

THE
GOSPEL
WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION:

OR,
THE DUTY OF SINNERS
TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST.

THIRD EDITION,
WITH CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS

To which is added,

an

APPENDIX,

ON THE QUESTION, WHETHER THE EXISTENCE OF ANY
HOLY DISPOSITION OF HEART IS NECESSARY
IN ORDER TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST.

By A. FULLER.

Go, preach the gospel to every creature: he that believes and
is baptized, shall be saved; but he that does not believe
shall be damned! — Jesus Christ.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author had no thoughts of reprinting the present publication, till he was repeatedly requested to do so from very respectable quarters.

The corrections and additions, which form a considerable part of this edition are such as, after a lapse of fifteen years, the writer thought it proper to make. It would be inexcusable for him to have lived all this time, without gaining any additional light by what he has seen and heard upon the subject; and still more so, to publish a second edition, without doing all in his power towards improving it. The *omissions*, however, which also are considerable, are not always owing to a disapproval of the sentiment; but to other things presenting themselves, which appeared to be more immediately in point.

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PREFACE

To the First edition.

WHEN the following pages were written, which was in 1781, the author had no intention of publishing them. He had formerly entertained different sentiments. For some few years, however, he had begun to doubt whether all his principles on these subjects were scriptural. These doubts arose chiefly from thinking on some passages of Scripture; particularly the latter part of the second psalm, where kings who *set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed*, are positively commanded to *kiss the Son*: also the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles; who, he found did not hesitate to address unconverted sinners, and to do that in the most pointed manner; saying, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand — Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*. And it appeared to him, there must be a most unwarrantable *force* put upon these passages, to make them mean any other repentance and faith, than what are connected with salvation.

Reading the lives and labors of such men as *Elliot, Brainerd*, and several others who preached Christ with so much success to the American Indians, had an effect upon him. Their work, like that of the apostles, seemed to be plain before them. They appeared to him, in their addresses to those poor benighted heathens, to have none of the difficulties with which he felt himself encumbered. These things led him to the throne of grace, to implore instruction and resolution. He saw that he lacked both; the one to know the mind of Christ, and the other to avow it.

He was for some time, however, deterred from disclosing his doubts. During nearly four years they occupied his mind, and not without increasing. Being once in company with a minister whom he greatly respected, it was thrown out as a matter of enquiry, Whether he had generally entertained just notions concerning unbelief. It was common to speak of unbelief as calling into question the truth of our own personal religion: whereas, he remarked, “It was calling into question the truth of what God had said.” This remark appeared to carry in it its own evidence.

From this time his thoughts upon the subject began to enlarge. He preached upon it more than once. From hence, he was led to think on its opposite, *faith*, and to consider it as *a persuasion of the truth of what God has said*; and of course, to suspect his former views concerning its not being the duty of unconverted sinners.

He was aware that most Christians with whom he was acquainted, viewed the belief of the gospel as something *presupposed* in faith, rather than as being of the *essence* of it; and they considered the contrary as the opinion of Mr. *Sandeman*, which they were agreed in rejecting, as favorable to a dead or inoperative kind of faith. He thought, however, that what they meant by a *belief* of the gospel, was nothing more than a general assent to the doctrines of revelation, unaccompanied with love for them, or a dependance on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. He had no doubt but that such a notion of the subject ought to be rejected: and if this is the notion of Mr. Sandeman (which by the way, he does not know, having never read any of his works), he has no scruple in saying, it is far from anything which he intends to advance.¹

It appeared to him, that we had taken unconverted sinners too much upon their word when they told us that they believed the gospel. He did not doubt but that they might believe many things concerning Jesus Christ, and his salvation: but being blind to the *glory of God*, as it is displayed *in the face of Jesus Christ*, their belief of the gospel must be very superficial, extending only to a

¹ Since the First Edition of this piece made its appearance, the author has seen Mr. Sandeman's writings, and those of Mr. A. McLean, who, on this subject, seems to agree with Mr. Sandeman. Justice requires him to say, that these writers do not appear to plead for a kind of faith which is not followed with love, or by a dependance on Christ alone for salvation; but their idea of faith itself goes to exclude everything cordial from it. Though he accords with them in considering the belief of the gospel as saving faith, yet there is an important difference in the ideas which they attach to believing. This difference, with some other things, may be examined in an APPENDIX. at the end of this edition.

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few facts, without any sense of their real intrinsic excellency — which, strictly speaking, is not faith. Those who see no form, nor splendor in the Messiah, nor beauty that they should desire him, are described as *not believing the report* concerning him. ^{Isa 53.1-2}

He had also read and considered, as well as he was able, President Edward's *Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will*, with some other performances on the difference between *natural* and *moral* inability. He found much satisfaction in this distinction, as it appeared to him to carry with it its own evidence — to be clearly and fully contained in the Scriptures, and calculated to disburden the Calvinistic system of a number of calumnies with which its enemies have loaded it — as well as to afford clear and honorable conceptions of the divine government. If it were not the duty of unconverted sinners to believe in Christ, and do that because of their inability, he supposed this inability must be *natural*, or something which did not arise from an evil disposition. But the more he examined the Scriptures, the more he was convinced that all the inability ascribed to man with respect to believing, arises from the aversion of his heart. They *will not* come to Christ, that they may have life — *will not* hearken to the voice of the charmer, however so wisely he charmed — *will not* seek after God — *nor desire* the knowledge of his ways.

He wishes to avoid the spirit, into which we are apt to be betrayed when engaged in controversy — that of magnifying the importance of the subject beyond its proper bounds. Yet he seriously thinks the subject treated in the following pages is of no small importance. To him it appears to be the same controversy, for substance, as that which in all ages has subsisted between God and an apostate world. God has ever maintained these two principles: *All that is evil is of the creature, and to him belongs the blame of it; and all that is good is of Himself, and to Him belongs the praise of it.* To acquiesce in *both* these positions, is too much for the carnal heart. The advocates for free will, would seem to yield the former, acknowledging themselves blameworthy for the evil; but they cannot admit the latter. Whatever honor they may allow to the general grace of God, they are for ascribing the preponderance in favor of virtue and eternal life, to their own good improvement of it. Others, who profess to be advocates for free grace, appear to be willing that God should have all the honor of their salvation, in case they should be saved; but they reveal the strongest aversion to take to themselves the blame for their destruction, in case they should be lost. To yield both these points to God, is to fall under in the grand controversy with him, and to acquiesce in His revealed will, which acquiescence includes *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* ^{Act 20.21}

Indeed it would not be very difficult to prove that each, in rejecting one of these truths, does not in reality embrace the other. The ARMINIAN, though he professes to take the blame for the evil upon himself, yet he feels no guilt for being a sinner any further than he imagines he could by the help of divine grace, given to him and all mankind, have avoided it. If he admits the native depravity of his heart, it is his misfortune, not his fault; his fault lies not in being in a state of alienation and aversion to God, but in not making the best use of the grace of God to get out of it. And the ANTINOMIAN, though he ascribes salvation to free grace, yet he feels no obligation for the pardon of his impenitence, his unbelief, or his constant aversion to God during his supposed unregeneracy. Thus, as in many other cases, opposite extremes are known to meet. Where no grace is given, they are united in supposing that no duty can be required; which if true, *grace is no more grace.* ^{Rom 11.6}

The following particulars are premised for the sake of a clear understanding of the subject: —

First, There is no dispute about the doctrine of election, or any of the discriminating doctrines of grace. They are allowed on both sides. And it is granted that none ever did, nor will believe in Christ, except those who are chosen of God from eternity. The question does not turn upon what are the causes of *salvation*, but rather upon what are the causes of *damnation*. As Mr. CHARNOCK happily expresses it,

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“No man is an unbeliever, but because he *will* be so; and every man is not an unbeliever, because the grace of God conquers some, changes their wills, and *bends* them to Christ.”¹

Secondly, Neither is there any dispute concerning who ought to be encouraged to consider themselves as entitled to the blessings of the gospel. Though sinners are freely invited to the participation of spiritual blessings, yet they have no interest in them (according to God’s revealed will) while they *continue in unbelief*.^{Rom 11.23} Nor is it any part of the design of these pages to persuade them to believe that they have. On the contrary, the writer is fully convinced that whatever is the secret purpose of God concerning them, they are at present under the curse.

Thirdly, The question is not whether men are bound to do anything more than the law requires; but whether the law, as the invariable standard of right and wrong, does not require every man to cordially embrace whatever God reveals — in other words, whether love to God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, does not include a cordial reception of whatever plan He shall, at any period of time, disclose?

Fourthly, The question is not whether men are required to believe any more than is reported in the gospel, or anything that is not true; but whether that which *is* reported ought not to be believed with all the heart, and whether this is not saving faith?

Fifthly, It is no part of the controversy, whether unconverted sinners are *able* to turn to God, and to embrace the gospel; but what kind of *inability* they lie under with respect to these exercises? Whether it consists in the lack of natural powers and advantages, or merely in the lack of a heart to make a right use of them? If the former, it is granted that obligation would be set aside; but if the latter, it remains in full force. *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God*.^{Rom 8.8} But it does not follow that they are not *obliged* to do so. And their obligation requires this to be clearly insisted on, that they may be convinced of their sin, and so induced to embrace the gospel remedy.

Sixthly, The question is not whether faith is required of sinners as a virtue which, if complied with, shall be the ground of their acceptance with God; or that on account of it, they may be justified in his sight — but whether it is not required as the appointed *mean* of salvation. *Believing in the righteousness of Jesus*, is the only ground of justification; but *faith in him* is necessary to our being interested in it.² We remember the fatal example of the Jews, which the apostle Paul holds up to our view. *The Gentiles*, he says, *who did not follow after righteousness, have attained to righteousness; even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness: Why not? BECAUSE THEY DID NOT SEEK IT BY FAITH, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone*.³ Though we had not been told elsewhere, that in doing this, they were *disobedient*; ⁴ yet our judgments must be strangely warped by our system, if we did not conclude it to be their sin, and that by which they fell, and perished. And we dare not fail to charge our hearers, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, to beware of stumbling upon the same stone, and of falling after the same example of unbelief.

Finally, The question is not whether unconverted sinners are the subjects of exhortation; but whether they ought to be exhorted to perform spiritual duties? It is beyond all dispute, that the Scriptures exhort them to many things. If, therefore, there are any professors of Christianity who question the propriety of this, and who would have nothing said to them except that, “if they are elected, they will be called,” they are not to be reasoned with, but *rebuked*, as setting themselves in direct opposition to the word of God. Most of those who may differ from the author on these

¹ *Discourses*, Vol. II. p. 473.

² *To be interested in it*, is like owning stock in a company, to have ownership rights, a vested interest. — WHG

³ Rom 9.30-32.

⁴ 1Pet 2.8.

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subjects, it is presumed, will admit the propriety of sinners being exhorted to duty; only this duty must, as they suppose, be confined to merely *natural* exercises, or such as may be complied with by a *carnal heart*, destitute of the love of God. It is one design of the following pages, to show that God requires the heart, the whole heart, and nothing but the heart; that all the precepts of the Bible are only the different modes in which we are required to express our love to Him; that, instead of its being true that sinners are obliged to perform duties which have no spirituality in them, there are no such duties to be performed; and that, so far from their being exhorted to everything but what is spiritually good, they are exhorted to nothing else. The Scriptures undoubtedly require them to read, to hear, to repent, and to pray, that their sins may be forgiven them. It is *not*, however, in the exercise of a *carnal*, but of a *spiritual* state of mind, that these duties are performed.

THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST
WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION.

PART I.

In which the subject is shown to be important, stated, and explained.

Inquiry into the Nature of Saving Faith

GOD having blessed mankind with the glorious gospel of his Son, has spoken much in his word, as it might be supposed he would, of the treatment which it should receive from those to whom it was addressed. A cordial reception of it is called in Scripture, *receiving Christ, allowing him, believing in him*, etc.; and the contrary is called, *refusing, disallowing, and rejecting him*; and those who thus reject him are, in so doing, said to *judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life*.¹ These are things on which the New Testament largely insists: great stress is laid there on the reception which the truth meets with. The same lips which commissioned the Apostles to go and *preach the gospel to every creature*, added, *He that BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED, SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT DOES NOT BELIEVE SHALL BE DAMNED. To as many as RECEIVED HIM*, he gave power to become the sons of God; but to those *who did not receive him*, but refused him, and rejected his way of salvation, he became a stumbling-stone, and a rock of offence, that they might stumble, and fall, and perish. Thus the gospel, according to the different reception it meets with, becomes a *savor of life unto life, or of death unto death*.²

The controversies which have arisen concerning faith in Jesus Christ, are not so much an object of surprise, as the conduct of those who, professing to be Christians, affect running down the subject as a matter of little or no importance. There is no principle or exercise of the human mind of which the New Testament speaks so frequently, and on which so great a stress is laid. And with regard to the inquiry whether it is obligatory on all men who hear, or have an opportunity to hear the word, it *cannot* be uninteresting. If it is *not*, then to inculcate it would be unwarrantable and cruel to our fellow-sinners, as it subjects them to an additional charge of abundance of guilt. But if it *is*, then to explain it away, is to undermine the Divine Prerogative, and as far as it goes, to subvert the very intent of the promulgation of the gospel, which is that men "*should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life through his name*."³ This is doubtless a very serious thing, and ought to be seriously considered. Though some good men may be implicated in this matter, it becomes them to remember that *whoever breaks one of the least of Christ's Commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven*.⁴ If believing is a commandment, then it cannot be one of the *least*. The important relations which it sustains, as well as the dignity of its object, must prevent this — the knowledge of sin, repentance for it, and gratitude for pardoning mercy, all depend upon our admitting it. And if it is a *great commandment*, the breach of it must be a *great sin*; and whoever teaches men otherwise, is a partaker of their guilt; and if they perish, he will be found to have been accessory to their eternal ruin. Let it be considered whether the Apostle to the Hebrews did not proceed upon such principles when he exclaimed, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation?*^{Heb 2.3} And the Lord Jesus himself when he declared, *HE THAT DOES NOT BELIEVE SHALL BE DAMNED!*^{Mar 16.16}

In order to determine whether faith in Christ is the duty of all men who have an opportunity to hear the gospel, it will be necessary to determine what it is, or what it consists in. Some have maintained that it consists in a persuasion of our interest in Christ, and in all the benefits and

¹ Joh 1.12, 3.16; Psa 118.22; Mat. 21.42; 1Pet 2.7; Act 13.46.

² Mar 16.16; 1Pet 2.8; 2Cor 2.16.

³ Joh 20.31.

⁴ Mat 5.19.

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blessings of his mediation. The author of *The further Inquiry*, Mr. L. Weyman, of Kimbolton, who wrote upon the subject about sixty years ago, questions whether there is any act of special faith which does not have the nature of appropriation in it; ¹ and by *appropriation* he appears to mean a persuasion of our interest in spiritual blessings. This is the ground upon which he rests the main body of his argument; to overturn it would therefore, in effect, be to refute his book. Some who would not be thought to maintain a persuasion of an *interest in Christ* as essential to faith — for the sake of many Christians whom, upon this principle, they cannot help but observe to be, generally speaking, *unbelievers* — yet maintain what fully implies it. Though they will allow for the comfort of such Christians, that *assurance* is not of the essence of faith (understanding by *assurance*, an assured persuasion of our salvation), but that a *reliance on Christ* is sufficient; yet in almost all other things, they speak as if they did not believe what they say at those times. It is common for such persons to call those fears which occupy the minds of Christians, lest they miss salvation at last, by the name of *unbelief*, and to reprove them for being guilty of this God-dishonoring sin, exhorting them to be strong in faith, like Abraham giving glory to God — when all that is meant is that they should firmly believe the goodness of their own state without doubting. If *this* is saving faith, then it must inevitably follow that it is *not* the duty of unconverted sinners; for they are not interested in Christ, and it cannot possibly be their duty to believe a lie. But if it can be proved that the proper object of saving faith is *not* our being interested in Christ, but the glorious gospel of the ever blessed God, and which is *true whether we believe it or not*, a contrary inference must be drawn: for it is admitted on all hands, that it is the duty of every man to *believe* what God reveals.

I have no objection to allowing that true faith “has in it the nature of appropriation,” if by this term he meant an *application* of the truths believed, to our own particular cases.

“When the Scriptures teach,” says a pungent writer, “*we* are to receive instruction for the enlightening of *our own* minds; when they admonish, *we* are to take warning; when they reprove, *we* are to be checked; when they comfort, *we* are to be cheered and encouraged; and when they recommend any grace, *we* are to desire and embrace it; when they command any duty, *we* are to hold ourselves enjoined to do it; when they promise, *we* are to hope; when they threaten, *we* are to be terrified, as if the judgment were denounced against *us*; and when they forbid any sin, *we* are to think they forbid it to *us*. By which application, we shall make all the rich treasures contained in the Scriptures wholly our own, and in such a powerful and peculiar manner enjoy the fruit and benefit of them, as if they had been wholly written *for us*, and no one else besides us.” ²

By saving faith we undoubtedly embrace Christ for ourselves, in the same sense as Jacob embraced Jehovah as *his* God (Gen. 28.21); that is, to reject every idol that stands in competition with Him. Christ is all-sufficient, and suited to save *us* as well as others; and it is for the forgiveness of *our* sins that we put our trust in him. But this is very different from a persuasion of our being in a state of salvation. My objections to this notion of faith are as follows.

First, Nothing can be an object of faith except what God has revealed in his word; but the interest that any individual has in Christ, and the blessings of the gospel more than another, is not revealed. God has nowhere declared concerning any one of us as individuals, that we shall be saved. All that he has revealed on this subject respects us *as characters*.³ He has abundantly promised that all who *believe in him, love him, and obey him*, shall be saved; and a persuasion that *if we sustain these characteristics*, we shall be saved, is doubtless an exercise of faith. But whether we do or not, is not an object of faith, but of consciousness. *By this we know that we*

¹ Page 13.

² Downname’s *Guide to Godliness*. Page 647.

³ That is, as people who exhibit the *characteristics* or *attributes* of those who will be saved. – WHG

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*know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever keeps his word, in him truly, the love of God is perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth: hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*¹ If anyone imagines that God has revealed to him his interest in his love, and did this in a special, immediate, and extraordinary manner, and not by exciting in him the holy exercises of grace, and thereby begetting a consciousness of his being a subject of grace, let him beware lest he deceive his soul. The Jews were not lacking in what some would call *the faith of assurance*. “*We have one father,*” they said, *‘even God.’* But Jesus answered, *‘If God were your father, you would love me.’* Joh 8.41,42

Secondly, The Scriptures always represent faith as terminating on something *outside* us; namely, on Christ, and the truths concerning him. But if it consists in a persuasion of our being in a state of salvation, it must terminate principally on something *within* us; namely, the work of grace in our hearts: for to believe myself interested in Christ, is the same thing as to believe myself a subject of special grace. And hence, as was said, it is common for many who entertain this notion of faith, to consider its opposite, unbelief, as *doubting whether we have been really converted*. But as it is the truth and excellence of *the things to be interested in*, and not *his interest in them*, that the sinner is apt to disbelieve; so it is *these*, and not *that*, on which the faith of the believer primarily terminates. Perhaps what relates to personal interest may, in general, more properly be called *hope* than faith, and its opposite called *fear* than unbelief.

Thirdly, To believe ourselves to be in a state of salvation, however desirable when grounded on evidence, its object is far inferior to *saving faith*. The grand object on which faith fixes, is the glory of Christ, and not the happy condition we are in, as interested in him. The latter doubtless affords great consolation; and the more we discover of His excellence, the more ardent we will be for an interest in him, and the more disconsolate while it continues to be a matter of doubt. But if we are only concerned for our own security, then our faith is vain, and we are still in our sins. That repentance which fixes merely on the consequences of sin, as subjecting us to misery, is selfish and spurious; so too, that faith which fixes merely on the consequences of Christ’s mediation, as raising us to happiness, is equally selfish and spurious. It is the peculiar property of *true faith* to endear Christ: *to you who believe, He is precious.* ^{1Pet 2.7} And where this is the case, if there are no impediments arising from constitutional dejection, or other accidental causes, we will not be in doubt about an interest in him. Consolation will accompany the faith of the gospel: *being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ^{Rom 5.1}

Fourthly, All those exercises of faith which our Lord so highly commends in the New Testament, — such as that of the centurion, the woman of Canaan, and others — are represented as terminating on his *all-sufficiency* to heal them, and not as consisting in a persuasion that they were interested in his special favor, and therefore would succeed. *Only speak the word, says the one, and my servant shall be healed: for I am a man under authority, having Soldiers under me; and I say to this man, go, and he goes; and to another come, and he comes; and to my servant do this, and he does it.* ^{Mat 8.9} Such was the persuasion which the other entertained of his all-sufficiency to help her, that she judged it enough if she might but partake of the crumbs of his table, the scatterings of mercy, as it were. ^{Mat 15.27} Similar to this is the following language: *If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I will be made whole — Do you believe that I am ABLE to do this? They said to him, yes Lord — Lord if you will, you CAN make me clean — If you CAN do anything, have compassion on us, and help us: Jesus said, if you CAN believe, all things are possible to him that believes.* I allow that the case of these people, and that of a sinner applying for forgiveness, are not exactly the same. Christ had nowhere promised to heal all who came for healing: but he has graciously bound himself not to cast out any who come to him for mercy. On this account there is a greater ground for faith in the willingness of Christ to save, than there was

¹ 1Joh 2.3,5; 3.18, 19.

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in his willingness to heal: and there was less unbelief in the saying of the leper, *IF YOU WILL you can make me clean*, than there would be in similar language by someone who, convinced of his own utter insufficiency, applied to him for salvation.

But a persuasion of Christ being both able and willing to save all those who come to God by Him, and consequently to save us if we so apply, is very different from a persuasion that we are the children of God, and interested in the blessings of the gospel.

Mr. ANDERSON, an American writer, has lately published a pamphlet on *The Scripture Doctrine of the Appropriation*, which is in the nature of saving faith. The scheme which he attempts to defend, is that of *Hervey, Marshall, et al*; or that which in Scotland is known by the name of the *Marrow* doctrine.¹ These divines write much about the gospel containing a *gift* or *grant* of Christ and spiritual blessings to sinners of mankind; and that it is the office of faith to so receive the gift as to claim it as our own; and thus they seem to have supposed that it becomes our own. But the gospel contains no *gift* or *grant* to mankind in general beyond that of an offer, or free invitation; and thus indeed Mr. Boston, in his notes on *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, seems to explain it. It warrants every sinner to believe in Christ for salvation; but none to conclude that he is himself interested in salvation till he has *believed*. Consequently such a conclusion, even where it is well founded, cannot be faith, but that which *follows* faith.

Mr. Anderson is careful to distinguish the appropriation for which he contends, from “the knowledge of our being believers, or already in a state of grace,” page 61. He also acknowledges that the ground of saving faith is “something that may be known before, and in order for the *act* of faith;” that it is “among the things that are revealed, and which belong to us and to our children,” Page 60. Yet he makes it of the essence of faith, to believe “that Christ is *ours*,” page 56. It must be *true*, then, that Christ is ours *antecedent* to our believing it, and whether we believe it or not. This, it seems, Mr. Anderson will admit — for he holds that “God has made a *gift* or *grant* of Christ and spiritual blessings, to sinners of mankind;” and this denominates him as ours “before we believe it.” Yet he does not admit the final salvation of all to whom Christ is thus supposed to be given. What, therefore, does the gift amount to, more than a free invitation, concerning which his opponents have no dispute with him? A free invitation, though it affords a warrant to apply for mercy, and that is with an assurance of success; yet it gives no *interest* in its blessings, except on the supposition of its being accepted. Neither does the gift for which Mr. A. contends; nothing is conveyed by it that ensures any man’s salvation. All the author says, therefore, against what he calls *conditions* of salvation, is no less applicable to his own scheme, than to that of his opponents. His scheme is as really conditional as theirs. The condition which it prescribes for our becoming interested in the blessings of eternal life — so far interested, however, as to *possess* them — is to believe them to be our own; and without this, he supposes we will never enjoy them.

He contends, indeed, that the belief of the promises cannot be called a condition of our right to claim an interest in them, because if such a belief is claiming an interest in them, it would be making a thing the condition of itself, pages 50, 51. But to this it is replied: —

First, Though Mr. A. considers saving faith as *including* appropriation, yet this is only one idea which he ascribes to it. He explains it as consisting of three things: (1) a *persuasion* of divine truth wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost; (2) a *sure* persuasion; (3) an *appropriating* persuasion of Christ’s being ours, pages 54-56. Now, even if it were allowed that the last branch of this definition is the same thing as claiming an interest in the promises, and therefore cannot be reckoned as the condition of it, yet this is more than can be said of the former two, which are no less essential to saving faith than the other.

¹ Alluding to a work published some years ago, under the title, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, by Edw. Fisher.

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Secondly, The sense in which the promise is *taken* by what is called *appropriating faith*, is not the same sense as that in which it is given in the promise itself. As *given* in the word, the promise is general, applying equally to one sinner as to another; but as *taken*, it is considered as particular, and as insuring Salvation.

Thirdly, If an *interest* in the righteousness of Christ were the immediate object of saving faith, how could it be said that *it shall be imputed to us if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus from the dead?* ^{Rom 4.24} If Christ's righteousness is ours, it must be ours as *imputed* to us; but this would be making the apostle say, If we believe Christ's righteousness to *be* imputed to us, it *shall be* imputed to us,

I have no partiality for calling faith, or anything done by us, the *condition* of Salvation; but if the term meant a deed to be performed for which the promised good is the reward, it would be inadmissible. If I had used the term, it would have been merely to express the necessary connection of things, or that faith is *that without which there is no Salvation*. And in *this* sense, it is no less a condition in Mr. A.'s scheme, than in what he opposes. He thinks, however, that the promises of God are (by his statement of things) disencumbered of conditions. Yet, how he can prove that God has absolutely given Christ and spiritual blessings to multitudes who will never possess them, I am at a loss to conceive. I would have supposed that whatever God has absolutely promised, would take effect. He says, indeed, that "the Lord may give an absolute promise to those who, in the event, never come to the actual enjoyment of the promised blessing, as in the case of the Israelites being brought to the good land, (Exo 3.17), though the bulk of those who left Egypt perished in the wilderness through unbelief," page 43. It's true, God absolutely promised to plant them "*as a nation*" in the good land; and this He performed. But he did not absolutely promise that every individual who left Egypt would be among them. So far as it respected individuals (unless it was in reference to Caleb and Joshua), the promise was not absolute. ^{Num 26.65}

Upon the mere ground of Christ being exhibited in the gospel "I am persuaded," says Mr. A. "that he is *my* Savior; nor can I without casting reproach upon the wisdom, faithfulness, and mercy of God in setting him forth, entertain any doubts about my justification and salvation through his name," page 65. Has God then *promised* justification and salvation to everyone to whom Christ is exhibited? If He has, it doubtless belongs to faith to give Him credit. But in this case, we should also maintain that the promise will be performed, whatever the state of our minds; for though we do not believe, he abides faithful. On the other hand, if the blessing of justification, though freely *offered* to all, is only *promised* to believers, then it is not faith, but presumption, to be persuaded of my justification in any other way than as being conscious of my believing in Jesus for it.

Mr. A. illustrates his doctrine by a similitude.

"Suppose that a great and generous prince had made a grant of large estates to a certain class of persons described in it, including all things suitable to their condition; and he had publicly declared that whoever of the persons so described, would *believe* such an estate to be his own, by virtue of the grant now mentioned, would not be disappointed, but might immediately enter upon the granted estate according to the order specified in the grant. Suppose, too, that the royal donor, had given the grant in writing, and had added his seal, and his oath, and his gracious invitation, and his most earnest entreaty, and his authoritative command — to induce the persons described in the grant to accept it. It is evident that any one of these persons, having had access to read or hear the grant, must either be truly persuaded that the granted estate is his own, or be chargeable with an attempt to bring dishonor upon the goodness, the veracity, the power, and authority of the donor; on account of which attempt he is liable not only to be debarred forever from the granted estate, but to suffer a most exemplary, and tremendous punishment." (page 66)

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I suppose the object of this similitude is expressed in the sentence, "It is evident that any one of these persons having had access to read or hear the grant, must either be truly persuaded that the granted estate *is his own*; or be chargeable with dishonoring the donor." In what sense then *is it his own*? He is freely invited to partake of it: that is all. It is not *so* his own, except that he may ultimately be debarred from possessing it. But in whatever sense it *is* his own, that is the only sense in which he is warranted to *believe it to be so*. If the condition of his actually possessing it, is his *believing* that he will actually possess it, then he must believe what was not revealed at the time, except conditionally, and what would not have been true, except for his believing it.

The above similitude may serve to illustrate Mr. A.'s scheme; but I know of nothing like it, either in the concerns of men, or the oracles of God. I will venture to say, there never was a gift or grant made upon any such terms; and the man who would make it would expose himself to ridicule. The Scriptures furnish us with an illustration of another kind. The gospel is a *feast, freely provided*; and sinners of mankind are *freely invited* to partake of it. ^{Mat 22.1-14} There is no mention of any *gift* or *grant* distinct from this; but this is itself a sufficient ground. It affords a complete warrant for any sinner, not indeed to believe the provisions are his own, whether he accepts the invitation or not; but that, relinquishing everything that stands in competition with them, and receiving them as a free gift, they will be his own. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins* ^{1Joh 1.9} — *To us it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.* ^{Rom 4.24} Those who were persuaded to embrace the invitation are not described as coming to *make a claim of it as their property*; but as gratefully accepting it. And those who refused are not represented as doubting whether the feast was *provided for them*; but as *making light of it*, and preferring their farms and merchandize before it.

In short, if this writer can prove it to be *true* that justification and eternal life are absolutely given, granted, and promised to all who *hear* the gospel, there can be no dispute whether saving faith includes believing it with respect to ourselves, nor whether it is a duty. But if the thing is false, it can be no part of the faith of the gospel, nor of the duty of a sinner to give credit to it.

But to return. That *the belief of the truth* which God has revealed in the Scriptures concerning Christ, *is saving faith*, is evident from the following passages: — *Go preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.* ^{Mar 16.15-16} Believing here manifestly refers to the gospel to be preached, and the rejection of which would subject the unbeliever to certain damnation — *These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through his name.* ^{1Joh 5.13} Believing unto life is here described as a persuasion of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, and that is on the ground of what was written of him in the Scriptures. — *Those by the wayside are those who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word, out of their hearts, lest they believe and be saved.* ^{Luk 8.12} This language plainly denotes that a real belief of the word is connected with salvation — Peter confessed, *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven.* ^{Mat 16.16,17} Here it is plainly intimated that a belief of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of the living God, *is saving faith*; and that no man can be strictly said to do this, unless he is the subject of a spiritual illumination from above.

To the same purpose are those express declarations of Paul and John: *If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.* ^{Rom 10.9} — *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* ^{1Joh 5.1} — *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* ^{1Joh 5.5} — *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God.* ^{1Joh 4.15} — *He that has received his testimony has set to his seal that God is true.* ^{Joh 3.33} — *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* ^{1Cor 12.3} — *Again, While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.* ^{Joh 12.36} The light they then had was that of the gospel; which

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if they had believed, they would be the children of *light*, or true Christians. — *You sent to John, and he bore witness to the truth— These things I say that you might be saved.* ^{Joh 5.33,34} Our Lord could not mean less by this language than that if they believed those things which John testified, and which he himself confirmed, they would be saved; which is the same thing as declaring it to be *saving faith* — *Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those who believe, (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.* ^{1The 1.10} The words in parentheses are evidently intended to give the reason for the phrase, *those who believe*, and intimate that it was the belief of the gospel testimony that designated them *believers*. — *God has chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.* ^{2The 2.13} It cannot be doubted that *belief of the truth* here means faith in Christ, and being connected with sanctification of the spirit, and eternal salvation, proves it to be *saving faith*.

If the foregoing passages are admitted to prove the point (and if they do not, we may despair of learning anything from the Scriptures), the duty of unconverted sinners to believe in Christ cannot fairly be called in question. For as said before, it is admitted on all hands that it is the duty of every man to believe what God reveals.

But to this statement it is objected that Christianity, having at that time great opposition made to it, and its professors being consequently exposed to great persecution and reproach, the belief and acknowledgment of the gospel was more of a test of sincerity than it is now. Men are now taught the principles of the Christian religion from their youth, and believe them, and are not ashamed to acknowledge them, while yet they give no evidence of their being born of God, but of the contrary. — There is some force in this objection, so far as it respects a *confession* of Christ's name; but I do not perceive that it affects the belief of the gospel.

It was no more difficult to believe the truth at that time than at this, though it might be much more so to avow it. With respect to that traditional assent which is given to Christianity in some nations, it is of the same nature as that which is given to Mahomedanism and Paganism in others. It is no more than that of the Jewish nation in the time of our Lord towards the Mosaic Scriptures. They declared themselves to be Moses' disciples, and had no doubt that they believed him; yet our Lord did not allow them to believe his writings. *Had you believed Moses, he says, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me.* ^{Joh 5.46} The same is doubtless true of all others who assent to His gospel merely from having been educated in it. If they believed it, they would be consistent, and embrace those things which are connected with it. It is worthy of remark that those professors of Christianity who *did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved*, are represented as not believing the truth, and as having pleasure in unrighteousness. ^{2The 2.10,12} To admit the existence of a few facts, without possessing any sense of their humiliating implication, their holy nature, their vast importance, or the practical consequences that attach to them, is to admit the body without the spirit. Paul, notwithstanding his knowledge of the law, and great zeal on its behalf, while blind to its *spirituality*, reckoned himself to be *without the law.* ^{Rom 7.9} And such are those professing Christians, with respect to the gospel, who do not receive the love of the truth, that they may be saved.

It is further objected that men are said to have believed the gospel, who notwithstanding, were destitute of true religion. Thus some among the chief rulers are said to have *believed in Jesus; but did not confess him; for they laved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* ^{Joh 12.42,43} It is said of Simon [the Sorcerer], that he *believed also; yet he was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.* ^{Act 8.13,23} Agrippa is acknowledged by Paul to have *believed the prophets;* ^{Act 26.27} and faith is attributed even to the devils. ^{Jas 2.19} The term *belief*, like almost every other term, is sometimes used in an improper sense. Judas is said to have *repented*, and hanged himself, though nothing more is meant by it than his being struck with remorse, wishing he had not done as he did, on account of consequences. Through the paucity of language, there is no name for everything that differs. And therefore, where two things have the same visible appearance, and differ only in

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some things which are invisible, it is common to call them by the same name. Thus men are termed *honest* who are punctual in their dealings, though such conduct in many instances may arise merely from a regard for their own credit, interest, or safety. Thus the remorse of Judas is called *repentance*; and thus the convictions of the Jewish rulers, of Simon, and Agrippa, and the fearful apprehension of apostate angels, from what they had already felt, is called *faith*. But as we do not infer from the application of the term *repentance* to the feelings of Judas, that there is nothing spiritual in *real* repentance, so neither should we conclude from the foregoing applications of the term *believing*, that there is nothing spiritual in a real belief of the gospel.

“The objects of faith,” it has been said, “are not bare axioms or propositions: the act of the believer does not terminate at an axiom, but at *the thing*: for axioms are not formed but that by them knowledge may be had of *things*.”¹ To believe a bare axiom or proposition, in distinction from the *thing*, must be to barely believe that such and such letters make certain words, and that such words put together have a certain meaning; but who would call this believing the proposition? To believe the proposition is to believe the *thing*. Letters, syllables, words, and propositions are only means of conveyance; and these are not the objects of faith as such, but *the thing conveyed*. Nevertheless, those things must have a conveyance before they can be believed in. The *person, blood, and righteousness of Christ*, for instance, are often said to be *objects of faith*, and this they doubtless are; as they are objects presented to us by the language of Scripture. But they could not meet our faith unless something were *affirmed concerning them* in letters and syllables, or vocal sounds, or by some means or other of conveyance. To say therefore, that these [convenances] are objects of faith, is to say the truth, but not the whole truth; the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ *revealed in the Scriptures as the way of a sinner’s acceptance with God*, are (properly speaking) the objects of our faith. For without such a revelation, it would be impossible to believe in them.

Mr. Booth, and various other writers, have considered faith in Christ as a *dependence* on him, as *receiving* him, *coming* to him, and *trusting* in him for salvation. There is no doubt that these terms are frequently used in the New Testament to express believing. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name — He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall never thirst — That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ — I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*² Whether these terms, however, strictly speaking, convey the same idea as believing, may admit of a question. They seem to be the immediate effects of faith, rather than faith itself. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes the order of these things in what he says of the faith of Enoch. — *He that comes to God must believe that he exists, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* Here are three different exercises of the mind: *first*, believing that God exists; *secondly*, believing that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him; *thirdly*, coming to him; and the last is represented as the effect of the former two.

The same may be applied to Christ. He that comes to Christ must believe the gospel testimony, that he is the Son of God, and the Savior of sinners; His is the only name given under heaven, and among men, by which we can be saved. He must also believe the gospel promise, that He will bestow eternal salvation on all them who obey him; and under the influence of this persuasion, he *comes* to him, *commits* himself to him, or *trusts* the salvation of his soul in his hands. This process may be so quick as not to allow the mind to be conscious of it; and especially as at such a time it is otherwise employed than in speculating upon its own operations. So far as it is able to recollect, the whole may appear to be one complex exercise of the soul. In this large sense also, as comprehending not only the credit of the gospel testimony, but the soul’s dependence on Christ

¹ John Gill, *Work – Practical and Doctrinal Divinity*, bk. 2, *Of Faith in God and In Christ*, par. II.

² Joh 1.12; 6.35; Eph. 1.12; 2Tim 1.12.

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alone for acceptance with God, it is allowed that believing is necessary not only to *salvation*, but to *justification*. We must *come* to Jesus that we may have *life*. Those who attain the blessing of justification must *seek it by faith*, and *not by the works of the law*; *submitting* themselves to the righteousness of God. This blessing is constantly represented as following our *union* with Christ; and *he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit*.¹

Let it but be granted that a real belief of the gospel is not merely a matter presupposed in saving faith, but that it enters into the essence of it, and the writer of these pages will be far from contending for the exclusion of trust or dependence. He certainly has no such objection to it as is alleged by Mr. Mc'Lean; that "to include in the nature of faith, any holy exercise of the heart, affects the doctrine of justification by grace alone; without the works of the law."² If he supposed with that author, however, that in order for justification to be wholly of grace, no holiness must precede it, or that the party must at the time be in a state of enmity to God, he must (to be consistent) unite with him also in excluding *trust* (which undoubtedly is a holy exercise) from having any place in justifying faith; but persuaded as he is that the freeness of justification rests upon no such ground, he is not under this necessity.

The term *trust* appears to be most appropriate or best adapted of any, to express the confidence which the soul reposes in Christ for the fulfilment of his *promises*. We may *credit* a report that brings evil tidings as well as good; but we cannot be said to *trust* it. We may also credit a report, the truth or falsehood of which does not at all *concern us*; but that in which we place *trust*, must be something in which our well-being is involved. The relinquishment of false confidences which the gospel requires, and the risk taken in embracing it, are likewise better expressed by *this* term than by any other. A true belief of the record which God has given of his Son, is accompanied with all this; but the term *belief* does not of itself necessarily convey it. When Jacob's sons brought the coat of many colors to him, he credited their story; he believed Joseph to be torn in pieces: but he could not be said to *trust* that he was so. When the same persons on their return from Egypt declared that Joseph was yet alive, Jacob at first did not believe them; but on seeing the wagons, he was satisfied of the truth of their declaration, and *trusted* in it too, leaving all behind him on the ground of it.

But whatever difference there may be between *credit* and *trust*, they agree in those particulars which affect the point at issue; the one no less than the other has relation to *revealed truth* as its foundation. In some cases, it directly refers to the divine veracity; as in Psa 119.42, *I trust in Your word*. And where the immediate reference is to the power, the wisdom, or the mercy of God, or to the righteousness of Christ, there is a remote relation to veracity: for neither the one nor the other would be objects of trust, were they not revealed in a way of *promise*. And from this it will follow, that trusting in Christ, no less than crediting his testimony, is the duty of every sinner to whom the revelation is made.

If it is asked, What ground could a sinner, who at last proves to have no interest in the salvation of Christ, ever possess for trusting in Him? Let it be considered what it was for which he was warranted or obliged to trust? Was it that Christ would save him, whether he believed in him or not? No, there is no such promise, but an explicit declaration of the contrary. To trust in this, therefore, would be trusting in a falsehood. That for which he ought to have trusted in him, was the obtaining of mercy *in case he applied for it*. For *this*, there was a complete warrant in the gospel declarations, as Mr. Booth, in his *Glad tidings to perishing sinners*, has fully evinced. There are principles in that performance, which the writer of these pages, as highly as he respects the author, cannot approve. The principal subjects of his disapproval have been pointed out, and he

¹ Joh 5.40; Rom 9.31, 32; 10.3; 1Cor 6.17.

² Mc'Lean, *On the Commission*, p. 83.

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thinks scripturally refuted by Mr. Scott. ¹ But with respect to the warrant which every sinner has to trust in Christ for salvation, Mr. B. has clearly and fully established it. I may add, If any man distrusts either the power or willingness of Christ to save those who come to him, and so continues to stand at a distance, relying upon his own righteousness, or some false ground of confidence, to the rejection of Christ, it is criminal and inexcusable unbelief.

Mr. *Booth* has, to all appearance, designedly avoided the question, Whether faith in Christ is the *duty* of the ungodly? The leading principle of the former part of this work, however, cannot stand upon any other ground. He contends for the gospel affording a complete *warrant* for the ungodly to believe in Jesus; and surely he will not affirm that sinners are at liberty either to embrace the warrant afforded them, or to reject it? He defines believing in Jesus Christ as, “*Receiving* him as he is exhibited in the doctrine of grace, or *depending upon him only*.” But if the ungodly are not *obliged* as well as warranted to do this, they are at liberty to do as the Jewish nation did, *not receive him*, and to go on depending upon the works of the law for acceptance with God. In the course of his work, he describes the gospel message as full of “kind invitations, winning persuasions, and importunate entreaties; and the messengers as commissioned to persuade and entreat sinners to be reconciled to God, and to regard the vicarious work of Jesus as the only ground of their justification.” ² But *how* if they should remain unreconciled, and continue to disregard the work of Christ? *How* if they should after all, make light of this “royal banquet,” and prefer their farms and merchandise to these “plentiful provisions of divine grace?” Are they guiltless in doing so, and free from all breach of duty? I am persuaded, whatever was Mr. Booth’s reason for being silent on this subject, he will not say they are.

¹ See his *Warrant and Nature of Faith*.

² Pp. 36, 37. Second Edition.

PART II.

***Arguments to prove faith in Christ is the duty of all men
who hear, or have an opportunity to hear the gospel.***

WHAT has been already advanced on the *nature of faith in Christ* may contribute to deciding the question, Whether it is the duty of the ungodly; but in addition to this, the Scriptures furnish abundance of positive evidence. The principal part of that which has occurred to me, may be comprehended under the following propositions:— *

I. Unconverted sinners are commanded, exhorted, and invited to believe in Christ for salvation.

It is here taken for granted, that whatever God commands, exhorts, or invites us to comply with, is the duty of those to whom such language is addressed. If therefore saving faith is not the duty of the unconverted, we may expect never to find any addresses of this nature directed to them in the holy Scriptures. We may expect God will as soon require them to become angels as Christians, if the one is no more their duty than the other.

There is a phraseology suited to different periods of time. Previous to the coming of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, we read but little of *believing*; but other terms fully expressive of the thing are found in abundance. I will select a few examples, and accompany them with such remarks as may show them to be applicable to the subject.

Psa 2.11, 12. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling: kiss the Son lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

The psalm is evidently a prophecy of the resurrection and exaltation of the Messiah. Whatever reference may be had to Solomon, there are several things which are not true of either him or his government; and the whole is applicable to Christ, and is plentifully applied to him in the New Testament.

The *kings and judges of the earth* who are here admonished to *serve the Lord Messiah with fear*, and to *kiss the Son lest he be angry*, are the same persons mentioned in verse 2, which words we find in the New Testament applied to *Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel*; ^{Act 4.27} that is, for all appearances, they were the enemies of Christ, unregenerate sinners; and as such, they lived and died.

The command of God addressed to these rulers is of a *spiritual* nature, including unfeigned faith in the Messiah, and sincere obedience to his authority. To *kiss the Son*, is to be reconciled to him, to embrace his word and ordinances, and bow to his scepter. To *serve him with fear, and rejoice with trembling*, denote that they should not think meanly of him on the one hand, nor on the other, hypocritically cringe to him from a mere apprehension of his wrath; but they should sincerely embrace his government, and even *rejoice* that they had it to embrace. That which is required of unbelievers here, is the very spirit which distinguishes believers: a holy fear of Christ's majesty, and a humble confidence in his mercy; taking his yoke upon them, and wearing it as their highest delight. That the object of the command was spiritual, is also manifest from the threatening, and the promise annexed to it, *lest you perish from the way — blessed are all those who put their trust in him*. It is here plainly supposed that if they did embrace the Son, they would not perish from the way, and if they did put their trust in him, they would be blessed. The result is, unconverted sinners are commanded to believe in Christ for salvation: therefore, believing in Christ for salvation is their duty.

Arguments for Faith Being a Duty

Isaiah 55.1-7. Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money: come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread; and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know; and nations that did not know you, shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and for the holy One of Israel; for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

This is the language of invitation: but divine invitation implies an obligation to accept it; otherwise the conduct of those *who made light* of the gospel supper, and preferred their farms and merchandise before it, would have been guiltless.

The concluding verses of this passage express those things *literally* which the foregoing ones described *metaphorically*: the persons invited, and the invitation, are the same in both. The *thirst* which they are supposed to possess, does not mean a holy desire after spiritual blessings, but the natural desire of happiness which God has implanted in every bosom; and which, in wicked men is directed not to *the sure mercies of David*, but to that which *is not bread*, or which has no solid satisfaction in it. The *duty* to comply with what they are so pathetically urged, is a relinquishment of every false way, and a returning to God in His name who was given for *a witness, a leader, and a commander to the people*; which is the same thing as *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*.^{Act 20.21} The encouragements held up to induce compliance with this duty are the freeness, substantiality, durableness, certainty, and rich abundance of those blessings which as many as *repent and believe the gospel*, shall receive. The whole passage is exceedingly explicit as to the duty of the unconverted; nor is it possible to evade the force of it by any just or fair method of interpretation.

Jer 6.16. Thus says the Lord, stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls: but they said, We will not walk in it.

The persons addressed here are beyond all doubt ungodly men. God himself bears witness of them that *their ears were uncircumcised, and they could not hearken; for the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, and they had no delight in it*. Verse 10, Yes, so hardened were they, that *they were not ashamed when they had committed abomination*, and so impudent that *they could not blush*, verse 15. And such, from all appearances, they continued; for when they were exhorted to *walk in the good way*, their answer was, *We will not walk in it*. Hence the awful threatening which follows: *Hear, O earth, behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law, but rejected it*, verse 19.

The *good way* in which they were directed to walk, must have been the same as that in which the patriarchs and prophets had walked in former ages, who, we all know, lived and died in the faith of the promised Messiah. Hence our Lord with great propriety applied the passage to himself. Jeremiah directed to *the old paths*, and *the good way*, as the only medium of finding rest for the soul. Jesus said, *Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, and you shall find rest for your souls*.^{Mat 11.28}

We see in this passage also, as in many others, in what manner God requires sinners to *use the means of grace*: not by a mere attendance upon them (which while the end is disregarded, and the means rested in instead of it, is not using but perverting them), but with a sincere desire to

find out the good way, and to walk in it. God requires no natural impossibilities. No man is required to believe in Christ before he has an opportunity to examine the evidence attending his gospel. But he ought to search into it like the noble Bereans, immediately, and with a pure intention of finding and following the good way; which if he does, then like them, he will soon be found walking in it. If we teach sinners that a mere attendance on the means of grace is that use of them which God requires at their hands, and in which the whole of their duty consists, as to repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, we will be found false witnesses for God, and deceivers of the souls of men.

The New Testament is still more explicit than the Old. Faith in Jesus Christ, even that which is accompanied with salvation, is constantly held up there as the duty of all to whom the gospel is preached.

Joh 12.36. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light.

The persons to whom this passage was addressed were unbelievers; those who, *though Jesus had done so many miracles among them, yet did not believe on him* (v. 37); and it appears that they continued unbelievers, for they are represented as given over to judicial blindness and hardness of heart (v. 40). The *light* which they were exhorted to believe in, appears to be Jesus himself, as revealed in the gospel: for thus he speaks in the context, *I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness*. And the believing which Christ required of them was such that, had it been complied with, it would have issued in their salvation. This is manifest from its being added, *that you may be the children of light*, an appellation never bestowed on any but true believers.

Joh 6.29. This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

These words contain an answer to a question. The persons who asked it were men who followed Christ for loaves, who did not believe, and who after this walked no more with him. verses 26, 36, and 66. Christ had been rebuking them for their mercenary principles in thus following him about, and charged them, saying, *Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto everlasting life* (v. 27.) They replied by asking, *What shall we do that we might work the works of God?* Which was saying, in effect, 'We have been very zealous for you in following you here and there, yet you do not allow us to please God: You direct us to *labor for that which endures unto everlasting life*. What would you have us do? What can we do; what must we do in order to please God?' To this question our Lord answers, *This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent*. If this is a proper answer, it is the same as saying, This is the first and greatest of all duties, and without it no other duty can be acceptable.

It has been said in answer to the argument from this passage,

"The words contain a declaration that believing in Christ for salvation is necessary to the enjoyment of eternal life, and that faith in him is an act acceptable and pleasing to God. But they afford no proof that it is required of men in a state of unregeneracy. To declare to unregenerate persons the necessity of faith in order to salvation, which is what our blessed Lord does here, falls very far short of asserting it to be their present duty."¹

We see by this answer that Mr. Brine, who is admitted to have been one of the most judicious on that side the question, was fully convinced of three things. *First*, That the persons here addressed were unregenerate sinners. *Secondly*, That the faith recommended is saving. *Thirdly*, That when faith is called the *work of God*, it does not mean the work which *God performs*, but an act of theirs, which would be *acceptable* and *pleasing* to Him. Yet we are told that our Lord merely expresses the *necessity* of it, without asserting it to be their present *duty*. If it was not then the

¹ Mr. Brine's *Motives to Love and Unity*, etc., p. 42.

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object of their inquiry, what *was* their present duty; or what *ought* they to do in order to please God? What else can be made of it? Further: How can our Lord be supposed, in answer to their question, to tell them of an act which was necessary, acceptable, and pleasing to God, but which was not their present duty? Is such an answer worthy of him? Indeed, how could their believing be an act acceptable and pleasing to God, if it were not their present duty? God is pleased only with that in us, which He requires at our hands.

Joh 5.23. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father which has sent him.

That men are obliged to honor the Father by a holy hearty love to him and adoration of him, under every character by which he has manifested himself, will be admitted by all except the grossest Antinomians. And if it is the will of the Father that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father, nothing less can be required of them than a holy hearty love to him, and adoration of him, under every character by which *he* has manifested himself. But such, a regard to Christ necessarily supposes *faith in him*. For it is impossible to honor him while we reject him in all or any of his offices, and neglect his great salvation. To honor an infallible teacher is to place an implicit and unbounded confidence in all he says; to honor an advocate is to commit our cause to him; to honor a physician is to trust our lives in his hands; and to honor a king is to bow to his scepter, and cheerfully obey his laws. These are characters under which Christ has manifested himself. To treat him in this manner is to honor him; and to treat him otherwise is to dishonor him.

The Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament, abound with exhortations to hear the word of God, to hearken to his counsel, to wait on him, to seek his favor, etc., all which imply saving faith. *Hearken to me, O you children; for blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not refuse it. Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sins against me wrongs his own soul. All those who hate me love death— How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity; and the scorners delight in their scorning; and fools hate knowledge? Turn at my reproof; Behold, I will pour out my heart to you; I will make known my words to you —Hear, you deaf, and look you blind, that you may see— Hearken diligently to me— Incline your ear, and come to me: Hear, and your soul shall live. Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near— This is my beloved Son; hear you him!— And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people — Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto everlasting life.*¹

It is a grievous misapplication of such language to consider it as expressive of a mere attendance on the means of grace, without any spiritual desire after God; and to allow that unregenerate sinners comply with it. Nothing can be further from the truth. The Scriptures abound in promises of spiritual and eternal blessings to those who thus *hearken, hear, and seek* after God. Such exercises therefore must of necessity be spiritual, and require to be understood as including faith in Christ. The Scriptures exhort us to no exercises that may be complied with by a mind at enmity with God. The duties which they inculcate are all spiritual; and no sinner while unregenerate is supposed to comply with them. So far from allowing that ungodly men *seek* after God, or do any *good thing*, they expressly declare the contrary. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any who *understood, who sought God*. Every one of them has gone back; they have altogether become filthy: *there is none that does good, no not one.*^{Psa 53.2,3} To reduce the exhortations of Scripture to the level of a carnal mind, is to betray the authority of God

¹ Pro 8.32-36; 1.22, 23; Isa 42.18; 55.2,3,6; Mar 9.7; Acts 3.23; Joh 6.27.

over the human heart; and to allow that unconverted sinners comply with them, is to aid and abet in their self-deception. The unconverted who attend the means of grace, generally persuade themselves, and wish to persuade others, that they would gladly be converted, and be real Christians, if it were but in their power. They imagine themselves to be waiting at the pool for the moving of the waters: and therefore feel no guilt on account of their present state of mind. Doubtless they are willing and desirous to escape the wrath to come; and under certain convictions, they would submit to relinquish many things, and to comply with other things as the condition of it; but they have no direct desire for spiritual blessings. If they had, they would seek them in the name of Jesus, and thus seeking, they would find them. Therefore, that preaching which exhorts them to mere outward duties, and tells them that their only concern is in this manner to wait at the pool, helps forward their delusion; and should they perish, it will prove accessory to their destruction.

Simon the Sorcerer was admonished to *repent and pray to the Lord, that the thought of his heart might be forgiven him.* ^{Act 8.22} From this express example, many who are averse to the doctrine defended here, have been so far convinced as to acknowledge that it is the duty of the unconverted to pray, at least for temporal blessings. Simon was not admonished to pray for temporal blessings, but for the *forgiveness of sin*. Neither was he to pray in a carnal and heartless manner, but to *repent and pray*. And being directed to *repent and pray for the forgiveness of sin*, he was in effect directed to believe in Jesus: for in what other name could forgiveness be expected? Peter, after having declared to the Jewish rulers that there was *no other name given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved*, cannot be supposed to have directed Simon to hope for forgiveness in any other way.

To admonish any person to pray, or to seek the divine favor in any other way than by *faith in Jesus Christ*, is the same thing as to admonish them to follow the example of Cain, and of the self-righteous Jews. Cain was not averse to worship. He brought his offering: but having no sense of the evil of sin, and of the need of a Savior, he had taken no notice of what had been revealed concerning the promised seed; and he paid no regard to presenting an expiatory sacrifice. He thanked God for temporal blessings, and might pray for their continuance: but this was not *doing well.* ^{Gen 4.7} It was practically saying to his Maker, 'I have done nothing to deserve being made a sacrifice to your displeasure; and I see no necessity for any sacrifice being offered up, either now, or at the end of the World.' In short, it was claiming to approach God merely as a creature, and as though nothing had taken place that required an atonement. The self-righteous Jews did not live without religion. They followed after the law of righteousness; yet they did not attain it; and why not? Because *they did not seek it by faith, but as it were by works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.* ^{Rom 9.32} And shall we direct our hearers to follow this example, by exhorting them to pray, and seek the divine favor in any other way than by faith in Jesus Christ? If so, how can we deserve the name of Christian Ministers?

The Scriptures exhort sinners to put their *trust* in the Lord, and censure them for placing it in an arm of flesh. ^{2Chr 32.8} Whether trusting in Christ for the salvation of our souls is distinguishable from believing in him, or not; it certainly includes it. To trust in Christ is to believe in him; if therefore the one is required, the other must be also. Those who *loved vanity, and sought after lying*, are admonished to *offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and to put their trust in the Lord;*¹ and a trust connected with the sacrifices of righteousness must be spiritual. To rely on any other object, is to *trust in vanity*, against which sinners are repeatedly warned: *Do not trust in oppression; do not become vain in robbery — He that trusts in his own Heart is a fool — Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.*²

¹ Psa 4.5.

² Psa 62.10; Pro 28.26; Jer 17.5.

It is admitted that if God had never sent his Son into the world to save sinners, or if the invitations of the gospel were not addressed to sinners indefinitely,¹ there would be no warrant for trust in the divine mercy: and as it is, there is no warrant for trust beyond what God has promised in his word. He has not promised to save sinners indiscriminately; and therefore it would be presumption in sinners indiscriminately to trust that they will be saved. But he has promised, and in a great variety of language, that *whoever, relinquishing every false ground of hope, comes to Jesus as a perishing sinner, and relies on Him alone for salvation, shall not be disappointed*. For such a reliance, therefore, there is a complete warrant. These promises are true, and will be fulfilled whether we trust in them or not: and whoever still continues to trust in his own righteousness, or in the general mercy of his Creator, without respect to the atonement, refusing to build upon *the foundation which God has laid in Zion*,^{Isa 28.16} is guilty of the greatest of all sins; and if God does not give him repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, the stone which he has refused, will fall upon him and grind him to powder.

But “Until a man through the law, is dead to the law,” says Mr. BRINE, “he has no *warrant* to receive Christ as a Savior, or to hope for Salvation through him.”² If *receiving Christ* meant the *claiming of an interest in the blessings of his salvation*, this objection would be well founded. No man, while adhering to his own righteousness as the ground of acceptance with God, has any warrant to conclude he is interested in the righteousness of Jesus. The Scriptures everywhere assure him of the contrary. But the question is, Does he need any warrant to be *dead to the law*; or which is the same thing, to relinquish his vain hopes of acceptance by the works of the law, and to choose that rock for his foundation which is *chosen of God and precious*?^{1Pet 2.4} To “receive” Christ, in the sense of Scripture, stands opposed to *rejecting* him, or to such a non-reception of him as was practiced by the body of the Jewish nation.^{Joh 1.11,12} An interest in spiritual blessings, and of course a persuasion of it, is represented as *following* the reception of Christ, and consequently it is to be distinguished from it. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name.*^{Joh 1.12}

The idea that is generally attached to the term in various cases to which the reception of Christ bears an allusion, corresponds with the above statement. To receive a *gift* is not to believe it to be my own, though after I have received it, it is so; but to have my pride so far abased as not to be above it, and my heart so much attracted as to be willing to relinquish everything that stands in competition with it. To receive a *guest* is not to believe him to be my particular friend, though he may be such; but to open my doors to him, and make him heartily welcome. To receive an *instructor* is not to believe him to be my instructor any more than another’s; but to embrace his instruction, and follow his counsel. For a town or city, after a long siege, to receive a *king* is not to believe him to be their special friend, though he may be such, and in the end they may see it; but to lay down their arms, throw open their gates, and come under his government. These remarks are easily applied; and it is no less easy to perceive that every sinner not only has a warrant thus to receive Christ, but that it is his great sin if he does *not* receive him.

II. Every man is bound to cordially receive and approve whatever God reveals.

It may be presumed that if God reveals anything to men, it will be accompanied with such evidence of its being what it is, that no upright mind can continue to doubt it. *He that is of God, hears God’s words.*^{Joh 8.47}

It will be allowed by those with whom I am now reasoning, that no man is justifiable in disbelieving the truth of the gospel, or in positively rejecting it. But then it is supposed that a belief of the gospel is *not* saving faith, and that though a positive rejection of divine truth is sinful, yet a spiritual reception of it is *not* a duty. I hope it has been made to appear in the former part of this

¹ *Indefinitely*: not to any particular one, but to all generally. – WHG

² Brine, *Motive to Love and Unity*, pp. 38, 39.

piece, that a real belief of the doctrine of Christ is saving faith, and it includes such a cordial acquiescence in the way of salvation, that it has the promise of eternal life. But be this as it may, whether the belief of the gospel is allowed to include a cordial acquiescence in God's way of salvation or not, such an acquiescence will be allowed to include saving faith. "Acting faith,"¹ says Mr. BRINE, "is none other than having suitable thoughts of Christ, and a hearty choice of him as God's appointed way of salvation."² If it can therefore be proved that a cordial approval of God's way of saving sinners is the duty of everyone, then it will amount to proving the same thing of saving faith.

I admit there is a difficulty in this part of the work; but it is that which attends the proof of a truth which is nearly self-evident. Who could suppose that Mr. Brine, after such an acknowledgment concerning faith, could doubt its being the duty of all mankind? If we think of Christ at all, should we not to think *suitably* of him; and are we justifiable in entertaining low and unsuitable thoughts of him? Is it not a matter of complaint that the ungodly *Jews saw no form or splendor in him, nor beauty that they should desire him?* Isa 53.2 — And with respect to a hearty choice of him as God's appointed way of salvation, if it is not the duty of sinners to *choose* him, is it their duty to *refuse* him, or to desire to be accepted of God, by the works of their hands in preference to him? Mr. Brine would censure men for this. So does Mr. Weyman. Speaking of self-righteous unbelievers, he says,

"They plainly declare that Christ is **not all and in all** to them, but that he comes in at but second-hand; and their regard is more to themselves, and their dependence more upon their own doings, than upon the mighty One upon whom God has laid our help."³

But why thus complain of sinners for not choosing Christ, if they are under no obligation to do so? Is there no sin in the invention of the various false schemes of religion with which the Christian world abounds, to the exclusion of Christ? Why then are heresies reckoned among *the works of the flesh?* Gal 5.19 If we are not obliged to think suitably of Christ, and to choose him whom the Lord and all good men have chosen, then there can be no evil in these things: for where no law is there is no transgression.

"A hearty choice of God's appointed way of salvation," is the same thing as falling in with its grand designs. Now the grand designs of the salvation of Christ are *the glory of God, the abasement of the sinner, and the destruction of his sins*. It is God's manifest purpose in saving sinners, to save them in this way — and can any sinner be excused from cordially acquiescing in it? If any man properly regards the character of God, he must be willing that He should be glorified. If he knew his own unworthiness as he ought to know it, he must also be willing to occupy that place which the gospel way of salvation assigns him. And if he is not wickedly wedded to his lusts, he must be willing to sacrifice them at the foot of the cross. He may be averse to each of these, and is so while he is an unbeliever. But he will not be able to acquit himself of guilt; and it is pity that any who sustain the character of Christian Ministers should be employed in laboring to acquit him.

If a way of salvation were provided which did not provide for the glory of God, which did not abase, but flattered the sinner, and which did not require him to sacrifice his lusts, then he would feel no want of power to embrace it. Nominal Christians and mere professors in all ages have shown themselves able to believe anything but the truth. Thus it was with the carnal Jews; and thus our Lord plainly told them. — *I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, him you will receive. — Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God, hears God's words. You therefore do not hear them, because you are not*

¹ *Acting faith*: a common phrase in the 17th c., meaning to act from or to *exercise* our faith. — WHG

² Johnson's *Mistakes noted and rectified*, page 34.

³ *Further Inquiry*, page 160.

of God. ¹ This is the true source of the innumerable false schemes of religion in the world, and the true reason why the gospel is not universally embraced.

Unbelievers are described as *disallowing* him who is *chosen of God and precious*.² To allow or disallow, supposes a claim. Christ claims to be the whole foundation of a sinner's hope; and God claims on his behalf that he be treated as *the head of the corner*.^{Mat 21.42} But the heart of unbelievers cannot allow the claim. The Jewish builders set him at naught; and every self-righteous heart follows their example. To express his displeasure at this conduct, God assures them that their unbelief will affect none but themselves; it will not deprive the Savior of his honors: *for the stone which they refuse, notwithstanding their opposition, shall become the head of the corner*. What can be made of all this, if not that they *ought* to have allowed him the place which he so justly claimed, and to have chosen him whom the Lord had chosen? On no other ground could the Scripture censure them as it does; and on no other principle could they be characterized as *disobedient*: for all disobedience consists in a breach of duty.

Believers, on the other hand, are described as thinking highly of Christ; reckoning themselves *unworthy to unloose the strap of his shoes*, or that he should *come under their roof*; treating his gospel as *worthy of all acceptation, and counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him*. They are of the same mind with the blessed above, who sing His praise, *saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing*. In brief, they are of the same mind with God himself: the one whom God has chosen, they choose; and he that is *precious* in His sight is *precious* in theirs.³ And do they overestimate his character? Is he not worthy of all the honor they ascribe to him, of all the affection they exercise towards him, and is that not true whether he actually receives it or not? If all the angels had been of the mind of Satan, and the saints of the spirit of the unbelieving Israelites who were not gathered, yet he would have been *glorious in the eyes of the Lord*.^{Isa 49.5} The belief or unbelief of creatures makes no difference as to his worthiness, nor their obligation to ascribe it to him. ‘

It is allowed by all, except the grossest antinomians, that every man is obliged to love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength; and this notwithstanding the depravity of his nature. But to love God with all the heart is to love him in *every character* ⁴ *by which He has made himself known; and more especially in those in which His moral excellencies appear with the brightest luster*. The same law that obliged Adam in Innocence to love God in all his perfections as displayed in the works of creation, obliged Moses and Israel to love him in all the glorious displays of himself in his wonderful works of providence, of which they were witnesses. And the same law that obliged them to love him in those revelations of himself, obliges us to love him in other revelations by which he has since more gloriously appeared, such as *saving sinners through the death of his Son*. To suppose that we are obliged to love God as manifesting himself in the works of creation and providence, but not in the work of redemption, is to suppose that in the highest and most glorious display of himself, he deserves no regard. The same perfections which appear in all his other works, and render him lovely, appear in *this* with a tenfold luster: to be obliged to love him on account of the one, and not of the other, is not a little extraordinary.

As these things cannot be separated in point of obligation, so neither can they in *fact*. He that loves God for any excellency as manifested in one form, must of necessity love him for that excellency manifested in whatever form it may take; and the brighter the display, the stronger will be his love. This remark is verified in the holy *angels*. At first they loved their maker for what they

¹ Joh 5.43; 8.45-47.

² 1Pet 2.4.

³ Mar 1.7; 1Tim 1.15; Phi 3.8; Rev. 5.12; 1Pet 2.4-7.

⁴ That is, in every *attribute*. – WHG

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saw in his works of creation. They saw him lay the foundation of the earth, and they SHOUTED FOR JOY. ^{Job 38.10} In the process of time, they witnessed the glorious displays of His moral character in the government of the world which he had made; and now their love increases. On every new occasion they cry, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD OF HOSTS; THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY. ^{Rev 4.8} At length, they beheld an event to which the accomplishment of all former events were subservient; they saw the Messiah born in Bethlehem. And now their love rises still higher. As though heaven could not contain them on such an occasion, they resort to the place, and contemplate the good that should arise to the moral system, bursting forth into a song: — GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TO MEN! ^{Luk 2.14} All this was but the natural operation of love to God; and from the same principle, they took delight in attending the Redeemer through his life, strengthening him in his sufferings, watching at his tomb, conducting him to glory, and looking into the mysteries of redemption. With a heart like theirs, is it possible to conceive that we should continue impenitent or unbelieving? If in our circumstances we possessed that love to God by which they were influenced, it would melt us into holy lamentation for having sinned against him. If the gospel invitation to partake of the water of life once sounded in our ears, we would instantly imbibe it. Instead of *making light of it*, and preferring our *farms* and our *merchandise* before it, we should embrace it with our whole heart. Let any creature be affected towards Christ as the holy angels are, and if he had a thousand souls to be saved, and the invitation extended to every one that is willing, he would not hesitate a moment whether he should rely on his salvation. It is owing to a lack of love to God, that any man continues impenitent or unbelieving. This was plainly intimated by our Lord to the Jews. *I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my Fathers name, and you do not receive me.* It is impossible to love God, and not embrace the greatest friend of God that ever existed; or to love His law, and not approve of a system which, above all things, tends to magnify and make it honorable.

“The affections included in divine love,” says an able writer, “are founded on those truths for which there is the greatest evidence in the world. Everything in the world, that proves the being of God, proves that his creatures should love him with all their hearts. The evidence for these things is, *in itself*, very strong, and level to every capacity. Where it does not beget conviction, it is not owing to the weakness of men’s capacities, but the strength of their prejudices, and prepossessions. Whatever proves that reasonable creatures are *obliged* to love God and his law, proves that sinners are obliged to a suitable hatred of sin, and self-abasement for it. A sinner cannot have due prevalent love to God, and hatred of sin, without prevalent *desire for obtaining deliverance from sin, and the enjoyment of God.* A suitable desire of so important ends cannot be without proportionate desire for the *necessary means*. If a sinner, therefore, who hears the gospel, has these suitable affections of love to God, and hatred of sin, to which he is obliged by the laws of natural religion, *these things cannot be separated from a real contentment in that redemption and grace which are proposed in revealed religion.* This does not suppose that natural religion can discover or prove the peculiar things of the gospel to be true; but when they are discovered, it proves them to be infinitely desirable. A book of laws that are enforced with awful sanctions cannot prove that the sovereign has passed an act of grace, or indemnity in favor of the transgressors. But it proves that such favor is the most desirable to them, and the most necessary thing in the world. It proves that the way of saving us from sin, which the gospel reveals, is infinitely suitable to the honor of God, to the dignity of His law, and to the exigencies of the consciences of sinners.”¹

“If any man has a taste for moral excellency,” says another, “a heart to account God glorious for being what he is; he cannot help but see the moral excellency of the law, and love it, and conform to it; because it is the image of God. And so he cannot help but see the moral excellency of the

¹ M'Laurin's *Essay on Grace*, p. 342.

gospel, and believe it, and love it, and comply with it; for it is also the image of God. He that can see the moral beauty in the original, cannot help but see the moral beauty of the image drawn to life. Therefore, he that despises the gospel, and is an enemy to the law, even he is at enmity against God himself, Rom. 8.7. Ignorance of the glory of God, and enmity against him, make men ignorant of the glory of the law, and of the gospel, and enemies to both. *If men knew and loved Him that begot, they would love that which is begotten of him, 1Joh 5.1. He that is of God hears God's words; you therefore do not hear them, because you are not of God, Joh 8.47.*"¹

III. Though the gospel, strictly speaking, is not a law, but a message of pure grace; yet it virtually requires obedience, and such an obedience as includes saving faith.

It is no uncommon thing to distinguish between a formal requirement, and that which affords the *ground* or *reason* for that requirement. The *goodness* of God, for instance, though it is not a law, or formal precept, yet it virtually² requires a return of gratitude. It deserves it; and the law of God, formally requires it on its behalf. Thus it is with respect to the gospel, which is the greatest overflow of divine goodness that was ever displayed. A return suitable to its nature is required *virtually* by the gospel itself, and *formally* by the divine precept on its behalf.

I suppose it might be taken for granted that the gospel possesses some degree of virtual authority, as it is generally acknowledged that by reason of the dignity of its author, and the importance of its subject matter, it deserves the audience and attention of all mankind; even more, that all mankind who have an opportunity of *hearing* it, are obliged to *believe* it. The only question is, therefore, whether the faith it requires is spiritual, or such as has the promise of salvation.

We may form some idea of the manner in which the gospel ought to be received, from its being represented as an embassy. *We are ambassadors for Christ, says the apostle, as though God beseeched by us: we pray in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God.* ^{2Cor 5.20} The object of an embassy in all cases is peace. Ambassadors are sometimes employed between friendly powers for the adjustment of their affairs: but the allusion in this case is manifestly that of a righteous prince who would condescend to speak peaceably to his rebellious subjects, and as it were, to entreat them for their own sakes, to be *reconciled*. The language of the apostle supposes the world is engaged in an unnatural and provoked rebellion against its maker; that it is in his power to utterly destroy sinners; that if he were to deal with them according to their deserts, this must be their portion: but that through the mediation of his Son, he had, as it were, suspended hostilities, had sent his servants with words of peace, and commissioned them to persuade, to entreat, and even to beseech them to be reconciled. But *reconciliation* to God includes everything that belongs to true conversion. It is the opposite of a state of *alienation and enmity* to him. ^{Col 1.21} It includes a justification of his government, a condemnation of their own unprovoked rebellion against him, and a thankful reception of the message of peace — which is the same for its substance as to *repent and believe the gospel*. To speak of an embassy from the God of heaven and earth to his rebellious creatures, being entitled to nothing more than an *audience*, or a decent *attention*, must itself be highly offensive to the honor of his majesty; and for such language to proceed from his professed friends, must render it still more so.

“When the apostle beseeches us to be *reconciled* to God, I would know,” says Dr. Owen, “whether it is not a part of our duty to yield obedience? If not, the exhortation is frivolous and vain.”³ If sinners are not obliged to be reconciled to God, both as a Lawgiver, and a Savior, and to do that with all their hearts, it is no sin to be unreconciled. All the enmity of their hearts to God, his law, his gospel, or his Son, must be guiltless. For there can be no neutrality in this case: not to be

¹ Bellamy's *true Religion delineated*, p. 332.

² Virtually here does not mean *almost*, or *appearance only*; rather, it means “by virtue of” – by the authority, power, grounds, or reason of the qualities or attributes (virtues) inherent in a thing. – WHG

³ John Owen, *Display of Arminianism*, chap. x.

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reconciled, is to be unreconciled; not to fall in with the message of peace, is to fall out with it; and not to lay down arms and submit to mercy, is to maintain the war.

It is in perfect harmony with the foregoing ideas, that those who acquiesce in the way of salvation in this spiritual manner, are represented in doing so, as exercising OBEDIENCE; as *obeying the gospel, obeying the truth, and obeying Christ*.¹ The very end of the gospel being preached is said to be for *obedience to the faith among all nations*.² But *obedience* supposes previous obligation. If repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ were not duties required of us, even prior to all consideration of their being blessings bestowed upon us, it would be incongruous to speak of them as exercises of *obedience*. Nor would it be less so to speak of that impenitence and unbelief which expose men to *eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, as consisting in their *not obeying the gospel*.³ The passage on which the former part of this argument is founded (2Cor 5.19,20), has been thought inapplicable to the subject, because it is supposed to be *an address to the members of the church at Corinth*, who were considered by the apostle as believers. On this principle, Dr. Gill expounds the reconciliation exhorted to — of submission to Providence, and of obedience to the discipline and ordinances of God. But let it be considered whether the apostle is here immediately addressing the members of the church at Corinth, beseeching them at that time, to be reconciled to God: or whether he is not rather *repeating to them what had been his conduct, and that of his brethren in the ministry, in vindication of himself and them from the base insinuations of false teachers*. The great evils that had crept into that church had been principally owing to them. The methods they appear to have taken to supplant the apostles, were those of underhanded insinuation. By Paul's answers, they appear to have suggested that they were either subtle men, who by their *soft and beseeching* style ingratiated themselves into the esteem of the simple, catching them as it were *with guile* (2Cor 1.12; 12.16); or weak-headed enthusiasts, *beside themselves* (v. 5.13) going up and down, *beseeching* people to this and that (v. 11.21); and that as to Paul himself, however great he might appear in his *letters*, he was nothing in company: *His bodily presence, they say, is weak, and his speech contemptible*.

In the first epistle to this church, Paul generously waved a defense of himself and his brethren, being more concerned for their recovery to Christ, than their opinion of them. Yet, when the one was accomplished, he undertook the other; not only as a justification of himself and his brethren, but knowing that just sentiments of them bore an intimate connection with their own spiritual welfare. It is thus that the apostle goes over their various insinuations, acknowledging that they did indeed *beseech, entreat, and persuade* men; but such conduct did not arise from the motives of which they were accused, but from *the love of Christ... If we are beside ourselves, it is for your sakes*.

If the words in 2Cor 5.19, 20, are an immediate address to the members of the church at Corinth, those which follow in verse 6.1, must be an address to its *ministers*; and thus Dr. Gill expounds it. But if so, the apostle in the continuation of that address, would not have said as he does, *In all things approving OURSELVES as the ministers of God*: his language would have been, *In all things approving YOURSELVES*, etc. From this it is manifest that the whole is a vindication of their preaching and manner of life, against the insinuations of the Corinthian teachers.

There are two things which may have contributed to the misunderstanding of this passage of Scripture: one is the supplement *you*, which is unnecessarily introduced three times over in verses 5.20 and 6.1. If any supplement had been necessary, the word *men*, as it is in the text of verse 5.11,

¹ Rom 10.16; 6.17.

² Rom 1.5.

³ 2The 1.8,9.

might have better conveyed the apostle's meaning. The other is the division of the fifth and sixth chapters in the midst of the argument.¹

IV. The lack of faith in Christ is ascribed in the Scriptures to men's depravity, and is itself represented as a heinous sin.

It is taken for granted that whatever is not a sinner's duty, the omission of it cannot be charged upon him as a sin, nor imputed to any depravity in him. If faith were no more a duty than *election* or *redemption*, which are acts peculiar to God, the lack of the one would be no more ascribed to the evil dispositions of the heart than of the other. Or if the inability of sinners to believe in Christ were of the same nature as that of a dead body in a grave, to rise up and walk, it would be absurd to suppose that they would on this account fall under the divine censure. No man is reprov'd for not doing that which is naturally impossible: but sinners are reprov'd for *not believing*, and given to understand that this is solely owing to their criminal ignorance, pride, dishonesty of heart, and aversion to God.

Voluntary ignorance is represented as a reason why sinners do not believe. Being *IGNORANT of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, THEY HAVE NOT SUBMITTED THEMSELVES TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.* Rom 10.3 — *If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost: In whom the god of this world has BLINDED THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* 2Cor 4.3,4 To the same purpose we are taught by our Lord in the parable of the sower, *when anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes, and snatches away that which was sown in his heart; and this is, as Luke expresses it, lest they BELIEVE AND BE SAVED.* ²

If men, even though they were possessed of the same principles as our first father in paradise, would nevertheless be blind to the glory of the gospel, with what propriety is their blindness attributed to the god of this world? Is he ever represented as employing himself in hindering that which is *naturally* impossible, or in promoting that which is innocent?

Pride is another cause to which the lack of saving faith is ascribed. *The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek. God is not in all his thoughts.* Psa 10.4 We have seen already that *seeking* God is a spiritual exercise, which implies faith in the mediator; and the reason why ungodly men are strangers to it, is the haughtiness of their spirits, which makes them scorn to take the place of a supplicant before their offended Creator, and who labor to put far from their minds every thought of him. *How can you BELIEVE,* said our Lord to the Jews, *who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from God only?* Joh 5.44

If believing were here to be taken for any faith other than that which is *spiritual*, or *saving*, the suggestion would not hold good. For we are told of some who could and did believe in Christ in some sense, but who did not confess him; for *they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* Joh 12.43 It was *pride* that blinded the minds of the *wise and prudent of this world,* Mat 11.25 to the doctrines of Christ; and what is that if not this same proud spirit working in a way of self-conceit, and self-righteousness, that still forms the grand objection to the doctrine of salvation by mere grace?

Dishonesty of heart is that on account of which men do not receive the word of God so as to bring forth fruit. This is fully implied in the parable of the sower, recorded in the eighth chapter of Luke. The reason why those hearers represented by the good ground, received the word and brought forth fruit, rather than the others, was that they had *good and honest hearts*: plainly intimating that the reason why the others did not so receive it, was that their hearts were not *upright* before

¹ See Dr. Guyse on the place.

² Mat 13.19; Luk 8.12.

God. Indeed, such is the nature of divine truth, that every heart which is honest towards God must receive it. An honest heart must approve of God's holy law, which requires us to love him with all our powers; and this is because it is no more than giving him the glory *due* to his name. An honest heart will approve of being justified wholly for Christ's sake, and not on account of any of its own works, whether legal or evangelical; for it is no more than relinquishing a claim which is justly forfeited, and accepting as a free gift, that which God was under no obligation to bestow. Further, an honest heart must rejoice in the way of salvation as soon as he understands it; because it provides a way in which mercy can be exercised *consistent with righteousness*. A right spirit would revolt at the idea of receiving mercy itself, in a way that would leave a blot upon the divine character. It is to the glory of Christ that he does not have an honest man for an enemy. *The upright love him.*^{Sol 1.4}

We are not ignorant who it is that must now *give* men honest hearts, and what the source is of everything in a fallen creature that is truly good; but this does not affect the argument. However far sinners are from it, and whatever divine agency it may require to produce it, no man who is not disposed to deny the accountableness of creatures to the God who made them, will deny that it is their duty. For if we are not obliged to be upright towards God, we are obliged to nothing; and if obliged to nothing, we must be guiltless, and so stand in no need of salvation.

Finally, *Aversion of heart* is assigned as a reason why sinners do not believe. This truth is strongly expressed in that complaint of our Lord, in Joh 5.40, *You will not, or YOU ARE NOT WILLING to come to me, that you might have life*. Proudly attached to their own righteousness, when Jesus exhibited himself as *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, they stumbled at it; and thousands in the religious world are the same to this day. They are willing to escape God's wrath, and to gain his favor; yes, and to relinquish many an outward vice in order to attain it. But to come to Jesus among the chief of sinners, and be wholly indebted to his sacrifice for life, they are *not willing*. Yet can any man plead that his unwillingness is innocent?

Mr. *Hussey* understands the foregoing passage of barely owning Christ to be the Messiah, which he says, would have saved them as a nation from temporal ruin and *death*; or, as he expresses it in another place, "from having their brains dashed out by the battering rams of Titus," the Roman General.¹ But it ought to be observed, that the life for which they were *not willing* to come to him, was the same as that which they thought they had in the Scriptures, and this was *eternal life*. *Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me: but you will not come to me that you might have life.*^{Joh 5.39.40} This was the same as saying, "These very Scriptures in which you think you have eternal life; testify of me as the only way to it; but such is the pride and aversion of your hearts, that you will not come to me for it."

Dr. Gill in general opposed these principles.² Yet frequently, when his system was out of sight, he established them. His exposition of this passage is a proof of this remark: He tells us that "the perverseness of their wills was blameworthy, owing to the corruption and viciousness of their nature, which being blameworthy in them, that which follows upon it must be so too."

There is no inconsistency between this account, of things, and that which is given elsewhere, that *no man CAN come to Christ except the Father draws him.*^{Joh 6.44} No man can chase that to which his heart is averse. It is common both in Scripture and in conversation to speak of a person who is under the influence of an evil bias of heart, as unable to do that which is inconsistent with it. *They have eyes full of adultery, and CANNOT cease from sin.*^{2Pet 2.14} — *The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed CAN it be. So then, those who are in the flesh CANNOT please God.*^{Rom 8.7-8}

¹ Joseph Hussey, *Glory of Christ Revealed*, pp. 527, 615.

² John Gill was a *hyper-Calvinist*: not only did God foreordain the elect to salvation, but the reprobate to hell. – WHG

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On account of this different phraseology, some writers have affirmed that men are under both a moral and a natural inability of coming to Christ; or that they neither *will* nor *can* come to him. But if there is no other inability than what arises from aversion, this language is not accurate: for it conveys the idea that if all aversion of heart were removed, there would still be a natural and insurmountable bar in the way. But no such idea as this is conveyed by our Lord's words: the only bar to which he refers, lies in that *reluctance* or *aversion* which the drawing of the Father implies and removes. Nor will such an idea comport with what he elsewhere teaches. *And because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God hears God's words. You therefore do not hear them because you are not of God. Why do you not understand my speech? BECAUSE YOU CANNOT HEAR MY WORD.*

These cutting interrogations proceed on the supposition that *they could have received the doctrine of Christ, if it had been agreeable to their corrupt hearts; and its being otherwise was the ONLY reason why they could not understand and believe it.* If sinners were naturally and absolutely unable to believe in Christ, they would be equally unable to disbelieve: for it requires the same powers to reject as to embrace. And in this case there would be no room for an inability of another kind. A dead body is equally unable to do evil as to do good; and a man naturally and absolutely blind, could not be guilty of shutting his eyes against the light.

“It is indwelling sin,” as Dr. Owen says, “that both disenabled men unto, and hinders them from believing, AND THAT ALONE. Blindness of mind, stubbornness of the will, sensuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor perishing souls at a distance from Christ. Men are made *blind* by sin, and cannot see his excellency; *obstinate*, and will not lay hold of his righteousness; *senseless*, and take no notice of their eternal concerns.”¹

A voluntary and judicial blindness, obstinacy, and hardness of heart, are represented as the bar to conversion.² But if that spirit which is exercised in conversion were essentially different from anything which the subjects of it in any state possessed, it would be absurd to ascribe the lack of it to such causes.

Those who embraced the gospel, and submitted to the government of the Messiah, were baptized with the baptism of John; and are said, in doing so, to have *justified God*: their conduct was an acknowledgment of the justice of the law, and of the wisdom and love of the gospel. On the other hand, those who did not thus submit, are said to have *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, not being baptized. ^{Luk 7.29,30} But no Christians I suppose, certainly no Baptists think it was their sin not to be baptized while they continued enemies to Christ; and probably very few, if any, serious paedobaptists would contend for its being the duty of *adults* to be baptized in Christ's name, without first embracing his word. How then can this passage be understood, but by supposing that they *ought* to have repented of their sins, embraced the Messiah, and submitted to his ordinances? Nor can the force of the argument be evaded by distinguishing between different kinds of repentance and faith — for a profession of true repentance, and unfeigned faith, was required in order for baptism.

Finally, *Unbelief is expressly declared to be a sin, of which the spirit of truth has to convince the world.* ^{Joh 16.8,9} But unbelief cannot be a sin, if faith were not a duty. I know of no answer to this argument, except what must be drawn from a distinction between believing the report of the gospel, and saving faith; allowing the lack of the one to be sinful, but not of the other. But it is not of gross unbelief only, nor of an open rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, that the Holy Spirit has to

¹ John Owen, *On indwelling sin*, Chap. xvi.

² **Act 28.27.** For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.

convince the world; nor is it to a bare conviction of this truth, like what prevails in all Christian countries, that men are brought to by his teaching. *When he, the Spirit of truth comes*, his operations are deeper than this amounts to. He convicts the sinner of an *opposition of heart* to the way of salvation, and He brings him to a *cordial acquiescence* with it. Those who are born in a Christian land, and who were never the subjects of gross infidelity, stand in no less need of thus being convinced than others. Indeed, in some respects they need it more. Their unbelieving opposition to Christ is more subtle, refined, and out of sight, than that of open infidels. They are therefore less apt to suspect themselves of it; and consequently, they stand in greater need of the Holy Spirit to search them out, and show them to themselves. Among those who constantly sit under the gospel, and who remain in an unconverted state; there are few who think themselves the enemies of Christ. On the contrary, they flatter themselves that they are willing at any time to be converted, if God would but convert them — considering themselves as lying at the pool for the moving of the waters. ^{Joh 5.4} *But when he, the Spirit of Truth comes*, these coverings will be stripped from the face, and these refuges of lies will fail. ¹

V. God has threatened and inflicted the most awful punishments on sinners, for their not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is here taken for granted that nothing can be the cause of God's inflicting punishment but sin; and nothing can be sin which is not a breach of duty.

Mar 16.15,16 *Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that does not believe shall be damned.*

This awful passage appears to be a kind of *ultimatum*, or last resolve. It is as if our Lord had said, 'This is your message... go and proclaim it to all nations... Whoever receives it and submits to my authority, assure him from me, eternal salvation awaits him: but whoever rejects it, let him see to it damnation shall be his portion!' *Believing* and *not believing*, in this passage, serve to explain each other. It is saving faith to which salvation is promised; and it is the lack of this to which damnation is threatened. It has been alleged that,

“as it is not inferable from that declaration that the faith of believers is the procuring cause of their salvation, so it is not to be inferred from this that the lack of that *special* faith in unbelievers is the procuring cause of their damnation. That declaration contains in it the descriptive characters of those who are saved, and those who are damned; but it does not assign special faith as the procuring cause of the salvation of the former, nor the lack of it as the procuring cause of the damnation of the latter.” ²

But if this mode of reasoning were admitted, we would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to prove any thing to be evil from the threatenings of God against it. A multitude of plain texts of Scripture, in which sin (as any common reader would suppose) is threatened with punishment, might in this manner be made to teach *nothing* with regard to its being the procuring cause of it.

For example, Psa 37.18, 20, *The Lord knows the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be forever: but the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.* But it might be said, as the uprightness of the upright is not the procuring cause of his enjoying an everlasting inheritance, so neither will this prove that the wickedness of the wicked, or the enmity of the Lord's enemies, are the procuring cause of their being consumed.

Again, Psa 147.6, *The Lord lifts up the meek: he casts the wicked down to the ground.* But it might be alleged that as the meekness of the former is not the procuring cause of his being lifted up, so

¹ See Charnock's excellent discourse on *Unbelief the greatest sin*, from the above passage, Vol. II. of his works.

² Mr. Brine's *Motive to Love and Unity*, pp. 31, 32.

it cannot be from inferred from this that the wickedness of the latter is the procuring cause of his being cast down.

Again, Psa 145.20. *The Lord preserves all who love him; but the wicked He will destroy.* But it might be said, as the love of the one is not the procuring cause of his preservation, so it cannot be proved from this that the wickedness of the other is the procuring cause of his destruction; and that these declarations contain only the *descriptive characters* of those who are saved, and of those who perish.

In this manner almost all the threatenings in the book of God might be made to say nothing *as threatenings*; for the mode in which they are delivered is the same as that in the passage in question. For example, *What shall be given to you, or what shall be done for you, you false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper — He that shows no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy — Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge— Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, not abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God — Behold the day comes that shall burn like an oven, .and all the proud, yes, and all who do wickedly shall be stubble — Bring my enemies here who would not have Me reign over them, and slay them before me — The fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

But none of these awful threatenings declare that the respective crimes which are mentioned, are the procuring cause of the evils denounced. Though it is said concerning the *false tongue*, that *sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper, shall be given him*, yet it does not say that these shall be given him *because of his falsehood*; and so on with the rest. And thus they may be only *descriptive characters* of those who shall be damned, and all these things may, for anything these denunciations prove, be blameless. If this reasoning is just, it cannot be inferred from the laws of England declaring that a murderer shall be put to death, that it is on account of his being a murderer. Neither could our first parents justly infer from its being told to them, *The day you eat of it you shall surely die*, that it should be *on that account*.

The truth is, though eternal life is the *gift of God*, yet eternal death is the proper WAGES of sin. And though faith is not represented in the above passage, as the procuring cause of salvation, yet unbelief is of damnation. It is common for the Scriptures to describe those who shall be saved, by something which is pleasing to God, and by which they are fitted for glory; and those who shall be lost by something which is displeasing to God, and by which they are fitted for destruction.

Joh 3.18. *He that believes on him is not condemned; but he that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Two things are here observable. *First*, Believing is expressive of saving faith, seeing that it exempts from *condemnation*. *Secondly*, The lack of this faith is a sin, on account of which the unbeliever stands condemned. It is true that unbelief is an *evidence* of our being under the condemnation of God's righteous law for all our *other sins*; but this is not all: unbelief is *itself* a sin, which greatly aggravates our guilt, and if persisted in, gives the finishing stroke to our destruction. That this idea is taught by the Evangelist appears partly from his dwelling upon the dignity of the character offended, *the only begotten Son of God*; and partly from his expressly adding, *this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Luk 19.27. *But those mine enemies who would not have Me reign over them, bring here, and slay them before me.*

If Christ, as wearing his mediatorial crown, does not have a right to unreserved submission and hearty obedience, then he has no right to be angry, and still less to punish men as his enemies for

not being willing that he should reign over them. He has no right to reign over them, at least not over their hearts, if it is not their duty to obey him from their hearts. The whole controversy indeed might be reduced to an issue on this argument. Every sinner ought to be Christ's friend, or his enemy, or to stand by as neutral. To say that he ought to be his enemy, is too gross to be defended. To plead for his being neutral, is pleading for what our Lord declares to be impossible: *he that is not with me, is against me.* ^{Mat 12.30} There is therefore no room for any other position, than that he ought to be his cordial friend; and this is the plain implication of the passage.

2The 2.10-12. Whose coming is— with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in those who perish; because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

From this we may remark two things: *First*, That faith is here called *receiving the love of the truth*; and that it means saving faith is manifest, seeing it is added that *they might be saved*. *Secondly*, That their *not* receiving the love of the truth, or which is the same thing, not believing with such a faith as that to which salvation is promised, was the *cause* of their being given up by God, and carried away with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. The loose and cold-hearted manner in which merely nominal Christians held the truth, would occasion the introduction of the grand papal apostacy, by which great numbers of them would be swept away. And this assuredly ought to afford a lesson to nominal Christians of the present day, who owing to the same cause, are fast approaching infidelity. But unless we suppose that these professors of religion ought to have *received the love of the truth*, there is no accounting for the awful judgments of God upon them for the contrary.

VI. Other spiritual exercises which sustain an inseparable connection with faith in Christ, are represented as the duty of men in general.

Though this controversy has been mostly carried on with respect to the duty of faith, yet in reality it extends to the whole of spiritual religion. Those who deny that sinners are obliged to believe in Christ for salvation, will not allow that it is their duty to do anything truly and spiritually good. It is a kind of maxim with such persons that 'none can be obliged to act spiritually but spiritual men.' *Spiritual exercises* appear to me to mean the same as *holy exercises*: for the *new man which is created after God*, is said to be *created in righteousness*, and TRUE HOLINESS: and I believe the Scriptures are silent as to two kinds of true holiness. But as my opponents affix different ideas to the term *spiritual*, to prevent all disputes about it, I will proceed on a ground which they will not refuse. *Whatever has the promise of spiritual blessings, that is considered as a spiritual exercise.* With this criterion of *spirituality* in view, let the following passages of Scripture be carefully considered.

How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity; and the scorers delight in their scorning; and fools hate knowledge? Turn at my reproof — Behold I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you— The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction — Wisdom cries at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors; Unto you, men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man — you simple, understand wisdom, and you fools, be of an understanding heart. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things, and the opening of my lips shall be of right things. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. Harken unto me, O you children: for blessed are those who keep My ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and do not refuse it. Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me, finds life, and shall obtain favor from the Lord. But he that sins against me, wrongs his own soul. All those who hate me love death.¹ — And now, Israel, what does the Lord your

¹ Prov 1.7, 22, 23; 8.3-6, 10, 32-36.

Arguments for Faith Being a Duty

God require of you, but to FEAR the Lord your God, to walk in ALL his ways, and to LOVE him, and to SERVE the Lord your God with ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL? Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your hearts, and be stiff-necked no more. ^{Deu 10.12,16} — Rent your HEARTS, and not your garments; turn to the Lord your God. ^{Joe 2.13} — Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ^{Mat 3.2} — REPENT, therefore, and be CONVERTED, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. ^{Act 3.19}

We may remark on these passages, *First*, The persons addressed were unconverted sinners; as appears by their characteristics of *fools — scorers — haters of knowledge — uncircumcised in heart — and impenitent*. *Secondly*, The things to which they were exhorted were things that are *spiritually good*. This appears in part from the names by which the exercises themselves are termed; namely, such an understanding as originates in *the fear of the Lord — fearing — loving — and serving God, with all the heart, and with all the soul — circumcision of the heart — repentance, and conversion*; and partly from the blessings of salvation being promised to them: these are expressed by the terms, *blessedness — life — favor of the Lord — and the blotting out of sin*.

More particularly: *The love of God* is a spiritual exercise; for it has the promise of spiritual blessings. *All things work together for good to them that love God — He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him — Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love him.* ¹ But the love of God is required of men without distinction. The people of Israel, like all other people, were composed of good and bad men; but they were all required to love Jehovah, and cling to him, and do that with *all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.* ² The moral part of those precepts which God gave to them on tablets of stone were binding on all mankind. Even those who had no other means of knowing God than were afforded by the works of nature, with perhaps a portion of tradition, were required to *GLORIFY HIM AS GOD, AND TO BE THANKFUL.* ^{Rom; 1.21}

The love of God, as is intimated here, is either a holy *thankfulness* for the innumerable instances of his goodness, or a cordial approval of his *glorious character*. It is true, there are favors for which the regenerate are obliged to love him, which are not common to the unregenerate; but every one has shared a sufficient portion of his bounty to have incurred a debt of gratitude. It is generally admitted even by our opponents, that God ought to be loved as our Creator and Benefactor: but they suppose this is not a spiritual exercise. There is a kind of gratitude, it is granted, which is not spiritual, but merely the effect of natural self-love, and in which God is not regarded otherwise than as subservient to our happiness. But this does not always respect the bestowment of temporal mercies — the same feelings which possessed the carnal Israelites when they felt themselves delivered from Pharaoh's yoke, and saw their oppressors sinking in the sea — still possess many professors of religion under a groundless persuasion of their being elected of God, and having their sins forgiven them. Gratitude of this sort has nothing spiritual in it; but then, neither is it any part of duty. God nowhere requires it, either of saints or sinners. That which God requires is a *spiritual exercise*; whether it is on account of temporal or spiritual mercies is immaterial. The object makes no difference as to the nature of the act; that *thanksgiving* with which the common mercies of life are received by the godly, and by which they are *sanctified* to them, ^{1Tim 4.3,4} is no less of a spiritual nature, and it is no less connected with eternal life, than gratitude for the forgiveness of sin.

This thankful spirit, instead of being an operation of self-love, or regarding God merely in subservience to our own happiness, greatly consists in self-abasement, or in a sense of our own unworthiness. Its language is, *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that you*

¹ Rom 8.28; 1Joh 4.16; 1Cor 2.9.

² Deu 6.5; 30.20.

have brought me to here? What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? ¹ This is holy gratitude; and to be destitute of it, is to be *unthankful, unholy*.

With respect to a *cordial approval of the divine character, or glorifying God as God*, and which enters into the essence of holy love, there can be no reasonable doubt whether it is obligatory on sinners. Such is the glory of God's *name*, that nothing but the most inexcusable and deep-rooted depravity could render any intelligent creature insensible to it. Those parts of Scripture which describe the devout feelings of godly men, particularly the psalms of David, abound in expressions of affection to the *NAME* of the Lord. *How excellent is your NAME in all the earth! Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto your NAME give glory — magnify the Lord with me; and let us exalt his NAME together— Sing unto God, sing praises to his NAME: let those who love your NAME say continually, the Lord be magnified— Blessed be his glorious NAME for ever and ever; and let the whole earth be filed with his glory. Amen, and Amen.* ²

This affection for the *name* of the Lord, as it is revealed in his word and works, and particularly in the work of redemption, lies at the foundation of all true desire after an interest in his mercy. If we seek mercy from anyone whose character we disesteem, it is merely for our own sakes; and if he is acquainted with our motives, we cannot hope to succeed. This is what leads us to mourn for sin as sin, and not merely for the inconvenience to which it exposes us. This is what renders salvation through the atonement of Christ so acceptable. He that loves only himself, provided he might be saved, would care little or nothing for the honor of the divine character; but he that loves God, will be concerned for His glory. Heaven itself would be no enjoyment to him, if his admission must be at the expense of righteousness.

“God is to be loved,” says Dr. Gill, “for himself; because of his own nature, and the perfections of it, which render Him amiable and lovely, and worthy of our strongest love and affection; as these are displayed in the works of creation and providence, and especially of grace, redemption, and salvation; to all of which the psalmist has respect when he says, *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name, nature and perfections, in all a the earth!* Psa 8.1. As God is great in himself and greatly to be praised; great, and greatly to be feared; so, great, and greatly to be loved for what he is in himself. And this is the purest, and most perfect love of a creature towards God. For if we love him only for his goodness towards us, it is loving *ourselves* rather than *Him*; or at least loving him *for* ourselves, and so loving ourselves more than him.” ³

But this “most pure and perfect love” is manifestly the duty of all mankind, however far they are from compliance with it. *Give unto the Lord, you kingdoms of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength: give unto the Lord the glory DUE unto his name: bring an offering, and come before htm: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all you lands — Kings of the earth, and all people, princes and all judges, of the earth — both young men, and maidens, old men, and children — Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent — his glory is above the earth, and heaven — Let the people praise you, O God, let all the people praise you!* ⁴

Love to Christ, I suppose, may be taken for granted to be a spiritual exercise. The grace or favor of God is with all who possess it *in sincerity*. ^{Eph 6.24} But love to Christ is the duty of everyone to whom the gospel is preached. On no other principles could the apostle have written as he did — *If any man does not love our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha!* ^{1Cor 16.22} It is worthy of notice, that this awful sentence is not denounced against sinners as positively *hating* Christ, but as *not loving* him — plainly implying his *worthiness* of a place in our best affections,

¹ 2Sam 7.18; Psa 116.12.

² Psa 8.1; 115.1; 34.3; 68.4; 40.16; 72.19.

³ Owen, *Body of Divinity*, Vol. iii. Chap. 9.

⁴ 1Chr 16.28, 29; Psa 148.11-13; 67.3.

and that if it were possible for us to be indifferent towards him, even that indifference would deserve the heavy curse of the Almighty at the last judgment. Paul appears to have felt as a soldier would feel towards the best of princes or commanders. If after David's return from his engagement with Goliath, when the women of Israel were praising him in their songs, any of the sons of Belial had spoken of him in the language of detraction, it would have been natural for one of a patriotic spirit, deeply impressed with an idea of the hero's worth, and of the service he had rendered to his country, to have expressed himself thus: 'If any man does not love the son of Jesse, let him be banished from among the tribes of Israel.' Of such a kind were the feelings of the apostle. He had served under his Lord and Savior for many years: and now sensible in a high degree of the glory of His character, he does not hesitate to pronounce that man who does not love him, *accursed!*

The fear of God is a spiritual exercise: for it has the promise of spiritual blessings.¹ But it is also a duty required of men, and that is without distinction, as to their being regenerate or unregenerate. *O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always! Fear before him, all the earth — Let all that are round about him bring presents unto him THAT OUGHT TO BE FEARED — Who would not fear you, O King of nations? — FEAR God — FEAR God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man — Gather the people together, men, women and children, and the stranger that is within your gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and FEAR the Lord your God: and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear and learn to FEAR the Lord your God — Serve the Lord with FEAR, and rejoice with trembling— And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying FEAR God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship Him that made heaven and earth!*² — *Who shall not FEAR you, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy.*^{Rev 15.4} — To say of men, *they have no fear of God before their eyes,*^{Rom 3.18} is to represent them as under the dominion of depravity.

It may be objected, that the Scriptures distinguish between that holy fear of offending God which is peculiar to his children, and a mere dread of the misery threatened against sin, which is found in the wicked. True: there is a fear of God which is not spiritual; such was that of the slothful servant; and the same is found in hypocrites and devils;³ but this is no part of duty, but rather of punishment. God does not require it either of saints or sinners. That which he requires is of a *holy* nature, as expressed in the passages quoted before, which is spiritual, and has the promise of spiritual blessings. It resembles that of a dutiful child to his father, and is therefore properly called *filial*; but though none are possessed of it but the children of God, yet it is because none else are possessed of a right spirit.

Repentance, or godly sorrow for sin, is a spiritual exercise; for it abounds with promises of spiritual blessings. But repentance is a duty required of every sinner. — *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand— Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.— Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*⁴ — The *hardness of heart* which our Lord found in the Jews, and which is the opposite of repentance, grieved him, which it would not

¹ Psa 34.7, 9; 103.11, 13, 17.

² Deu 5.29; 1Chr 16.30; Psa 77.11; Jer 10.7; Ecc 5.7; 12.13; Deu 31.12, 13; Psa 2.11; Rev 14.6, 7.

³ Luk 19.21; Jas 2.19.

⁴ Mat 3.2; Act 3.19; Jas 4.8-10.

if it had not been their sin. Finally, *a hard and impenitent heart treasures up wrath against the day of wrath*: but impenitence could be no sin, if penitence were not a duty.¹

Repentance, it is allowed, like all other spiritual exercises, has its counterfeit, and which is not spiritual: but neither is it that which God requires at the hands of either saints or sinners. What is called *natural*, and sometimes *legal repentance*, is merely a sorrow on account of *consequences*. Such was that of Saul and Judas.

In order to evade the argument arising from the address of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, who called upon the Jewish people to *repent and believe the gospel*, it has been alleged that it was only an outward repentance and acknowledgment of the truth to which they were exhorted, and not that which is spiritual, or which has the promise of spiritual blessings. But it will be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that such repentance and faith are anywhere required of sinners, or that it is consistent with the divine perfections to require them. An outward repentance and reformation of manners, as distinguished from that which consists in godly sorrow, is only *repentance in appearance*. Whatever sorrow there is in it, it is not on account of sin, but its consequences; and to suppose that Christ or his servants required this, would be doing them infinite dishonor. It is no other than supposing them to have betrayed the authority of God over the human heart, to have sanctioned hypocrisy, and to have given counsels to sinners, which if taken, would leave them still exposed to everlasting destruction.

The case of the *Ninevites* has been alleged as furnishing an example of that repentance which is the duty of men in general, and which Christ and his apostles required of the Jews. I do not know that the repentance of the Ninevites was genuine, or connected with spiritual blessings: neither do my opponents know that it was not. Probably the repentance of some of them was genuine, while that of the greater part might be only put on in conformity to the orders of government, or at most, merely the effect of terror. But whatever it was, even if none of it might have been genuine, the *object professed was godly sorrow for sin*. And if God treated them upon the supposition of their being sincere, and it turned Him from the evil which he had threatened, it is no more than he did to Pharaoh, Abijah, Ahab, and others.² It is a very unjust conclusion to draw from his conduct, that their repentance was such as God approved, and the whole of which he required at their hands. So far from it, there might be nothing in any of them which could approve itself to him as the searcher of hearts. And though for wise reasons He might think it proper in those instances, to overlook their hypocrisy and *to treat them* on the supposition of their repentance being what they professed it to be, yet He might still reserve to himself the power of judging them at the last day according to, their works.

The object of John the Baptist was not to effect a mere outward reformation of manners, but to *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*.^{Luk 1.17} Such was the effect actually produced by his ministry, and by that of Christ, and the apostles. The repentance which they called upon sinners to exercise, was such that it entitled those who possessed it, to Christian *baptism*, and which had the promise of *the remission of sins*.³

It is plainly intimated by the apostle Paul, that all repentance except that which works in a way of godly sorrow, and which he calls *repentance to salvation*, NEEDS TO BE REPENTED OF. It is the mere *sorrow of the world, which works death*.^{2Cor 7.10} But what requires to be repented of, cannot be

¹ Mar 3.5; Rom 2.5.

² Exo 8.8, 9; 2Chr 13 with 1Kng 15; 1Kng 21.27, 29.

³ Mar 1.4; Act 2.38.

commanded by God, or constitute any part of a sinner's duty. The *duty* of every transgressor is to be *sorry at heart* for having sinned. ¹

Humility or lowliness of mind is a spiritual disposition, and has the promise of spiritual blessings. *Though the Lord is high, yet he regards the lowly — He gives grace to the humble — Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ² Yet this disposition is required as the duty of all.— *Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.* ^{Jas 4.8-10} Humility does not consist in thinking less or more meanly of ourselves than we are. The difference between one who is lowly, and one who is proud, lies in this: the one thinks justly of himself, and the other unjustly. The humblest Christian only thinks of himself *soberly, as he ought to think.* ^{Rom 12.3} All the instances of humility recorded of the godly in the Scriptures, are but so many examples of a right spirit, a spirit brought down to their situation. *Carry back the ark of God into the city, says David: If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back, and show me both it and his habitation: but if He thus says, I have no delight in you, behold, here am I; let him do to me as seems good to him.* ^{2Sam 15.25,26} This was very different from the spirit of his predecessor, when he was given to expect the loss of the kingdom; yet it was no more than the duty of Saul, as well as of David; and all his proud and rebellious opposition served only to increase his guilt and misery. The spirit of the publican was no more than was becoming of a sinner, and would have been becoming of the Pharisee himself. ^{Luk 18.13}

Finally: if whatever has the promise of spiritual blessings is a spiritual exercise, everything that is *right*, or which *accords with the divine precept*, must be so: for the Scriptures uniformly promise eternal life to every such exercise. Those who *do good* shall come forth to the resurrection of life — He that *does righteousness* is *righteous*. Giving a *cup of cold water* to a disciple of Christ, because he belongs to Him, will be followed with a disciple's reward. Indeed, a *blessing* is pronounced upon those who are *not offended* by him. But though these things are spiritual, and are characteristic of the godly, yet who will say they are not binding on the *ungodly*? Are they excused from good, from doing right, from bestowing a cup of water on a disciple of Jesus, because he belongs to Him? At least, are they allowed to be *offended* by him?

If God's law is spiritual, and remains in full force as a standard of obligation; if men while unconverted have no real conformity to it; if regeneration is the writing of it upon the heart, or the renewal of the mind to a right spirit, then all these things are clear and consistent. This is for the same thing, in different respects, to be "man's duty and God's gift," a position which Dr. Owen has fully established. ³ And somewhere he remarks, that the one who is ignorant of it has yet to learn one of the first principles of religion. In short, this is rendering *the work of the Spirit*, what the Scriptures term it: — *Leading us by the way that we should go.* ^{Isa 48.17} But if that which is bestowed by the Holy Spirit is something different in its nature from that which is required in the divine precepts, I do not see what is to be made of the Scriptures, nor how it is that *righteousness, goodness, or anything else* which is required of men, should be accompanied (as it is) with the promise of eternal life.

¹ God commands us to repent and believe (Mar 1.15); He commands us to turn from our wicked ways and live (Eze 33.11). But what causes us to turn, what opens us to believe, is *godly sorrow*, which comes from within. Like love, it cannot be commanded. God's enabling grace, *permits* us to see our sin for what is; but *turning* from it is our choice, even in Calvinism. How that works with God's *sovereign election* is the mystery (Joh 6.37, 44; Eph 1.4). Hence the continuing debate between Arminians, Calvinists, and hyper-Calvinists. — WHG

² Psa 138.6; Jas 4.6; Mat 5.3.

³ Owen, *Display of Arminianism*, Chap, x.

PART III. CONTAINING ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS.

The principal objections that are made to the foregoing statement of things, are taken from the nature of original holiness, as it existed in our first parents — The divine decrees — Particular redemption — The Covenant of Works — The inability of man — The operations of the Spirit — and the necessity of a divine principle in order to believe.

It may be worthy of some notice, at least from those who are perpetually reproaching the statement defended here as leading to Arminianism, that the greater part of these objections are of *Arminian* origin. They are the same for substance as have been alleged by the leading writers of that scheme, in their controversies with the Calvinists; and from the writings of the latter, it would be easy to select answers to them. This, in effect, is acknowledged by Mr. *Brine*. However, he considers these answers as insufficient, and therefore prefers others before them. ¹

It also deserves to be considered, whether objections drawn from such subjects as the above, in which we may presently get beyond our depth, ought to weigh against that body of evidence which has been adduced from the plain declarations and precepts of the holy Scriptures? What if by reason of darkness, we could not ascertain the precise nature of the principle of our first parents? It is certain we know but little of original purity. Our disordered souls are incapable of forming just ideas of so glorious a state. To attempt, therefore, to settle the boundaries of even *their* duty, by an abstract inquiry into the nature of their powers and principles, would be improper; and still more so to make it the medium by which to judge *our own*. There are but two ways by which we can judge on such a subject: The one is from the *character of the Creator*, and the other from *Scripture testimony*. From the former, we may infer the *perfect purity* of the creature, as coming out of the hands of God; but nothing can be concluded of his inability to believe in Christ, had he been in circumstances which required it. As to the latter, the only passage that I recollect to have seen produced for the purpose, is 1Cor 15.47. *The first man was of the earth, earthy*, which Mr. *Johnson* of Liverpool alleged to prove the earthiness of Adam's mind, or principles. But Mr. *Brine* sufficiently refutes this, proving that this divine proposition respects the *body*, and not the principles of our first father; ² and thus Dr. *Gill* expounds it.

With regard to the doctrine of *divine decrees*, etc., it is a fact that the great body of the divines who have believed those doctrines, have also believed the other. Neither Augustine, nor Calvin — who each in his day defended *predestination*, and the other doctrines connected with it — ever appear to have thought of denying it to be the duty of every sinner who has heard the gospel, to repent, and believe in Jesus Christ. Neither did the other reformers, nor the Puritans of the sixteenth century, nor the divines of the synod of Dort who opposed Arminius, nor any of the nonconformists of the seventeenth century (so far as I have any acquaintance with their writings) — none ever so much as hesitated upon this subject. The writings of Calvin himself would now be deemed Arminian by a great number of our opponents. I allow that the principles defended here may be inconsistent with the Doctrine of Grace, notwithstanding that the leading advocates of those doctrines have admitted them; and I am far from wishing any person to build his faith on the authority of great men. But their admission of them ought to suffice for silencing that kind of opposition against them which consists in calling names.

Were a difficulty allowed to exist, as to the reconciling of these subjects, it would not warrant a rejection of either of them. If I find two doctrines are affirmed or implied in the Scriptures, which to my feeble understanding may seem to clash, I should not embrace the one and reject the other, because of their supposed inconsistency. For on the same ground, another person might embrace what I reject, and reject what I embrace, and have equal *scriptural authority* for *his* faith, as I have for *mine*. Yet in this manner many have acted on both sides: some taking the general precepts

¹ *Brine, Arminian principles of a late writer refuted*, p. 6.

² *Johnson's Mistakes noted and rectified*, pp. 18-23.

and invitations of Scripture for their standard, have rejected the doctrine of discriminating grace; others taking the declarations of salvation as being a fruit of electing love for their standard, deny that sinners without distinction are called upon to believe for the salvation of their souls. Hence we hear of *Calvinistic* and *Arminian* texts; as though these leaders had agreed to divide the Scriptures between them. The truth is, there are but two ways for us to take: one is to reject them *both*, and the Bible with them, on account of its inconsistencies; or else embrace them both, concluding that as they are both revealed in the Scriptures, they are both true, and both consistent, and that it is owing to the darkness of our understandings that they do not appear so to us. One should think those excellent lines of Dr. Watts, in his Hymn on Election, must approve themselves to every pious heart:

“But, O my soul, if truth so bright
Should dazzle, and confound thy sight;
Yet still his written will obey,
And wait the great decisive day.”

If we had more of that, about which we contend, it would teach us more to suspect our own understandings, and to submit to the wisdom of God. Abraham, that pattern of faith, might have made objections to the command of offering up his son, on the ground of its inconsistency with the promise; and he might have set himself to find some other meaning for the terms. But he *believed God*, and left it to Him to reconcile his promise and his precepts. It was for him not to dispute, but to obey.

These general remarks, however, are not introduced for the purpose of avoiding a particular attention to the several objections, but rather as preparatory to it.

On the principle of holiness possessed by man in Innocence.

THE objection drawn from this subject has been stated in the following words:

“The holy principle connatural to Adam, and concreated with him, was not suited to live unto God through a Mediator. That kind of life was above the extent of his powers, though perfect. And therefore, as he in a state of integrity did not have a capacity of living unto God agreeably to the nature of the New Covenant, it is apprehended that his posterity, while under the *first* covenant, are not commanded to live unto God in that way — or in other words, to live by faith in God through a Mediator.”¹

The whole weight of these important conclusions rests upon the two first sentences, and which are mere unfounded assertions. No *proof* whatever is offered for the truth of them. What evidence is there that the principle of holiness concreated with Adam was not suited to live unto God through a Mediator? It is true that his circumstances were such as not to need a Mediator; but this involves no such consequence. A subject while he preserves his loyalty, needs no Mediator in approaching the throne; if he has offended, then it is otherwise: but a change of circumstances would not require a change of principles. On the contrary, the same principle of loyal affection that would induce him while innocent to approach the throne with modest confidence, would induce him, after having offended, to approach it with penitence or, which is the same thing, to be *sorry at heart* for what he had done; and if a Mediator were at hand, with whose interposition the sovereign had declared himself *well pleased*, it would at the same time lead him to implore forgiveness in his name.

Had Cain lived before the fall, God would not have been offended at his bringing an offering without a sacrifice; but after that event, and the promise of the woman’s seed, together with the institution of sacrifices, such conduct was highly offensive. It equally disregarded the threatening

¹ Mr. Brine, *Motives to Love and Unity*, pp. 50, 51.

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and the promise: treating the first as if nothing was meant by it; and the last as a matter of no account. It was practically saying,

‘God is not in earnest. There is no great evil in sin; nor any necessity for an atonement. If I come with my offering, I will doubtless be accepted, and my Creator will think himself honored.’

Such is still the language of a self-righteous heart. But is it thus that Adam’s posterity while “under the first covenant” (or rather, while vainly hoping for the *promise* of the first covenant, after having broken its conditions) are required to approach an offended God? If the principle of Adam in Innocence ¹ was not suited to live to God through a Mediator, and this is the standard of duty to his carnal descendants, then it must of course be their duty either not to worship God at all, or to worship Him as Cain did, without any respect to an atoning Sacrifice. On the contrary, is there not reason to conclude that the case of Cain and Abel was designed to teach mankind, from the very outset of the world, God’s determination to have no fellowship with sinners, except through a Mediator; and that all attempts to approach him in any other way would be vain and presumptuous?

It is true that man in Innocence was unable to repent of sin, or to believe in the Savior: for he had no sin to repent of, nor was any Savior revealed or needed. But he was equally unable to repent with such a *natural* sorrow for sin, as is admitted to be the duty of his posterity, or to believe the history of the gospel in the way which is also admitted to be binding on all who hear it. To this it might be added that he was unable to perform the duty of a father; for he had no children to educate: nor could he pity or relieve the miserable; for there were no miserable objects to be pitied or relieved. Yet we do not conclude from this, that his descendants are excused from these duties.

“That Adam in a state of Innocence,” says Dr. *Gill*, “had the power of believing in Christ, and did believe in him as the second person of the Trinity, as the Son of God, cannot well be denied, since, with the other two Persons, He was his Creator and Preserver. And his not believing in Him as the Mediator, Savior, And Redeemer, did not arise from any defect of power in him, but from the state, condition, and situation he was in, and from the nature of the revelation made to him; for no doubt Adam had a power to believe every word of God, or any revelation that was or might be made to him.” ²

Dr. Owen, in his *Display of Arminianism*, complains of the attempts of the Arminians to ‘draw down our first parents, even from the instant of their forming, into the same condition in which we are engaged because of our corrupted nature.’ He mentions several of their maxims and sentiments, and among others, two of their statements, the one of the Remonstrants in their apology, and the other of the six Arminian collocutors at the Hague: ‘The will of man,’ say the Remonstrants, “never had any spiritual endowments.’ ‘In the spiritual death of sin,” say the Arminians, ‘there are no spiritual gifts properly lacking in the will, because they were never there.’

“The sum is,” adds the Doctor ironically (speaking their language), “man was created with a nature, not only weak and imperfect, unable by its native strength and endowments to attain that *supernatural* end for which he was made, and which he was commanded to seek, but depraved also with a love and desire for things repugnant to the will of God, by reason of an inbred inclination to sinning. It does not properly belong to this place to show how they extenuate those gifts also with which they cannot deny but that he was endued, and also deny those which he had, such as *a power to believe in Christ*, or to assent to any truth that God should reveal to him. And yet they grant this privilege to every one of his posterity, in that depraved condition of nature into which by sin he cast himself and us. We all have now, *they*

¹ *Innocence: i.e., prior to the fall.*

² John Gill, *Cause of God and Truth*, Part III ch. iii.

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tell us, a power of believing in Christ; — that is, Adam, by his fall, obtained a supernatural endowment, far more excellent than any he had before!”

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

I conclude from the following reasons, that the principle of holiness in Adam, and that which is wrought in believers, are *essentially* the same:

First, They are both formed after the same likeness; THE IMAGE OF GOD. — God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him — PUT ON the new man, which, AFTER GOD, is created in righteousness, and true holiness. ¹ If God is immutable in his nature, that which is created after Him must be the same for its substance at all times, and in all circumstances. There cannot be two specifically different images of the same original.

Secondly, They are both a conformity to the same standard: THE MORAL LAW.

— That the spirit and conduct of man in Innocence was neither more nor less than a perfect conformity to this law, I suppose will be allowed; and the same may be said of the spirit and conduct of Jesus Christ, *so far as he was our Exemplar*, or the model after which we are formed. God’s law was within his heart. It was *his food and drink to do His will*. He went to *the end of the law for righteousness*; but it does not appear that he went beyond it. The superiority of his obedience to that of all others, lay not in his doing more than the law required; but in the dignity of his person, which stamped infinite value on everything he did. But if such was the spirit and conduct of Christ, to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed, then of necessity, it must be *ours*. This also perfectly agrees with those scriptural representations, which describe the work of the Spirit as *writing God’s law in the heart*,² and those which represent the ultimate state of holiness to which we shall arrive in heaven, as no more than a conformity to this law, and this model: *the spirits of just men MADE PERFECT.* ^{Heb 12.22} *We shall be LIKE HIM.* ^{1Joh 3.2}

Thirdly, The terms used to describe the one, imply that it is of the same nature as the other.

— Conversion is expressed by *a return to God*; ^{Isa 55.7} which denotes a recovery to a right state of mind after a departure from him. Regeneration is called a *washing*, which expresses the restoring of the soul to the purity from which it had degenerated. And hence, the same divine operation is called in the same passage, the *renewing* of the Holy Ghost. ^{Tit 3.5}

But “this renovation,” it has been said, “is spoken of the *mind*, not a *principle* in the mind.” ³ The renewal of the mind must either be natural or moral. If the former, it would seem as if we had divested ourselves of the use of our natural faculties, and that regeneration consists in restoring them. If the latter, the *mind* must mean the *disposition* of the mind, or as the Scripture speaks, *the SPIRIT of our minds.* ^{Eph 4.23} But this amounts to the same thing as a principle in our minds. There is no difference between a mind being restored to a right state and condition, and a right state and condition being restored to the mind.

¹ Gen 1.27; Eph 4.24.

² Psa 40.8; Joh 4.34; Rom 10.4; Jer 31.33.

³ Brine, *Motives to Love and Unity*, p. 22.

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Fourthly, Supreme love to God, which is acknowledged to be the principle of man in Innocence, would necessarily lead a fallen creature to embrace the gospel way of salvation.

— This is clearly intimated in our Lord's reasonings with the Jews: *I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in my father's name, and you do not receive Me.* ^{Joh 5.42,43}, On the contrary hypothesis, this reasoning was invalid; for if receiving the Messiah was that to which a principle of supreme love to God was *unequal*, then a non-reception of him would afford no proof of its *absence*. They might have had the love of God in them, and yet not have received him.

Love to God, which was possessed by Adam in Innocence, was equal to that of the holy angels. His being *of the earth, earthy*, as to his body, no more proves his inferiority to them as to the principles of his mind, than it proves the inferiority of Christ in this respect, who, before his resurrection, was possessed of a *natural* and not a *spiritual* body. But it cannot be denied that the angels are capable of understanding, believing, and approving of the gospel way of salvation. It is, above all others, their chosen theme: *which things the angels desire to look into.* ^{1Pet 1.12} It is true, they do not embrace the Messiah *as their Savior*; because they do not stand in need of salvation. But give a being that lacks a Savior, a free invitation and their principles, and he would not hesitate a moment about accepting it. It is not possible for a creature to love God, without loving the greatest friend of God, and embracing a gospel that more than anything, tends to exalt His character. Neither is it possible to love mankind with a holy and affectionate regard towards their best interests, without loving the Friend of sinners, and approving of a doctrine that breathes *good will to men.* ^{Luk 2.14}

Concerning the Decrees of God.

A GENERAL invitation to sinners to return to God, and be saved through Christ, it\$ has been thought must be inconsistent with an election of some, and a consequent rejection of others. Such has been the mode of objecting used by the adversaries to the doctrines of discriminating grace;¹ and such is the mode of late adopted by our opponents.

I would observe in general, If this mode of reasoning proves any thing, it will prove too much; it will prove that it is not the duty of some men to attend the means of grace, or in any way to seek after the salvation of their souls, or to be in the least degree concerned about it. For it may be pleaded that God cannot have made it their duty, or have invited them to attend the means of salvation, seeing the He is determined *not* to bestow salvation upon them. And thus we must not only be driven to explain the general invitation to many who never came to the gospel supper, of a mere invitation to attend the *means of grace*, but must absolutely give it up, and the Bible with it, on account of its inconsistency.

Further, This mode of reasoning would prove that the use of means in order to obtain a temporal subsistence, and to preserve life, is altogether vain and inconsistent. If we believe that the future states of men are determined of God, then we must also believe the same of their present states. The Scriptures teach the one no less than the other. *God has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation.* Our *cup* is measured, and our *lot* assigned us. There is also *an appointed time for man upon earth; his days are as the days of a hireling. His days are determined, and the number of his months are with God: He has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.* ² Yet those who 'reason as above, with regard to things of another life, are as attentive to the affairs of this life as other people. They are no less concerned than their neighbors for their present accommodations; nor less employed in devising means for lengthening out their lives, and their tranquility. But if the purpose of God may consist with the agency of man in

¹ See Owen's *Death of Death*, Book IV; Chap. 1.

² Act 17.26; Psa 16.5; Job 7.1; 14.5.

Objections Answered.

present concerns, it may consist in those which are future, whether we can perceive the link that unites them or not. And if our duty in the one case is the same as if no such purpose existed, then it is so in the other. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong to us, and to our children forever.* ^{Deu 29.29}

It was the duty of Pharaoh to have followed the counsel of Moses, and to have let the people go; and it was his sin to pursue them into the sea. Yet it was the purpose of God by this means to destroy him. ^{Exo 7.1-4} *Moses sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying Let me pass through your land;* and it was doubtless the duty of Sihon to have complied with the request. Yet it appears by the outcome, that the Lord had determined to give his country to Israel for a possession, and therefore gave Sihon up to hardness of heart, by which it was accomplished (Deu 2.26-30).

If the days of man are, determined, and his bounds appointed so that he cannot pass them, then it must have been determined that that generation of the Israelites who went out of Egypt should die in the wilderness. Yet it was their duty to have believed God, and to have gone up to possess the land; and it was their sin to disbelieve him, and turn back in their hearts to Egypt. And it deserves particular notice, that this sin of theirs is held up, both by David and Paul, as an example for others to shun, and that is in spiritual concerns. ^{1Cor 10.6-10} It was the determination of God that Ahab should fall in his expedition against Ramoth Gilead, as was plainly intimated to him by Micaiah. Yet it was his duty to have hearkened to the counsel that was given him, and to have desisted from his purpose. ^{1King 22.15-22} The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was determined by God, and frequently foretold by the prophets; yet the inhabitants were as frequently counselled to return from their evil ways that they might avoid it. Jeremiah particularly entreated Zedekiah to follow his counsel, that he might save the city and himself from ruin. ^{Jer 38.20}

However such things may grate upon the minds of some, yet there are cases in which we ourselves are in the habit of using similar language, and we do that without any idea of attributing to God anything inconsistent with the greatest perfection of moral character. If a wicked man is set on mischievous pursuits, and all the advice and warnings of his friends are lost upon him, we do not hesitate to say, 'It seems as if God had determined to destroy him, and therefore has given him up to infatuation.' In the use of such language we have no idea of the determination of God being unjust, or capricious. On the contrary, we suppose He may have *wise* and *just* reasons for doing as he does; and as such, notwithstanding our compassion towards the party, we acquiesce in it. Whenever we speak of God as having determined to destroy a person, or a people, we feel the subject is too profound for our comprehension; and well indeed we may.

Even an inspired apostle, when discoursing about God's rejection of the Jewish nation, though he glances at the merciful aspect which this awful event wore towards the gentiles, and traces some great and wise designs that should be answered by it, yet he feels himself lost in his subject. Standing as on the brink of an unfathomable abyss, he exclaims, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his ways past finding out!* ^{Rom 11.33} He believed the doctrine of divine decrees, or that God *works all things after the counsel of his own will.* ^{Eph 1.11} But he had no idea of making these things any part of the rule of duty; either so as to excuse his countrymen from the sin of unbelief, or himself from using every possible mean that might accomplish their salvation. On the one hand, he quoted the words of David as applicable to them, *Let their table be made a snare and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense to them.* On the other he declares, *I speak to you gentiles—if by ANY MEANS I may provoke to emulation, those who are my flesh, and might save some of them!* ¹

There were those in that day, as well as in this, who objected, that if things are as God has purposed, *Why does he yet find fault; for who has resisted his will.* ^{Rom 9.19} This was no other than

¹ Rom 11.9; 10.1; 11.13, 14.

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suggesting that the Doctrine of Decrees must operate to set aside the *fault* of sinners; and this is the substance of what has been alleged from that day to this. Some, because they cannot conceive of the doctrine except as drawing after it the consequence assigned to it by this *replier against God*, reject it. Others appear to have no objection to the consequence itself, stamped as it is with infamy by the manner in which the apostle repelled it; and therefore they admit the doctrine as being connected with it! But Paul did not do so. He held fast the Doctrine of Decrees, and held it as comporting with the fault of sinners. After all that he had written upon God's electing some, and rejecting others — he in the same chapter assigns the failure of those who failed, to their *not seeking justification by faith in Christ; but as it were by the works of the law, stumbling at the stumbling-stone.* ^{Rom 9:32}

“God's word,” says Mr. Brine, “and not his secret purpose, is the rule of our conduct.” ¹

“We must exactly distinguish,” says Dr. Owen, “between man's *duty*, and God's *purpose*; there being no connection between them. The purpose and decree of God is not the rule of our duty; neither is the performance of our duty, in doing what we are commanded, any declaration of what it is God's purpose to do, or his decree that it should be done. This is especially to be seen and considered in the duty of the ministers of the gospel; in the dispensing of the word, in exhortations, invitations, precepts, and threatenings, committed to them; all of which are perpetual declaratives of our duty; and they manifest the approval of the thing exhorted and invited to, with the truth of the connection between one thing and another — but *not* of the counsel or purpose of God, in respect of individual persons, in the ministry of the word. A minister is not to make inquiry after, nor to trouble himself about, those secrets of the eternal mind of God, viz. whom He purposes to save, and whom he has sent Christ to die for *in particular*. It is enough for them to search his revealed will; and from there take their *directions*, from where they have their *commissions*. This is why there is no conclusion from the universal precepts of the word concerning these things, as to God's purpose in himself concerning *persons*. They command and invite all to *repent* and *believe*, but do not know in particular on whom God will bestow repentance unto salvation, nor in whom He will effect the work of faith with power.” ²

On Particular Redemption.

OBJECTIONS to the foregoing principles from the Doctrine of Election, are generally united with those from Particular Redemption. And indeed, they are so connected that the validity of the one stands or falls with that of the other.

To ascertain the force of the objection, it is proper to enquire, In what does the peculiarity of redemption consist? If the atonement of Christ were considered as the literal payment of a debt; if the measure of his sufferings were according to the number of those for whom he died, and to the degree of their guilt, in such a manner that if more had been saved, or if those who are saved had been more guilty, his sorrows must have been proportionally increased, it might, for all I know, be inconsistent with indefinite invitations. But it would be equally inconsistent with the free *forgiveness* of sin, and with sinners being directed to apply for mercy as *supplicants*, rather than as claimants. I conclude, therefore, that a hypothesis which in so many important points is manifestly inconsistent with the Scriptures, cannot be true.

On the other hand, If the atonement of Christ does not proceed on the principle of *commercial*, but of *moral* justice, or justice as it relates to *crime*; if its grand object were to express the divine displeasure against sin, ^{Rom 8:3} and so to render the exercise of mercy, in all the ways in which sovereign wisdom should determine to apply it, consistent with righteousness; ^{Rom 3:25} if it be in

¹ Brine, *Certain Efficacy*, etc. p. 151.

² Owen, *Death of Death*, Book IV. Chap. 1.

Objections Answered.

itself equal to the salvation of the whole world, if the whole world were to embrace it; and if the peculiarity which attends it did not consist in its insufficiency to save more than *are* saved, but in the sovereignty of its *application* — then no such inconsistency can justly be ascribed to it.

If the atonement of Christ excluded a part of mankind *in the same sense* that it excludes fallen angels, then why is the gospel addressed to the one, any more than to the other? The message of wisdom is addressed to *men*, and not to devils. The former are invited to the gospel supper, but the latter are not. These facts afford proof that Christ by his death opened a door of hope to sinners of the human race *as sinners* — *affording a ground for their being invited without distinction, to believe and be saved.*

But just as God might send his Son into the world to save men rather than angels; so he may *apply* his sacrifice to the salvation of *some* men, and not of others. It is a fact that a great part of the world have never heard the gospel; that the greater part of those who have heard it, disregard it; and that those who believe are taught to ascribe not only their salvation, but *faith itself*, through which it is obtained, to the *free gift of God*. And as the application of redemption is solely directed by sovereign wisdom, like every other event, it too is the result of *previous design*. That which is actually done was *intended* to be done. Hence the salvation of those who are saved is described as the *end* which the Savior had in view: He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. ^{Tit 2.14} In this, it is apprehended, consists the peculiarity of redemption.

There is no contradiction between this peculiarity of *design* in the death of Christ, and a universal *obligation* on those who hear the gospel, to believe in him, or a universal *invitation* being addressed to them. If God through the death of his Son, has promised salvation to all who comply with the gospel; and if there is no *natural* impossibility as to compliance, nor any obstruction but that which arises from an aversion of heart; then exhortations and invitations to believe and be saved, are consistent: And our duty as preachers of the gospel is to administer them, without any more regard to particular redemption than to election, both being *secret things* which belong to the Lord our God, and which, however they may be a rule to him, are none to us. If that which sinners are called upon to believe, respected the particular design of Christ to save them, it would then be inconsistent. But they are neither exhorted nor invited to believe anything but what is revealed, and what will prove true, whether they believe it or not. He that believes in Jesus Christ, must believe in him as he is revealed in the gospel; and that is as the Savior of *sinners*. It is only as a *sinner*, exposed to the righteous displeasure of God, that he must approach him. If he thinks of coming to Him as a favorite of heaven, or as possessed of any good qualities which may recommend him before other sinners, he deceives his soul. Such notions are the bar to believing.

“He that would know his own particular redemption, before he will believe,” says a well-known writer, “begins at the wrong end of his work, and is very unlikely to come that way to the knowledge of it... Any man that owns being a *sinner*, has as fair a ground for his faith as anyone in the world that has not yet believed; nor may any person on any account exclude himself from redemption, unless by his obstinate and resolved continuance in unbelief, he has marked himself out.” ¹

“The preachers of the gospel, in their particular congregations,” says another, “being utterly unacquainted with the purpose and secret counsel of God, being also forbidden to pray or search into it (Deu 29.29) may justifiably call upon *every* man to believe, with assurance of salvation to every one in particular upon his doing so — knowing and being fully persuaded that there is enough in the death of Christ to save every one who does so — leaving the purpose and counsel of God on whom he will bestow faith, and for whom in particular Christ died (even as they are commanded) to himself. — When God calls upon men to believe, he does not, in the first place,

¹ Elisha Coles on *God's Sovereignty*, on Redemption.

call upon them to believe that Christ died for *them*, but that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but only of Jesus Christ, through whom salvation is preached.”¹

On sinners being under the Covenant of Works.

Much has been said on this subject in relation to the present controversy.² Yet I feel at a loss in forming a judgment as to where the force of the objection lies, as it is nowhere (that I recollect) formed into a regular argument. If I understand Mr. Brine, he supposes, *First*, That all duty is required by the law, either as a rule of life, or as a covenant. *Secondly*, That all unconverted sinners, being under the law as a covenant, whatever the revealed will of God now requires of them, it is to be considered as the requirement of that covenant. *Thirdly*, That the terms of the Covenant of Works being, *Do this and live*, it cannot for this reason be, *Believe and be saved*.

Allowing that the distinction between the Law as a *rule of life*, and as a *covenant*, is a just distinction, before any conclusion can be drawn from it, it must yet be ascertained in what sense unbelievers are under a Covenant of Works; and whether in some respects it is not their sin to continue so? It is true that they are *under the curse* for having broken it. And it is also true that they are still laboring to substitute something in place of perfect obedience, by which they may regain divine favor; *but this ought not to be*. A self-righteous attachment to a Covenant of Works, or, as the Scripture expresses it, a being *of the works of the law*, is none other than the working of unbelief, and rebellion against the truth. Strictly speaking, men are *not* now under the Covenant of Works; but *are* under the curse for having broken it. God is not in covenant with them, nor they with him. The law as a covenant was recorded, and a new and enlarged edition of it was given to Israel at Mount Sinai. It was not, however, for the purpose of *giving life* to those who had broken it, but rather as a preparative to a better covenant. Its *precepts* still stand as the immutable will of God towards his creatures; its promises as memorials of what might have been expected from his goodness in case of obedience; and its curses as a flaming sword that guards the Tree of Life. It is stationed in the oracles of God as a faithful watchman to repel the vain hopes of the self-righteous, and convince them of the necessity of a Savior.³ Hence it was given to Israel by the hand of Moses *as a Mediator*. See Gal 3.19-31.

But if unbelievers are not otherwise under the Covenant of Works than as they are exposed to its curse, it is improper to say that whatever is required of them in the Scriptures, is required by that covenant, and as a term of life. God requires nothing of fallen creatures as a *term of life*. He requires them to love him with all their hearts, the same as if they had never apostatized. But this is not with a view to regain his lost favor. For if they were thereafter to perfectly comply with the divine precepts, unless they could *atone for past offences*, which is impossible, they could have no ground to expect the bestowment of everlasting life. It is enough for us that the revealed will of God to sinners says, *Believe*; while the gospel graciously adds the promise of *salvation*.

On the inability of sinners to believe in Christ and do things spiritually good.

This objection is seldom made in form, unless it is by persons who deny it to be the duty of a sinner to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself. Intimations are often given, however, that it is absurd and cruel to require of any man, what is beyond his power to comply with. And as the Scriptures declare that, *No man CAN come to Christ, unless the Father draws him*; ^{Joh 6.44} and that *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, nor CAN he know them*,

¹ Dr. Owen, *Death of Death*, Book IV. Chap. 1.

² Brine, *Motives to Love and Unity*, pp. 37-42.

³ Rom 7.10; Mat 19.17.

Objections Answered.

because they are spiritually discerned; ^{1Cor 2.14} — it is concluded that these are things to which the sinner, while unregenerate, is under no obligation to do.

The answer that has frequently been made to this reasoning is, in effect, as follows:

Men are no more *unable* to do things spiritually good, than they are to be subject to the law of God, which the carnal mind is not, nor can it be. And the reason why we have no power to comply with these things is, that we have lost it by the fall. But though we have lost our ability to obey, God has not lost his authority to command.

There is some truth in this answer; but it is apprehended to be insufficient. It is true that sinners are no more, nor otherwise unable to do anything spiritually good, than they are to yield a perfect submission to God's holy law; and the inability of both arises from the same source — the original apostacy of human nature. Yet if the nature of this inability were direct, or such as consisted in the lack of *rational faculties, bodily powers, or external advantages*, being the consequence of the fall, it would not set aside the objection. Some men pass through life totally insane. This may be one of the *effects* of sin; yet the Scriptures never convey any idea that such persons will be dealt with at the last judgment on the same ground as if they had been sane. On the contrary, they teach that to whom much is given, much shall be required. ^{Luk 12.48} Another is deprived of his eyesight, and so is rendered unable to read the Scriptures. This also may be the effect of sin; and in some cases, of his own personal misconduct. But whatever punishment may be inflicted on him for such misconduct, he is not blameworthy for not reading the Scriptures, after he had lost his ability to do so. A third possesses the use of reason, and of all his senses, and members; he has no other opportunity to know the will of God than what is afforded him by the light of nature. It would be equally repugnant to Scripture and to reason, to suppose that this man will be judged by the same rule as others who have lived under the light of revelation.

As many as have sinned without law, will also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, will be judged by the law. ^{Rom 2.12}

The inability in each of these cases is *natural*; and to whatever degree it exists, let it arise from whatever cause it may, it excuses the subject of blame, in the account of both God and man. The law of God itself requires no creature to love him, or obey him, beyond his *strength*, or with more than all the powers which he possesses. If the inability of sinners to believe in Christ, or to do things spiritually good, were of this nature, it would undoubtedly form an excuse in their favor; and it must be absurd to exhort them to such duties, as to exhort the blind to look, the deaf to hear, or the dead to walk. But the inability of sinners is not such that it induces the *Judge of all the earth* ^{Gen 18.25} (who cannot do other than right) to abate his requirements. It is a fact that he *does* require them, without any regard to their inability, *to love him, and to fear him, and to do all his commandments always*. The *blind* are admonished *to look*, the *deaf* *to hear*, and the *dead* *to arise*.¹ If there were no other proof than what is afforded by this single fact, it ought to satisfy us that the blindness, deafness, and death of sinners, toward that which is spiritually good, is of a different nature from that which furnishes an *excuse*.

This, however, is not the only ground of proof. The thing speaks for itself. There is an essential difference between an inability which is independent of the inclination, and one that is owing to nothing else. It is equally impossible, no doubt, for any person to do that which he has no mind to do, such as to perform that which surpasses his natural powers; and hence it is that the same terms are used in the one case as in the other. Those who were under the dominion of envy and malignity, *COULD NOT speak peaceably*; and *those who have eyes full of adultery, CANNOT CEASE from sin*. Hence also the following language — *How CAN you, being evil, speak good things? — The natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, nor CAN he know them — The*

¹ Isa 42.18; Eph 5.14.

Objections Answered.

carnal mind is enmity against God; and is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed CAN be — Those who are in the flesh CANNOT please God — No one CAN come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him — It is also true, that many have affected to treat the distinction between *natural* and *moral* inability as more curious than solid. 'If we are unable,' they say, 'we are unable. As to the nature of the inability, it is a matter of no account. Such distinctions are perplexing to plain Christians, and beyond their capacity.' But surely the plainest and weakest Christian in reading his Bible, if he pays any regard to what he reads, he must perceive a manifest difference between the blindness of Bartimaeus, who was ardently desirous that *he might receive his sight; and that of the unbelieving Jews, who closed their eyes, lest they should see, and be converted, and healed; and between the lack of the natural sense of hearing, and the state of those who have ears, but do not hear.* ¹

So far as my observation extends, those persons who affect to treat this distinction as a matter of mere curious speculation, are as ready to make use of it as other people where their own interest is concerned. If they are accused of injuring their fellow-creatures, and can allege that what they did was not *knowingly*, or of *design*, I believe they never fail to do so; or when charged with neglecting their duty to a parent, or a master; if they can say in truth that they were unable to do it at the time, *however good their will may have been*, they are never known to omit the plea. And should such a master or parent reply by suggesting that their lack of ability arose from lack of *inclination*, they would very easily understand it to be the language of reproach, and be very earnest to maintain the contrary. You never hear a person in such circumstances, reason as he does in religion. He does not say, 'If I am unable, I am unable; it is of no account whether it is of this kind or that;' but labors with all his might to establish the difference. Now if the subject is so clearly understood and acted upon where an interest is concerned, and never appears difficult except in religion, it is only too manifest where the difficulty lies. If by fixing the guilt of our conduct upon our father Adam, we can sit comfortably in our nest, we will be very averse to a sentiment that tends to disturb our repose, by planting a thorn in it.

It is sometimes objected, that the inability of sinners to believe in Christ, is not the effect of their depravity; for Adam himself in his purest state was only a natural man, and had no power to perform spiritual duties. But this objection belongs to another topic, and has (I hope) already been answered. To this, however, it may be added — *The natural man who does not receive the things of the spirit of God* (1Cor 2.14) is *not* a man possessed of the holy image of God, as Adam was, but of mere natural accomplishments; as were the *wise men of the world*, the philosophers of Greece and Rome, to whom the things of God were *foolishness*. Moreover, if the inability of sinners to perform spiritual duties, were of the kind alleged in the objection, they must be equally unable to commit the opposite sins. Someone who from the constitution of his nature is absolutely unable to understand, or believe, or love a certain kind of truth, must of necessity be alike unable to *shut his eyes* against it, to disbelieve, to reject, or to hate it. But it is manifest that all men are capable of the latter. It must therefore follow, that nothing but the depravity of their hearts renders them incapable of the former.

Some writers, as has been already observed, have allowed that sinners are the subjects of an inability which arises from their depravity; but they still contend that this is not *all*; but that they are both *naturally* and *morally* unable to believe in Christ; and this they think is agreeable to the Scriptures, which represent them as both *unable* said *unwilling* to come to him for life. But these two kinds of inability cannot consist with each other, so as for both to exist in the same subject, and towards the same thing. A moral inability supposes a natural ability. One who was never in any state possessed of the power of seeing, cannot be said to *shut his eyes* against the light. If the Jews had not been possessed of natural powers, equal to the knowledge of Christ's doctrine, there would have been no justice in that cutting question and answer, *Why do you not understand my*

¹ Mar 10.51; Mat 13.15.

Objections Answered.

speech? Because you CANNOT hear my word. A total physical inability must of necessity supersede a moral one. To suppose, therefore, that the phrase, *No one CAN come to me*, is meant to describe the former; and *You WILL NOT come to me that you may have life*, to describe the latter, is to suppose that our Savior taught what is self-contradictory.

Some have supposed that in ascribing physical or natural power to men, we deny their *natural depravity*. Through the poverty of language, words are obliged to be used in different senses. When we speak of men as *by nature* depraved, we do not mean to convey the idea of sin being an essential part of human nature, or of the constitution of man as man. Our meaning is that it is not a mere effect of education and example; but from his very birth it is so interwoven through all his powers, so ingrained, as it were, in his very soul, as to grow up with him, and become natural to him.

On the other hand, when the term *natural* is used as opposed to *moral*, and applied to the powers of the soul, it is designed to express those faculties which are strictly a part of our nature as men, and which are necessary to our being accountable creatures. By confounding these ideas we may be always disputing, and bring nothing to an issue.¹

Finally, It is sometimes suggested, that to ascribe natural ability to sinners to perform things spiritually good, is to nourish their self-sufficiency; and that to represent their inability as only *moral*, is to suppose that it is not insuperable, but may after all be overcome by efforts of their own. But surely it is not necessary, in order to destroy a spirit of self-sufficiency, to deny that we are men, and accountable creatures —which is all that natural ability supposes. If any person imagines it possible, of his own accord to choose that to which he is utterly averse, let him make a trial of it.

Some have alleged that, ‘natural power is only sufficient to perform natural things; and that spiritual power is requisite to perform spiritual things.’ But this statement is far from being accurate. Natural power is as necessary to the performance of spiritual, as of natural things. We must possess the powers of men in order to perform the duties of *good* men. And as to spiritual power, or which is the same thing, a right state of mind, it is not properly a faculty of the soul, but a quality which it possesses; and though it is essential to the *actual performance* of spiritual obedience, yet it is not necessary to our being under an obligation to perform it.

If a traveller, from an aversion to the western continent, should direct his course perpetually towards the east, he would in time arrive at the place which he designed to shun. In like manner, it has been remarked by some who have observed the progress of this controversy, that there are certain important points in which false Calvinism, in its ardent desire to steer clear of Arminianism, is brought to agree with it. We have seen already that they agree in their notions of the original holiness in Adam; and the inconsistency of the duty of believing, with the doctrine of Election and particular redemption. To this may be added, they are agreed in making the *grace of God* necessary to the accountableness of sinners, with regard to spiritual obedience. The one pleads for graceless sinners being free from obligation; the other admits about obligation, but founds it on the notion of universal grace. Both are agreed that where there is no grace, there can be no duty. But if grace is the ground of obligation, *it is no more grace, but debt.* ^{Rom 4.4} It is that which, if anything good is required of the sinner, cannot justly be withheld. This, in effect, is acknowledged by both parties. The one contends that where no grace is given, there can be no obligation to spiritual obedience, and therefore acquits the unbeliever of guilt in not coming to Christ that he might have life, and in the neglect of all spiritual religion. The other argues that if man is totally depraved, and no grace is given him to counteract his depravity, he is blameless. That is, his depravity is no longer depravity: he is innocent in the account of his judge;

¹ *Issue*: the result, consequence, or outcome of something; the issue of a fig tree is figs (fruit); the issue of that fruit is seed; and the issue of that seed — planted in good soil, watered, and fed — is a fig tree. — WHG

consequently he needs no savior. And if justice is done him, he will be exempt from punishment, if not entitled to heaven, in virtue of his personal innocence. Thus the whole system of grace is rendered void; and fallen angels, who have not been partakers of it, must be in a far preferable state to that of fallen men who, by Jesus taking hold of their nature, are liable to become blameworthy and eternally lost. But if the essential powers of the mind are the same, whether we are pure or depraved, and are sufficient to render any creature an accountable being, whatever his disposition, the grace is what its proper meaning imports — *free favor, or favor towards the unworthy*. And the redemption of Christ, with all its holy and happy effects, is what the Scriptures represent it to be: *necessary to deliver us from the state into which we were fallen, antecedent to its being bestowed*.¹

Of the Work of the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures clearly ascribe both repentance and faith, wherever they exist, to divine influence.² From this many have concluded that they cannot be duties required of sinners. If sinners have been exhorted from the pulpit to repent or believe, they have thought it sufficient to show the absurdity of such exhortations, by saying; ‘*A heart of flesh is of God’s giving. Faith is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.*’ — as though these things were inconsistent, and it would be improper to exhort to anything but what can be done of ourselves, and without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The whole weight of this objection rests upon the supposition that, *We do not stand in need of the Holy Spirit to enable us to comply with our duty*. If this principle were admitted, we must conclude either with the Arminians and Socinians, that “Faith and conversion, seeing they are acts of obedience, cannot be wrought of God;”³ or with the objector, that seeing they are wrought of God, they cannot be acts of obedience. But if we need the influence of the Holy Spirit *to enable us to do our duty*, both these methods of reasoning fall to the ground.

And is it not manifest that the godly in all ages have considered themselves insufficient to perform those things to which, nevertheless, they acknowledge themselves obliged? The rule duty is what God requires of us. But He requires those things which good men have always confessed themselves, on account of the sinfulness of their nature, insufficient to perform. *He desires truth in the inward part*; yet an Apostle acknowledged that they were not sufficient of themselves to think anything, as of themselves; but their sufficiency was of God.⁴ *The Spirit*, he says, *helps our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we should: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered*. The same things are required in one place, which are promised in another: — *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, and with all your hearts— I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*⁵ — When the sacred writers speak of the divine precepts, they neither disown them, nor infer from them a self-sufficiency to conform to them; but turn them into prayer: — *You have COMMANDED us to keep your precepts diligently. Oh that my ways were directed to keep your statutes.*^{Psa 119.4,5} — In brief, the Scriptures uniformly teach us that all our sufficiency to do good, or to abstain from evil, is from above: repentance and faith, therefore, may be duties, notwithstanding their being the gifts of God.

If our insufficiency for this, and every other good thing, arose from a natural impotency, it would indeed excuse us from obligation; but if it arise from the sinful dispositions of our hearts, it is

¹ Rom 5.5; 15.21; Heb 9.27, 28; 1The 1.10.

² Eze 11.19; 2Tim 2.25; Eph 1.19; 2.8.

³ See Owen’s *Display of Arminianism*, Chap. x.

⁴ Psa 51.6; 2Cor 3.5.

⁵ 1Sam 12.24; Jer 32.40.

otherwise. Those whose eyes are *full of adultery, and THEREFORE cannot cease from sin*, are under the same obligations to live a chaste and sober life, as other men are. Yet if ever their dispositions are changed, it must be by an influence from outside them; for it is not in them to relinquish their courses of their own accord. I do not mean to suggest that this species of evil prevails in all sinners. But sin in some form prevails, and has its dominion over them, and to such a degree that nothing but the grace of God can effectually cure it. It is depravity alone that renders the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit necessary.

“The bare” and outward declaration of the word of God, “says a great writer, “ought to have largely sufficed to make it to be believed, if our own blindness and stubbornness did not withstand it. But our mind has such an inclination to vanity, that it can never cling fast to the truth of God; and such a dullness, that it is always blind, and cannot see the light of it. Therefore there is nothing available done by the word, without the enlightening, of the Holy Spirit.”¹

On the necessity of a Divine Principle in order to believe.

About fifty years ago, much was written in favor of this position by Mr. Brine. In recent years; much has been advanced against it by Messrs.. Booths, Mc’Lean, and others. I cannot pretend to determine what ideas Mr. Brine attached to the term *principle*. He probably meant something different from what God requires of every intelligent creature: and if this were admitted to be necessary to believing, such believing could not be the duty of any except those who were possessed of it. I have no interest in this question, further than to maintain that *the moral state, or disposition of the soul, has a necessary influence on believing in Christ*. This I feel no difficulty in admitting on the one side, nor in defending on the other. If faith were an involuntary reception of the truth, and were produced merely by the power of evidence; if the prejudiced or unprejudiced state of the mind had no influence in retarding or promoting it — in brief, if it were wholly an intellectual and not a moral exercise, then nothing more than rationality or a capacity of understanding the nature of evidence, would be necessary to it. In this case, it would not be a *duty*; nor would unbelief be a *sin*, but a mere mistake of the judgment. Nor could there be any seed of divine influence: for the special influences of the Holy Spirit are not required for the production of that which has no holiness in it. But if, on the other hand, faith in Christ is that on which the *will* has an influence; if it is the same thing as *receiving the love of the truth*, that we may be saved: if aversion of heart is the only obstruction to it, and the removal of that aversion is the kind of influence necessary to produce it (and whether these things are so or not, let the evidence adduced in the *Second Part* of this treatise determine²), a contrary conclusion must be drawn. The mere force of evidence, however dear, will not change the disposition of the heart. In *this* case, therefore, and this *only*, it requires *the exceeding greatness of divine power* to enable a sinner to believe.

But as I design to notice this subject more fully in an *Appendix*, I will pass it over here, and attend to the *objection* to faith being a duty, which is derived from it. If a sinner cannot believe in Christ without being renewed in the spirit of his mind, then believing, it is suggested, cannot be his *immediate* duty. It is remarkable in how many points the system here opposed agrees with Arminianism. The latter admits that *believing* is the duty of the unregenerate; but on this account it denies the necessity of a divine change in order to believe. The former admits the necessity of a divine change in order to believe; but on this account it denies that believing can be the duty of the unregenerate. In this they are agreed: that the necessity of a divine change, and the obligation of the sinner, cannot comport with each other.

¹ Calvin: See *Institutes*, Book III . Chap. 2.

² Particularly *Propositions iv and v*.

Objections Answered.

But if this argument has any force, it will prove more than its abettors wish it to prove. It will prove that divine influence is not necessary to believing; or if it is, that *faith is not the IMMEDIATE duty of the sinner*. Whether divine influence changes the bias of the heart in order to believe, or it causes us to believe without such change, or it only *assists* us in it, makes no difference as to this argument. If it is antecedent, and necessary to believing, then believing cannot be a duty, according to the reasoning in the objection, till it is communicated. On this principle, SOCINIANS,¹ who allow faith to be the sinner's *immediate* duty, deny it is the gift of God.²

To me it appears that the necessity of divine influence, and even of a change of heart, *prior* to believing, is perfectly consistent with its being the immediate duty of the unregenerate. If that disposition of heart which is produced by the Holy Spirit, is *no more than every intelligent creature should at all times possess*, then the lack of it can afford no excuse for the omission of any duty to which it is necessary. Let the contrary supposition be applied to the common affairs of life, and we will see what work it will make: —

I am not possessed of a principle of common honesty;
But no man is obliged to exercise a principle which he does not possess;
Therefore I am not obliged to live in the exercise of common honesty!

While reasoning upon the absence of moral principles, we are exceedingly apt to forget ourselves, and to consider them as a kind of natural accomplishment, which we are not obliged to possess, but merely to improve in case we are possessed of them; and that, till then, the whole of our duty consists either in *praying* to God to bestow them upon us, or waiting till He is graciously pleased to do so. But what would we say if a man were to reason thus with respect to the common duties of life? Does the whole duty of a dishonest man consist either in *praying* to God to make him honest, or waiting till He does so? Everyone in this case feels that an honest heart is itself that which he ought to possess. Nor would any man, in matters that concerned *his own interest*, think of excusing it by alleging that the poor man *could not* give it to himself [*i.e., honesty*], nor act otherwise than he did [*i.e., stealing*], till he possessed it.

If an upright heart towards God and man is not *itself* required of us, nothing is or can be required; for all duty is comprehended in the acting out of the heart. Even those who would compromise the matter, by allowing that sinners are not obliged to *possess* an upright heart, but merely to *pray* and wait for it — if they would oblige themselves to understand words before they used them, they must perceive that there is no meaning in this language. For if it is the duty of a sinner to pray to God for an upright heart, and to wait for its bestowment, I would enquire, Whether these exercises ought to be attended to *sincerely* or *insincerely*; with a true desire after the object sought, or without it? It will not be pretended that he ought to use these means insincerely. But to say he ought to use them sincerely, or with a desire after that for which he prays and waits, is equivalent to saying that he ought to be *sincere*; which is the same thing as possessing an upright heart. If a sinner is destitute of all desire after God and spiritual things, and set on evil, then all the forms into which his duty may be thrown, will make no difference. The carnal heart will meet it in every approach, and repel it. Exhort him to repentance: he tells you he cannot repent; his heart is too hard to melt, or be in any way affected with his situation.

Say, with a certain writer, he ought to *endeavor* to repent: he answers, he has no heart to go about it. Tell him he must pray to God to give him a heart: he replies, prayer is the expression of desire, and I have none to express. What shall we say then? Seeing that he cannot repent, cannot find it in his heart to *endeavor* to repent, cannot *pray* sincerely for a heart to make such an endeavor — shall we deny his assertions, and tell him he is not so wicked as he makes himself out? — This might be more than we should be able to maintain. Or shall we allow them, and acquit him of

¹ Socinians reject the divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and original sin. — WHG

² Narrative of the York Baptists, Letter III.

Objections Answered.

obligation? Rather, should we not to return to the place where we set out, admonishing him as the Scriptures direct, to *repent and believe the gospel*; declaring to him that what he calls his *inability*, is his sin and shame; and warning him against the idea of its availing him another day — not in expectation that of his own accord he may change his mind, but in hope *that God perhaps may give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.* ^{2Tim 2.25}

This doctrine, it will be said, must drive sinners to *despair*. If so, it is such despair as I wish to see prevail. Until a sinner despairs of any help from himself, he will never fall into the arms of sovereign mercy. But once we are convinced that *there is no help in us*, and that this is so far from excusing us, that it is a proof of the greatest wickedness, we shall *then* begin to pray as *lost sinners*, and such prayer offered *in the name of Jesus* will be heard.

Other objections may have been advanced, but I hope it will be allowed that the most important ones have been fairly stated. Whether they have been answered, the reader will judge.

Concluding reflections.

FIRST, *Though faith is a duty, the requirement of it is not to be considered as a mere exercise of AUTHORITY, but of INFINITE GOODNESS; binding us to pursue our best interest.*

If a message of peace were, sent to a company of rebels, who had been conquered, and lay at the mercy of their injured sovereign, they must of course be required to repent and embrace it, before they could be interested in it; yet such a requirement would not be considered by impartial men as a mere exercise of authority. It is true, the authority of the sovereign would accompany it, and the proceeding would be so conducted as that the honor of his government would be preserved; but the grand character of the message would be mercy. Neither would the goodness of it be diminished by the authority which attended it, nor by the malignant disposition of the parties. If some of them should even prove incorrigible, and be executed as hardened traitors, the mercy of the sovereign in sending the message would be just the same. They might possibly object, that the government which they had resisted was hard and rigid; that their parents before them had always disliked it, and had taught them from their childhood to despise it; that to require them to embrace *with all their hearts* a message, the very import of which was that they had transgressed without cause, and deserved to die, was too humiliating for flesh and blood to bear; and that if he would not pardon them without their cordially subscribing such an instrument, he would have better left them to die as they were. For instead of its being good news to them, it would prove the means of aggravating their misery. Every loyal subject, however, would easily perceive that it *was good news*, and a great instance of mercy — however they might treat it, and of whatever evil, through their perverseness, it might be the occasion.

If faith in Christ is the duty of the ungodly, it must of course follow, that every sinner, whatever may be his character, is completely warranted to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of his soul. In other words, he has every possible encouragement to relinquish his former attachment and confidences, and to commit his soul into the hands of Jesus to be saved. If believing in Christ is a privilege belonging only to the regenerate, and no sinner while unregenerate is warranted to exercise it, as Mr. Brine maintains,¹ it will follow either that a sinner may know himself to be regenerate before he believes, or that the first exercise of faith is an act of presumption. It has been admitted that the bias of the heart requires us to be turned to God antecedent to believing, because the nature of believing is such that it cannot be exercised while the soul is under the dominion of blindness, hardness, and aversion. These dispositions are represented in the Scriptures as a bar in the way of faith, as being inconsistent with it; ² and which consequently are required to be taken out of the way. But whatever necessity these may be for a

¹ Brine, *Motives to Love and Unity*, etc. pp. 38-89.

² See [Brine's] *proposition iv.* p. 59.

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change of heart in order to believe, it is neither necessary nor possible that the party should be *conscious* of it till he has believed. It is necessary that the eyes of a blind man be opened before he can see; but it is neither necessary nor possible for him to know that his eyes are open till he does see. It is only by surrounding objects, appearing to his view, that he knows the obstructing film to be removed. But if regeneration is necessary to warrant believing, and yet it is impossible to obtain a consciousness of it till we have believed, then it follows that the first exercise of faith is without foundation; that is, it is not faith, but presumption.

If believing is the duty of every sinner to whom the gospel is preached, there can be no doubt as to a *warrant* for it, whatever his character may be. And to maintain the latter, without admitting the former, would be reducing it to a mere matter of discretion. It might be inexpedient to reject the way of salvation, but it could not be *unlawful*.

SECONDLY, *Though believing in Christ is compliance with a duty, yet it is not as a DUTY, or by way of REWARD for a virtuous act, that we are said to be JUSTIFIED by it.*

— It is true that God does reward the services of his people, as the Scriptures teach; but this *follows* upon justification. We must stand accepted in the beloved, before our services can be acceptable or rewardable. Moreover, if we were justified by faith *as a duty*, justification *by faith* could not be, as it is opposed to justification *by works*. *To him who works, the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt. But to him who does not work, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* ^{Rom 4.4-5} The Scripture doctrine of *justification by faith*, in opposition to the works of the law, appears, to me as follows:

— By believing in Jesus Christ, the sinner becomes vitally united to him, or as the Scriptures express it, *joined to the Lord*, and is *of one spirit with him*. ^{1Cor 6.17} And this union, according to the divine constitution as revealed in the gospel, is the ground of an interest in his righteousness. Agreeable to this is the following language,

There is now therefore, NO CONDEMNATION to those who are in Christ Jesus ^{Rom 8.1} — *Of him you are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us RIGHTEOUSNESS, etc.* ^{1Cor 1.30} — *That I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ [or faith in Christ].* ^{Phi 3.9}

As the union, which in the order of nature precedes a revealed interest in Christ's righteousness, is spoken of in allusion to that of marriage, the one may serve to illustrate the other. A rich and generous character walking in the fields, spies a forlorn female infant, deserted by some unfeeling parent in the day that it was born, and left to perish. He sees its helpless condition, and resolves to save it. Under his kind patronage the child grows up to maturity. He now resolves to make her his wife: *casts his skirt over her, and she becomes his.* ^{Eze 16.8} She is now, according to the public statutes of the realm, interested in all his possessions. Great is the transition! Ask her in the height of her glory, how she became possessed of all this wealth; and if she retained a proper spirit, she will answer in some such manner as this—'It was not mine, but my deliverer's; it was his who rescued me from death. It is no reward of any good deeds on my part. It is *by marriage*... It is *of grace*.'

It is easy to perceive in this case, that it was necessary she be voluntarily married to her husband, before she could, according to the public statutes of the realm, be interested in his possessions, and that she now enjoys those possessions *by marriage*. Yet who would think of asserting that her consenting to be his wife was a *meritorious act*, and that all his possessions were given as the reward for it?

THIRDLY, *From the foregoing view of things, we may perceive the alarming situation of unbelievers.*

Objections Answered.

— By unbelievers, I mean not only avowed infidels, but all persons who hear or have an opportunity to hear the gospel, or come to the knowledge of what is taught in the holy Scriptures, and do not cordially embrace it. It is an alarming thought to be a *sinner* against the greatest and best of Beings; but to be an *unbelieving* sinner, is much more so. There is deliverance from the *curse of the law*, through him who was *made a curse for us*.^{Gal 3:13} But if, like the barren fig-tree, we stand from year to year under a gospel culture, and bear no fruit,^{Luk 13:6-9} we may expect to fall under the curse of the Savior; and who is to deliver us from this? *If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, then how shall we escape if we neglect so GREAT a salvation?*^{Heb 2:2,3}

We are in the habit of pitying heathens who are enthralled by abominable superstition, and immersed in the immoralities which accompany it. But to live in the midst of Gospel Light, and reject it, or even disregard it, is abundantly more criminal, and it will be followed with a heavier punishment. We feel for the condition of profligate characters — for swearers, and drunkards, and fornicators, and liars, and thieves, and murderers — but these crimes become tenfold more heinous in being committed under the light of revelation, and in contempt of all the warnings and gracious invitations of the gospel. The most profligate character who never possessed these advantages, may be far less criminal in the sight of God, than the most sober and decent who possesses and disregards them. It was on this principle that such a heavy woe was denounced against Chorazin and Bethsaida,^{Luk 10:12-13} and that their sin was represented as exceeding that of Sodom.

The gospel wears an aspect of mercy towards *sinner*s; but towards *unbelieving* sinners the Scriptures deal wholly in the language of threatening. *I have come*, says our Savior, *as a light into the world, that whoever believes on me should not abide in darkness; if any man hears my words, and does not believe, I do not judge him (that is, at present) for I did not come to judge the world, but to save, the world. He that rejects me, and does not receive my words, has one that judges him: the word, that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*¹ It will be of but small account in that day, that we have escaped a few of the *lusts of the flesh*, if we have been led captive by those of the *mind*. If the greatest gift of heaven is treated as nothing by us, through the pride of science, or a vain conceit of our own righteousness, *How shall we stand when He appears?*^{Mal 3:2}

It will then be found that a price was in our hands to get wisdom, but we *had no heart for it*;^{Pro 17:16} and that our sin consists in this, and from this proceeds our ruin. God called, and we would not hearken; he stretched out his hand, and no man regarded. Therefore He will laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear comes. It is intimated both in the Old and New Testaments, that the recollection of the means of salvation being within our reach, will be a bitter aggravation to our punishment. *They come to you*, says the Lord to Ezekiel, *as my people come, and sit as my people sit, and they hear your words, but they will not do them. And when this comes to pass (lo, it **will** come!) THEN THEY SHALL KNOW THAT A PROPHET HAS BEEN AMONG THEM.*^{Eze 33:31-33} To the same purpose, our Savior speaks of those who would reject the doctrine of his apostles — *Into whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go your way out into its streets and say, Even the very dust of your city which clings on us, we wipe off against you. NOTWITHSTANDING, BE SURE OF THIS, THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME NEAR TO YOU.*^{Luk 10:10,11}

Great as the sin of unbelief is, however, it is not unpardonable: it only becomes such by persisting in it till death. Saul of Tarsus was an unbeliever, yet he *obtained mercy*; and his being an

¹ Joh 12:46-48.

Objections Answered.

unbeliever, rather than being a presumptuous opposer of Christ against conviction, placed him within the pale of forgiveness; and it is therefore assigned as a reason for it. ¹

This consideration affords a hope even to unbelievers. O you self-righteous despisers of a free salvation, through a Mediator; be it known to you, that *there is no other name given under heaven, or among men, by which you can be saved*. To him whom you have disregarded and despised, you must either voluntarily or involuntarily submit. *To him every knee shall bow*. You cannot go back into a state of non-existence, however desirable it might be to many of you. For God has stamped immortality upon your natures. You cannot turn to the right hand, nor to the left, with any advantage. Whether you give loose to your inclination, or put force upon it by an assumed devotion, each will lead to the same outcome. Neither can you stand still. Like a vessel in a tempestuous ocean, you must go this way or that — and go whichever way you will, if it is not to Jesus as utterly unworthy, you are only *heaping up wrath against the Day of Wrath*. ^{Rom 2.5} Whether you sing, or pray, or hear or preach, or feed the poor, or till the soil: if *self* is your object, and Christ is disregarded, then all is sin,² and all will result in disappointment: *the root is rottenness, and the blossom shall go up as the dust*. ^{Isa 5.24} Where will you go? Jesus invites you to come to him. His servants beseech you in his name to be reconciled to God. The Spirit says, *Come*, and the bride says *Come*; and *Whoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely*.³ An eternal heaven is before you in one direction, and an eternal hell in the other. Your answer is required. Be one thing, or another. *Choose this day, whom you will serve!* For our parts, we will abide by our Lord and Savior. If you continue to reject him, so it must be; *nevertheless, be sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near to you!*

FINALLY, *From what has been advanced, we may form a judgment of our duty as ministers of the word, in dealing with the unconverted.*

— The work of the Christian ministry, it has been said, is to *preach the Gospel*, or to hold up the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as the only way of a sinner's salvation. This is doubtless true; and if this is not the leading theme of our ministrations, we had better be anything other than preachers. *Woe to us, if we do not preach the gospel!* ^{1Cor 9.16} The minister who, under a pretense of pressing the practice of religion, neglects its all-important principles, labors in the fire. He may enforce duty till duty freezes on his lips; neither his auditors nor himself will greatly regard it. But on the other hand, if by *preaching the gospel* is meant insisting solely upon the blessings and privileges of religion, to the neglect of exhortations, calls, and warnings, then it is sufficient to say that such was not the practice of Christ and his apostles. It will not be denied that they preached the gospel. Yet they warned, admonished, and entreated sinners to *repent and believe; to believe while they had the light; to labor not for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto everlasting life; to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out; to come to the marriage-supper, for all things were ready: in brief, to be reconciled to God.*

If the inability, of sinners to perform things spiritually good were natural, or that which existed independent of their present choice, it would be absurd and cruel to address them in such language. No one in his right senses would think of calling the blind to look, the deaf to hear, or the dead to rise up and walk; and of threatening them with punishment in case they refuse. But if the blindness arises from the love of darkness rather than light; if the deafness resembles that of the adder, which stops her ear and will not hear the voice of the charmer, however artfully he

¹ **1Tim 1:13** although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

² **Pro 15:8** The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But He loves him who follows righteousness. **Pro 28:9** One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination. **Pro 21:4** A haughty look, a proud heart, And the plowing of the wicked are sin.

³ Rev 22.17.

Objections Answered.

charms; and if death consists in the alienation of the heart from God, and the absence of all desire for Him — then there is no absurdity or cruelty in it.

But enforcing the duties of religion, either on sinners or saints, is called by some *preaching the law*. If it were so, it is enough for us that such was the preaching of Christ and his apostles. It is folly and presumption to affect to be more evangelical than they were. All practical preaching, however, is not preaching the law. Preaching the law, as I apprehend it, is only that in which our acceptance with God is in some way or other, placed to the account of our *obedience* to its precepts. When eternal life is represented as the reward for repentance, faith, and sincere obedience (as it too frequently is, and that is under the complacent form of being ‘*through the merits of Christ*’)¹ this is preaching the law, and *not* the gospel. But the precepts of the law may be illustrated and enforced for evangelical purposes, as tending to vindicate the divine character and government; to convince of sin; to show the necessity of a Savior, with the *freeness* of salvation; to ascertain the nature of true Religion; and to point out the rule of Christian conduct. Such a way of introducing the divine law, in subservience to the gospel is, properly speaking, *preaching the gospel*. For the end designates the action.

If the foregoing principles are just, then it is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal auditors to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; but it is at our peril to exhort them to anything short of it, or which does not involve or imply it. I am aware that such an idea may startle many of my readers, and some who are engaged in the Christian ministry. We have sunk into such a compromising way of dealing with the unconverted, as to have well nigh lost the spirit of the primitive preachers. And this is why sinners of every description can sit so quietly as they do, year after year, in our places of worship. It was not so with the hearers of Peter and Paul. They were either *pricked in the heart* in one way, or *cut to the heart* in another. Their preaching commended itself to *every man’s conscience in the sight of God*. ^{2COR 4.2} How shall we account for this difference? Is there not some important error or defect in our ministrations? I have no reference to the preaching of those who disown the divinity or atonement of Christ, on the one hand — those whose sermons are little more than harangues on morality: nor to that preaching of gross antinomians, on the other — those whose chief business it is to feed the vanity and malignity of one part of their audience, and the sin-extenuating principles of the other. These are ERRORS, the folly of which is *manifest to all men* who pay any serious regard to the religion of the New Testament. Rather, I refer to those who are commonly reputed *evangelical*, and who approve of addresses to the unconverted. I hope no apology is necessary for an attempt to exhibit the scriptural manner of preaching. If it affects the labors of some of my brethren, I cannot deny that it may also affect my own. I conceive there is scarcely a minister among us, whose preaching has not been more or less influenced by the lethargic systems of the age.

Christ and his apostles without any hesitation, called on sinners to *repent and believe the gospel*. But we, considering them as poor, impotent, and depraved creatures, have been disposed to drop this part of the Christian ministry. Some may have felt afraid of being considered *legalistic*; others have really thought it inconsistent. Considering such things as beyond the *power* of their hearers, they seem to have contented themselves with pressing on them those things which they *could* perform, still continuing as the enemies of Christ; such as behaving decently in society, reading the Scriptures, and attending the means of grace. Thus it is, that hearers of this description sit at ease in our congregations. Having done their duty, the minister has nothing more to say to them; nothing however, unless it is to tell them occasionally that something more is *necessary* to salvation. But as this implies no guilt on their part; they sit unconcerned, conceiving that all that is required of them is ‘to lie in the Way, and await the Lord’s time.’ But is this the religion of the

¹ Repentance, faith, and sincere obedience are *responses* to the *Gospel of salvation by God’s grace alone*; belief is the *means* and the *pledge* by which that promise is received and accepted, not the *cause* of its fulfillment. Faith, if it is a work at all, is a “*dead work*,” meaning it is *without merit*.— WHG

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Scriptures? Where does it appear that the prophets or apostles ever treated that kind of inability, which is merely the effect of reigning aversion, as affording any excuse? And where have they descended in their exhortations to things which might be done, and the parties still continue as the enemies of God? Instead of leaving out everything of a spiritual nature because their hearers *could not* find it in their hearts to comply with it, it may safely be affirmed, they exhorted to *nothing else* — treating such inability not only as of no account with regard to the lessening of their obligation, but as rendering the subjects of it worthy of the severest rebuke. — *To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: Behold, the word of the Lord is to them a reproach, and they have no delight in it.* ^{Jer 6.10}

What then? Did the prophet desist from his work, and exhort them to something to which, in their present state of mind, they *could* hearken? Far from it! He delivers his message, whether they would *hear*, or whether they would *forebear*. — *Thus says the Lord, Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your soul. But they said, We will not walk in it.* ^{Jer 6.16}

And did this induce him to desist? No! He proceeds to read their doom, and calls the world to witness its justice — *Hear O earth! Behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law, but have rejected it.* ^{Jer 6.19} Many of those who attended the ministry of Christ, were of the same spirit. Their *eyes were blinded, and their hearts hardened, so that they COULD NOT BELIEVE*. Yet, paying no regard to this kind of inability, he exhorted them *to believe in the light while they had the light*. And when they had heard and did not believe, he proceeded without hesitation to declare, *He that rejects me, and does not receive my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.* ^{Joh 12.36,48}

Such also were many of Paul's hearers at Rome. They did not believe. But did Paul, seeing they could not receive the gospel, recommend to them something which they *could* receive? No! He gave them one word at parting:

Well did the Holy Ghost speak by Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, Go to this people and say, Hearing, you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, you shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people has grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I would heal them. Let it be known to you, therefore, that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it. ^{Act 28.24-28}

When did Jesus, or his apostles go about merely to reform the manners of men? Where do they exhort to duties which a man may comply with, and yet miss the kingdom of heaven? If a man *kept their sayings*, he was assured that he would *never see death*. In addressing the unconverted, they began by admonishing them to *repent and believe the gospel*. And in the course of their labors, they exhorted to all manner of duties: but all were to be done *spiritually*, or they would not acknowledge them to have been done at all. Carnal duties, or duties to be performed otherwise than *to the glory of God*, had no place in their system.

The answer of our Lord to those carnal Jews, who inquired of him, *What must we do to work the works of God?* ^{Joh 6.28} is worthy of special notice. Did Jesus give them to understand that, as to believing in him, however willing they might be, it was a matter entirely beyond their power? Were all the directions he had to give, that they should attend to the means, and wait for the moving of the waters? No; Jesus, answered, *This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent.* ^{Joh 6.29} This was *the gate at the head of the way*, as the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* ¹ has

¹ John Bunyan (1628-1688).

admirably represented it, to which sinners must be directed. A *worldly-wise* instructor may inculcate other duties; but the true evangelist following the example of his Lord, will point to this as the first concern, and as that upon which everything else depends.

There is another species of preaching which proceeds on much the same principle. Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, are admitted to be duties; but not *immediate* duties. The sinner is considered as unable to comply with them; and therefore they are not urged upon him: but instead of them, he is directed to pray for the Holy Spirit to enable him to repent and believe. And this it seems he *can* do, notwithstanding the aversion of his heart to everything of the kind. But if any man is required to pray for the Holy Spirit, it must be either sincerely, and in the name of Jesus, or insincerely, and in some other way. The latter, I suppose will be admitted to be an abomination in the sight of God; he cannot, therefore, be required to do this. And as to the former, it is just as difficult, and as opposite to the carnal heart, as repentance and faith themselves. Indeed, it amounts to the same thing: for a sincere desire after a spiritual blessing, presented in the name of Jesus, is none other than *the prayer of faith*.

Peter exhorted Simon the Sorcerer to pray that he might obtain repentance, but not with an impenitent heart; rather, with a penitent one, that he might obtain *forgiveness*; and this, no doubt, in the only way in which it was to be obtained, *through Jesus Christ*. *REPENT*, he says, *and pray to the Lord, that perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.* ^{Act 8.22} Our Savior directed his disciples to pray for the *holy Spirit*. But surely the prayer which they were encouraged to offer was to be sincere, and with an eye to the Savior; that is, it was *the prayer of faith*, and therefore it could not be a duty directed to be performed antecedently, and in order to obtain it.

The mischief arising from this way of preaching is considerable.

— FIRST, It gives up a very important question to the sinner, even that question which is at issue between God and conscience on the one hand; and a self-righteous heart on the other: namely, Whether he is obliged to immediately repent and believe the gospel? ‘I could find nothing in the Scriptures,’ the sinner says, ‘that would give me any comfort in my present condition: nothing short of *repent and believe*, which are things I cannot comply with. But I have gained it from my good minister. Now my heart is at ease. I am not obliged to immediately repent, and sue for mercy in the name of Jesus. It is therefore not my sin that I do not. All I am obliged to do, is to pray God to help me do so, and *that* I do.’ Thus, after a bitter conflict with Scripture and conscience, which have pursued him through all his windings, and pressed upon him the call of the gospel, he finds a shelter in the house of God! Such counsel, instead of aiding the sinner’s convictions, which is our proper business as *laborers with God*, has many a time been equal to a victory over them, or at least to purchase an armistice.

— Secondly, It *deceives* the soul. He understands it as a compromise, and so he acts upon it. For though he in fact is as far from sincerely praying for repentance, as from repenting; and just as unable to desire faith in Christ, as to exercise it; yet *he does not think so*. He reckons himself very desirous of these things. The reason is, he takes that *indirect* desire for them (which consists in wishing for conversion, or for anything to escape the wrath to come, however disagreeable in itself) to be the desire for *grace*. And being conscious of possessing this desire, he considers himself in a fair way, at least, of being converted. Thus he deceives his soul; and thus he is helped forward in his delusion! Nor is this all. He feels himself set at liberty from the hard requirement of *returning immediately to God by Jesus Christ, as utterly untrustworthy*; and being told to pray that he may be enabled to do so, he supposes that such prayer will avail him, or that God will give him the power of repenting and believing, in answer to his prayers — prayers, let it be observed, which are necessarily offered up with an impenitent, unbelieving heart. This nicely suits his self-righteous spirit. But alas, all is delusion!

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Some say, You have no relief then for the sinner. I answer, if the gospel or any of its blessings will relieve him, there is no lack of relief. But if there is nothing in Christ, or grace, or heaven, that will suit his inclination, then it is not for me to furnish him with anything else; nor to encourage him to hope that things will come to a good issue. The only possible way of relieving a sinner while his heart is averse to God, is by lowering the requirements of heaven to meet his inclination, or in some way to shape the Gospel to his mind. But to relieve him in this manner is at my peril! If I were commissioned to address a company of men who had engaged in an unprovoked rebellion against their king and country, what should I say to them? I might make use of authority, or entreaty, as occasion required. I might caution, warn, threaten, or persuade them. But there would be a point from which I must not depart: *Be reconciled to your rightful sovereign*: lay down your arms, and submit to mercy! To this I must inviolably adhere. They might allege that they *could not* comply with such hard terms. If I accepted their plea, and directed them only to such conduct as might consist with a rebellious spirit, instead of recovering them from rebellion, I would go far towards designating *myself* as a rebel.

And as Christ and his apostles never appear to have exhorted the unconverted to anything which did not include or imply repentance and faith, so *in all their explications of the divine law, and preaching against particular sins, their object was to bring the sinner to this issue*. Though they directed him to no *means* in order to get a penitent and believing heart, but only to repentance and faith themselves, yet they *used means with them* for this purpose. Thus our Lord expounded the law in his Sermon on the Mount, and concluded it by emphasizing such a *hearing of his sayings, and doing them*, that it would be equal to *digging deep, and building one's house on a rock*.^{Mat 7:24} And thus the apostle Peter, having charged his countrymen with the murder of the Lord of glory, quickly brings it to this issue: *Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*.^{Act 3:19}

Some years ago I encountered a passage in Dr. Owen on this subject, which at that time sunk deep into my heart. And the more observation I have since made, the more just his remarks appear.

“It is the duty of ministers,” he says, “to plead with men about their sins; but always remember that it be done with that which is the proper end of law and gospel: that is, that they make use of the sin they speak against, to reveal the state and condition of the sinner. Otherwise they may by accident work men to formality or hypocrisy, but little of the true end of preaching the gospel will be brought about. It will not avail to beat a man from his drunkenness into a sober formality. A skillful master of the assemblies lays his axe at the root, drives still at the heart. To inveigh against the particular sins of ignorant unregenerate persons, such as the land is full of, is a good work. Yet, though it may be done with great efficacy, vigor, and success, if this is the whole effect of it — that they are set upon the most sedulous endeavors of mortifying their sins preached against — then all that has been done is but like beating an enemy in an open field, and driving him into an impregnable castle, not to be prevailed against there. Anytime you gain an advantage on a sinner, on account of any one sin whatsoever, if you have *anything* to take hold of him by, bring it to his *state* and *condition*; drive it up to the head, and deal with him there. To break men of particular sins, and not to break their *hearts*, is to deprive ourselves of advantages of dealing with them.”¹

When a sinner is first seized with conviction, it is natural to suppose that he will abstain from many of his outward vices, even if only for the quiet of his own mind; but it is not for us to administer comfort to him on this ground; as though because he had *broken off* a few of his *sins*, he must have broken them off *by righteousness*; and either be on the road to life, or at least in a fair way of getting into it. It is one of the devices of Satan to alarm the sinner, and fill him with anxiety for healing the outward eruptions of sin, while the inward part is overlooked, though it is

¹ Owen, *On the Mortification of Sin*, Chap. vii.

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nothing but sin. But we must not aid and abet in these deceptions; nor administer any other relief than what is held out in the gospel to sinners *as sinners*. And when we see such characters violating their promises, and falling anew into their old sins (which is frequently the case), instead of joining with them in lamenting the event, and assisting them in healing the wound by renewed efforts of watchfulness, it becomes us rather to probe the wound; to make *use* of that which has appeared, for detecting that which has *not* appeared; and so to point them to *the blood that cleanses from all sin*.¹ *Joh 1.7* “Poor soul!” says the eminent writer just quoted, “It is not your sore finger, but your hectic fever from which your life is in danger! “If the *cause* is removed, the *effects* will cease. If the spring is purified, the waters will be healed, and the barren ground become productive.

I conclude with a few remarks on the *order* of addressing exhortations to the unconverted. There being an established order in the workings of the human mind, it has been made a question, Whether the same should not be preserved in addressing it? For instance: we cannot be convinced of sin, without previous ideas of God, and moral government; nor of the need of a savior, without being convinced of sin; nor of the importance of salvation, without suitable conceptions of sin’s evil nature. Hence, it maybe supposed, we should not teach anyone these truths till the preceding one is well understood; or, at least, that we should not preach the gospel without prefacing it by representing the just requirements of the law, our state as sinners, and the impossibility of being justified by the works of our hands. Doubtless, such representations are proper and necessary; but not so necessary as to render it improper on any occasion to introduce the doctrine of the gospel *without* them; and much less to refrain from teaching it till they are understood and felt. In this case, a minister must be reduced to the greatest perplexity, never knowing when it is safe to introduce the salvation of Christ, lest some of his hearers not be sufficiently prepared to receive it. The truth is, it is never *unsafe* to introduce this doctrine.

There is such a connection in divine truth, that if any one part of it reaches the mind, and finds a place in the heart, all others which may precede it in the order of things, will come in along with it. In receiving a doctrine, we receive not only what is *expressed*, but what is *implied* by it. And thus the doctrine of the cross may *itself* be the means of convincing us of the evil of sin. An example of this lately occurred in the experience of a child of eleven years of age. Her minister visiting her under a threatening affliction, and perceiving her to be unaffected with her *sinful* condition, suggested that, “It was no small matter that brought down the Lord of Glory into this world to suffer and die. There must be something very offensive in the nature of sin against a holy God.”— And this remark appears to have sunk into her heart, and to have issued in a saving change.¹ Divine truths are like chain-shot;² they go together; and we need not perplex ourselves which should enter first; if *any one* enters, it will draw the rest after it.

Remarks nearly similar may be made concerning *duties*. Though the Scriptures know nothing of duties to be performed without faith, or which do not *include* or *imply* it, yet they do not wait for the sinner’s being possessed of faith, before they exhort him to other spiritual exercises — such as *seeking* the Lord, *loving* him, *serving* him, etc. Nor do we need to lay any such restraints upon ourselves. Such is the *connection* of the duties, as well as the truths of religion, that if one is truly complied with, we need not fear that the others will be wanting. If God is sought, loved, or served, we may be sure that Jesus is embraced; and if Jesus is embraced, that sin is abhorred. Or should things first occur to the mind in another form; should sin be the immediate object of our thoughts; if this is abhorred, the God against whom it is committed must at the same instant be loved; and the Savior who was made a sacrifice to deliver us from it, be embraced. Let any part of truth or holiness but find place in the heart, and the rest will be with it. Those parts which, in the order of

¹ *Dying Exercises of Susannah Wright of Weekly, near Kettering.*

² In naval gunnery, this is a projectile consisting of two cannon balls or half balls linked by a chain, fired from cannons, mostly to attack spars and rigging. — WHG

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things, are required to precede it, will come in by way of *implication*; and those which follow it, will be *produced* by it. Thus the primitive preachers seem to have had none of that exactness¹ which appears in the discourses and writings of some modern preachers. Sometimes they exhorted sinners to *believe* in Jesus; but it was such belief that it *implied* repentance for sin; sometimes to *repent and be converted* — but it was such repentance and conversion that it *included* believing.² And sometimes it was to *labor for the food that endured to everlasting life*; but it was such laboring, that it comprehended both repentance and faith.

Some have inferred, from the doctrine of *justification by faith*, in opposition to the *works of the law*, that sinners should not be exhorted to anything which contains obedience to the law, either in heart or life, unless we would preach the law to them for the purpose of conviction; and do this lest we be found directing them to the works of their own hands as the ground of acceptance with God. From the same principle, it has been concluded that faith itself cannot include any holy disposition of the heart, because all holy disposition contains obedience to the law. If this reasoning is just, then all exhorting of sinners to things expressive of a holy exercise of heart, is either improper, or it must be understood as merely preaching the law for the purpose of conviction — as our Savior directed the young ruler to *keep the commandments, if he would enter into life*. Yet the Scriptures abound with such exhortations. Sinners are exhorted to *seek* God; to *serve* him with fear and joy; to *forsake* their wicked way, and *return* to him; to *repent* and be *converted*. These are manifestly exercises of the heart, and addressed to the *unconverted*. Neither are they to be understood as the requirements of a Covenant of Works. That covenant neither requires repentance, nor does it promise forgiveness. But these things are directed under a promise of *mercy*, and *abundant pardon*.

There is a wide difference between the address of our Lord to the young ruler, and *these* addresses. that to which *he* was directed was producing a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law, which was naturally impossible; and our Lord's design was to show its impossibility, and thereby to convince him of the need of *gospel mercy*. But that to which the above directions point, is not to any natural impossibility, but to the *very way of mercy*. The manner in which the primitive preachers guarded against self-righteousness was different from this: they were not afraid of exhorting either saints or sinners to holy exercises of heart; nor of connecting them with the promises of mercy. But though they exhibited the promises of eternal life to any and every spiritual exercise, yet they never taught it was *on account of it*, but of mere grace, *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*.^{Rom 3:24} The ground on which they took their stand was, *Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law, to do them*.^{Gal 3:10} From this they inferred the impossibility of a sinner being justified in any other way than for the sake of Him who was *made a curse for us*. And from this it clearly follows that whatever holiness any sinner may possess — before, in, or after believing — it is of no account whatsoever as a ground of acceptance with God.

If we inculcate this doctrine, we need not fear exhorting sinners to holy exercises of heart, nor holding up the promises of mercy to all who thus return to God by Jesus Christ.

¹ *Originally*, scrupulosity (scrupulousness): being overly precise or exact; qualifying every statement. — WHG

² That is, without explicitly requiring it. — WHG

APPENDIX.

Whether the existence of a holy disposition of heart is necessary to believing.

IT is not from a fondness for controversy that I am induced to offer my sentiments on this subject. I feel myself called upon to do so on two accounts.

First, The leading principle in the foregoing treatise is implicated in the decision of it. If no holy disposition of heart is presupposed or included in believing, it has nothing holy in it; and if it has nothing holy in it, it is absurd to plead for its being a duty. God requires nothing as a duty which is merely natural, or intellectual, or in which the will has no concern.

Secondly, Mr. Mc'Lean, in a Second Edition of his treatise on *The Commission of Christ*, has published several pages of animadversions ¹ on what I have advanced on this subject, and has charged me with very serious consequences; consequences which, if substantiated, will go to prove that I have subverted the great doctrine of *Justification By Grace Alone*, without the works of the law.² It is true he has made no mention of my name; owing, I suppose, to what I had written as contained in two *private* letters, one of which was addressed to him. I certainly had no expectation when I wrote those letters that what I advanced would have been *publicly* answered. I do not pretend to understand so much of the *etiquette* of writing, as to decide whether this conduct was proper. But if it were, some people may be tempted to think that it is rather dangerous corresponding with authors. I have no desire, however, to complain on this account, nor indeed on any other, except that my sentiments are very partially stated, and things introduced so much out of their connection, that it is impossible for the reader to form any judgment concerning them.

I have the pleasure to agree with Mr. M. in considering the belief of the gospel as a saving faith. Our disagreement on this subject is confined to the question, *What does the belief of the gospel include?* Mr. M. explains it so carefully as to exclude every exercise of the heart or will, as either being included in it, or having any influence upon it. Whatever of this exists in a believer, he considers as belonging to the *effects* of faith, rather than to faith itself. If I understand him, he pleads for such a belief of the gospel that it has nothing in it of a *holy* nature, nothing of conformity to the moral law "in heart or life;" a passive reception of the truth, in which the will has no concern; and this is because it is opposed to the *works of the law* in the article of justification.³

On this ground, he accounts for the apostle's language in Romans 4.5. *To him that does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly*; understanding by the terms, *he that does not work*, one who has done nothing yet which is pleasing to God; and by the term *ungodly*, one who is actually an enemy to God. He does not suppose that God justifies unbelievers. If therefore He justifies sinners, while in a state of enmity against him, there can be nothing in the nature of faith but what may consist with it. And it is true, if faith has nothing in it of a holy nature, nothing of conformity to the divine law "in heart or life," nothing of the exercise of any holy disposition of heart, it cannot designate the subjects of it as *godly*. Godliness must in this case consist merely in the *fruits* of faith. And these fruits being *subsequent* to justification, the sinner must of course be justified *antecedent* to his being the subject of godliness, or while he is actually the enemy of God.

If Mr. M. had only affirmed that faith is opposed to works, even to every good disposition of the heart, as the *ground of acceptance with God*; that we are not justified by it *as a work*; or that whatever moral goodness it may possess, it is *not such* that it is imputed to us for righteousness, there would have been no dispute between us. But he rejects this distinction, and endeavors to improve the caution of those who use it, into a tacit acknowledgment that their views of faith were

¹ *Animadversion*: a harsh criticism or disapproval.

² Pages 74—86.

³ Mc'Lean, *On the Commission*, pp. 83-86.

Appendix.

very liable to misconstruction: in other words, that they border on the doctrine of justification by works in so great a degree, as to be in danger of being mistaken for its advocates. ¹ He is not contented with faith being opposed to works in point of *justification*: it must also be opposed to them *in its own nature*. “Paul,” he affirms, “did not look upon faith as a work.” In short, if there is any possibility of drawing a certain conclusion from what a writer has advanced, in almost every form of speech, it must be concluded that he means to deny that there is anything holy in the nature of faith; and that if it could be separated from its effects (as he supposes it is in justification) it would leave the person who possessed it, among the enemies of God.

Notwithstanding the above, however, Mr. M. allows faith to be a *duty*. He has largely, and I believe successfully, endeavored to prove that “faith is the *command* of God”—that it is “part of obedience to God”—that “to believe all that God says is *right*”—and that unbelief, which is its opposite, is “a great and heinous sin.” ² But how can these things agree? If there is nothing of the exercise of a holy disposition in what is *commanded* of God, in what is *right*, and in what is an exercise of *obedience*, then by what rule are we to judge what is holy, and what is not? I can scarcely conceive of a truth more self-evident than this: That God’s commands extend only to that which *comes under the influence of the will*. Knowledge can be no further a duty, nor ignorance a sin, than as each is influenced by the moral state of the heart; and the same is true of faith and unbelief. We might as well make the passive admission of light into the eye, or of sound into the ear, *duties*, as a passive admission of truth into the mind. To receive it into the *heart*, indeed is duty; for this is a *voluntary* acquiescence in it: but that in which the will has no concern cannot possibly be so.

Mr. M. sometimes writes as if he would acknowledge faith to be not only a duty, but to “contain virtue,” or true *holiness*; seeing, as he observes, that “it is the root of all Christian virtues, and that which gives glory to God, and without which it is impossible to please him.” Indeed, the reader would imagine, by his manner of writing, that he was pleading for the holy nature of faith, and that I had denied it, seeing that I am represented as having made the “too bold,” and “unfounded assertion,” that *mere belief contains no virtue*. The truth is, I affirmed no such thing, but was pleading for the *contrary*; as is manifest from what Mr. M. says in the same note: “But why so solicitous to find virtue or moral excellence in faith?” It is true, I contended that *if* the belief of the gospel were a mere exercise of the understanding, uninfluenced by the moral state of the heart, it could contain no virtue, nor be the object of a divine command. But I supposed it to be a persuasion of divine truth *arising from the state of the heart*, in the same sense as unbelief, which Mr. M. justly calls “its opposite.” Unbelief is not a mere mistake of the judgment, but a persuasion arising from aversion to the truth.

From the above, however, it would seem that we are agreed in making faith in Christ something which comprehends “true virtue,” or which is the same thing, true holiness. Yet Mr. M. will not abide by all or any of this. If he would, indeed there would be an end of the dispute. But he proceeds to reason in favor of that very “unfounded assertion,” for the making of which, I am unwarrantably accused of having been “too bold.” Thus he reasons in *support* of it:

“If mere belief contains no virtue, it would not follow that unbelief could contain no sin: for such an argument proceeds upon this principle: That if there is no virtue in a thing, there can be no sin in its opposite; but this does not hold true in innumerable instances. There is no positive virtue in abstaining from many crimes that might be mentioned; yet the commission of them, or even the neglect of the opposite duties, would be very sinful. There is no moral virtue in taking food when hungry; but to willfully starve one’s self to death would be suicide: and to come nearer the point, there is no moral virtue in believing the testimony of a friend, when I have every reason to do so; yet in these circumstances, if I were to discredit his word, he would feel the

¹ Mc’Lean, *On the Commission*, p. 76.

² *Belief of the Gospel, saving Faith*, pp. 34-44.

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injury very sensibly. Now, supposing there was no more virtue contained in believing the witness of God, than in believing the witness of men, to which it is compared, it does not follow that there would be no sin in unbelief, which is to make God a liar. To deny that faith is the exercise of a virtuous temper of heart, is to refuse some praise to the creature. But to deny that unbelief is a sin, is to impeach the moral character of God... And “why so solicitous to find virtue, or moral excellence in faith?”

Now whether this reasoning is just or not, it must be allowed in order to prove that Mr. M., notwithstanding what he has said to the contrary, does *not* consider faith as containing any virtue. It is true, what he says is under a hypothetical form, and it may appear as if he were only allowing me my argument for the sake of overturning it. But it is manifestly his *own* principle which he labors to establish, and not mine; the very principle on which, as he conceives it, the freeness of justification depends. I cannot but express my surprise that so acute a writer should deal so largely in inconsistency.

Mr. M. cannot conceive of any end to be answered in finding moral excellence in faith, unless it be to give “some praise to the creature.” He doubtless means by this insinuation, to furnish an argument against it. So far as anything is *praise-worthy* which is spiritually good in us, and which is wrought by Him who *works all our works in us*, the same may be granted of faith. And as we should not think of denying that the one contains moral excellence, for the sake of humbling the creature, neither is there any ground for doing so with respect to the other.

But there are other ends to be answered by maintaining the holy nature of faith; and these are such ends that Mr. M. himself will not deny they are of importance.

—*First*, It is of importance that faith be considered as a duty: for if this is denied, Christ is denied the honor due to his name. But it is impossible to maintain that faith is a *duty*, if it contains no holy exercise of the heart. This, I presume, has already been made apparent. God requires nothing of intelligent creatures but what is holy.

—*Secondly*, It is of importance that the faith which we inculcate be *genuine*, or *such as will carry us to heaven*. But if it has no holiness in its nature, it is *dead*, and must be unproductive. Mr. M. considers true faith as the *root* of holiness. But if this is so, it must be holy itself; for the nature of the fruit corresponds with that of the root. If the difference between a living and dead faith do not consist in this — that the one is of a holy nature, and the other is not — I would be glad to be informed what it does consist in. And if the nature of the one is the same as that of the other, does the difference between them arise merely from circumstances?

—*Thirdly*, It is of importance that unbelief be allowed to be a sin, as it is that which, by Mr. M.’s acknowledgement, “impeaches the moral character of God.” . But if there be no holiness in faith, there can be no sin in its opposite. It is true that Mr. M. denies the principle of this argument, and speaks of “innumerable instances “of things which have no virtue, and yet the opposite of them is sin. This, I am persuaded, is *not* true. Whatever is the *proper* opposite of sin, is holiness. The instances which are given do not prove the contrary, such as abstinence from various crimes, eating when we are hungry, and believing a human testimony. There may indeed be no holiness in these things, as they are performed by apostate creatures. But if they were performed as God requires them to be (and which they *should* be in order to be the *proper opposites* to the sins referred to), they would be holy exercises. God requires us to abstain from all sin, *out of a regard for His name; to eat and drink, and do whatever we do, even giving credit to the testimony of a friend “when we have reason to do so,” to his glory*. These things thus performed, would be exercises of holiness.

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I am aware that those who have opposed the doctrine of TOTAL DEPRAVITY have argued, that as being *without natural affection* is sin, so being *possessed* of it must be virtue.¹ To this it has been justly answered, that though being *without natural affection* argues for the highest degree of depravity — as nothing else could overcome the common principles of human nature — yet it does not follow that mere natural affection is virtuous. For, if so, virtue would be found in animals. This answer is just, and sufficient to repel the objection on the subject of human depravity. But it will not apply to the case in hand. The question *there* relates to a matter of *fact*, or what men actually are; but *here* is a matter of *right*, or what they *ought* to be. Whatever is capable of being done by a moral agent, with an eye to the glory of God, ought to be done; and if it is, it is *holy*; if not, whatever may be thought of it by men, it is *sinful*. Natural affection itself, *if subordinated to Him*, would be sanctified, or rendered holy; and the same might be said of every natural inclination or action of life. It is thus that God would be served, even in our civil concerns; and *holiness* to the Lord would be written, as it were, upon the *bells of the horses*. Zec 14.20

I have known several persons in England who have agreed with Mr. M. as to faith belonging merely to the intellectual faculty, and the moral state of the heart having no influence upon it. But then they either denied, or have been very reluctant to own it to be duty.

‘The mind,’ they say, ‘is *passive* in the belief of a proposition: we cannot believe as we will; but according to evidence. It may be our duty to *examine* that evidence; but as to faith, being altogether involuntary, it cannot be a duty.’

And if it is a mere passive reception of the truth, on which the state of the will has no influence, I do not perceive how this consequence can be denied. But then the same might be said of unbelief: ‘If evidence do not appear to us, how can we believe? It may be our sin not to examine. But as to our not believing, being altogether involuntary, it cannot be a sin.’ By this mode of reasoning, the sin of unbelief is explained away, and unbelievers commonly avail themselves of it for that purpose. As both these consequences (I mean denying that faith is a duty, and unbelief is a sin) are allowed by Mr. M., to be utterly repugnant to the Scriptures, it becomes him, if he will defend the premises, to show that they have no necessary connection.

The above reasoning might hold good, for all I know, *in things which do not interest the heart*. But to maintain it in things which do, especially in things of a *moral and practical nature*, is either to deny the existence of prejudice, or of its having any influence in hindering belief.

The author of *Glad Tidings to perishing sinners*,² though he pleads for faith as including our receiving Christ, and coming to him; yet is decidedly averse to all holy disposition of the heart preceding it, not only as affording a warrant, but as being in any way necessary to the thing itself. And as he unites with Mr. Mc. Lean in considering the sinner as an enemy of God at the time of his being justified, he must, to be consistent, consider faith as having no holiness in its nature. His method of reasoning on the priority of repentance to believing, would seem to denote the same thing. He allows speculative repentance, or a *change of mind* which has “no holiness” in it, to be necessary to believing; giving this as the reason:

“While a sinner is either stupidly inattentive to his immortal interests, or expecting justification by his own obedience, he will not come to Christ.”

It would seem then, that *aversion of heart* to the gospel plan, or a *desire* to be justified by one’s own obedience, is no objection to coming to Christ; and that a sinner *will* come to him notwithstanding this, provided he is right in speculation, and his conscience sufficiently alarmed.

¹ “*Total Depravity* means that every sinner is guilty of elevating some lower [natural] affection or desire above regard for God, His Law, and the Gospel. Sinners not only do not love the true God and put Him first, but they love some other God and put that false God first.” – John Reisinger.

² Author, Abraham Booth.

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If so, there certainly can be nothing spiritual or holy in the act of coming. The respect which I feel both towards Mr. Booth and Mr. Mc. Lean, is not a little; but no apology is needed for opposing these sentiments. Truth ought to be dearer to us than the greatest or best of men.

Mr. M. writes as if he were at a loss to know my meaning. “By a *corresponding temper of heart*,” he says, “cannot be meant some good disposition previous to faith; for as the question relates to a faith itself, that would be foreign to the point.” I have no scruple in saying, however, that I consider it as *previous* to faith; and as to what is suggested of its irrelevancy, the same might be said of unbelief. Were I to say that unbelief includes the exercise of an evil temper of heart, and that the sin of it consists in this, I would say no more than is plainly intimated by the sacred writers, who describe unbelievers as *stumbling at the word, BEING DISOBEDIENT*.^{1Pet 2.8} Yet Mr. M. might answer,

‘By an evil temper of heart, you cannot mean anything *previous* to unbelief: for as the question relates to unbelief itself, that would be foreign to the point. Nor can you mean that it is the immediate and inseparable effect of unbelief; for that is fully granted; and it is not the *effect*, but the *nature* or essence of unbelief, that is the point in question. Your meaning therefore must be this: that unbelief in its very nature, is a temper or disposition of heart disagreeing with the truth.’ To this I should answer, I do not consider unbelief as an evil temper of heart, but as a persuasion *arising out of it, and partaking of it*. And the same answer is applicable to the subject in hand.

I will first offer evidence that faith in Christ is a persuasion influenced by the moral state of the heart, and partaking of it; and then consider the principal objections advanced against it.

If what has been said already is just, about duty being confined to things in which the will has an influence, then the whole of the second part of the foregoing treatise may be considered as evidence in favor of the point now at issue; as whatever proves faith to be a duty, proves it to be a holy exercise of the soul towards Christ, arising from the heart being turned towards Him.

In addition to this, the following particulars are submitted to the reader:—

First, Faith is a *grace of the Holy Spirit*.

— It is ranked with hope, and charity, which are spiritual, or holy exercises. Indeed, whatever the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier produces, must resemble His own nature. *That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. As the wisdom which is from above is pure*, and of a practical nature, so faith, which is from above, resembles its divine origin.

Secondly, It is that in the exercise of which we *give glory to God*.^{Rom 4.20}

— If faith is what Mr. M. acknowledges it to be — a duty, and an exercise of obedience — its possessing such a tendency is easily conceived. But if it is a passive reception of the truths on which the moral state of the heart has no influence, how can such a property be ascribed to it? There is a way in which inanimate nature glorifies God, and he may get himself glory by the works of the most ungodly; but no ungodly man truly *gives* glory to him, nor does a godly man, except in the exercise of holiness.

Thirdly, Faith is represented as depending upon *choice*, or *the state of the heart* towards God.

— *Did I not say to you, If you WOULD believe, you should see the glory of God? — How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from God only? — If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.*¹ If faith is a mere passive reception of the truth into the understanding, on which the state of the will has no influence, then what fair interpretation can be given to these passages? If a disposition *to seek the divine honor*,

¹ Joh 11.40, 44; Mar 9.23.

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is not necessary to believing, then how is it that the lack of it should render it impossible? And if believing had no dependence upon choice or the state of the heart, then how is it that our Savior should suspend his healing of the child, upon the parents being *able* to exercise it? Did he suspend his mercy on the performance of a natural impossibility; or upon something on which the state of the heart had no influence?

Fourthly, Faith is frequently represented as *implying repentance for sin*, which is acknowledged on all hands to be a holy exercise.

— It does not come up to the Scripture representation to say, repentance is a fruit of faith. There is no doubt, but that where faith it exists, it will operate to promote repentance, and every other holy exercise. It is true also, that a conviction of the being and attributes of God, must in the order of nature, precede repentance; because we cannot repent for offending a Being of whose existence we doubt, or of whose character we have no just conception: but *the faith of the gospel*, or believing in Jesus for the salvation of our souls, is represented in the New Testament as *implying repentance for sin*. *Repent and believe the Gospel— And you, when you had seen it, did not repent, THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE — If perhaps, God will give them repentance TO THE ACKNOWLEDGING OR THE TRUTH.*¹

Whenever the Scriptures speak of repentance as followed by the remission of sins, it will be allowed that faith is supposed: for repentance without faith could not please God, nor have any connection with the promise of forgiveness. And it is equally evident that when they speak of faith as followed by justification, repentance is supposed; for faith without repentance would not be genuine. It is impossible to discern the glory of Christ's mediation, or to believe in the necessity, the importance, the loveliness, or the suitableness of his undertaking, while we do not *feel* for the dishonor done to God by the sin of Creatures, and particularly by our own sin. Ignorance, therefore, is ascribed to *obduracy*, or *insensibility* of the heart.^{Eph 4.18} Indeed it is easy to perceive, that where there is no sense of the evil and demerit of sin, there can be no *form or splendor* discerned in the Savior, *nor beauty that we should desire him*; and while this is the case, the servants of Christ will have to lament, *Who has believed our report?*^{Isa 53.1,2}

Fifthly, Faith is often expressed by terms which indicate the exercise of *affection*.

— It is called *receiving* Christ, which stands opposed to *rejecting* him or *not receiving him*; and this is descriptive of the treatment Christ met with from the body of the Jewish nation. It is called *receiving the love of the truth, that we may be saved*; and by salvation being thus connected with it, it is implied that no other reception of the truth is saving. Christ's word is said to have no place in unbelievers, which implies that it *has a place* in true believers, and this is expressive of more than a mere assent of the understanding. The "good ground" in the parable is said to represent those *who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*^{Luk 8.15} It is here intimated that no one receives the word to purpose, but in the exercise of an *honest and good heart.*²

Sixthly, Belief is expressly said to be *with the heart*.

— *If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe IN YOUR HEART that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation — If you believe WITH ALL YOUR HEART you may.*³ It is allowed that *the heart*, in these passages, does not denote the affections, to the exclusion of the understanding; nor does the argument require that it should. But neither does it denote the understanding to the exclusion of the affections, which is required by the argument on

¹ Mar 1.15; ;Mat 21.32; 2Tim 2.25.

² Joh 1.12; 2The 2.10; Joh 8.37; Luk 8.15.

³ Rom 10.9, 10; Act 8.37.

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the other side; but it denotes the *inmost soul*, in opposition to the mouth with which confession is made unto salvation. Doing anything *with the heart*, or *with all the heart*, are modes of speaking never used in Scripture (I believe) for the mere purpose of expressing what is internal or mental, and which may pertain only to the understanding. They rather denote the quality of *unfeignedness*, a quality repeatedly ascribed to faith, and which marks an *honesty of heart* which is essential to it. (1Tim 1.5; 2Tim 1.5)

Seventhly, The lack of faith is ascribed to MORAL CAUSES, or to THE LACK OF A RIGHT DISPOSITION OF HEART.

— *You do not have his word abiding in you: for whom he has sent, him you do not believe — Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are those which testify of me: And you WILL NOT come to me that you might have life. I do not receive honor from men. But I know you that you do not have the LOVE OF GOD in you, I have come in my Fathers name, and you DO NOT RECEIVE ME. If another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor which comes from God only?— Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. If I say the truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God, hears God’s words; you therefore do not hear them, because you are not of God.*¹

If a holy disposition were *unnecessary* to believe in Christ, neither the lack of it, nor the existence of the contrary, could form any obstruction to it.

Lastly, *Unbelief is not a mere error of the understanding, but a positive and practical rejection of the gospel.*

— It is actually treating God as a liar, and all the blessings of the gospel with contempt; but faith is the opposite of unbelief. Therefore it is not a mere assent of the understanding, but a positive and practical reception of the gospel, actually treating God as the God of truth, and the blessings of the gospel as worthy of all acceptance. This statement of things is clearly taught to us by the pointed address of our Lord to the Jews, quoted under the foregoing argument. *Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me — If I say the truth, why do you not believe me?* If faith were a mere exercise of the understanding, why do men not as readily believe the truth, as they believe a lie? Surely truth is not less evident to the mind, or less consistent than falsehood. It is evident that their not believing the truth, was owing to the aversion of their hearts, and nothing else; and by what follows, it is equally evident that the belief of the truth is owing to the *removal* of this aversion, or to the heart’s being brought to be on the side of God: *He that is of God, hears God’s words; you therefore do not hear them, because you are not of God.*

Objections

I now proceed to the consideration of objections. The first, and principal objection that Mr. M. alleges against this statement of things, is that it *affects the Doctrine of Justification by grace alone, without the works of the law.*

“The Scriptures pointedly declare,” he says, “that God justifies sinners **FREELY BY HIS GRACE**, through the **REDEMPTION** that is in *Jesus Christ*, and that this justification is received through **FAITH** in Christ’s blood. Faith, in this case, is always distinguished from, and opposed to the works of the law — not merely of the Ceremonial Law, which was peculiar to the Jews; but of that law by which is the knowledge of sin — which says, *You shall not covet*, and which requires not only outward *good actions*, but *love*, and every good disposition of the heart, both towards God and our neighbor. So that, the works of this law respect the heart as well as. life. The distinction, therefore, between *faith* and *works*, on this subject, is not that which is between

¹ Joh 5.38-44; 8.45-47.

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inward and *outward* conformity to the law. For if faith is not in this case distinguished from, and opposed to our conformity to the law, both outwardly and inwardly, it cannot be said that we are *justified by faith without the deeds of the law*, or that God *justifies the ungodly*. Faith indeed, as a principle of action, works by love. But it is not *as working thus* that it is imputed for righteousness; for it is expressly declared that righteousness is imputed to him who DOES NOT WORK, but BELIEVES on him who justifies the UNGODLY. *It is of FAITH, that it might be by GRACE*. And grace and works are represented as incompatible with each other: for to him that works, the reward is not reckoned of GRACE, but of DEBT. Now when men include in the very nature of justifying faith such good dispositions, holy affections, and pious exercises of heart, as the moral law requires, and so make them necessary to a sinner's acceptance with God (no matter under what consideration), it perverts the apostle's doctrine on this important subject, and it makes justification to be at least, as it were, by the works of the law."¹

There is no dispute whether justification is of *grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ*; nor whether justification by faith is opposed to justification by the works of the law — even those works which are internal, as well as those which are external. But it is apprehended, that in order to maintain these doctrines, there is no need to explain away the holy nature of faith, or to maintain that it consists in mere speculation, which it *must* if it has nothing of the disposition of the heart in it.

If considering faith as arising from the disposition of the heart, is unfriendly to justification by grace, without the works of the law, then it must be on one or other of these suppositions:

First, either that if there were any holiness in us *antecedent* to justification, it must be imputed to us for righteousness; or,

Secondly, If this is not so *in fact*, yet it will *be so* in the view of awakened sinners.

The first of these suppositions is so far from being friendly to the doctrine of justification by grace, that it utterly subverts the grand principle on which the necessity of it is founded. The grand principle on which the apostle rests the doctrine is this: *It is written, Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.* Gal 3:10 This declaration goes to an utter denial of the possibility of a sinner's being justified by the works of his hands. But if the foregoing supposition is true, the declaration must be false. For according to this, the holiness of someone who has not continued in all things written in the book of the law, to do them (provided he has any), is admissible to his justification. On the other hand, if the declaration is true, then the supposition is false. For according to the apostle's doctrine, it must follow that whatever holiness any creature may possess — before, in, or after his believing — unless he could produce a righteousness conforming *in all things* to God's righteous law, it will avail him nothing in respect to justification. I have no idea of any holiness antecedent to justification, any further than what is necessarily implied in the nature of justifying faith. But if it were otherwise, and a sinner could produce a series of holy actions, performed over a course of years, then *all must be reckoned as loss and dung* in respect to his being accepted of God. He that would win Christ, must be *found in him*.

If *antecedent* holiness destroys the freeness of grace, I know of no solid reason why *consequent* holiness should not operate in the same way. And then, in order to be justified by grace, it would be necessary to continue as the enemies of God throughout life. It is not the priority of time that makes any difference; but that of *causation*. Holiness may precede justification, as to time, and it may be necessary, on some account, that it *should* precede it, and yet it would have no causal influence on it. The self-abasement of the publican preceded his going down to his house *justified*; yet it was not on *this ground* that his justification rested. Holiness, on the other hand, may follow

¹ Mc'Lean, *On the Commission*, pp. 83, 84.

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justification, as to time; and yet, for anything that this will prove, it may be that which is accounted for righteousness. The righteousness of Christ was imputed to Old Testament believers long before it was actually wrought. And good was promised to Abraham, on the ground that God *knew him, that he would command his children, and his household after him.* ^{Gen 18.18,19}

It was the denial of personal holiness being necessary to justification as a *procuring cause*, and not anything which regarded the timing of it, that excited those *objections* against the doctrine as leading to licentiousness, which are repelled in the epistle to the Romans, and which have been pleaded in this controversy. The doctrine defended here is liable to the same objection — not *justly* indeed; neither was that of the apostle. But so long as we maintain that acceptance with God is wholly out of regard to the righteousness of another, and not for anything done by us — before, in, or after believing — a self-righteous spirit will be offended, and will reproach the doctrine as immoral.

The argument for the necessity of a sinner's being an enemy to God at the *time* of his justification, in order for it to be wholly of grace, resembles that of some divines, who for the same purpose have pleaded for our being justified *from eternity*. They seem to have supposed that if God justified us before we had any existence, or could have performed any good works, it must be on the footing of *grace*. Yet these divines maintained that some men were ordained to condemnation from eternity; and that as a punishment for their sin, which God foresaw. But if an eternal decree of condemnation might rest upon foreseen *evil*, who does not perceive that an eternal decree of justification might equally rest upon foreseen *good*? The truth is, the freeness of justification does not depend upon the date of it.

Mr. M. charges the sentiment he opposes as a *perversion* of the apostle's doctrine; and with making justification to be at least, "*as it were*, by the works of the law." Yet he is fully aware that whatever is pleaded in behalf of the holy nature of faith, it is not supposed to justify us as a work, or holy exercise, or as being any part of that which is accounted to us for righteousness; but merely as that which unites us to Christ, for the sake of Whose righteousness alone we are accepted. I have no idea of merit, either of condignity or congruity, or of justification being bestowed as a *reward* for believing, any more than he has. But I will be told that this is "a caution which intimates an apprehension that my idea of faith is very liable to such a misconstruction." ¹

And was the apostle's doctrine liable to *no misconstruction*? And did he use no caution to guard against it? Is Mr. M.'s doctrine liable to none; and does he never use caution for the same purpose? What else does he mean, when he is discoursing on God's justifying the ungodly, by adding, "Faith, indeed, as a principle of action, *works by love*; but it is not *as thus working*, that it is imputed for righteousness," ² I confess, I am not able to discern the difference between this distinction, and that which he discards. For if there is any meaning in words, either in the apostle's or his own, faith *does* work by love, and that is from its first existence. And its thus working belongs to it as genuine, justifying, faith. But though it always possessed this property — and without it, it could not have been genuine — yet it is not *on this account*, or in a way of *reward*, that we are said to be justified by it.

If he alleges that the property of *working by love* does not belong to the nature of faith as justifying, and that in the order of time we are justified by it *previously* to its thus working, then he must contradict the apostle, who speaks of *receiving the love of the truth THAT WE MAY BE SAVED*, and pronounces those persons unbelievers who do not thus receive it. ^{Gal 5.6} His own words in this case will also be ill-adapted to express his ideas. Instead of saying, "Faith indeed works by love, but it is not *as thus working* that it justifies; he ought to have said to this effect, 'Faith indeed

¹ Mc'Lean, *On the Commission*, p. 76.

² *Ibid.* p. 84.

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works by love; but it is not till it has first performed its office in respect to justification, and which it does previous to its working at all.’

The Scriptures constantly represent *union with Christ* as the foundation of our interest in the blessing of justification. — *Of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us righteousness — That I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ — We are accepted in the beloved — There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* ¹ Now, faith in him being that by which this union is effected, hence arises the necessity of it in order to justification. It is that by which, as in a marriage, we are joined to the Lord; and so, by his gracious constitution of things, we are interested in all he is, and all he possesses. And thus it is supposed that living faith, or faith that works by love, is necessary to justification — not as being the ground of our acceptance with God; not as a virtue of which justification is the reward — but as that without which we could not be united to a living Redeemer. But we are told,

“If anything holy in us is rendered necessary to our being accepted of God (no matter under what consideration) we pervert the apostle’s doctrine, and make justification to be at least, *as it were*, by the works of the law.”

Is Mr. M. sure that *he* does not pervert, or at least sadly misapply the apostle’s words? Whatever is the meaning of the phrase, *as it were*, it does not describe the principles of those who renounce all dependance upon their own holiness, and plead for the holy nature of faith only as being necessary to render it genuine, and consequently to unite us to a holy Savior. The characters referred to there, were ungodly men who relied upon their own works for justification, *stumbling at the stumbling-stone*.

That we may judge whether this assertion is well founded, it is necessary to examine the evidence on which it rests; and *this*, if I am not mistaken, is confined to the phraseology of a single passage of Scripture. If this passage (namely, Rom. 4.4, 5.) does not prove the point for which it is alleged, I know of no other that does; and what is more, the whole tenor of Scripture teaches a doctrine directly opposite — that is to say, that REPENTANCE PRECEDES FORGIVENESS. But waving this, we will attend to the passage itself. If by *him who does not work*, and the *ungodly* whom God justified, is meant persons who at the time had never done any good thing in the sight of God, and who were actually under the dominion of *enmity* against him, Mr. M.’s assertion will be granted. But if these terms are meant to describe persons who *do not work with respect to justification*, and who in their dealings with God for acceptance, *do not come as righteous*, but as *ungodly*, then no such consequence will follow. On the contrary, it will follow that if the apostle’s doctrine is perverted, it is Mr. M. who has perverted it.

We are expressly told in the passage itself, that the apostle is speaking of *believers*. He that *does not work* is said at the same time to *believe*; but whenever this can be said of a man, it cannot with truth be affirmed of someone who has done nothing good in the sight of God, or that is under the dominion of enmity against Him. By Mr. M.’s own account, he has by the influence of divine grace, done “what is *right* in giving credit to what God says;” he has “obeyed the gospel;” he has complied with “the *command* of God,” that we should believe in him whom He has sent. It may, however, be truly affirmed of him, that he *does not work with respect to justification*. For it is of the nature of faith to overlook and relinquish everything of the kind. Whatever necessity there may be for a writer, in vindication of the truth, to enumerate these things, they are such that the subject of them thinks nothing of them at the time; especially not as the ground of his acceptance with God. All his hopes of mercy are those of a *sinner*, an *ungodly* sinner.

¹ 2The 2.10-12; 1Cor 1.30; Phi 3.9; Eph 1.6; Rom 8.1.

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Him that does not work, stands opposed by the apostle, to *Him that works; to whom*, he says, *the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt*, Rom 4.4. And is this a description of actually working for God? The character referred to is either *real* or *supposed*: either that of a self-righteous sinner who would at last be dealt with on the footing of that covenant to which he adhered; or of a perfect conformist to the divine law. If it is the former, *he that works* undoubtedly means, not one who actually labors for God, but one who works with a view to justification. And consequently, *he that does not work* must mean, not one who has actually wrought nothing for God, but one who does not work *with a view of being justified by it*. Or if, on the other hand, the character is allowed to be only a *supposed* one; namely, a perfect conformist to the divine law, yet what is done by him that works, is done *with a view to justification*. And on this account it is properly opposed to the life of a believer who, whatever he may do, does nothing with *such an end*, but derives all his hopes of acceptance with God, from the righteousness of another.

To this may be added the *examples* which the apostle refers to, for the illustration of his doctrine. These are Abraham and David; and let the reader judge whether they are not decisive of the question. It is of *Abraham's* justification that he is speaking. He is held up as a pattern of justification *by faith*, in opposition to the *works of the law*. It was supposed about him, *that he did not work, but believed on Him who justifies the ungodly*. If Abraham, therefore, at the time when he is said to have *believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness* — if he had never done any good thing, and he was actually the enemy of God — then Mr. M.'s position is established. But if the *contrary* is true, then is overturned. To determine this, the reader has only to consult the following passages — Gen 15.6; 12.1; and Heb 11.8, He will here perceive that it was several years after his departure from Haran, at which time the apostle bears witness to his being a *believer*, that he is said to have *believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness*. From this it is manifest that the character described by the apostle, is not that of an enemy, but a friend of God; and that it is not merely applicable to a Christian at the first moment of his believing, but through the whole of life. We have to deal with Christ for pardon and justification more than once; and we must always go to him as *not working; but believing on him who justifies the ungodly*.

Nor is the example of David less decisive than that of Abraham. When the blessedness of which the apostle speaks, came upon him, he was not in a state of enmity to God: but had been his friend and servant for a series of years. The thirty-second Psalm evidently appears to be one of his penitential psalms, composed after his fall in the case of Uriah. Yet he also is supposed to have *not worked, but believed on him who justifies the ungodly*. And it is worthy of notice, that the very principle inculcated through this whole psalm, is *the necessity of repentance in order for forgiveness* — a principle which needs to be disowned before the position maintained by Mr. M. can be admitted.

It has been said that the term *ungodly* is never used except to describe the party as being under *actual enmity* to God at the time. I apprehend this is a mistake. Christ is said to have died for the ungodly. Did he then lay down his life only for those who *at the time* were actually his enemies? If so, he did not die for any of the Old Testament saints; nor for any of the godly who were then alive, not even for his own apostles. All that can be said in truth, is that whatever their characters were at the time, he died for them as ungodly; and thus it is that he *justifies the ungodly*. Gospel justification stands opposed to that which is in ordinary use: the one acquits the righteous, the worthy, the deserving — the other acquits the unrighteous, the unworthy, the ungodly.

But let us examine the other branch of Mr. M.'s objection; namely, the *effect* which such a doctrine must have on the mind of an awakened sinner.

“This,” he says, “is obvious. He who conceives that, in order to receive his pardon and acceptance with God, he must first be possessed of such good dispositions and holy affections as are commonly included in the nature of faith, will find no immediate relief from the gospel, nor anything in it which fully reaches his case while he views himself merely as a guilty sinner.

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Instead of believing on Him who justified the ungodly, he believes, on the contrary, that he cannot be justified till he sustains an opposite character. Though Christ died for *sinner*s — for the *ungodly* — yet he does not believe that Christ's death will be of any benefit to him as a mere sinner, but only as possessed of holy dispositions. Nor does he expect relief to his conscience purely and directly from the atonement, but through the medium of a better opinion of his own heart or character. This sentiment, if he is really concerned about his soul, must set him upon attempts to reform his heart, and to do something under the notion of *acting faith*, that he may be justified; and all his endeavors, prayers, and religious exercises, will be directed to that end."

First, By the manner in which Mr. M. speaks of "pardon and acceptance with God," uniting them together, and denying all holy affection to be necessary to either, it is manifest that he denies the necessity of repentance in order to obtain forgiveness; a doctrine taught not only in the thirty-second psalm, from which the apostle argued the doctrine of *free* justification, but also in the whole tenor of Scripture. ¹

Secondly, By rejecting this doctrine, he finds in the gospel, "relief for the mere sinner." This mere sinner is described as "awakened," and as "*viewing himself* merely as a guilty sinner." At the same time, however, he is supposed to be destitute of all "holy affection." It may be questioned whether this account of things is consistent with itself; or whether any "mere sinner" ever "views himself merely as a guilty sinner." For such views include a just sense of the evil of sin, and of his own utter unworthiness of the divine favor, which no "*mere sinner*" ever possessed* But passing by this, whatever his "awakenings" are, and whatever the load of "guilt that lies upon his conscience, seeing that he is allowed to be destitute of all holy affection," he must in fact be no other than a *hard-hearted enemy to true religion*. He does not have a grain of regard for God's name, nor concern for having offended Him; nor the least degree of attachment to the atonement of Christ on account of its securing *his* honor — in a word, his whole affection centers in himself. This character wants "relief." And what is it that will relieve him? Pardon and acceptance with God, *through the atonement of Jesus*? If so, he does not need to climb to heaven, nor to descend into the deep: the word is near him. But *this* is not what he wants: for he sees *no form, nor splendor in HIM; nor beauty that he should DESIRE HIM*.

Is it to be saved from his sins? No: It is to be saved *in* them. It is to obtain ease for his troubled conscience, and exemption from the dread of divine wrath, *without* relinquishing his self-righteous lusts, and *submitting* to the righteousness of God. And is it true that such a character stands in need of "relief?" He may think he does, and may labor hard to obtain it. But surely he needs to be *wounded* instead of healed, and *killed* rather than made alive.² Indeed, in such a state of mind, is it possible that he should be "relieved" by the *gospel as it is in Jesus*? Rather, is it not self-evident that to relieve him, we must accommodate our doctrine to his inclinations? It would be as absurd to suppose that a hard-hearted sinner should be relieved by the true gospel, as that the healthy should find relief in a physician.

Thirdly, The *hard-hearted* sinner is not only to be "relieved" by the assurance of "pardon and acceptance with God;" but this is supposed to be derived "directly from the atonement." If this meant merely for the sake of the atonement, it would be unobjectionable; but the meaning is that the mere sinner is pardoned without repentance, or any "holy affection to Christ." There must be no consciousness of anything of the kind previous to forgiveness; for then it would not be "direct, but through the medium of a good opinion of his own heart, or character." And does Mr. M. really believe in all this? What then will he make of the concurrent language of the Old and New Testament? *Let the wicked FORSAKE HIS WAY, and the unrighteous man his THOUGHTS, and let him RETURN TO THE LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will*

¹ 1Kng 8.29-50; Pro 28.13; Isa 60.6-8; Mat 3.2; Mar 1.4; Luk 3.3; Act v.31; Luk 24.48; Act 2.38; 3.19; 26.18.

² Rom 6.2, 6; Gal 2.20.

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abundantly pardon — Preaching the baptism of REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS — REPENT therefore and be CONVERTED, that your sins may be BLOTTED OUT — To turn them from the POWER OF SATAN unto God, that they might receive the FORGIVENESS of sins. ¹

What can be made of this language? Shall we say, It is the voice of the *law*, directing a sinner what he must do in order to be accepted by his own obedience? ² An ingenious mind will seldom be at a loss for something to say, but let us take heed lest we be found perverting the Scriptures in support of a hypothesis. If there is any meaning in language, it is manifest that these exhortations are addressed to sinners as the means not of *legal*, but of *evangelical* justification, justification of which *the forgiveness of sins* is an essential branch.

From the foregoing, and many such passages, it is evident that when we are said to be justified by faith, it is a faith that involves *repentance* — equally so as when we are said to be forgiven upon repentance, it is such repentance as involves *believing*.

Even more, If Mr. M. believes as above, what can be made of his own writings? How are we to understand his note in page 92, containing a brief but judicious answer to Mr. John Barclay? He there proves that no man is pardoned or accepted by God till he sustains a different character from that which belongs to him *merely as a sinner*: that is, till he is a *believer*; and that,

“The assurance of a man’s own justification is not founded merely upon the direct testimony of God, but also upon the testimony of his own conscience, bearing him witness in the Holy Spirit that he believes the gospel testimony.”

Mr. Barclay might reply to him as he does to others. He might say, concerning the awakened sinner, that on Mr. M.’s principles,

‘Though Christ died for *sinners*, for the *ungodly*, yet he does not believe that Christ’s death will be of any benefit to him as *a mere sinner*, but as possessed of *faith*. Nor does he expect any satisfaction as to the salvation of his soul purely and *directly* from the atonement, but through the medium of a better opinion of himself, a consciousness that he is a believer. This sentiment, if he is really concerned about the salvation of his soul, must set him upon attempts that he may obtain this faith, in order to be justified, and all his endeavors, prayers, and religious exercises will be directed to that end.’

If Mr. M. answers *this* objection, he will answer his own.

After all, there is a way of deriving relief as “mere sinners, directly from the atonement;” but this is what a *mere sinner*, in Mr. M.’s sense of the terms, never does. Only believing sinners, sinners possessed of “holy affection” to Christ, are thus rendered dead to everything in themselves, and alive to Him. By Mr. M.’s reasoning, it would seem as though impenitent and unhumiliated sinners not only derived their comfort in this way, but as if they were the only persons who did so! To derive relief as mere sinners directly from the atonement, it is not necessary that we *possess* no holy affection towards Christ, but that whatever we affection possess, we make *nothing* of it as a ground of acceptance, *counting* all things but loss and dung, that we may *win and be found in him*. And this manner of deriving relief is not peculiar to the time of our first believing, but belongs to a *life of faith in the Son of God*.

Finally, It is supposed that including holy affection in the nature of faith, and rendering it necessary to acceptance with God (no matter under what consideration) must of necessity lead the sinner away from Christ, to rely on something good in himself. It is true, that if any holiness in us were required *as a ground of acceptance with God*, it would be so. And the same would be true of the requirement of a faith without holiness, provided it was required *to this end*. Mr. M.

¹ Isa 55.6-8; Luk 3.3; Act 3.19; 26.18.

² See Mr. M.’s *Simple Truth*, pp. 21-26.

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will not deny that faith, whatever its nature, is required, and is necessary to precede justification. He denies that it is necessary as that thing on account of which we are justified; *and so do I*. But whatever the place it occupies, it is admitted that it is necessary. Now, if the necessity of a holy faith is more favorable to self-righteousness, than one which has nothing holy in it, it must be either because it is of the *nature* of holiness rather than unholiness, so as to operate; or else because the depravity of the heart can find an *occasion* for glorying in the one case, which it cannot find in the other. To suppose the first, is the same as supposing that it is of the nature of holy affection for Christ to reject his salvation, and of godly sorrow for sin to render us more attached to it, and of humility of heart to lift us up with pride. With respect to the last, I cannot answer for it, that the proud spirit of a merely “awakened sinner” will not make a righteousness of a supposed holy faith. Nor can Mr. M. answer for it, that he will not make the same of his “simple belief.” Whether faith has any holiness in it or not, seeing that [the sinner] is taught to consider it as *necessary* to justification — and told that God makes so great an account of it, that *without* it, the atonement itself will avail him nothing — it is no wonder if his unhumiliated heart should take its rest in his *supposed believing*, instead of looking to the *doctrine of the cross*. An unrenewed sinner will make a righteousness of *anything*, rather than submit to the righteousness of *God*.

But this I *can* answer for it: If he really has repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, his mind will not be employed in self-admiration. And this I am persuaded is more than Mr. M. can say, respecting a faith in the nature of which there is nothing holy. For if faith has no holiness in its nature, the sinner must and will in the very exercise of it, admire *himself*. It is only in the exercise of a holy disposition of heart, that the attention is turned another way. If this therefore is absent, there is nothing to counteract a self-righteous spirit. And if at the same time the sinner is flattered with having gained more clear and evangelical views of faith than most professing Christians, there is everything to feed that spirit. To make the requirement of a speculative assent of the judgment,¹ in which there is no holiness, necessary to the destruction of self-righteousness, is supposing that this spirit cannot exist unless it has true holiness to feed upon. But everyone knows that this spirit reigns uncontrolled in “mere sinners,” and that it is so far counteracted according to the degree in which *true holiness* exists. It is natural that it should be so: for it is essential to this principle, to sink us into our native *nothingness*, and to embrace the Savior as *all in all*.

From these considerations, I conclude that instead of its being necessary for a sinner to be *in an ungodly state of mind* in order to believe in Christ, and being *justified as ungodly*, the direct contrary is true. To believe in Christ as justifying the ungodly, is to forego all claim and expectation of favor on the ground of our own deservings — to feel that nothing belongs to us but shame, and confusion of face; ^{Dan 9.8} and that the only hope which remains for us is in the free mercy of God through Jesus Christ. But no man ever did this, whose heart was still under the dominion of enmity; for the thing itself is a contradiction. Enmity necessarily blinds the mind, both to its own deformity, and to the glory of the Savior. An enemy of God, therefore, and a self-righteous unbeliever, are one and the same character.

I can only express my surprise that it should ever have entered into the heart of wise and good men to imagine that a faith which implies contrition and self-annihilation in its very nature (the spirit of the publican) should be supposed favorable to self-righteousness; while that which may consist with a hard heart, a proud spirit, and perfect enmity to God (the very temper of the Pharisee) is pleaded as necessary to root it up! Why then did the Pharisee not go down to his house justified, rather than the publican? The one had humbled himself. It seems for God to justify him, therefore, would be inconsistent with the freeness of his grace. As to the other, assuredly he was not lacking in *ungodliness*; nor had he ever wrought a single *work for God*, notwithstanding all his boasting. He was “a mere sinner;” and if Christ’s death proves a benefit to such, why was it not

¹ That is, to speculate that you’re saved, rather than actually believing in what Christ has done.

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so to him? At least, he came very near to the character which, according to Mr. M.'s doctrine, God should justify. No, it will be said, *he did not believe*. It seems, then, that something more is necessary after all, than being "a mere sinner." Yet why should it? Didn't Christ "die for sinners, for the ungodly?" Why should this man not, as "a mere sinner," become a partaker of his benefits? Or if not, why does Mr. M. write as if he *should*? Answer, 'He did not *believe*.' True; nor while he was under the dominion of such a spirit, *could he believe*. Before he could come to Jesus, or believe in him, he must have *heard and learned* another lesson.¹

It is further objected, that to suppose faith to include in it any holy disposition of heart, is *confounding it with its effects*, and making those to be one, which the Scriptures declare to be three; namely, faith, hope, and charity. I don't know that the Scriptures anywhere teach us that all holy disposition is the effect of faith. It is not more so, I apprehend, than all unholy disposition is the effect of unbelief. *But unbelief itself is the effect of an unholy disposition*, as I suppose will be allowed. All unholy disposition, therefore, *cannot* be the effect of unbelief.

— Mr. M. has also proved that faith is not only a *principle* of evangelical obedience; but *is itself an exercise of obedience*. All obedience, therefore, by his own account, is not the effect of faith; for nothing can be an effect of itself. And unless it is possible to *obey* God without any holy disposition of heart to do so, it will equally follow, that all holy disposition cannot be the effect of faith.

— With respect to the confounding of what the Scriptures distinguish, whatever distinction there is between faith, hope, and charity, it does nothing for Mr. M.'s argument, unless they can be proved to be so distinct that nothing of the one is to be found in the others. Faith must not only have no love in it, but no hope; hope must include neither faith nor love; and love must possess neither faith nor hope. But are they thus distinct? On the contrary, it may be found upon strict inquiry, that there is no grace of the Holy Spirit, that does not possess a portion of every other grace. Yet faith is not love, nor hope, nor joy, nor long-suffering, nor gentleness, nor goodness, nor meekness, nor patience. Each has a distinctive character, and yet each is so blended with the others, that in dissecting one, you must cut through the veins of all.

"Some affirm," says Mr. M., "that faith, hope, and love are three, considered only in respect to their objects." ² I had indeed suggested that they are three, considered with respect to their objects; but never thought of affirming that they are three *only* in that view. They may be three in many other respects, for all I know. My argument only required me to point out a sense in which they were distinct, provided they were not distinct in respect to their holy nature. I see no solidity in Mr. M.'s objection to an objective distinction; and it is rather extraordinary that what he substitutes in its place, from Mr. Sandeman, is a distinction that is merely objective.

Mr. M. thinks that faith, hope, and love, are distinct as to their nature; and that the excellency ascribed to love, consists in its being holy; whereas faith is not so. But what becomes of *hope*? Love is not said to excel faith only: hope therefore is required to have no holiness in it, any more than faith. And has it none? Mr. M., when asked whether hope did not imply *desire*, and desire *love*, answered, "Yes, hope is a modification of love." It was replied, "Then you have given up your argument."

It has been further objected, that the reception of God's testimony is compared to the reception of a human testimony; and that as a disposition of heart (whether it is holy or unholy) is not necessary to the one, so neither is it to the other. It is allowed that the testimony of man may, in many cases, be believed merely by the understanding, and without being at all influenced by the state of the heart: but it is only in cases with which THE HEART HAS NO CONCERN. If the admission

¹ Joh 5.44; 12.39, 40; 6.45.

² On the Commission, p. 82. Note.

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of human testimony respected things of which there was no sensible evidence — things which, to be believed, would require a total relinquishment of a favorite system, and the pursuit of an opposite course of action; things which most of those around us disregarded, and which, if true, might be at a considerable distance — then objections would arise against the admission of it, which if it were otherwise, would have no existence. Nor could they be removed while the heart remained averse. The fact, it is true, might become so notorious as to silence opposition, and in the end extort conviction; but conviction thus extorted, would not be faith. Faith implies that we *think well* of the testifier, or possess a confidence in his veracity. But *this* may consist with both ill opinion, and ill will. It is the persuasion of sense, rather than of faith. Such was that of some of the chief rulers, that Christ was the Messiah. ^{Joh 12.42,43} The miracles which he wrought, silenced their opposition, and planted in their consciences a conviction that it must be so. It is true, this conviction is called *believing*; but it is only in an improper sense. It was not that sort of faith which is connected with justification, or salvation.

Whatever conviction any man may have of the truth, while it is against the grain of his heart, he is not a believer in the proper sense of the term; nor do the Scriptures acknowledge him as such. It is only *receiving the love of the truth* that will prove to be saving: and he that does not thus receive it, is described as an *unbeliever*. ^{2The 2.10-12} If Micaiah's testimony of what God had revealed to him, had been *in favor* of the expedition against Ramoth Gilead, Ahab could have believed it. For a little before this he had believed a prophet who spoke good concerning him. ^{1Kng 20.13,14} Or if it had been delivered by a person against whom he had no prejudice, and on a subject that neither favored nor thwarted his inclinations, he might have believed it merely with his understanding, uninfluenced by any disposition of his heart. But as it was, while four hundred prophets were *for* him, to one *against* him, and while sensible appearances were in his favor, he did not believe it, and even bid defiance to it. It is possible he might have some *misgivings*, even while he was ordering Micaiah to prison; and when the arrow pierced him, his fears would rise high. As death approached, he would *feel* the truth of what he had been told, and be possessed, it is likely, of tremendous *forebodings* of a hereafter. But all this was not faith, only *involuntary conviction*. This was a species of conviction which neither possesses nor produces any good; and which does not have a promise made to it in the oracles of truth.

It is acknowledged by the author of *A Dialogue Between David and Jonathan*, that “After all we can say of the speculative knowledge of practical truth, we must still remember that it implies some very essential imperfection, and error.” But if practical truth requires something more than speculative knowledge to enter into it, then why isn't the same acknowledged about *believing* it? Can spiritual things be required to be *spiritually discerned*, and yet be believed while the heart is wholly *carnal*?

Lastly, It is objected that the word of God is represented as the mean of regeneration: *Of his own he will beget us with the word of truth* ^{Jas 1.18} — *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever*. ^{1Pet 1.23} And as it is supposed that the word must be *understood* and *believed* before it can have any saving influence upon us, so it is concluded, that regeneration must be preceded by faith, rather than faith by regeneration; or at least that they are coeval.¹ This objection has been advanced from several quarters, and for several purposes. In answer to it, I would offer in the first place, two or three general remarks:—

First, Whether regeneration influences faith, or faiths regeneration, if either of them influences the other, they cannot be coeval. One *must* be prior to the other, at least, in the order of nature — as the effect is always preceded by the cause.

Secondly, Whatever weight this objection may possess, it ought not to be made by anyone who denies that *belief of the gospel is saving faith*. For allowing the word, *understood and believed*,

¹ *Coeval*: at the same time or of the same period.

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to be that by which we are regenerated, still, if this belief is not faith, but something merely presupposed by it, then faith may, notwithstanding, be preceded by regeneration. If faith is the same thing as coming to Christ, receiving him, and relying upon him for acceptance with God, then *all this*, in the order of things, follows upon believing the truth concerning him — no less so than coming to God follows *believing that He exists, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* ^{Heb 11.6} Therefore, we may be regenerated by a perception and belief of the truth, and as the immediate effect of it, come to Jesus and rely upon him for salvation.

Thirdly, It may be questioned whether this objection ought to be made by those who admit the necessity of a spiritual discernment of the glory of divine things in order to believe. That this is a principle clearly established in the Scriptures, cannot be denied. *Seeing the Son* is necessary to believing in him. ^{Joh 6.40} Unbelief is attributed to spiritual blindness; and those who did not believe the *report* of the gospel, are described as *seeing no form nor splendor in the Savior, nor beauty that they should desire him.* ¹

Mr. M., speaking of the saving truth of the gospel, says, “It is no sooner *perceived* and *believed*, than it takes possession of the will and affections.” ² *This*, I would think, is allowing that *perception* is distinct from believing, and necessarily precedes it. But if a spiritual perception of the glory of divine truth precedes believing, this may be the same *in effect* as regeneration preceding it. Allowing that the word requires [the truth] to be *perceived*, before the will and affections can be changed, it does not follow that it must also be *believed* for this purpose. For the very perception itself may *change us into the same image;* ^{2Cor 3.18} and in virtue of that, we may instantly with our whole heart set our seal to it, that God is true.

Now, I apprehend that all my opponents are included under one or the other of these descriptions; and if so, I might very well be excused from any further answer. The word of God may be allowed to be the means of regeneration; and yet regeneration, may precede believing.

My Own Views

I do not wish, however, to dismiss the subject without stating my views of it, and the grounds on which they rest. To me it appears that the Scriptures trace a change of heart to an origin beyond either belief or perception, even to that divine influence which is the *cause* of both — an influence which, with great propriety, is compared to the power which at first *commanded the light to shine out of darkness.* ^{2Cor 4.6}

Those with whom I am now reasoning will admit that there is a divine influence upon the soul, which is necessary to spiritual perception and belief, as being the cause of them. The only question is, In what *order* are these things caused? Whether the Holy Spirit causes the mind, while carnal, to discern and believe spiritual things, and thereby renders it spiritual? Or whether He imparts a holy susceptibility and relish for the truth, in consequence of which we discern its glory, and embrace it? The *latter* appears to me to be the truth. The following are the principal grounds on which I embrace that:—

First, The Scriptures represent the dominion of sin in the heart as *utterly inconsistent* with a spiritual perception and belief of the gospel; and so long as it continues, it renders both the one and the other impossible.

— Spiritual blindness is ascribed to aversion of heart — *Their eyes they have closed — They say to God, Depart from; us; for we do not desire the knowledge of your ways — The ignorance that is in them because of the hardness, obduracy, or callousness of the heart.* ³ This obstinacy and

¹ 2Cor 4.4; Isa 53.1, 2.

² Mc’Lean, *On the Commission*, p. 82.

³ Act 28.27; Job 21.14; Eph 4.18.

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aversion of heart is the film to the mental eye, preventing all spiritual glory entering into it. *The natural man, therefore, does not receive the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them.* ¹Cor 2.14

From this it follows, that unless the Holy Spirit effects that which he has declared to be impossible, his influence must consist, not in causing the mind to see *notwithstanding* the obstruction, but in *removing* the obstruction itself out of the way. If it is said, though it is impossible with men, yet it may be possible with God, I answer, those things which are impossible with men but possible with God, are not those which are impossible *in their own nature*. Where this is the case, the power of God is never introduced as accomplishing them, any more than the power of man. We should not, for instance, think of affirming that the heart, while carnal, and in a state of *enmity against God*, can by His almighty power, be made to *love* him, and be *subject to His law*: for this is in itself impossible. But the impossibility of the natural man receiving the things of the spirit of God, while they appear foolishness to him, is manifestly of the same nature as this, and it is described in the same language. ¹ God does not cause the mind, while carnal, to be subject to his law; but He imparts that which removes the obstruction, *taking away the stony heart out of our fleshy and giving us a heart of flesh.* ^{Eze 11.19} And thus it is supposed to be, in respect to spiritual discernments. God does not cause the natural man to receive spiritual things, and thereby render him spiritual; but He removes the obstructing film by imparting a spiritual relish for those things. Thus it is that *spiritual things are SPIRITUALLY discerned.*

Secondly, Though holiness is frequently ascribed in the Scriptures to a spiritual perception of the truth, yet that spiritual perception itself, in the first instance, is ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart.

— *The Lord opened the HEART of Lydia, and she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul — God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ — The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you; and you need not have any man teach you: but the same anointing teaches you of all things — You have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.*²

Finally, Everything which proves spiritual blindness and unbelief to have their origin in the depravity of the heart, proves that whatever may be said about particular volitions being caused by ideas received into the mind, original biases are not this way. ³ And everything which proves

¹ Comp. 1Cor 2.14 with Rom 8.7.

² Act 16.14; 2Cor 4.6; 1Joh 2.27, 20.

³ President Jonathan Edwards (no man is admitted to have possessed a clearer insight into these difficult subjects than him) speaks with great caution on the will being determined by the understanding. He denies that it is so, if by the understanding he meant what is called *reason or judgment*; and only allows it “in a large sense, as including the whole faculties of perception or apprehension.” And even when taken in this large sense, he says:

I have chosen to express myself this way: “The will is always as the greatest apparent good is,” or “as what appears most agreeable,” rather than to say “that the will is *determined* by the greatest apparent good,” or “by what seems most agreeable;” because what appears most agreeable or pleasing to the mind, and the mind’s preferring and choosing, hardly seem to be properly and perfectly distinct.” (*Inquiry on the Will* [or *Freedom of the Will*], pp. 11-17. London Edition 1754.)

Thus also, he writes in his *Treatise on the Affections* [or *Religious Affections*, 1746]:

Spiritual understanding consists primarily in a sense of heart of spiritual beauty. I say *in a sense of heart*, for it is not merely speculation that is concerned in this kind of understanding; nor can there be a clear distinction made between the two faculties of *understanding* and *will*, as acting distinctly and separately in this matter. When the mind is sensible of the sweet beauty and amiableness of a thing, that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the *idea* of it. And this sensibleness of the amiableness or delightfulness of beauty, carries in the very nature of it, the sense of the heart; or an effect and impression of the soul as the subject of, as a substance possessed of taste, inclination and will.

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spiritual perception and faith to be holy exercises, proves that a change of heart must of necessity precede them, as no holy exercise can take place while the heart is under the dominion of carnality. Whether these principles have not been sufficiently proved in the foregoing pages, the reader must determine.

It is thus, I apprehend, that God *reveals* the truth to us by his Spirit, in order for our discerning and believing it. *Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: flesh and blood has not REVEALED these things to you, but my Father who is in heaven— You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and REVEALED them to babes— Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man (that is, into the heart of the worldly man) the things which God has prepared for those who love Him: but God has REVEALED them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea the deep things of God— Now we have not received the spirit of the world, BUT THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD, THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD. Which things also we (as ministers) do not speak in the words that man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED.*

This *revelation*, from above, communicates no new truths; but imparts a holy susceptibility of spirit, *a spirit which is of God*, and which stands opposed to *the spirit of the world*, by which those truths that were already revealed in the Scriptures, but which were *hidden* from us by our pride and hardness of heart, become manifest. Thus faith is the *gift of God*. Believing, I would think, cannot itself with any propriety be termed *a gift*; but He gives us that from which it immediately follows: namely, *a heart to know Him, a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear.*¹

I see nothing inconsistent between this statement of things, and that of James and Peter. We are as properly said to be *born again by the word of God*,² as we are said to be born into the world by means of our parents. Yet, as in this case, the instrumentality of man was consistent with *the inspiration of Him who quickens all things*, and who by an immediate though mysterious operation of his hand, *gave us life*; so I conceive it is in the other. The term *regeneration* in the sacred writings is not always used in that strict sense in which we use it in theological discussion. Like almost every other term, it is sometimes used in a stricter, and sometimes in a more general sense. Thus *repentance* is sometimes distinguished from *faith*: at other times it comprehends the whole of that which is necessary to forgiveness, and it must therefore comprehend believing. And thus *regeneration* is sometimes expressive of that operation in which the soul is passive; and in this sense it stands distinguished from *conversion*, or actual turning to God by Jesus Christ. At other times it includes not only the first impartation of spiritual life, but the whole of that change which designates us Christians, or by which we are brought as into a new moral world. When the term is introduced as a *cause* of faith, or as that of which believing in Jesus is a proof (as it is in Joh 1.12, 13, and 1Joh 5.1.) we may be certain that it stands distinguished from faith. But when the same things are ascribed to regeneration which peculiarly pertain to faith, we may be equally certain that it includes it. Thus we read of *the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the*

There is a distinction to be made between a mere *notional understanding*, in which the mind only beholds things in the exercise of a speculative faculty; and *the sense of the heart*, in which the mind not only speculates and beholds, but relishes and feels. That sort of knowledge by which a man has a sensible perception of amiableness and loathsomeness, or of sweetness and nauseousness, is not the same sort of knowledge as that by which he knows what a triangle is, and what a square is. The one is mere *speculative* knowledge; the other is *sensible or tangible* knowledge, in which more than the mere intellect is concerned. The heart is the proper subject of it, or the soul, as being what not only beholds, but has *inclination*, and is pleased or displeased by it. And yet there is the nature of instruction in it — as someone who has perceived the sweet taste of honey, knows much more about it than someone who has only looked upon and felt it. (Edwards, *Religious Affections*, Fourth Edition, pp. 227, 228)

¹ Jer 24.7; Deu 29.4.

² Jas 1.18; 1Pet 1.23;

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Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior: that BEING JUSTIFIED by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life. ^{Tit 3:5, 7} If regeneration here did not include faith in Jesus Christ, it would not, I conceive, stand connected, as it does, with *justification*, which is peculiarly ascribed to faith.

Regeneration, taken in this large sense of the term, is undoubtedly *by the word of God*. It is by means of this, that a sinner is first convinced of sin, and is kept from despair by this, as exhibiting mercy through Jesus Christ. It is by this alone that he can become acquainted with the character of the Being he has offended, the nature and demerit of sin, and the way in which he must be saved from it. These important truths, viewed with the eye of an enlightened conscience, frequently produce great effects upon the soul, even previous to its yielding itself up to Christ. And the impartation of spiritual life, or a susceptibility of heart to receive the truth, may generally, if not always, *accompany* the representation of truth to the mind. It was *while* Paul was speaking, that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. It is also allowed that when the word is received into the soul, and finds a place there, it *works effectually*, and it becomes a principle of holy action, *a well of water, springing up to everlasting life.* ^{Joh 4:14}

All I contend for is this: *that it is not by means of a spiritual perception, or belief of the gospel, that the heart is, for the first time, effectually influenced towards God.* For spiritual perception and belief are represented as the *effects*, and not the *causes* of such influence.

A spiritual perception of the glory of divine things, appears to be the first sensation of which the mind is conscious; but it is not the first operation of God upon it. Spiritual perception is that which the Scriptures call *αἰσθησις* (*aisthesis*), *judgment*, or *sense*, or *the judgment arising from holy sensibility.* ^{Phi 1:9} It is that in *spiritual* things, which a delicate sense of propriety is in *natural* things — in which the mind judges instinctively, as it were, from a feeling of what is proper. It is by this *unction from the Holy One*, ^{1Joh 2:20} that we perceive the glory of the divine character, the evil of sin, and the lovely fitness of the Savior. None of these can be properly known by mere intellect, any more than the sweetness of honey, or the bitterness of wormwood, can be ascertained by the sight of the eye. Nor can one be perceived, except in connection with the other. Without a sense of the glory of the object offended, it is impossible to have any just perception of the evil nature of the offence; and without a sense of the evil of the offence, it is equally impossible to discern either the necessity, or the fitness of a Savior. But with such a sense of things, each naturally, and perhaps instantaneously, follows the other. Hence arise the exercises of *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*; and that is in the order in which the scriptures represent them.

Much has been said of this statement of things, as involving the absurdity of a *godly unbeliever*. Scripture declarations and promises have been urged, expressive of the safety of the regenerate; and a conclusion drawn, that if regeneration precedes believing, men may be in a safe state without coming to Christ.¹ It will be allowed, I suppose, that spiritual perception necessarily precedes believing; or that *seeing the Son* goes before *believing in him*; also that a belief of the doctrine of Christ precedes our coming to him for life, as much so as *believing that God exists, and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him*, precedes coming to Him. But it would be as easy to produce a number of declarations and promises which express the safety of those who know Christ, and believe his doctrine, as of those who are regenerate. And it might with equal propriety be said, There is but little if any occasion for those who *know* Christ, to believe in him; or for those who believe his doctrine, to come to him for eternal life, seeing that they are *already in a state of salvation*. The truth appears to be, these things are inseparable; and when promises are made to one, it is as connected with the other.

¹ *Glad Tidings*, etc. pp. 176, 180.

The priority contended for is in *order of nature*, rather than *order of time*; or if it is the latter, it may be owing to the disadvantages under which the party may be placed, as to the means of understanding the gospel. No sooner is the heart turned towards Christ, than Christ is embraced. It is necessary that the evil humors of a jaundiced eye should be removed, before we can see things as they are: but no sooner are they removed than we see. And if there is a priority in order of time, owing to the lack of opportunity of knowing the truth, yet where a person embraces Christ so far as he has the means of knowing him, he is in effect a believer. The Bereans *received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so; therefore, it is said, many of them believed.* And had they died while engaged in this noble pursuit, they would not have been treated as unbelievers. This principle therefore does not involve the absurdity of a *godly unbeliever*. But if its opposite is true, the absurdity of an *ungodly believer* must undoubtedly be admitted. Indeed those who plead for it avow this consequence: for though they allow that none but believers are justified; yet they contend that at the time of justification, the party is absolutely, and in every sense, ungodly — that is, he is at the same instant both a believer, and an enemy of God!

The Consequences of the Principle I oppose

I will conclude with a reflection or two on the consequences of the principle I oppose, with respect to addressing the unconverted:

First, If the necessity of repentance in order to receive forgiveness is given up, we will not be in the practice of urging it on the unconverted. We will imagine that it will lead souls astray to press it *before*, in order to believe; and *afterwards*, it will be thought unnecessary, as all that is lacking will come of itself. Thus in effect, it will be left out of our ministry. But whether in this case we can acquit ourselves of having deserted the examples, and of course the doctrine of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, deserves our serious consideration.

Secondly, For the same reason that we give up the necessity of repentance in order to receive forgiveness, we may give up *all* exhortations to things that are spiritually good as *means of salvation*. Instead of uniting with the sacred writers in calling upon the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to return to the Lord, that He may have mercy upon him, we will consider it as tending to make them Pharisees. Indeed Mr. M. seems prepared for this consequence. If I understand him, he does not approve of unconverted sinners being exhorted to *anything spiritually good*, other than holding up to them the language of the law to convince them of sin. This is how he answers the question, “Are unbelievers to be exhorted to obedience to God’s commandments?” He refers us to the answer of our Lord to the young ruler, which directed him to keep the commandments, if he would enter into life.¹ It is easy to perceive that his scheme requires this construction of the exhortations of the Bible. For if he allows that sinners are called to the exercise of anything spiritually good *in order to partake of spiritual blessings*, he must give up his favorite notion of God’s justifying men while in a state of enmity against him.

It is true, that all duty, in some sort, belongs to the law. Considering it as the eternal standard of right and wrong, it requires the heart in every modification. In this sense, repentance, faith, and all holy exercises of mind are required by it. But as a *covenant of life* it does not admit of repentance, much less hold up the promise of forgiveness. When God says, *Repent and turn from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*,^{Eze 18.30} this is not the language of the law as a *covenant of life*. Mr. M. tells us on the same page, that “There is no promise of life for doing any good thing, except that *all* the commandments be kept.” How then can the law as a covenant of life, so much as admit of repentance, much less hold up a hope that in case of it, iniquity shall not be our ruin? The Scriptures exhort in this way:

¹ Mc’Lean, *Simple Truth*, p. 21. Second Edition.

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— *Incline your ear, and come to Me; Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David... Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon Him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon — Do not labor for the food that perishes; but for that which endures unto everlasting life—Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, and you will find rest for your souls.*¹

Is this the mere language of the law, designed to suggest what they must do if they would be justified by the works of the law?

It would seem that if Mr. M. was called to visit a dying sinner, he would be careful not to use any such language as this. Or if he did, it must be used ironically, teaching him what he must do on his own self-justifying principles to gain eternal life. If he is serious, he has only to state to him what Christ has done upon the cross, and assure him that if he believes it, he is happy. Far be it from me, that I should disapprove of an exhibition of the Savior as the only foundation of hope to a dying sinner, or plead for such directions as fall short of believing in him. In both these particulars, I am persuaded, Mr. M. is in the right; and that all those counsels to sinners, which are adapted only to turn their attention to the workings of their own hearts, to their prayers, or to their tears, and *not* to the blood of the cross, are delusive and dangerous. But does it follow that they are to be exhorted to nothing spiritually good, unless it is for their conviction? Mr. M., to be consistent, must not seriously exhort a sinner to *come away* from those refuges of lies, to *renounce* all dependence on his prayers and tears, and to *rely upon Christ alone*, as necessary to justification, lest he make him a Pharisee. For this would be the same thing as exhorting him to *humble himself*, and *submit himself to the righteousness of God*— exercises in which the mind is active, and which are spiritually good.

Why should we be wise beyond what is written? Why hesitate to address such a character in the language of inspiration: *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* The sacred writers *warn* and *exhort*, as well as *teach*. While they exhibit the Savior, they expostulate, entreat, and persuade men to embrace Him with all their hearts; and this is without any apparent apprehensions of undermining the doctrine of free justification.

If it is said that the exercises included in the foregoing exhortations, *imply faith*, I grant it. For without faith in Christ, neither repentance, nor any other spiritual exercise, would be followed with forgiveness. Those who seek the Lord, must be exhorted to seek him in the way in which he is to be found; those who *call upon him*, must do so *in the name of Jesus*; the *way* and *thoughts* to be forsaken, respect not merely a course of outward crimes, but the self-righteous schemes of the heart. *Returning to the Lord*, is nothing less than returning home to God by Jesus Christ. But this does not prove that the exhortation, unless it is to teach them what they must do to be justified by a Covenant of Works, is improperly addressed to the unconverted. It is manifestly intended for no such purpose, but as a direction to obtain salvation.

The Scriptures sometimes give directions as to the way of our obtaining the remission of sins, and acceptance with God; and sometimes of being saved in general, or of obtaining everlasting life; and we ought to give the same. If they direct us to seek pardon, it is by repentance;² if it is for justification, it is by believing;³ and if it is for eternal salvation, it is by a life of evangelical

¹ Isa 55.3, 6, 7; Joh 6.27; Mat 11.28, 29.

² Isa 55.6, 7; Act 8.22.

³ Act 13.39; Rom 4.4, 5; 9.32.

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obedience.¹ When they speak of pardon, justification is supposed;² and when they exhort to repentance, in order for it, believing in the *name* of Jesus is supposed. ³ On the other hand, when they speak of justification, they include forgiveness;⁴ and when they exhort to believing, in order for it, it is to such a believing that comprehends repentance. ⁵

Many of these directions on the principle I oppose, must be omitted; which if they are, some of the most essential branches of the Christian ministry will be neglected.

FINIS.

¹ Rom 2.7; Heb 11.14.

² Psa 32.1,2 comp. Rom 4.6, 7.

³ Luk 24.4, 7; Act 13.38; Eph 1.7; Col 1.14.

⁴ Rom 4.6, 7.

⁵ Mar 1.15; Mat 21.32; Act 16.31 comp. 20.21; Luk 13.3.