining that the corruption of human nature will not prevent any man from giving credit to what is contained in the word of God. But both scripture and experience might convince them of the contrary. No man did ever believe the truth, until the Spirit of God enlightened the eyes of his understanding. Till this is the case, the doctrine of Christ is a stumbling-block and foolishness, and whenever a sinner believes the truth, we may therefore be assured that flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto him.

We have noticed that some, while professing faith, are only seeking to establish their own righteousness, and are trusting in their faith and not in Christ. Others appear to make their supposed clear views of faith their righteousness, and are puffed up with a vain conceit of themselves, while they despise others. Let it be remembered that the clearer our views are of the gospel, the more shall we live out of ourselves, not glorying in the flesh, nor walking in the light of the sparks that we have kindled, but glorying in the cross of Christ. The man whose faith is strongest will be most deeply humbled, and least disposed to glory in any real or supposed difference between himself and others. But our views of faith may be very clear, we may know that it expresses simply receiving the testimony of God, while we are completely ignorant of what is testified. To say that a man has clear views of the gospel, is to say in other words, that he is strong in faith that he has much knowledge of God; but a natural man, without any divine illumination may talk clearly of the nature of faith as the most enlightened believer. Human blindness consists, not in rejecting the true definition of faith, but in not receiving the truth because it is foolishness to us. Clear views, then, of the nature of faith, and clear views of the gospel, are two distinct things, and

not always connected.

Some who talk in a very confused manner about faith, when professing to describe it, evidently appear to have just views of the object of faith, by living near to God, simply depending on Christ as their all; whereas others, who talk clearly, not only about faith, but about various parts of the truth, as plainly prove that they know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, by not living under the influence of the truth. When a believer falls into a backsliding state, and loses those comfortable and sanctifying views of the truth which he once enjoyed, he may still not only talk very clearly of the doctrine of faith, but of the doctrines of the gospel, although he has lost in a great measure his discernment of the truth.

We are not on this account to undervalue clear and scriptural views on the very important subject of faith. Many, from improper views, are all their life time kept in bondage; but on the other hand, men may talk very clearly, while the light that is in them is darkness. The only proper and unequivocal way of proving either our own faith, or the faith of others, by observing the temper of mind and the conduct it produces. If any man say he has faith, and have not works, his faith will never save him. God will not condescend to argue the matter with him, whether his faith wants this or the other ingredient, but declares it is dead, a mere profession, like the body without the spirit. We use the words a dead man, to denote what it is really, only a dead body. So the scripture calls a profession of faith unaccompanied by the power of godliness a dead faith. The reason of this mode of expression is obvious in both cases. We only see the human body, not the spirit, In like manner, we only know the existence of faith by the profession that is made.

Let all beware, then, how they trifle with religion; there is indeed much speculation on the subject in this country. Some are speculating about faith as a fiducial act, and others about faith as being simply believing the truth, while both perhaps are ignorant of that glorious truth which produces love to God and man, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Some comfort themselves that their faith will save them because it is not historical, and their confidence is increased by their doubts: and fears about their own interest in Christ, which they view as a pleasing evidence that they are the Lord's. Others are sure all is well with them, because their faith is simple belief, and because they have no doubts and fears. Yet both may be deceiving them-

selves. The doubts and fear of the one may arise from their own hearts condemning them for their carnality, while they are ignorant of that which gives the answer of a good conscience; and the peace of the other may arise from indifference about eternity, and light views of the evil of sin. But he that has heard the voice of Christ, and learned of him the truth as it is in Jesus, "shall come forth of them all." He neither trusts in his faith, nor in his works, nor in any real or supposed change in his heart, but the life he lives in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God, and abiding in him he shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.

THE REVELATION
OF
GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS
INTRODUCTION

THE heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Every part of creation proclaims the character of Him who called it into existence; but the introduction of sin into the world has given rise to a far more glorious exhibition of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and goodness of God. In the Gospel, JEHOVAH is revealed, not only as the Ruler of the universe, maintaining the unsullied purity of his moral government, by a more awful display of his justice, than if the whole human race had been left to perish; but also, as the Saviour of sinners, providing means by which the most guilty of the sons of men, debased, degraded, and condemned as they are, may be restored to the favour and friendship and image of God. It was the contemplation of this wonderful scheme which led the apostle to exclaim, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith," Romans 1:16,17.

We have here one of those short, but comprehensive summaries of the doctrine of Christ, which are frequent in the New Testament, and which, by presenting the Gospel under different aspects, while its fundamental character remains the same, are so much calculated to enlarge our views of the truth.

The epistle from which these words are taken, was originally addressed to the disciples at Rome; but, like the other scriptures, it was intended for the instruction of the people of God to the end of the world. The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and in this passage, which it is our object to illustrate, the Gospel is described as the revelation of god's righteousness, and consequently the power of God to the salvation of every believer.

PART I

Paul's reason for affirming that he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ—Justification wholly of faith—The Gospel the only means of restoring fallen man.

At first sight it may appear extraordinary, that the apostle, when expressing his desire to preach the Gospel at Rome, would think it necessary to add, “for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.” How could such an idea occur to a man who had seen the Lord after his ascension into glory; who had witnessed so many instances of the efficacy of the Gospel in turning sinners to God; and who had so long possessed the power of confirming the truth by mighty signs and wonders? But every subject may be viewed in different lights. When the Gospel is considered as the power of God unto salvation, upon the reception or rejection of which depends our everlasting happiness or misery—when we contemplate it as the grandest display of the Divine perfections which the Almighty has made to his intelligent creation—the idea of a believer being ashamed of the Gospel appears absurd and extravagant. But when we recollect, that this Gospel is to them that perish foolishness; that the whole world lieth in the wicked one; and that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution; when we think of the contempt and obloquy which a leader of the “sect everywhere spoken against” could not fail to encounter at Rome, we shall be convinced, that in saying he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, the apostle at once proclaimed the victory which, through grace, he had obtained over a very powerful temptation, and cautioned believers against a sin into which they are in no small danger of falling.

It is perhaps almost unnecessary to remark, that the Gospel of Christ means the good news concerning Christ. But we are all so prone, especially in religion, to use words without attaching to them any very determinate meaning, that this explanation may not be superfluous.

The apostle describes the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, because “therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” The expression may seem obscure; but it evidently means, that this righteousness is received by faith, and does not consist in our obedience to the holy law of God. “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” Romans 3:28, “This is the work of God,

that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,” John 6:29.

That in many things we all offend, is universally admitted; and therefore it is absurd to suppose that we can be justified by our own obedience. We may indeed conceive of God as if he were altogether such an one as ourselves, and consequently that we may be accepted on account of our imperfect services; but we deceive ourselves. JEHOVAH is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; he demands of his creatures perfect obedience; he declares, that “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all,” James 2:10; he pronounces every one accursed “who continueth not in ALL things written in the book of the law to do them,” Galatians 3:10.

There is no inconsistency in the divine character. The attributes of God do not clash with each other; he does not exercise benevolence at the expense of truth, nor does his mercy interfere with his justice.

In Jesus Christ this glorious character is revealed. The gospel is addressed to the lost and ruined race of Adam, whom it represents to be under condemnation, without strength, alienated from the life of God through the darkness and ignorance that is in them, their hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Such is the state of man as delineated in the Word of God, and such is the condition from which every believer in Christ is delivered. Hence the gospel is described as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is the means which infinite wisdom has seen fit to employ for saving fallen man from the wrath to come, for raising him from the depth of guilt and misery into which he was plunged, and for restoring him to the enjoyment of the divine favour.

Are we experimentally acquainted with this salvation? Has it come to us, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance? If so, surely we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; we do not blush to confess Christ before an ungodly world. No, if we are holding fast the truth, if the word of God abideth in us, we esteem the reproach of Christ our highest honour; we feel it our privilege to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and follow him; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

PART II

The righteousness of God—Adam's posterity involved in his guilt—Believers pardoned through the sacrifice of Christ.

In the passage before us, the Gospel is characterized as containing the revelation of the righteousness of God. This expression frequently occurs in the New Testament, and denotes the righteousness provided by God for the justification of sinners through the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ.

Men sometimes dream of being justified by their own righteousness, but the Gospel exposes the folly of such presumption. In the plan of salvation, there is no winking at sin, no compromise of the Divine justice. A perfect righteousness is provided, in which the eye of Omniscience can discern no flaw. This is always opposed to our own righteousness. The apostle, in this epistle, speaking of the Jews, says, "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Romans 10:3, 4. It is called the righteousness of God without the law, Romans 3:21; and the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 1:1, who of God is made unto us righteousness, 1 Corinthians 1:30. This righteousness is received by faith, and is sometimes called the righteousness of faith. Hence it is written, "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith," Galatians 5:5; and Paul desiring to be found in Christ, says, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Philippians 3:9.

It will assist us to understand this subject if we look back to the introduction of sin. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Romans 5:12. Hence it is appointed for men once to die, and death reigns, even over those who have not personally broken the law of God, ver. 14. Thus were the posterity of Adam brought under condemnation; and, consequently, we are all by nature the children of wrath. But God laid help on one that is mighty; he sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He who was in the beginning with God, and was God, by whom all things were made, assumed our nature. He was born of a woman, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and was in all things

tempted like as we are, yet without sin. At length, he offered himself without spot to God, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Although the cup put into his hands was unspeakably bitter, yet he drank it to the dregs. He did not fail nor was discouraged till he had set judgment in the earth. He yielded complete obedience to God's holy law; it was his meat and his drink to do the will of his heavenly Father; by which will believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, Hebrews 10:10.

Thus, from his birth at Bethlehem to his death upon Mount Calvary, the Son of God not only submitted to all that affliction to which fallen man is subject, but endured the most poignant anguish, in suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring sinners to God. Hence his agony in the garden; hence his exclamation on the cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? But then was the judgment of this world, then was the prince of this world cast out. His bitter sufferings and bloody death made full atonement for sin. On the cross he spoiled principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. The Lord made to meet on him the iniquities of his people, and he bore them all away. When his lifeless body hung on the tree, when he had endured that death which, in reference to this event, God had pronounced accursed, Galatians 3:13, his enemies congratulated themselves on the victory which they had obtained. But their triumph was short; he had been delivered for our offences, but he was raised for our justification. He had been numbered with the transgressors, but he was "justified by the Spirit," 1 Timothy 3:16; and when the God of peace brought from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, he declared that ample satisfaction had been made for sin.

Here then was the full revelation of God's righteousness. Thus did God make him who knew no sin, sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Corinthians 5:21. If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe, Galatians 3:21, 22. "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely

by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God had 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,” Romans 3:21-26.

Adam had trampled on the law of God, and involved all his posterity in his guilt and ruin. The second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, magnified this law, and made it honourable; and as, by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one man, many are made righteous. As by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive—Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming. As the death of Adam was the knell of all his posterity, so the resurrection of Jesus is the pledge of the resurrection of all who believe, 1 Thessalonians 4:14.

After the Lord had risen from the dead, he commanded his apostles to preach to every creature the glad tidings of salvation, and to beseech men to be reconciled to God. Accordingly their language was, “Be it known unto you brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things.” They encouraged sinners to approach God with confidence through the atonement of Christ; to behold him who died for sin now seated on the right hand of God, and able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. In short, they exhibited grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

PART III

Apparent discrepancy and real harmony of the Old and New Testaments—God's gracious purposes to man gradually unfolded—First promise of the Saviour, and the appointment of animal sacrifices—Offerings of Cain and Abel—The sense of shame, and clothing provided for our first parents, an emblem of God's righteousness—Proofs of this—The revelation of God's righteousness foretold in the Psalms and the Prophets—Intimations of salvation being through faith.

Amongst the various proofs by which the truth of revelation is confirmed, none is more satisfactory than the harmony of its two great divisions, the Old and New Testaments. This proof is rendered complete by the rejection of Israel on account of their unbelief, while they continue to vouch for the authenticity of the living oracles delivered to their fathers, of which the New Testament is the fulfilment. To a superficial observer indeed the two parts of Scripture may appear to contain systems radically and essentially different. In the former, Divine worship was connected with numberless rites and ceremonies. JEHOVAH was declared to be the God of the whole earth, but he appeared in many respects as a local deity. Judea is called the Lord's land; Jerusalem the city of the great King, and Israel his inheritance; while the uncircumcised heathen are treated with comparative indifference. The man who despised Moses's law died without mercy on his guilt being established; the nation of Israel were assured of great worldly prosperity while they continued obedient, and were severely punished when they transgressed.

Under the new covenant, no place is more holy than another; wherever two or three assemble in the name of Jesus, he is in the midst of them. The apostles knew no man after the flesh; Jew and Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, are equally invited to become the subjects of Christ's kingdom and the children of God by faith. All temporal punishment for irreligion is strictly prohibited, and the disciples of Jesus are taught to expect tribulation and persecution in consequence of attachment to their Lord.

And yet, amidst all this apparent discrepancy, we find the most perfect harmony between the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments. It would be foreign to our purpose to illustrate this subject; but we may observe, that not only the sacrifices, but the whole of the law of Moses, was "a parable for the time then present," Hebrews 10:9, and that the New Testament contains its

explanation. Spiritual and heavenly things were prefigured by things which were carnal and earthly. Moses taught precisely the same things with the apostles, only he preached with a veil upon his face, which is done away in Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:14; and hence the apostle, describing the superiority of the new dispensation, observes, “We use great plainness of speech; and not as Moses, who put a veil over his face that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished,” 2 Corinthians 3:12, 13; and another apostle says, “The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.”

The whole of the New Testament presupposes an acquaintance with the Old. The writings of the apostles are the completion of the revelation of God to man, the full display of his gracious purposes to our ruined race, intimated immediately after the fall, and gradually unfolded in the law and the prophets. It cannot therefore be uninteresting to trace the progress of revelation in regard to the righteousness of God by faith.

Man was placed in paradise, and, as a test of his obedience, and a memorial of his dependence, was forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil on pain of death. He disobeyed, and incurred the threatened penalty, from which he was utterly incapable of delivering himself; and therefore fallen man is described as dead in trespasses and sins, far from righteousness, lost, and ungodly. God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent; and if he allowed mankind still to survive, it was for the purpose of imparting a new and eternal life to a multitude whom no man should be able to number, and of manifesting, by the church, to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.

This was to be done, not by our obedience to any law, for man was already under condemnation. His trial was past, he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting: he could not therefore be saved by his own righteousness; his only hope was in the mercy of God, Titus 3:5, and this mercy was to be bestowed through faith in the Saviour, whom God promised to raise up, and who was to be head and representative of all believers, as Adam had been the father of all mankind. Accordingly, before the Saviour’s appearance, every thing implied the salvation of sinners through faith in his righteousness.

The curse pronounced on the serpent contained the first promise of the Saviour. He was described as the seed of the woman who was to bruise the

serpent's head, while his own heel was to be bruised in the contest. The apostle explains this obscure intimation. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise took part of the same; that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Hebrews 2:14, 15. Connected with the promise of the Saviour, and the intimation of his sufferings and victory, was the appointment of animal sacrifices. The history is so short, that the precept to offer sacrifices is not recorded; but that this was a Divine appointment, is put beyond a doubt, by the circumstance of God's acceptance and approbation of Abel's offering the firstlings of his flock. We know that, in every age, will-worship has been an abomination in the sight of God. "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," Matthew 15:9: and the apostle informs us, that while will-worship may have a show of wisdom, it proceeds from the pride of the carnal mind, Colossians 2:23.

Besides, can we for a moment believe, that under the law there was no remission without shedding of blood, and yet suppose that animal sacrifices were not of Divine appointment? Did God adopt a human invention as the very basis of his law? And did this human invention so remarkably correspond with the sacrifice of Christ? Hebrews 9:13, 14. But this is not all. We are informed, that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain through faith, Hebrews 11:4. Here there is evident allusion to the promise of the seed of the woman, who, by his sufferings, was to vanquish the great adversary of man. Cain disregarded this promise; he acknowledged his dependence on God, and his obligations to him, by offering the fruits of the ground; but he had no respect to the promised Saviour, and therefore God had no respect to him or to his offering. No man, says Jesus, cometh to the Father but by me; and this has been the case from the beginning: it is only in the Saviour that God has revealed himself to fallen man; and in every age, those who have professed to worship God, unconnected with the revelation of the Saviour, have, like the Samaritans, worshipped they know not what. The language of Cain's offering was, "To thee I present this acknowledgment of my dependence on thy bounty." The language of Abel's sacrifice was, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and he sought mercy in the way of God's appointment by the shedding of blood. Cain's religion, like that of all who know not God, chiefly respected the Divine favour in the enjoyment of

temporal blessings: Abel, like all who have “heard and learned of the Father,” looked beyond death and the grave.

There is another circumstance which establishes the fact, that animal sacrifices were of Divine appointment. A sense of shame and nakedness was the immediate consequence of the transgression of our first parents. They attempted to make coverings for themselves; but”unto Adam, and also to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skin, and clothed them.” Where were these skins procured? Evidently from the animals which had just been offered in sacrifice; for no animals had then been slain for food; and the circumstance of our first parents having received garments made by God himself, is recorded, because it was a shadow of that righteousness which God has provided for all “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.” Here it may not be improper to refer to some passages of Scripture, in order to prove that this interpretation is not fanciful, especially as the subject is intimately connected with the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel.

We have already adverted to the sense of shame and nakedness consequent upon the transgression of our first parents. Hence we find nakedness frequently employed in the Word of God to denote a state of guilt, helplessness, and danger. When the children of Israel had departed from God at Horeb, and made the golden calf, it is said Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked to their shame before their enemies, Exodus 32:25. Doubtless there is here a reference to the people’s having stripped themselves of their golden ornaments for the purpose of making the calf; but what is said of their nakedness chiefly relates to their having forfeited the favour of God, and consequently having exposed themselves to their enemies; and, in token of this, God commanded them to put off the rest of their ornaments, Exodus 33:5, 6.

Again, the Lord represents Israel, when he took them under his protection, as resembling a helpless infant, naked and bare; and he says, “I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness,” Ezekiel 16:7, 8. The prophet Isaiah introduces the Church rejoicing in the Lord; for she exclaims, “He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,” Isaiah 61:10. When Zechariah saw

Joshua the high priest, he was clothed with filthy garments, and the angel spake to those that stood before him, saying, Take the filthy garments from him; and unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment, Zechariah 3:3. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6. He that overcometh “shall be clothed with white raiment,” Revelations 3:5. Thou “knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear,” verse 17, 18. “Behold I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame,” 16:15. When the apostle saw the souls of those that had been slain for their regard to the Word of God, “white robes were given to every one of them,” 6:11; and the innumerable multitude of all nations who stood before the Lamb were clothed with white robes, 7:9. To the Lamb’s wife it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints, 19:8. These passages clearly prove, that the term nakedness is often employed in Scripture to denote our being exposed and helpless, and that the righteousness which God has provided for his people is frequently spoken of under the emblem of a robe for the covering of their nakedness; and the foundation of this emblem is evidently the remarkable fact, of God’s having made coats of skins for our first parents. Adam and Eve, conscious of their nakedness, having lost the robe of innocence in which they were originally clothed, attempted to make coverings for themselves. But their own contrivance was insufficient; and God, by making for them clothing from the skins of animals offered in sacrifice, intimated that—while “their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works,” Isaiah 59:6; while such a “covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it,” Isaiah 28:20, —a perfect righteousness should be provided for fallen man.

In the psalms and the prophets, the revelation of the righteousness of God was clearly foretold. Thus, “David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works: saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin,” Romans 4:6-8. And speaking of God’s salvation, he says, “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.—Truth shall spring out of the earth, and

righteousness shall look down from heaven—Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps,” Psalm 85:10, 11, 13.

Isaiah, foretelling the advent of the Saviour, says, “Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,” Isaiah 45:24, 25. “Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory,” Isaiah 46:12, 13. “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord,” Isaiah 54:17. “Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed,” Isaiah 56:1. Jeremiah foretells the coming of the Saviour, and adds, “This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness,” Jeremiah 23:6. In the well-known prophecy of Daniel, he says, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,” Daniel 9:24.

Thus did Moses and the prophets testify of Christ’s righteousness; and, after his resurrection from the dead, the apostles proclaimed him, to be made of God to all who receive the truth, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Not only did the Old Testament Scriptures foretell the revelation of God’s righteousness, but, from the beginning, constant intimations were given that fallen man could only be saved by faith. In the destruction of the world by the flood, God gave a striking proof of his abhorrence of sin, and that although hand joined in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished. From this destruction Noah was preserved through grace, Genesis 6:8, “and being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith,” Hebrews 11:7.

The Saviour was first described as the seed of the woman. God was afterwards pleased to declare, that in the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed. This eminent patriarch was at the same time constituted the father, model or pattern of all believers. In him the way of a sinner’s justification is clearly exhibited. “What shall we then say, that

Abraham our father according to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God: for what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.—Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” Romans 4:2, 23-25.

The same doctrine is inculcated in the history of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, their preservation in the wilderness, and their conquest of Canaan. All was by faith; and those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, could not enter into the land because of unbelief, Hebrews 3:19. The various sacrifices of the law taught the same lesson. It is true, “the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth these things shall live in them,” Galatians 3:12; but the law was our schoolmaster (or leader) to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, verse 24. The law required perfect obedience, and denounced a curse on every transgression, verse 10. It appointed sacrifices indeed; but these were plainly weak and inefficacious; for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin, and this was confirmed by the constant repetition of the legal sacrifices, Hebrews 10:1, 2, 4. Thus, before the great Object of faith came, men were kept under the law, shut up unto faith which should afterwards be revealed, Galatians 3:23.

The doctrine of justification by faith was also clearly taught by the prophets. “Look unto me,” said the Lord by Isaiah,”and by ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and beside me there is none else—a just God and a Saviour, there is none beside me,” Isaiah 45:22. And when the Apostle describes the Gospel as the revelation of the righteousness of God from faith to faith, he represents it as the fulfilment of the prediction of Habakkuk, “The just shall live by faith,” Habakkuk 2:4.

When John the Baptist appeared, he exhorted the people, on pain of destruction, to receive the promised Saviour, of whom he declared himself the harbinger, Luke 3:15-19; Acts 19:4; and after the Lord Jesus had been manifested to Israel, John testified that He was the Son of God, and that those who believed in Him should have eternal life, while those who rejected Him should perish, John 1:34; 3:36.

The miracles wrought by Jesus at once attested that He was the Messiah, and

shadowed forth the blessings of his salvation. He went about doing good, and healing those that were oppressed of the devil, Acts 10:38. Disease and death are the consequences of sin, and therefore miracles of healing the bodies of men were wrought to evince Christ's superiority to Satan, and his ability to heal and restore their souls. Accordingly we find the forgiveness of sins connected with the removal of bodily disease, Matthew 9:6, and men were healed through faith to intimate that in this way alone, the blessings of salvation were to be communicated, Matthew 9:22, 28; 13:58; Mark 9:23.

After the resurrection of Christ, He commanded his apostles to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name to all nations; and this was the word of faith which they preached, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed," Romans 10:9-11.

Here, then, let us pause, and observe, that, amidst all the variety of the Divine dispensations, Christ was in all. The whole of revelation is a display of his glory, and of the means which he has been pleased to employ for the salvation of sinners. From the beginning to the end of the Word of God, everything tends to confirm and illustrate the glorious plan of redemption through faith in Christ's righteousness. The revelation of mercy resembles the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It dawned on fallen man in Eden; it gradually brightened in the history of the patriarchs, and in the Mosaic dispensation; it was hailed by the prophets in the most triumphant language; and, at the resurrection of Christ, it burst forth in all its splendour. The great promise of the old dispensation was the coming of the King of Zion, meek and lowly, and having salvation; and the fulfilment of this promise was fondly anticipated by many kings, and prophets, and righteous men. The great promise of the new covenant is also the manifestation of our glorified Redeemer; and to those who look for Him, He will appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

We live in these days of the Son of Man; the gospel is not preached to us in types and figures, and comparatively obscure predictions, which the prophets themselves did not fully understand, 1 Peter 1:11, 12. The righteousness of

God, through faith in his Son, is now clearly revealed. He no longer treats his people as servants, who are kept ignorant of the purposes of their master, and obey his orders without comprehending their object; but, Jesus says, I have called you friends for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you, John 15:15. Our privileges are very great—let us be careful not to abuse them.

PART IV

Deliverance from sin connected with pardon—mankind condemned and corrupted by their connection with Adam—Believers pardoned and restored through union with Christ—The truth necessarily purifies the heart in which it dwells—Inseparable connection of holiness and happiness—Analogy between the means of man's corruption and restoration—The necessity of the influence of the Spirit—Union between Satan and fallen man Connection of believers with the elect angels—Conformity to God keeps pace with the strength of our faith—Perfecting by seeing Him as He is—A false profession—All shall be judged by their works.

Having briefly traced the revelation of God's righteousness from its first announcement in Eden to its full manifestation in the resurrection of Jesus, we shall endeavour to show how the gospel of Christ, in which this righteousness is revealed, is the power of God unto salvation.

In speaking of the salvation of Christ, it is sometimes necessary to distinguish between deliverance from condemnation, and from the love and power of sin; but the salvation is one, and the pardon of sin through the blood of Jesus is necessarily and essentially connected with deliverance from its power. Christ's salvation consists in saving sinners from death and condemnation, and raising them to the privilege of becoming the sons of God; and this privilege is uniformly connected with a change of character; in other words, they are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, Colossians 1:12.

Man was created in the Divine image, but the moment he came under the curse, he became corrupted and depraved, and alienated from God. In like manner, the moment his sins are pardoned he is created anew in Christ Jesus. Hence the Apostle, speaking of believers being dead with Christ, or in other words, having the old man crucified with him, adds he that is dead is justified from sin, Romans 6:7.

As through our connection with Adam, we are condemned and depraved, through union with Christ we are pardoned and restored. Our connection with Adam is the consequence of our birth; our union with the second Adam is through faith in his Word. The great moral change which takes place when a sinner becomes a subject of Jesus Christ's kingdom, is called, with reference to our birth, being born again; and this is effected through the power of the Holy Spirit by means of the Gospel. As the children of fallen Adam, we are

born of corruptible seed; and as the children of God, and the brethren of Jesus, believers are born of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever 1 Peter 1:23. Adam is the model or pattern after which all his children are made; and all believers are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, Romans 8:29. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, 1 Corinthians 15:49. Indeed, the moment a sinner receives the truth, he is indissolubly united to Jesus Christ. “By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit,” and again, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” 1 Corinthians 12:13; 6:17.

Such is the close and intimate union formed between Christ and the believer. Now, there is no concord between Christ and Belial; and the truth as it is in Jesus, purifies the heart and makes the believer free from the bondage of sin, John 8:32; Romans 6:18. How, indeed, should it be otherwise? What inducement have we at any time to transgress the law of God? It is the hope of enjoyment—of finding pleasure: and this must of necessity arise from want of faith in God—from not believing that in his favour is life, and not feeling that his loving-kindness is better than life. While under the influence of the truth, we must be sensible that wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, while the way of transgressors is hard. The believer knows that the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; and hence it inevitably follows, that sin must always issue in suffering; and that, however enticing it may appear, it must be bitterness in the latter end. Under the influence of the truth, therefore, he looks not at the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; for he knows, that at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth as an adder, Proverbs 23:31, 32.

When we indulge in sin, hoping for gratification, we err, not knowing the character and power of God. We practically say that he is not a sufficient portion, and that, in order to obtain enjoyment, we must disobey him; but when we view him as the God of love, the fountain of light and happiness, who withholdeth no good thing from him that walketh uprightly, sin must appear at once foolish and loathsome. Now, the truth as it is in Jesus is the revelation of the character of God, of his almighty power, his infinite knowledge, extending alike to the most important events and the most minute occurrences. It is the exhibition of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as the

cause of all the misery which exists in the universe. It is the revelation of mercy and happiness to sinners, through the sufferings and death of the Son of God. The disciple of Jesus feels that sin is his inveterate enemy, and unless destroyed, must necessarily bring about his destruction; while he beholds the glory Christ, as the forerunner of his people, has entered into, as that of which they are all to partake. Thus is the believer urged by every motive, by hope, and fear, and love, to press after conformity to God, while the Divine power and truth guarantee his success.

Full provision then, is made in the plan of salvation for completely counteracting the effects of the fall. The transgression of Adam produced a double effect on his posterity. It brought them under condemnation, from which they are incapable of delivering themselves, Psalms 49:7, and therefore we are all by nature the children of wrath Ephesians 2:3. But in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of Christ, a sufficient remedy is provided, and God is just while he justifies every one who believes in Jesus. But mankind are not only condemned, not only under the curse, their minds are also corrupted and alienated from God. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Psalm 51:5 The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, Romans 8:7. It was therefore necessary, that man should also be restored to the image of God, and this is effected by the revelation of that righteousness by which the ungodly are justified. Were a sinner to receive a free pardon, it is evident that, unless his heart were changed, he would immediately incur renewed condemnation; and besides, as God is the source of blessedness, it is impossible that any being can be blessed while his mind is alienated from God. The whole of revelation teaches us, that holiness and happiness are inseparably connected; and how should it be otherwise, under the government of one who fills all things, with whom evil shall not dwell, and who hateth all workers of iniquity?

There is a striking analogy, not only between the introduction of sin and righteousness, but also between the manner in which the mind of man was corrupted, and by which it was purified. The progress of the first temptation is thus described: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of

it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also to her husband and he did eat,” Genesis 3:1-6.

Thus it is evident, that the mind of man was corrupted by the reception of falsehood, and in this falsehood was included a completely erroneous view of the Divine character, for it represented God as deceitful and jealous of his creature. The necessary consequence of man’s giving credit to this representation was the corruption of the human heart. It was a part of his dependence on his Maker, that the image of God, in which he was created, could only be preserved by the contemplation of the character of his Creator; and, therefore, no sooner did the falsehood of Satan, which completely misrepresented this character, take possession of his mind, than his own character was completely changed. Thus did man receive the recompense of his error which was meet. He “changed the truth of God into a lie;” he “did not like to retain God in his knowledge;” and God “gave him over to a reprobate mind. He was filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity.” Such was the process of man’s corruption; and all are begotten in Adam’s likeness, after his image—“having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart,” Ephesians 4:18.

In the revelation of the righteousness of God contained in the Gospel, the Divine character is displayed in all its glory and excellence; and when a sinner beholds this display, he is transformed by the renewing of his mind. As man was corrupted by a falsehood, which represented God as altogether different from what he really is; he is restored by a truth, which exhibits the Divine character in all its purity and grandeur. Hence the Gospel is represented as a mould into which the believer is delivered, Romans 6:17; and hence it is written, “All we, 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,” 2 Corinthians 3:18; and thus the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, by which believers are not only delivered from

the wrath to come, but by whose mighty energy they are brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, 1 Peter 2:9; are born again, 1 Peter 1:23; are made free from sin, John 8:32; Romans 6:22; and in short are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Colossians 1:13. The Gospel is the rod of God's strength, which he promised to send out of Zion, Psalm 110:2; and which, by revealing a perfect righteousness for the justification of sinners, casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought of the believer to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:5.

But while believers are begotten with the word of truth, born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, we must always remember that, so entire is the alienation of fallen man from God, so completely blinded is he by the love of this present evil world, that as the mid-day sun in all its splendour shines in vain to the blind, so the Gospel is a stumbling-block and foolishness to every man by nature. 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, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Hence faith is uniformly described as the gift of God. In the economy of redemption, it is the office of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to the mind, John 16:13, 15. "Our Gospel," says the Apostle, "came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," 1 Thessalonians 1:5; and no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Corinthians 12:3. Believers have purified their souls in obeying the truth, but it is through the Spirit, 1 Peter 1:22; and it is only by the Holy Ghost, that we can hold fast the truth, 2 Timothy 1:14. The Lord Jesus was quickened by the Spirit, 1 Peter 3:18; and we are taught that the same almighty power by which he was raised from the dead, is exerted in quickening those who are dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 1:19, 20; 2:1.

When a sinner believes the Gospel, he becomes aware of his true character. He knows that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing; that he has no resources in himself. He feels his entire dependence on God, and views Christ as the medium through whom every spiritual blessing is communicated; and therefore he says with the Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life

which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,” Galatians 2:20. He is a partaker of the Spirit of Christ, by whom a new life was first imparted to him, by whom it is maintained, and by whom his body shall be raised from the dead, Romans 8:11.

Thus we see, that man was created in the image of God; that this image was preserved so long as he continued to behold his Divine original: but no sooner was this glorious object removed through the subtlety of Satan, than the image of God was defaced, and man was changed into the image of that false, and jealous, and deceitful idol, which Satan had substituted in the place of God, and imposed on our first parents as their Creator. Man had now lost his guide, he was involved in the grossest darkness, and would for ever have remained in this state, had not God regarded him in mercy, and provided a way by which sinners might be partakers of a Divine nature, through union with the Son of God, who took part with them in flesh and blood, and as their head and representative, magnified the law which man had dishonoured. This union is formed by faith in Him, who is the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his person. He is the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, who has risen with healing in his wings; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared to the sinful race of Adam, that God, whom no man hath seen at any time, and whom no man knoweth except those to whom the Son will reveal him, Matthew 11:27. Hence, says the apostle, ”We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” 1 John 5:20.

Nothing is revealed for the purpose of gratifying our curiosity. The Word of God is intended to check the pride of our fleshly minds, and warns us against intruding into those things which we have not seen, Colossians 2:18. But it makes known to us the existence of a being, who is always placed at the head of those who have apostatized from God. There are angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, who are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day, Jude 6. Of these, the devil, or Satan, is described as the chief and head. The everlasting fire into which the wicked shall be cast, is ”prepared for the devil and his angels.” By his subtlety man was at first seduced, and he is still represented as our great

adversary, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, The means of his triumph was falsehood, and no sooner did he succeed in conveying it into the mind of our first parents, than they became his subjects, and a real, though mysterious union, was formed between fallen man and the arch enemy of God. Hence he is denominated the God and Prince of this world, “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” He is the father of the wicked, John 8:44; Cain “was of that wicked one;” “the whole world lieth in the wicked one,” and are led captive by the devil at his will.

But for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and establish an everlasting kingdom, which should subvert the kingdom of Satan. The foundation of this kingdom was laid in his atonement on Calvary. By his sufferings and death, he opened a way for the exercise of mercy to mankind; and, as the reward of his humiliation, he is constituted the head of God’s obedient and intelligent creation. A name is given him above every name, angels and authorities and powers beings made subject to him; and it would appear that it is in virtue of their connection with him, that the elect angels are irrevocably and finally secured from all danger; for it is written, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance,” Ephesians 1:9-11. Hence we are said to have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, who are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. And when the mystery of God shall be finished, when the great end of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall be accomplished, he will come to judgment, attended by all the holy angels, and then shall the kingdom of Satan be completely destroyed, and he, and all his adherents, be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, Revelations 20:10-15.

To the connection formed between believers and the elect angels as the subjects of Jesus Christ, the apostle seems to allude, when he speaks of his being employed to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, Ephesians 3:9. The gospel not only exhibits all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, as united in one glorious fellowship or

society under Christ, but as connected with the angels, who are also his subjects, and who take a lively and active interest in the progress of his kingdom on earth, Luke 15:10; 16:22.

The gospel, then, is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Through faith in this gospel the sinner receives a perfect righteousness, by which he is justified before God; by faith he is united to Christ in the closest and most indissoluble union, and by beholding the glory of his exalted King and Head, the image of God is restored in his soul. Through faith he receives the promise of the Spirit, Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 1:13; and the same almighty agent who at first moved on the face of the waters, reducing to order the earth when without form and void, renews the believer in knowledge after the image of his Creator, Colossians 3:10, and imparts light and life and love to his soul.

Our conformity to God must, then, be in exact proportion to the strength of our faith; for it is by beholding the glory of God, that any measure of conformity is produced; and hence the importance of the exhortation, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The greater progress we make in the discernment of the truth, the more strongly is the Divine image stamped upon the soul; and in heaven the believer's complete conformity to God will spring from the same source, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness," Psalm 17:15. "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known," 1 Corinthians 13:12. Thus is the restoration of fallen man begun, carried on, and completed by the manifestation of the Divine glory in Christ Jesus. The crucifixion of the old man commences in the day of regeneration, when the Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to the mind; and every remnant of corruption shall be destroyed by the full discovery of the Divine glory in the astonishing plan of redemption when we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Many indeed profess to believe who are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and daily give occasion to the adversaries to blaspheme the doctrine of the holy Jesus; but the gospel is not said to be the power of God

unto salvation to every one that professth, but to every one that believeth; and faith uniformly purifies the heart, Acts 15:9, works by love, Galatians 5:6 and overcometh the world, 1 John 5:4, 5. “He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God,” 3 John 11. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him”; “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him,” 1 John 2:4; 3:6. “He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit that he hath given us,” 1 John 3:24. So inseparable are faith and obedience, that the apostles Paul and James quote the same passage of scripture history, the former to prove the doctrine of justification by faith without works, and the latter to establish the position, that a profession of faith, the sincerity of which is not manifested by obedience, is loathsome as a dead carcass, Hebrews 11:17, 31; James 2:21, 23. It is the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that while believers are saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast, they are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that they should walk in them, Ephesians 2:8, 10.

The salvation of Christ, then, is a deliverance not only from the wrath to come, but also from sin, Matthew 1:21 Jesus hath undertaken that sin shall not have dominion over believers, Romans 6:14; and, therefore, while to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness, Romans 4:5, we are assured whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, Galatians 6:7; and we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Corinthians 5:10. So that instead of the law being made void through faith, it is established, Romans 3:31, not only because believers are justified by a perfect righteousness, corresponding to the law’s most extensive requirements, but as the power of Christ is engaged for their immediate deliverance from the dominion of sin, and for their being finally presented before God without spot and blameless.

PART V

The efficacy of faith is producing obedience taught in the Old Testament—Noah, Abraham, Moses. Purifications under the law—The prophets teach the connection of justification with purity of heart—The salvation of Christ excludes boasting, and secures conformity to God in all who are pardoned.

We have seen that the Old Testament clearly taught the doctrine of justification by faith. With equal clearness it exhibited the inseparable connection between acceptance with God and conformity to his will.

Noah was preserved from perishing in the flood by faith of things not seen as yet, Hebrews 11:7; and his faith secured obedience to the Divine commandments, “Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he,” Genesis 6:22.

In the life of Abraham, we have a striking exemplification of the efficacy of this Divine principle, In obedience to the commandment of God, he left his native country, and set out to go he knew not whither. He cheerfully sojourned as a pilgrim and stranger in the land of promise; and so confident was he of receiving from God whatever was necessary and proper, that he declined accepting what the gratitude of the king of Sodom prompted him to offer, lest he should appear indebted to any man for that wealth and prosperity which God had promised to bestow, Genesis 14:22, 23. Under the influence of the same faith, he hesitated not to offer his darling son upon the altar as a burnt-offering, convinced that God was able to raise him up from the dead, Hebrews 11:17, 19.

Faith led Moses to despise the treasures of Egypt, and to prefer suffering affliction with the people of God to the enjoyment of the pleasures of sin for a season, Hebrews 11:23, 26. In short, whatever was pleasing to God in the conduct of those whose history is recorded in the Old Testament, was the fruit of faith, Hebrews 11:2-39, and indeed, from what other source could it proceed? The apostle challenges gainsayers to produce any other principle sufficiently strong to enable men to resist the allurements of this present world. “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,” 1 John 5:4, 5; and again it is written, “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” Hebrews 11:6.

As the sacrifices enjoined by the law of Moses prefigured the sufferings of

the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, so the various legal purifications denoted that internal purity which is the characteristic of all the children of the new covenant. The nation of Israel were a peculiar people unto God, and their separation from the rest of mankind was signified by their being sprinkled with the blood of the covenant at Mount Sinai, Hebrew 9:19, 20. But they were liable to many defilements, by which they were excluded from the sanctuary, and certain rites of purification were necessary before the unclean were permitted again to approach the holy place, and to enjoy those privileges from which other nations were debarred. The blood and the water employed on such occasions, prefigured the sanctifying and purifying influences of the blood and spirit of Christ, 1 John 5:6.

One very important means of purification was the ashes of an heifer mixed with running water, and sprinkled on the person who had contracted defilement, Numbers 19. To this the apostle alludes, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God," Hebrews 9:13, 14.

The priests, who approached still nearer to God than the body of the people, were solemnly consecrated for their office, by being washed with water, clothed with the holy garments, and sprinkled with blood and oil.

Believers are described as a royal priesthood, who are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of their God. They have all an unction from the Holy One, who abideth in them, and teacheth them all things, 1 John 2:27.

The language of the legal purifications is frequently employed in the psalms and the prophets, to denote moral purity. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," Psalm 51:7. "So," says Isaiah, speaking of the Redeemer, "shall he sprinkle many nations," chapter 52:15. "Then," says the Lord, "will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your idols, and from all your filthiness, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my

statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them,” Ezekiel 36:25-27.

It is unnecessary to trace this subject through the writings of the prophets. We only observe, that while they uniformly teach that God imputed to sinners righteousness by faith without works, Romans 4:6, they represent the purification of the heart as essentially connected with this privilege. “Blessed,” says the Psalmist, “is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,” Psalm 32:2 “Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments,” Psalm 119:166. And the man who trusted in the Lord is always contrasted with the wicked, Psalm 32:10.

We have already seen, that in the New Testament the inseparable connection between faith and holiness is constantly maintained. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death,” Romans 8:1, 2; and thus, through the whole of the Word of God, we are taught, that while salvation by faith effectually excludes boasting, it also secures conformity to God in all who receive the forgiveness of sins.

PART VI

1st. We cannot appear before God in our own righteousness—Difference of character in society—The two debtors—The Gospel reveals an atonement sufficient for all: addressed to sinners—The brazen serpent— The Gospel humbles the pride of man.

2nd. Vain talk of justification unless our hearts are purified—Shall be known by our fruits, and should therefore examine ourselves—General expectation of a future state, founded on revelation—Corrupted— The hope of the Gospel purifies the heart.

3rd. The nature of saving faith—Some believe facts, yet ignorant of the truth.

4th. How much we should prize the knowledge of Divine things—Men may appear to possess this knowledge while profligate, but it is the foundation of everything in man which is well-pleasing to God.

5th. Our constant need of the supply of the Holy Spirit—The influence of the Spirit equally necessary with the meditation of Christ—The dreadful consequences of the fall.

6th. God deals with us as rational creatures—Opposite errors on this subject.

From this subject we may learn many important lessons.

1st. We can never appear before our Judge in our own righteousness, but only in that which God hath provided.

It would be absurd to deny that there is a great difference in the conduct of men. Some are most useful and valuable members of society; their natural disposition is amiable, and they feel pleasure in promoting the happiness and comfort of their fellow-creatures. Others are engaged in deeds of blood and rapine, and the well-being of society requires that they should be put to death. The former class have their reward. The satisfaction which they enjoy in their own minds, the respect and affection with which they are regarded, and the comparative security of their situation, form a striking contrast with the feelings of uneasiness and apprehension endured by the outcasts of society.

But the difference shrinks into nothing when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and therefore

all are condemned. This is beautifully illustrated in our Lord's parable. "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty; and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both," Luke 7:41, 42. The difference of the amount of their debt was great, The debt of the one was ten times that of the other; but they had nothing to pay. Here they were completely on a footing; and as all have sinned, and the law condemns him who offends in one point as being guilty of all, no man can stand before God, on the ground of his own righteousness. It is only the righteousness of Christ that the sinner can be accepted, and this righteousness is "unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference," Romans 3:22. Whether we owe fifty or five hundred pence—whether we have been an ornament and blessing to society, or profligate and abandoned in the extreme—the mercy of God is freely proclaimed to us through Christ. We have cause to be thankful, if, from the circumstances in which we were placed, we have been preserved from gross sin; if our situation has been so favourable, that many worldly motives have conspired to render us amiable and useful. But, in the matter of acceptance with God, all this is out of the question. The Gospel is the good news of pardon to the guilty; and it enters into no calculations, in regard to the different degrees of guilt in those whom it addresses. It reveals an atonement sufficient for all; and every sinner of the human race is commanded to receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners. The Gospel does not teach us how to lay a foundation for ourselves, but informs us of the sure foundation which God has laid in Zion, upon which all are equally invited and commanded to build their hopes, without any apprehensions of being upbraided for their past conduct by their gracious Creator.

The Gospel is very generally misunderstood by those who profess to believe. They view it as a scheme for making up their deficiencies through the merits of Christ; but this is "another gospel." The Gospel of Christ is addressed to those who are far from righteousness; who are poor and blind, and naked; who have no money to purchase salvation, no merit to recommend them to the favour of God. Christ came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If we are not sinners we have nothing to do with the Gospel; and if we are sinners, let us not reject the counsel of God against ourselves, by vainly supposing that anything about us gives us a peculiar claim to his

favour, or by imagining that our sins are too great to be forgiven. The righteousness of God is altogether irrespective of our obedience. The Gospel equally holds out its promises of favour and acceptance to the man who by his crimes has forfeited his life to the laws of his country, and to him who is justly honoured for his benevolence and philanthropy. The thief upon the cross was saved by faith in Jesus, and none shall enter heaven in any other way.

Let us not then suppose, that we either have, or shall hereafter obtain, something which may entitle us to the favour of God. “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” Let us therefore come to God with the publican’s prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner;” and let us look for this mercy through the atonement of Christ.

Although the Scriptures are so clear and express on this subject, it is a stumbling-block and foolishness to the great body of those who hear the Gospel. It offends their pride to be put upon a level with the outcasts of society; surely, they think, some difference will be made; but they err, not knowing the Scriptures; not understanding the malignity of sin; not perceiving, that while the blood of the cross is sufficient to wash away guilt of the deepest dye, nothing less than that precious blood can atone for the smallest deviation from the holy law of God. Such persons mistake the Gospel. They view it as a kind of bargain which God proposes to make with his creatures, that on certain conditions he will accept them—while in fact it is the message of reconciliation, equally addressed to all mankind, declaring that a full atonement for sin has been made upon the cross, and inviting every sinner of Adam’s race instantly to approach God as his Friend and Father through Christ. When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, it was a remedy equally adapted for all who had been bitten. Whether the bite had just been received, or whether the poison had infected the blood, by looking to the serpent, the patient was healed; and in reference to this emblem, Christ, indiscriminately addressing all mankind, says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no else—a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me,” Isaiah 45:21, 22.

In announcing the publication of the Gospel, the Lord declared by his prophet, “the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day,”

Isaiah 2:11; and this is illustrated by the words of the apostle, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Galatians 6:14. Nor was this feeling peculiar to Paul, “We,” says he, including all Christians,—“we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” Philippians 3:3. Believers look forward with joy to the coming of the Lord; but their confidence rests solely on their knowledge of the perfection of Christ’s righteousness, and in no degree whatever on any idea of their superior personal merit. Pride was the snare in which man was taken by the subtlety of Satan—“Ye shall be as Gods;” and the Gospel lays every high imagination of man in the dust, showing him that he is without strength and ungodly; that he can only be justified through the righteousness of Christ; and that he can in no other way be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, than by being created anew, by union with the Son of God.

2nd. We may also learn from this subject, that it is vain to talk of being justified by Christ’s righteousness, unless our hearts are purified by faith.

While the Gospel is a proclamation of pardon addressed to sinners without exception, an unlimited invitation to the guilty to take shelter in the blood of atonement, it is the power of God unto salvation, only to those who believe. They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts. We may profess faith in Christ while we are the slaves of sin; we may deceive ourselves, and affirm that we are trusting in his righteousness while we are living after the flesh; but every branch in the vine that beareth not fruit shall be cast into the fire. We cannot impose on God; and if with the Scriptures in our hands, we impose on ourselves, we are inexcusable. “By their fruits ye shall know them,” is the test which Christ has given to enable us to detect false teachers, and the same test shall at last discover, whether we were indeed believers in Jesus. Hence all are commanded to examine themselves whether they be in the faith, not only by comparing their creed with the Word of God, but also by comparing the fruits of their faith with the fruits of the Spirit. Wherever the Spirit of Christ dwells, the fruits of the Spirit will be produced; and “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

It is said, Are we not conscious whether we believe? Doubtless we are conscious of what passes in our minds; but we may believe many things, and

yet remain in the gall of bitterness. If we believe Christ's Gospel, it will effectually work in our hearts, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, and teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; and if what we believe does not produce this effect, it is not the true grace of God in which we stand. We have seen how the discovery of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ restores the Divine image in the soul of him who beholds it; and every doctrine, the belief of which does not produce this effect, is a delusion, and the comfort which we derive from it is merely sporting ourselves "with our own deceivings."

We may indeed feel strong desires of future happiness, and we may persuade ourselves that these desires shall be gratified, while we are far from God. In every country the expectation of a future state has prevailed. Men, it is true, engage in worldly pursuits with as much eagerness as if there were no danger of disappointment. The world was made for man, and was so admirably adapted by infinite wisdom to promote his happiness, that it appears as if he had nothing else to do but to enjoy it, and he is led by the instincts of his nature to expect that it will yield him satisfaction. But the spell is soon broken: every earthly object proclaims to fallen man, Happiness is not in me! And the unwelcome truth is constantly forced on his consideration, that in sorrow he shall eat bread all the days of his life till he return to the dust. Hence the exclamation of a monarch whose means of procuring all the happiness which this world can impart were very uncommon, and whose wisdom in improving his advantages was unrivalled, "Vanities of vanities, all is vanity!" And this exclamation has been re-echoed by all classes of men. At the same time, the human mind revolts at the idea of annihilation. We feel that there is within us something distinct from and superior to the body; and, in every age, men have cherished a hope of enjoying, in a future state, that happiness which universal experience declares to be unattainable in this world. This expectation is not only rational, but is founded on Divine revelation.

We have seen, that no sooner did man apostatize from his Creator, and begin to feel the effects of his folly, than God intimated his purposes of mercy, and opened for him the prospect of happiness beyond the grave. Considering the character and circumstances of man, it was impossible that this revelation should be forgotten, unless where men were debased almost to the level of the brutes. But the blindness of the human mind, and the corruptions of the

human heart, have grossly distorted this, as well as every other part of revelation. Men have imagined a state of happiness, consisting in the uninterrupted gratification of all their evil passions, and consequently the stronger their hopes of future enjoyment, the more were their lusts inflamed. Such was the heaven of the Scandinavians, who expected at once to gratify their intemperance and revenge, by drinking out of the skulls of their enemies. Such is the Mahometan paradise, and such has been the heaven looked forward to in every nation which has not been favoured with the oracles of God: and even the Scriptures, without the teaching of the Holy Spirit, are insufficient to lead men of learning and science to look for anything in a future state beyond the enlargement of their intellectual faculties, and an indefinite advancement in the philosophical investigations in which they are at present occupied.

The Scriptures represent heaven as consisting in beholding the Divine glory, in being entirely and for ever delivered from whatever is contrary to the will of God, and which would interrupt our fellowship with him who is glorious in holiness. That this hope must of necessity purify the heart in which it dwells, not only results from the nature of things, but is recorded in the Scriptures of truth. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.”

3rd. Here too, we may learn the nature of saving faith. To ascertain this, it is not necessary to enter into metaphysical speculations or nice distinctions. Saving faith consists in receiving the testimony of God concerning his Son; but it must be admitted, that many believe that Jesus died at Jerusalem as a sacrifice for sin, and rose again from the dead, who are completely ignorant of the character of God. All the rites of the Papal Church, the mass, absolution, and extreme unction, are founded on these acknowledged facts; but still, how many of the deluded votaries of superstition are involved in the grossest darkness! They have not, then, believed the gospel; for by the gospel, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into the heart of every believer, giving him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Jesus has said, “I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life;” and if we are followers of Christ, we were sometimes darkness,

but now we are light in the Lord, Ephesians 5:8.

Many trust in Jesus precisely as the Jews trusted in Moses, John 5:45. They professed themselves his disciples, John 9:28. They upbraided the Lord with the superiority of the miracles wrought by that eminent prophet, John 6:30,31: yet the searcher of hearts declared, that they did not believe Moses, John 5:46, 47. And many who in the present day fully admit the facts respecting the miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and in one sense trust in him, will be found at last to have been strangers to the truth, not because there was a defect in their manner of believing, but because they believed another gospel, or at least perverted the gospel of Christ, Galatians 1:6, 7.

4th. We may be able to talk about religion, and appear to possess an accurate knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, while they are immersed in the love of the world. In consequence of this, many have undervalued knowledge, and spoken as if we might possess an acquaintance with God, without our hearts being affected. But the knowledge of God is the foundation of every thing in man which is well pleasing to his Creator. It is by knowing the true God, That believers are made to differ from others. We may indeed appear to possess much knowledge, while we are enemies of the cross of Christ; but still in the knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, consists eternal life, John 17:3, and wherever this knowledge is communicated, it produces an entire change on the sinners heart, Proverbs 2:10, 22.

5th. We may learn from this subject, that believers stand in constant need of the supply of the Holy Spirit. We have seen that it is by the revelation of himself in the gospel that God restores the divine image to fallen man; and as our first parents retained the image of God no longer than they continued to view God as he really is, so it is only by holding fast the truth that his image can be preserved in our mind. By his influence we maintain fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father, Ephesians 2:18. The influence of the Holy Spirit is therefore equally necessary to our salvation as the meditation of Jesus. How careful ought we then to be not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, Ephesians 4:30. Is God the portion of our souls? Is he our “exceeding joy?” Do we feel it our highest privilege to cast all our cares on him for time and eternity? Do we rejoice in being able to cry, Abba, Father, while we know and believe the

love that God hath to us? 1 John 4:16. Let us remember that the continuance of all these enjoyments depends on our minds being enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and that this knowledge is maintained in our hearts only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Here, then, we see our entire dependence on God. So lost and ruined were we by the fall, that nothing but the blood of Christ could redeem us from destruction; and so blinded were we by the love of sin, that the preaching of reconciliation by the death of Christ, was a stumbling-block and foolishness, till the Holy Spirit brought home the truth to our minds with divine power and energy; and, without the continuance of his influence, we should immediately relapse into our former ignorance and alienation from God.

6th. Let us at the same time remember, that while all is of grace, while it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, and while he alone makes us to differ from the most abandoned of our species, he deals with us as rational creatures. In the plan of redemption all is of God; but this does not supersede the use of our faculties, our care, our watchfulness, our exertions, to enter into the strait gate, and to obtain that crown of glory which fadeth not away.

Let us also remember that, in endeavouring to direct the attention of our fellow-men to the gospel of Christ, while the consideration that Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase, should lead us to depend entirely on the Lord for success, and to be earnest in prayer that the Holy Spirit may guide those whom we address into the truth, it is at the same time our incumbent duty to employ the means best calculated to excite attention. In all their discourses the apostles preached Christ crucified; they never compromised the truth, or handled the Word of God deceitfully: yet they adapted themselves to the circumstances and prejudices of their hearers. They know that it was God alone who caused them to triumph; but they taught “with all wisdom,” and avoided giving unnecessary offence; becoming all things to all men, and endeavouring to make straight paths for the feet of those whom they were endeavouring to lead into the way of peace. While they recollected that they were addressing men who were the enemies of God, and whose minds were opposed to his salvation, they considered their hearers as rational creatures, and set before them those motives which were best calculated to arouse and awaken them to a sense of their guilt and danger. They knew that man labours under no inability to believe the gospel

which weakens his responsibility or lessens his guilt; and they knew, that while no man cometh to Christ except the Father draw him, sinners are brought to the foot of the cross in a way perfectly consistent with their character as accountable creatures.

By losing sight of this, men have been led into the most ruinous and pernicious errors. Some have misrepresented the gospel as if it afforded encouragement to sinners to go about to establish their own righteousness; others, in avoiding this extreme, have spoken of men in a natural state, as if they were mere machines, and as if reason were to be put out of the question in reference to the revelation of mercy. But he that is taught of God “shall come forth of them all;” and while he depends on the influence of the Holy Spirit alone for preserving the impression of the truth on his own heart, or carrying it home to the consciences of others, he will carefully guard against temptation, and will shun whatever might cast an unnecessary stumbling-block in the way of those whom he addresses.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this very imperfect illustration of an important passage of Scripture, it may not be unsuitable more particularly to direct our attention to the caution which it contains against being ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

The hopes of the believer, for time and for eternity, rest on the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God. So boundless was his love, that he left that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, took on him the form of a servant, gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, hid not his face from shame and spitting, and finally became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that guilty sinners might be reconciled to God, and might inherit eternal life.

Is it possible that the believer can, for a moment, be insensible of the extent of his obligation? Is he redeemed from sin and misery by the precious blood of Christ: did the Lord descend from the throne of his glory and assume our fallen nature: did he endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, and make his soul an offering for our sins; and can we requite such unparalleled love with coldness and ingratitude? Has Christ risen from the dead and entered into his glory: does he ever live to make intercession for us: are the reins of universal dominion placed in his hands: and does he constantly employ his unbounded authority for our benefit: had he promised to return, and receive us into his immediate presence, to give us a share of that glory in which he is now enthroned; and can it be necessary to caution us against being ashamed of his gospel?

Yes; such is the desperate wickedness of the human heart, such the natural enmity of fallen man against God, that even those, who are renewed in the spirit of their mind, who are no longer, as formerly, the slaves of sin, are ever prone to compromise their allegiance to their Lord, for the sake of avoiding “the world’s dread laugh.” They know that they have not followed cunningly devised fables; they know that Christ died for their sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; they know, that he who did so much for them, is God over all, blessed for evermore: in whom they live, and move, and have their being; and yet, this is not sufficient to lead them on every occasion to glory in the cross of Christ.

They know, that there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by

which they can be saved; they know, that if the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; and still they feel backward to go forth without the camp to Jesus, bearing his reproach. They know that the gospel, derided and despised as it is by worms of the dust, forms the theme of unceasing praise by myriads of angels and glorified spirits before the throne of God. They know, that the salvation of Christ, although a stumbling-block and foolishness to them that perish, is the great subject into which the angels desire to look, and in which, with wonder and astonishment, they trace the manifold wisdom of God. There are moments indeed, when the sublimity of these considerations so elevates the mind, as to lead believers to glory when counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of the Lord; but at other times, the open ridicule, or the half-suppressed derision of those who know not God, fills them with uneasiness, and they are tempted to conceal their attachment to Jesus.

What a proof is this of our weakness, and of the dreadful malignity of that disease with which our nature is so deeply infected! How impressively does it remind us of the declaration of our Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Sin, we are assured, shall not have dominion over those who are Christ's; but this does not arise from any inherent strength which they have received. The Christian life is a life of faith, of entire dependence on Christ, of habitual conviction of our own weakness, and of constant application to his fulness. The grace of Christ has often enabled his people to glory in the most aggravated tribulation. The martyrs of Jesus have braved death in its most appalling forms. For no other crime than attachment to him, they have endured the most cruel sufferings, and they have gotten the victory through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony. No temptation is too strong for the believer when his eyes are directed to Christ. In such cases, his Lord always makes him to triumph: but the same grace is necessary to enable him to endure the smallest trial.

Without this, we can no more bear the sneer of ignorance, or the affected pity of the deluded votaries of this present world, than we could support the torments of the rack. But this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith; and, under the influence of this Divine principle, we shall always be more than conquerors.

This may teach us how exactly the religion of Jesus is adapted to our circumstances. It reveals a perfect atonement for the lost and guilty, which

neither requires nor admits of any addition; it proclaims pardon to sinners without money and without price; and by forming an indissoluble union between the Saviour and the believer, it secures his deliverance from sin. This deliverance is indeed imperfect in our present state. The moral disease of our nature has withered all our energies, and left us an easy prey to the wiles of the Devil. But as the precious ointment on the head of Aaron ran down to the skirts of his garments, so the Holy Spirit, communicated to Christ without measure, is imparted to every believer, and causes him to triumph over all his enemies. But this Spirit we receive through faith, Galatians 3:14. The moment our eyes are withdrawn from the Captain of our salvation, like Peter, we begin to sink. The believer then resembles Samson when shorn of his locks; and weak like another man, is sure to fall before the slightest temptation.

Let the followers of Jesus at once be humbled and encouraged by this consideration. Well may they say, Lord, what is man? Surely, in his best estate, he is altogether vanity. After tasting that the Lord is gracious, after experiencing the sweetness of communion with God, we are often so base and ungrateful as to blush at the sneer of the scorner, and hardly dare to avow our attachment to that gracious Friend who hath redeemed us with his own blood. But notwithstanding all this, let not the believer turn aside from following the Lord; let him daily cultivate habitual dependence on Christ, and all shall be well. We know who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

The day is approaching when all, who, from fear of man, from attachment to this present world, or from any other cause, have been ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, thus rejecting this only remedy which the love of God has provided for a lost and ruined world, shall be doomed to everlasting contempt; while those, who, through the Saviour's grace, have confessed him before men, shall be received into the heavenly mansions, and for ever share that matchless glory with which their Elder Brother is already crowned.

Let this hope then animate believers. Let them not think it strange although they should have trial of cruel mockings, but remember the exhortation, "Let those who suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator." Amidst all the ridicule which the men of the world affect to pour on the doctrine of Christ, they feel

a secret misgiving of heart, an apprehension that at last they may be found in an error, and that the persons whom they brand as enthusiasts, may receive the approbation of God. How much does it tend to harden such characters, when they see an appearance of faltering in those who have embraced the Gospel; when, instead of being always ready to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of their hope with meekness and fear, they are, on certain occasions, ashamed to avow their real sentiments. It is not necessary or proper at all times to intrude upon others the doctrine of Christ. Nothing is more calculated to excite prejudice, and to harden men to their destruction. But never let the silence of a Christian, on that subject which chiefly occupies his mind, appear to arise from the fear of ridicule.

Let him judge when he ought to direct the attention of others to the truth, and when he ought to be silent. There is a season for everything; but there is no time when the follower of Jesus, without the basest cowardice, and the deepest ingratitude, can disown his Master, or shrink from the open avowal of his allegiance. His motives may be misrepresented, his understanding contemned; he may be charged with hypocrisy, or with being the dupe of able and unprincipled men; but he must follow his Lord through good and through bad report. Truth will finally prevail; and the approbation of Jesus from the thrones of his glory will more than compensate for every uneasy sensation which the believer experienced, while an inhabitant of a world in a state of rebellion against God. Nor will the approbation of Jesus be transient. Through the revolving ages of eternity his people shall be the objects of his unchanging love; and not a cup of cold water, given under the influence of attachment to him, or the smallest sacrifice of our inclinations to his authority, shall fail to obtain an everlasting, an unmeasurable reward.

DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

Examination of John 3:16 & John 3:17

John the Baptist had preached that the kingdom of God was at hand; and this was confirmed by the preaching of Jesus. Nicodemus, convinced by the Lord's miracles that he was a teacher come from God, desired information respecting this kingdom, and was told, that those only were its subjects who had been born again. This appeared strange to one who, in common with this countrymen, considered it a matter of course, that Israel, so long distinguished as God's peculiar people, should enjoy the privileges of the kingdom of which their prophets had spoken during a period of fifteen hundred years. In opposition to the warning given by John, not to trust in their relation to Abraham, (Matt. 3:9) he imagined that the blessings of Messiah's reign would be confined to Israel, and that, under his victorious banner, they should go forth to execute vengeance on the heathen who knew not God, and by whom Israel had been so long oppressed (Psa. 149:6-7; Isa. 41:15-16).

The Lord, having described himself as the Son of man who came down from heaven, proceeded to inform Nicodemus that, in correspondence with the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness, he was to be lifted up, that whosoever believed in him might not perish, but have eternal life; adding, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved," (John 3:16-17).

Here the Lord gives the explanation of whosoever, which the Jewish ruler would undoubtedly have understood to refer to Israel, but he was taught that it included men of all nations. Dr. Wardlaw tells us, that God's love "to mankind—to the race, ought not to be questioned by any who believed that in these words Jesus spoke truth." I shall not stop to comment upon the irreverence of this remark. I leave it as it stands, although, considering the different senses in which the general term world is employed, it might well have been spared. "Do not," he says again, "contradict the Saviour himself by denying that he loved the world." Dr. Wardlaw surely knows that the whole is often used in Scripture for a part;—thus, all Judea is said to be baptized of John (Matt. 3:5-6) and yet Christ made and baptized more disciples than John

(John 4:1).

We have already examined the statement that God's love extends to the world, and have shown that it is not only destitute of any solid foundation, but that its fallacy is practically demonstrated by the history of God's dealings with the human race from the beginning down to the present time. It is passing strange that any one should, at the same time, hold this sentiment and the doctrine of personal election. Dr. Wardlaw admits that, had it not been for personal election, none would have been saved. Of what avail, then, is God's love to the non-elect? He says, there is a "special love to his people;" but what kind of love is that, the objects of which are "children of wrath,"—alienated from God, under the curse of the law, and who are permitted to perish in their sins either without once hearing the way of escape, and consequently dying in unbelief (Rom. 10:14); or having their condemnation aggravated by their rejection of the Gospel through their love of darkness and hatred of light!

The question is—What is the meaning of the term world, in this passage? If it necessarily means the whole human race, doubtless Dr. Wardlaw's assertion of God's universal love to mankind is clearly established; but he well knows such is not necessarily the meaning of the word. Sometimes it denotes the wicked, in contrast with God's people. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you," (John 15:18, see also John 14:17-19). It is used for the Gentiles exclusively. "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:11-15). It is used also for men of all nations, whether Jews or Gentiles: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," (2 Cor. 5:19; That the world here means the redeemed of all nations, "the children of God who are scattered abroad," is plain, for to them alone God does not impute their trespasses.) The use of the term world, in the passage under consideration, cannot then be a proof of God's universal love

to mankind,—a sentiment opposed to the whole tenor of scripture, and to the fact that the gate which leads to life is strait, and few there be that find it. Dr. Wardlaw may indeed reply,—I keep to the word here made use of; Jesus says, God so loved the world; but you tell us it is only a part of the world. Various passages have been adduced, to which more shall afterwards be added, in which the same word is used, which all must admit that it is not to be taken in a universal sense. The Apostle tells us, the whole world lieth in wickedness; hence we might argue, that none shall escape; and if any should observe that this interpretation contradicts the former clause of the verse,—"we know that we are of God,"—we might reply, we adhere to the Apostle's words, he tells us the whole world lieth in wickedness.

The best comment on our Lord's words,—"God so loved the world,"—is the song of the redeemed: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," (Rev. 5:9). And, again, the Apostle, after enumerating the tribes of Israel, of which twelve thousand of each tribe were sealed, adds, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9-10). Here is the world which God so loved as to give his only begotten Son, "men of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Again, we are informed that on the day of Pentecost there were dwelling at Jerusalem devout men "out of every nation under heaven." This is at least as strong an expression as "the world," and yet no one supposes it is to be understood as necessarily including men from Britain and China. So that the principle of interpretation for which our author contends, must be abandoned.

Dr. Wardlaw alleges, that the limiting statement,—"that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life,—establishes the universality of the phraseology used in the beginning of the verse,—"God so loved the world." But this by no means follows; the limitation is equally necessary whether "the world" be understood in a limited or universal sense. Supposing the world to mean either the Gentiles or men of all nations,—in both which senses it occurs in the word of God,—the limitation is as necessary as if the

world had denoted the whole race of mankind. It points out the only way of salvation by faith in the Son of God.

In the passage under consideration, while the term world includes men of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, it particularly refers to the latter. The Jews connected the privileges which they expected under Messiah's reign with the judgments of God upon the Gentiles; but the Lord informed Nicodemus that the Son of God had come, not for the condemnation, but for the salvation, of men of all nations, whether Jews or Gentiles. The middle wall of partition was to be broken down, and peace to be proclaimed to them that were afar off, as well as to them that were nigh.

Thus it is apparent that in his discourse with Nicodemus, the Lord intimated that the peculiar privileges of Israel were about to cease,—that there was to be under the new dispensation no respect of persons,—that God was no longer to be the God of the Jews only, but "of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith," (Rom. 3:30); for whosoever—Jew or Greek—believed in the Son of man, who was about to be lifted up, should not perish, but have eternal life. This was a rude shock to the prejudices of the Jewish ruler, and therefore the Lord proceeds to illustrate what he had said, by adding, "for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." The world here obviously means men of all nations. For two thousand years, the knowledge of God had been confined to Israel; during that period preparations had been going forward for the manifestation of the Son of God. The day was now about to break, and the shadows to flee away; the kingdom of God was to be preached, and "every man" was to press into it. "All flesh was to see the salvation of God." Jesus was to be lifted up, and was to "draw all men unto him." God's love to the world is evidently in contrast with the love with which he had loved Israel (Deut. 33:3). He was now to show the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, whom he had afore prepared unto glory, even those whom he should call, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (Rom. 9:23-24).

If in John 3:16, we are to understand by the world all mankind, how different is the language of other passages,—"I never knew you." Were those whom he never knew, and to whom he will say, depart from me, the objects of God's love?

In proportion as men depart from just views of the Atonement, they approximate to those who, perverting the declaration that God is love, which is manifested by sending his Son into the world that his people might live through him,—represent this love as embracing all mankind, and issuing in universal salvation; which indeed is the necessary result of God's universal love. The world which God loved, is the world which shall be saved through faith in his Son,—the world to which he will not impute their trespasses,—a countless multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.

Dr. Wardlaw dwells on the absurdity of understanding by the world, in this passage, "the elect in the world," because it is added, that whosoever "believeth in him should not perish; that being a position which would imply that some of the elect might not believe, and might thus incur perdition." We answer,

First, No such thing would be implied. Faith is the manifestation of election; the two are inseparably connected. We can only know our election by our calling (2 Pet. 1:10). If by the world we were to understand the elect, the following clause would show how their election was to be ascertained.

Secondly, We understand the world in this passage, to mean men of all nations, with an especial reference to the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered to be accursed, and who are here put upon the same footing with Israel, as being equally the objects of the Divine love.

Although the various parts of the plan of salvation may be distinguished, they form one connected whole. We may speak of the incarnation, sufferings, and death of Jesus, his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God, his being invested with all power in heaven and in earth; but these are all constituent parts of the same stupendous plan,—they cannot be separated,—they mutually depend on each other. Having expiated the sins of his people, in other words, having purchased the Church—to be gathered out of all nations,—with his own blood, Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give them repentance, by manifesting himself to them in their successive generations, in a way he doth not to the world. Dr. Wardlaw explains God granting repentance unto life (Acts 11:18), as evidently meaning, "in the spirit of the words, the granting of the means, as revealed in the Gospel, of restoration to God, to holiness, and to happiness," (p. 227). But the disciples were speaking of Cornelius and his friends, to whom God had not only

granted the means, but the blessing of repentance; and it is abundantly evident that the same thing is implied in the words of the Apostle, when he proclaims Christ's exaltation as a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins, for it is limited to Israel, the people of God, (Acts 5:31).

The principle upon which Dr. Wardlaw interprets "granting repentance unto life," as merely granting the means of restoration to God, would neutralize, or at least dilute, many of the most precious promises of the word of God. "I give unto them (my sheep) eternal life," must, on this principle, be understood, "I grant them the means, as revealed in the Gospel, of restoration to God, to holiness, and to happiness."

We are told that the servant of the Lord must not strive, 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 (2 Tim. 2:24-25). Here, as elsewhere, giving repentance does not mean, "in the spirit of the words," the granting of the means of restoration, for that they already enjoyed while opposing the servant of the Lord; it means turning men from darkness unto light; taking away the heart of stone, and giving them an heart of flesh. Again: unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, "but to suffer for his sake," must, "in the spirit of the words," mean, Unto you is granted, in the behalf of Christ, "the means, as revealed in the Gospel," not only of believing, but of suffering for his sake. The sufferings, however, of the Philippians were real; and so was the faith bestowed on them.

But how does it comport with Dr. Wardlaw's idea of God's universal love to mankind, that he did not give the means of repentance and forgiveness to the Gentiles till so late a period, but left them in ignorance and darkness for two thousand years since the call of Abraham, and that to this day so small a part of the world enjoys the means of repentance and forgiveness?

On the whole, this passage, which Dr. Wardlaw deems so conclusive in favor of the universality of the Atonement, simply teaches us, that the blessings of salvation were to be extended to all nations,—that no man was to be known after the flesh,—that henceforth there was to be neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; that, through faith, the objects of the Divine love should come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And this is the uniform doctrine of the New Testament.

THE GOSPEL, WHAT IS IT?

THE GOSPEL is the good news of pardon to the guilty; and it enters into no calculations, in regard to the different degrees of guilt in those whom it addresses. It reveals an atonement sufficient for all; and every sinner of the human race is commanded to receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners. The Gospel does not teach us how to lay a foundation for ourselves, but informs us of the sure foundation which God has laid in Zion, upon which all are equally invited and commanded to build their hopes, without any apprehensions of being upbraided for their past conduct by their gracious Creator.

The Gospel is very generally misunderstood by those who profess to believe. They view it as a scheme for making up their deficiencies through the merits of Christ; but this is “another gospel.” The Gospel of Christ is addressed to those who are far from righteousness; who are poor and blind, and naked; who have no money to purchase salvation, no merit to recommend them to the favour of God. Christ came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If we are not sinners we have nothing to do with the Gospel; and if we are sinners, let us not reject the counsel of God against ourselves, by vainly supposing that anything about us gives us a peculiar claim to his favour, or by imagining that our sins are too great to be forgiven. The righteousness of God is altogether irrespective of our obedience. The thief upon the cross was saved by faith in Jesus, and none shall enter heaven in any other way.

Let us not then suppose, that we either have, or shall hereafter obtain, something which may entitle us to the favour of God. “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” Let us therefore come to God with the publican's prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner”; and let us look for this mercy through the atonement of Christ.

Although the Scriptures are so clear and express on this subject, it is a stumbling-block and foolishness to the great body of those who hear the Gospel. It offends their pride to be put upon a level with the outcasts of society; surely, they think, some difference will be made; but they err, not knowing the Scriptures; not understanding the malignity of sin nor the grace of God. They view it as a kind of bargain which God proposes to make with

his creatures, that on certain conditions he will accept them—while in fact it is the message of reconciliation, equally addressed to all mankind, declaring that a full atonement for sin has been made upon the cross, and inviting every sinner of Adam's race instantly to approach God as his Friend and Father through Christ. When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, it was a remedy equally adapted for all who had been bitten. Whether the bite had just been received, or whether the poison had infected the blood, by looking to the serpent, the patient was healed; and in reference to this emblem, Christ, indiscriminately addressing all mankind, says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else—a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me” (Isa. 45:21, 22).

In announcing the publication of the gospel, the Lord declared by his prophet: “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isa. 2:11).

While the Gospel is a proclamation of pardon addressed to sinners without exception, an unlimited invitation to the guilty to take shelter in the blood of atonement, it is the power of God unto salvation, only to those who believe. But it is vain to talk of being justified by Christ's righteousness, unless our hearts are purified by faith.

We may profess faith in Christ while we are the slaves of sin; we may deceive ourselves, and affirm that we are trusting in his righteousness while we are living after the flesh; but every branch in the vine that beareth not fruit shall be cast into the fire. We cannot impose on God; and if with the Scriptures in our hands, we impose on ourselves, we are inexcusable.

If we believe Christ's Gospel, it will effectually work in our hearts (1 Thess. 2:13), and teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; and if what we believe does not produce this effect, it is not the true grace of God in which we stand. Every doctrine, the belief of which does not produce this effect, is a delusion, and the comfort which we derive from it is merely sporting ourselves “with our own deceivings.” They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.